Trends in Learning Structures in

Higher Education (II)

Follow-up Report prepared for the Salamanca and Prague Conferences of March / May 2001

by Guy HAUG and Christian TAUCH

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The report *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II)* is the result of a lead project undertaken by the Finnish National Board of Education, Finland, with financial support from the European Commission, and of two complementary projects undertaken by the Association of European Universities (CRE) with support from the European Training Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Board of Education, the Association of European Universities, the European Commission or the European Training Foundation.

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Guy HAUG and Christian TAUCH

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Trends 1 was mainly based on a survey of structure and trends in higher education in the EU/EEA countries. Trends 2 surveyed the other signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration.

This review:

- confirms all the main conclusions reached in the Trends 1 report;
- - reinforces the observation concerning the move towards a two-tier system, but not necessarily corresponding to the definitions used for the degree structure outlined in the Bologna Declaration (e.g. the notions of "postgraduate" or "binary" system of higher education);
- - confirms the observation concerning the move towards accreditation;
- - shows that long study programmes at all levels, and rather inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula still exist in several countries and would need to be adjusted to meet the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

The follow-up process to the Bologna Declaration: widespread interest and support -

- The Bologna Declaration is on all agendas: all countries have established a unit or a forum to explain and discuss its content and implications. It serves as a new source of dialogue between Ministries and higher education institutions, and between sub-sectors of higher education;
- - It is mostly seen as confirming/reinforcing national priorities: this is the process' biggest strength, i.e. it "crystallises" major trends and reveals that issues and solutions have a European dimension; as a consequence the process is not (or no longer) seen as an intrusion, but as a source of information on the most suitable way forward for Europe;
- - It has been used to accelerate, facilitate and guide change: the main role of the Declaration has become to serve as a long term agenda for structural change;
  A major strength of the process is its complementarity with other developments in progress. It reinforces and it is being reinforced by other tools/factors which point in the same direction: Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, ENQA, EU Directives, EU mobility programmes including ECTS, ENIC/NARIC network, reforms entailed by the accession process to the EU in the countries concerned;
- The Bologna process is both a consequence of, and a contribution to the process of integration of European higher education.

Consensus on the core objectives of the process

- Mobility: there is unanimous support to the promotion of the mobility of students as well as of graduates, both outbound and (less expectedly) inbound. Teacher mobility

seems to still receive insufficient attention. The mobility agenda of the Declaration is strongly underpinned by EU tools (ECTS, SOCRATES, TEMPUS, directives on professional recognition, Mobility Action Plan) and by the Lisbon Convention as well as by the willingness to prepare for EU integration in the countries concerned. ECTS and the Diploma Supplement receive very strong support.

- Employability: the Bologna Declaration has reinforced the debate and increased the awareness that employability is an issue all over Europe. There are new "professional Bachelors" in several countries, and new "professional Masters" in some. The change to a two-tier structure does not necessarily come with immediate in-depth renovation of the underlying curricula. The debate has now taken into account that there are various ways in which first degrees can be "relevant to the European labour market" and that all need not to be directly geared towards short term employment in a particular profession. In some countries university Bachelors are mainly seen as a preparation and a platform for the choice of postgraduate studies; this is less a problem where a strong college sector produces a significant number of holders of professionally oriented Bachelors.
- Competitiveness/attractiveness: most countries now seem to understand "competitiveness" in a positive sense and to endorse the need for their higher education systems to be "attractive". The issue is seen as "important" or "crucial" in an unexpectedly high number of countries: several have specific comprehensive plans aimed at non-European students; accession countries want to enhance their attractiveness to EU students in order to balance their exchanges within SOCRATES. No country said competitiveness was irrelevant, but it is not yet on the agenda everywhere. Most countries show little concern about transnational education and foreign accreditation sought by their universities.

  Answers to transnational education are mainly of two types: to rule it out, or to subject it to national rules; neither is likely to resolve the issue. The Bologna Declaration is attracting interest outside Europe, in particular in Latin America: this confirms that understandable higher education structures would make Europe a more attractive study destination in other world regions.

Instruments of the convergence process

- Easily readable and comparable degrees: three countries developed comprehensive and coherent qualifications frameworks which could be useful for similar exercises in others and therefore relevant for Europe as a whole. Regional higher education areas are being consolidated in the Baltic Republics and the Nordic countries. Far from imposing uniformity as was sometimes feared, Bologna has encouraged more diversity and more flexibility. In particular, there are now more binary systems, with more bridges between sub-systems and more "professional Bachelors/Masters": The surprising fears that the Bologna Declaration had the intention to transform all colleges into universities seems to be disappearing.

  On the contrary, the move towards integrated systems (one system with different institutions and various bridges between them) is confirmed in a number of countries. The Diploma Supplement is seen as a major instrument to facilitate readability and comparability. There are still very complex degree structures in many countries, e.g. systems which are in fact not binary but "trinary" (universities, colleges/polytechnics, short post-secondary courses) with different degree structures in different sectors and in different disciplines. The least compatible sector seems to be the non-university sector, which is growing but without sufficient convergence between countries. There are also still many examples of confusing names/nomenclature (e.g. undergraduate "Master" degrees or "academies" focussing on Bachelor education).

The integration of lifelong learning as a regular part of higher education and of the qualification framework is a priority in only a relatively small number of countries.

- Mainly organised in undergraduate/postgraduate phases: the movement of convergence towards a two-tier structure continues, through the implementation of reforms previously adopted, the consolidation of Bachelor/Master structures introduced during the last decade and the initiation of reforms in several new countries.

  There are examples of two-tier structures in ALL disciplines including engineering (few in medicine). There are however also many countries where the Bachelor/Master structure does not concern certain professional curricula, which remain organised in long, one-tier courses. The strongest trend is towards 3-year Bachelors, but there are many examples of Bachelors lasting 3 - 4 years. A limited move towards professional Bachelors is in progress. Several comprehensive plans combine the introduction of Bachelor/Master degrees, credits and accreditation ("the golden triangle of reforms"), mostly in countries that engaged early in the reform process. There is not a similar effort towards convergence at the postgraduate level: there is therefore a need for debate/progress concerning the various types of Master degrees.

  Admission to Master courses is usually not automatic, at least not for "outside" students.
- Credit accumulation and transfer systems: there is a strong push towards ECTS-compatible credits based on national systems with easy translation into ECTS, or on the adoption of ECTS itself, either by obligation or more often following the strong recommendation of rectors' conferences and/or ministries. There is concern about the potential of divergence in the implementation of the system. The fears that the introduction of credits would deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula and oblige them to recognise all imported credits seem to be diminishing.
- Quality assurance: there is a powerful movement towards more quality assurance (new agencies, ENQA network), but in very different ways: unclear relationship between "quality assurance" and "accreditation", applied to all or only part of the higher education system, focussing on programmes (sometimes along subject lines across a whole country) or on institutions, with different types of consequences. The development of "accreditation" is now more easily recognisable than in the Trends 1 report: many non EU/EEA countries have accreditation, and several others are considering the possibility or have firm plans for a new accreditation agency (separate from the quality assurance agency or combined with it). In some countries that wish to increase the international acceptance of their new degrees, accreditation is seen as a *sine qua non* . There is however still confusion about the benefits and the meaning of accreditation. The decentralised approach to quality assurance/accreditation (sometimes referred to as "meta accreditation") which is being experimented in one country may provide inspiration for European mechanisms based on mutual acceptance of quality assurance decisions, respecting national and subject differences and not overloading universities.

A significant impact in non-signatory countries

- The Trends II report covers six non-signatory countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It does not cover other countries, although it is known that there is interest in e.g. Turkey, Russia and some other CIS countries.

- In these six countries the Bologna Declaration receives strong attention, in particular as a reference for long term structural reforms and as an agenda for change in the whole of Europe.
- In the countries of former Yugoslavia and in Albania the structure of curricula, degrees and institutions differs significantly from the principles of the Bologna Declaration, but the reform process has started or is in progress and is supported by various European programmes and initiatives.
  The reform prepared for Kosovo by the International Administration took direct inspiration from the Bologna Declaration. A major difficulty for the development of the kind of curricula envisaged by the Bologna Declaration is the fragmentation of universities into independent faculties (resulting in inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula) in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.
  - The higher education system in Cyprus is already largely in line with the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Some indications and directions for the future

- In future priority attention should be paid to :
- - the challenge of readability of the Master level;
- fostering convergence in the college/polytechnic sector;
- the reform/adaptation of curricula at higher education institutions that have adopted or are adopting a two-tier articulation (there are good examples showing the way towards shorter, more broadly based and relevant Bachelors in all areas);
- the development of quality assurance mechanisms extending to the European level *bona fide* quality labels earned at the national or regional level; ENQA is likely to have a major role and responsibility in meeting this challenge;
- external aspects, in particular concerning the attractiveness and credibility of European higher education at the global level;
- support to the process of system reforms and curricular renovation in Southeast European countries.

- Some fears which were initially felt from the Bologna Declaration seem to be diminishing or even vanishing. It is now in general accepted that:
- the Declaration does not challenge the diversity of systems and disciplines, but rather to promote it and organise it;
- it is fully compatible with binary systems;
- credit systems do not deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula in a coherent way, and do no oblige them to accept without discrimination all credits which students would like to transfer;
- there are various ways in which degrees can be "relevant to the labour market" and the need is for a diversity of first degrees opening possibilities in the labour market and/or the way to various types of postgraduate studies.

- As the process develops, there is a need and a demand for:
- the reconfirmation of the main aims and principles of the Bologna Declaration, in order to underpin its role as a reference for long term reforms and as a European agenda of change;
- more co-ordination, in particular concerning the implementation of ECTS and the profile of Bachelor and Master degrees, in order to avoid that too much variance creates a new type of obstacles and annihilates the benefits of the convergence process.

- The general trend towards diversified systems (with diverse institutions offering a variety of Bachelors, a variety of Masters and various types of "bridges" allowing students to change track) points in the direction of a network, rather than a ladder of qualifications:

- the continuation of long one-tier curricula in a limited number of areas does not contradict the overall objectives and principles of the Bologna Declaration (even though there is no convincing argument – except maybe in medicine- that the adoption of a two-tier structure would not provide significant benefits);
- even though the main direction is towards 3-year Bachelors, any European system needs to accommodate first degrees with diverse purpose, orientation and profile requiring the equivalent in credits of 3 to 4 years of full time study. Extended first degrees would not pose any difficulty if they formed a common European base in a given subject area (e.g. engineering); otherwise, it would be useful to distinguish them from other Bachelor degrees (e.g. by calling them "advanced" Bachelor or Honours degrees").

- There is still a growing need for information about how the main issues are seen and addressed elsewhere in Europe and in the world:

- even more than hitherto, progress towards more convergence will be dependent on the availability of comparative studies, the dissemination of good practice and the tracking of problem areas;
- in the vocabulary for higher education as a whole (e.g."binary", "two-tier", "non-university", "accreditation") and in the nomenclature of degrees there are certain confusions or inconsistencies to which attention should be paid (e.g. what is postgraduate, name of certain degrees or institutions and their translation into English).

- The marked growth of the attention given to the "external" dimension of the process and to the development of tools/plans to make national higher education more attractive at home, in Europe and in the world should continue. The fact that this process could be made easier and more successful if it had a European dimension has not yet been acknowledged: European degrees will not be generally accepted in the world if they are not generally accepted in Europe.

- Future progress towards comparable qualifications requires additional work at the European level within particular subject or professional areas. A series of publications or databases on studies in Europe in all major subject areas would enhance comparability and mobility both within Europe and with the rest of the world.

Finally, it seems important to point out that the future of the Bologna process and indeed of European higher education is bound to be related to two fundamental principles which could guide all future action :

- students in Europe have a need and a *right* to study for degrees that can effectively be used in Europe, not just in the country/region where they were earned;
- a major responsibility of higher education institutions and governments in Europe is to ensure that they take all steps needed to be in a position to award this type of qualifications to their students.

Part I

Background information to the present survey of change in higher education from Bologna to Prague

LINKS WITH THE 1999 REPORT *TRENDS IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION ("TRENDS 1")*

The present report complements and updates *Trends 1* The present report should be understood as a complement and an update to the report *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education* prepared for the Bologna Conference of June 1999 ("Trends 1").

Trends 1 was prepared by Guy HAUG and Jette KIRSTEIN, on behalf of the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences, with support from the European Commission. It was mainly based on a survey of the structure of higher education (institutions, degrees) in the 18 countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area and served as a main background report for the preparation of the Bologna Conference and Declaration.
The report was published in 1999 by the Danish Rectors' Conference in the English and French language. It has been translated in full or in part in several other languages at the initiative of various organisations and persons. The full report, together with an executive summary, the text of the Bologna Declaration, country profiles, overview tables and comments can be found on the following websites:
www.rks.dk/trends1.htm
www.unige.ch/eua
Since the present report prepared for the Salamanca and Prague Conferences of March/May 2001 builds on data and conclusions of the 1999 report prepared for Bologna, it has been considered useful to include here for reference the text of the Executive Summary of Trends 1.

Executive summary of the Trends 1 report

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE:

BOLOGNA, JUNE 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guy HAUG

This document is meant as a contribution to the follow up work to the Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998 which called for the harmonisation of the architecture of higher education qualification systems in Europe. Its main purposes are to map areas of convergence between these systems in Europe (mainly EU/EEA), to identify trends affecting them and to indicate ways towards greater convergence in the future.
The **survey of existing structures** shows the extreme complexity and diversity of curricular and degree structures in European countries. The Sorbonne Declaration recommended that studies should be organised in an undergraduate and a graduate cycle, but did not provide an indication of their duration. The debate that followed

focussed on the alleged existence (or emergence) of a European “model” with 3 main levels of qualifications requiring 3, 5 or 8 years of study.

No significant convergence towards a 3-5-8 model was found. Whether traditional or newly introduced, Bachelor-type degrees require 3 to 4 years, and many European countries without Bachelors have first degrees in 4 years; there is however a high degree of convergence towards a duration of about 5 years for Master-level studies; but there is no 8-year standard duration for doctoral degrees. In addition, whereas the UK, the US and most countries in the world - except in continental Europe - apply two-tier (undergraduate-postgraduate) systems, the length of studies and the degree structures vary considerably within and between these countries, and duration tends to be expressed in academic credits rather than in years.

Several important **trends affecting the structure of degrees/qualifications** in Europe could be identified. There is a strong and growing governmental push towards shorter studies, first aimed at reducing the real duration of studies to their official length (which is typically exceeded by 2 to 4 years in many countries), and more recently through the introduction of first degrees in countries with traditionally long curricula without an intermediate exit point. Recent reforms in Germany and Austria have introduced new Bachelors/Masters curricula on a voluntary basis alongside traditional diplomas, whereas in Italy and France existing curricula are being re-arranged in a first and postgraduate cycle. Elements of two-tier systems exist in many other European countries, and it seems that currently only a few countries in the EU/EEA do not have, or are not experimenting with two-tier curricula in at least part of their higher education system.

In countries with a binary system, the line of divide between the university and non-university sectors (and their degree structure) is become increasingly blurred. Most countries have adopted, or are adopting various types of systems for the transfer, and to a lesser extent also the accumulation of academic credits; most are compatible with the ECTS system, which is gaining ground at many institutions. There is a marked trend towards more autonomy of universities, coupled with new initiatives for quality control and evaluation in many countries.

In recent years, European higher education has been faced with mounting challenges from abroad. Transnational education delivered in English by foreign/overseas providers through branch campuses, franchising, or by electronic means has grown rapidly in many European countries; a whole new sector of higher education is emerging alongside traditional, national, state-regulated systems, but until now it has been largely ignored by governments as well as universities in Europe.

Four main avenues of combined **action which may foster the desired convergence and transparency in qualification structures in Europe** are being suggested.
* The gradual adoption of an ECTS-compatible credit accumulation system. This would enhance the flexibility of national/institutional systems (in particular in view of the development of lifelong learning), bring them more in line with each other and with world systems, and ease mobility both within and from outside the EU/EEA area.
* The adoption of a common, but flexible frame of reference for qualifications. A rigid, uniform model (like the 3-5-8 model) is neither desirable nor feasible in Europe. In line with the analysis of existing systems and reforms in progress, the following broad frame could serve as a common reference, while at the same time allowing for flexibility and differences in countries and subjects (length of studies are expressed not in years, but

as the number of academic credits that must be successfully completed (one academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits):
- sub-degree level (certificate, diploma): 1 to 2 years worth of ECTS credits;
- first degree level (Bachelor, Honours, other first degree): no less than 3, no more than 4 years worth of ECTS credits;
- Master level: about 5 years worth of ECTS credits, of which at least 12 months worth of Master-level credits;
- doctoral level: variable (about 7 or 8 years in total).

The main conditions for meaningful first degrees of the Bachelor/Honours type are being set out. Key factors are the introduction of new curricula (instead of a sheer re-packaging of existing ones), a guaranteed level (gauged on the basis of knowledge and competencies acquired rather than time spent), real possibilities on the market labour, a clear separation from postgraduate studies, and formal accreditation.
Short Master programmes (12 months) present specific opportunities for intra-European mobility and international competitiveness.

* An enhanced European dimension in quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation:
  - compatible quality assurance systems, especially regarding the setting of threshold standards based on learning acquired (outputs) rather than on time spent and curriculum content (inputs);
  - independent evaluation leading to European quality labels in broad subject areas; the current vacuum for independent evaluation in Europe would best be filled through agencies independent from national and European authorities, and working along subject lines; they could draw on existing and future European-wide subject-based networks;
  - a coordinated approach to quality standards for transnational education, which raises the question of the recognition of foreign private providers.

* Empowering Europeans to use the new learning opportunities. Compatible credit systems, understandable degree structures, increased quality assurance and an more European labour market are structural improvements which would create a whole new range of learning opportunities for all; their impact would be even greater if they were combined with measures such as short Master degrees favouring new types of mobility, the further strengthening of the NARIC/ENIC network, counselling with a European dimension, and the elimination of remaining obstacles to student and teacher mobility.

The combined impact of the suggested action lines would also make European higher education more understandable and attractive to students, scholars and employers from other continents; they would **enhance European competitiveness** and thus help to consolidate (or in the eyes of many, to re-establish) its role and influence in the world.

PURPOSE AND METHODS OF THE PRESENT REPORT

Purpose

This report has two main purposes:
- to extend to all signatory countries (and a few non-signatory ones) the data collected and analysed in Trends 1 with respect to the EU/EEA countries; this will be found in Part III below, which contains an analysis, country profiles and supporting overview tables for the 12 non-EU/EEA countries that signed the Bologna Declaration and for 6 non-signatory countries;

- to update the analysis of the main structures and trends in all 35 countries, through a survey of change and reforms since the Bologna Declaration, with a view to provide background information to the Convention of European higher education institutions (Salamanca, 29-30 March 2001) and the meeting of Ministers of Education with the participation of representatives of the higher education community of Europe (Prague, 18-19 May 2001). This will be found in Part II below. Its main aim is not to review what exists or does not exist (e.g. which countries have or do not have a quality assurance agency), but to focus on change and reforms, in order to identify the major trends in the follow-up to the Bologna Declaration in the perspective of the setting up of the European higher education area by 2010.

Methods of the survey

The data collected on higher education structures (institutions, degrees) in non EU/EEA countries (Part III of this report) used the questionnaire developed by Jette Kirstein for the Trends 1 report of 1999. This guarantees the comparability of data and tables between all countries involved in the process. The authors wish to express their gratitude to Jette Kirstein for her kind co-operation which greatly facilitated their task.

The survey of reforms and changes from Bologna to Prague (Part II below) is mainly based on information gathered in the last two months of 2000 through questionnaires sent to all countries. The questionnaire used focussed on the organisation of the follow-up process, on the three main goals of the Declaration (mobility, employability, competitiveness) and on the five main action lines outlined in it.

- In the 29 signatory countries the questionnaire was sent to the officially designated "contact persons" in the Ministry with copies to the rectors conferences. In a majority of these countries some or extensive co-ordination took place in order to reflect the view of both government and higher education. It was not considered essential to stress the diversity of views between the various stakeholders involved, but rather to gather information on main changes at the national level;
- A slightly different version of the questionnaire was prepared and sent to the governmental and higher education authorities in the non-signatory countries;
- A simpler and shorter version of the questionnaire was designed and sent to a limited number of governmental and non-governmental European organisations who had shown their interest in the process. The main purpose, and indeed the main benefit from this exercise was to help looking at certain issues from a non national or "European" angle.

The authors wish to express their deep gratitude to all respondents who accepted to answer the questionnaires and sometimes also complementary questions by phone, fax or email. In spite of the length and complexity of the questionnaire the majority of respondents provided detailed, accurate and comprehensive information on all aspects. Other countries provided less detailed answers to some, or in a few cases to most questions. Two countries did not return the questionnaire.

The "country reports" prepared by a number of signatory countries for (or shortly after) the meeting of the Follow-up Group in Lisbon in June 2000 were used as a complementary source of information.

However the most detailed "country reports" tended to be those produced by the countries that also provided detailed answers to the questionnaire. One country, for which there was neither a country report nor answers to the questionnaire, could not be included in the survey and the report.

Other references: in addition to questionnaires et country reports a series of other documents were used. A list of the main ones is provided at the end of Part II below.

Part II

Towards a European higher education area: survey of change and reforms from Bologna to Prague

WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND SUPPORT

The Bologna process is high on national and institutional agendas

The Bologna process is on the higher education agenda of *all* signatory countries: each has either a unit, a working group, a forum or a debate dealing with the Declaration and its significance for governments and higher education institutions in the national context.

The follow-up debate and process has been organised according to several different patterns. In a majority of the countries concerned, the Ministry of Education has taken on a leading role, in all cases in more or less close co-operation with other key actors. In the most frequently encountered pattern the main partner organisations are the national Rectors' Conference(s). Other partners are also found in some countries: a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. in the UK), student unions (e.g. in Sweden) or the national ENIC/NARIC unit, especially in Central/Eastern Europe.

Several countries have set up a special (sometimes a formal) follow-up group, usually in the form of a working group bringing together ministerial officials and higher education representatives, as in e.g. three Nordic countries, Germany (where it includes the federal and *Länder* authorities) or Spain. A similar working group is planned in Portugal. In Austria, the Ministry has created a "progress chasing project" to monitor the implementation of the Declaration.
In several countries without a mixed follow-up unit, the Rectors' Conferences have set up special committees or working groups to consider the Declaration. This is the case in e.g. France, Belgium (both the French Community and Flanders) as well as in Switzerland. In the latter countries the working groups are specific for the university and college/polytechnic sector. In Malta, the University of Malta, as the only university in the country, has taken on the role to monitor the process. In Switzerland universities have set up a "Steering Committee" with a "Bologna co-ordinator" and an Advisory Group with the mission to ensure a co-ordinated introduction of the changes resulting from the implementation of the Bologna Declaration.

The Bologna Declaration has been discussed in an impressive number of events and fora

It is not possible to draw up a full picture of the information and discussion events dealing mainly or partly with the Bologna Declaration since June 1999. The following paragraphs try to convey an impression of the scope of the debate, distinguishing between the European, national and institutional levels.

At the European level, a series of seminars dealing with the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration was commissioned by the "Follow-up Group" put in place by Ministers for the implementation of the Declaration. They received financial support from the European Commission and focused on the following aspects:

- mechanisms for credit accumulation and transfer (Leiria, Portugal, November 2000);
- quality assurance and "accreditation" (i.e. the certification that certain standards of quality are met) in the European higher education area (Lisbon, January 2001);

- patterns for undergraduate studies and degrees (Helsinki, February 2001);
- transnational education (i.e. education delivered in a country different from the country of the institution controlling the course programme) in the broader context of "competitiveness" or "attractiveness" of European higher education (Malmö, Sweden, March 2001).

Apart from these "official" seminars, the Bologna Declaration was discussed in a series of meetings organised or supported by inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. What follows is just a few examples to provide an idea of the breadth of the debate.

A major positive change has been the recent creation of the European Network of Quality Agencies in higher education (ENQA) on the basis of a recommendation by the EU Council of Education Ministers. It was launched in February 2000 and all future work related to quality assurance aspects in the emerging European higher education area should be able to benefit from it. Current and anticipated developments related to the Bologna Declaration have quite naturally been a major topic on the agenda of ENQA meetings.

The ENIC/NARIC network co-ordinated by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and CEPES/UNESCO has set up a working group and produced a statement on the implications of the Bologna Declaration on recognition issues.

The creation of the European higher education area was also on the agenda of the 2000 annual conference of OECD's programme on institutional management (IMHE).

The Bologna Declaration was an important topic at numerous workshops and conferences organised by European associations and networks in higher education, e.g. CRE (Association of European Universities), the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences, EURASHE (institutions of the college/polytechnic sector), ESIB (National Unions of Students in Europe), SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education), EAIE (European Association for International Education), ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts), ELFA (European Law Faculties Association) and many others.

At the national level, many countries have reported that the Declaration was discussed not in one or two, but in many different meetings. In countries where the implementation process is already well under way, such as Italy, Germany or the Netherlands, there were specialised seminars dealing with particular issues emerging from the reforms in progress. Several countries had a national "Bologna information day" organised by the Ministry (e.g. in Austria and Greece), the Rectors' Conference (e.g. in Hungary and Switzerland), the quality assurance agency (in the UK), the NARIC/ENIC (in five countries in Central and Eastern Europe) or the national student unions (e.g. in Malta, Sweden, Norway). Such "Bologna days" are also planned in Portugal and in Ireland in April 2001. Germany invited representatives from all other signatory countries to its national Bologna Day in Berlin in October 2000.

Other reports on information activities include the translation of the Bologna Declaration and the main background report ("Trends 1") into the national language and their dissemination to various actors (e.g. in Greece, Spain and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe), explanatory articles in university magazines (e.g. Iceland) or interviews/press conferences for major newspapers (reported by e.g. Malta and the UK). Some co-ordination meetings took place at the level of a region (e.g. the Baltic

Higher Education Co-ordination Committee in April 2000) or across a common border (e.g. between Flanders and the Netherlands on quality assurance and accreditation).
There were in many countries ministerial statements supporting the goals and principles of the Bologna Declaration or stressing its compatibility with the national higher education policy. Such statements were made in Parliament in e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. In Germany they were issued by the federal authorities (BMBF) as well as by the Conference of State Ministers of Education (KMK). In a number of countries (e.g. Belgium and Spain) the Ministers have decided not to issue an official opinion before the rectors' conferences produce their own.
Liechtenstein confirmed that it felt in line with the Declaration and could sign it any time.
The debate did, of course, not start and develop at the same pace everywhere. In Finland it seems that the most intensive discussion took place *before* the country agreed to sign the Declaration and a more technical debate has taken place since. In other countries, the debate has reached public attention more recently, e.g. in Greece (where it came into focus mainly since December 2000) or in the French Community of Belgium (where the Minister emphasised that the process is one of long-term considerations and that premature action should be avoided). In Portugal, government as well as higher education institutions have expressed their deep interest in achieving the goals of the Bologna Declaration and in introducing the necessary reforms.

The higher education sector itself organised numerous meetings and discussion forums, in addition to those held in conjunction with governmental authorities already mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Rectors' conferences were very active in this area in many countries, both in the university and in the college/polytechnic sector (e.g. in Belgium). Many rectors' conferences have issued statements expressing their basic support to the creation of a European higher education area, e.g. in Poland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland (the "Twelve-point Statement"), the Netherlands, etc. Meetings and debates for members were also organised at the initiative of other national organisations like student unions (in e.g. Sweden and Austria) or the association of international officers (e.g. HEURO in the UK). Finally, it is important to mention that a large number of individual universities and other institutions organised internal seminars and information days for their own staff, students and partners (e.g. in Barcelona, Malmö, Gent, Lille, Bordeaux, Brussels, Brno, etc.)

Interestingly, the development towards a more coherent, and hence more compatible European higher education system has already received attention from universities outside Europe. This shows that the completion of an understandable degree structure in Europe would make the continent more attractive to students, teachers and universities from the rest of the world, and provide a suitable alternative to study destinations in other continents. Contacts have been established on this basis with the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP). Within the framework of the COLUMBUS programme two seminars on regional convergence in higher education between Europe and Latin America were organised in 2000. The Association of Commonwealth Universities is also showing an interest in the European convergence process.

Integration into national policy plans and action programmes

The Bologna Declaration has been taken up in several national (governmental) reports on higher education. Examples can be found in Norway (where the MjØs Report of May 2000 on the Bachelor/Master structure took account of the Declaration and served as a basis for the White Paper on higher education), the Czech Republic (White Paper of December 2000 on government's education policy), Slovakia (Strategic Plan For Higher Education of August 2000), Latvia (Conception Plan for Higher Education

Development), Estonia (Development Plan of Estonian Education) or in the Netherlands (where the Minister's Policy Memorandum draws on the report of the Rinnooy Kan Committee of July 2000). In other countries, the Declaration has been considered in the cyclical policy planning or reporting to Parliament, e.g. in Austria (Three-Year Report of 1999), Finland (governments' Five-Year Plan for Education for 1999-2004), Flanders (Policy Paper on Education/Training for 2000-2004) or Sweden (Minister's 2000 Report to Parliament). In Switzerland, the Rectors' Conference and the Science Council produced two action-oriented reports on the implementation and co-ordination of the process in the country.

In some countries, action is mostly based on major higher education reports produced prior to the Bologna Declaration that are in various stages of their implementation phase: the Dearing and Garrick Reports in the UK, the Martinotti Report in Italy and the Steering Group Report on Higher Education in Ireland (all 1997) as well as the 1998 Attali report in France. The countries concerned all have mentioned that the implementation measures, while they would have happened in some way anyhow, have been influenced in their content and timing by the Bologna Declaration (e.g. for the finalisation of the two new Qualification Frameworks in the UK). In Spain, it is not yet clear to what extent the Bricall Report ("University 2000") is being drawn upon for the preparation of the planned reform of the 1983 Law on Higher Education.

STRONG CONSENSUS ON THE CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCESS

The three core objectives of the Bologna Declaration for the European higher education area are free mobility, employability on the European labour market, and international competitiveness/attractiveness of European higher education. The survey reveals an amazingly strong consensus on these objectives.
Unanimous support to promotion of mobility The aim of the Bologna Declaration to promote more and freer mobility is seen as relevant, important, very relevant, of greatest importance, or even as crucial or vital, by 25 of the 29 countries.

In most countries the Bologna Declaration is perceived as supporting an already existing priority given to mobility, or "as an important step in a process that started some years earlier" (Netherlands). Its main roles are described as:

- stimulating the debate (Sweden, Finland, Malta, Czech Republic) and creating new dynamics (Flanders);
- accelerating or facilitating reforms (French Community of Belgium, Czech Republic, Austria, Finland), in particular by creating a common awareness of the need to reform (Spain, Portugal);
- clarifying the issues and the direction of reforms for European compatibility (Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic).

In line with this, many countries are of the opinion that the changes they have introduced or planned would have happened anyway, but that their scope, orientation and timing have been influenced or determined by the Bologna Declaration.
Against this background of unanimous support to mobility, it is interesting to observe that the reasons underpinning this unanimity vary considerably. The main reasons mentioned by the various countries are:

- long-standing emphasis on mobility as a national priority, e.g. in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK or Switzerland;
- new emphasis on student and staff mobility in accession countries, as part of their integration into SOCRATES/ERASMUS and other EU programmes; the answers of these countries reflect their dual concern to allow the effective participation of their

own students (in particular in view of their need for substantial top-up grants within ERASMUS, which many countries have decided to provide in spite of their very tight budgets) and to balance their higher education exchanges (by measures aimed at increasing their attractiveness to students from other countries);
- the implementation of the Lisbon Convention on recognition and of the Mobility Action Plan adopted by the EU in November 2000;
- new or renewed national priority in countries where the process of internationalisation of higher education is seen as insufficient in view of national needs; this was stressed in particular by Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Greece, as well as by Hungary and Slovenia. The first four countries have recently taken measures to support double- degree curricula and/or to provide significantly more funding for mobility (e.g. the budget for grants is to triple in Spain). Greece regrets that its higher education is still a "rather closed system";
- free mobility is seen as particularly important in "small" countries with a strong need for study and employment abroad, e.g.Iceland, Malta, Liechtenstein and the Baltic Republics.

Another interesting aspect is that many countries approve of mobility not only for outgoing students, but place new emphasis on incoming mobility and on the need to eliminate obstacles encountered in this area. The underlying reasons are related to the desire to fill labour shortages (e.g. in Ireland), to attract more foreign students (the UK, Malta, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden), especially young researchers needed to sustain high level research centres and programmes (Ireland, Germany, Finland).

Only a few countries mentioned the importance of teaching staff mobility. According to the new Italian Law of 1999, teaching abroad should become a criterion for the selection and promotion of university teachers; similar provisions are planned in Belgium (French Community) and France. Austria plans to eliminate from its legislation on civil servants articles seen as incompatible with international mobility in higher education.

Several countries, in particular those with a federal or very decentralised higher education system, stressed that free mobility in Europe would also enhance mobility between their constituent units (Germany, Spain, Switzerland) or their different types of higher education institutions (a few countries in Central Europe).

This is not the place to draw up an inventory of all the various measures taken or planned to encourage or support mobility. The following observations are meant to draw attention to certain specific or new directions in reforms:
- several accession countries have taken measures to lighten visa obligations for exchange students, or to ensure national treatment to citizens of EU countries; the current limitations of mobility between the EU and non-EU countries are seen as important obstacles;
- the decision to accept foreign students is becoming increasingly decentralised and left to colleges/polytechnics, e.g. in Sweden or Belgium (French Community), where universities have enjoyed this freedom previously as part of their autonomy;
- a database on the recognition of foreign degrees should be operational in Norway from 2002; this kind of public, stabilised and timely data on recognition reduces the risks of mobility and the underlying mechanism could apply in the wider European context.

More structural measures were also mentioned as factors facilitating mobility: the adoption of a credit system, the streamlining of the degree structure, the Bachelor/Master articulation, the implementation of the Lisbon Summit on employment, etc. This signals the direction of efforts towards changing the conditions in the

environment and thus creating more opportunities for students (as was emphasised in particular by the Netherlands).

Another key observation made by many countries is that the aims of the Bologna Declaration in the area of mobility are strongly underpinned by parallel developments and existing instruments.
The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in education, the implementation of the Lisbon Convention on recognition and the implications of the Mobility Action Plan adopted by the EU in November 2000 are important factors of reform mentioned by many countries. The EU mobility programmes (mainly ERASMUS), the Diploma Supplement, the European credit transfer system (ECTS) and the EU Directives on professional recognition were mentioned as instruments for the implementation of the aims and principles of the Bologna Declaration.
Two important conclusions can be drawn from this:

- The Bologna Declaration is largely in line with national priorities and other European actions; it is reinforcing these other priorities and activities and is being reinforced by them.
- The scope and level of mobility required in a well-functioning European higher education area depends on the fair, timely and efficient recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes; the necessary tools and instruments exist; the main challenge now is for higher education institutions and governments to make use of them (cf. report of the NARIC/ENIC working group on recognition issues in the Bologna process; this view has also been emphasised by the Swedish Ministry).

Employability: an increasingly important and common concern

The Bologna Declaration has had a strong and positive effect on the debate about the relationship between higher education and professional life, in particular concerning the preparation of graduates for "employability". It has raised the profile of the issue and increased the awareness that it is a shared concern all over Europe.

Just as its intention to increase mobility, the aim of the Bologna Declaration to promote the employability of graduates on the European labour market is seen as very important and relevant by the vast majority of signatory countries. In a similar way as for mobility, the Declaration is seen as underpinning national plans in promoting employability as a priority, for four different types of reasons.

Several countries stressed that employability has been a long-standing guide or baseline in national higher education policy and see the Bologna Declaration as reinforcing it. In Sweden the collaboration of higher education institutions and professional and economic circles is seen as "generalised, natural and easy" and responsiveness to the needs of the surrounding society has been made the "third pillar" of higher education, on an equal footing with research and teaching. Similar attitudes exist in other Nordic countries. The Netherlands also see employability as a major issue for which there is broad support from government and social partners. France stressed that the shift towards "professionalisation" has been the backbone of national higher education policy for three decades and is strongly reflected in the 4-year contracts signed between the Ministry and each university.

In countries where qualifications, including first degrees, have confirmed acceptance on the labour market (Ireland, the UK, Sweden, Malta, Iceland) the main emphasis seems not so much to be on employment in general (graduate unemployment is low), but rather on the adjustments to specific market needs, especially in view of growing skills and labour shortages (as reported in particular by Ireland and some Nordic countries).

The introduction of the new 2-year "Foundation Degrees" in the UK is also mainly a response to a shortage of qualified graduates at this level.

The emphasis in the Bologna Declaration on employability meets other, convergent calls for reform related to the process of preparation for entrance into the EU. This has been stressed by all accession countries in various ways. Some regretted the restrictions to access to the European labour market which still exist in both directions between the EU and accession countries.

In several countries employability is seen as a particularly important national priority as a response to high graduate unemployment. This has been stressed in particular by Italy and Spain. Greece underlined that the necessary change in this direction would require a more intensive dialogue between government, higher education institutions, students and employers. In Italy, "one of the most innovative aspects of the new architecture of the whole higher education system introduced from 1999 is that it is also based on convergence with the labour market".

Employability : a powerful source of change and reform

From the three aims underpinning the Bologna Declaration, enhanced employability seems to be the strongest source of change and reform in higher education. This has also been significantly reinforced by the Lisbon Summit on Employment of March 2000, which has contributed to guiding national agendas in education and other areas. The impact of the Bologna Declaration can be found mainly in three areas.

The most visible aspect is that the Declaration created a broad debate about employability after a first (Bachelor-type) degree, e.g. in Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Flanders, etc. A few countries recalled that education is not only for professional purposes (e.g. Spain), or reported concern from the university sector that first degrees should not be geared too narrowly to short-term needs on the labour market. In countries where Bachelor degrees were introduced about a decade ago (in particular Denmark, Finland, Czech and Slovak Republics) there is a renewed debate around the definition (or redefinition) of Bachelor degrees . The general move is clearly towards a stronger attention to employment prospects and the acquisition of core, or transversal, skills. The new qualification frameworks adopted in the UK and Ireland are strongly "outcome-based" and qualifications are mostly defined in terms of skills/competencies acquired by graduates. Denmark noted that both academic and professional Bachelor degrees needed to be "relevant" (although in not exactly the same way). Recent legislation in many countries made relevance to labour market a key factor for the authorisation (or "accreditation") of new programmes or made the collaboration with professional bodies compulsory in the development of new curricula, e.g. in Italy (where employability is seen as the major change required in the new system launched in 1999), Germany, Austria, Latvia, France, Flanders or in Switzerland's plans for a new quality assurance agency. This is often combined with the requirement that all curricula must provide core skills (Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Bulgaria) or with an encouragement to create shorter curricula (Estonia).

Some countries have also undertaken specific efforts to promote first degree graduates on the labour market. In Germany, where the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) in March 1999 stressed market relevance as a key dimension in the new degree structure, this was reinforced by a similar emphasis in the German Employers' Association's "Cologne Declaration" (October 1999) on new higher education qualifications. Some countries reported concrete measures aimed at adjusting the statutes/laws regulating access to civil service (e.g. Austria, Italy, Germany) or to

regulated professions (e.g. Slovakia) in order to create opportunities for holders of first degrees.

The second impact of the Bologna Declaration's interest in employability is that it provided new impetus for the further development of the college/polytechnic sector and for its creation in a few more countries. In nearly all countries with a binary system the Declaration opened a renewed debate on the respective roles of various types of higher education institutions and on the profile of their degrees. This debate has been widespread in countries with a binary system, especially in those where a strong college/polytechnic sector provides a relatively high number of graduates with qualifications geared towards access to the labour market after 2, 3 or 4 years. In these countries the need for a shift towards "employability" in the university sector is clearly not felt in the same way as in those where higher education is mostly or exclusively found at universities.
The new impetus for professional higher education has led to the creation or extension of a binary system in several countries, e.g. Finland, Malta, Estonia, Slovakia, and Italy. Italy has recently introduced in some regions a new sector for advanced professional education and training (FSI) with a view to creating an alternative to university education. The current introduction of Foundation Degrees at British universities, although not in direct response to the Bologna Declaration, also points in the direction of the diversification of higher education as a means towards broader access and easier employability. The creation of the *licence professionelle* at French universities and of professional bachelors in several countries are on the contrary largely a response to the Bologna Declaration. The debate about Master degrees at colleges/polytechnics (cf. section on the Bachelor/Master articulation) should also be seen in this connection.

Finally, the Bologna Declaration has played an important role in drawing attention to the increasingly European dimension of the issue of employability. This was noted by e.g. France, Malta, Latvia, Iceland and Sweden. Sweden stressed that "for a small country, it is natural to develop employability for the national, European and international market in parallel with measures for mobility". In most countries the widening of the European dimension in higher education qualifications is seen mainly in conjunction with the development of EU programmes for co-operation and mobility.
There is renewed attention given to the setting up of joint, integrated or double-degree courses in several countries, e.g. Germany and Italy (which have both created special funding possibilities for such courses), Estonia, France, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Iceland and Denmark. Greece regrets that only a few universities/faculties are engaged in this type of curricular development in the country. A dozen countries mention the development of courses with a "European" orientation taught in English and designed for national and foreign students alike (there are for example some 500 such courses in Sweden). The continuous development of European summer courses in a wide spectrum of disciplines and specialisation areas, run by a single institution or jointly by higher education networks (e.g. UNICA or ECIE), should also be noted in this regard.

Several countries see the EU Directives on professional recognition as an important tool for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration's aims concerning employability in Europe. Accession countries are integrating in their curricula the standards set by the EU for various specific professions (e.g. nurses and midwifes in Poland, health professions and teachers in Romania, etc). These changes, while mainly related to the accession process and the *acquis communautaire* are mentioned as measures which would have happened anyway in these countries, but at the same time underpin the objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

Acknowledging the need for European higher education to become more attractive (or "competitive")

While support for mobility was predictable and support for employability expected, the strong backing of the Bologna Declaration's aim to promote competitiveness (in the meaning of "attractiveness") was much less foreseeable. The answers collected for this study reflect a remarkable increase of awareness of what is at stake and the beginning of a mobilisation of energies and resources. In stressing the need for European higher education to compete for its place in the world, the Declaration has played a major role in this direction.

The issue of competitiveness is seen as an important priority by an amazingly high number of countries. Very few countries do not see it as an area of concern. **The Bologna Declaration has had three different effects on the issue of competitiveness.**

First, it brought the issue into focus, as was mentioned by e.g. Norway, Flanders, or even Switzerland (in spite of its 20-30 % foreign students, 40 % at postgraduate level). In Finland the work on a strategy to promote the country as a study destination "would not have started without the Bologna Declaration". Germany sees the internal restructuring of its higher education system and its international promotion as two equally important pillars of its comprehensive reform process. Quite understandably the push for competitiveness is less felt in countries (mainly in Southeast Europe) where higher education is still considerably oversubscribed.

Second, the Bologna Declaration has drawn attention to signals that "went unnoticed for a long time" (France) pointing to declining overall attractiveness. This seems to apply to various aspects: the overall decrease in student numbers from non-EU/EEA countries has long been ignored in the countries concerned; the generalisation of the Bachelor/Master structure throughout the world except in continental Europe went unnoticed (as reported by Germany, but applicable elsewhere); and the belated acknowledgement that "foreign students have problems with the recognition of our long diplomas in their country" (e.g. by Germany and Italy).

It should however also be pointed out that several issues are still not fully acknowledged. Ministries and higher education organisations in most countries show limited awareness and little concern about European universities seeking U.S. accreditation, the proposed inclusion of certain aspects of education into WTO negotiations or the development of various forms of transnational education. Only Greece and Portugal reported serious concern about the role of imported education. Answers to transnational education have been mainly of two types: to rule it out (as in Greece) or to subject it to national quality assurance or accreditation (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania or Austria). Neither is likely to resolve the issue. As was pointed out by Latvia, national regulations are not in a position to stop the development of unofficial transnational education, mainly because it does not seek, and maybe does not need to be integrated in the national frame.

Third, the Bologna Declaration added a new dimension to the policy of internationalisation by "articulating national and European attractiveness" (France). There seems to be a growing awareness that for foreign students the choice is first between Europe and other continents, and only once Europe is seen as a real option does the student refine his/her choice. Austria sees the promotion of Europe as a whole as a study/research place as the "backbone of the Bologna Declaration". For Greece, the increased competitiveness of Europe is a means to improve the situation in each

individual country. For the Netherlands, the need to be attractive and readable was a major reason for signing the Bologna Declaration in the first place .

There are, of course, various reasons why the attention paid to attractiveness and competitiveness is growing throughout Europe.
Three main motivations seem to play a role.

For several countries, the main goal is to attract more foreign students, in particular non-Europeans. France and Germany expressed concern about diminishing attractiveness and Sweden wants to prevent a similar drift. Receiving more foreign students is mentioned as a national goal in the UK, Norway and Sweden (which have long "exported" many students and now want to "import" more), Austria, Germany, France, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands as well as in Malta, Hungary and Latvia. Many of these countries, as well as Switzerland, are in particular interested in attracting young researchers in order to maintain a world-class research environment. Another goal they have in common is to increase the international acceptance of their own degrees.

Another major reason for policies aimed at increasing the attractiveness of national higher education is related to European integration. For countries in the accession process to the EU, their integration into the EU programmes has stimulated the need and willingness to be attractive to students from other European countries. Some countries stress that their graduates will seek study and employment in Europe and therefore the national system must be competitive (e.g. Estonia or Malta), several others emphasise that in the framework of the EU programmes they need to be attractive in order to have "real exchanges" and not only an outflow of students (all 3 Baltic countries, Slovenia, Romania, etc).
As Bulgaria put it, "these efforts are mainly related to European integration, but they also meet the objectives of the Bologna Declaration".

A third, slightly different reason can be found in some countries which see the Europeanisation of their higher education systems as a means to make them more competitive. This is strongly emphasised in Italy, where a "very high national priority" and the main aim of the broad reforms in progress are to increase the competitiveness of Italian universities. Other countries, e.g. Austria and Malta, also see Europeanisation as a factor to gain a competitive edge.

With these various aims in mind**, different types of measures have been introduced throughout Europe.** Several countries have developed comprehensive strategies. These are typically based on co-operation between government (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and higher education institutions and usually start as a response to a national report confirming the need for action in this area. In Sweden a State Committee proposed in February 2001 a five-year action plan ("Advantage Sweden") which was perceived as urgently needed. In Finland the Ministry set up a working group in the fall of 2000 to design a marketing strategy for Finnish higher education. In Germany the process was started at the end of 1999 with a report adopted jointly by the federal and states governments stressing the need to increase the international competitiveness of German higher education. This led one year later to a major federal marketing project to stimulate through DAAD and the Rectors' Conference the "export" of German higher education, with a budget of over DM one billion. In the UK the Prime Minister set a clear target in June 1999: to increase Britain's market share to 25 % of the world's mobile students. The British Council now operates a major five-year worldwide plan to establish the *"EducationU*K" brand name to help British universities in their marketing efforts.

Measures applied include traditional ones, such as information (brochures, databases, student fairs) and the provision of language courses for incoming students (both for ERASMUS exchange students and for others). There is, however, a whole range of other developments which demonstrate the growing role and the re-orientation of policies for higher education competitiveness.
Active marketing is rapidly gaining ground and is becoming an increasingly important task for many existing national agencies such as the British Council, DAAD, NUFFIC, etc. France has recently created a marketing body (Edufrance) and Switzerland is considering creating one. In many cases these agencies push for the transformation of existing study programmes and the creation of new ones responding to the needs of international students. In many countries (e.g. the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Hungary) universities are setting up a new generation of internationally oriented, mostly postgraduate programmes taught in English, either specifically for foreign students or for a mixed audience of local and international students. There seems to be a growing awareness that Europe could offer on the world market unique programmes drawing on the joint curricular work of institutions in more than one country. Some countries are establishing support centres *in* the targeted countries (e.g. Netherlands, Germany; the UK has already established such centres around the world).

A profound, long-overdue change can be noticed in visa policies.
After at least one decade of disastrous visa policies applied to foreign students, interns and teachers/researchers, a number of countries are now changing their approach. The UK, Ireland and Malta are the only countries referring to a well-established policy of making immigration procedures in this area as user-friendly as possible. Other countries seem to have discovered the need for a drastic change (France, Germany, the Netherlands). Several are now introducing more user-friendly procedures (Germany, France), the possibility for students to work part-time, to return home in the summer or to bring along their family (Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Flanders). Some countries now recognise the need to improve non-educational services to foreign students, concerning e.g. accommodation (in Italy, Sweden, Austria and France) or "social and academic tutoring" (in Germany). Some countries also recommend a more generous approach to the recognition of foreign degrees (e.g. Sweden, or Germany's "Master Plus" scheme aimed at helping holders of a foreign Bachelor degree to find their way into German higher education).

It is interesting to observe that while very few countries see tuition-free education as a key factor of attractiveness (exceptions are the Czech Republic regarding Slovak students and Belgium) equally few (the UK, the Netherlands, to a limited extent Malta, Latvia or Hungary) mention financial reasons as an important motive for international marketing. On the contrary the no-fee policy in the international context has been recently reconfirmed in Sweden (overall) and in Germany (for studies up to the first degree) and several countries have announced their intention to provide additional grants to incoming students, e.g. Germany, the UK, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. From these observations it should be clear that in most cases the efforts towards increased attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education are driven mostly by non-financial motives, such as cultural influence, the internationalisation of the national higher education system, labour market and research policy needs, the safeguarding of the higher education sector through the inflow of talent, etc.

Another important observation is that in all countries the national schemes put in place stress that it is the responsibility of higher education institutions themselves to be attractive to foreign applicants and to act to recruit them. At the same time, few plans seem to consider it important to provide incentives to institutions. In the UK a main aim

of the national scheme is to develop the "entrepreneurial skills" at universities. Sweden and Germany provide some initial support for marketing initiatives. Flanders provides to its universities the same funding for non - EU students as for European students for up to 2 % of their total enrolments. In a few countries (e.g. Malta, Latvia, Iceland) some other financial incentives seem to exist.

A number of countries have taken measures to foster the international acceptance of their degrees, mostly through traditional instruments (e.g. bilateral agreements or the dissemination of information through the NARIC network or the national Ministry of Education). In several countries the better international acceptance of their degrees is seen as a major reason for, and a main benefit of the 1997 Lisbon Convention. Some are increasing their support (e.g. through the Diploma Supplement or more specific backing) to foreign graduates who need to get their degree recognised or accepted in their home country. Other countries rely on more structural reforms to improve the international acceptance of their degrees, e.g. through ECTS credits or grading (Italy, Estonia), the adoption of a Bachelor/Master structure (Germany, Austria, Italy) or though the creation/strengthening of a trustworthy accreditation system (the Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania). The most comforting aspect, however, is that more and more European countries and universities seem to have become aware that their degrees are not automatically recognised at their real level in the outside world and that co-ordinated action is needed in this area (starting with a thorough survey of the actual situation).

PROGRESS TOWARDS READABLE DEGREE SYSTEMS

This section deals with changes and reforms affecting the overall architecture of higher education systems, from the point of view of the readability and comparability of the degrees and qualifications offered.

New qualification frameworks

In the UK two new comprehensive qualification frameworks have been adopted recently: one for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2000) and another one for Scotland (January 2001). They are mainly a development recommended in the Dearing and Garrick Reports of 1997 to enhance internal transparency, but the Bologna Declaration shaped the later stages and added impetus for clear definitions of levels, accurate qualification descriptors and a consistent nomenclature. Both frameworks are output-based; they differ in some respects (with Scotland putting more emphasis on credits and keeping its traditional dual system of Bachelors-Honours degrees), but they come together at the level of the Honours degree and have an identical structure for postgraduate degrees.

In Ireland, where higher education is a binary system and lifelong learning a major priority, the Qualifications Act of July 1999 led to the development of a national qualifications framework which is now operational. It covers all qualifications except those from universities, with which it is however closely co-ordinated.

The definitions and approach adopted in these three frameworks, including their attempt to eliminate all inconsistencies in the degree nomenclature, will no doubt contribute to the objective of a more easily understood degree system at European level. No other European country has developed a similar comprehensive framework of qualifications, but other efforts were undertaken.
Finland, Bulgaria and Malta have specifically tried to streamline their degree systems. In France the introduction in 1999 of the *Mastaire* as a master-level degree common to universities and *Grandes Ecoles* is also a first step in this direction in a particularly

complex degree system. Lithuania tried to put its national degree structure in line with UNESCO's ISCED scale, and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe are streamlining their lists of areas of specialisation in order to keep pace with transformations of their system (e.g. Slovenia, Bulgaria).

Increased integration of higher education systems

The move towards integrated systems of higher education (i.e.various types of different and complementary institutions and qualifications organised within a single, cohesive system) has been confirmed. Austria pointed out that the Bologna Declaration had increased the awareness that higher education has become a diversified system extending beyond universities. In the Czech Republic, where a move in this direction has been in progress, it may have served to clarify the issue. In Norway's integrated system *(Network Norwa*y) the two sub-sectors usually recognise each other's study programmes on a time-for-time basis. Sweden also has universities and colleges but sees its higher education as a "unitary" system accepted by the educational community as well as by the labour market. In several other countries recent developments point in the same direction, in particular through the adoption of identical or symmetric degrees structures. In Portugal the law of 1997 introduced the same degrees at colleges and universities. In Germany, the new Bachelor/Master degrees introduced as of 1998 are the same, irrespective of the institution which awards them (university or *Fachhochschul*e), and they are subject to the same accreditation procedures. In response to the Bologna Declaration several countries introduced Bachelor (and in some cases also Master) degrees in their non-university sector instead of the traditional vocational diplomas. Professional Bachelors have been created since 1999 in Denmark, Malta, Lithuania, Slovakia, France, Slovenia and Latvia and the MjØs report proposed to establish a common degree system for professional and academic studies in Norway.

The Bologna Declaration has clearly stimulated a new debate on "bridges" between the sub-systems of binary higher education systems and in some cases new possibilities have been introduced.
The main aim of these changes seems to be - in perfect harmony with the lifelong learning objective - to avoid dead ends for students who did not make the right choice immediately and for those who change their plans. Agreements between colleges and universities setting out the transfer possibilities have been encouraged in the Netherlands and in both higher education systems of Belgium.
Belgium's French Community adopted in 1999 new legislation aimed at unifying the transfer possibilities, some becoming guaranteed and others subject to clearly defined conditions. In the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia and Bulgaria, the possibilities for college graduates to continue their studies towards a Master degree at a university have been expanding, either according to new rules or simply by changed practice.
France's new professional *licence* is being developed mainly for graduates of two-year professional courses such as BTS and IUT.
In all countries where college-type higher education has been introduced recently, "bridges" towards university studies were included in the new legislation, e.g. in the UK ("foundation degrees" can be converted into Bachelors after no more than 4 terms of further studies), Malta, Italy or Lithuania. There seems however to be a significant gap between the possibilities existing in the legislation and the actual practice, as reported by e.g. the Czech Republic, Finland and in particular Greece, where transfers remain very uncommon.

Widespread support to the Diploma Supplement

The Bologna Declaration called for the implementation of the Diploma Supplement and has indeed significantly contributed to its rapid dissemination. Most countries see the Bologna Declaration and the Diploma Supplement as complementary, the implementation of one pushing for the fuller implementation of the other.

The review of measures already taken or planned with respect to the Diploma Supplement shows that it is seen as a key instrument for the achievement of systems of more readable and comparable degree systems. The measures planned by governments and by higher education organisations and institutions indicate that the Diploma Supplement should be very widely used in the very near future.

At the EU level a project was launched in late 1998 to promote and implement the Diploma Supplement, and by March 2001 Diploma Supplement promoters have undertaken various information activities in EU and EEA countries, often in close co-operation with national authorities, in a joint effort to create widespread understanding of, and knowledge about the Diploma Supplement.
The project has developed a template which will be available to higher education institutions in April 2001. The project has been based on the final version of the Diploma Supplement jointly developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO/CEPES.

In a few countries the introduction of the Diploma Supplement is or will be compulsory, e.g. in Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and at Swiss *Fachhochschule*n. In some systems a compulsory or generalised national Diploma Supplement has been in use previously and the transition to the European version is in progress, e.g. in Hungary and Flanders. Many countries predict that the Diploma Supplement will be in common use by 2002 or 2003, not on the basis of a compulsory introduction but rather at the initiative of the higher education institutions themselves or as a response to a "recommendation" by the Ministry, the Rectors' Conference or both, e.g. all Nordic countries, French Community of Belgium (universities only), Estonia, Malta, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Germany). In the Czech Republic higher education institutions must issue a Diploma Supplement to students who request it. A similar obligation is planned in Slovakia. In a number of countries, the Diploma Supplement is still being tested, but its generalisation is expected (Spain, France, Poland, Portugal, Austria). In the French Community of Belgium *(Hautes Ecole*s), the UK, Lithuania and Bulgaria the introduction of the Diploma Supplement is under consideration.

In several countries a national template for the Diploma Supplement is either already in use (Hungary, Finland, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy) or in preparation (e.g. in Sweden and Estonia). An English version will be added either for all students or at students' request (as in Slovenia). With a view to enhance the Diploma Supplement's role as a tool for employability, Italy plans to include additional information of interest for employers. Liechtenstein will use ECTS credits and grades in its Diploma Supplements. In several countries the method and the speed adopted for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement may differ between universities and colleges/polytechnics, either as a result of different policies (e.g. French Community of Belgium), various degrees of autonomy (e.g. in Switzerland) or because of differently structured databases (e.g. Norway). Finally it should be pointed out that the Diploma Supplement is of paramount importance in those countries where old and new degrees co-exist, as in Italy during the transition years and in Germany, where old and new degrees may coexist within the same institution and perhaps for years to come.

MOVE TOWARDS MORE COHERENT DEGREE STRUCTURES

The move towards a more coherent system of degrees has been the most visible part of the process which should lead to the completion of the European higher education area by 2010.

The gradual replacement of long first degrees by studies articulated in an undergraduate and a postgraduate phase has been accelerating since the signature of the Bologna Declaration. This section will review the main reforms in progress or in preparation and draw some key interim conclusions from the analysis of these changes.

Sustained reforms towards a Bachelor/Master articulation

This section will try to identify the main patterns followed by reform processes to introduce and extend the Bachelor/Master structure.
Bachelors/Masters are traditional in the UK, Ireland and Malta and are well established in Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In the Nordic countries a varying number of long one-tier "professional" degrees have been kept from the old system (in e.g. medicine, law, theology or technology) and the consolidation of the Bachelor/Master structure continues, in relation with the Bologna Declaration. In Norway the MjØs report proposes a common degree structure for universities and colleges with 3 or 3.5-year Bachelors and 2 or 1.5-year Masters (except for some long one-tier professional degrees). The proposal is supported by the Network Norway Council and a new law is in preparation. Sweden is debating its "undergraduate *magiste*r" degree which is not easy to reconcile with the Bologna pattern. Denmark is introducing professional Bachelors in the college sector and Bachelors in Life Science on the road towards Medical degrees, and is strengthening its efforts to establish Bachelors as the normal entrance level to a broader spectrum of careers.

In all three Baltic countries Bachelors and Masters were introduced within a few years from independence and have in the meantime become widespread at universities, except in certain "professional" subject areas with long, one-tier curricula (mainly medical disciplines and some other such as law, agronomy, architecture, engineering, depending on the country). The consolidation of the new system continues, in particular through its extension to the college/polytechnic sector. In Latvia the legislation was changed in 2000 and a new degree structure will be in place from 2002; it will be symmetric for academic and professional studies at universities, and Bachelors/Masters will replace the old 3 to 6-year professional degrees after a transition period during which the two systems will run in parallel. A similar move is planned in Estonia, where the new plan is for 3-year Bachelors at colleges as well as at universities. In Lithuania the new law introducing a binary system will come into force from September 2001.

In Germany and Italy the reforms introduced since 1998 - 1999 in relation to the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations have entered the phase of full-speed implementation. In Germany the new legislation adopted at federal and state level provides for the voluntary development of Bachelor and Master curricula (in parallel to traditional long ones or replacing them) but requires that they be based on modules and ECTS credits and accredited through the new, independent accreditation system. There are currently over 600 new Bachelor and Master courses offering different "profiles", covering all subject areas (except medicine and theology) and involving a large number of different universities and *Fachhochschule*n. The process enjoys strong support from the Ministry, the Rectors' Conference and the DAAD and is still gaining momentum: the pace of creation of new courses is fast, and the number of students enrolled grew by 40 % in the last academic year. Two entire universities (Bochum and Greifswald) and many faculties at other universities have decided to drop their traditional courses and to offer

only Bachelors and Masters. The Rectors' Conference expects the new structure to develop and become standard throughout the country. At the same time Germany has adopted and is now implementing a comprehensive marketing plan to promote its higher education in the world.

The other major reform scheme already in full implementation is that of Italy. On the basis of new legislation passed for the most at the end of 1999 the introduction of a new degree structure is compulsory at all universities and in all disciplines from the academic year 2001-2002 at the latest (some universities introduced it voluntarily one year earlier). The new 3-year *Laurea* (180 credits) and 5-year *Laurea Specialistica* (300 credits in total) will replace the "old" one-tier *Laurea* which will be phased out after a short transition period. A national credit system based on ECTS will be applied for all courses. Curricula need to be fully redeveloped, in connection with regional and professional partners, and must meet minimum requirements for each main component (transversal skills including a foreign language, specific subject skills, free choice courses, dissertation). These requirements have been fixed for each "subject class" (42 for the first degree, 104 for the second) with a view to guarantee the breadth and flexibility of curricula and avoid an overload of traditional lecture hours. The system foresees quality evaluation, but no formal periodic "accreditation" of the new programmes.

Since the signature of the Bologna Declaration, other countries have in various ways addressed its recommendation concerning degree structures. France created the *Licence professionnelle* (requiring a total of 3 years of study) and the *Mastaire* (as a common denominator for diverse qualifications requiring 5 years of study at universities or *Grandes Ecole*s). Universities developed in close co-operation with professional circles over 600 proposals for *Licence professionnelle*s, of which 170 were accepted to start in October 2000. In Austria recent legislation created the possibility for universities to introduce Bachelor and Master courses, but not as in Germany in parallel with existing long, one-tier programmes. After a slow start (only 2 Bachelor courses in 2000-2001) the development of new curricula seems to be gaining momentum: 6 more degrees will be offered from 2001-2002 and at least 8 others are in preparation. There is as yet no accreditation agency for these courses. In Flanders universities and the Rectors' Conference are preparing a move in the same direction, with 3-year Bachelors and mostly 1.5-year Master degrees based on accreditation. In Switzerland the two-tier structure has been adopted independently by some universities (in particular the University of St-Gallen, where 3-year Bachelors and 1 to 2-year Masters will start in 2001) and its introduction is planned on a step-by-step basis elsewhere, with due co-ordination at the national level in order to avoid too wide variations in the new degrees. The National University Council has obtained the possibility to pass directives for this purpose, and an accreditation agency and a credit system are envisaged.
Liechtenstein's two higher education institutions have adopted the Bachelor/Master structure based on ECTS credits.

In several countries where Bachelors were introduced during the last decade, the Bologna Declaration has provided renewed impetus to establish them more firmly as genuine degrees in their own capacity or to further generalise them. In the Netherlands the possibility to have a Bachelor-type *kandidaats* degree already existed but was not much used. A new law will change the system to enable the widespread introduction of 3-year Bachelors and 1-2 year Masters, together with a new system of accreditation as a *sine qua non* requirement. Graduates will be able to choose between the Dutch titles and international Bachelor/Master degrees and the funding system for institutions and students will be adjusted. Higher education institutions are already changing their curricula and rapid implementation is expected when the law comes in force from

2002/2003. In the Czech and Slovak Republics the possibility for universities to offer Bachelor degrees was introduced in 1990, but has not been widely used. In the Czech Republic some 75 % of students still study in long one-tier programmes and only 17 % are enrolled in Bachelor courses. Additional legislation is being considered to establish Bachelors as more independent degrees, standardise their duration, and make them more clearly a requirement for admission to Master studies. Similarly, in the Slovak Republic only few Bachelors were created under the 1990 law; the country is now preparing profound changes with a new reform aimed at establishing three clear levels (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), with broadly based and versatile Bachelors serving both as a qualification giving access to the labour market and as a requirement for further studies (except in a small number of fields like medicine). In Finland Bachelors were abolished in 1980 and re-introduced in 1995 mainly as an intermediary step towards Master programmes. The government's 1999-2004 Plan for Higher Education Development includes proposals to bring the Finnish system in line with the Bologna Declaration. In Bulgaria an amendment to the 1995 Law on Higher Education changed and simplified the degree structure and redefined Bachelors more in line with the Bologna Declaration. Poland plans to move from its already existing 2-stage higher education system (Bachelor/Master) to a 3- stage one thanks to the integration of Doctoral studies (which were hitherto not considered as a part of higher education) as the third level. Portugal is considering the best way to reconcile its current 4- level degree structure with the Bologna Declaration and plans to adopt a subject-by-subject approach, in co-ordination between universities and *politecnico*s, towards a newly defined system of degrees, probably starting with engineering.

In Hungary and Romania the new higher education laws of the early 1990s created undergraduate "colleges" within universities – in parallel to external colleges of professional studies in Hungary.
Where they exist these university colleges offer mainly "professional" education up to the Bachelor level, while the universities continue to run academic degrees as a separate one-tier track leading straight to the Master level. In these systems there are formally Bachelors and Masters, but not in a sequence as in the Bologna Declaration - even though the "bridges" leading from a college Bachelor to a university Master degree may be somewhat expanded in order to make the whole system more flexible. A similar model exists in Spain, where universities offer short and long courses leading to degrees of different orientation and level; an overall revision of the 1983 Law on Higher Education in the light of the Bologna Declaration and other changes is in preparation.

Some countries in Central and Eastern Europe have two-tier systems consisting of long "undergraduate" studies (4-5 years in the non-medical areas) leading to the main degree (whether called Bachelor or not) and "postgraduate" studies of a duration of usually 2 years leading to various types of specialisation or "Master" degrees. Doctoral studies require an additional 2-4 years and are sometimes structured in 2 steps (Doctorate, Higher Doctorate or "Habilitation"). While this structure may be seen as in line with the principles of the Bologna Declaration because it is formally "two-tier", the long duration of studies and the notion of what is "undergraduate", "graduate" and "postgraduate" raise issues that would need to be considered.

NEW BACHELOR DEGREES: 3 to 4 YEARS, DIVERSE PROFILES

Not less than 180, not more than 240 ECTS credits

The reforms under scrutiny confirm a crucial feature which was already emphasised in the preparatory report for the Bologna Conference in 1999. All reforms endorse the underlying principle that Bachelor degrees in Europe require no less than 3 and no

more than 4 years, or rather no less than 180 and no more than 240 ECTS credits. These limits are explicit in legislation or regulations in e.g. Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Finland, Hungary, Iceland and Latvia. Ireland has a tradition of 4-year Bachelors. In Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Norway most Bachelor (or *kandidaa*t) degrees take 3 years. In the UK (except Scotland) the standard duration of Bachelor (Honours) courses is usually 3 years for full-time students, but many sandwich courses require the equivalent of 4 years and there are some 4-year courses classified as "undergraduate" although they are called "Masters" (Sweden and France also have this type of degrees). Portugal seems to be considering 4-year first degrees in at least certain subjects. Scotland and Malta have two levels of first degrees, i.e. an "ordinary" Bachelor after 3 years and an advanced Bachelor or "Honours" degree after 4 years (this distinction has become obsolete in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

A main conclusion is that any system of readable and comparable degrees in Europe needs to take full account of this variance in the "normal" time required for the completion of a first, Bachelor-type degree. The seminar on undergraduate degrees held in Helsinki in February 2001 came to the conclusion that Bachelors in Europe should require no less than 180 and no more than 240 ECTS credits. In view of developments since June 1999 the suggestion made in the preparatory report for the Bologna Conference still holds that 4-year curricula with proven quality could lead to an "advanced" undergraduate qualification. The co-existence in Europe of these two types of Bachelors would be all the less problematic if there were particular patterns in specific subject or professional areas (e.g. if Bachelors at universities/faculties of technology all required the equivalent of 4 years worth of credits).

A clear trend towards 3-year Bachelors

There is however a clear trend in recent reforms towards 3-year Bachelors. This should of course be seen also in conjunction with the fact that the majority of existing degrees of this type are in 3 years. The new Italian *Laure*a, which will be generalised throughout the system, is in 3 years or rather 180 ECTS credits. In Germany 84 % of the Bachelor degrees created at Universities are of 3 years' duration and at *Fachhochschulen* 48% are of 3 years' and 30% of 3.5 years' duration. The first Austrian and Swiss Bachelors and the new French *licence professionnelle* are also of 3 years' duration.
Estonia plans to reduce its current Bachelor degrees from 4-year to 3-year curricula. The Netherlands and Flanders are preparing for 3- year Bachelors at universities, and in Norway the MjØs report's proposal is for a 3 + 2 or 3.5 + 1.5 Bachelor-Master articulation in the whole system. In addition, where college/polytechnic diplomas have been changed into Bachelors, these are mostly 3-year degrees.

Diverse types and profiles of Bachelor degrees

As could be expected, the general trend towards a main articulation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies comes together with a diversification of the purpose and profile of the Bachelor degrees which are being introduced. The requirement in the Bologna Declaration that first degrees should be "relevant to the labour market", which first created fear that all Bachelors would be expected to be purely vocational and geared to specific short term needs of the labour market, has now been interpreted in a more open and positive way: there are various ways in which degrees can be "relevant", and this diversity is of essence to the whole process towards a European higher education area. In several countries the professionally oriented diplomas of the colleges/polytechnics have been adjusted to "professional Bachelors" and co-exist with more "academic" or "scientific" Bachelors offered by universities. This is e.g. the case in Denmark, which underlines that both types of qualifications are expected to be "relevant", but of course not in exactly the same way.

In most reform processes a major requirement is that the development of the new curricula at universities must involve some kind of participation or involvement from professional circles before the new courses are authorised or accredited. The requirement is not that degrees should be just a preparation for a particular, well-defined profession, but rather that certain dimensions required for nearly all future professional activities ("transversal skills") should receive due attention. Several models have been developed for broadly based Bachelor degrees (e.g. the "Greifswald-Modell" in Germany or the "college" approach at the universities of Utrecht or Maastricht in the Netherlands). There is clear emphasis in reform processes that Bachelors should have a profile of their own and at least some degree of autonomy from a particular, predetermined Master specialisation.

In some countries (particularly in Finland, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Flanders) universities have explicitly stressed that their Bachelor degrees should be mainly seen as providing a solid scientific basis for further studies and thus as a step towards the Master level. Similar views certainly exist at universities in other countries. This type of mainly non-terminal Bachelors is however more than just a pass-through: the University of Leuven sees them as marking the time when students select their options for Master studies and the Swiss University Rectors' Conference sees them as the stage at which students can choose, and possibly change the place and field of their further studies. This calls for the development of less narrowly focused undergraduate curricula serving as a common basis for various areas of later specialisation.
The role of Bachelor degrees as a platform and an instrument facilitating choice and mobility should not be underestimated in the European higher education area and does not seem to be in contradiction with the principles of the Bologna Declaration. This is probably all the more true in countries with a binary or an integrated higher education system where a sufficient number of graduates enter the labour market with a professional Bachelor from the college/polytechnic sector.

The pattern of Bachelor degrees which is emerging in Europe is one of diversity, with more or less vocational and professional Bachelors; broadly based Bachelors with a dual purpose (i.e. developing skills required in a wide range of professional activities or giving access to postgraduate studies in a selected area); and scientific or academic Bachelors providing the basis for further studies in several related areas of specialisation. With adequate bridges, fair credit transfer and customised gap courses between these various tracks, the "system of readable and comparable degrees" in Europe could be effective and would resemble a network rather than just a ladder of qualifications.

POSTGRADUATE DEGREES: SOME ADDITIONAL COHERENCE, BUT....

The postgraduate level of higher education is receiving growing attention in many countries in Europe. Competition for students and talent has increased in particular at the Master and Doctoral levels.
The most visible trends are the continuing diversification of Master-type qualifications and some general efforts to organise this diversity in order to create increased transparency and coherence in postgraduate higher education.

Increasingly diverse Master degrees

The diversity of Bachelors is matched by a diversity of Masters and postgraduate diplomas, and the articulation between the two levels has become a major topic in the debate on the emergence of a system of readable and comparable degrees in Europe. Master degrees differ considerably in their profile and purpose: further specialisation, broader competencies through study in a different or complementary area, professional

preparation, European courses offered by a consortium of institutions or targeting international students, preparation for doctoral studies, etc. As was already pointed out previously the relation of the postgraduate level with the undergraduate level is also diverse: nearly automatic pass-through, Bachelors as a platform for choice and mobility, more or less selective admission procedures to Master programmes (e.g. in the new Dutch law), etc. This underlying diversity of curricula is not made more transparent by a consistent nomenclature of degrees. The same generic name "Master" (or its equivalent in other languages) designates official or accredited postgraduate courses as well as simple certificates like e.g. in Spain, where "Masters" are not part of the official degree structure. In many countries there are "postgraduate" degrees *following* a long one-tier degree requiring some 5 years of study, e.g. in Romania and several other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. A few countries already have two levels of postgraduate degrees before the Doctorate (e.g. Finland with the *licenciaa*t) or might have two in the future, e.g. Italy (in some areas where the new second degree, the *Laurea Specialistic*a, is followed by studies for a Master degree) or Switzerland (in case the existing DEA after the current one-tier degree is kept for post-Master studies in the new degree structure).

The diversity of Master degrees is further increased by developments in binary systems. The possibility for colleges/polytechnics to award Master degrees has been in many countries the subject of a very intense debate dominated by two questions: the respective role of the two types of institutions (in several countries universities have opposed non-university Masters) and the development of franchised postgraduate courses in co-operation with foreign universities where polytechnics do not have the possibility to offer such courses themselves. The outcomes of the debate until now have been manifold. Denmark has clearly excluded the possibility of Master degrees outside universities. In Austria, *Fachhochschulen* may award *Magister* and engineering diplomas which are specific to them and are not part of the Bachelor/Master scheme. In Finland, polytechnics (AMK) have won a limited right to offer from 2002 postgraduate courses requiring from 1 to 1.5 years of study but leading to a *sui generis* diploma rather than to a Master degree. In the Netherlands *hogescholen* will be able to offer from 2002 Master courses recognised by law provided they can fund them from non-governmental sources. Liechtenstein's *Fachhochschule* will soon offer a new Master programme leading to a British degree. In Germany, where the degrees of *Fachhochschulen* are traditionally different from those of universities, courses created in accordance with the new Bachelor/Master structure are subject to a single set of criteria, lead to the same degrees and are under the purview of the same accreditation agencies. There are examples of courses offered in co-operation between *Fachhochschulen* and universities, but there are still not many Master degrees outside universities. In Poland, the Czech Republic or Portugal, where the possibility for colleges/polytechnics to offer Master degrees has existed for some years, it has not become common practice yet. Recent moves towards symmetric degree structures (e.g. in Norway or Lithuania) have not yet led to actual changes. The main conclusion which can be drawn from this overview is that the pressure for Master degrees at colleges/polytechnics has led to limited change until now.

In a number of binary systems where the Bachelor/Master structure is being introduced universities plan to keep the Master degree as their "normal" final degree (e.g. in Switzerland, Flanders, Finland and the Netherlands). This means that while the Bachelor level may serve as a platform for choice and mobility, the majority, if not all students are expected to continue their studies immediately in a Master programme. At the same time, many universities stress that admission to their Master programmes should not be automatic (e.g. in the Netherlands) for all holders of a Bachelor degree,

even in a related area. As has already been mentioned previously the possibilities for holders of a professional Bachelor degree or a Bachelor-level diploma from a college/polytechnic to study for a university Master degree have increased substantially in several countries.

Some more coherence at the Master level

The diversity of curricula and the inconsistent nomenclature of degrees have led some countries to undertake specific efforts to streamline their qualifications framework at this level. The two new qualifications frameworks in the UK pay special attention to postgraduate degrees and introduce a consistent nomenclature which could usefully be taken into consideration for more transparency in the European system. Finland also plans to address the structure of its postgraduate levels. The new French *Mastaire* introduced in 1999 to designate qualifications requiring 5 years of higher education is the first qualification in the system common to *Grandes Ecoles* and universities. Efforts towards a more coherent nomenclature of postgraduate degrees would also be needed within particular subjects to distinguish between various types of qualifications. The European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) has adopted a proposal distinguishing between three broad categories of Master degrees (generalist M.Sc. in Management, specialised Masters in a particular area, and post-experience MBAs). In other subject areas (e.g. engineering) a similar distinction between broadly based scientific degrees, more professional degrees and more specialised degrees seems also desirable.

As the Bachelor/Master sequence becomes more common in European higher education some trends are emerging concerning the average duration of studies leading to a Master-type qualification. In several countries a more or less formal standard requires a total of 5 years in differently articulated combinations. In Italy the total required for the new *Laurea Specialistica* is 300 ECTS points (of which 180 for the first degree, if it is fully credited). Some countries have set a minimal duration of 3-4 years for the Bachelor and 1-2 years for the Master, but a total of 5 years as the minimum (e.g. Latvia or Estonia). In Finland the minimum is also 5 years for one-tier or sequential studies. In some cases the combined duration of undergraduate and Master studies may actually result in slightly longer studies than in the current system in certain subject areas (e.g. in Switzerland).

In all systems with separate Master degrees (i.e. those following the previous completion of an undergraduate degree) its minimal duration is never inferior to one year. In several countries it is however higher, e.g. 1.5 years in Latvia in certain subjects or 2 years in Italy. There are few examples of Master degrees requiring more than 2 years of study; some can be found in Poland (up to 2.5 years) or the Czech Republic (up to 3 years). Hence, the "normal" duration of Master courses is between 1 and 2 years and is required by the legislation (e.g. in Germany) or by the planned regulations (e.g. in Switzerland) in a significant number of countries.

There is a need for higher education institutions in Europe to agree on some basic minimal requirements for Master degrees. A key requirement is that they should be postgraduate not only in terms of timing, but also of orientation and content. For genuine Masters of Arts and of Science a thesis and the equivalent of one calendar year (rather than an academic year of 9 -10 months) or 90 (rather than just 60) postgraduate credits seem to be the minimal requirements, in particular when they follow immediately a 3-year Bachelor degree. This principle has been advocated by some universities when preparing their plans for conversion to a Bachelor/Master

structure. It should be given consideration in order to ensure the quality, readability and credibility of European Master degrees.

In conjunction with the general trend towards a Bachelor/Master structure many higher education systems have kept, or are planning to keep some long curricula leading straight to the traditional Master-level degree or diploma. This is the case mainly in medicine and other regulated professions for which there are specific European Union Directives on professional recognition, in theology and to a lesser extent in engineering and law. In many countries such long one-tier degrees exist as exceptions to the Bachelor/Master structure which applies everywhere else. In some countries (e.g. Switzerland) and some disciplines (e.g. engineering) universities have stressed the need for some such exceptions. In Germany traditional long degrees are seen as a reality in the short term, but are unlikely to stay as exceptions isolated from the main pattern of degrees in the longer term (with the exception of medicine and a few other disciplines). In several countries, the number of "exceptions" is shrinking: Denmark has introduced in 2000 a Bachelor in medicine, leaving theology as the only discipline still not organised according to the Bachelor/Master structure. In Latvia's new law and in the plans of Norway and Finland the number of areas with long one-tier courses is diminishing. A major point in the Italian reform is that Master degrees require 300 credits in total, but can only be accessed after the completion of the 180 credit points Bachelor-type *Laurea* (universities are not allowed to offer Master courses without corresponding Bachelor courses). In the Czech Republic, an amendment has been proposed to the law on higher education to make the Bachelor degree compulsory for admission to Master studies, with the possibility of some exceptions if authorised by the Accreditation Council. A reasonable conclusion of this analysis seems to be that the existence of a limited number of long one-tier, Master-level degrees in some professional disciplines would not seriously undermine the overall convergence towards an undergraduate-postgraduate system of qualifications.
There are however examples of quality curricula articulated as Bachelors/Masters in all disciplines and professional areas, and the benefits of an intermediary degree are increasingly recognised (in particular concerning their role as a platform for mobility and choice, for easier recruitment of foreign students and better international acceptance of degrees).

More convergence in Doctoral studies

Several interesting changes point in the direction of increased convergence in Europe at the doctoral level and could encourage further movement towards doctorate degrees acceptable throughout Europe.

The first is that the previously started move towards the setting up of Doctoral Schools or Doctoral Centres (as opposed to traditional doctoral programmes) has been emphasised in several countries, e.g. Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, Hungary or France. The main reasons for these changes are the need and willingness to meet high international standards in research and the growing awareness of the acute competition for talented students and young researchers, partly in the wake of the Bologna Declaration's emphasis on international competitiveness.

The second trend, also recognisable before but stimulated by the Bologna process of convergence, is towards one-tier doctoral studies of the Ph.D. type, i.e. towards the disappearance of the "Higher Doctorate" or "Habilitation" as in Latvia (where it was recently abolished) or Lithuania (where it is no longer required). In other countries, e.g. Austria, the Bologna Declaration has started a new debate about this issue. These

changes also point in the direction of a Ph.D. based on a combination of lectures and research and opening access to an academic career.

The third trend concerns the integration of doctoral studies as the highest level of university studies as a more or less direct response to the Bologna Declaration. In several countries in Central and Eastern Europe doctoral studies were not formally part of higher education, but of research under the purview of research academies or research councils. The new Estonian law put them back into universities as the third level of degrees, and similar amendments are planned in Poland and Slovakia. Also in Italy the new laws of 1999 abolished the centrally planned State doctorate and integrated it more firmly in universities. The possibility for holders of a Bachelor degree to undertake doctoral studies, which has existed in some countries (e.g. the UK), has been introduced recently in Slovenia and Bulgaria, but there does not seem to be a generalised move in any particular direction concerning this question.

Finally, the development of joint supervision of doctoral theses *(co-tutelle de thès*e) is attracting growing interest in e.g. Italy, France, Germany or Slovakia and could encourage new initiatives towards "European" doctorates.

All these changes should of course be seen also in connection with the development of the European Research Area in parallel with the move towards a European higher education area, since their aims are similar.

LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE WITH NEW BACHELOR-MASTER STRUCTURES

Based on the review of the reforms in degree structures presented in the previous sections, a series of relevant observations are proposed in the following paragraphs.

The basic triangle of reforms: new degrees + credits + accreditation

The analysis of the reforms introduced up to now shows that in most cases they combine the introduction of a new Bachelor/Master degree structure (for readability and efficiency) with a credit system (for flexibility and curricula renovation) and with a system of certification of the quality of the new programmes ("accreditation").
In some cases, one of these elements already existed (e.g. credits in the Netherlands, accreditation in Latvia). In a few cases, the introduction of one element is delayed (e.g. in Austria where the creation of a quality assurance/accreditation agency is still under consideration). In several countries the basic triangle is complemented with other items such as the development of new bridges between the university and the college/polytechnic sub-sectors, the requirement that new degrees be developed in connection with external partners (relevance) or the obligation to deliver a Diploma Supplement to all students (transparency).

Structural reforms + greater autonomy

It is interesting to observe that in the majority of countries where a recent reform plan based on the above basic triangle has been introduced it is part of a broader process which includes, or entails, a greater curricular autonomy of universities. In Italy and Austria more university autonomy is an underlying policy line in the higher education agenda. In other countries (e.g. Germany) increased curricular autonomy results from the relaxation of nationally fixed degree contents in favour of more diverse profiles and of a degree of competition between them.

Various patterns of reform

The introduction of the Bachelor/Master articulation in countries with a tradition of long one-tier degrees seems to be following different patterns according to the existing structure of the higher education system (with or without a strong college/polytechnic sector, centralised or federal authorities), the scope of the reform (nearly all disciplines, or without changing the many long professional degrees) or the transition horizon considered (compulsory change within a few years, optional change substituting old courses by new ones, or running new and old curricula in parallel). It can be observed that in many cases the adoption of the new degree structure seems to happen in two stages: first the *possibility* to create Bachelors was introduced but without enough incentives or guidance, leading to limited change (few new degrees or no real curricular review to create a profile for the Bachelor degrees); later on, often as a response to the Bologna Declaration, the reform was re-confirmed and deepened. Two-stage processes more or less following this pattern could be found in e.g. the Czech and Slovak Republics, the Netherlands or Finland.

Some particular challenges

The implementation of the Bologna Declaration seems to meet specific challenges in certain countries (e.g. Greece), certain disciplines (e.g. engineering), certain types of degree structures (e.g. those with traditional degrees requiring 4 years of study, which may need to be shortened, repositioned as advanced Bachelors or upgraded to Masters) and in some binary systems (where the profile and position of Bachelor degrees in each sub-sector is an issue).

At the same time it is interesting to point out that genuinely new programmes (e.g. those with a European dimension) and new institutions (e.g. the Dutch-Flemish University of Limburg or the *Università della Svizzera Italian*a) tend to opt for the more internationally compatible Bachelor and Master qualifications. This is a clear indication of the direction chosen by those programmes and institutions which are maybe freer than others to design higher education in accordance with the expectations of tomorrow.

STRONG MOVE TOWARDS ECTS-COMPATIBLE CREDIT SYSTEMS

ECTS, a multi-purpose tool

The information gathered for this report reflects a very strong move towards ECTS-compatible credit systems as a multi-purpose tool not only to ease recognition and facilitate mobility, but also to reform curricula and enhance universities' autonomy in this area (cf. the Italian reform process or the position of the French rectors' conference welcoming the ministerial proposal to introduce ECTS).

It is used in most countries and by many higher education institutions as an instrument for credit transfer within the framework of EU programmes – including by those which have their own, different national or institutional credit system. In several accession countries the interest in ECTS has been encouraged first as a TEMPUS priority (e.g. Czech Republic or Romania), then through their participation in ERASMUS (e.g. in Poland or Malta) and more recently by the Bologna Declaration: in the area of credit systems the Bologna process and the EU's higher education programmes act obviously as complementary moves reinforcing each other. In a number of countries the development of ECTS is also encouraged as a tool facilitating internal mobility, i.e. mobility between institutions and/or sectors of higher education in the same country.

This has been mentioned by several countries with a federal-type structure in education (Germany, Spain, Switzerland) but also by e.g. Slovakia.

Widespread adoption of ECTS as a common denominator

By the time of the signing of the Bologna Declaration over a dozen countries already had credit systems of various types. In the UK both newly adopted qualification frameworks are primarily based on outcome descriptors rather than on students' workload as in ECTS.
In Scotland however the role of SCOTCATS as a common credit system for lifelong learning has been kept, while in the rest of the UK credits should henceforward play a lesser, more implicit than explicit role.

Many countries with a credit system in place have taken steps to ensure its compatibility with, or its replacement by ECTS. In Ireland and Flanders the national system introduced as of 1995 throughout higher education is in line with ECTS and no difficulties are expected for further extension. Several countries with national workload-based credit systems checked their compatibility with ECTS; Norway (with 20 credits per year), Iceland (with 30 credits per year) and the countries around the Baltic Sea sharing the same credit system (with 40 credits per year, in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) see easy compatibility with ECTS, using a simple conversion factor. The Dutch system based on 42 credits corresponding to as many weeks of study is less easy to convert into ECTS and renewed interest in ECTS has been reported.
Spanish credits based on contact hours and the credit accumulation system used by Portuguese universities (but not by the *politecnico*s) are likely to be changed in the near future. Spanish universities have agreed on the adoption of ECTS at least for transfer purposes and the new law on higher education in preparation is expected to confirm this. Portuguese universities envisage a credit accumulation and transfer system based on ECTS which seems to receive interest also from polytechnics. In Hungary a decree of 1998 requiring all higher education institutions to introduce some credit system before 2002 was complemented by a new decree of 2000 establishing a *national* credit system fully in line with ECTS.

Several other countries have recently adopted ECTS or a national system based on ECTS, or are preparing to do so. It has become compulsory in Denmark in both higher and adult education and at Austrian universities (from 2002) and universities of arts (from 2003). The introduction of ECTS is on its way in Switzerland (independently of the Bologna Declaration) as well as in France and in the French Community of Belgium (as a direct response to the Declaration); its generalisation is expected in all three systems on a voluntary or contractual basis (in the 4-year plans signed between French universities and the Ministry) rather than as a compulsory requirement. The new law on higher education in Slovakia foresees a national credit system based on ECTS. In Italy and Germany courses developed as part of the new degree structure must be based on ECTS to be registered or accredited. In Slovenia it is compulsory for all new curricula. In Italy an additional dimension is that the workload on which credits are based must include at least 50 % personal work, in order to move away from the traditional overload of class hours. Some countries adopted ECTS as a means to unify the credit systems in use at different institutions or faculties (e.g. in Malta). In others, ECTS grades were adopted as a means to unify the various grading systems in use (e.g. in Estonia and Latvia). In Germany the Ministries (KMK) and the rectors' conference (HRK) have agreed on a common conversion scale between German and ECTS grades.

Finally it is important to stress that **many institutions of higher education have introduced ECTS at their own initiative** even in countries with no national or compulsory credit system or before such a system becomes operational. This is the case in e.g. the Czech Republic, where the universities of technology and of economics

have introduced ECTS with a view to increase student choice or to facilitate their co-operation policy. In Germany the HRK has called for further implementation of ECTS, i.e. also for traditional courses where it is not obligatory. Greece, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria do not have national systems in preparation, and ECTS exists mainly for transfer purposes within the framework of EU programmes.

Finally it should be noted that the Bologna Declaration seems to have had **very little effect on the acceptance of prior professional experience** as a replacement for traditional credits or for advanced entry into study programmes. Either the possibility already existed (e.g. in the UK, Iceland, Sweden, the French community of Belgium, Ireland, France or Portugal) or was introduced or extended for other reasons related e.g. to lifelong learning policies (as in Norway, the Netherlands and France), to the rules of the European Social Fund (e.g. in Austria) or to those of the new GRUNDTVIG strand of the SOCRATES programme (e.g. in Malta). An exception may be Italy, where the possibility to count credits for prior work-based learning has been introduced as part of the 1999 law reforming the structures of higher education.

Need for more co-ordination in the implementation process

The strong move towards ECTS as a common reference in European higher education is a signal of the broad agreement which exists on its aims and general principles. As it becomes more widespread there is a growing concern in several countries that inconsistencies in its implementation might inhibit or undermine its potential as a common denominator. Some countries have taken national measures to monitor the process. In Hungary, the adoption of a national credit system based on ECTS has been coupled with the creation of a National Credit Council with the responsibility to ensure that ECTS-type credits are introduced in a co-ordinated way at all institutions. In Germany fears about inconsistencies at the operational level led the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) to adopt a national framework aiming at more homogeneity in the implementation of ECTS. Coherence at the national level is an objective in many other plans for ECTS development prepared by governments or rector conferences. Spain and several other countries also reported concern about inconsistencies at the European level. In the UK, plans for ECTS under consideration are hindered by a perceived need for more comparable level descriptors. In Norway its introduction coincides with questions about the link between workload and credits in different systems.
Switzerland underlined the complexity of the introduction and implementation process and called for more co-ordination at the European level as an urgent priority. The project "Tuning educational structures in Europe", initiated by a group of European universities and supported by the European Commission, is a two-year pilot project which intends amongst other things - by using ECTS as an accumulation and transfer system - to tune the different educational structures in Europe and to develop professional profiles and desired learning outcomes, in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies in five subject areas.

At institutional level fears that ECTS would deprive universities of the possibility to organise coherent and progressive curricula or would force them to automatically accept credits from all other institutions seem to have decreased considerably. At the same time as the autonomy of universities in these matters has been reconfirmed a need for more transparent policies for credit transfer has emerged. In several countries the risk of arbitrary or inconsistent recognition of transfer credits has been acknowledged.
The guiding principle seems to be that the receiving institution decides on transfers, but "according to predetermined criteria and procedures", as set out in e.g. the Italian reform law or the French Community of Belgium.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION: A NEED FOR MORE CONVERGENCE

The European dimension in quality assurance foreseen in the Bologna Declaration is a vital aspect of any system of easily readable and comparable degrees as well as of Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness in the world. Its importance is widely recognised or indeed emphasised in the vast majority of European countries, in order to ease recognition procedures, facilitate mobility, increase confidence and avoid any lowering of standards. Its development is seen as a necessary complement to increased curricular autonomy of universities.

More quality assurance with a European dimension

The major event in this area has been the creation of the European Quality Assurance Network (ENQA) which was launched by the European Commission in March 2000 on the basis of a Recommendation on European co-operation in quality assurance issued by the Education Council of the EU. Most EU/EEA countries see their participation in ENQA as an important aspect of their quality assurance policy and others seem to be keen to join.

All countries have some kind of quality assurance mechanism in place, although they differ significantly in terms of purpose, focus and organisation. Quality evaluation is only an internal responsibility of higher education institutions in some countries where no national agency exists, e.g. in Austria, Switzerland, the French community of Belgium, Germany or Slovenia. In many countries there is an obligation for universities to have their own quality evaluation system and a body at national level responsible for the organisation and stimulation of this process, e.g. in Portugal, Spain, Germany and Iceland.

However the majority of countries have a quality assurance agency also carrying out external evaluation functions. Most were created or restructured in the 1990s. Some operate as single national agencies in unitary or integrated systems (e.g. in the UK, Norway, Sweden and Romania) or in binary systems (e.g. Denmark and Estonia). Other countries have an agency for each sub-sector of a binary system, e.g. Poland and Ireland. In countries with decentralised or federal structures in higher education some specific features exist; in Spain, some communities like Andalucia and Catalunya have their own quality assurance system and agency that follows the same principles as the national level. In Germany the Federal Ministry is funding a special project operated by the Rectors' Conference for the sharing of information and experience concerning quality evaluation between the federal states. In the UK there are two agencies, one for Scotland and one for the rest of the country.

A few new quality assurance agencies were set up or are in preparation. In Italy the 1999 reform laws required all universities to re-organise their self-evaluation and replaced the former "observatory" for university evaluation by a new, independent National Committee for Quality Assurance which can set standards and produce reports. The first phase of Spain's national plan for quality evaluation expired at the end of 2000 and it is at this moment not yet clear which changes will be introduced. In Ireland the new Qualifications Act of 1999 created a new National Qualifications Agency with two awarding bodies (for higher education and for further education) next to the standing Higher Education Authority which reviews the quality assurance procedures of universities. Austria, Switzerland, the French community of Belgium and Slovakia have plans to set up a national quality assurance agency which would seek links with ENQA. A project also exists in Greece, where quality assurance has gained acceptance, but

the role of the agency under consideration has not yet been defined. No plans for the creation of an agency were reported by Slovenia.

While in the UK and in Ireland quality assurance is mostly outcome-based, many other systems remain primarily based on inputs such as curricula and resources. In most cases external quality assurance agencies deal with programmes rather than whole institutions and in several countries the evaluation process is organised along subject lines on a cross-institutional basis, e.g. in the Netherlands, Flanders, Estonia and the UK. This type of "benchmarking" of particular disciplinary or professional areas is becoming more important and more common.

Accreditation is gaining momentum

Accreditation, defined as the public confirmation by an external body that certain standards of quality are met, is not a tradition in Europe. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe established accreditation agencies after the political changes and transformations in higher education in the region. These agencies differ from each other in several respects. Their status and composition reflect various degrees of independence from the ministry, government or parliament whom they advise. In most cases their prime mission has been to "accredit" new programmes or institutions (universities or faculties), in particular private ones. In this case accreditation is rather an authorisation to set up an institution or a programme based on an *ex ante* evaluation of the components presented. Such authorisations have also existed in other countries to protect the homogeneity of nationally defined curricula and degrees, e.g. in France, Spain and Italy. In its broader, more widespread definition accreditation refers to a cyclical process (e.g. every 5 to 6 years) of certification of the quality of a programme (sometimes a whole institution) based mainly on outcomes rather than on inputs. This mission of accreditation agencies is well-established in some countries (e.g. in Hungary) and is gaining importance in others.

The relationship between quality assurance and accreditation varies from one country to another. In the UK and Ireland accreditation is carried out *de facto* not by separate specialised agencies but by the quality assurance agencies; in these cases a publicly expressed opinion on the quality of a programme, based on established standards, is seen as the final step of the quality assurance process. This is also the case in countries with an "accreditation agency" responsible both for external quality assurance and for accreditation, e.g. in Hungary, Latvia, Estonia and Sweden. In other countries such as Denmark, Finland and Lithuania quality assurance agencies have no specific accreditation mission, or accreditation agencies have no specific role in quality assurance (even though their activities may have an important function in terms of quality evaluation and assurance at institutional level, as e.g. in the Czech and Slovak Republics). There are also examples of accreditation bodies responsible for only certain disciplines (e.g. teacher education in Portugal or engineering studies in France) or certain types of institutions: Austria has two separate accreditation agencies for *Fachhochschulen* and for private universities, but none yet for public universities. In Poland the draft new law on higher education plans to unify the hitherto split accreditation bodies for universities and polytechnics.

Since the adoption of the Bologna Declaration several countries have taken measures to introduce accreditation in their higher education system. In Germany, the Netherlands and Flanders programme accreditation is directly linked to the Bachelor/Master reform and aims at guaranteeing the quality, visibility and credibility of the new degrees. In Germany the National Accreditation Council created in 1999 does not directly accredit programmes (except under special circumstances); rather, it authorises regional or

subject-based accreditation agencies organised by the higher education community to accredit new programmes and allow them to carry the quality label of the National Council. This decentralised, indirect structure of accreditation, sometimes referred to as "meta-accreditation", is an interesting pattern combining the advantages of a national quality label with those of a single procedure and flexible standards administered by higher education itself and respecting the diversity of disciplines and systems. In the Netherlands an accreditation system should be in place by 2002 as a constituent part of the reform introducing Bachelor/Master degrees. It will be built on the already existing quality assurance system and will be implemented through a single agency with two awarding bodies, for professional and scientific courses. It is interesting to point out that the dividing line does not formally depend on the type of institution undertaking the course (i.e. whether it is a university or a *hogescho*l) but on the content and orientation of the course. An accreditation agency is also in preparation in Flanders and close co-operation between the Dutch and Flemish agencies is foreseen.
Switzerland is preparing a single agency for quality assurance and accreditation. Plans for an accreditation scheme and agency are also under consideration in Norway (following a suggestion in the MjØs report) and Austria. Most of these projects have been inspired by the Bologna Declaration.

The still limited, but growing phenomenon of European universities seeking accreditation from overseas seems to be largely ignored.
The cases reported are few in comparison to those which are known to exist. They concern mainly programmes in the areas of engineering, veterinary or business studies accredited by U.S.
professional bodies. The fact that foreign accreditation produces no direct legal consequence in any of the countries concerned should not occult the main issue, which is related to the reasons why European universities seek international acceptance and credibility from abroad. It is also interesting to point out that the only real case of "European" accreditation, the EQUIS scheme run by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), is attracting growing interest, both within Europe and from non-European universities. This seems to indicate that the best way to contain the need for European universities to seek foreign quality labels may well be to create such labels at the European level.

Fostering readability and transparency in European higher education

The trends presented in the previous sections show a move towards more attention paid in Europe to quality evaluation and assurance, with or without special accreditation agencies next to quality assurance agencies. The creation of ENQA carries hopes that these developments will indeed help to create more readability and transparency. There is, however, a danger that Europe may be moving out of a jungle of degrees but into a jungle of quality assurance and accreditation standards, procedures and agencies.

A precondition for progress would be to clarify the confusion in terminology. The word "accreditation" is used to designate the administrative process leading to the authorisation to establish an institution or a programme as well as a recurrent quality assurance process. It may also apply to credit transfer, e.g. in the process of "accreditation" of prior learning.

Tools and models exist. The development of ENQA may prove of paramount importance to progress in the whole area of quality assurance and "accreditation". There seems to be unanimous agreement that Europe should not plan for a single quality assurance agency trying to enforce a single set of criteria. Ranking and uniformity in procedures are neither wanted nor needed. The decentralised approach

imagined in Germany could provide inspiration for a future architecture of quality assurance in Europe respecting system and subject differences and not overloading universities. The notion of a European "platform" or "clearing house", based on criteria to be met by quality assurance/accreditation agencies and on their mutual acceptance of their conclusions, could be a possible way into the future of the European higher education area. It would enhance quality and transparency (and thereby also mobility within Europe) as well as readability and acceptance (and thereby also attractiveness in the world).

THE DECLARATION'S EFFECT IN NON-SIGNATORY COUNTRIES

This section reviews the situation and trends relevant to the Bologna Declaration in six non-signatory European countries : Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with its three higher education systems (in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo).

This report will not try to review the effect of the Declaration in other areas, although it is known that it has also attracted serious interest in Turkey as well as in Russia and other CIS countries. The changes in progress, which have the potential to make Europe a more understandable partner and a more attractive study and research destination, have also drawn the attention of universities in the Asia-Pacific region and in particular in Latin America.

The situation in the six aforementioned countries is set out in the tables and country notes in Part III of the present report. The following paragraphs will attempt to sketch some major trends in progress in the six countries and relevant to the higher education convergence process.

Cyprus and the Bologna Declaration

Cyprus is in many respects in a different situation from the other five countries. It is the only one participating in the SOCRATES programme, and changes required for this purpose are also supportive of the principles of the Bologna Declaration. The credit system (30 points per year) is easily compatible with ECTS and the degree structure (with a 4-year first degree serving as the main entrance to the labour market) is already broadly in line with the Bologna Declaration. Several moves towards greater compatibility have been undertaken. The college sector is being consolidated.
Transnational education is an issue and legislative action is under preparation. A new accreditation agency has been set up in 2000 for private institutions, and the Diploma Supplement is expected to be commonly used in the near future.

The Bologna Declaration: a reference for long term reforms and concerted action in Southeast Europe

The five countries of continental Southeast Europe which were surveyed for this report have some features in common and some particular difficulties to overcome.

- In all five countries the traditional degree structure is seemingly in two tiers, but with long, highly structured, mono-disciplinary first degrees not easily compatible with the kind of Bachelor degrees proposed in the Bologna Declaration. There is no credit system and students' choice is usually limited.
- In the four countries which were part of the former Yugoslavia some common characteristics still exist. The most important one is the fragmentation of universities into independent faculties and institutes which makes institutional strategies and the development of multidisciplinary curricula extremely challenging (the abolition of this system was achieved only recently in Slovenia and in Tuzla and is foreseen in the draft law for Kosovo prepared by the International Administration). Another

characteristic is the absence of post-secondary, college-type education (only Croatia established it in 1996). Another difference with Albania is that the TEMPUS programme could start only later and is still in the inception phase in Croatia and the FRY.

- Finally higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is confronted with unique problems of governance and co-ordination.

  As a result of the Dayton Peace Accords education is subject to different legislation in the Republika Srpska and in each of the ten cantons of the Federation. Attempts at co-ordination between cantons often meet strong political resistance, and co-operation between the two entities is also lacking. In the absence of competent authorities at national level, the country is yet to become a party to important European Conventions, and there is still no national Rector's Conference. The universities remain loose association of independent faculties, with the exception of Tuzla, where legislation has been passed to ensure that the university is unified. However a Higher Education Co-ordination Board (HECB) could be established in June 2000 as the first national higher education body to encompass both the Federation and the Republika Srpska. Interest in the Bologna Declaration is very strong among the members of the HECB and within higher education institutions. This is reflected in particular in the recent creation (March 2001) of an HECB working group on the compatibility of higher education in the country with the Bologna Declaration.

In spite of all difficulties the same strong interest in the Bologna Declaration exists throughout the region, both within higher education institutions and among governments and other national bodies. Thanks to several important information events the awareness about its existence and significance has grown significantly, even though its detailed implications are still not widely known. The Bologna Declaration is mainly seen as a key reference for the long term agenda of both governments and universities. It is also used in this way by the international partners working in co-operation with them to foster an *aggiornamento* in higher education.
Thus the Bologna process underpins the programmes for structural change of European organisations and the reforms encouraged by e.g. the LRP programme of the Council of Europe, the Stability Pact, the Graz process, the Lisbon Convention on Recognition, the PHARE Multi-country Programme or the TEMPUS scheme. These activities in turn enhance the role and usefulness of the Bologna Declaration.

Steps in the direction sign-posted by the Bologna Declaration

In the five countries concerned the Bologna Declaration is seen as supporting their own national priorities on mobility, curricular change and compatibility with the rest of Europe. At the same time they all expressed concern about brain drain and signalled that their most pressing need was for co-operation and exchange with European partners rather than for mere student mobility on a large scale.

A major priority is legislative change as a basis and condition for other reforms. New laws on higher education were recently adopted in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Bologna Declaration plays a significant role as a point of reference for planned legislative changes in Croatia (where the law of 1996 is planned to be amended or replaced) as well as in Serbia and Montenegro. The International Administration of Kosovo has prepared a draft new law fully in line with the Bologna Declaration.
A major issue in the legislative process in the countries of the former Yugoslavia is the status of faculties. There has been consistent advice from the international community

to reform it, but the various laws adopted in Bosnia-Herzegovina (except in Tuzla), the draft new law proposed in Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's new law of 2000 all stick to the tradition of independent faculties. As was already indicated above the newly established Higher Education Co-ordination Board produced guidelines for a higher education strategy recommending the Bologna Declaration as a set of common guiding principles for legislation and reforms.

The need for deep curricular change is generally recognised but actual change has been limited and the crucial move towards multidisciplinary curricula will be difficult to organise in universities weakened by independent faculties not accustomed to co-operate.
A few examples however exist, e.g. new Master courses at the universities of Sarajevo and of Montenegro or at the Advanced Academic Educational Network (AAEN) in Serbia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina many curricula were revised since the Dayton Peace Agreement and some 3-year B.Sc. courses were developed. Since TEMPUS support is dependent on the participation of all faculties offering the same programme, progress in curriculum development is on a discipline-by-discipline basis. The main aim of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's new law of 2000 is to promote more flexible and compatible curricula. In Albania the current law reserves university status to study programmes lasting at least 4 years, and shorter Bachelor degrees would either be downgraded or require a change in law. The draft law prepared by the International Administration for Kosovo is based on a 3-5-8 structure of degrees.

The adoption of ECTS credits is foreseen or planned in all countries and is perceived as a major change entailing in-depth curricular renovation. In Croatia it was approved by the Rectors' Conference for introduction from 1999 and is already used by 11 faculties. The working groups, pilot experiments and changes in laws which exist for ECTS announce its widespread adoption in the next 3 to 5 years. The same applies to the Diploma Supplement, for which there are plans and working groups as well as a few pilot experiments.

Quality assurance is also receiving growing attention, starting with self-evaluation, e.g. in Bosnia-Herzegovina (where a quality assurance or accreditation agency would be conceivable only at the national level) or at the University of Montenegro. Accreditation agencies were created in 1996 in Croatia, in 1999 in Albania (in co-operation with the Hungarian Accreditation Council and with TEMPUS support) and in 2000 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and there are plans to create one as part of the new law on higher education which is in preparation in Serbia.

ENIC recognition centres exist in Albania and are in creation or preparation in Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be dependent on the success of all these initiatives. Reforms would be significantly boosted by a change in the status of higher education institutions.
The action of the groups supporting reforms would be underpinned by the reconfirmation of the Declaration's main aims and principles and by the renewed commitment of signatory countries to their implementation.

MAIN REFERENCES

This report is mainly based on questionnaires filled in October-November 2000 by the countries and some international organisations involved in the process towards the creation of the European higher education area. It draws also on the "country reports"

produced in the summer of 2000 by most signatory countries, and on the conclusions of the various thematic seminars organised at the initiative of the Bologna Follow-up Group.

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Part III:

Learning structures and higher education systems in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland

THEMATIC OVERVIEWS

In the first project report on Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education, prepared for the Bologna Conference in 1999 ("Trends 1"), Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein presented an outline of some of the main trends in the higher education systems of the EU/EEA countries. In particular they looked at institutional structures, credit and recognition systems, quality assurance, the organisation of the academic year and similar matters.

A main purpose of the present "Trends II" report is to provide the same analysis and overview for those countries that have signed the Bologna declaration but, due to time constraints, had not been included in "Trends I". This concerns mainly countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In addition this group includes Malta and Switzerland.

Finally, six states that have expressed interest in the process towards the creation of a European higher education area have been included in the survey: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The following part of "Trends II" should be read as a direct complement to Jette Kirstein's survey of EU/EEA countries in "Trends I". We have used her questionnaire and prepared similar country reports for the above mentioned additional 18 countries. For reasons of consistency and comparability we also used her definitions and explanations and we are very grateful to her for her permission to do so.

Unlike the group of countries analysed in "Trends I", the 18 countries that form the object of "Trends II" represent a fairly heterogeneous group:

There are Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland whose higher education systems have long-standing links to some EU member states' systems such as Greece, the UK, Germany or France.

Then there are the countries of Central and Eastern Europe who freed themselves of their Communist regimes a decade ago, introduced new higher education laws and more or less fundamentally reformed their higher education systems.
Lastly, there are the countries in Ex-Yugoslavia plus Albania, who have not signed the Bologna Declaration but have started to restructure their higher education systems, and to whom the convergence process in higher education means new challenges and opportunities. After the democratic changes in Serbia in October 2000, also the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was included in the survey.

As Jette Kirstein pointed out concerning the first study, a comprehensive survey of this kind, dealing with very different aspects and diversified developments in a large number of countries can only offer a glimpse of what is emerging in European higher education.

Any comparison of higher education systems and identification of common trends can only be considered a fairly simplifying generalisation. Further information therefore has to be obtained from more extensive and detailed publications such as those of the European Commission, EURYDICE, the Council of Europe, the ENIC/NARIC network, the Association of European Universities (CRE) or the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences.

National frameworks for higher education institutions and qualifications

Diversification of institutions

As Jette Kirstein pointed out in "Trends I", two different types of higher education systems prevail world-wide, in spite of the existing diversification:

- ♦ a so-called *unitary* or comprehensive system where most higher education is catered for by universities or university-like institutions, offering both general academic degrees and more professionally-oriented programmes of various lengths and levels;
- ♦ a so-called *binary* or dual system with a *traditional university sector* based more or less on the Humboldt university concept and a separate and distinct *non-university higher education secto*r.

In all European countries the need for diversified offers in higher education to serve the different needs of students and employers has been recognised and taken into account.
In the *unitary system* the diversification is taken care of by a single type of institution, normally the university. The study programmes are therefore often much more varied in level, character and academic and theoretical orientation than in traditional universities in a binary system. Many programmes are professionally oriented. Among the countries surveyed in this study unitary systems exist today in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, FYROM, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In FYROM, however, the new Higher Education Law of November 2000 calls for the creation of professional schools, thereby changing the system into a binary one.
The binary systems in some of the other countries are still in the development phase, with the new laws on higher education adopted in the 1990s providing for the possibility to set up non-university and private institutions. As for Malta, higher education is just changing from a unitary to a binary system.
In binary systems developed in Western Europe there is a traditional difference between universities offering the theory- and research-based programmes and the non-university institutions taking care of high-level professional programmes. In Central and Eastern Europe the Soviet division of labour between universities and very specialised higher education schools (in charge of teaching) and academies (in charge of research) prevailed up to 1990. Many countries have by now re-integrated more research into the universities and are re-defining the tasks of the academies and their relationship to the universities. The definition of universities as places where teaching and research should take place in a large variety of disciplines and doctoral degrees are awarded is very much alike in all the countries. Academies, on the other hand, are either defined as a sort of smaller universities with a more narrow range of disciplines, or as research institutions that may run post-graduate programmes (in particular doctoral programmes) in co-operation with universities.

Finally, as in Western Europe, there is a tendency to up-grade existing vocational and professional institutions and to integrate them fully into the higher education sector.
The reasons for these developments are the same as those listed by Jette Kirstein for the EU/EEC countries:

- ♦ to offer more professionally-oriented and economically relevant types of education in order to meet a labour market demand for such candidates;
- ♦ to cater for a growing number of higher education applicants without substantially increasing governmental expenditure for higher education;
- ♦ to cater for non-traditional groups of students in a more innovative manner;
- ♦ to offer primarily teaching-oriented programmes with some use of applied research;
- ♦ to upgrade existing vocationally oriented post-secondary education.

Also another diagnosis of Jette Kirstein with regard to Western Europe is equally applicable to the countries studied in this report, namely that those who "have or are developing a distinct binary system want to keep it, but with a clear intention to build on the specific qualities and characteristics of each sector as well as to establish more flexibility, interlinkages and co-operation between the sectors." This is in particular true of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia.
E.g. in the Czech Republic the Ministry of Education is currently elaborating a strategy for the restructuring of the non-university institutions, as they are seen as being too numerous (around 170) and too small (in 1998/99 only 13 institutions had more than 400 students). The plan foresees that they will be merged, where possible, and will be expected to offer very diversified programmes ranging from one to three years in accordance with labour market needs.

In November 2000 Latvia passed an amendment to the Law on Higher Education that introduces a system of professional Bachelor degrees enjoying full equivalence with academic degrees. Estonia is planning to strengthen its non-university sector by combining the two existing types of non-academic institutions into one.

In Switzerland, as in Germany, *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) offer an alternative to traditional university education by putting the emphasis on application-oriented teaching and research.
Tables 1 and 2 below describe in more detail the present higher education structures in the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries as well as Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, together with indications about some major developments.

Degree structures

The Trends I report showed that the traditional differentiation between the "continental European" degree structure with rather long, academically integrated university studies (one-tier) and the "Anglo-American" degree structure with shorter first degrees and many post-graduate possibilities often based on a more modular system (two-tier) was getting blurred[1].
As Jette Kirstein pointed out, there is a push in the university sector, mostly coming from the political side, to establish shorter university programmes - i.e. a first degree on the Bachelor level.

The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the Trends II study. With the exception of Switzerland and Hungary all countries offer a two-tier system, with a first-cycle degree before the Master's degree. It should be noted, however, that some of the two-tier systems still contain one-tier Master programmes in specific fields, e.g. in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia and that some institutions in Switzerland and Hungary have started to offer Bachelor and Master degrees.

In a number of countries the Bologna Declaration clearly seems to have influenced the introduction of a two-tier system, if only by the acceleration of processes that had

[1] ibid. p.34

already started, as in the Czech Republic, where the introduction of two tiers had been decided as early as 1990.
In Switzerland the introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees is currently under discussion.
In Estonia there is a move to standardise the duration of Bachelor programmes to three years and of Master programmes to two.
Croatia is discussing a reform of its diversified degree system in the light of the Bologna declaration.
In Poland, where the existing system still combines one-tier and two-tier programmes, the draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two-tier model.
In Slovakia a new higher education law is being prepared, taking into account the Bologna principles. It provides for an institutional diversification into universities (offering all three levels of degrees in a large variety of subjects), specialised higher education institutions on university level, but with a more limited range of disciplines, and professional higher education institutions offering Bachelor programmes relevant to the labour market. Slovakia is planning to introduce the 3-2-3 model as the standard structure. Moreover, the new act takes into account all the other points of the Bologna Declaration, such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement etc.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is facing the particular difficulty that 11 different laws regulate higher education and that the adoption of a system of easily readable degrees is therefore rather complicated.

Also with regard to the non-university sector, the development towards an ever wider diversification of qualifications is the same in the countries surveyed in Trends II as in those of the EU/EEA: "Many new undergraduate programmes are being established to meet new labour market needs in specific professional fields, and at the same time a great variety of post-graduate courses are being developed either as part of ordinary programmes or as programmes aimed at recurrent education activities."[2]

As in Western Europe, non-university institutions do not offer doctoral degrees in their own right but in some countries the possibility exists for non-university graduates to enter a doctoral programme in a university. Thus in Slovenia three-year professional higher education programmes have been introduced that give direct access to doctoral programmes. Also in Bulgaria the Bachelor gives access to doctoral studies of four years' duration (as opposed to three years after a Master). In the majority of countries, however, a Master degree is the precondition for admission to doctoral programmes.

Table 2 illustrates, tentatively, the degree framework and major qualifications of the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries, plus Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, according to length and types of institutions/institutional affiliations (university/non-university). It should be noted that neither the length of qualifications nor the type of institution/institutional affiliation say much about the level of the qualification, its contents and the learning outcomes. Degree titles also vary considerably and often they do not by themselves give an explicit indication of the type and character of a specific qualification. Thus they have to be seen in the national framework of qualifications to be understood. Qualifications should therefore not be compared according to years of study but according to learning outcomes, predefined standards of learning and acquired competencies.

Access and admission requirements

By and large *access* to higher education *(access* meaning general eligibility for higher education programmes) is in all countries subject to the completion of twelve to thirteen

[2] ibid. p.34

years of prior schooling. In a few countries there are slight differences in the required length of secondary education programmes giving access to university and to non-university programmes, respectively[3].
Thus in Switzerland universities require a *Matura* (maturity certificate), while *Fachhochschulen* demand a *Professional Matura* which is normally acquired during an apprenticeship.
The same principle applies in Slovenia.

Furthermore, there are major differences in the actual requirements for being admitted to a particular programme and obtaining a study place.
Only in Switzerland and Malta applicants with final secondary school qualifications have free access to most university programmes. In the other countries admission is usually on a competitive basis and depends on a special combination of the secondary school leaving examination subjects and on other requirements concerning e.g. the level of the subjects studied in secondary school and the grades obtained, as in Latvia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. The dominant model is a combination of the secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination, set by the higher education institutions or the faculty, respectively. This procedure can be found in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro, Poland and Serbia.
In Romania admission tests are still required but there is a tendency to abolish them and rely exclusively on the results of the secondary school leaving certificate. Slovakia has a diversified approach, in that either the school leaving certificate or entrance examinations or a combination of both are required. National examinations as in Estonia are the exception.
The information gathered for this study does not allow a more differentiated statement on the selectivity of the different types of higher education institutions.

Several countries refer explicitly to the Lisbon convention of 1997 on the recognition of higher education qualifications that they have ratified. It states that parties to the convention shall mutually recognise qualifications giving general access to higher education in the home country unless substantial differences can be shown between the general access requirements in the countries in question.
See table 3 for more information on admission systems for higher education.

International credit transfer systems

Table 4 shows the situation with regard to national or international credit systems.
Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland work with ECTS and ECTS-compatible systems, respectively, and the situation in those countries resembles that of most EU/EEA countries where ECTS has been more or less firmly established as an instrument for international credit transfer. On the other hand, none of the Central and Eastern European states has as yet introduced ECTS nationwide and only a few use a national credit system.
Most countries, however, are planning the introduction of ECTS or a national credit system and, for the time being, allow their higher education institutions to experiment with ECTS and other systems.
Estonia and Latvia use national credit systems similar to those of Nordic countries. Latvia is working on proposals to reduce the split between the academic and the professional sector by introducing full transferability of credits between the two types of programmes. In Romania higher education institutions are free to experiment with an ECTS-compatible system but there is awareness that the participation in Socrates/Erasmus will require a stricter application of ECTS-principles. Hungary has

[3] ibid. p.35

made the introduction of a national, ECTS-compatible credit system compulsory from September 2002.

Organisation of the academic year

Table 5 shows that the surveyed countries all have divided their academic year into two semesters, but that the dates for the beginning and end of the semesters vary considerably, from the beginning of September to mid-October and from the end of May to mid-July. Thus in Romania, in the spirit of university autonomy, a new regulation has been introduced in 1999, allowing individual higher education institutions to begin their winter semester any time in September or October, although in practice most start on 1st October. Just as in the EU/EEA countries, student mobility is not made easier by this very heterogeneous picture.

Tuition fee systems and support for study abroad

The majority of the "Trends II" countries charge tuition fees in some form.
Many Central/Eastern European countries have a partial fee system, in which the state finances a number of study places that are normally allocated on a performance basis (secondary school results, entrance examinations). Higher education institutions may, however, admit additional students on a fee-paying basis. This system is presently applied in Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro and Romania. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia national students do not pay fees for regular full-time courses within the standard duration of studies. In almost all states foreign students have to pay fees. The participation in European mobility programmes will require adjustments in a number of countries in this regard, and some of them, like Bulgaria, have stated explicitly that they are already undertaking the necessary preparations.
Latvia is discussing the introduction of a "participation fee" to be paid by all students to cover the gap between the state funding available and the real costs of the programmes, combined with the prior introduction of a loan system.
National support for study periods or full degree courses taken abroad is unknown or very limited in many CEE countries. In some (Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) the state provides a limited number of scholarships, often within the framework of bilateral agreements with foreign governments/institutions.
Some countries also referred to the support coming from EU- programmes. Cyprus and Malta provide full support for study abroad as their national higher education systems do not offer the whole range of academic disciplines. Similarly, a Swiss student entitled to a cantonal grant may use it for study abroad if the chosen programme is not offered in Switzerland. Also Montenegro applies such a regulation.

COUNTRY PROFILES

Albania

Higher Education was reformed by the “Law for Higher Education in the Republic of Albania” of February 1999 that for the first time allows for the creation of private institutions. The Council of Ministers will pass more detailed regulations regarding private higher education in the near future. The situation in higher education in Albania is characterised, as in the states of former Yugoslavia, by a traditionally very strong autonomy of faculties vis-à-vis the university rector.

Higher education follows a unitary two-tier model. There are two kinds of university-type higher education institutions: 8 universities and 2 academies.

In some disciplines like nursing a professional diploma is offered after 2 to 3.5 years, but the regular first degree at universities and academies, the university diploma, which is equivalent to a Bachelor, takes 4 to 6 years.
There are graduate courses (specializations) of up to one year, or equivalent to the Master after 1 to 2 years. An advanced post-graduate degree, comparable to the French DEA, is a prerequisite for admission to doctoral studies.
Doctoral degrees take between 2 and 5 years.

In addition to the universities and academies there is a nursing school that awards a professional diploma after 2 to 3.5 years.
There are plans to strengthen the non-university sector in the future. Some of the short diploma programmes offered at various universities will then be taught at the newly established institutions.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The situation regarding higher education is complicated by the fact that it is governed by 11 different laws (10 cantonal laws in the Federation, one in the Serb Republic).

Higher education is organized in a unitary two-tier system with universities as the only higher education institutions. Within the universities there are faculties, colleges and pedagogical academies. The faculties enjoy a very strong degree of autonomy within the universities.
The following degrees are offered:

1. Two types of first degrees: VI grade: awarded after 2 to 3 years of college-level education. This degree is given to lawyers, teachers, engineers, medical technicians, computer experts, etc.

   VII grade: awarded after 4 to 6 years by faculties and academies. This degree corresponds to the Bachelor and bears the titles B.Sc. Engineering, B.Sc. Sociology, B.A.Journalism, Attorney at Law, Medical doctor, etc.

2. Second degrees (only after successful completion of first degree): Specialisation studies of one year Master degrees of 2 to 3 years.

3. Doctoral degrees: A doctoral degree may be obtained after successful completion of a Master programme.

Bulgaria

Higher education is governed by the Higher Education Act of 1995 that guarantees the autonomy of higher education institutions. Amendments, adopted in July 1999 and July 2000, regard the degree system and related matters.

Bulgarian higher education is largely organized in a binary two-tier system but there are still some one-tier degrees. At the university level there are universities and specialised higher education schools (i.e. academies and institutes), the latter offering training and research only in specific fields such as science, arts, sports and defence, but conferring the same degrees as the universities. In addition there are colleges with shorter, professionally oriented courses. They result from a re-shaping of the former semi-higher education institutions. In most cases they are incorporated into the structure of universities but there are also some independent colleges.

The university sector: Universities and specialised higher education schools offer a Bachelor degree after 4 years and a Master degree after one additional year. In addition to these two-tier degrees, there are still some fields, e.g. in architecture, where only a 5-years Master degree can be obtained.

Doctoral degrees require at least 3 years of study and research after the Master and 4 years after the Bachelor. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other academic institutions may also confer the doctoral degree.
Finally, there is the degree of Doctor of Sciences, corresponding to a *doctor habilitatu*s.

The non-university sector: Colleges offer after 3 years the degree of "specialist".

Croatia

The 1996 Higher education act provides the legal basis for higher education in Croatia, stressing the principle of academic autonomy. The proposal for a new Higher Education Law, which was to be adopted by the end of 2000, includes proposals for greater faculty autonomy in terms of finances and management and for the introduction of tuition fees and mechanisms for quality assurance. Several changes to the draft have been proposed and the adoption of the law has been postponed.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system: there are 4 universities and 7 polytechnics offering academic and professional studies, respectively, on a "superior" tertiary level. Their programmes are divided into an undergraduate and a graduate level. In addition there are schools of higher education, either as independent institutions (there are 8 of them) or integrated into universities, offering 2 - 4 year professional programmes.

The university sector: After 4 years the University Diploma (e.g. for engineers) can be obtained, after 5 years the Diploma in Medicine and after 6 to 7 years a Master of Science/Arts degree.
Both the University Diploma and the Master give access to doctoral studies that last 3 years (after the Diploma) or one year (after the M.Sc./M.A.), leading to a Doctor of Science.

The non-university sector: The professional studies at polytechnics are organised as undergraduate studies (2 to 4 years), postgraduate professional studies (at least one year) and postgraduate artistic studies (at least one year).

Cyprus

A state law of 1989 governs the University of Cyprus.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system. Only the University of Cyprus offers university-level degrees, whereas various public and private higher education institutions offer vocational degrees.

The university sector: The first university degree is the *Ptychio* after 4 years (corresponding to the Bachelor), followed by the Master after at least 18 months of study. The Master is the prerequisite for admission to a doctoral programme.

The non-university sector: The non-university higher education institutions offer vocational degrees, called Diplomas of Higher Education, after 1 to 4 years: after one

year a certificate is awarded, after 2 years a diploma, after 3 years a higher diploma and after 4 years a Bachelor.
These schools also offer some postgraduate diplomas at the level of a Master degree.

Czech Republic

Two laws reformed higher education: the Higher Education Act of 1990 and the new act of 1998.

The new system is unitary and offers new two-tier programmes as well as the traditional one-tier programmes with Master-level degrees lasting 4 to 6 years. The new law directs its focus rather on a study programme – which has to be duly accredited - than on the institution providing the programme. The law aims at the broad diversification of institutions and programmes. Since 1990 there are degrees at Bachelor, Master and doctoral level. Tertiary education comprises state-run and private universities, non-university higher education institutions and higher professional education offered by tertiary, but non-higher education schools.

University-type institutions provide Master and doctoral programmes as well as Bachelor programmes. A Bachelor programme takes 3 to 4 years. There are still one-tier Master degrees that take between 4 and 6 years. If the Master programme follows a Bachelor, it takes 2 to 3 years.
The standard duration for doctoral studies, which require a Master degree as prerequisite, is 3 years.

The non-university higher education institutions – which despite their name operate on university level - have only begun their operations and concentrate on Bachelor programmes of 3 to 4 years, but they also may offer Master programmes.

Bachelor programmes are not yet well known to students and employers; only 17.5 % of all students are enrolled in Bachelor programmes, compared to 75 % in Master programmes and 7,5 % in doctoral programmes.

There are also *tertiary education institutions called "higher professional schools"* which award the diploma of specialist, after 2 to 3.5 years of study. These institutions do not belong to he higher education system in the Czech Republic.

Estonia

Higher education is regulated by the Law on universities (1995), the Law on private schools (1998), the Law on applied higher education institutions (1998), the Law on vocational education institutions (1998), the Law on the University of Tartu (1995) and the Law on the organisation of research and developmental activities (1997).

In addition there is the Standard of higher education of 2000, the fundamental legal act for the accreditation of study programmes.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system and consists of universities and applied higher education institutions.

The university sector:

1. Diplomas in vocational higher education, comparable to those offered at the applied higher education institutions, after 3 to 4 years, often using modules and parts of the Bachelor programmes.

2. Bachelor programmes with a focus on general education of 3 to 4 years (teacher training: 5 years).
3. Master programmes to deepen specialised and theoretical knowledge and improve research proficiency. Admission requirement is the Bachelor. Duration: 1 to 2 years, together with the Bachelor not less than 5 years.
4. Other degrees: Medical doctor after 6 years, degrees in veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture, etc. after 5 years.
5. Doctorate: the nominal length is 4 years and a Master degree is the prerequisite.
There are research doctorates and professional doctorates.
Universities are currently changing their programmes to 3-year Bachelor and 2-year Master programmes. The doctorate will be changed from 4 years to 3 - 4 years.

The non-university sector: Non-academic professional diplomas are awarded after 3 to 4 years and include an important part of practical training (e.g. nursing, midwifery, social work, etc.). At present there are two different types of non-academic professional degrees, but it is planned to combine them into one. Whether the non-university institutions will also offer Bachelor programmes has not yet been decided**.**

Hungary

A new higher education law was adopted in 1993, authorising the setting-up of private colleges and universities, including church-run institutions.
Private institutions enrol some 10 percent of all students.

Higher education is organised in a binary system with basically one-tier degrees. In the wake of the Bologna Declaration, many institutions have started to introduce a two-tier system of degrees, especially in programmes for foreign students.
Today there are 17 state universities and 13 state colleges as well as 26 church-run institutions and 6 foundation colleges. The number of state institutions has been reduced from previously 55 to the present 30 institutions. Some of the colleges are, as college faculties, part of the universities.

The university sector: Universities follow a one-tier system leading to a Master level degree (or *egyetemi oklevé*l) after 5 years (medicine: 6 years) and offer doctoral degrees of 3 years.

The non-university sector: Colleges offer Bachelor degrees (or *föiskolai oklevé*l) after 3 to 4 years, with the possibility to obtain a Master at a university after another 2 to 3 years. Colleges have an assignment not only to teach, but also to carry out research and development activities.

Both universities and colleges may organise short-cycle post-secondary courses of two years called Accredited higher vocational training courses, leading to a certificate.

Latvia

Higher education is regulated by three laws, with the Law on higher educational institutions of 1995 being the most important one, followed by the Law on education of 1998 and the Law on professional education of 1999. An amendment to the 1995 law, adopted in November 2000, takes into account the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Latvia organised higher education in a binary two-tier system, with universities and other higher education institutions on the one hand and professional higher education institutions on the other.

The university sector: The universities offer all academic degrees up to the doctorate level in a variety of fields.
The "other higher education institutions" also offer university level degrees but concentrate more on Bachelor and Master and less on doctoral programmes than the universities. They offer programmes only in a limited number of fields. Both the universities and the other higher education institutions may also offer professional qualifications.
A Bachelor degree can be obtained after 3 to 4 years. Alternatively the level V professional higher education qualification can be obtained after 4 years. Both degrees make a graduate eligible for a Master programme.
A Master takes another 1 – 2 years. In medicine and dentistry there are one-tier degrees of respectively 6 and 5 years that give access to doctoral studies.
A doctoral degree takes 3 to 4 years (with the Master as a prerequisite). The doctoral degree has been transformed into a one-tier degree, the *habilitets doktors* (doctor habilitatus) not being awarded any more since 1 January 2000.

The non-university sector: Professional higher education institutions offer various professional qualifications, with a compulsory component of applied research. A new type of professional degrees is just being introduced, the 2-3 year college programmes ("level IV qualifications").
The second type of professional degree ("level V qualifications") can be obtained either in a 4-5 year programme leading to a degree equivalent to a Bachelor (eligibility for a Master programme), in a supplementary programme (1-2 years) for holders of a Bachelor (but without eligibility for doctoral programmes) or in applied professional 4-year programmes, without eligibility for Master studies.
The amendment to the Law on Higher Education of November 2000 introduces a symmetric structure of academic and professional Bachelor and Master degrees. The introduction of the new degrees that will eventually replace the existing professional diplomas will start in 2001.
Latvia is considering increasing the mobility between the academic and the professional sector of higher education by introducing full compatibility and recognition of those academic and professional degrees that require the same number of ECTS credits.

Lithuania

The Law on research and higher education of 1991 and the Law on higher education of March 2000 form the basis for higher education.
It is organised in a binary two-tier system: according to the new law of March 2000 some colleges were established in Lithuania in autumn 2000, which provide non-university type education.
Up to now there are 19 state (10 universities, 5 academies and 4 colleges) and 7 non-state (4 university-type and 3 colleges) higher education institutions in Lithuania.

The university sector: The universities offer Bachelor, Master and doctoral degrees (including the *doctor habilitatus*) and also professional studies on two levels.
Academies are of the same academic status as universities, but offer a more limited range of programmes.
Bachelor degrees (or equivalent professional qualifications) take 4 years.
Master degrees require another 1.5 to 2 years.
The doctoral degree is not considered a higher education qualification but a research degree. It should not take more than 3 years (for holders of a Master degree) or 4 years (after the completion of specialised professional studies or continuous studies in some study fields, such as law or medicine), out of which 1 to 2 years are spent in doctoral courses as a requirement for the admission to the doctoral research project.

Doctoral students may also be trained at research institutions, in cooperation with universities.

Colleges: The colleges offer a professional qualification after 3 years (or 4 years for extramural studies).

Macedonia Former Yugoslav Republic of)

Higher education was, until 2000, regulated by the Specialised Education Act of 1985 that was, however, not in compliance with the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, adopted in 1991. A new higher education law has therefore been drafted with the support of the Legislative Reform Project for higher education of the Council of Europe and adopted in November 2000. The new law provides for a new legal status for higher education institutions, affirming their autonomy, offering the possibility to establish both state and private institution and introducing new recognition procedures in accordance with European standards etc.
Higher education is organised in a two-tier system that has been unitary until now, with the two state universities as only providers of higher education. The new law calls for the setting-up of vocational higher education schools.

The equivalent to the Bachelor, the Diploma for completed level VII (1) of professional education is awarded after 4 to 6 years.
After one more year the level VII (2) is attained, finishing with the degree of Specialist studies. The Master programme, also leading to level VII (2), takes 2 years after the Bachelor.
A Master degree is the regular prerequisite for admission to a doctoral project. The doctoral degree corresponds to level VIII of professional training.

The faculties that enjoy a very high degree of autonomy offer postgraduate programmes of 4 to 6 years, plus doctoral studies. Their level is the same as that of universities, but they offer fewer programmes, often with specialisations.

A vocational sub-degree is offered after 2 years, the certificate for level VI (1), but this will be replaced by new vocational degrees delivered by the new vocational higher education institutions.

Malta

Higher education used to be offered by one state institution only, the University of Malta. It offers all degrees, from university diploma and Bachelor to Master and Doctor.
Presently, however, the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology is being set up by merging various colleges for shorter, vocational education. Maltese higher education is therefore becoming a binary two-tier system.

The University: Undergraduate courses lead to a Diploma after 1 to 2 years, a Bachelor after 3 years and to a Bachelor Honours after 3 to 4 years.
After another 1 to 1.5 years a Master can be obtained. A M.Phil. takes another 15 months to 2 years, a Ph.D. 3 to 5 years.

The programmes and degrees at the new college are still under development.

Poland

The Act on Higher Education of 1990 and the Act on Higher Vocational Education of 1997 provide the legal basis for the higher education system.
It is a binary system, partly one-tier and partly two-tier. The two types of higher education institutions are the universities and academies (e.g. the academies of economy, of agriculture, of pedagogy etc.) on the one hand and the schools of higher vocational education on the other. Currently a single Law on Higher Education is under preparation that will, however, maintain the institutional diversification into universities, academies and schools of vocational higher education. It will also formally introduce the 3-stage higher education system of Bachelor, Master and doctoral studies. The 5-year programmes will be maintained in some fields.

The university sector: There are courses leading to a first degree with a professional orientation, the *Licencja*t, after 3 to 3.5 years and the *Inzynier* after 3.5 to 4 years.

The *Licencjat* degree gives access to Master programme of 2 to 2.5 years.
There are, however, also one-tier Master programmes for certain professions: 5 years or more for law, psychology, pharmacy, etc. and 6 years for medicine.

Doctoral studies last 4 years. They still have a separate status and are not regarded as the third level of the higher education system. The new law will change this.

The draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two–tier model with *Licencjat/Inzynier* studies as first degree, followed by Master and doctoral degrees. It limits the possibility for evening and extramural studies by stipulating that studies in medicine and dentistry can only be carried out in full-time intramural classes.

The non-university sector: Schools of higher vocational education offer exclusively vocational studies leading to the titles of professional *Licencjat* and *Inzynie*r. The introduction of professional Bachelor degrees is planned.

Romania

Higher education is governed by the Education Law of 1995, amended and republished in 1999.

It is organised in a unitary two-tier system: there are university colleges that are part of the universities, and universities (plus university-level institutions like academies).
Although the system is therefore formally a unitary one, the colleges offer different degrees and courses.

The universities (and academies) offer courses leading to a *Diploma de licenta* or a *Diploma de absolvire* (Bachelor-level degree) that take

- 4 years in the sciences, humanities, law, sports, etc.,
- 4 to 5 years in economics, theatre, cinematography, 5 years in arts, agronomy, pharmacy etc. and
- 6 years in architecture, medicine and veterinary medicine.

Starting with the academic year 2000-2001, for engineers and architects the final diploma of *Licenta* was replaced with *Diploma de inginer* and *Diploma de arhitec*t.

Holders of a first degree may continue at the postgraduate level in a Specialist programme (one year or more) or a Master programme (1 to 2 years) The doctorate, comparable to a Ph.D., takes 3 to 5 years.

The university colleges offer courses of 3 to 4 years in such fields as technology, sports, agriculture, economics, etc., leading to a University College Diploma.
Graduates from a university college programme can apply directly for admission to the third year of university programmes (in related fields).

Slovak Republic

The Higher Education Act of 1990 laid down fundamental academic rights and freedoms and also introduced the Bachelor degree, thereby opening the system from the traditional one-tier towards a two-tier system. The amendment of 1996 provided for the possibility to establish private higher education institutions. In the academic year 1999/2000 only one such institution existed.

Slovak higher education today is therefore a unitary two-tier system, as all institutions are of the university type and offer the three degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor.
However, one-tier Master programmes are still the most popular programmes with students for the time being. In 2000 a new concept for the further development of higher education was adopted which provides for the creation of a non-university sector in Slovakia that will concentrate on Bachelor programmes. Also a consistent application of the Bachelor-Master-Doctor model (with the exception of medicine) in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration is foreseen.

The Bachelor takes normally 3 years, with the exception of some 4-year programmes in engineering, architecture, fine arts and design. There are professional Bachelor degrees, relevant to the labour market, and academic ones qualifying for a Master course of 1.5 to 2 years duration.

Master and "Engineer" studies take 4 to 6 years in the traditional one-tier system that still exists in parallel to the new two-tier system. On average the total duration of study required for the Master/"Engineer" degree is 5 years, but there are also degrees after 4 years (teacher training, dramatic art) and 6 years (architecture, fine arts, design).

Furthermore, there is a 6-year degree in Medicine and Veterinary Medicine called MUDr or MVDr. This “Doktor” degree is, however, part of the second cycle. Holders of a Master degree may take the *Examina rigorosa* (including the defence of a thesis) and are then awarded the following degrees: doctor farmácie (PharmDr.), doctor filozofie (PhDr.), doctor práv (JuDr.), etc.

The actual doctoral studies, leading to a Master, last around 3 years. There is the possibility of Habilitation.

Slovenia

Higher Education legislation was reformed in two steps: by the Higher Education Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Amendment Act of 1999. The 1993 law provided for the setting-up of non-state higher education institutions and the introduction of new 3-year professional higher education programmes. In 1999 it became possible to enrol for a doctoral programme immediately after graduation (first university degree), without first obtaining a Master degree.
Post-secondary vocational education is offered by vocational colleges and is not considered to be part of the higher education sector.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system. The two universities plus the art academies and independent faculties (private institutions) offer both academically

oriented studies and professionally oriented studies. In addition there are professional colleges that offer only professionally oriented programmes.

The university sector: Academically oriented programmes at the undergraduate level last 4 to 6 years (plus an additional year for the preparation of a dissertation), finishing with a Diploma.
Professionally oriented programmes take 3 to 4 years (plus one additional year) and lead to a Diploma.
At the postgraduate level there are the following degrees:

1. Specialisation (1 to 2 years), ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either a first university degree or, in some cases, a professionally-oriented first degree as access condition;
2. Master (2 years), also ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either the first university degree or a professionally-oriented first degree;
3. The doctoral degree requires either the first university degree or a Master degree and takes 4 or 2 years, respectively.

The non-university sector: Professional colleges offer study programmes that lead to a Diploma after 3 to 4 years. It is intended to turn these degrees into professional Bachelors.

Switzerland

Higher education is structured in a binary one-tier system. There are 10 cantonal universities and 2 federal technical universities, both types research-oriented and awarding all academic degrees including doctorates. The other type of higher education institution are the 7 *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences), based on federal law and currently under reorganisation, with an emphasis on teaching and applied research.

Universities: There is only one main type of university degree: the *Diplom/Diplôme* (more in engineering and the sciences) or *Lizenziat/Licence* (more in the humanities) after 4 to 5 years, giving access to doctoral studies (normally 2 to 4 years, but without time limit). In addition, the French-speaking universities issue a number of postgraduate diplomas, like the *diplôme d'études supérieure*s.

Fachhochschulen:

The Universities of Applied Sciences (FH) award the *Diplom/Diplôme FH* after 3 (in some cases 4) years.

There are as yet not many Bachelor/Master degrees, but some universities have started to translate their traditional diplomas as "Masters", and some FH translate their diplomas as "Bachelors". There is a discussion among Swiss higher education institutions on the possible introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees: the universities of St. Gallen and Lucerne and the Swiss Italian university have started to adopt the new system.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Serbia

The University Act of June 1998 had abolished any kind of university autonomy. After the democratic changes that took place in October 2000 and the elections in December 2000 the new government is now drafting a new provisional University Act. Amongst other objectives it will mandate the revision of all appointments and expulsions that

occurred under the act of 1998. Afterwards a law for a thorough reform of higher education will be prepared that should comply as much as possible with the new trends in European higher education.

Serbian higher education is structured in a unitary two-tier system and is offered at universities and research institutes. Universities are the only institutions to offer a first degree (Diploma or Bachelor) after 4 years in social sciences and humanities, 5 years in engineering and sciences and 6 years in medicine.
Postgraduate studies can be carried out either at universities or at accredited research institutes and lead to a M.Sc. after 2 years or to a Master after 3 years.
Access to doctoral studies can be granted straight from the Bachelor level or after obtaining a Master.

Montenegro

The University Law of 1992 regulates higher education. It defines the university as consisting of higher professional schools, faculties, art academies and scientific institutes.
The law allows for the creation of private higher education institutions but at present there is only the public University of Montenegro.
Higher education is a unitary two-tier system.

At the sub-degree level the higher professional schools deliver degrees after 2 years.
A Bachelor degree is awarded at the faculties after 4 to 5 years, depending on the subject. In medicine and related fields the Bachelor requires 6 years of study.
Postgraduate studies (Master) take 2 years. Research for a doctoral degree must not exceed a period of 5 years.

Kosovo

The situation in Kosovo is characterised by the Interim Statute that was introduced within the UNMIK system in October 2000. At present the executive power in higher education matters lies with the International Administrator who is also co-head of the Department of Education (or Ministry). The Interim Statute aims at restoring autonomous governance at the University of Prishtina.
The higher education is unitary. Until now the university comprised 14 faculties offering Master and doctoral degrees, and 7 higher schools offering 2-year degrees.
In 2001 the system will be re-organised along a 3 – 5 – 8 model, introducing Bachelor and Master degrees in all disciplines with the exception of medicine.

OVERVIEW TABLES

Table 1 Higher education systems and degree structures

	The HE system		Degree structure at universities		Doctoral degree structure	
Country	Unitary	Binary	One-tier	Two-tier	One-tier	Two-tier
Albania	●			●	●	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	●			●	●	
Bulgaria		●		● [4]	●	
Croatia		●		●	●	
Cyprus		●		●	●	
Czech Republic	●			● [1]	●	
Estonia		●		●	●	
Hungary		●	●		● [5]	
Latvia		●		●	● [6]	
Lithuania		●		●		● [7]
Macedonia (Former. Yugosl. Republic of)	●			●	●	
Malta		●		●	●	
Poland		●		● [1]	● [2]	
Romania	●			●	●	
Slovak Republic	●			●	●[2]	
Slovenia		●		●	●	
Switzerland		●	●		● [8]	
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	●			●	●	
Montenegro	●			●	●	
Kosovo	●			● [9]	●	

[4] Higher Education is a mixed system as there are also one-tier programmes.
[5] The possibility of Habilitation exists.
[6] The habilitation existed in the Latvian system but was abolished in 2000.
[7] The possibility of Habilitation still exists, but there are discussions about abolishing it.
[8] Habilitation still required in the German-speaking part of the country, with the exeption of the ETH Zürich
[9] Higher education in Kosovo used to be a one-tier system and will have two tiers from 2001 onwards.

Table 2 Higher education qualifications*

	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/ doctoral level degrees	
Country Type of institution	1-2 years+	3 years +	4 years +	5 years +	6/7 years +[10]	Inter-med. de-grees	PhD/ Doctoral degrees
Albania Universities and academies		Professional degree[11] (engineer, teacher etc.)	University diploma qualification/ specialisation	Post-university Study degree	Master, advanced		Doctor
Bosnia-Herzegovina University		First degree: VI grade[12]	First degree: VII grade[13]	Specialisation studies	Master		Doctor
Bulgaria Universities			Bachelor	Master[14]			Doctor
Colleges		Specialist					
Croatia Universities			University diploma	Diploma in medicine	Master of science		Doctor of science
Polytechnics		Professional degree[15]		Postgraduate professional degree[16]			
Cyprus University			Ptychio	Master			Doctor
Higher education schools	Certificate, Diploma	Higher diploma	Bachelor	Postgraduate diplomas at Master level			
Czech Republic Universities and non-university types of higher education		Bachelor[17]		Master[18]			Doctor
Estonia Universities		Bachelor	Bachelor[19]	Master, Diploma	Degree in basic medical studies.		Doctor
Applied higher education institutions		Diploma	Diploma				
Hungary Universities	Accredited higher vocational certificate			Master or egyetemi oklevél	Medical degree		Ph.D., DLA[20]

* This table should be read together with the supplementary information on each country in the Country profiles. The aim is to indicate some of the main degree possibilities in each country. It should be noted that the number of years of study does not in itself say much about the level and contents of the qualifications. It should also be noted that the table does not illustrate the various requirements for moving from one qualification stage to another. Thus the conditions for access to doctoral level studies vary from three to five years of previous higher education. Neither has it been possible to illustrate all degree possibilities – especially not at postgraduate level.

[10] In almost all countries the longer degrees of 6 – 7 years duration include degrees in such fields as medicine, veterinarian science, dentistry and others. Usually these degrees do not follow the degree structure for the more general academic degrees, e.g. there is very seldom a first intermediate degree possibility.

[11] Only in some diciplines like nursing

[12] Awarded after 2 – 3 years, e.g. to lawyers, teachers, engineers, medical technicians

[13] Awarded after 4 – 6 years, e.g. Bachelor, Medical doctor, etc.

[14] Either as a one-tier programme of 5 years or consecutive to a Bachelor in one year

[15] Awarded after 2 – 4 years.

[16] Requires at least 1 year of studies after the first professional degree

[17] Awarded after 3 – 4 years

[18] Either as a one-tier programme of 4 – 6 years or consecutive to a Bachelor, lasting 2 – 3 years

[19] There is a tendency to standardize the duration of Bachlor degrees to 3 years and of Master's to 2 years.

[20] DLA: Doctoral degree in arts

Colleges	Accredited higher vocational certificate	Bachelor or föiskolai oklevél					
Latvia Universities and academies		Bakalaurs	Bakalaurs, professional degree	Master, professional qualifications level v	Professional qualifications		Ph.D.
Professional higher education institutions[21]	College degrees: level IV qualifications		Professional degree, level V; applied professional degrees	Professional degrees for holders of a Bachelor			
Lithuania Universities and academies			Bakalauras, professional qualifications	Professional qualifications	Magistras, professional qualifications	1 - 2 years doctor. course	Doctor
Colleges		Professional qualification					
Macedonia (Form. Yugosl. Republic of) Universities/ Faculties	Certificate for level VI(1)[22]		Diploma for level VII(1) (Bachelor)[23]	Diploma for level VII (2) (Specialist)	Diploma for level VII (2) (Master)		Doctor (level VIII)
Malta University	Diploma	Bachelor	Bachelor honours	Master[24]		M.Phil.[25]	Doctor
College		Degrees still being developed					
Poland Universities		Licencjat, Bachelor	Inzynier	Master	Professional qualifications		Doctor
Schools of higher vocational education		Licencjat	Inzynier				
Romania Universitiesand academies		Diploma de absolvire (Bachelor)	Licenta [26], diploma de inginer or diploma de arhitect[27]	Master, DEA			Doctor
University colleges[28]		Diploma de absolvire					
Slovak Republic Universities		Bachelor	Bachelor or Master /engineer	Master [29]/ engineer	Professional qualifications		Doctor
Slovenia Universities		Professional diploma	University diploma[30]	Specialisation degree	Master, professional qualifications		Doctor
Professional colleges		Professional Diploma					
Switzerland Universities		[31]	Lizentiat/ Licence or Diplom/ diplôme[32]		Professional qualifications		Doctor

[21] Introduction of professional Bachelor/Master degrees starting in 2001
[22] A vocational sub-degree level in the traditional system, presently disappearing
[23] After 4 to 6 years
[24] After Bachelor honours
[25] After Bachelor honours or Master
[26] After 4 to 5 years
[27] After 6 years
[28] Integrated into universities
[29] Either as a one-tier programme of 5 years or consecutive to a Bachelor in one year
[30] Duration 4 – 6 years, depending on the subject; 1 additional year *(absolventsko leto)* is required for degree dissertation
[31] By spring 2001 three Swiss universities had started to introduce Bachelor and Master degrees
[32] The licence is awarded more in humanities, the diplôme more in engineering and sciences, after 4 – 5 years

Fachhoch-schulen		Diplom/ Diplôme FH					
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: **Serbia** Universities			Bachelor[33]	Bachelor[34]	M. Sc.		Doctor[35]
Montenegro University	Professional degree		Bachelor[36]	Medical degree	Master		Doctor
Kosovo University		Bachelor[37]		Master	Postgraduate degrees		Doctor

[33] Social sciences and humanities
[34] Engineering and natural sciences: 5 years; biomedical sciences: 6 years
[35] Also the Bachelor gives direct access to doctoral studies
[36] 4 to 5 years
[37] The degree structure at the University of Prishtina is currently being reformed: in 2001 a 3-5-8 model is being introduced

Table 3 Admission to higher education

Country	Admission to higher education[38]	Numerus Clausus/ Limitations in admission
Albania	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and a compulsory entrance examination set up by the institution and the ministry.	There is a general numerus clausus.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate – the results of which are weighted, depending on the study programme chosen - and an entrance examination.	No information available.
Bulgaria	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and the specific requirements (entrance examination) set by the higher education institution.	No information available.
Croatia	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination set by the Ministry of Education.	There is an overall numerus clausus for all institutions and all disciplines.
Cyprus	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination set by the Ministry of Education.	There is an overall numerus clausus in all public higher education institutions.
Czech Republic	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and the specific requirements (entrance examination) set by the higher education institution or faculty.	There is no overall numerus clausus; admission is decentralized.
Estonia	The general access requirement is a secondary school leaving certificate plus the State examination certificate (Riigieksamitunnistus). In addition, there may be entrance examinations set by the faculties, depending on the individual institution/programme.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. The institutions can accept additional students on a tuition fee basis.

[38] According to the1997 Lisbon Convention the terms access and admission are distinct, but linked. They denote different steps in the same process towards participation in higher education. Meeting the access requirements is necessary but not always sufficient for actually gaining admission to a higher education programme (getting a study place). When comparing access and admission requirements one has also to look into the structuring of secondary education which in some countries is based on a high degree of streaming in academic and less academic tracks. These differences are only partially reflected in this table.

Hungary	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and – for most programmes - an entrance examination in two subjects, depending on their choice of study programme.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. Higher education institutions can accept additional students in exchange for tuition fees.
Latvia	The general access requirement is a recognised secondary school leaving certificate. The higher education institution may specify the necessary elective subjects during secondary education for admission to a programme of study.	There is an overall numerus clausus, set annually by the Ministry of Education.
Lithuania	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination set by the higher education institution in a number of disciplines, such as medicine, languages, arts, music, law, etc.	Admission procedures are decentralised, higher education institutions may set a numerus clausus in certain disciplines with regard to state-financed places and accept additional students for fees.
Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination (no uniform admission procedure, departments may decide). It is planned to abolish the entrance examination.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. Higher education institutions can accept additional students in exchange for tuition fees.
Malta	All students with a recognised secondary school leaving certificate (Matriculation certificate) are eligible for admission. There are no entrance examinations.	The numerus clausus policy has been abolished.
Poland	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination set by the higher education institution.	There is no overall numerus clausus yet but the new higher education act provides for the possibility to introduce a numerus clausus in certain disciplines.
Romania	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination set by the higher education institution in accordance with criteria defined by the Ministry.	Government defines a numerus clausus, but each HEI may accept additional students on a tuition fee basis.
Slovak Republic	Admission is granted either based on the secondary school leaving certificate or on entrance examinations set by the higher education institution or on a combination of both.	No general numerus clausus. Higher education institutions may introduce a local numerus clausus.
Slovenia	Access to academically oriented programmes requires a secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*, in the future also *poklicna matura*, a sort of vocational *matura*) plus an examination in an additional subject. Access to professional programmes requires the *matura* or the *poklicna matura*.	No general numerus clausus, but higher education institutions may introduce local limitations with governmental authorisation (e.g. in medicine, law, business).
Switzerland	Access to universities requires a secondary school leaving certificate *(Matura, maturité).* Access to Fachhochschulen requires a professional *matura*, normally obtained during an apprenticeship.	A numerus clausus in medicine is applied in the German-speaking part of the country.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination set by the department.	The government defines a numerus clausus each year for each department.
Montenegro	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination.	A numerus clausus is defined each year by the government.
Kosovo	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination.	The International Administrator may define a numerus clausus.

Table 4 Credit transfer systems

Country	Credit systems
Albania	No credit system in use yet. The introduction of an ECTS-compatible system is being prepared.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	No national credit system. The introduction of ECTS as a pilot project is currently being considered.
Bulgaria	No national system. So far only two universities use a credit system. The general introduction of credits is being discussed as a medium-term priority.
Croatia	No national credit system. The introduction of ECTS is being prepared.
Cyprus	There is a national credit system that is ECTS-compatible with one national credit equalling two ECTS-credits. E.g. the Ptychio, 4 years, requires 120 credits.
Czech Republic	No national credit system. There is a general trend to introduce ECTS, also due to Socrates/Erasmus, and to use it not only for foreign students but also for Czech students (both for accumulation and transfer).
Estonia	A national credit system is used in all higher education institutions, academic and professional, with 40 credits equalling one academic year. One credit corresponds to 40 hours or one week of study. Conversion into ECTS-credits possible.
Hungary	In 1998 the introduction of a credit system was made compulsory for all higher education institutions by September 2002, supervised by the National Credit Council. It will be ECTS-compatible, with one semester equalling 30 credits, and one credit corresponding to 30 hours of work. The institutions will have some autonomy in defining the operational details.
Latvia	There is a national credit system, similar to that of Scandinavian countries: 40 credit points equal one academic year and one credit corresponds to 40 hours or one week of study. The system is compatible with ECTS, but different.
Lithuania	The new higher education law of March 2000 establishes a relation of the national system to ECTS: 1 credit equals 1 week of study, 40 credits equal 1 year.
Macedonia (Form. Yugoslav Republic of)	No national credit system. The new higher education law of 2000 makes the introduction of ECTS compulsory.
Malta	National credit system with 30 credits per year, ECTS-compatible.
Poland	No national credit system. Some institutions have started, however, to introduce credit systems for specific disciplines and some are working with ECTS

Romania	A national decentralised credit transfer system has been introduced since 1998/99 on a voluntary basis. It is ECTS-compatible, with one semester equalling 30 credits.
Slovak Republic	No national credit system. Individual institutions experiment with ECTS. According to the concept for the future development of Slovak higher education, an ECTS-based system is to be developed for all institutions.
Slovenia	No national system. Both universities are introducing a credit system and use ECTS for student exchange within Socrates/Erasmus. In one university ECTS is compulsory for all newly introduced programmes. The basis, however, is not student workload, but contact hours.
Switzerland	All universities and Fachhochschulen are introducing ECTS for transfer purposes. Credit accumulation is being introduced simultaneously.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	No system yet. The introduction of ECTS is planned. For the time being one of the newly established post-graduate institutions is experimenting with ECTS.
Montenegro	No system yet. The introduction of ECTS is planned as part of the university reform.
Kosovo	No system yet.

Table 5 Organisation of the Academic Year

Country	Start of the academic year	Organisation of the academic year/lecturing periods
Albania	First week of October	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 38 to 42 weeks. There are three examination periods (in winter, summer and autumn)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	October	The academic year is divided into two semesters, from October to July. There are three exam periods (January-February, June-July, September-October).
Bulgaria	October	The academic year is organised in two semesters, from October to June. After each semester there follows an examination period, defined by the higher education institution.
Croatia	1 October	The academic year is divided into two semesters. There are three examination periods, in winter, summer and autumn.
Cyprus	September	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each: from September to January and from January to May. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Czech Republic	Between 15 September and 15 October, decided by the individual higher education institution.	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 14 weeks duration each. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Estonia	September	The academic year is divided into two semesters. Each lasts 20 weeks, including an examination period at the end.
Hungary	Beginning of September, but this may vary significantly	The academic year is divided into two semesters. Each lasts 14 to 15 weeks, followed by an examination period of six weeks.
Latvia	Normally the first week of September, but there may be differences between the higher education institutions	The academic year is organised in two semesters. After each semester there follows an examination period of two to three weeks, in January/February and in June/July.
Lithuania	1 September	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 20 weeks (September – January, February – June), including a 4-week examination period at the end of each semester.
Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)	1 October	The academic year is semester-based. The two semesters run from 1 October to 15 January and from 15 February to 31 May. The new higher education law of 2000 allows each institution to set their examination periods.
Malta	1 October	The academic year is divided into two semesters, from 1 October to 31 January, and from 1 February to 15 July. Exams are organised during the last week of January, and between the last week of May and 15 July.

Poland	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each, followed by an examination period.
Romania	1 October for most institutions, but they are free to choose the exact date in September and October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each, followed by an examination period.
Slovak Republic	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters: From 1 September to 31 January and from 1 February to 30 June. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Slovenia	1 October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each. There are three examination periods, in January/February, June/July and September.
Switzerland	Second half of October	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 15 weeks duration each. They run from the second half of October to the beginning of March and from mid-April to mid-July Examination periods are organised independently in spring, summer and autumn.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: **Serbia**	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters: from September to January and from February to June. Examinations are organised in September, October, January, April and June.
Montenegro	1 October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each: from 1 October to 15 January and from 15 February to 31 May. There are three examination periods, in January/February, June/July and September.
Kosovo	1 October	The academic year is semester-based with fixed examination periods.

Table 6 Tuition fees and student support systems for study abroad

Country	Tuition fees for regular study programmes	National student support systems for studies abroad
Albania	A tuition fee system was introduced in the past years. The government determines the fee level (identical for all disciplines) but higher education institutions may keep up to 90 percent of the fees.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	No tuition fees yet, although the higher education law allows the introduction of fees. Foreign students pay fees, depending on the study programme.	No support system.
Bulgaria	A tuition fee system was introduced in 1999. The fee level depends on the kind of degree and is set by the government. Foreign students also pay fees.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Croatia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest the higher education institutions charge tuition fees. Foreign students generally pay fees. The introduction of a general tuition fee system is under discussion.	The government provides grants for Master and doctoral programmes abroad. In addition, foreign governments offer grants within bilateral agreements.
Cyprus	At the University of Cyprus the state pays the fee (CP 2000 p.a.) for Cypriot students. Foreign students pay CP 4000 p.a. At other institutions, Cypriots pay CP 1000-3500 CP., foreigners often more.	National support plus scholarships for study abroad provided by the Ministry of Finance
Czech Republic	At state and public institutions regular studies at all levels are free within the standard duration plus one year. Students exceeding this duration by more than one year pay fees. Foreign students pay for courses taught in foreign languages. 24 private institutions (non-university type) charge fees.	No specific national system, but grants for study abroad may be provided by the department, the higher education institution or the Ministry (within the framework of international cooperation agreements)
Estonia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest the higher education institutions charge tuition fees. Foreign students generally pay fees.	Educational assistance (loans) is provided for studies abroad.
Hungary	General tuition fees, introduced in 1996, were abolished again in 1998. A number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are set by higher education institutions (Euro 400 - 2400 per semester). Foreign students generally pay fees.	There are a very limited number of grants for study abroad; they are normally allocated in bilateral agreements between Hungary and foreign governments.
Latvia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are charged. A system of study loans is being introduced.	A limited number of grants for study abroad are available if it is academically justified. Study loans are available for studies abroad if these studies require paying a tuition fee.

Lithuania	A number of places for "good students" are state-financed; an additional 25 percent are admitted in exchange for tuition fees charged by the higher education institutions (Euro 375 - 6000 per year). Foreign students generally pay fees.	The Lithuanian government abroad finances a few programmes for study.
Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)	A number of places are state-financed. For the other students the higher education institutions charge fees. Foreign students generally pay fees. The introduction of a general fee system for all students is planned.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Malta	All full-time programmes are free of charge for Maltese students. Tuition fees, set by the Ministry, are to be paid for part-time courses and by foreign students.	All Maltese undergraduate students are entitled to a maintenance grant, also for study abroad as part of their programme
Poland	Regular studies are free of charge but tuition fees are charged for evening classes, extramural studies and the repetition of exams. These fees, set by the Ministry, are not related to the student's nationality	There is no national support system yet, but a system for all types of study is being prepared
Romania	In state institutions, a number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are charged (Euro 1500 per year). Private institutions charge similar fees. Foreign students pay around Euro 400 per month, also in state institutions.	There is a national scholarship office for study abroad, and grants are also given by foreign countries and higher education institutions (cooperation agreements)
Slovak Republic	No tuition fees for full-time Slovak students (only administrative fees for certain services and part-time programmes, life-long learning etc.). Tuition fees may be charged to foreign students.	No national support system, study abroad is either self-financed or through grants available through bilateral agreements
Slovenia	No fees for undergraduate programmes in state institutions and in private institutions with a concession. All part-time and postgraduate students, and also full-time students in private institutions pay fees, set by the institution in accordance with ministerial regulations. Foreign students pay around Euro 1500 – 2000 p.a. for undergraduate, Euro 2250 – 3000 for graduate programmes.	No national support system, but some grants are available through bilateral agreements.
Switzerland	Yes, fixed by the institutions: SFR 500 – 800 per semester at universities and SFR 500 at *Fachhochschulen*. (At the Swiss Italian University SFR 2000 per semester.)	No specific system, but students with a cantonal grant may use it for study abroad if their programme is not offered in Switzerland

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	At the state universities there are 3 categories of students: fully funded and with a tuition waiver, subsidised (with reduced tuition) and paying full tuition. The decision is performance-based. In private universities all students pay full fees. All foreign students pay fees. The government sets fees at state universities.	No support system.
Montenegro	A number of places are state-financed. For the other students tuition the higher education institutions charge fees. The university, in accordance with the Ministry of Education, defines the fee level. A new system is being developed.	A grant for study abroad can be obtained for programmes not offered in the country.
Kosovo	All students pay a tuition fee of Euro 13 per semester. Foreign students pay a slightly higher fee. The decision on fees lies, under the Interim Statute that is currently in effect, with the International Administrator.	There is for the time being no support system.