

**Transparency of Academic Qualifications
as a Gateway for Professionals' Free
Movement in Europe**

- Final Report -



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PREFACE

The **overall objective** of the action is *to create a forum for debate gathering representatives from all the involved target groups, geographical areas and institutional backgrounds on the topic **Transparency of Academic Qualifications as a Gateway for Professionals' Free Movement in Europe***. We consider it a must of the moment, in the context of the institutional changes that take place and are expected to take place in Europe, giving the opportunity and suitable framework for well-grounded discussions and debates on the above-mentioned topic. It is obvious that the limitation to the formal provisions of the relevant regulations in the field is not efficient. It is important to analyze the way in which they are put into practice and the particular aspects that characterize the process of ensuring mutual recognition of academic qualifications in Central and Eastern European countries, as well as the potential difficulties and inconveniences that decision makers in different European countries have been facing in the process of implementing this chapter in the *acquis*.

The **specific objectives** of the project are designed in accordance with the broad institutional and geographical areas that it covers as well as with the complexity and boldness of the overall objective:

1. To initiate/intensify communication between all the participants involved in the process. Most of them have already participated in common projects, but there are new parties that have to be actively involved in the action. In this respect, it is vital to consolidate two categories of interfaces:

- the one between decisions makers from Western European



Universities, on the one hand and decision makers from Central and Eastern European Universities, on the other hand;

- the one between decision makers from the academic environment and the adjacent groups, namely students and employers across Europe.

2. To evaluate and quantify to the maximum extent possible, the progress that every involved country has made in ensuring the transparency of academic qualifications and the free movement of professionals across Europe; the specificity in the progress of this process by country and region; the difficulties, obstacles and potential ignorance vis-à-vis this process in certain countries/periods of time.

This evaluation is to be accomplished before the workshop takes place, so that the representatives of the target groups would be able to acquire a sort of barometer for the analysed process in their own institutions/countries.

3. To communicate, compare, analyze, and synthesize data on the status of ensuring transparency of academic qualifications, on the occasion of the workshop to take place in the academic year 2004-2005 in Craiova, Romania. This is a good opportunity for presenting the results of the acquired "barometers" and to identify the best lines of action in order to make the process work, according to the Lisbon Convention and other regulatory provisions in the field. Participants from both Western and Central & Eastern European countries will have to opportunity to tackle various issues regarding this process and to elaborate future strategies. What must be done; what has been done; what needs to be done in future; how to synergize efforts between countries and between institutions – these are some of the questions that the action aims at finding an answer to.

4. To create pathways for communication between participants in future, after the funding from the European Commission ceases. Free movement of professionals in Europe and the demarches that



need to be done in this respect are not disparate actions that can be solved by snapping one's fingers. They require permanent interest and preoccupation from the involved parties and consistent efforts in time. The workshop will raise the public opinion's interest and will serve as an alarm signal on the above mentioned issues. Thus, it can be considered as a starting point for future initiatives in the field that can materialize in real progress for ensuring the free movement of professionals in Europe.





EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION – A MUST FOR AN ENLARGED EUROPE

by

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First of all, we must define the social inclusion. As often seen, it is easier to define the term by its opposite. Mainly, the social exclusion means a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

Speaking about social inclusion is not easy because the issue is having many aspects. One of them, the most known, perhaps, is about groups or minorities: socio-economics, ethnic, religious, sexual, gender, disabled, other (i.e. travellers) etc. Another is social inclusion?" The answer is easier if we define the social exclusion one is related to the actions meant to help the social inclusion. A third one is dealing with responsibilities, socio-economic and technical environment impact etc. Not the last one is studying the relation between social exclusion and education, governance, political decision etc. and, of course, any possible combination among these aspects. A complex issue as I mentioned...



And further more, one may ask “What is good for education?” and “What is education good for?” Those twin questions about the causes and consequences of education are high on the agenda of any responsible country, concerned about its future.

Usually, the answer to the first question is related to more money, higher standards, and accountability. For the second question, the most common answer is related to economic competitiveness, technological progress, and economic growth. The answers are not the most important issue, but the fact that the economic returns for the investments in human capital are high and apparently growing.

Physical capital refers to physical tools that enhance productivity (regardless the size and price). Usually, the human capital is another form of capital that also can enhance productivity and comprises the skills and education. More recently, the observation that social networks (and the associated norms of reciprocity and trust) can also have powerful effects on productivity, led to the term “social capital” to refer to these effects. In connection with social inclusion, we must say that one reason that students from different minority or social groups and/or impoverished backgrounds are disadvantaged educationally is precisely because they lack access to productive social capital, both inside and outside the school.

Social cohesion is an increasingly prominent concern in most countries. In part, this is because social and ethnic diversity is rapidly increasing everywhere, and social and economic inequalities are also increasing in many countries. In fact, the most certain prediction that can be made about any advanced nation today is that it will be more ethnically diverse 20 years from now.



In this context, the distinction between “bonding” social capital (that is, ties within a given social or ethnic group) and “bridging” social capital (that is, ties between groups) is very important. Social health requires adequate stores of both bonding and bridging social capital. A society that has only bonding and no bridging is in serious danger of coming apart. So a modern pluralistic democracy has special needs for bridging social capital. But it is a fact about the human condition that bridging social capital is harder to build than bonding social capital — “birds of a feather flock together.” So leaders in every modern society today need to be especially concerned about fostering networks and trust that bridge divisions.

Social inclusion must be a high priority for moral, social, and political reasons. But the knowledge economy itself has a distinctive dependence on social capital. As an easy example, it is no accident that Silicon Valley (like its counterparts elsewhere) is a place of intense “networking.” The image of the isolated, hermit-like inventor who transforms an industry may never have been historically accurate, but it is wildly wrong today. So even from a strictly economic point of view, the coming generation in all our countries must be equipped not merely with intellectual skills and knowledge, but also with skills in teamwork and “bridging social capital.”

The successful countries implemented a policy mixture of cost cutting, improving institutions and investing in future growth, with the largest difference to the low performers in the dynamics of research, education and technology diffusion. Recent studies shown that the reality in Europe is not in line with the usual twin hypotheses that high welfare costs and insufficient flexibility are the main culprits in underperformance. The main common elements for all the successful countries turning to the modern knowledge society are:



- good or excellent use of ICT;
- high growth in manufacturing;
- excellence in education and/or research;
- high productivity.

In correlation with the above mention issue, the problem of required skills in the knowledge society is important. The new “knowledge workers” are becoming more and more “networking nomads”. A laptop and a mobile phone is almost all you need to create a job or a company. Not even a location is needed. New denominations appear in connection with these new workers (employee or employers): teleworker (or naked worker), telecommuter, mobile worker (or frequent flyer, or globopolitan). The world is shrinking more and more. For this new type of worker, new or high skills are required. This new type of activities requires, mainly, higher education, technical and/or managerial skills, mastering several languages, cross-cultural approaches, comfort to travel, IT and internet must be a second skin, innovation and creativity. The wishes and preferences of the “knowledge workers” are changing:

- economic and professional: knowledge companies, flexible and mobile jobs, conducive environment for entrepreneurship and firm creation, abundance of business-support services;
- socio-political and civil: open and tolerant society, cultural and leisure possibilities, life-education possibilities;
- habitat and entourage: residence-job proximity, heavily IT equipped areas and houses, car free, alternate trends (today – quality urban life);
- familial: safe area, clean environment, children education facilities (with international tendency, if possible).

These new challenges are not suppressing the traditional questions related to education and social inclusion:

- What level of skill demand is required to meet economic and/or social objectives?



- How is the demand expected to change over the medium term?
- What is the nature of any identifiable (if case) skill deficit?
- What role could the initial education play in meeting the skills deficits?
- What role could the adult learning system play in generating missing skills?
- To what extent the social, economic, educational and health opportunity of individuals constrained by their skill level?
- How and to what extent can the state mitigate market failure, particularly in adult training? etc.

The answers must take into account the skill demand by life context. We must imagine skills on three levels:

1. Fully portable:
 - motor skills;
 - numeracy;
 - oral communication: speaking and listening;
 - written communication: reading and writing;
 - intra-personal ability to learn: motivation and metacognition.
2. Largely portable:
 - using tools associated with technologies of production;
 - analyse and problem solving: decision making, job task planning and organising, significant use of memory;
 - work-place interpersonal relations: teamwork, leadership, practical intelligence.
3. Narrowly portable:
 - firm and job specific skills and bodies of knowledge.

All these levels must meet the same requirements: to be creative, to be fluid, to be crystallised, to be practical. It is simple to see that in order to increase the social inclusion chances, initial education must focus on the first and partially second level. The further training is mainly focusing on the third level.



There for paradigm shift in education is necessary, a shift in focus towards learning, rather than teaching, and towards a competence-based (rather than subject-based) curricula that combines knowledge with the development of personal qualities and social skills. It is a paradigm that results from a vision of a “learning society” focusing less on the acquisition of information and academic subject knowledge, and more on the competencies required to learn and continue learning throughout life. These competencies or life skills range (as we already mentioned in the present paper) from sound basic literacy and numeracy skills initially acquired in the learners’ mother tongue, to analytical, problem solving and critical thinking skills, to the personal qualities and social competencies required for social inclusion, co-operation and participation in social and economic life in a way that is respectful of the dignity of all. The paradigm shift also translates into a more practical orientation, as suggested in the move toward more functional knowledge and skills in current adaptation of curricula content. In addition to the traditional concern with content, the new paradigm attaches equal importance to the process of learning and to the need for partnerships in ensuring the arrangements required for effective learning and development of social competencies.

A major tendency in late modern education in Europe is the transformation from governance by rules and directives toward governance by goals and results, often in combination with deregulation and decentralisation of decision-making. The implications of such a transformation are having societal consequences in terms of social inclusion and exclusion.

This topic is tackling mainly two distinctive problems. The first is the equity problem, where access and participation as well as social integration are focused over different categories. The second is the problem of knowledge, where the focus is on the



construction of categories that are used to identify inclusion and exclusion.

We consider that changes in education and governance are related to transitions towards a "late modern" society. Such an approach enables one to consider not only national contexts but issues of globalisation that are embedded in the changes occurring within the European Union. Thus, we consider institutional changes in the governing practices of education related to social inclusion and exclusion. But the changes in the systems of reason on education are also interesting. The later gives focus to a little considered element of educational policy that is how the categories and distinctions of education generate principles about the participation of the "new" citizen in terms of social inclusion and exclusion in the educational system. The background of current restructuring measures of European states are decentralisation, deregulation, marketization connected with changes in accountability and in management. We consider these two sides of change as overlapping and mutually related rather than distinct and in some hierarchical relation. Further more, these different changes have implications for the restructuring practices related to citizenship and democratisation. Thus, we may ask two main empirical questions:

1. What characterises the new governance structures of educational systems in different countries and what are the implications of this for social integration or exclusion?
2. What are the implications of different national contexts for the social meaning of restructuring measures and the consequences of these measures in these contexts in terms of integration or exclusion?

The problems of transition from a traditional society to a modern one, dealt with at the end of the last century, and the role of education in that transition, the implications of that for social



cohesion, integration, and fragmentation are today again “trendy” and questions of social cohesion are being reformulated and redefined through an amalgamation of institutional and political changes, European integration etc. The struggles about social inclusion and exclusion cross-state welfare and economic policy issues with that of issues of globalisation.

The new cultural, social and economic context of European Unions, but not only, place the educational system as a central institution in late modernity concerned with providing access, social progress, economic development and skills for the labour markets.

Usually there is no conceptual discussion about the governance, but there might be some discussion about the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. These difficulties usually are related to:

- the lack of consideration of the assumptions in the formulation of problems and practices in relation to the idea of governance;
- the classifications of groups to be included in the policies, thus conserving the political systems of reference embedded in the categories and distinctions that are driving political changes;
- the continual imposition of value and normativity through which the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion are drawn, such as the tensions between the values of collective and community obligations and that of individual values;
- the ways in which contemporary discourses about inclusion can deflect attention from issues of citizenship, class and racism.

Another major issue is the equity problematic as a tradition in policy that focuses on the means by which activities are controlled or directed to deliver an acceptable range of outcomes according to some established social standard. Governance is typically related to the concept of the State that gives attention to



the formal administrative practices in organising institutional practices and social actors. The State is considered as an actor that controls, mediates the benefits in existing arrangements and the allocation of values to be distribution among social groups to challenge inequities. Governance is to order and to judge what is appropriate action to correct social imbalances. The notion of governing in the equity problematic relates to the procedures and processes that enable groups and individuals access and representation.

One can think of the belief in the modern school as an institution to promote equity and justice as operationalised through the problematic of equity. For many people, “the school” is viewed as a progressive institution. And yet...

The problem of access and affordability is important to be discussed in this context. Equal access in educational system is a myth because the socio-economic background is not equal for all. Even “equal chances” concept is sometime discussed.

There is evidence that those who do not enter the initial or further training or are not able to pursue successful learning or training programmes are people who often have deep-rooted problems, relating to their position in the socio-economic structure. The problem is even bigger. The “open gates” policy that helps a lot of disadvantaged persons to enter the educational system is not ensuring the possibility of finalising the studies: a low entry level (generated by a low quality education) is generating a huge rate of drop out. This means returning to the initial situation, aggravated by the credits (study loans) that must be reimbursed! The only solution is a broad policy approach, tackling the whole system in order to ensure also the potential for success, the affordability in terms of education and knowledge.



Another aspect of the affordability is the financial factors that are raising walls against participation in any form of education. This is also associated with factors such as low income and poverty.

The knowledge problematic is a second but complementary to that of the equity problematic. The knowledge problematic focuses on the rules and standards of reason through which policy and actors “make sense” of the capabilities and characteristics of the youth who succeeds or fails in educational system.

One can differentiate between the problematic of equity and the problematic of knowledge, as follows. The equity problematic treats governance of inclusion and exclusion as a problem of access and participation of groups or populations. Sometimes politics focus on groups not represented but structurally classified through categories of race, class, and gender. The knowledge problematic, in contrast, must consider the construction of the “qualities” that distinguish, differentiate, and “creates” the individuality of different groups. To think of it a little differently, the knowledge problematic focuses not race, gender, or class, but on the practices of normalisation and division that produce race-ness, gender-ness, or class-ness. The knowledge or systems of reason are not what are commonly considered as stereotypes, or beliefs that create exclusion. Governing is in the distinctions, differentiation, and categories that are generated for action; and the inclusion/exclusion as the normalisation and divisions that simultaneously create an inside and outside.

We can think of the particular categories of populations targeted in the policy documents and actor interviews as part of the governing of education. These categories are related to:

- economic inclusion in which education is related to labour markets, with issues of class and social stratification privileged (these categories have changed in the past two decade to include greater distinctions of marginalization and exclusion);



- cultural inclusion in which access issues to include cultural representations of gender, race, ethnicity and religious minorities;
- inclusion of the disabled.

Both notions of *governing* - the processes through which actors gain or are denied access to decision-making and the *principles of knowledge* - have important implications for the issues through which individuals are qualified and disqualified for action and participation.

One also needs to consider the social spaces in which education is placed. At one level, the school systems of the countries have developed educational and social infrastructures, with certain specificity. While we can think of the participating nations as having high enrolment and graduate rates, there are differences among the nations in expenditures and relation of educational finances to gross national products.

Establishing stronger social cohesion within and among communities and nations is a necessary precondition for peace and stability, as well as for sustainable social and economic development. Lately, one could see growing international concern with social cohesion as the social fabric in all regions of the world has increasingly been under the strain of greater inequalities in income distribution, unemployment, marginalization, xenophobia, racial discrimination, school-based violence, organized crime and armed conflict. These diverse manifestations and causes of social exclusion point to the dissolution of bonds of trust between individuals and social groups, as well as to a weakening of respect for human life and dignity. Furthermore, these societal strains constitute important threats to social and political stability. The concept of social cohesion therefore clearly stems from deep concern about social exclusion and the way this is reproduced and exacerbated within contexts of economic transition, economic depression and political instability.



As a result, there has been increasing focus on social inclusion in view, not only of mitigating the impact of weakening social fabric and cohesion, but also of ensuring greater respect for the basic rights of individuals and groups. Emphasis on social exclusion therefore translates into a desire to enhance the inclusion of all individuals and groups into a pluralistic, just and cohesive society, particularly through equitable access to social services (health, education, housing, employment), security and justice, as well as to other social benefits. This attempt to enhance inclusion is directed particularly at those groups that are most excluded from full social, cultural, economic and political participation: they include a wide array of groups ranging from national minorities, the unemployed, youth, women, immigrants, refugees and internally displaced populations, street children, remote rural communities, people living with HIV/AIDS, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, to traveler families and to the elderly. It is important to note that, in many cases, it is a combination of multiple discriminations that leads to social exclusion of individuals and groups.

It is now widely established that education systems often contribute to perpetuating social and economic disparities and inequalities as is illustrated by patterns of inequitable access to formal education based on a combination of factors related to gender, income level, residence and minority status. These inequities (as monitored by disparities in net enrolment ratios, retention, completion and literacy rates) are important sources of social exclusion. Moreover, beyond educational deprivation and inequitable access to education and training, official curricular content may also contribute to maintaining and reproducing stereotypes and prejudice towards certain minority groups through the languages of instruction used (or not used). Similarly, while the content and unintended consequences of schooling may act as precipitating factors in the breakdown of social cohesion, formal education also has an important role to play in



strengthening or rebuilding social fabric through enhanced social.

The extraordinary expansion in access to education worldwide is therefore associated with the historical development of the nation-State model. However, there exists a more recent tension arising from the simultaneous globalization of the model of the nation-State, and that of expanding markets for which political frontiers are less relevant. In all contemporary societies, globalization is impacting on the ways in which individuals and groups define themselves. There are discussions about the ways in which these changes translate, for example, into attitudes of extreme individualism associated with the “individualization of social norms” or the need to counter the “growing cynicism” characteristic of “Late Modernity”. Considerations of this type have led many people to wonder to what extent education for social inclusion is possible within a context of economic globalization. Yet, transforming our models of education to reflect changing educational culture and to ensure new modes of social cohesion is, as we all know, not an easy task.

Despite principles of the right to education for all and of equality of opportunity and the expansion of basic education across the world, inequality is an integral part of the educational process. There appears then to be a tension between the principle of equality and the reality of economic and social inequalities that is only partly resolved through schooling. The educational process cannot fully address the causes and determinants of social exclusion that lie elsewhere outside the school system. Nevertheless, a range of measures can be taken with regard to the school system to adopt norms, management styles, learning content and approaches that respond to the specific needs resulting from social determinants of exclusion. The translation of such measures to enhance social inclusion into effective practice is perhaps the central challenge, particularly within contexts of decentralized educational management systems.



The major social categories given as externally influencing inclusion and social exclusion in schooling seem not to have changed. Central for system actors are socio-economic status and poverty. But these "older" categories of differentiation, exclusion, and social equity weave together with categories of ethnicity, gender and race. We say "weave together" with categories of poverty and socio-economic status because many, but not all of the newer categories, are in fact correlated in the interviews, but never made explicit except by discussion about an ethnic or minority group in contexts of social problems of "lack of discipline", unemployment, and family. This is not, however, necessarily the case with gender issues, which we can surmise, moves along structural lines of division in society.

The importance of the new categories that overlap with that of poverty and socio-economic status is that the excluded groups become defined through new social categories of deviance. The different sets of categories are placed in a proximity to each other to pose a practical causality, that is, the different categories are thought of as providing explanations about the cause and effects of social inclusion and exclusion.

In this context, quality control is a particular type of governing-at-a-distance. Individuals internalise the management rules of action and participation as though they are on their own. The logic of action demands particular types of self-assessment that steer what is construed as responsible and motivated teaching.

As one should expect, the decentralisation/centralisation processes has produced new roles for system actors: increased responsibilities to co-ordinate school development and finances, reconstruct the school curriculum and new models of administration with a new middle management level within schools that include self management and self evaluation. In Sweden, for example, decentralisation has produced new



expertise in designing the teacher through hiring consultants, and need for economic skills in the local organisation of the school.

Another important element related to social inclusion is the role of the life long learning, the increasing recognition of the key role of the further education in widening access to education and training, particularly to “non-traditional” learners.

Beside the socio-economic problems that have been presented for the initial training/education, financial factors were found to mitigate against participation in any form of further education. This is associated with factors such as low income and poverty. It is also associated with regulations within the benefits system. This might indicate a problem in policy which advocates lifelong learning and social inclusion through education and training and participation in the labour market yet at the same time makes it difficult for people caught in the poverty trap to take the first step towards learning.

Structural inequality needs to be tackled as this lies at the root of the learning divide. The measures which are required to attract “non-traditional” students/learners, and to enable them to pursue their studies successfully, will require a heavy investment of resources, given the nature of the problems to be overcome. These are however issues which must be addressed.

The needs of these groups must be clearly identified and appropriate provision developed if they are to be enabled to participate successfully in further training. If this is not done there is the danger that the expansion of further training may exacerbate the problem of social exclusion, rather than lessen it. There is the possibility that as we widen the net to include more people who have some educational achievements, even if limited, those from the most disadvantaged circumstances will become more isolated in their lack of achievements and qualifications which would



enable them to participate in education, society or/and the labour market.

Recently, lifelong learning concept is being enriched with a new dimension: lifewide learning. Together, the concept of “learning” is becoming bi-dimensional. On one side is lifelong – meaning education and training for the entire life (sometime quite literally), on the other side lifewide – meaning the recognition of all learning “dimensions”: formal (in an organised environment), in-formal (random and unorganised contacts with different sources of learning: socioprofesional, family, friends etc.), non-formal (mainly self instruction).

The new concept is further pointing out the responsibilities transfer from the state toward the individual, being obvious that the motivation and seizing of the opportunities is “person oriented”. The state must, create through a national strategy, the required condition for the lifelong learning process, especially finding the financial levers and assessment mechanisms for different programmes or skills acquired.

Further education is more and more interdisciplinary and is now crossing more or less formal boundaries between education, labour market, industry, social, regional etc. This is imposing a reshaping of the communications and coordination among central and local authorities, state and private agencies, various institutions and organisations.

The responsibilities transfer from public sector towards the private and civil one must be considered, especially because of the life wide dimension. The environments and contexts in which the learning process occurs are diversifying, involving more actors from an increased number of sectors. New subsystems of the educational and lifelong learning process are thus structuring, in a synergic manner.



AUSTRIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In Austria, higher education is provided by universities (including the universities of the arts) and Fachhochschulen which were introduced in 1994. There are also Academies (e.g. Teacher Training Colleges). The 1993 University Reform redefined the relationships of the universities and the State. The universities remain state institutions and the State continues to finance them. Universities are free to handle their internal affairs and formulate their statutes. The law provides for the establishment of a university board (Universitätsbeirat) at each institution which comprises leading figures from public life and the private sector. It also provides for the University Curatorium which is responsible for providing the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Culture with expert opinion on issues of university policy and launching evaluation measures that pertain to the university sector as a whole. The University Assembly



elects the rectors. The Ministry assumes a predominantly supervisory function and continues to be responsible for strategic planning and research. The 1997 Universities Studies Act establishes which degree programmes may be introduced at universities and regulates admissions and the award of academic degrees. In 1998, a law was passed which reorganised the Schools of Art and Music into universities of the arts. In 1999, the university Accreditation Act was enacted which allows private institutions to obtain accreditation as a Private University by an autonomous board, the Accreditation Council.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

University type higher education institutions are established, organised and run their activities in accordance with the Federal Act on the Organisation of Universities and their studies (Universities Act 2002), which became fully effective in 2004. The Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) are organised in accordance with the 1993 *Fachhochschul* (FH) Study Act.

In universities, it has been possible to offer a degree structure based on **two main cycles** (Bachelor's/Master's) since 1999. At *Fachhochschulen*, the 2002 amendment to the *Fachhochschul* Study Act provides a legal basis for the Bachelor's/Master's degree structure.

Doctoral programmes have their main legal basis in paragraph 54 of the 2002 Universities Act. They comprise either 120 ECTS credits or – where universities offer Ph.D. type programmes in certain fields – 240 ECTS credits. Each programme consists of compulsory taught courses (involving mainly science oriented seminars) and a thesis. The amount of time allocated to each is laid down in the respective curriculum and there are no centralised regulations. A doctorate may also be awarded by several universities, including foreign institutions as is the case in some joint degree programmes.



Since 1999, implementation of **ECTS** has been compulsory for Bachelor and Master level programmes and, in universities, for doctoral programmes. ECTS is used for credit transfer as well as for credit accumulation. It is fully implemented at universities and *Fachhochschulen*. In accordance with the Academies Studies Act of 1999, it has also been compulsory in the case of diploma studies at *Lehrer/innenbildende Akademien* (teacher training colleges).

The University Studies Evidence Decree which came into force in August 2002, regulates implementation of the **Diploma Supplement**.

The *Lehrer/innenbildende Akademien* have been issuing Diploma Supplements since the 2003 summer term. Since October 2003, Diploma Supplements have been issued free of charge in German and English to all graduates. In *Fachhochschulen*, they are issued automatically. From July 2005, all universities will also be obliged to issue the Diploma Supplement automatically to all graduates.

Action has been taken to develop a unified national approach to **quality assurance** in higher education. The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) was founded in late 2003 and became effective in the spring of 2004. The Agency is a joint initiative of the Austrian Rectors' Conference (ÖRK), the Austrian *Fachhochschule* Conference (FHK), the Association of Private Universities (PU), the Austrian Students Union (ÖH) and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK). AQA is a service agency set up to assist the universities and *Fachhochschulen* in creating their quality management systems. The Agency's responsibilities include the development of standards and procedures for quality assurance in higher education, the coordination of evaluation procedures for study programmes and institutions, counselling and supporting higher education institutions in the development and implementation of internal quality assurance processes, as well as the certification of quality management processes. In accordance with international standards for quality assurance and evaluation agencies, AQA



publishes a summary of the results of evaluations with the agreement of the higher education institutions concerned. The scientific council (*Wissenschaftlicher Beirat*) of the AQA includes a majority of foreign experts. The independent *Fachhochschul*-Council (FHR) is the accrediting body of the *Fachhochschulen* sector (universities of applied sciences). Its duties are regulated by the FH Study Act and comprise accreditation, advice to the ministry, and the promotion of the quality of teaching and learning, innovation and further education, as well as the monitoring of the FH sector. A summary based on the evaluation report is published on the website of the FH Council with the agreement of the institution. The findings – and especially the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the follow-up – contribute to the re-accreditation decisions of the FHR. According to the 2004 Evaluation Decree of the FH Council, at least one member of a review team in *Fachhochschulen* must come from a similar higher education institution abroad. The independent Austrian Accreditation Council (AR) is the accrediting body for the private university sector. Its main activity is the accreditation of new higher education institutions or of study courses within already accredited private universities. In addition, it monitors the private university sector and the maintenance of general standards. The findings of site visits by external experts are used for accreditation and re-accreditation decisions by the AR, the majority of whose members are international experts. The results are not made public.

The 1999 University Accreditation Act regulates the accreditation procedures for private universities (accounting for around 1% of students in higher education) and establishes the responsibilities and decision-making powers of the AR. Under the regulations of the Act, private universities have to submit an annual development report, as well as documentation and the results of evaluation procedures in the areas of teaching and research carried out by the university. Accreditation, which lasts for five years, is based on a site visit by an expert panel. The AR decision



must be approved by the responsible federal minister. The evaluation procedures which are applied in a similar manner by all the accreditation and evaluation bodies are based on three general stages: self evaluation/documentation, external evaluation including peer review and a followup. In general, all higher education institutions in Austria practice continuous evaluation of courses and teaching by means of student surveys. Students are often involved in selfevaluation processes prior to external evaluations. The Austrian Students Union (ÖH) is a member organisation of AQA, and represented on its management board and in its general assembly.

The Universities Act 2002 (Art. 14) lays down the obligation on the part of universities to establish an **internal quality** management system. Several elements are further specified: continuous internal evaluation, evaluation of the activities and performance of university teachers and external evaluation initiated by the university council, the rector or the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK). Performance agreements (*Leistungsvereinbarungen*) are a key concept in establishing profiles and services and provide a basis for the funding of public universities (comprising around 90 % of students in higher education). University responsibilities and the achievement of stated goals are taken into consideration in the negotiation process. Evaluations and quality assurance measures are considered in the performance agreements and are normally conducted in accordance with international standards and generally accepted procedures. There is no legal obligation to accredit public universities or their study programmes. The 1993 Study Act founding the *Fachhochschulen* (accounting for around 8 % of students in higher education) contains regulations for their internal quality assurance procedures (e.g. regular evaluation of courses through student surveys). It also prescribes an obligation for accreditation and reaccreditation of study programmes (after a maximum period of five years) by the FHR. The 2004 Evaluation Decree specifies the procedures for the external evaluation of study programmes and institutions with a view to their re-



accreditation. The decision to reaccredit is generally taken on the basis of external evaluation, which is co-ordinated by an independent quality assurance agency. The external evaluation process follows three main stages: (1) self-evaluation and a report, (2) a site visit by an expert team of at least three members, and (3) an evaluation report and follow-up. The AQA is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and has observer status with the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEEN).

The FHR and AR are full members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and INQAAHE, as well as founder members of the D-A-CH Network (a regional network of accreditation agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland). They are also members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) and of the CEEN. The FHR is a member of the Joint Quality Initiative.



BELGIUM



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (Flemish)

Higher education comprises university and non-university institutions (Hogescholen); transfer from one type to another is possible. Entrance examinations exist only for Civil Engineering,



Civil Engineering -Architecture, Dental Sciences, Medical Sciences, Nautical Sciences and Fine Arts. Higher non-university education offers both short-term (one cycle), three-year study courses and long-term (two-cycle) four-to five-year study courses of academic level. There are 24 hogescholen and 6 universities. University education takes four, five, six or seven years, depending on the discipline. In addition, hogescholen and universities offer postgraduate (advanced, supplementary or specialized) training programmes. Courses at postgraduate level are also organized at postgraduate training institutions, three of which are recognized by the Flemish government: Vlerick Leuven-Gent Management School, Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde and Instituut voor ontwikkelingsbeleid en-beheer.

STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (French)

Higher education is provided in both universities and non-university institutions, mainly the Hautes Ecoles, which include long cycle and short cycle studies. The Instituts supérieurs d'Architecture provide long cycles only. University studies and long cycle studies are of the same level. Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution lays down the principle of the freedom of teaching and provides for the existence of state-organized teaching. Within this constitutional framework, two networks of institutions of higher education have developed extensively: public institutions set up by the state and administered by the (linguistic) communities, or by the provincial or municipal authorities, and private institutions of which the majority are denominational (Roman Catholic). Private higher education is of considerable importance: it takes place either in religious institutions or in civic institutions. The community is responsible for official education. Private institutions of higher education receive financial aid from the state, subject to certain conditions.



Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process (Flemish)

The most recent arrangements linked to the Bologna Process are specified in the Higher Education Act of 4 April 2003, which reforms the structure of higher education.

The degree structure based on **three main cycles** constitutes the core of the Act, which introduced this new structure for all programmes in the 2004/05 academic year. The transitional period between the previous system and the new one should end in 2006. For longer programmes, it may last until 2010.

The old system is transformed into a binary system consisting of professionally-oriented Bachelor's degrees in non-university higher education and two-tier Bachelor's and Master's degrees in universities, as well as nonuniversity higher education institutions. By means of the mechanism of bridging courses (*schakelprogramma*), holders of professionally-oriented Bachelor's degrees may have access to Master's programmes. The Higher Education Act also offered the opportunity to establish associations between universities and non-university institutions (*Hogescholen*). An association is the officially registered cooperation between a university and one or more *Hogescholen*.

Doctorates (*Doctor*) as the highest level of specialisation in scientific research are based on an original research project resulting in the public presentation of a doctoral thesis. The Higher Education Act does not specify any minimum or maximum duration for this kind of programme (although the average duration is 6" years). This degree is only offered at the six universities and at two by virtue of the law on registered higher education institutions (theological institutions). Joint and double doctoral degrees in co-operation with foreign universities are possible in law. Doctoral programmes are open to graduates with



a relevant foreign Master's degree, in some cases after a preliminary examination depending on the field of study.

A credit system based entirely on **ECTS** has been applied to university programmes (both in terms of transfer and accumulation) since 1991 and to non-university higher education programmes since 1994. The new Higher Education Act endorses the compatibility of the existing credit system with ECTS.

A compulsory **Diploma Supplement** has been awarded automatically to all students regardless the programme followed, at university level since 1991 and at nonuniversity level since 1994. The new Higher Education Act endorses the concept of a Diploma Supplement and the Flemish one is now adapted to the international one. The Diploma Supplement is free of charge. It is automatically delivered in Dutch and upon students' request in English.

As regards **quality assurance**, compulsory **external quality** control, based upon a selfassessment report and a site visit by a panel of peers, world of work/professionals and (international) experts, results in a public report on each programme and the state of the art of that programme in the Flemish Community. Together with the stakeholders, the NVAO has worked out a frame of reference, which will be used to evaluate and accredit programmes.

Internal quality control derives from the autonomy of higher education institutions and the report is used in the first stage of external evaluation. This quality control is the starting point for all evaluation.

The concept of **accreditation** has been incorporated into the Higher Education Act. As accreditation will be organised in close cooperation with the Netherlands, an independent Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Body (*Nederlands-Vlaams Accreditatie Orgaan*, or NVAO) has been set up since 3 September 2003. This co-operation initiated the Joint Quality Initiative and played an important role in the establishment of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). ECA functions as a platform for automatic and mutual recognition of the accreditation decisions of



its members and has produced a code of good practice. Accreditation is the final step in the programme quality control system used by all Flemish Community higher education institutions. Students are involved at every stage.

The Flemish Community of Belgium is a member since 2000 of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) through the VLIR (Flemish Inter-university Council) and the VLHORA (Flemish Council of *Hogescholen*).

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process (French)

The Bologna reform is above all apparent in the adoption of the decree of 31 March 2004, which specifies the remit of higher education, facilitating its inclusion within the European Higher Education Area and providing fresh funding for universities. The decree governs the structure of (full-time) university and non-university higher education, as well as that of social advancement courses corresponding to full-time non-university higher education.

The pattern in which courses are structured into **two basic cycles** and then a **third research-oriented cycle** is gradually being introduced with effect from the 2004/05 academic year for all types of higher education, except in the case of short courses. At present, this mainly applies to the first year of studies.

Higher education is currently in a transitional period in which two systems will co-exist until 2009. Entry to third-cycle programmes is possible after obtaining a Master's qualification (120 credits). These programmes consist of doctoral courses (60 credits) which lead to a research training certificate and offer graduates a high-level academic and professional qualification. They may also consist of research for a doctoral thesis (at least 180 credits) which, if successfully defended, leads to the qualification of doctor. They are provided in *écoles doctorales* (doctoral 'schools') belonging to one or several *académies universitaires* (university associations).



Since the 2004/05 academic year, all programmes (including doctoral programmes) are offered with **ECTS** credits (1 year of study equals 60 credits). The system is used for both credit transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** was adopted in 2004/05 and was made compulsory by law in all types of higher education. The example used at *Hautes Écoles* and *Écoles supérieures des Arts* is regulated by government, while the one used at universities is established by the CIUF (Interuniversity Council of the French Community). Universities already began issuing the Supplement in 2002 on an optional basis, and certain *Hautes Écoles* followed suit in 2003/04. It is issued in French automatically and free of charge to all students. Institutions may choose to issue it in English.

Following the November 2002 decree concerning the introduction of **quality evaluation** in higher education, the *Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur* (Agency for Higher Education Quality Evaluation) was established, and has been in official operation since January 2004.

Apart from representing the French Community vis-à-vis national and international bodies in the area of higher education quality evaluation, the Agency facilitates co-operation among all parties in higher education as a means of encouraging practices to improve quality at each institution. It is also responsible for ensuring the evaluation of higher education by drawing attention to good practice, as well as to inadequacies and problems that must be overcome. Finally, it must submit proposals to policy-makers for improving the overall quality of higher education. Students participate in the activities of the Agency, with three representatives chosen from a list put forward by student bodies.

The Agency selects experts for purposes of **external evaluation**. The committee consists mainly of a representative from the professional world and academics from the discipline undergoing evaluation.

There is a preference for foreign specialists who are not involved in any way with the institutions being evaluated. Students are



interviewed by the experts during the visits. The expert committee drafts a confidential report on each institution visited, which is communicated solely to its management and the president of the Agency. On completing an evaluation, the Committee drafts a 'horizontal' report which includes general comments and information regarding all institutions, without naming them. It is forwarded to the management of all the institutions concerned and to members of the Agency. The latter comment on the report, which is then passed on to the minister responsible for higher education for submission to the government.

The November 2002 decree states that higher education institutions must set up their own **internal evaluation** committees. In addition, each institution must nominate a resource person to act as an intermediary between the Agency and the institution itself in order to pass on information and encourage the participation of institutions.

Strictly speaking, there is no **accreditation** system for higher education institutions in the French Community. However, it is reasonable to think in terms of an 'ex ante' accreditation system, as only institutions that satisfy criteria established by the regulations may be recognised and subsidised by the French Community. Recognised institutions may provide courses only in subjects for which authorisation has been granted under the regulations.

They alone may award qualifications which are recognised academically or in law (in the case of those giving access to regulated professions in particular). Universities may have their authorisation to offer certain *master complémentaire* programmes (specialised programmes open to holders of a first *Master's* qualification) temporarily withdrawn if the number of students enrolled is not sufficient. Given their autonomy, higher education institutions are free to seek the accreditation of professional or sectoral bodies, but this has no legal implications (for example with regard to funding). There is no accreditation procedure for totally private institutions.



The Agency has expressed an interest in joining ENQA (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).



BULGARIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by universities, institutes and academies. Higher education is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. Some universities are private. Education is based on the Law on Higher Education (1995) and the Law on Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles (latest amendments 1996). Post-secondary institutions have academic



autonomy. In 1995, the National Assembly approved five new private higher education institutions.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

In June 2004, the Parliament adopted the last amendments to the 1995 Higher Education Act. The degree structure based on **three main cycles** was first implemented under the 1995 Higher Education Act. After the adoption of the Bologna Declaration (1999), the structure was reshaped, and holders of a Bachelor's degree were given the right to apply for doctoral studies. After the Berlin Conference (2003), the legislation was accordingly amended, thus only a Master's degree gives access to **doctoral studies** whose course of instruction lasts a minimum of three years (full-time) or four years (part-time). The higher education institution may offer provision for the third degree in listed fields of specialisation for which it has been accredited. Doctorands are trained according to individual curricula (including training and research activities) and have to prepare and defend a dissertation. Training is carried out under the guidance of a scientific supervisor appointed by the Faculty Council of the higher education institution concerned. Doctorate training can also be undertaken by research organisations such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Centre for Agrarian Studies in the fields for which these organisations are accredited. No special compulsory preparatory programmes or courses lead to these studies. The doctorate is conferred on doctorands who have passed the examinations specified in the curriculum and who have defended their dissertation in accordance with the requirements of the Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles Act.

The amendments to the Higher Education Act adopted in June 2004 and the ordinance for the implementation of **ECTS** in higher education institutions for credit accumulation and transfer (October 2004), provide the legal framework for its practical implementation. The system is mandatory for all institutions and study programmes for students admitted in 2004/05.



The **Diploma Supplement** was introduced in accordance with the amendments to the Higher Education Act adopted in June 2004. The secondary legislation related to the use of the Supplement is the ordinance on state requirements regarding the content of basic documents issued by higher education institutions, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers' Decree in August 2004. The Diploma Supplement has also been promoted by a variety of means (including seminars at national and university level, information brochures, meetings, etc.) in order to assist institutions with these activities. With effect from 2004/05, all graduates receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge in one of the widely spoken languages in the EU and in Bulgarian.

In recent years, the **evaluation** and **accreditation** system in Bulgaria has undergone considerable fresh development in terms of its scope and framework, and the methods and structure of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency established in 1995 have been subject to change and innovation. As a result, the Agency and higher education institutions hope to improve the transparency and comparability of the system for both students and employers. All such changes reflect widespread concern within the Bulgarian academic community regarding the quality of higher education and the need to develop, maintain and improve high quality academic programmes for its students and other stakeholders. The changes call for the creation of efficient and effective organisational structures within which programmes can be provided and supported, and are motivated by greater respect for institutional autonomy and the understanding that quality is primarily the responsibility of institutions themselves.

In 2003/04, the Agency made a considerable effort to develop and improve its evaluation and accreditation methods. Many of its proposals were incorporated into the new amendments of the Higher Education Act (in effect since June 2004). A number of paragraphs had been reworded, with a shift towards the evaluation of quality, rather than the evaluation of compliance with state requirements. Institutional accreditation is now



explicitly linked to the evaluation of the effectiveness of **internal quality assurance** processes and structures. Programme assessment methods are also shifting from a programme-by-programme approach to subject-level evaluation. The 52 subject fields in the National Classifier will be evaluated in the next two to three years, as the new method suggests a considerable reduction in the scope of the assessment exercise. Additional measures to enhance the effectiveness of Agency work are concerned with the new accreditation powers transferred from the Accreditation Council to eight subject-level standing committees. The latter have been responsible for the final accreditation of programmes since June 2004. The duration of the accreditation is five to six years.

Another innovation in Agency methods consists in the introduction of postaccreditation monitoring, which will become effective after the expected approval of the Agency's new statute by the Council of Ministers. To this end, the Agency is establishing a separate unit responsible for follow-up reviews, which may have serious consequences for the institutions visited, including possible withdrawal of accreditation. This legal and structural move on the part of the Agency reflects greater awareness of the need to protect the interests of society in the quality of higher education. Agency management is also likely to be improved following the establishment of its new Accreditation council. The Rectors Conference quota in the Council rises from four to six members, and the new body for the next six years will consist of eleven members, including the President and the Vice-President. The Vice-President is nominated from the Rectors Council quota and will be responsible for post-accreditation monitoring. Foreign experts are not involved in quality assurance procedures. With the last amendments to the Higher Education Act, the representatives of the Student Council of the higher education institution could participate in the monitoring of the internal quality assurance processes and education quality maintenance.



The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency is a member of the SEE regional network (Central and East European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies) which works in close co-operation with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The National Agency plans to apply for ENQA membership.



CROATIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Institutions of higher education include universities, faculties, academies of arts, polytechnics and schools of professional higher education. Higher education is divided into a university and a non-university sector. Universities can comprise faculties, academies of arts or departments. In addition to public higher education institutions which are founded by law or by a regulation of the Government of Croatia, there are private institutions which are founded by a decision of a founder. Private



institutions of higher education must be approved by the National Council for Higher Education. University studies qualify students for high level professional or artistic work and prepare them to continue their scientific work. Professional studies qualify students for high level professional work. There are four universities in Croatia located in Osijek, Rijeka, Split and Zagreb.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The most recent arrangements regarding the Bologna Process are specified in the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education of July 2003, and the amendments to it are contained in a further Act of July 2004.

The degree structure is traditionally based on **two main cycles** (consisting of a long first cycle of four to six years and a shorter second cycle lasting a minimum of two years), but the vast majority of students complete their studies at the end of the first cycle. The above-mentioned Act stipulates that a course structure based on **three main cycles** shall be introduced no later than the 2005/06 academic year. All higher education institutions are legally obliged to submit new study programme proposals to the National Council for Higher Education by March 2005. The first cycles at university will normally last three to four years and will lead to the title of *prvostupnik (baccalaureus/a)*. The second cycles will last one to two years and will lead to the *Master of Arts* and *Master of Science*. The third cycle will last three years. The major difference consists in the fact that the doctorate will not be awarded without proper doctoral study programmes. All other changes are still being determined.

The existing **doctoral studies** last a minimum of two years, or a minimum of one year for students working towards a doctorate in the academic field in which they have already earned a Master's degree. Normally no compulsory preparatory courses are needed to embark on doctoral studies. Entry requirements are usually a specific grade point average obtained during graduate studies, along with letters of recommendation. Some study programmes



(e.g. those at medical school) require published articles and/or attendance of specific courses for enrolment. Taught courses are part of the doctoral phase. There is little experience with joint European programmes.

Vocational studies will also be affected by the reform. From the 2005/06 academic year, courses that currently last at least two years will last from two to three years. In exceptional cases in which professional studies conform to international standards, they may last up to four years.

Introduction of **ECTS** is a legal obligation for all higher education institutions, as stipulated by the Act of July 2003. Those institutions that have not yet restructured their programmes are obliged to submit their proposals for new study programmes, as well as the number of ECTS credits for each, by March 2005. ECTS will be introduced no later than the 2005/06 academic year and will be used both in terms of transfer and accumulation. There is no national credit system but some disciplines have developed internal credit systems (similar to ECTS insofar as they award 30 credits per semester).

The Act of 2003 states that a format for the **Diploma Supplement** (*suplement diplome or dopunska isprava*) shall be established by universities, polytechnics and professional higher education institutions. An official model for the Supplement has not yet been finalised. Some faculties have been issuing the Diploma Supplement at the request of students, and some universities have implemented it before others. A regulation adopted in December 2004 determines the format of a Diploma Supplement and stipulates what information it must contain. The Diploma Supplement will be introduced for all students entering higher education in the 2005/06 academic year. However, the regulation does not determine whether a Diploma Supplement will be free of charge, nor does it state what language it will be issued in.

The national body responsible for **external quality assurance** is the National Council for Higher Education (*Nacionalno vijeće za visoku naobrazbu*), established by the Higher Education Act of



1993. The National Council is a state-funded body with four important responsibilities related to external quality assurance. It handles the evaluation of higher education on the basis of a qualitative appraisal of existing higher education institutions and their curricula in comparison with international standards. The Council is also responsible for providing the university senate with an opinion regarding the implementation and organisation of postgraduate academic studies. It participates in the process of determining qualitative standards for purposes of institutional accreditation, as well as in the periodic evaluation (every five years) of the quality and efficiency of teaching, academic and professional activities at higher education institutions.

Institutional **accreditation** is granted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in accordance with the assessment of evaluation findings carried out by the National Council of Higher Education.

Periodic evaluation of higher education institutions and programmes is initiated by the Ministry and is carried out by its expert commissions. Commissioners are appointed by the Minister following a National Council recommendation. The commissions base their assessment on the self-evaluation of the higher education institutions and on the opinions of professional societies and reputable international experts. Evaluations of higher education institutions by expert commissions are kept by the National Council for Higher Education but are not published. Some of institutions publish their evaluations on their websites.

Students have been involved in external reviews at the university level.

Discussions regarding the need for **internal quality assurance** mechanisms have been going on for some time, and certain universities have set up institutional bodies for safeguarding and advancing the quality of internal processes. So far, self-evaluations have been an integral part of the evaluation procedure by expert commissions. Students have been involved in the internal evaluation (of some higher education institutions only), through ECTS committees, quality assessment committees and



student evaluation projects, and as members of faculty councils and university senates.

The 2003 Act introduces considerable changes to existing quality assurance practices, including the establishment of an independent body for quality assurance as well as the Agency for Science and Higher Education (*Agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanj*), which will serve as a third party enabling and safeguarding unbiased quality control of academic and higher education institutions. In July 2004, the Regulation establishing the Agency for Science and Higher Education was passed and the latter has been operational since January 2005.

The Agency will be responsible for providing expert support in the process of evaluating academic organisations and higher education institutions, as well as in the evaluation of national scientific networks, establishing quality assurance systems at higher education institutions and accrediting study programmes.

It will also collect and analyse data related to the national science and higher education system. Furthermore, it will be responsible for enabling the Croatian higher education system to network with European and international education systems, securing conditions for joining the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and enhancing the presentation and implementation of the Bologna Process. Finally, it will establish the national quality assurance network as well as the Croatian ENIC office.

Experts propose that the Agency should consist of three departments. One of them would be the quality assurance department, which would be intended to serve as an independent body for external quality assurance and to perform external evaluations of institutions and study programmes. At some time in the future, this department might be transformed into an independent agency, in line with quality assurance practices in most EU countries. It is desirable that the external evaluation carried out by the department should be preceded by internal assessments (self-evaluation). The team performing external



evaluation will consist of university professors and external experts, with scope for the inclusion of student representatives. In accordance with the Act, the National Council for Higher Education (*Nacionalno vijeće za visoko obrazovanje*) with redefined responsibilities was set up at the end of February 2005 and has started functioning. The Council shall be an expert advisory body responsible for the development and quality of the higher education system as a whole. As part of its tasks related to quality assurance, it will give its consent to the requirements of the Rector's Conference and the Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education for obtaining scientific research and teaching grades, artistic teaching grades and other teaching grades. It will present the Minister with proposals for regulations on standards and criteria for establishing and assessing higher education institutions and programmes, as well as proposals regarding the issuing of accreditations. The Council will also appoint evaluators and give an opinion on the establishment of new higher education institutions and programmes, as well as assess higher education institutions and programmes. In 2001, this body became a member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies of Higher Education (CEENQAAHE). Croatia is also an eligible member of the ENQA.



CYPRUS



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

GREEK-CYPRriot: The University of Cyprus which opened in September 1992 comprises four schools (Humanities and Social Sciences, Pure and Applied Sciences, Economics and Management and Letters). Studies are organized in semesters, and subjects taught are counted in credits. Degrees last at least eight semesters. As of September 1987, a Law to regulate the establishment, control and operation of tertiary institutions was enacted by Parliament. According to this Law, all private tertiary institutions have to register with the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, registration does not imply recognition of their degrees.

TURKISH-CYPRriot: The Higher Technological Institute, Famagusta, was upgraded in 1986 and renamed the



University of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its courses are accredited by the Turkish Higher Education Council. The University of the Eastern Mediterranean offers a preparatory year which has, since 1988, been devoted entirely to courses in the English language to enable prospective students to move into undergraduate courses, all of which are conducted in English. There is also the Lefke Aürupali Üniversitesi (Lefke European University), the Uluslararası Amerikalı Üniversitesi (International American University) and the Yakim Dogu Üniversitesi (Near East University). These institutions, except for the International American University, are not recognized by the Cypriot Government.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Since the provision of higher education in Cyprus is limited, many young people at this level of education study abroad. The University of Cyprus (*panepistimio*) was established by law in 1989 and admitted its first students in 1992. The legal basis for the establishment and operation of institutions of higher education (including private schools) is regulated by a law adopted in 1996 (and last amended in December 2003).

The degree structure is traditionally based on **three main cycles**. At the University of Cyprus, the programmes leading to Bachelor's qualifications (*ptychio*) last 4 years and those leading to Master's (M.A. and M.Sc.) last 1 to 2 years. Some private higher education institutions (HEIs) also offer accredited programmes at the Master's level. Master's programmes follow on from degrees normally requiring four years of study.

Doctoral programmes leading to the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy (*didaktoriko diploma*) last 3 to 8 years. These are offered only at the University of Cyprus. The requirements for a doctorate include the successful completion of at least 30 University of Cyprus Credit Units (corresponding to 1 class hour per week and 60 ECTS) at Master's level according to the field of study, and an original research thesis. In some exceptional cases,



students that are awarded a Bachelor's degree may have access to doctoral programmes. Another compulsory requirement for being awarded a doctorate is the successful completion of a qualifying comprehensive written exam by the fifth semester of studies.

The legislation authorises the University of Cyprus to establish joint degrees, but this has not yet occurred.

ECTS has not yet been implemented by law. The system is expected to be fully operational at the University of Cyprus by 2005/06. In public and private HEIs, its implementation will be gradual, as the legislation required to introduce it is currently the subject of national debate. Once implemented, ECTS will provide for both credit transfer and accumulation, as is already the case at the University and certain public and private HEIs that use it alongside their own credit system.

The University of Cyprus has introduced the **Diploma Supplement** as of the 2004/05 academic year. It has been issued automatically and free of charge in English, to every student who graduates from the University. In some private HEIs, the Diploma Supplement is issued on request and free of charge in English. As regards **quality assurance**, the Council of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation, CEEA (*Symvoulío Ek paideytikis Axiologisis-Pistopoiisis*, SEKAP) is the independent body responsible for the **external evaluation** of study programmes at private HEIs. SEKAP appoints Visiting Teams that consist of academics from the University of Cyprus, the other public institutions and at least one member from overseas. The Visiting Team examines the application which includes also a Self Evaluation report submitted by the applicant. As regards the evaluation of a programme, the Team visits the institution and issues an initial report on the basis of its findings. This report is submitted to the institution involved for its comments before the publication of the final report.

Accreditation of programmes offered by private HEIs along with the accreditation process itself is governed by the provisions of the 1996 Law that regulates the establishment and operation of higher education institutions. Public HEIs are not accredited.



There have also been moves to establish a National Quality Assurance Agency. Although the issue is currently being discussed by the appropriate authorities, no official steps have yet been taken to set up such an Agency.

As part of **internal evaluation** (selfassessment), the University of Cyprus has satisfactorily completed the European Universities Association (EUA) institutional peer evaluation and follow-up for 2004. Students participate in internal evaluation through surveys and questionnaires. Through CEEA, Cyprus has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since it was set up in 1996.

Besides its measures associated with the Bologna Process, the government has taken steps to enable the establishment of private universities that guarantee appropriate levels of quality. This is currently in the process of being approved by the plenary session of the parliament. The Technological University of Cyprus has also been established. In addition, there is ongoing debate on further legislation to introduce ECTS and the Diploma Supplement in all public and private higher education institutions.



CZECH REPUBLIC



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by university type and non-university type institutions. The non-university higher education institutions mainly offer Bachelor study programmes. Higher education institutions of university type offer Bachelor, Master and Doctoral study programmes. Higher education institutions offer courses in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural



Sciences, Engineering, Medicine and Pharmacy, Theology, as well as in Economics, Veterinary Medicine, and Agriculture, Teacher Training and Arts. The majority of higher education institutions are public institutions. There are also 14 private higher education institutions. Public institutions are financed by the state budget by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The private higher education institutions could be partially financed by the State. In addition, the Czech higher education system includes 4 state higher education institutions. There are three military higher education institutions and a Police Academy. These institutions are financed by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior. All higher education institutions provide accredited study programmes which are assessed by the Accreditation Commission. Important partners of the Ministry of education in all decisions concerning higher education are the Czech Rectors' Conference and the Council of Higher Education Institutions.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The main arrangements linked to the Bologna Process are the 1998 Act on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which came into force on 1 July 1998 and its amendments, especially that of 1 July 2001. The implementation of the principle of the Bologna Process has become an important part of the strategy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) as well as of respective higher education institutions, concretely expressed in their longterm strategies and the long-term strategy of MEYS and their annual updating. It is also a part of the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper) approved by the Government in 2000 and the Strategic Development of Tertiary Education issued by MEYS for the period 2000-2005 (2010). The above mentioned legislation creates a legal framework which clearly identifies and



corresponds with the Bologna scheme of three cycles of higher education, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral.

A degree structure based on **two main cycles** – a short Master's programmes (*magistr*), building on a first university degree, Bachelor's (*bakalář*) – was formally added to the traditional one-tier programmes in 1990. The 2001 Amendment of the Act on HEIs introduced a strictly **three-cycle structure**. A Doctoral study programme follows any Master's qualification. The complete model is 3-4 years Bachelor's, 1-3 years Master's and 3 years Doctoral. In the case of non structured programmes it is 4-6 years long Master's and 3 years Doctoral. Since the academic year 2004/05, the vast majority of students have been accepted into a Bachelor's study programme. The integrated study programmes running in parallel are either those in which the accreditation has not expired yet or specific disciplines e.g. medical studies, veterinary studies, pharmacy and others selected by the Accreditation Commission. It is not possible to enter Doctoral studies after a Bachelor's degree programme.

Under the Act on HEIs, all study programmes have been re-accredited since 2002. Since 2000, the Transformation and Development Programme has been established to support Bologna action lines including the development of Bachelor's degree studies and the restructuring of traditional higher education courses into two cycles (Bachelor's and Master's). A 'long' doctoral study programme of 5 years starting after a Bachelor's degree is not planned.

Doctoral study programmes are aimed at scientific research and independent creative activity in the field of research and development, or independent theoretical and creative activity in the Arts. The **Doctoral study** consists of individual research and a theoretical part for which students have to pass an examination. Study is completed with a state doctoral examination and the defence of a dissertation.

Higher education institutions can be of university or non-university types. According to the law the non-university type higher education institutions cannot provide Doctoral study



programmes. In practice nonuniversity type higher education institutions provide mostly Bachelor's study programmes, only 7 of them have had Master's degree study programmes accredited (academic year 2004/05).

There are **joint degree** programmes as well as combined degree programmes. There is no specific national legislation but the present one allows for the development of joint degrees. There is no central monitoring but some higher education institutions are involved in such programmes.

The ECTS system is not stipulated in the Act on HEIs, however, all public higher education institutions have **ECTS** or ECTS-compatible credit systems. In private establishments, it is relatively new, and some have not yet introduced it. The international transfer of credits has been relatively widely accepted. The national transfer of credits occurs between higher education institutions, faculties and higher education study programmes of similar type. However, problems arise if there is a transfer of credits between different types of institution, faculty and study programme. The accumulative function of ECTS has recently been used by many places of higher education.

The number of institutions, namely universitytype HEIs, which use the accumulative function to enable their students to follow more flexible paths within a respective study programme has been growing. Technical universities especially try to increase the attractiveness of their studies in this way.

The European **Diploma Supplement** (DS) is listed among the documents on studies and papers certifying graduation in study programmes. In accordance with the 1998 Higher Education Act, the DS was issued on request. In 2004, a group of experts from higher education institutions, MEYS, ENIC/NARIC and the national DS co-ordinator prepared documentation to help Czech institutions to meet the demand of the Berlin Communiqué – issuing the DS to every graduate in 2005. From 2005, it will be available free of charge in the language to be determined by the HEI. The bilingualism is highly recommended.



The **quality assurance** system includes selfevaluation, external evaluation, peer review and accreditation (based on previous evaluation).

The 1998 Act on HEIs states that any higher education institution (public, state or private) has to regularly carry out **internal evaluation** of its activities on a regular basis, to specify details of the process in its internal regulations and to publish the results. Internal evaluation is considered to be a precondition and the point of departure for setting the long-term strategy of HEIs in the area of education and research and development.

External evaluation and/or peer review is performed by the Accreditation Commission (AC– *Akreditační komise*) or its working committees unless the institutions apply for international evaluation. The AC was established by the Act on HEIs in July 1990. Since 1992, it has conducted peer reviews and comparative evaluations of faculties in related fields of study. The procedures of the AC are regulated by statute, the most recent valid from 28 July 2004). After 1998, the duty of accreditation of all study programmes was given by the 1998 Act on HEIs, when a number of significant changes to the education system were made. New powers and responsibilities were also given to the AC. It is expected that the AC will concentrate once again on peer review, comparative evaluation and related activities connected with external evaluation procedures.

The Accreditation Commission is an independent expert body composed of 21 members, including foreign experts. There are no rules concerning international experts in the governance and evaluation panels of the agency. In practice, there have always been foreign experts in the AC, at present there are 3 members from foreign universities. All members are appointed by the Czech Government on the recommendation of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports. The AC's tasks are to foster the quality of higher education and to evaluate all aspects of education and research, scientific, developmental, artistic or other creative activities of higher education institutions. All higher education study programmes whether state or private have to be



accredited. Accreditation is awarded by MEYS on the AC's recommendation. The AC's approval is also needed to receive the licence enabling the establishment of private higher education institutions, the appointment of professors and associate professors (*docent*). The AC is also involved in the founding and abolition of faculties in public HEIs as well as in determining types of HEI (university or non-university). The Accreditation Commission settles minimum standards concerning staff and information technologies, literature and study materials.

Study results within the framework of Doctoral study programmes are monitored and assessed by a specialist board. HEIs or parts of them can create a joint specialist board for study programmes in the same field. The chair of the board is elected from within its members. The AC sets minimum standards concerning the content, staff and information technologies, literature and study materials of doctoral programmes.

Since May 2002, the Accreditation Commission has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The Czech Republic is also a member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and belongs to the founders of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEEN).



DENMARK



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education comprises a university sector and a college sector, i.e. the professionally-oriented higher education sector. The university sector includes 11 universities, 5 of which are multi-faculty universities. The other 6 are specialized in Engineering, Education, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Pharmacy or Business Studies. The university sector offers courses at three levels: Bachelor's Degree (normally 3 years of study), the Candidatus Degree (i.e. Master's Degree, normally 2 years following upon the Bachelor's Degree) and the Ph.D. Degree (normally 3 years' study after the Candidatus Degree). The universities also award the traditional higher Doctoral Degree



(dr. phil., dr. scient etc) after a minimum of 5-8 years' individual and original research. Study programmes of the university sector are research-based. The college sector comprises more than 150 specialized institutions of higher education offering professionally-oriented programmes, either short-cycle (2 years) or medium-cycle (3 to 4 years). Colleges offering medium-cycle higher education have started merging into more comprehensive Centres for Higher Education (Centre for Videregående Uddannelse (CVU)). Vocational colleges have formed Vocational Academies (Erhvervsakademier) as a framework for regional cooperation. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation is responsible for university education except for certain higher education programmes which come under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (e.g. Architecture, Music, Fine Arts, and Librarianship). The Ministry of Education is responsible for short- and medium-cycle education. The legislation covers the aims and framework of education, funding and in some cases curricula, examinations and staffing. Higher education institutions are publicly financed and State-regulated. The quality of higher education is ensured by ministerial approval of new programmes and institutions, external examiners and an evaluation system. Although they have institutional autonomy, institutions must follow general regulations concerning teacher qualifications, award structures, study programmes and quality assurance. While private institutions can operate without any approval, they must abide by an accreditation procedure to make their students eligible for state study grants.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The most recent arrangements linked to the Bologna Process in Denmark are specified in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation's Order of May 2004 on university Bachelor's and Master's programmes, which was issued under the Universities Act of May 2003, and the June 2004 Ministry of Culture Order on education in the academies of music and the Opera Academy.



A degree structure based on **two main cycles** was introduced in Denmark at the end of the 1980s. The above legislation has established a 3+2 structure (or in certain cases 3+2" or 3+3) in all university disciplines.

Since 1992, the **third-cycle Ph.D. programme** corresponds to 3 years full-time study based on the level of a completed ordinary Master's degree. According to the 2002 legislation, the Ph.D. programme includes supervised work on an independent research project (the Ph.D. project); preparation of a written thesis based on the Ph.D. project; and satisfactory completion of research (Ph.D.) courses approved by the institution. The total course workload must correspond to approximately 30 ECTS credit points; participation in research activities, including visits to other – mainly foreign – research institutions, or similar undertakings; and gaining teaching experience or experience in the dissemination of knowledge, directly related as far as possible to the Ph.D. project in question. In addition, the higher degree of *doctor* (dr.) can be obtained by mature researchers, normally after a minimum of 5-8 years of individual original research and public defence of a dissertation. Currently, a doctorate cannot be undertaken or awarded at two or more universities together.

The use of **ECTS** became mandatory in all higher education study programmes on 1 September 2001. It is also intended that it should be used for lifelong learning in adult higher education. The use of ECTS for credit accumulation is possible in most programmes.

Use of the **Diploma Supplement** became mandatory on 1 September 2002. All higher education institutions have since been obliged to issue the Supplement in English to all their graduates. It is issued free of charge.

In the field of **quality assurance**, the Act on the Danish Institute of Evaluation (Consolidated Act of September 2000) established the Danish Institute of Evaluation (EVA) as an independent national agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. At the time of its establishment, EVA incorporated the Danish Centre of Evaluation, which carried out external evaluation of



higher education from 1993 to 1999. EVA is responsible for external quality assurance at all levels of education in Denmark, including higher education (public and private subsidised higher education institutions). It initiates and conducts systematic evaluations of higher education programmes. Their activities may include institutional, auditing and other forms of evaluation. EVA may initiate evaluations on request. These evaluations are conducted as revenue-generating activities and may be requested by government, ministries and advisory boards, local authorities and educational establishments. A Board is responsible for the overall supervision of EVA. It appoints the Executive Director of EVA and draws up the programme for the year's activities on the recommendation of the Executive Director. A Committee of Representatives, which includes representatives from student bodies, comments on EVA's annual report and the priority of planned activities. For each evaluation EVA appoints a group composed of individuals with special expertise in the field concerned. All members must be independent of the programmes/institutions evaluated. As a general rule, EVA tries to recruit at least one Nordic member for each evaluation. All evaluation reports are published. Institutions evaluated are responsible for follow-ups. Evaluated institutions must prepare a follow-up plan that has to take into consideration the recommendations of the evaluation report.

Public announcement of the follow-up plan must be made not later than six months after publication of the report and must be made electronically available on the institution's home page.

Institutions are required to set up their own **internal quality assurance** procedures. The Universities Act specifies the role of deans, heads of department and study boards, respectively, in assuring and developing the quality of education and teaching. Selfevaluation, in which students normally participate, is an integral mandatory part of any evaluation. Accreditation of all programmes leading to a professional Bachelor's degree began in 2004. EVA conducts the accreditation/evaluation, and the Ministry of Education makes the accreditation decision. EVA also



conducts accreditation of private courses as part of the Ministry of Education procedure determining whether students at private teaching establishments should be eligible for Danish state study grants. The relevant ministries decide which institutions can offer which programmes. Any decision is based on considerations concerning the institution's ability to deliver a programme meeting certain quality requirements. When an institution is given the right to offer a certain programme, the institution must design the programme within a framework laid down by ministerial order.

All examinations at Danish higher education institutions are administered not only by the teacher, but also by an examiner who, in the case of many examinations including the final project, must be external. The external examiners are responsible for assuring the same standard for all examinations and thus for their quality. EVA is a founder member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



ESTONIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The higher education system is binary and consists of universities (ülikool) and applied higher education institutions (rakenduskõrgkool). Since 1999 some post-secondary vocational schools have a right to offer vocational higher education. There are six public universities, twelve private universities, seven state institutions of applied higher education, six private applied higher education institutions, nine state vocational education institutions



and eight private vocational education institutions offering vocational higher education. The usual duration of studies is three to four years. Higher education institutions are regulated by the Law on Universities (January 1995), the Law on Private Schools (June 1998), the Law on Applied Higher education Institutions (June 1998), the Law on Vocational Education Institutions (July 1998), the Law on the University of Tartu (January 1995), the Standard of Higher Education (June 2000) and the Law on the Organisation of Research and Developmental Activity (April 1997, 2001). The administration of higher education institutions or their study programmes is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Private higher education institutions or their study programmes are officially recognized after accreditation.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The general principles of legislation relevant to higher education are set out in the 1995 Universities Act (amended in 2004) and in the Professional Higher Education Institutions Act (1998 and 2004). The Vocational Education Institutions Act (1998 and 2004), the Private Schools Act (1998 and 2004) and the Adult Education Act (1993 and 2004) also regulate certain aspects of higher education.

Since the 2002/03 academic year, university (*ülikool*) programmes have been structured into **three main cycles**. The Master's degree (*magistrikraad*) requires 40 national credits (60 ECTS) if it follows a Bachelor's degree of 160 credits, and 80 credits if it follows a Bachelor's degree of 120 credits. The 3 + 2 model (3-year Bachelor's level programme and then a 2-year Master's level programme) is more common than the 4 + 1 model. The two-cycle structure applies to most disciplines, with the exception of medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, architecture, civil engineering and class teacher training. Applied higher education programmes continue to follow the one-cycle structure. The new law states that, with effect from 1 January 2004, not only universities but also



professional higher education institutions (*rakendusõgkool*) may offer Master's level programmes in theology and defence, or in other fields in co-operation with universities, depending on public needs.

Existing programmes leading to **doctorates** (*doktorikraad*) last 3 or 4 years and can be accessed after completion of a *magistrikraad* degree. Additional admission criteria may be set by each university. Universities only award doctoral degrees based on individual research. Bigger universities have also set minimum requirement for the theoretical courses. These optional courses are provided in parallel with the preparation of PhD theses. The reform of the doctoral programmes in the framework of the Bologna Process has not been initiated yet, but should be completed by 2007/08. The main change in new programmes will be a greater attention to research methodology, philosophy of science, etc. which are no longer part of the Masters' programmes.

Theoretical courses in PhD programs have usually a set minimum amount workload that may be different in different universities. These seminars can be completed in parallel to the preparation for the research work, but the courses are compulsory.

There is no possibility to award joint degrees at any level (Master's or doctorate). Funding is being provided for efforts in universities as well as at national level. The Nordic and Baltic countries are the main area of focus for international co-operation for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but institutional co-operation agreements have been signed with HEIs all over the world.

The national credit system (1 CP equals 1.5 ECTS credits) is based on student workload and corresponds to 40 working hours a week, and 40 weeks/credits per academic year. Since 1995, **ECTS** credits have been used voluntarily by most higher education institutions involved in the Socrates (Erasmus) programme. According to the legislation, ECTS will have to be introduced in all higher education institutions from the 2006/07 academic year onwards. A final decision in regard to all aspects



of ECTS has not been taken yet, but credit points are already used both for transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** has been implemented and all higher education institutions have had to issue it since 1 January 2004. It is free of charge and is issued automatically in Estonian and English to all students who have completed specialised studies (e.g. professional higher education, Master's, integrated curricula of Bachelor's and Master's, or doctoral studies). The Diploma Supplement is issued upon request in the case of students who have completed Bachelor's studies only.

Public universities entered into a **Quality Assurance** Agreement on June 2003, which establishes requirements for curricula, academic posts and academic degrees. In accordance with the Agreement, the universities have started to harmonise quality requirements in the three areas indicated, and undertook to apply the requirements by the start of the 2004/05 academic year. The Agreement includes an obligation to conduct a performance assessment of the previous academic year every September. Two private institutions have also joined the Agreement.

External evaluation is carried out mostly in the form of accreditation. There is no specific body involved in external evaluation. However, the Ministry of Education and Research has the power to carry out monitoring activities when the performance of higher education institutions does not comply with legal regulations.

Few institutions have a fully-fledged **internal quality** management system in place, but many are working to develop one. The Rectors' Conference has initiated the development of a quality handbook and criteria for university education. The results of this ongoing initiative are due in 2005. It has identified 15 quality criteria which will undergo a first round of evaluation by September 2005.

In the field of **accreditation**, the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (HEQAC, *Kõrghariduse Hindamise Nõukogu*) founded in 1995 co-ordinates the overall accreditation process and advises universities and other higher education



institutions in the preparation of self-evaluation documents. It comprises 12 members who are representatives from higher education institutions, research and development organisations, professional associations, employers' associations and student unions. Its main activities include the accreditation of curricula, definition of standards for higher education, disclosure of accreditation decisions and issuing recommendations. The role of the Accreditation Centre (AC) established in 1997 is to perform all practical work related to accreditation. The first round of accreditation was completed from 1997 to 2002. In general, the methods and processes have been established in accordance with those suggested by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Yet there is room for improvement, mostly regarding the organisation of accreditation which is complicated due to the changes in the system. After a site visit, the expert panel compiles a report. On the basis of self-evaluation by the higher education institutions and the report from foreign experts, HEQAC makes the accreditation decision. Full accreditation lasts for 7 years and conditional accreditation for 3 years, and in the event of a negative decision, the curricula concerned must be withdrawn. Until 2003, HEQAC had the full right to decide the result of the accreditation. Most university programmes and a smaller proportion of those offered by professional higher education institutions are accredited. Three universities have undergone an institutional accreditation. Since 2003, student representatives who are members of the HEQAC are entitled to participate in the accreditation process at this stage and provide input to the internal evaluation report. AC has been a member of the ENQA since 2002.



FINLAND



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided in two types of institutions: polytechnics (AMK/YH) and universities. Polytechnics are more practically-oriented, training professionals for expert posts, while



universities carry out research and provide education based on it. There are 20 universities in Finland: 10 multidisciplinary universities, three universities of technology, three schools of economics and business administration and four art academies. All universities are State-owned. Lower academic degrees (usually called kandidaatti) require 120 credits and can usually be completed in three years; higher academic degrees (usually called maisteri) require 160-180 credits, meaning five years of full-time study. Universities also confer postgraduate degrees (lisensiaatti/licenciat) and doctorates (tohtori/doktor). In the 1990s, the university degree system was revised to develop a two-stage system in nearly all fields. In the old system, lower university degrees were awarded in only a few fields of study, but in the present system they are awarded in most fields of study. Universities select their students independently. Competition for places is fierce and a numerus clausus applies in all fields. The polytechnic system was introduced in the 1990s to create a non-university sector in higher education. It is founded on a nationwide network of 29 regional polytechnics. Polytechnic degrees require 140-180 credits and usually take 3.5 to 4.5 years to complete. The Ministry of Education confirms the polytechnic degree programmes but the polytechnics make decisions concerning the curriculum.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The main arrangements linked to the Bologna Process are set out in the government's fiveyear development plan for education and research. The current development plan covering the years from 2003 to 2008 was adopted by the government in December 2003. A new government decree on university degrees issued in 2004 together with amendments to the 1997 Universities Act comes into force on 1 August 2005. With this reform, a **two-cycle degree system** with an obligatory Bachelor's degree will be adopted in all fields of study except medicine and dentistry.



Doctoral studies have not been restructured as part of the Bologna Process, but have otherwise been actively developed since the mid-1990s. Third-cycle programmes leading to the *licentiate* and doctorates are available for students with a Master's degree or a corresponding foreign degree. The prerequisite is usually a 'good' grade in the main subject.

The *licentiate* is an optional pre-doctoral degree, and is not offered in all fields of study. Universities and their faculties decide on their own degree regulations and curricula within the national degree regulations. According to the law, students awarded a doctorate must have completed postgraduate studies in addition to their doctoral dissertation. In artistic third-cycle education they may, instead of a dissertation, have to demonstrate in public the knowledge and skills required by the university.

The situation concerning taught courses varies from one university or faculty to the next and, even within faculties, there are differences between students depending on their individual study plans.

Doctoral studies are also offered by the graduate schools (*tutkijakoulu*) established in 1995, which have been set up in cooperation with several universities and research institutes. They are linked with centres of excellence in research, high-quality research projects, or nationally comprehensive and academically wide-ranging cooperation networks. In addition to universities, research institutes and enterprises participate in programmes. An important part of the instruction, which is jointly organised, consists of national and international intensive courses. Graduate schools cover all main areas of research. The Academy of Finland supports the graduate schools nominated by the Ministry of Education by funding researcher training courses as well as domestic and foreign travel by doctoral students. The polytechnic degree is a Bachelor's degree, and second-cycle polytechnic degrees were introduced for a trial period at the beginning of 2002. The latter are for those who hold a firstcycle polytechnic degree or its equivalent, and have acquired a minimum of three years' professional experience. The government bill to introduce



second-cycle polytechnic degrees on a permanent basis was submitted to parliament in March 2005, and the reform is expected to come into force in August 2005. In 2004, in line with the development of joint degrees within the European Higher Education Area, the Ministry of Education made a recommendation concerning international joint and double degrees. The recommendation concerns all degrees and can also be applied to collaborative projects by Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs). In order to ensure the legal protection of students, a joint degree should be arranged so that the degree belongs to at least one country's official degree system.

From August 2005 onwards, the national credit system will be fully replaced by a system based directly on **ECTS** which will be used for both credit transfer and accumulation. The credit reform concerns both universities and polytechnics. In the old system, one credit was awarded for approximately 40 hours of work (including lectures and other forms of instruction, exercises, seminars, and independent work at home or in the library). In the new system, the completion of one academic year is estimated to require an average of 1 600 hours of work, which is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits.

Doctoral programmes are not measured in ECTS credits. The universities and polytechnics have had a statutory duty since the mid-1990s to issue a **Diploma Supplement** to students on request.

Most institutions already issue the English language Diploma Supplement automatically to all students on graduation, and from August 2005 have a statutory obligation to do so. The Ministry of Education reminded HEIs in 2004 that the Supplement should always be free of charge.

Quality assurance in higher education comprises the three elements of national higher education policy, national evaluation and the quality assurance of individual institutions. All Finnish universities and polytechnics are obliged by legislation to evaluate themselves and take part in external evaluations.



To emphasise the quality work of HEIs, the Ministry of Education allocates part of the funding for institutions on the basis of their educational output. The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC, or *Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto/Rådet för utvärdering av högskolorna*) is an independent expert body that was set up in 1995 to assist universities and polytechnics in evaluation matters. Its activities are financed by the Ministry of Education. The Council also functions as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education in matters relating to evaluation and quality assurance. All Finnish universities and polytechnics have been evaluated at institutional level, and the Council has carried out several programme and thematic evaluations.

The duties and policies of FINHEEC are governed by the 1995 Decree on the Higher Education Evaluation Council and its 1998 amendment, which specify the duties of the Council. They must assist institutions of higher education and the Ministry of Education in evaluations. They have to organise evaluations of the activities of HEIs and evaluations related to higher education policy. FINHEEC is to engage in international cooperation in higher education and research in this area. Professional courses offered by higher education institutions will be evaluated and registered. Furthermore, FINHEEC provides advisory and consultancy services in the implementation of evaluations, develops evaluation methodology and communicates information on good Finnish and international practice to higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education. FINHEEC uses a basic evaluation method, which is commonly used in international higher education evaluations, and which corresponds to the Council of Europe recommendation (98/561/EC) of 24 September 1998. While the evaluation pattern used by FINHEEC is not rigidly predetermined, the following is the basic pattern for most of its evaluation projects. It initially makes a decision on an evaluation and appoints a steering committee which then makes a proposal about the composition of an external evaluation team and prepares both a review and project plan. FINHEEC next appoints the team and approves the project plan. The HEI under



review compiles a selfevaluation report for the team that visits it. The team then writes a review report published for general consultation, often in English. Students play an integral part in all evaluations, most of which consist of self-evaluation and peer review with international experts, and they are often represented in evaluation steering groups. However, their opinion may also be obtained via questionnaires, interviews and seminars.

The different phases are modified and specified during the course of evaluation which may vary greatly, for example in how rigidly FINHEEC dictates the self-evaluation process. However, this has an effect both on how much freedom the higher education institution has in the selfevaluation process, and on the latitude enjoyed by the external evaluation team.

Furthermore, evaluation may be geared to development or to **accreditation**, as in the accreditation of professional courses and the selection of quality units and centres of excellence on the basis of ranking. These too follow the basic evaluation method, except that there is no evaluation visit in the selection of quality units and centres of excellence.

FINHEEC also works as an accreditation body for continuing education programmes offered by universities and polytechnics. These programmes include MBA programmes, professional development programmes and specialist studies in different fields. FINHEEC is responsible for maintaining the register of accredited programmes. Besides and within the basic method, FINHEEC uses other evaluation techniques, such as a portfolio, peer review, and benchmarking.

FINHEEC is engaged in several international projects involving the Nordic region, or at European and global levels. It is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the secretariat of ENQA is currently at FINHEEC. The Council is also a member of the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education, which provides a discussion forum on issues in the field.

Besides reforms associated with the Bologna Process, university student admission procedures are developed nationally. The



government is planning to reform the system so as to facilitate a quick transition from secondary to higher education and to streamline current procedures. This requires measures such as expanding the joint application system. In addition, opportunities for adult students to participate in university studies will be promoted.



FRANCE



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education in France is characterized by a dual system : it is provided in universities (including Instituts nationaux polytechniques) open to a large number of students, whose programmes are generally geared towards research and its applications and in Grandes Ecoles and other professional higher education institutions with selective admission policies. Whereas most institutions come under the responsibility of the Ministry of



Youth, Education and Research, some Grandes Ecoles come under other Ministries. Universities are made up of units offering curricula in academic fields and of various institutes and schools - such as the IUT - offering courses in Engineering and Technology and special programmes in Management, Political Science, Languages and Physical Education, the IUFM (Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres) which offer training courses for primary and secondary schools teachers, the IUP (Instituts Universitaires Professionnalisés) which offer technological courses and practical training with an introduction to research and foreign languages. The Grandes Ecoles offer a high standard of professional education in three or more years after two years of preparatory classes and the passing of a very selective competitive entrance examination. They offer scientific training, teacher training or advanced business studies. Five Catholic higher education institutes prepare for either national and professional diplomas or for church diplomas. National diplomas are conferred by universities.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Initiated in 1999, adjustments to the higher education system in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process have been accompanied by a series of regulations published in April 2002. Among the most noteworthy is a decree to adapt the higher education system to development of the EHEA for the purpose of implementing the *licencemaster-doctorat* (LMD, or Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate) reform.

The existing structure is based on the **three main cycles** of the LMD model. The Master's degree and professional Bachelor's degree, in accordance with the principles of the European plan for professional first-level studies, were introduced in 1999. The conditions for obtaining a Master's degree were defined in the decree of 25 April 2002. For the first time, with the Master's degree, the structure of higher education is applicable to both universities and *grandes écoles* (higher education institutes). The



(professional or research) Master's was introduced in the 2002/03 academic year and requires 120 ECTS credits after the Bachelor's degree, i.e. 300 credits after the *baccalauréat* (secondary school diploma), thus marking the 'Bac + 5' level of studies.

Doctoral studies were also restructured in April 2002. They are organised at doctoral schools in two phases. The first, lasting one year, leads to a research Master's degree or a *diplôme d'études approfondies* (DEA, or predoctorate post-graduate degree). The second, lasting three years, leads to a doctorate after the defence of a thesis. The first phase of doctoral studies aims at initiating students to research and confirming their aptitudes in this respect. The doctorate is awarded by universities, *écoles normales supérieures* (*grandes écoles* for the training of teachers) and authorised public higher education institutions (HEIs) alone or jointly, according to the decree issued by ministers in charge of higher education and university research. The possibility to prepare a doctorate within the framework of 'international thesis cosupervision' has been widened since the decree of 6 January 2005. In the same respect, following an agreement of principle between the ministry for national education and the three HEI conferences concerned, the awarding of joint or double degrees in international partnerships will soon be applied to all other degree levels. Considering the schedule for the negotiation of four-year contracts between universities and the state, the implementation of the LMD reform has been effective since the beginning of the 2004/05 academic year for threequarters of universities. It will become effective for all universities by 2007 at the latest and by 2010 for all HEIs, with the direct application of the Bologna Process principles in the health sector (including paramedical studies) and the field of architecture.

Institutions have begun an overhaul of programmes offered in **ECTS** credits since the 2002/03 academic year, and of the organisation of modular programmes allowing more flexibility and better gradual orientation of students. The ECTS system is used for transfer and accumulation and will be fully implemented by 2007.



Within the framework of the LMD reform, the **Diploma Supplement** is being implemented progressively by all higher education institutions. By 2007, it will be issued automatically by all institutions free of charge, in French and in another language chosen by the institution.

With regard to **quality assessment**, the general principle established by regulations in 2002 is that of regular internal and external evaluation of HEIs as well as programmes and certification measures. The regulation is based on periodic evaluation, which is mandatory so that state recognition (in the form of quality assurance guarantees, etc.) and financial support can be granted as appropriate. National periodic external evaluation of research as well as programmes and degrees, in collaboration with the contractual policy with HEIs, is conducted by specialised national evaluation teams which set the evaluation criteria and make them public. Representatives from the professional world concerned with programme objectives are involved in the evaluation procedure. The results of external evaluation of all activities – scientific, teaching and management – are considered during negotiation of the four-year contract between a university or a HEI and the State. They are also taken into account when the State, as guarantor of the quality of degrees, takes decisions regarding the authorisation to award them. In the case of engineering, business and management programmes, institutions must be evaluated by specific national commissions in order to receive the authorisation to award national degrees.

The *Comité national d'évaluation* (CNE, or National Evaluation Committee) has existed since 1984, and is an independent administrative authority with the mission to evaluate public HEIs. Its objective is to conduct a global evaluation of institutions with a view to encouraging the development of autonomy and quality.

The evaluation of an institution by the Committee is based on an internal evaluation (self-evaluation) report provided by the institution. To help institutions conduct internal evaluations, a reference book was prepared by a workgroup from the CNE and



the *Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche* (General Inspectorate for National Education and Research), in collaboration with the *Conférence des présidents d'université* (CPU, or Conference of University Presidents), and was published in November 2003. Members of the CNE include foreign academics. Academic and nonacademic experts from France or abroad, as well as students, are asked to participate in evaluations.

Methods for the **internal evaluation** of programmes and courses offered at universities are set by the board of governors upon a proposal by the studies and student life council. Elected student representatives participate in the various councils which govern politics and life at universities. The CNE has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2000.



GERMANY



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are public and private state-recognized institutions of higher education categorized as: 1. universities (Universitäten) and equivalent higher education institutions (Technische Hochschulen/Technische Universitäten, Universitäten-Gesamthochschulen, Pädagogische Hochschulen); 2. Colleges of art and music (Kunsthochschulen and Musikhochschulen); 3. Fachhochschulen (universities of applied sciences) and



Verwaltungsfachhochschulen and company training centres. Since the early 1990s, the structure of higher education study and the internal organization have been the subject of reform. This has involved a review of the standard periods of study and examination requirements and improvements in teaching and a separation of study aimed at preparing students for the practice of a profession and the qualification of a new generation of academics and scientists. One priority is to expand Fachhochschulen and consolidate applied research and technology transfer. Institutions of higher education will be granted further autonomy. Some Länder have already amended their laws on higher education accordingly. Following the adoption in 1998 of the Amendment to the Framework Act for Higher Education, further reform concerning the staff structure and recruitment requirements for professors was introduced through the Act's amendment in 2002. An alternative to institutions of higher education is provided by Berufsakademien. These professional academies have taken the principle of the dual system of vocational education and applied it to the tertiary sector. The qualifications they award are recognized as tertiary sector qualifications that fall under the EU directive on higher education degrees by a resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of 29 September 1995.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The structure of higher education is governed by the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) of 1998 last amended in 2004. A degree structure based on **two main cycles** has operated on a trial basis since 1998 in the universities and the universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) and has been mandatory since 2002. As part of the Bologna Process, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of The *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, or KMK) passed a resolution on 14



April 2000 on 'Access to the **doctorate** for graduates of Master and Bachelor Study Courses'. A subject-specific test procedure was fixed as a condition for direct access by Bachelor graduates (with exceptionally good results) to the doctorate. Joint preparation of a university and *Fachhochschule* doctorate is possible according to their specific regulations. The new graduation system also supports a *Master-plus-programme*, which makes it easier for foreign students with a first degree to enter the German higher education system, and an integrated double degree study programme. The transition from the old to the new system is to be achieved by 2010.

In September 2000, the KMK adopted general criteria (last amended in 2004) for the introduction of credit systems based on **ECTS**. The introduction of ECTS is now mandatory. One credit comprises a total of 30 hours of classroom and private study. ECTS applies to all degree programmes and is used for credit transfer and credit accumulation within one specific course of study.

The **Diploma Supplement** has been recommended by the KMK and the Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*, or HRK) since 1999. Moves to introduce it in all programmes got under way in 2000 and are still continuing. To assist institutions in their initial administrative work, the HRK has made available fully compatible Diploma Supplement software known as the *Diploma Supplement Deutschland* (DSD). From 1 January 2005, all students automatically receive the Diploma Supplement in English at no charge.

Traditionally, **quality assurance** was ensured by the general framework for study regulations. With the introduction of the two-cycle degree structure, quality assurance is guaranteed by a combination of accreditation and evaluation. Evaluation has been included in Germany's Framework Act for Higher Education since 1998, and has since been incorporated into higher education legislation in each of the *Länder*. Evaluation is designed to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and degree



programmes, and thus to assist universities and colleges in adopting systematic quality assurance and quality enhancement strategies. No nationally coordinating evaluation body exists. However an institutional infrastructure was developed, comprising initiatives at *Land* level (agencies) and at regional and crossregional level (networks and associations) to oversee quality assurance in higher education.

Higher education institutions are institutions of the *Länder*. According to paragraph 9 of the HRG, the *Länder* have to guarantee the equality of study courses and exams, of final examinations and the possibility of moving from one university to another. The aim of enhancing the efficiency of higher education institutions in terms of teaching is central to reform efforts. The scope and organisation of teaching is subject to supervision by the higher education supervisory authorities only in so far as the scope of teaching commitments is laid down in a teaching load ordinance. Examination regulations (*Prüfungsordnungen*) for state examinations (*Staatsprüfungen*) are issued by the relevant ministries. The regulations for higher education examinations leading to the degrees of *Diplom* or *Magister* must be approved by the competent body in accordance with *Land* legislation. If these study regulations (*Studienordnungen*) do not guarantee that the course can be carried out and completed in the standard period of study (*Regelstudienzeit*), the competent body is entitled to demand their amendment. The competent body can also demand that the examination regulations of higher education institutions be adapted to the framework provisions for the regulations governing *Magister* and *Diplom* examinations approved by the KMK and HRK. According to the regulations of the HRK, internal evaluation of higher education institutions is compulsory and is also the basis for external evaluation. Evaluation procedures include in house review, external peer review - often with international participation, involvement of student reviewers and publication of the results in an appropriate form. According to HRK regulations, internal evaluation of higher education



institutions is compulsory and also serves as a basis for external evaluation.

For the new Bachelor's and Master's study courses, as well as for future study courses leading to the degrees of *Diplom* or *Magister* in branches of study for which there are no framework regulations, the KMK has separated state approval and **accreditation** with regard to quality assurance. As with other study courses, state approval refers to guaranteeing finance for courses to be set up and their inclusion in the higher educational planning of the *Land* concerned, as well as the maintenance of structural guidelines. In contrast to this, the objectives of accreditation are to guarantee minimum standards in terms of academic content and to determine the vocational relevance of the degrees. Accreditation also seeks to increase the diversity of provision, ensure quality in international competition and create transparency for international collaboration. It is essentially performed via peer review and courses are periodically re-accredited. For the accreditation of new Bachelor's and Master's study courses, the Standing Conference set up an independent cross-*Länder* Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*) in 1998. The composition of the Council reflects both the 'cross-societal' scale of the reform process and the need for its acceptance among stakeholders. It comprises four representatives from higher education, four from the *Länder*, five practitioners from various professions, two students and two international members. A key role in the accreditation of degree courses is played by the expert teams who are responsible for assessing academic content and whose membership includes representatives from higher education institutions, professional people and students. According to the Resolution of the Standing Conference of 12 June 2003, Bachelor's and Master's study courses must be accredited. The accreditation involves a formal peer review process based on objective criteria, which is used to assess whether a course meets the required standards in terms of academic content and vocational relevance. The Statute for an Accreditation Procedure across the *Länder* and across higher



education institutions of 15 October 2004 defines the council's responsibilities. It has the power to accredit agencies, granting them for a fixed period the right to accredit courses of study. It monitors and periodically re-accredits agencies and defines minimum requirements for accreditation procedures. The Accreditation Council also works to ensure fair competition among the accreditation agencies. It contributes in bringing German interests to bear on international quality assurance networks and accreditation institutions by promoting, amongst other things, communication and cooperation among the agencies. The German Accreditation Council – Germany's central accrediting organisation – will be made a foundation under public law. Its work will thus be placed on a new legal footing. The Accreditation Council and the accreditation agencies are members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

In accordance with the principles for the future development of quality assurance for all *Länder* and institutions of higher education, also adopted by the KMK in 2004, the system of accreditation is to be extended to all courses of study in the long term.



GREECE



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Under the terms of the Constitution of 1975, higher education is dispensed by institutions which enjoy the status of legal persons under public law; under the terms of Laws 2083/1992 4.4. 159/A/ of 21.9.1992 and 1404/1983 respectively, Greece's 18 university institutions (AEI) and its 14 institutions of technological education (TEI) are self-governing and under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs which supports them financially and is responsible for educational policy concerning them. Military Academies (Stratitikes Scholes Axiomatikon) enjoy the same status as universities but they fall



under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence. The diplomas awarded by certain private post-secondary education institutions are not recognized by the State. Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) form part of higher education just like the universities but belong to the non-university sector. They comprise at least two faculties subdivided into departments, which are the main academic units.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Since March 2004, the education system has been in a transitory phase. A number of issues are under consideration with a view to system reform. To this end, the Ministry of Education is about to launch a national-level debate within the framework of the National Education Council (ESYP) and the Greek Parliament Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs. Some of the issues considered are related to the process of developing the European Higher Education Area.

The degree structure has been based on **three main cycles** since the beginning of the 1980s. A political decision providing for full implementation of the two-cycle structure is still awaited. The first cycle leads to the first degree (*ptychio* or *diploma*) in both sectors of higher education, i.e. the university and technological sectors. The second cycle leads to the second degree, which is called a postgraduate specialisation diploma, and to the third degree (doctorate). The postgraduate specialisation diploma is equivalent to the Master's degree. Second-cycle programmes are offered only in the university sector. However, there is legal provision for TEIs (technological educational institutions) to co-operate with universities in the realisation of postgraduate programmes leading to the second degree.

The **doctorate** is obtained after at least three years of original research, including the preparation and writing of a thesis. In some doctoral programmes, theoretical courses are compulsory and occur prior to individual research. The law enables a graduate with a first qualification (*ptychio*) to gain access to doctoral



studies but this is no longer the rule. Most faculties offer Master's Programmes and it is a requirement that students who wish to proceed with doctoral studies must have obtained a second degree (Master). Only those faculties that do not offer second-cycle programmes accept students without a second qualification for doctoral studies. Under the 2004 law, a new international scheme for joint Master's degrees has been established. This provides for co-operation between institutions to work out the details concerning the organisation and functioning of postgraduate study programmes which lead to joint qualifications. The first step has been inter-university cooperation, undertaken between the Greek and French Ministries of Education and the Greek and French rectors' conferences. As a result of this co-operation, three joint Master's programmes involving Greek and French universities are soon to be launched. Similar cooperation with German universities is also under consideration by the Greek and German rectors' conferences.

A national credit system has existed in both sectors of higher education since the beginning of the 1980s. This is in fact an accumulation system in which the credits are directly equivalent to the weekly hours of instruction, as far as the university sector is concerned. However, **ECTS** is used by institutions in both sectors as a transfer system for the European mobility programmes (Erasmus and Socrates). Nevertheless, it is not adopted on a regular basis, and the precise arrangements for its use are determined by the individual institutions concerned. On the other hand, a credit accumulation system based on the 'workload' approach is used in the technological sector and several university faculties (1 credit corresponds to 25 hours, with 30 units per semester, i.e. 750 hours), which means that it is considered to be compatible with ECTS. In order to clarify the situation, the Greek government intends to address this issue as part of the national dialogue, aiming to develop ECTS as an accumulation system for both sectors. A new law prepared by the Ministry of Education and scheduled for May 2005 will make the use of ECTS as a



transfer and accumulation system compulsory in two-cycle programmes at all higher education institutions.

The **Diploma Supplement** will be incorporated into the educational system by law in 2005, and thus will soon be available. The Supplement will be issued automatically on a compulsory basis, free of charge, in Greek and English. It will not be available for the third cycle (Doctorate).

There are plans to establish the National Quality Assurance Agency, which will be in charge of **quality assurance**, before May 2005. The broad basis for launching the quality assurance system is prescribed by legislation which is now under discussion in the Greek Parliament. The system will operate at two levels, namely that of **internal assessment** as well as **external evaluation** and review schemes.

A single national agency will aim at quality improvement through external evaluation. The responsibilities of the agency are specified within a legislative framework and mainly involve the evaluation of study programmes and institutions, as well as organisational audit. The autonomy and independence of the body responsible for quality assurance in terms of procedures, methods and the persons in charge will be safeguarded by law, in order to secure the effectiveness and validity of the process as well as fairness, transparency and the acceptance of results. The governing body of the agency and the external evaluation panels will consist of distinguished academics, foreign experts and experts from the world of education. Certified experts will be selected to perform evaluations from a registration list compiled for this purpose.

The agency will work in close co-operation with the higher education community and take into account the needs of society – particularly public and private stakeholders, including students, parents and the labour market – when devising its strategies. One of the main tasks of the agency will be to develop a set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance. In order to define objective external criteria and methodologies, the mission and aims assigned to each institution will be taken into



account, as well as its specific characteristics and orientations. The standards employed should not be confined to minimum requirements, but should aspire to higher levels with a view to rewarding excellence. In this sense, the work of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in the field of shared criteria and methodologies is capable of serving as a highly effective guide.

In terms of the evaluation process, site visits will be a standard element, as well as meetings, interview tours of facilities and the examination of documentary evidence. A major facet of evaluation will also be that of reporting to the general public. However, reports for publication will be subject to prior consultation of all parties involved.

Finally, since the whole process seeks to enhance the quality of higher education services, recommendations are crucial. Institutions and the government will share organisational and financial responsibility for following them up within a specific time frame. Higher education institutions are encouraged to set up their own internal quality assurance mechanisms to provide a sound basis for external evaluation. The aim is to effectively combine institutional autonomy and accountability within the national quality regulations framework. Each institution has the right to independent decision-making and is therefore responsible for devising its own quality assurance system for assessing education and administrative and research functions, although general provisions are set out in the legislation. Furthermore, it is expected that teaching and administrative staff as well as students, will be the main participants and contributors in this process. According to the law, the teaching competence of academics is evaluated every semester by their students. This evaluation constitutes one of the elements considered in the career development and promotion of academics. The new law for Quality Assurance provides for student participation during the internal evaluation process.



HUNGARY



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Hungarian higher education has a dual system with colleges and universities. Some colleges are associated with universities and operate as college faculties of the universities. A university can also offer college level courses. The duration of training at college level is minimum 3 years, maximum 4 years; the duration of education at university level is minimum 4 years, maximum 5 years (with the exception of medical universities where it is 6 years). According to the binary pattern, colleges and universities



grant *Főiskolai Oklevél* (college level degree) and universities grant *Egyetemi Oklevél* (university level degree). Universities organize three-year PhD courses, specialized further education courses (with a normal duration of two years) and various continuous education courses. The Act LXXX of 1993 on Higher Education established two institutions to provide professional advice on the development and control of higher education: the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) and the Higher Education and Scientific Council (HESC). On 1 June 1999, Parliament passed Act LII of 1999 on Restructuring the Institutions of Higher Education and amended Act LXXX of 1993 on Higher Education. By passing the above law the number of state run universities and colleges decreased significantly. The number of higher education institutions was 89 (55 run by the State, 28 by Churches and 6 by foundations). At present, the new network of higher education institutions consists of 17 state universities, 1 non-state university, 13 colleges, 26 Church universities and colleges and 9 colleges run by foundations.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The organisation of the higher education sector is governed by the Higher Education Act adopted in 1993 and amended several times since 1996. The latest proposed amendment to the Act (2004) is currently under national debate.

The new degree structure based on **three cycles** was adopted in December 2004 but has not yet been fully implemented. Higher education institutions are obliged by law to launch programmes of this kind with effect from the 2006/07 academic year. All main fields of study (with the exception of architectural engineering, dentistry, law, pharmacy and veterinary studies, which retain a long singlecycle structure) should be implemented in accordance with the new structure. The first cycles will consist of programmes leading to Bachelor's degrees (*főiskolai oklevél*) and lasting 3 or 4 years while the second cycles will lead to Master's degrees (*egyetemi oklevél*) and last 2 to 3 years. Since the 2004/05



academic year, a series of pre-selected Bachelor's-type programmes has already been introduced. The dual system, consisting of programmes that last 3-4 years for a *főiskolai oklevél* and 5-6 years for an *egyetemi oklevél*, is to be retained alongside them until 2006/07.

A 3-year **doctoral** study programme (*doktori képzés*) already in existence will follow any Master's qualification or equivalent title. In addition to the Master's qualification or equivalent title, each candidate has to possess a type 'C' middle-level foreign language certificate (written and oral) and has to undergo the entry procedure which includes a written dissertation plan and an interview. Further entry requirements can be set by the institutions. Taught courses are integral parts of the doctoral phase. In each semester, 30 credit points are awarded, which amounts to a total of 180 credit points for the 6 semesters. The awarding of joint doctoral degrees has not yet been provided for in the legal statutes.

Two-year advanced vocational programmes (*felsőfokú szakképzés* at ISCED level 5B) are available on an optional basis prior to first-cycle programmes leading to advanced vocational qualifications. Such programmes can count towards any ISCED 5A programmes up to a maximum of 60 credit points.

Professional higher education training programmes (*szakirányú továbbképzés* at ISCED level 5A) can follow on from any degree (Bachelor's or Master's) and involve specialisation in a field of study (with the awarding of a certificate on completion) but do not lead to another degree.

ECTS has been provided for in law since November 2000 and has been introduced in practice since the 2003/04 academic year. It is mandatory and is used both in terms of transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** has been issued by higher education institutions since July 2003 and is delivered upon students' request. In such instances, institutions provide the document free of charge in Hungarian. An English version may also be



requested by students and delivered for a fee determined by the institution.

The Hungarian Accreditation Board (*Magyar Akkreditációs Bizottság* or HAB) is responsible for **quality assurance**. It is an independent body of experts, consisting of 30 members mostly involved in higher education and research institutions. Students are represented by two regular participants at the meetings of this body.

In terms of **internal evaluation**, institutions are obliged to prepare their annual institutional evaluation report to be discussed and voted by the institutional council. As part of the accreditation procedure (every 8 years) and the interim control procedure (4 years after accreditation), they are also required to prepare self-evaluation documentation, for which the HAB provides detailed guidance. Students take part in the evaluation procedure at institutional level. The institution's annual evaluation report is accepted by the institutional council, on which students are represented. The self-evaluation documents contain spaces for students to give their opinion.

External evaluation is a lengthy multi-level process. The institution prepares its documentation and self-evaluation report based upon the pre-set HAB guidelines. The HAB nominates a Visiting Accreditation Committee (*Látogató Bizottság*), the composition of which varies according to the type of institution, the number of faculties and number of degree programmes. Based on the self-evaluation report, experiences, documented interviews and meetings during the visit, the Visiting Committee prepares its own report for the HAB. The comments and evaluation of the HAB are communicated to the institution, which is given the opportunity to make further remarks. The report, thus further supplemented, reaches the full plenary meeting of the HAB (30 members, 5 counsellors, 4 regular participants) during which it is finalised.

The Visiting Accreditation Committee (*Látogató Bizottság*) meets the students and their representatives during the external



evaluation procedure and conducts an interview according to pre-set guidelines. At national level, one representative of the National Organization of Student Self-governing Bodies (*Hallgatói Önkormányzatok Országos Konferenciája*) and one of the National Union of PhD students (*Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége*) is delegated to participate regularly at the HAB meetings.

The **accreditation** procedure is mandatory and involves two separate procedures. On the one hand, it involves examining higher education institutions (education and training activities and conditions, research activities and facilities, staff, organisational structure and infrastructure) and, on the other hand, the degree programmes themselves (their curriculum content, the proportion of practical and theory-based instruction, qualified staff and infrastructure). Each institution has to undergo the accreditation procedure every 8 years and an interim control procedure after 4 years. The State Audit Office (*Állami Számvevőszék*) exercises the right to investigate the financial activities of institutions. The result of the accreditation procedure provided in a summarised format are made public in the Accreditation Bulletin (*Akkreditációs Értesítő*) as well as on the website of the Hungarian Accreditation Board.

The Hungarian Accreditation Board has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2000.



ICELAND



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The higher education system in Iceland consists of two types of higher education institutions: Universities and Colleges. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development of higher education. The schools of agriculture come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. At the University of Iceland, the University Council is the highest governing body. It also presents matters to the Parliament or to Government Ministries for reform consideration and funding purposes. Two laws were passed in December 1997. The first sets the main



framework for the operation of higher education institutions. Their independence is being reinforced and they are being made more accountable. The second allows for the merging of the College for Pre-School teachers, the College of Physical Education and the College of Social Pedagogy with the existing Iceland University of Education. The Iceland University of Education has been fully operational since the autumn of 1998. The Iceland Academy of the Arts was established in 1998 according to a law passed in 1995. The Academy was created when three institutions, Leiklistarskóli Íslands (The Icelandic Drama School), Myndlista-og handíðaskóli Íslands (the Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts) and Tónlistarskólinn i Reykjavik (The Reykjavik School of Music) merged into one institution.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Higher education is regulated by the Universities Act adopted in 1997. In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture appointed a national Bologna working group to co-ordinate and conduct the process, as well as to provide input and make proposals for possible legislative reforms and regulations in order to ensure successful implementation. The group consists of representatives from the Ministry, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and student organisations.

A degree structure based on **two main cycles** (Bachelor's/Master's) existed for a long time in parallel with the single-structure *Candidatus* degrees (four to six years). In recent years, many *candidatus* degrees have moved towards the two-cycle system. Traces of the one-tier system remain.

Doctoral programmes are offered in two HEIs in several fields. In some fields, students have the possibility to enrol in a doctoral programme without having completed a MA/MSc degree, but in this case the duration of the doctoral programme is prolonged. The doctoral programmes include course work, which usually makes up about 15% of the programme. Each HEI that has been permitted to grant second- and third-level degrees can decide on



the duration and form of the degrees. Joint degrees do not have a clear legal basis in the Universities Act. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is preparing an amendment to the Act to facilitate them. Joint study programmes are nevertheless offered in some study fields.

The selection procedure at the point of entry applies only to courses in the following fields: medicine, physiotherapy (an entrance examination was introduced in June 2003) and fine arts. In dental studies and nursing, there is a numerus clausus after the first term.

ECTS has been used in parallel with the national credit system since 1990 in most HEIs. The national credit system, in which one credit is equivalent to two ECTS credits, is based on the same principles as ECTS and is used by all HEIs. According to the Universities Act, a full study programme normally consists of 30 national credits per academic year. There is no legislation concerned specifically with ECTS. Credits are awarded for all courses in all degree programmes and reflect student effort, class attendance, homework and examinations. ECTS credits are used by universities alongside national credits for credit transfer and accumulation.

All HEIs will introduce the **Diploma Supplement (DS)** for graduates no later than in spring 2005. Already in 2004, some HEIs issued DS to all graduates. The DS will be available automatically and free of charge to all students. The DS is issued in English, but some HEIs issue it in Icelandic as well.

General provisions for the **assurance of quality** in higher education are laid down in the Universities Act of 1997, and in regulations from 1999 set on the basis of the Act and revised in 2003. The Division of Evaluation and Supervision was established in 1996 in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Division exercises its responsibilities at national level.

According to the regulations, it is the responsibility of each HEI to set up a formal **internal quality** control system. The regulations also state that the Ministry of Education can take the



initiative in conducting **external evaluations** of clearly specified units within institutions or of institutions as a whole. For this task, an external, independent panel of specialists is appointed to implement the evaluation. A peer review group is comprised of three to six people. The group must include individuals who have qualifications in the relevant field of scholarship, or extensive work experience in higher education, quality control and employing graduates. No member of the peer review group may have any links to the institution evaluated. At least one member of the group must be employed outside Iceland.

The Minister of Education determines when an external evaluation shall take place, as stipulated in the regulations, and what the focus of the evaluation shall be. External evaluations carried out in recent years have mainly focused on specific programmes in one institution or across institutions. Evaluations focusing on the administration and management of private institutions have also been conducted. According to regulations, it is the responsibility of each HEI to set up a formal internal quality control system. The procedure for evaluating programmes at the level of higher education consists of self-evaluation by the institution, a site visit by external experts (including international experts) and the publication of a final report. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the follow-up of the evaluation. The higher education quality assurance regulations state that students must be among the members of the institution's self-evaluation group. For example, it is proposed that they should take part in course evaluation. Students are also involved in site visits. The peer review group interviews 8-12 students during each visit and, when planning the visit schedule, the Ministry of Education and HEI contact person consult with student representatives to secure contacts.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education established a special committee on quality in the education sector. The mission of the committee is to map the situation concerning quality issues at all educational levels. For the HE level, the Bologna process will be at the forefront of the work.



A three-year action plan (2005-2007) on HEI evaluation has been agreed. The plan specifies the kind of evaluations that will be conducted within the timeframe. It includes both programme evaluations and institutional evaluations. As a general rule, the evaluations are conducted by independent experts outside the Ministry.

The Ministry of Education signs performance-related contracts with all HEIs. Appended to each contract is a list of the degrees that each institution is allowed to offer. If a HEI wants to establish a new programme or degree, this has to be recognised by the Ministry of Education and added to the list. The Ministry of Education regularly publishes a list of all degrees that are recognised by national authorities.

The Ministry of Education is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). It participates in INQAAHE networks and in NOQA, the Nordic Network of Quality Assurance Agencies.



IRELAND



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education in Ireland is offered by universities and institutes of specialized higher education. Universities are financed for the most part by the State in the form of annual grants-in-aid and non-recurrent grants for capital expenditure, in a proportion of the order of 90%, as well as by student fees, endowments, and private donations. Each college has its own governing body and exercises full control over its finances. Colleges are composed of faculties and departments.



Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The Universities Act and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act adopted in 1997 and 1999, respectively, regulate the most recent arrangements linked to the Bologna Process in higher education institutions.

The traditionally existing degree structure based on **two main cycles** (Bachelor's degrees are awarded after 3 or 4 years, while courses leading to Master's or other postgraduate degrees last between 1 and 3 years) fits with the model set out in the Bologna Declaration.

Typically **doctoral** awards (PHD) are obtained by a process of supervised research resulting in the production of a thesis. There are a small number of programmes (profession training in the sense of research skills such library referencing skills, research skills, widening academic environment, etc.) where there is substantial taught part in addition to the thesis. It runs in parallel with the research element.

The **ECTS** has been incorporated into the national awards system of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) since 1989 and is implemented in many programmes in the institutes of technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology. Three universities use ECTS for all students, while the remaining 4 universities use it mainly for students under Erasmus Programmes. In order to review the existing systems in place and comply with the European approach, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland established a Technical Advisory Group on Credits in 2002. However, the use of ECTS in other higher education institutions is associated mainly with students in the Socrates (Erasmus) programme. As regards credit accumulation, awards are made in a sizeable number of HEIs when the requisite number of credits have been accumulated. However, there are as yet relatively few developments concerning credit accumulation over an extended period (i.e. beyond the conventional three-year duration of a BA degree).



The **Diploma Supplement** was introduced on a pilot basis in February 2004. It is now being 'rolled-out' to all HEIs, commencing with those 2005 graduates with the Institutes of Technology and other non-university sectors. It will be issued automatically and free-of-charge. It is also anticipated that the two of the seven universities will issue to their 2005 graduates, while the remaining will take a further year.

The bodies involved in **quality assurance** are under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established in 1972 and is responsible for furthering the development and assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education. The HEA has a statutory role to assist universities in achieving their objectives. Furthermore it may review and report on quality procedures in the universities. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established by the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, and is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) which was also established as part of the 1999 Act, is the qualifications awarding body for the Institutes of Technology and other non-university higher education colleges and institutions. HETAC may also delegate the authority to make awards to the Institutes of Technology. The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) is required under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 to agree and review the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures with its providers of higher education and training programmes. All higher education institutions are primarily responsible for establishing quality assurance procedures in accordance with HETAC guidelines and criteria. HETAC is responsible for both accreditation and for external evaluation. International expert peers are consulted on all quality assurance and other accreditation activities of the Council. HETAC has engaged over twentyfive international peers to participate in programme accreditation, delegated authority



(Institutional accreditation), research accreditation and quality assurance activities, in the past eighteen months. In 2002 HETAC published Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training. These require all providers of higher education and training programmes associated with HETAC to establish quality assurance procedures and agree those procedures with HETAC. Twentytwo providers have agreed quality assurance procedures with the Council to date. A review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures will commence in 2005. The governance of HETAC includes expert members with overseas international experience in higher education and quality assurance systems from Europe and North America.

In addition to these bodies, the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) was established in 2003 and will support universities in relation to quality assurance procedures. The Universities Act 1997 requires the universities to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by universities. It includes the conduct of evaluation at regular intervals and in any case not less than once in every 10 years or longer if determined by the university in agreement with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Such reviews are undertaken by persons, other than employees, who are competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services at university level. In addition, a review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures is also carried out by the Universities (at least every 15 years) in consultation with the HEA. The external members of the IUQB board includes at least two persons from outside Ireland with experience of accreditation and quality assurance of academic programmes in universities in Europe and North America. External members also include someone with experience of professional accreditation and a person with a background in quality improvement and assurance as it relates to management and services. One of the



external members acts as Chair of the Board and the Chief Executive of the IUQB acts as Secretary.

The HEA/IUQB joint review of the effectiveness of QA procedures in the universities is being undertaken by teams of international experts from Europe and North America.

On a wider level, the Higher Education Authority has a statutory role under the Act to assist universities in the achievement of their objectives generally. Furthermore, it may review established quality assurance procedures and may publish a report on the outcome of any such reviews – a process conducted in consultation with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. The first such review of quality assurance procedures is being undertaken by the Higher Education Authority in conjunction with the IUQB and this will be concluded in early 2005. In recent years, the seven Irish Universities have co-operated in developing their quality assurance systems and in representing their approach nationally and internationally as a unique quality model appropriate to the needs of Irish Universities. Further collaboration will be ensured by the decision of the governing authorities to establish the Irish Universities Quality Board.

While DIT (Dublin Institute of Technology) has primary responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance procedures, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) has a quality assurance review role in relation to these procedures. The DIT is at present undergoing an external quality assurance evaluation by the European Universities Association (EUA) on behalf of the NQAI. The Dublin Institute of Technology has made its own awards at Certificate and Diploma level for more than 50 years. The quality assurance system of DIT was assessed by an International Review Team in 1996; this team recommended that DIT be granted the power to award its own degrees. The recommendation was accepted and implemented by the Minister for Education and Science. Internationally, DIT is an active member of EUA.



Students are represented on, inter alia, the Governing Bodies of Higher Education institutions established in statute, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). Student representation has been further advanced through the policy initiatives on quality assurance, where the proposed system recognises the importance of students in the process, particularly in reviews of academic Departments and of units that directly provide services to students. This approach is underpinned by legislation, including the Universities Act, 1997 and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. HETAC has extended student representation to include activities such as the delegation of authority to make awards evaluation and committee representation for the Programme Accreditation Committee.

The Irish Higher Education Quality Network was established in October 2003 as a formal network. The network comprises the main organisations with a role or significant interest in quality assurance in higher education and training in Ireland. Membership includes the Universities, the Institutes of Technology, the Higher Education Colleges Association, the HEA, HETAC, IUQB, DIT, NQAI and student representatives. The network is working towards the development of a common national position on key quality assurance issues in order to inform the debate on those same issues at the European level. The network provides a forum for discussion of quality assurance issues amongst the principal national stakeholders involved in quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland and allows for the dissemination of best practice in quality assurance amongst practitioners and policy makers involved in the Irish higher education and training sector.

The Higher Education Authority, Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and National qualifications Authority of Ireland are all members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



ITALY



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by universities, technical universities, university institutes, as well as by a wide range of academies, higher institutes/schools, especially, but not exclusively, in the artistic sector, and by a number of professional training institutions in a variety of fields related to commerce, e-



technologies, fashion, industry, etc.. The majority of the existing university institutions were established directly by the State, while a limited number, originally set up by private entities, were later recognised by the relevant Ministry. At present (2001-2002) the university system includes 776 university institutions (52 state universities, 3 technical universities, 13 non-state legally-recognized universities, 3 state university institutes, 14 non-state legally-recognized university institutes, 2 universities for foreigners, 3 higher schools regulated by special legislation). From 1989 to 1999 MURST was responsible for university education, some sectors of non-university education (interpretation and translation, psychotherapy), as well as for the allocation of funds to the state universities and the private universities that had conformed with the structure of the public sector (i.e. legally-recognized university institutions). The main advisory body for university education are the National University Council (CUN), the University Student National Council (CNSU) in which the representatives of the various categories of university staff and students participate, and the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI). In the same decade (1989-99), the supervision and development of primary and secondary education was entrusted to the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (MPI) (Ministry of Education), whereas responsibility for the non-university sector of higher education was shared between the Ministry for the National Cultural Heritage (institutions and programmes in conservation and restoration) and MPI (institutions for fine and applied arts, dance, drama, and music, as well as since 1998-99 all FIS programmes (higher integrated technical education). In 1999, the reform of the artistic sector (drama, dance and music) was entrusted to MURST (Law 508/99). More recently, the new Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) was established to which all financial resources, staff and functions of the former MPI and MURST were transferred. The merging of the two ministries took place in 2001. Degree programmes are structured in credits (crediti formativi universitari-CFU). A university credit



corresponds to 25 hours of work per students, time for personal study included. The average annual workload of a full-time student is conventionally fixed at 60 credits.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The university sector is governed by Ministerial Decrees of 1999 and 2004 regulating university autonomy and making provisions for new degree structures.

In accordance with the Decree adopted in 1999 and implemented in 2001, the degree structure has been based on **three main cycles**, but a two cycle structure also widely occurs. In addition, *Laurea* holders are offered an alternative degree programme consisting of at least 60 national credits, which leads to the *Master universitario di I livello*. This latter does not give access to doctoral programmes. The *Laurea* provides undergraduates with knowledge of academic principles and specific professional skills. The *Laurea specialistica* gives graduates advanced education for highly skilled professions. The *Master universitario di I livello* offers academic or professional specialisation in specific fields. The reform also includes provision for third cycle programmes. The *Dottorato di ricerca* trains postgraduates for highly specialised research. No compulsory preparatory programmes or courses are specified by the legislation.

Doctoral programmes can include research periods abroad and training periods in public or private research bodies and industrial laboratories. They are not structured in credits as they are based on individual research and collective participation in seminars. The *Corsi di specializzazione* are set up exclusively in compliance with EU directives or national laws. Their purpose is to provide postgraduates with advanced knowledge and skills for specific professions. The *Master universitario di II livello*, a programme of at least 60 national credits, is intended for higher academic or professional specialisation.



All programmes leading to the above mentioned degrees may be designed and organised in cooperation with foreign universities and therefore result in the award of a joint degree.

The 1999 reform introduced a national credit system that was modelled on **ECTS** and has been compatible with it since 2001. In the university sector, the main aim has been to make the system more student-centred and reduce the gap between the legal and real length of degree programmes. Credits represent the total student workload (class time, individual study, final exam preparation and practical work, etc.) and are used for both transfer and accumulation. One national credit differs from one ECTS being equivalent to 25 hours, and the full-time workload for one academic year is equivalent to 60 credits (1500 hours). Credits may be accumulated up to the amount necessary for the award of degree or may be transferred to another degree programme. Universities may also recognise credits based on professional experience (prior learning accreditation).

The **Diploma Supplement** was also introduced under the decree of 1999 and since January 2005 has been issued with all degrees awarded in accordance with the new framework. Universities began introducing it in 2003. Details of the Diploma Supplement scheme were approved in a further Ministry of Education decree of May 2001. On the basis of the Berlin Communiqué, a decree adopted in April 2004 confirms that Universities must issue the Supplement automatically to all graduates in a bilingual version (Italian and English). Universities may issue the Diploma Supplement free of charge or not at their own discretion.

The National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (*Comitato nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario*, or CNVSU) set up in 1999 is the institutional body entrusted with **quality assurance**. It determines the general criteria for the evaluation of all universities and draws up an annual report on the university evaluation system. It promotes experimentation with and implementation of quality assessment procedures, methodologies and practice. The CNVSU devises and executes annual external assessment plans for individual



institutions or single teaching units. Technical evaluations concerning proposals for establishing new state or non-state universities with a view to authorising them to award officially recognised degrees are also carried out. The CNVSU, whose members are appointed by Ministerial Decree, enjoys the legal status of an independent body interacting autonomously with individual universities and the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). It is supported by a technical and administrative secretariat and has its own budget.

Universities have set up a system for the **internal evaluation** of operational management, teaching and research activities and student welfare services. Evaluation is entrusted to the *Nucleo di valutazione di ateneo* (university evaluation unit) set up in 1999, whose composition, objectives and functions are regulated by university statute. They number between five and nine members at least two of whom are chosen from students and researchers experienced in the field of quality assessment. University evaluation units are granted rights, which include operational autonomy and access to necessary data and information. They can publish their findings within the law respecting privacy. Students are requested to complete questionnaires relating to teaching activities and infrastructure, in accordance with the law regulating internal evaluation. These findings, which respect student anonymity, are presented annually to the MIUR and CNVSU.

A system of university degree programme **accreditation** was introduced in 2001. Universities had just designed new degree programmes and were applying to the State for funding while the MIUR was requesting the cooperation of the CNVSU in order to allocate funds effectively. A system of degree programme accreditation needed to be devised which benefited only those programmes successfully completing the whole process. Consequently, two distinct but correlated procedures were introduced simultaneously. The first concerns the formal approval of new curricula while the second is involved in the accreditation of programmes themselves. Minimum standards of quality are complied with and evaluation results are published. Moreover, a



presidential decree of 1998 provides for compulsory external evaluation in the accreditation of new state and non-state universities, while a 2003 ministerial decree sets out plans for compulsory external evaluation in the accreditation of virtual campuses (Open universities, *Università telematiche*). Italy has participated in the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) through the CNVSU since 1998.



LATVIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are four universities and a number of other higher education institutions in Latvia. The main split between university and non-university higher education is between the programmes rather than between the institutions since the law allows academic and professional programmes to be organised within the same institution. All universities and 17 other institutions are state run. In addition, there are a number of private institutions of which 10 are state-recognized. All the recognized institutions enjoy autonomy. Recognition of higher education institutions and programmes is based upon quality assessment, which is carried



out as self-assessment followed by an evaluation visit with the participation of foreign experts. Higher education institutions confer academic degrees and professional higher education qualifications.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Initial moves to reform the Latvian higher education system got underway well before the Bologna Declaration. The first major development was the Education Law of 1991. In accordance with this law, a degree structure based on **two main cycles** (Bachelor's/Master's) was introduced in most disciplines but only in academic programmes. The 1995 Law on Higher Educational Establishments (LHEE) led to further strengthening of this structure but also underlined the division between academic and professional programmes. The amendments to the LHEE in 2000 established professional Bachelor's and Master's degrees which replaced the former five-year programmes, introducing the Bachelor's/Master's structure into the whole system and thus facilitating the transfer from one type of education to the other. The total period of study for a Master's degree should be no less than five years.

Amendments to the LHEE introduced **doctoral studies** as part of academic education (previously, doctoral degree candidates were research workers not involved in education). A degree structure based on **three main cycles** is thus fully established. The procedure and criteria for awarding the doctoral degree in accordance with the Law on Scientific Activities (LoSA) are further set out in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. Doctoral study programmes are developed by the higher education institution, and contain the list of compulsory and optional subjects along with the corresponding number of credit points, the content of research, the previous level of education necessary to embark on studies, and other provisions for implementing the programme. A doctorate is obtained only after



fulfilling the requirements for the doctoral study programme and after the public defence of the doctoral thesis.

It is common practice for institutions to try and provide opportunities for their doctoral candidates to prepare part of their thesis abroad in co-operation with a foreign academic as a second supervisor. However, from a legal standpoint it is still difficult to formally award a joint doctorate with other universities. Since 1998, the majority of higher education institutions have introduced a Latvian credit point system compatible with **ECTS**, which has been used for both accumulation and transfer since it was first implemented. A Latvian credit point is defined as the full-time workload of a student in one week. As the academic year lasts 40 weeks, this corresponds to 40 Latvian credits per year and, on this basis, one Latvian credit is worth 1.5 ECTS credits. So far, the ECTS grading scale is used only in the case of credit transfer.

As of 1 January 2004, all graduates receive the **Diploma Supplement** automatically and free of charge, in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on the order concerned with the issuing of state-recognised education documents testifying to the completion of higher education, and the awarding of degrees. The Supplement is issued in Latvian and English.

The national Higher Education **Quality Evaluation** Centre, or HEQEC (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*), was established in December 1994. The Centre does not participate in the evaluation of a higher education institution or study programme itself, but assists higher education institutions in preparing their internal assessment reports, and appoints Evaluation Commissions (expert teams) which include one Latvian and at least two foreign experts. The continuous quality assurance process consists of self-evaluation and evaluation by external experts, and ends with accreditation.

Both the higher education institution as a whole and the programme in question have to be accredited before a state-recognised higher education credential can be issued. The first



step in the process is the self-assessment report that representatives of the administration, academic staff and students at higher education institutions have to prepare in English. Experts evaluate it and other documents, and arrange for an evaluation visit to the higher education institution, submitting a common statement as well as written individual opinions. Institutions are accredited by the Council of Higher Education (*Augstākās izglītības padome*), and study programmes are accredited by the Accreditation Commission established by the Ministry of Education and Science. Students are represented in both these national bodies. The accreditation process began in 1996 and the first round of accreditation was completed in 2002. Accreditation proceeds in accordance with the regulations entitled 'On accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes', approved in October 2001. Foreign experts are involved in each evaluation.

Study programmes are accredited once every six years. In exceptional cases, the Accreditation Commission grants only temporary accreditation, implying a repeated assessment after two years. The self-assessment reports and reports by expert teams are made publicly available via the Internet and the educational newspaper *Izglītība un Kultūra* (Education and Culture). The quality assurance system is also used for quality improvement and as a means to reforms in higher education.

In order to start implementing higher education programmes, a higher education institution has to receive a licence from the Ministry of Education and Science both for the institution itself and for each particular study programme. Licensing is a kind of preliminary quality assurance, in that within three years after getting a licence, a higher education institution has to submit the study programme for accreditation.

The HEQEC has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (**ENQA**) since 2003, and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 1997.



LIECHTENSTEIN



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by the Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) and the Internationale Akademie für Philosophie (International Academy for Philosophy).

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

A new law concerning higher education was recently published in 2005, replacing the former one adopted in 1992. Given the small size of the country, the higher education system consists of three institutions recognised by the State.



The degree structure based on **two main cycles** was implemented in 2005 in accordance with the new law for all ISCED 5A programmes. It has existed for the fields of business sciences and architecture offered by the *Hochschule Liechtenstein* since 2003/04. Since 2000, the IAP also offered a two cycle-structure. The programmes leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees last three years (180 ECTS) and one and a half to two years (90 to 120 ECTS) respectively.

Doctoral programmes exist but are limited to a specific field of study (philosophy), and are only provided by the *Internationale Akademie für Philosophie* (International Academy of Philosophy or IAP), where first- and secondcycle programmes are not offered. They last a minimum of two years (120 ECTS) and lead to the academic title of Doctor of Philosophy. Doctoral programmes include taught courses.

Admission to such programmes requires the completion of a Master's degree or another equivalent programme prepared and awarded abroad.

ECTS was introduced by the *Hochschule Liechtenstein* on a voluntary basis in 1996 for transfer purposes only, and by the IAP and *Universität für Humanwissenschaften* (University of Human Sciences or UfH) in 2000. Following the new law of 2005, the implementation of ECTS got under way at all higher education institutions in January 2005. Wherever it is introduced, it is used in terms of transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** has been delivered at the *Hochschule Liechtenstein* and the IAP since 1999 and was legally implemented for all programmes at each higher education institution in January 2005. It is automatically delivered free of charge to all students, in German and in English.

Quality assurance principles are included in the laws of 1992 and 2005.

Due to the size of the country, **accreditation** exists but is included in the external evaluation process.

External evaluation is operated every six years at least and is based on peer reviews. Due to the small size of the country and



the lack of a national agency involved in this field, external evaluation is carried out thanks to European experts. These groups of inspectors consist essentially of Swiss and Austrian experts. Their main task is to contribute to quality assurance and improvement (consisting of 'branding', internal assessment of the course of studies, self-assessment, talks and visits by experts followed by recommendations, and EU branding). There are also plans for private foreign agencies involved in quality assurance to participate in the accreditation process. Higher education institutions pay for these controls.

In terms of **internal evaluation**, the institutions guarantee the quality of research and teaching, which generally undergo improvements on a permanent basis. They are obliged in particular to draft an annual report dealing with quality management. Higher education institutions are supervised by the Office of Education (*Schulamt*). If shortcomings are observed in the management of an institution, they must be corrected by the institution before a deadline set by the government. Students, lecturers and business and industrial representatives all contribute to evaluation. In line with legal requirements and international standards, the *Hochschule Liechtenstein* has developed a process-oriented system of quality improvement and assurance for all products and services. The quality management system comprises six main processes. Under this system, all executives and faculty members as well as administrative and support staff have a duty to implement the defined processes and to play an active role in the overall enhancement process. Students and other groups and individuals with an interest in the university are also invited to participate.

Liechtenstein is eligible to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



LITHUANIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In Lithuania, higher education establishments provide study programmes of varying length and levels. The institutions are of two types: Universities and colleges - non-university higher education establishments. Higher education establishments may be both State and non-State institutions. Universities offer master and doctoral programmes, high level professional artistic creative activities, postgraduate art studies and carry out research. The status of university may be granted to a higher education establishment that performs the above functions even if its name does not include the word "university". A College is a higher education establishment where non-university studies prevail and the majority of students study in accordance with non-university study programmes, applied research and (or) development or



professional arts. The College's name cannot include the words "university" or "academy". The study system consists of consecutive university and non-university studies in higher education establishments according to the study programmes included in the Study and Teaching Programme Register, as well as non-consecutive studies. In the Republic of Lithuania, consecutive studies are carried out in accordance with study programmes that are included in the Register of Studies and Training Programmes. The quality of the study programmes is periodically assessed. A study quality assessment institution authorized by the Government carries out the assessment. Studies are measured in credits. One study credit is equal to forty conditional student work (academic, laboratory, independent, etc.) hours, i.e., one week of his work. Comparable with ECTS credits, one national credit corresponds to 1,5 ECTS credits.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The main reforms related to the Bologna Process were incorporated in the new Law on Higher Education adopted in 2000. The higher education system is currently undergoing a reform which should end in 2010.

The degree structure based on **three main cycles** has existed since 1993. The first cycles last three and a half to four and a half years (140 to 180 national credits) and lead to a Bachelor's (*bakalauras*) degree or a professional qualification (*profesinė kvalifikacija*). The second cycles last one and a half to two years (60 to 80 national credits) and lead to a Master's (*magistras*) degree or to a professional qualification (*profesinė kvalifikacija*).

Three different types of third cycles exist.

Doctoral studies (*doktorantūra*) last no more than three or four years (120 or 160 national credits), *rezidentūra* studies for students in Medicine, Odontology and Veterinary Medicine last two to six years (from 80 to 240 national credits), and art studies (*meno aspirantūra*) last no more than two years (80 national credits).



Vientisosios (integrated) studies (combining studies in the first and second cycles) are also provided. After the successful completion of integrated studies, a *profesinė kvalifikacija* or *magistras* degree is awarded, providing access to third-cycle studies. In order to complete the studies, 180 to 240 national credits (200 to 240 when a *magistras* degree is awarded) are required, whereas studies in the fields of Medicine, Odontology and Veterinary Medicine require a maximum of 280 national credits.

Doctoral programmes (*doktorantūra*) can be pursued by completing the second cycle or integrated studies, or by having comparable qualifications. The *doktorantūra* consists of doctoral courses, specific research activities and the preparation of a doctoral dissertation. Upon completion of the doctoral course, a doctoral thesis must be prepared and publicly defended in order for the candidate to qualify for the doctorate. Doctoral studies must be jointly organised by higher education and research institutions.

A national credit system dating from 1993 and compatible with **ECTS**, has been consolidated and fully implemented under the new law. The workload of each study programme is measured in credits. One national credit corresponds to 40 relative hours (or to one week) of the student's work (in classes, laboratories, independent work, etc.). It corresponds to approximately one and a half ECTS. The average volume of full-time studies is 40 credits per study year. It is used both for transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** was introduced legally at national level in 2004. It is issued on request and free of charge and in English and Lithuanian as one document from 2004/05. It will be delivered automatically to all students from 2005/06 onwards. Administrative arrangements in the field of **quality assurance** have existed since 1995. An **internal** quality assurance system is in place in each higher education institution (HEI). The self-evaluation report is the basis for external evaluation and accreditation. Accreditation in Lithuanian legal acts is used only



in relation to study programmes. Students are involved by means of internal procedures and questionnaires. One student is also included in the group responsible for the self-evaluation report.

In terms of **external evaluation**, the quality of the study programmes has been periodically assessed by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education since 1999 (*Studiju kokybės vertinimo centras*). The Centre is a public administration institution and the majority of its employees are civil servants. Its activities mainly include the assessment of higher education and research institutions (organisation of experts' assessments of the quality of higher education and research institutions) and the evaluation of higher education qualifications. Similarly, the Expert Council (which operated in 1999 and 2004) and the Council for Assessment (2004) cover both public and private higher education and research institutions. Initially, the Expert Council consisted of ten members (Lithuanian academics). It now consists of at least one teacher from either university or non-university higher education institution, one social partner representative, one student (member of governing or other students' association) and recognised scientists, specialists, etc. The Council for Assessment consists of scientists, distinguished teachers with peer review experience, specialists, administrators and civil servants. Students are members of both the Expert Council (2004) and the Council for Assessment (2004).

In August 2001, a Minister's decree on order of **accreditation** was adopted, and in April 2002, the first Minister's decree regarding programme accreditation was issued. An institutional assessment has been implemented for non-university higher education institutions (*kolegija*) since the 2004/05 academic year. This process will be implemented from the 2005/06 academic year at universities and research institutions. According to the Law on Higher Education of 2000, institutional evaluation should be performed for newly established private and public higher education institutions after four years. The evaluation is done for quality check rather than for accreditation purposes. The final



decision on accreditation is taken by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Minister is free to agree, disagree or suspend the Council's decisions and the Centre's recommendations. All suggestions made by the Expert Council (1999) were approved by the Minister. Accreditation is valid until the next external assessment of the study programme. The first cycle of external evaluation of study programmes with the purpose of accreditation started in 1999. There are plans to assess study programmes in all fields of study by the end of 2007. Conditional and restricted accreditation is valid for a shorter term which is indicated in the accreditation decree. As a rule, the period of validity for such accreditation is two to three years. Aside from arrangements linked to the Bologna Process, the procedure for student admission to higher education was simplified in 1999 with the introduction of national examinations now recognised by all Lithuanian higher education institutions. There are also plans to arrange for joint admission to courses (in some *kolegija* as well as universities). In 1999, the first two universities began to conduct joint admission to the first cycle of higher education. Then, in 2003, most universities joined the Association of Higher Education Institutions of Lithuania, which began to organise and co-ordinate admissions procedures for all its members. The 2000 Law on Higher Education also amended the status of institutions by implementing a two-tier system of university and non-university higher education. The latter is currently the most rapidly growing sector in the Lithuanian education system, partly as a result of the reform of the *aukštesnioji mokykla* (vocational colleges), many of which have become the first non-university higher education institutions (*kolegija*).

Finally, the law has also facilitated the development of private higher education institutions by providing a clearer definition of the requirements for their establishment. The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education has expressed an interest in joining the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



LUXEMBOURG



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg comprises: the first/second academic year at all faculties; short-term (2 years) education in Economic Sciences oriented towards pre-service training; four-year technological education; three-year pedagogical/social education; third cycle studies offered at the Centre Universitaire.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The University of Luxembourg was established by the law of 12 August 2003. The University was conceived as a small



international multilingual institution with a strong research commitment. It has taken over and restructured certain courses offered by the former higher education institutions (the *Centre universitaire*, the *Institut supérieur de technologie*, the *Institut supérieur d'études et de recherches pédagogiques* and the *Institut d'études éducatives et sociales pour la formation de l'éducateur gradué*). The University began its work at the beginning of the 2004/05 academic year. As the University of Luxembourg does not offer courses in all fields of study at all levels, Luxembourg students continue to pursue all or some of their higher education abroad.

The structural pattern of courses takes account of the aims of the Bologna process and is thus based on **three main cycles** (*bachelor*, *master* and *docteur*). The law states that mobility is compulsory at *bachelor* level so students enrolled at the University of Luxembourg can only obtain the *bachelor* qualification if they have spent a period of time studying at a university or any other higher education institution abroad. The provision of doctoral courses in certain fields is planned with effect from October 2005.

The three types of programme are converted into **ECTS** credits and the ECTS system is used for credit transfer and accumulation. No steps have been taken to introduce the **Diploma Supplement**. As yet there is no national agency responsible for evaluation, but the law of 12 August 2003 provides for the **internal** and **external evaluation** of teaching, research and administrative services at the University. Evaluation is carried out by recognised personalities or agencies in order to establish international comparisons regarding quality in teaching and research, and university services.

Luxembourg is planning to set up a body belonging to an international consortium for external evaluation. It has no member agency within the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



MALTA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is mainly provided by the University of Malta. The governing body is the Council, which acts on the advice of the Senate but which also has responsibility for appointing faculty staff, promulgating regulations, overseeing and approving expenditures and ensuring that the University responds to the needs of the country. The Education Act of 1988 is the principal legislation governing the provision of education.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Higher education is regulated by the Education Act of 1988 and subsequent amendments. The University of Malta falls under the provisions of this Act.



The degree structure, traditionally based on **three main cycles**, has been followed for many years. Full-time programmes leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees last 3 to 4 years and 1 to 2 years respectively. They are offered by the University of Malta in most disciplines.

Full-time **doctoral programmes** vary in duration between 3 and 6 years. There are no programmes offering initial preparation. Doctoral programmes offered by the University of Malta are based solely on research. A 15 - month full-time research programme is undertaken by holders of first-cycle degrees prior to formal transfer to doctoral studies. This period is included in the duration of the doctoral programme.

On 20 January 2005, the University of Malta approved provisions for the award of joint degrees with other overseas universities. In such cases, programmes are offered and degrees may be awarded as laid down in the agreements reached with them.

ECTS has been implemented since October 2003. It is mandatory for all programmes and is applied both in terms of transfer and accumulation.

The University of Malta is working on introducing the **Diploma Supplement** in the near future but no date has been fixed as yet. Pending its introduction, students receive a transcript of their academic record. Such transcripts include students' personal details, course of studies, duration, mode of attendance, areas of study, titles of modules followed and results obtained, participation in overseas exchange programmes and final classification of the award. The issuing of a Diploma Supplement is not legally mandatory in Malta. When it is issued, it is expected that the chosen language will be English.

Quality assurance is undertaken for study programmes at the University of Malta through the annual participation of **external** examiners (both visiting and non-visiting) in setting and correcting examination papers and dissertations of final year students. They are also expected to report on the courses in general. External examiners from overseas institutions are always appointed members of the Board of Examiners for doctorates.



The **internal evaluation** procedure is pursued by a Quality Assurance Committee set up in 1996 by the University of Malta. This includes representatives from each faculty and the administrative staff, as well as from the Students' Representative Council. As from 2004/05, measures introduced by the Committee and approved by Senate include faculty internal audits. At this initial stage, the Audit Team includes a member of the Quality Assurance Committee, the Dean (or representative) of the faculty and an external auditor who will normally be an academic working in an overseas university and who is well acquainted with the Maltese academic scene.

The Students' Representative Council is represented on the Committee and provides feedback and suggestions. The Committee relies on External Examiners to provide feedback on the standards prevailing at the University.

The University of Malta is empowered by law to award diplomas and degrees, and no **accreditation** by other bodies is required. Malta participates in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) through the University of Malta Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Audit Unit. The University of Malta has expressed an interest in joining ENQA. Apart from the University of Malta, higher education is in the process of becoming a binary system thanks to the foundation of the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (MCAST) which has merged various colleges for vocational and professional education. Currently, MCAST offers courses at ISCED 3 and ISCED 4. However the development plan of the College envisages the provision of ISCED 5 courses. There is no indication regarding the type of programmes and date of implementation as yet.



NETHERLANDS



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Netherlands higher education system is a binary system, composed of Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (WO - university education) and Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (HBO - professional higher education). In addition, there is the Open Universiteit (OU - Open University) which offers fully recognized university degree programmes through distance education. Internationaal Onderwijs (IO) (international education), generally conducted in



English, is mainly designed to meet the needs of foreign students. Since 1991, university research schools have been founded to cater for young researchers and to centralize research activities.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Higher education comprises higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO), which have been governed by the Higher Education and Research Act since 1993. The Act was amended in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

The Bachelor's/Master's structure came into effect following an amendment to the Higher Education Act in 2002 which led to a degree system with **three main cycles**. The universities converted most of their traditional single-cycle courses into Bachelor's and Master's courses in the 2002/03 academic year. The remainder were converted in 2003/04. Some courses still exist in the old format but will be phased out. Incidentally, programmes in medicine, pharmacy and veterinary science are still organised in a long cycle. The courses at institutions for professional education have been converted into Bachelor's programmes in 2002. The Minister of Education can authorise these institutions to offer Master's courses as the need arises, and has done so in the area of health care.

Doctoral programmes can be accessed after the completion of a Master's degree or an equivalent title. Doctoral or PhD students do scholarly or scientific research, generally leading to a thesis or dissertation (*dissertatie*). The programme leading to a doctorate last at least 4 years. This type of qualification may be obtained from a university as well as from the *Open Universiteit* (Open University). Research schools are national and international centres for high quality research in a particular field or in a multidisciplinary context. They offer research posts to talented research assistants and provide a guaranteed level of supervision and tuition for doctoral studies. Candidates are expected to obtain a doctorate at the end of their training.



The 2002 amendment to the Higher Education Act introduced a Dutch credit system similar to **ECTS** (with 60 study points a year), which replaced the former 42-credit system with. This mandatory ECTS-credit system for accumulation and transfer of credits has been implemented since the 2002/03 academic year.

The 2002 amendment defined 60 credits by law as a workload of 1 680 hours.

The use of the **Diploma Supplement** has been mandatory since 1 March 2005. Many institutions have introduced or are introducing the Diploma Supplement, whose use is being promoted extensively by student organisations, the government and the NUFFIC (as the Dutch ENIC/NARIC). Prior to 1 March 2005, the Diploma Supplement was issued on request, free of charge and in Dutch or English. Since then, it has been issued automatically to all students.

In order to guarantee the **quality assurance** of the Bachelor's and Master's programmes, the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation (NAO), established by law in 2002, assesses courses at colleges and universities. A treaty between the Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium established the NAO as a supranational organisation in the two countries in 2003. By the end of 2004, the treaty was ratified, and since then the organisation has been known as the *Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie in oprichting* (NVAO, or Dutch-Flemish Accrediting Organisation).

At the same time, the task of overseeing the **external evaluation** of study programmes was transferred from the Inspectorate (responsible for the education system at large) to the newly established NVAO in 2003. Its board members are appointed by the shared governments of the Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium. It is good practice for academic communities to be consulted before the government appoints board members. The NVAO accredits programmes if the external evaluation is done according to the set protocol and if the assessment is positive. This assessment is independent.



Accreditation applies both to existing and new programmes. In order to be included in CROHO (*Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs* or Central Register of Programmes in Higher Education), Bachelor's and Master's programmes are subjected to a test for new programmes. The NVAO confirms jointly with CROHO that the programme is indeed new, and that it has neither been registered, nor had its registration withheld in the past. The NVAO is entrusted by law to accredit all existing Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes and to validate new study programmes at government-funded higher education institutions as well as institutions approved (but not funded) by the Dutch government. Institutions excluded from government funding or approval can apply for accreditation of post-initial Master's degree programmes. The NVAO bases its judgement on external validation, carried out by validation/evaluation organisations, such as the QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities), the NQA (Netherlands Quality Agency) and the Dutch Validation Council. External care for quality is organised by the *Visiterende en Beoordelende Instanties* (VBIs, Visiting and Assessing Institutions) and is complementary to internal care for quality. Each external peer review is preceded by internal evaluations. The *Visitatiecommissies* investigate all courses and research programmes in all Dutch universities. They report publicly on their conclusions and give recommendations. All courses are assessed once every six years and research programmes once every five years. A *visitatie* (review) includes all Dutch (and sometimes Flemish) programmes in the same field. The committee consists of a number of experts in the field concerned, who assess the content of the field of study and the educational aspects; the committee includes a student member as well. Since 2003, the NVAO checks if the external assessments of the VBIs meet certain quality prerequisites. The NVAO compiles an annual list of organisations which satisfy the criteria for carrying out assessments. According to the law, both the reports by the *Visitatiecommissies* as well as the accreditation reports must be made public. The results of the external peer reviews are



published and are available on websites. Positive accreditation judgements are published by the NVAO and available on their website. In addition, universities and institutions for higher professional education have a great deal of freedom to organise their own system of quality assurance. All universities are involved in the individual quality assurance (consisting of external and internal evaluations) of their own education and research. It is mandatory for students to be members of the education committees for each programme. Their involvement in internal evaluation is at the institution's discretion.

The QANU and the NQA are, along with the Inspectorate and the NVAO i.e., members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



NORWAY



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

All institutions of higher education are subject to the authority of the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. Higher education in Norway is mainly offered at state institutions, notably universities (four), university colleges (six), state colleges (26) and art colleges (2). They are all covered by the same Act which came into force on January 1, 1996. The degrees and titles that each institution can award and their professional and



educational programmes, as well as the duration and specific requirements concerning breadth and depth are all laid down in a Royal Decree of 10 May 1996. A degree candidate may combine studies from universities and colleges, as the courses offered are at the same academic level. Network Norway was set up to promote cooperation and a more rational division of labour between the Norwegian universities and colleges. It benefits the various academic environments by enabling them to cooperate with regard to field of specialization and division of labour. Education with a similar content and degree structure should be viewed as equitable and give students a larger range of options and make it easier to combine studies from different institutions. Transfers between the institutions are encouraged and facilitated by the degree system. Although there are as many as 26 private higher education institutions with recognized study programmes, the overwhelming majority of students (90%) attend state institutions. Private higher education in Norway is regulated by the Act of 11 June 1986 on the recognition of study programmes at private colleges. Some of the study programmes are recognized by Royal Decree as degrees or professional titles of equal standing as those offered by the public institutions. Other study programmes may be recognized by the public institutions as well. In June 2001, the Norwegian Parliament (Storting) passed an extensive reform of higher education. It was drawn up against two comprehensive reports to the Storting. The main points include a new degree structure: Bachelor, of 3 years' duration; Master of 2 years' duration, and PhD of 3 years' duration; ECTS credits will be introduced with 60 credits being equivalent to 1 year's full-time study; the possibility for some types of colleges to become universities; the redefinition of governing bodies and management of the institutions; an increase in student loans/grants; priority will be given to the improvement of teaching and assessment; and the introduction of mutual and formalized agreements between students and institutions. Priority will be given to participation in international programmes and exchange agreements. Higher education institutions will strive to



offer students a period of study abroad as a component of their degree programme. Institutions will be encouraged to cooperate with public institutions in developing countries. More programmes in English will be introduced. Institutions will be given greater autonomy in academic and financial matters. They will bear the main responsibility for quality assurance of their own provisions and will follow up quality development strategies and make use of available resources. A national independent agency will be established to deal with the accreditation and recognition of higher education. The relationship between students and institutions will be strengthened through a variety of measures, e.g. teaching methods with emphasis on counselling, interactive study, better feedback and new forms of assessment.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Most provisions of the Bologna Declaration have been incorporated in the general reform of higher education referred to as the Quality Reform (*Kvalitetsreformen*), which was fully implemented from the 2003 autumn term. Since the 2003/04 academic year, all institutions have been obliged to incorporate the structure based on **two main cycles**.

During a transition period up to 2007, both the old and new structures will exist side by side. A limited number of study programmes (medicine, theology, psychology and veterinary science) are exempt from the Bologna model.

With the adoption of the Quality Reform, a common organised **doctoral programme** was introduced for all 15 different doctoral programmes leading to the Ph.D. degree. There is also an individual doctoral programme based on a relatively long record of research and publication, leading to the title of *doctor philosophiae*. Taught courses are part of the doctoral phase. The time spent on taught courses differs from institution to institution but, as a general rule, it is one semester. There are no Norwegian laws or regulations preventing two or more higher education institutions, Norwegian or European, from awarding a doctorate.



In 2001, a new system of credits in which a full academic year corresponds to 60 credits, was introduced in all study programmes. It replaced the former system consisting of 20 credits a year. The new system was accompanied by a new standardised grading scale (descending from A to E for different pass grades and F for fail). Both are equivalent to **ECTS** arrangements and were fully implemented in 2003. ECTS is used for credit transfer and accumulation.

The **Diploma Supplement** was introduced in 2002, and higher education institutions are obliged to issue it automatically to all students. It is available free of charge and only in English. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (*Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen*, or NOKUT) was established in 2002. It is regarded as an independent government body and began its work in January 2003. Its role is to supervise and develop the **quality of higher education** at national level through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of institutions and course provision. NOKUT is governed by a board, which has overall responsibility for Agency activities and decisions. The board is appointed for a period of four years and consists of seven members, including one student. At present, one of NOKUT's board members is a pro-rector from Denmark, in keeping with Norway's attempt to include an international member on the board at all times. All evaluation panels have a student representative. At least one of the experts on the evaluation panels comes from another country, which for linguistic reasons is usually one of the Nordic countries. The Agency evaluates and passes judgement on the internal quality assurance systems of institutions, by means of quality audits carried out on all accredited institutions in regular cycles. In addition to providing a control mechanism, audits should be conducive to quality development. Another task is to make all accreditation decisions concerning higher education that go beyond the self-accrediting powers of institutions. These decisions cannot be modified by any other authority. The Agency also carries out evaluations for the purpose of revising specific



accreditations. Any institution can have accreditations revoked or suspended – for the entire institution as such, or for individual programmes – following a negative assessment in this type of evaluation. The evaluations and accreditations are conducted by experts appointed by NOKUT. Finally, the Agency carries out other types of evaluation for the general purpose of investigating, assessing and developing the quality of higher education in Norway. The Ministry may instruct NOKUT to undertake such evaluations.

All material connected with evaluations and accreditations, such as the appointment of experts, institutional applications, the experts' report and NOKUT's decisions, is made public.

In the Norwegian system, **accreditation** entails a professional assessment of whether a higher education institution and the programme it provides fulfil a given set of standards. As from January 2003, accreditation is mandatory and universal for all formally recognised higher education. Accreditation is not limited to a specified period of time, but is considered valid until explicitly revoked, following an assessment aimed at revising previous accreditation. The system is a combination of institutional and programme accreditation. Standards concerning institutional accreditation are set in regulations fixed by the Ministry of Education and Research. Further criteria for institutions, and standards and criteria for programmes have been developed by NOKUT.

Institutions are accredited in the three different categories of 'university', 'specialised university institution' and 'university college'. An institution's right to offer (new programmes of) higher education without specific programme accreditation is dependent on its category. The universities have full autonomy and may accredit any type of programme without applying to either the Ministry or NOKUT. The specialised university institutions have basically the same rights as the universities in the fields in which they are allowed to offer doctoral degree programmes. If they want to extend their programmes to new fields, they must present the new provision for accreditation.



University colleges have the right to offer any provision at Bachelor's level without any further accreditation process. In the fields in which they are allowed to offer doctoral degree programmes, they have the right to establish new Master's programmes without any further process of accreditation by NOKUT. All other new programmes have to be accredited by NOKUT.

Private institutions were not considered accredited institutions as such at the time of NOKUT's establishment, because of the former system of programme accreditation for private institutions. These institutions thus have to apply for institutional accreditation in any of the three categories in order to obtain the same rights as state institutions in the same category. A precondition for accreditation is that the institution must have a satisfactory quality assurance system. If an institution which applies for institutional accreditation does not have an approved system, NOKUT will start the accreditation process by evaluating it. In such cases, two expert panels are involved, each with four to five experts, and the whole process takes about ten to twelve months. Programme accreditation may be obtained for specific courses or programmes that the institution is not institutionally accredited to provide. There are standards and criteria for all three main levels – Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. – and for short-cycle higher education (two-year) degrees. Some professional education programmes are regulated by national curriculum regulations that serve as additional standards. Private institutions without institutional accreditation will have to apply for it separately for every course or programme they wish to offer. At the time of NOKUT's establishment, all state-owned institutions were considered accredited. NOKUT will conduct cyclical evaluations of all accredited institutions every six years in order to establish whether their quality assurance systems are satisfactory.

All state-owned institutions were obliged to establish a quality assurance system by January 2004. Institutions are required to document their quality assurance work and demonstrate that their systems can uncover instances where quality is weak. The



systems must include routines for student evaluation of teaching, institutional self-evaluation and the follow-up of evaluations, documentation of the institution's development of the learning environment, and routines that ensure the continuous development of quality work. External evaluations are preceded by internal assessments (self-evaluation).

NOKUT is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). In addition, the agency has signed bilateral agreements with the Spanish Quality Assurance Agency (ANECA) and the South African quality assurance agency known as the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).



POLAND



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The higher education system comprises both state and non-state institutions. The latter are created on the basis of the 1990 Higher Education Act. Before that, there were only state higher education institutions (with the exception of the Catholic University of Lublin). When the Act on Schools of Higher Professional Education came into force in 1997, courses of higher professional education were created. Thus, at present, there are both university-type and non-university type (professional education) institutions in Poland. Graduates of higher professional courses (offered by państwowe wyższe szkoły zawodowe and wyższe



szkoly zawodowe) are awarded the professional title of licencjat or inżynier after 3-4 years' study. Graduates of university-type higher education institutions are awarded the professional title of magister or an equivalent after having followed uniform 5-year magister level courses or 1.5 to 2-year complementary magister level courses (in the case of holders of the professional title of licencjat or inżynier obtained either at university-type institutions or institutions of higher professional education). Most higher education institutions are under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and Sport. Some, however, are under the control of other competent Ministries: Ministry of Health (Academies of Medicine) and Ministry of Culture (Academies of Music, Fine Arts, Theatre, and Film Studies). There are also schools that are supervised by the Ministry of National Defence (military schools), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Main School of Fire Service, School of Police) and the Ministry of Infrastructure (merchant navy schools). The total number of state higher education institutions is 116 and there are 182 non-state higher education institutions. The credential giving access to higher education is the swiadectwo dojrzalosci (Maturity Certificate) of a given kind of secondary school. The most common form of recruitment is the entrance examination.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The establishment, organisation and activity of university-type higher education institutions in Poland is regulated by the 1990 Act on Schools of Higher Education (with further amendments). The professional higher education sector (*wyższe szkoły zawodowe*) is governed by the Act on Higher Vocational Schools 1997 (with further amendments). The organisation of doctoral studies as well as the regulations concerning academic degrees and titles – including the degree of doctor in a given area of study or artistic field – is specified in the Act of 2003 on Academic Degrees and Titles and on Degrees and Titles in the field of art.



A degree system based on **three main cycles** has existed in Poland since 1990 when it became possible for university-type higher education institutions (HEIs) to offer three or four-year higher vocational study courses leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat, inżynier*), which could then be followed by a Master's degree. The title *licencjat* was introduced by legislation in 1992. As institutions are autonomous, these courses have been introduced gradually over the last 10 years, but their development has been further encouraged by the Bologna Process. At present they are already quite popular.

Doctoral studies may be provided by all types of HEI as well as units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research and development establishments which have a right to confer the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany*. These rights are granted by the Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Title, at the request of the organisational unit and on the basis of an opinion by the Main Council of Higher Education. When granting these rights, the Commission takes into consideration the following: the quality of research or artistic activity performed by the unit and the number of academic staff with the academic title of professor or *doktor habilitowany* (a minimum 12 people representing the study area or artistic field, including at least six with the title of professor). Curricula, the number and character of compulsory subjects, the number of exams and passes to be obtained are determined by the faculty (academic) councils of the doctoral studies units. Doctoral students are also obliged to undertake some teaching duties at the institution (the number of hours is determined by the faculty or academic council).

Although adoption of **ECTS** is not mandatory or as yet underpinned by legislation, it is gradually being introduced. Its implementation began under the Tempus (Phare) programme and is being continued under the Socrates (Erasmus) programme. The majority of establishments which use ECTS do so only for the transfer of credits. Some also use it for accumulation. The establishment itself decides how it is going to use the system. There is also a Presidential Project for a law which foresees the



obligatory introduction of ECTS (such as the system of transfer and accumulation of credits) in all establishments.

As from 1 January 2005, it is compulsory for all higher education institutions to issue the **Diploma Supplement**. The Supplement is available free of charge and issued automatically in Polish and on request in one of the five languages, English, French, German, Spanish or Russian. This results from a July 2004 Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport on the types of diplomas and professional titles as well as the models of diplomas issued by institutions.

The most important national agency involved in the **quality assurance** system is the State Accreditation Committee (*Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna*) which was established in January 2002 on the basis of the September 1990 Act on Schools of Higher Education. Its tasks are to draw up opinions on motions regarding the founding of an HEI, to establish its extramural branches, to establish new degree programmes in existing institutions and to assign fields of specialisation to appropriate degree programmes in vocational schools. Until September 2002, the Committee prepared opinions on motions concerned with establishing fields of specialisation in higher education institutions, on the basis of the Act on Higher Vocational Schools of June 1997. The Committee also evaluates the quality of teaching and verifies compliance with the requirements of degree programmes in all Polish civilian higher education institutions (whether state or non-state, academic or vocational), which are supervised by the Minister for Higher Education, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Culture or the Minister of Infrastructure. The role of these ministers is to approve the implementation of new degree programmes, which are different from those defined in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of March 2002 on requirements to be met by HEIs when establishing and implementing degree programmes, as well as on the names of such programmes.

Another important national organisation involved in the quality assurance system is the General Council for Higher Education



(*Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego*), which has existed under its present name since January 1991 and was established on the basis of the Act on Schools of Higher Education of 1990.

The Council co-operates with the Minister of National Education and Sport and with other governmental bodies in establishing state policy in the area of higher education.

The Conference of Rectors of the Academic Higher Education Schools (*Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich*, or KRASP) was established on 7 June 1997 and is in charge of peer **accreditation** in Poland. This type of accreditation is voluntary and is carried out by eight accreditation commissions established by rectors of the different types of HEI involved in KRASP activities. The eight commissions are supervised by the KRASP Accreditation Commission established in June 2001. Accreditation by the KRASP commissions is considered to be the hallmark of high quality teaching in a given institution or faculty. Only academic partners of national standing take part in the evaluation process involving the State Accreditation Committee, the General Council for Higher Education and the Conference of Rectors of the Academic Higher Education Schools.

Internal Evaluation of individual academic teachers is obligatory under the Act on Schools of Higher Education of 12 September 1990 (with further amendments). The procedure for obligatory assessment of individual academic teachers is subject to institutional autonomy and it is defined in the HEIs' statutes. The internal evaluation procedures are set by the university authorities (*senat*) and defined in the institutions' statutes. This is reflected in the variety of procedures used by Polish HEIs. Questionnaires and surveys among students are very popular. The results of internal evaluation (if available) are taken into account during the implementation of external evaluation. Since the beginning of 2003, the State Accreditation Committee has had observer status at the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). It is not involved in any other supranational quality assurance networks. In March 2004, a draft version of a new Act on Higher Education prepared by the



President was submitted to the Polish Parliament. The draft is a comprehensive regulation on the system of higher education and deals with issues so far regulated by three different acts, namely the Act on Schools of Higher Education, the Act on Higher Vocational Schools and the Act on Higher Military Education. New proposals aim to promote the competitiveness of Polish HEIs and support implementation of the Bologna Process. The most important proposals of the draft bill are related to doctoral studies (ISCED 6). They include new definitions for higher education institutions, including the definition of an autonomous institution. A fully autonomous higher education institution, according to this draft bill, is a state or non-state institution with the right to confer the degree of doctor (Ph.D.) in at least four areas of study. An autonomous institution would have greater freedom to create and abolish its organisational units, and offer new courses and studies in co-operation with other higher education and research institutions. Rules providing for the establishment of associations of HEIs (with state and non-state participants) in order to implement particular tasks will be introduced. This will make it possible for higher education institutions to offer courses in broad study areas and inter-faculty courses. There will be the introduction of three-cycle studies in vocational higher education. The title of *licencjat* or *inżynier* would correspond to first-cycle studies, complementary *Magister* studies to second-cycle studies, and doctoral studies to third-cycle studies. Institutions entitled to award doctorates in two areas will be authorised to offer doctoral studies. So far only institutions with the right to confer the *doktor habilitowany* have had such rights. The present proposal would result in the establishment of a new status for doctoral students and entitle them to apply for financial support, participate in the senate and academic councils of university units, and establish doctoral student self-government, as well as enabling them to benefit from reduced fares on public transport.



PORTUGAL



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education in Portugal is divided into two subsystems: university education and non-university higher education (polytechnical education), and it is provided in autonomous public universities, private universities, polytechnic institutions and private higher education institutions of other types. In addition, there is a university institution which offers courses in Management, Anthropology, Sociology, History, Economics and Psychology. The Portuguese Catholic University was instituted by decree of the Holy See and is recognized by the State of Portugal. Private higher education institutions cannot operate if



they are not recognized by the Ministry of Education. Access is regulated by the same procedures as those for state higher education institutions. The two systems of higher education (university and polytechnic) are linked and it is possible to transfer from one to the other. It is also possible to transfer from a public institution to a private one and vice-versa.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The Basic Law on the Education System dated 14 October 1986 and amended in September 1997, establishes the general rules governing all levels and types of education. The law sets out its aims and scope, the conditions for admission to higher education as well as the types of institutions involved. In February 2005, the Decree-Law was approved, regulating the principles and instruments for the creation of the European Higher Education Area. This new legislation applies to all higher education institutions and degree programmes.

In 2004/05, a structure based on two main cycles has not yet been introduced. A new Basic Law on Education to determine the structure based on **three main cycles** is foreseen to be approved, with the view to comply with the objectives called for by the Lisbon Strategy and the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

According to the 2005 Decree-Law, the study programmes must be expressed in **ECTS** credits in principle from 2005/06. In 2004/05, only two universities developed an ETCS pilot project and were awarded the European ECTS label. ECTS has been applied in the scope of the Socrates mobility programme by institutions which signed the institutional contract in the framework of the programme. A national credit system exists but is only applied by public universities and is not compatible with the ECTS system.

According to the 2005 Decree, from the 2005/06 academic year, the **Diploma Supplement** will be issued automatically to all students, free of charge, in Portuguese and English, although some universities are already issuing it.



The process of **internal** and **external evaluation** of higher education institutions was introduced by legislation in 1994. In 1998, the National Higher Education Evaluation Council (CNAVES) was established. It is an independent body responsible for assessment of higher education institutions. The 2003 law on the development and quality of higher education ensures fulfilment of the right to equal opportunities in education in terms of access, attendance and success, by overcoming economic, social and cultural inequalities. This law marks a step forward in the area of quality assurance and the quality and accreditation of courses and institutions. It is foreseen that CNAVES, which is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), will become the national evaluation and accreditation agency.



ROMANIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education in Romania is offered in both public and private higher education institutions. These include universities, academies, politechnics, institutes and colleges, organized in specialized departments. In accordance with its objectives, university education comprises: short university education carried out in university colleges (3 years), long university education (duration 4 to 6 years) and postgraduate university education



(duration 1 to 2 years). Public higher education institutions are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. University autonomy is fully guaranteed. Private higher education is an alternative to public education. It is subject to an accreditation process. Accredited private institutions may obtain state support.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Several reforms linked to the Bologna Process have been launched since 1998. They are partly set out in three ministerial orders adopted in 1998, 2000 and 2002 respectively, in a government decision taken in 2001, and finally, in a law on the organisation of university studies approved by parliament in June 2004.

In 2004/05, the degree structure based on **two main cycles** had not yet been implemented.

Doctoral studies can be organised on a fulltime or part-time basis by higher education or research institutions, subject to Ministry of Education and Research approval of a proposal from the National Council for Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates. The structure of a doctoral programme includes theoretical and applied training activities, successful performance in a minimum of three examinations, and the defence of at least three scientific dissertations or three creative works, depending on the field (sciences or arts). In addition, full-time doctoral studies involve attending at least four taught courses, including the associated seminars and corresponding examinations. Doctoral studies can be organised jointly by two institutions, one in Romania and one abroad (in Europe or elsewhere) on the basis of a written agreement between both institutions, specifying the role of each and the recognition of the title of 'doctor' by the corresponding authorities in both countries.

According to the 2004 law, the degree structure based on **three main cycles** will be fully implemented with effect from the 2005/06 academic year. Each cycle will have its own admissions



and graduation procedures. The duration of study cycles, corresponding to various fields and areas of specialisation, will be established by the Ministry of Education and Research on the basis of proposals from the National Council of Rectors and will be approved by government decision. Special norms concerning the study conditions applicable to regulated professions adopted at European level will be established within the Romanian higher education system. The first (Bachelor's) cycle will include a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 transferable study credits equivalent to ECTS, and will last three to four years, depending on the field and area of specialisation. The second (Master's) cycle will include a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 120 transferable study credits (in exceptional cases and depending on the length of the first cycle, the lower limit may be 60 transferable study credits), and will last one to two years. Both cycles should enable the accumulation of at least 300 transferable study credits. For professions regulated by European norms or good practice, the provision entailed might be offered by joining the two cycles into a long study programme lasting five to six years and leading to the equivalent of a Master's qualification. According to the same law, the third cycle (doctorate) has also been restructured as part of the Bologna Process and will last three years. As an exception imposed by the specific nature of the theme or the need for longer experimentation, the length of doctoral studies may be extended by one to two years, subject to approval by the university senate. For integrated programmes provided by two or more universities and leading to a common diploma, the Ministry of Education and Research will draw up the corresponding framework methodology based on the current regulations, and submit it to the government for approval.

ECTS was introduced in graduate and postgraduate programmes at the end of 1998 on the basis of a ministerial order adopted in October of that year. In accordance with the Strategy for Romanian Higher Education for the period from 2002 to 2010, the Ministry of Education and Research has encouraged state as well as private universities to implement ECTS and identify



mechanisms for ensuring national compatibility. Prior to 2000, ECTS was recommended but not compulsory. According to the 2004 law on the organisation of university studies, ECTS will become compulsory for all universities and study programmes from the 2005/06 academic year. It will be used both for credit transfer and accumulation in all study programmes (including doctoral programmes), as it is the case at universities which implemented ECTS in the 2004/05 academic year.

The **Diploma Supplement** was introduced on the basis of a Ministerial order adopted in April 2000. At present, it is issued free of charge by all institutions on request, in English or French. From the 2005/06 academic year, universities will issue the Diploma Supplement free of charge to every graduate in a language commonly used at international level.

The official body responsible for **quality assurance** is the *Consiliul Național pentru Evaluare Academică și Acreditare* (National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation). The Council was formed in 1993 and acts at national level as an independent body under parliamentary control. It comprises nine specialist commissions that evaluate all existing faculties and colleges every five years, in accordance with criteria that include educational content, research activity and teacher/student ratios. The 2002 Ministerial order has developed a methodology for more frequent periodic evaluation of higher education institutions.

Criteria used in **external evaluation** relate to the basic organisational and operational fields of higher education institutions, namely their underlying goals, teaching staff, educational content, physical facilities, research activity and financial performance. Compulsory standards have been established for each criterion.

Internal evaluation of higher education institutions is carried out by department councils in compliance with the principle of university autonomy, as well as by commissions for evaluation and attestation at university level. Internal evaluation of various academic units (departments, institutes, laboratories, research



groups, etc.) is based on academic standards established by the National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation. New forms of education or fields of specialisation are included in the internal evaluation carried out by the commissions for evaluation and attestation.

All higher education institutions, public or private, follow the **accreditation** procedures undertaken by the National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, as required by the 1993 Law on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Diploma Recognition.

Accreditation is a two-step process first involving trust licensing, which gives institutions the right to organise admission examinations. Secondly, it involves accreditation, which gives them the right to organise degree examinations and issue diplomas recognised by the Ministry of Education and Research.

A new law on quality assurance in education was debated. The working document prepared by the Ministry of Education and Research proposes a global approach to the whole education system, with specific methodologies for every type and level of education, including higher and adult education. According to the document, quality assurance will be based on standards, benchmarks, norms and performance indicators, and will take into account the quality of the national education system, the education and training services provided by institutions and the education and training process outcomes. A Government Ordinance for promoting the Quality Assurance was promoted in July 2005. This Ordinance should be promoted soon as a law.

In line with the proposals for a new law on quality assurance in education which is currently being debated, a new body – the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education – would be set up at national level, as an institution specialising in quality assurance of the education system, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. The Agency would implement policies for quality assurance, and devise and implement the national framework for quality assurance within the national education system through specific methodologies and instruments, as well



as implement periodical evaluations culminating in public reports. The administration council of the Agency would consist of the heads of various institutions involved in quality assurance (the National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation of Pre-university Education, and the National Service for Assessment and Examination), plus a representative of the Ministry of Education and Research and eight Agency department directors. Some main responsibilities of the Agency would be to co-ordinate and develop national methodologies, standards, benchmarks, norms and performance indicators for quality assurance in education, and to supervise compliance with performance indicators. Other responsibilities would be to evaluate the national education system and draw up recommendations for improvement, and to produce methodologies and self-evaluation tools for education and training providers. The Agency would also conduct periodical or (on request) external evaluation of education and training providers, undertaken independently or in co-operation with other institutions and experts, in Romania or abroad, prepare the report on the quality of the national education system. Finally, it would develop good practice portfolios for the improvement of national benchmarks, provide support programmes to institutions during the monitoring period, prepare comparative studies relating to the quality of education and training in Romania, the European Union and developed countries elsewhere, and provide information on results via various publications, the Internet, public debates and events. Students are involved in the process of evaluation/quality assurance as members of the department council, which plays a major role in writing the self-evaluation report needed for the academic evaluation and accreditation of the department or area of specialisation concerned. University charters usually state that the opinions of students, expressed individually or through their representatives, should be taken into account in the process of evaluating and enhancing academic activities.



Since 1996, the National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation has been a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and has been a member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEEN) since 2002. The same Council is in the process of becoming a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), although it does not currently take part in its activities.



SLOVAK REPUBLIC



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

All higher education institutions have the same legal standing and social function. They provide not only higher education, but also research and artistic activities. Higher education institutions have the exclusive right to award academic degrees. According to the Higher Education Act No.172/1990, they provide education at three levels. The first level leads to the degree of *Bakalár*; the second level, the complete higher education, leads to the academic degrees of *Magister*, *Inžinier*, *Doktor Medicíny*, *Doktor Veterinárskej medicíny*; and the third level to the *Doctorate /PhD*.



Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The new Higher Education Act adopted in April 2002 and amended in November 2003 regulates arrangements associated with the Bologna process.

The degree structure based on **three main cycles** has been implemented since 1996. The new Act clearly distinguishes between Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral programmes. Bachelor's degrees are generally awarded after three or four years of study, while Master's degree courses may last between 1 and 3 years. The former long-cycle programmes are gradually being phased out from the 2005/06

academic year onwards and incorporated into Master's courses. The only exception are programmes in Catholic theology, medicine and veterinary medicine which will remain the only fields of study offered in the form of a single long course.

The standard length of full-time **doctoral programmes** varies between 3 and 4 years (the exact standard number of credits recommended by decree is 60 per academic year). Ph.D. study is completed by the defence of a dissertation and leads to the academic degrees of *doktor* (in general fields) or *doktor umenia* (in artistic fields). In the field of Catholic Theology, a *licenciát teológie* degree (completed after two years of study) is required for access to the one-year programme leading to the *doktor* and *doktor teológie* degrees. Theoretical courses are compulsory and occur in parallel to individual research. Doctorates may be awarded at two or more national or foreign European universities. Double or joint degrees may also be awarded by universities in non-European countries.

ECTS was first introduced in 1998 in the framework of European mobility programmes. Since 2002, the legislation has included the obligation to implement the credit system on the basis of ECTS (for both transfer and accumulation purposes) and to publish the ECTS information package in all higher education institutions by the 2005/06 academic year at the latest. Information packages



have been used since the start of the Erasmus/Socrates programme in the university sector as a tool for facilitating study orientation for incoming/outgoing students and academic staff.

The **Diploma Supplement** was first introduced in the Slovak Technical University at the end of the 2002/03 academic year. It was issued on request and for a fee, in Slovak and in English. According to the current legislation, it is to be fully introduced by all higher education institutions from the 2005/06 academic year onwards. It will then be issued automatically and free of charge in Slovak to all students. The English version of the Supplement may be issued in return for payment, depending on the costs incurred by HEIs when producing it. When introduced, it will be provided, together with the diploma, at all three levels for a fee determined by each institution. This rule applies to graduates of higher education institutions pursuing study programmes reaccredited in accordance with the new Higher Education Act.

The **external evaluation** of higher education institutions is an integral part of **accreditation**. It has been provided for in legislation since March 2003, and carried out by the Accreditation Commission (*Akreditačná komisia*, or AC). When checking the performance of higher education activity in science, technology and art, the AC uses the findings of internal quality assessment by institutions (included in a report but not published), prepares peer reviews, and then after evaluating activity as a whole, submits proposals to the Ministry of Education. Statements by the AC are the basis for decisions taken by the Ministry (e.g. recognition of the right to award a particular degree to graduates in a given field) and the government (e.g. state consent to function as a private institution). The AC, which was established by the government in 1990 as its advisory body, consists of 21 members appointed for a period of 6 years (renewable for one further term). In the field of external quality assurance, it monitors and independently evaluates the quality of the teaching, research, development, artistic or other creative activities of higher education institutions and contributes to their improvement. It generally assesses conditions under which such activities are carried out at



individual institutions and prepares recommendations for enhancing their work. The AC may inform the public about its findings. The AC carries out accreditation of the individual activities of institutions. It gives its opinion on the capacity of institutions to implement a particular study programme and award the corresponding degree to graduates, as well as to conduct habilitation and professors' nomination procedures, and submit proposals for establishment, merger, affiliation, split, dissolution, etc. The AC also carries out regular complex accreditation of all higher education institutions at six-year intervals. An addendum to the new Higher Education Act lists the background materials that institutions should submit to the Accreditation Commission when accrediting their individual activities or when carrying out complex accreditation. Complex accreditation of activities of a higher education institution is a process in which the AC assesses teaching, research, development, artistic or other creative activities of the higher education institution, as well as personnel, technical information and other elements which are part of the context of such activities. It gives a statement on requests by higher education institutions for accreditation of all study programmes and habilitation procedures, as well as procedures for nomination of professors, for which the higher education institution wishes to be granted the appropriate rights. In March 2003, the Ministry also published the evaluation criteria and method for accrediting the individual activities of institutions and for complex accreditation.

In the course of **internal quality** assessment, the scientific boards of higher education institutions regularly evaluate (at least once a year) the standard of the institution in terms of educational activity in the fields of science, technology and art. The results of such an evaluation are included in a report. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, all institutions are responsible for introducing their own quality assurance system. Some universities develop practices based on national and international projects for developing their internal evaluation programmes. At some universities, quality assurance guidelines are also being prepared.



Students are involved in internal evaluation procedures. According to the Higher Education Act, each student has the right to express him/herself about the quality of teaching and teachers by means of anonymous questionnaires, at least once a year. The Accreditation Commission has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 1995. It is also a member of the INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and its regional sub-network CEENQAAHE (Central and Eastern Europe Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education). In order to achieve optimal implementation of the Bologna reforms, a project called the National Team of Bologna Promoters (*Národný tím bolonských promótorov*) was prepared in June 2004.

The Ministry of Education, in co-operation with the Slovak Rectors Conference, the Council of Higher Education Institutions and the Socrates National Agency, selected the national team of seven Bologna Promoters from all regions of Slovakia. The project covers the period from 1 July 2004 to the end of June 2005. A national report as output will be drafted.



SLOVENIA



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education institutions comprise universities, faculties, art academies or professional colleges. Slovenia has two universities with 38 members, e.g. faculties, art academies and professional colleges and nine single institutions of higher education (samostojni visokošolski zavodi) established as private institutions. Higher education is regulated by the Higher Education Act (1993, amended 1999 and 2001). The most



important features introduced by the new legislation are: the new role of the university (change from an association of independent faculties to an integrated university) and the creation of single higher education institutions, the separation of some large faculties into several smaller ones, changes in the structure of the higher education system, the implementation of the Diploma Supplement and the implementation of different kinds of state financing of higher education. Public higher education is free of charge for native full-time students. Part-time students and post-graduate students pay tuition fees. Today, higher education shows certain features of a binary structure. Programmes, but not institutions, are divided into academic studies and professionally oriented studies. In addition to teaching, higher education institutions also conduct research and offer artistic activities.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The legal basis for the higher education system is set out in the Constitution, which recognises the right of universities and other higher education institutions to act autonomously within the limits set by the following laws: the 1993 Higher Education Act (and its amendments in 1999, 2001 and 2003), Amendments and Supplements to the Higher Education Act (ASHE), and the 2004 Higher Vocational Education (HVE) Act. The changes introduced by the 2004 legislation will be applicable with effect from the 2005/06 academic year. In 2002, the National Assembly adopted the Master Plan for Higher Education. Its aim is to introduce measures that will make it easier to comply with the Bologna Declaration criteria (the widespread introduction of ECTS, quality assurance measures and preparation of proposals for legislative changes) and put them into practice.

A degree system based on **two main cycles** has existed in the Slovenian higher education system since the 1960s. Two-year Master's programmes (Magisterij) have been introduced by law and are offered by faculties and academies in all disciplines. They



build on degrees that require normally four, but in some cases also four and a half, five or six years of study.

The Master's programmes are also regarded as a first step and prerequisite for **doctoral studies**. Indeed, since the 1993 Higher Education Act, it has been possible to study for a doctorate in two ways: by embarking on a four-year course after the first degree including theoretical courses and personal research work, and by completing a two-year Master's course and then two further years of doctoral study. Taught courses are not necessarily part of two-year doctoral studies, which are based on individual research and consultation with mentors.

According to the new higher education legislation (the 2004 ASHE Act), the new structure of higher education in accordance with the proposed Bologna patterns is to be gradually implemented with effect between 2005/06 and 2009/10. A first cycle (equivalent to Bachelor's) will include three to four years of academic or professional studies. It will be possible to continue and obtain a second degree (equivalent to Master's) which will require one additional year (4+1) or two additional years (3+2). In general, all second degrees will provide access to three-year doctoral studies (or the labour market). In a post-reform structure, the Master's qualification will be equivalent to a Master's degree (in Bologna terms). Any second-degree graduate may be admitted to doctoral study programmes (taught courses). Pre-reform Master's graduates will be recognised as having already obtained 60 credits from doctoral-level studies within the course of their Master's qualification. In addition, the doctoral studies will be open to other candidates under certain conditions. It will be possible to obtain a doctorate as a joint degree at two or more universities. Universities from other European countries and from third countries may be included.

With effect from 2002 (criteria of the Council for Higher Education), application of the credit system based on **ECTS** became obligatory for all programmes. It is used both as a transfer and accumulation system. The 2004 ASHE Act stipulates that ECTS must be applied in all first-, second- and third-cycle



programmes, and that ECTS credits must be allocated to all educational components of a study programme and reflect the amount of work done by the student. In November 2004, the Council for Higher Education enforced the Criteria for the implementation of a credit system based on the 2004 ASHE Act.

To improve international transparency and facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications, a **Diploma Supplement** has been issued in Slovenia since the 2000/01 academic year. It is issued by all higher education institutions to all students in Slovene, and also in English on request. It is available free of charge in Slovene, and in return for payment in English. The 2004 ASHE Act stipulates that from 2005/06, the Diploma Supplement shall be attached to each first-, second- and third-cycle diploma and issued free of charge in Slovene and in one of the official languages of the European Union. The content details of the Diploma Supplement will be determined by the Minister for Higher Education at the proposal of the Council for Higher Education.

Currently, the **quality assurance** of the teaching process is monitored by higher education institutions themselves and discussed by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission (established in 1996), which in 2000 also accepted student representatives as new members. The Commission regularly produces and publishes annual reports. In October 2004, the Commission issued rules on external evaluation criteria.

The procedure for **accrediting** study programmes and institutions is the responsibility of the government and the Council for Higher Education (CHE) of the Republic of Slovenia (*Svet za visoko šolstvo Republike Slovenije*). According to the new 2004 Higher Education Act, the new Council was appointed in March 2005. Its responsibilities and membership have been redefined. From March 2005, these responsibilities include running the (re-)accreditation process, discussing the findings from **self- and external evaluation** reports, co-operating with councils of experts in the area of education and science and with other agencies, and determining the criteria for credit evaluation of



study programmes. The new Council also defines a minimum share of optional courses in these programmes, and determines criteria for transfers between them and for the recognition of prior learning outcomes and other achievements, which are necessary for further studies, etc. The new CHE is composed of a president and fifteen members, including seven university professors and scientists nominated by institutions of higher education, three representatives of industry and nonindustrial sectors nominated by the Chambers and Associations of Employers, three representatives of students nominated by the Student Organisation of RS in cooperation with Students' Councils of Universities and other HEIs, and three representatives of the Government.

Technical assistance to the CHE is offered by the public Agency for Higher Education (no longer by the Ministry of Higher Education). The Agency is expected to be established by the end of 2005 as an independent institution. It will have an administrative board, a director and a council for the evaluation of higher education. It will also (among other responsibilities) ensure the operation of a quality assurance system in higher education and higher technical education. Furthermore, it will provide support and follow-up of quality assurance systems, as well as appoint expert panels, and encourage the self-evaluation of higher education institutions and co-operation with institutions or bodies from other countries. Finally, it will be responsible for training evaluators, analysing and publishing self-evaluation and external evaluation reports, providing professional and administrative assistance to the Council for Higher Education, establishing data bases, providing information about higher education for institutions, students, employers and employees, and carrying out other development tasks.

The 2004 ASHE Act also refers to the quality assurance responsibilities of the Council for Evaluation (an independent body of experts from the Agency). It will comprise representatives of higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges, employers, students and the government of the Republic of Slovenia. It will define the criteria for monitoring, assessment



and quality assurance, as well as issue opinions and external evaluation reports.

Higher vocational education is governed by the new Higher Vocational Education Act (HVE Act, 2004), which replaces the former Vocational Education Act (1996). Full implementation of the new Act is expected in the 2005/06 academic year. It now regulates tertiary-level vocational education separately from the upper secondary level, determines the organisation of higher vocational colleges, and places them clearly within tertiary education. The aim of the reform is partly to ensure international comparability in terms of programme quality, and to introduce the European dimension into programmes and promote lifelong learning. It will also give greater consistency to the educational structure by providing for 120 vertical credits and further education at degree level. Joint study programmes are to be offered by higher vocational colleges from Slovenia with one or more colleges from abroad. Higher vocational colleges issue a diploma, stating the field of education, and will in future also offer a Diploma Supplement in Slovene and in one of the EU languages. The new law plans for the appointment of the accreditation committee (a body appointed by the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training), a procedure for the accreditation of study programmes, and the establishment of quality assessment and assurance committees in each college. It also outlines how these committees should co-operate with the Council for the Evaluation of Higher Education. The Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission is a member of the CEE Network (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), and also participates in sessions of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), although it is not yet a member of ENQA.



SPAIN



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is mainly provided by both public and private universities. Universities are divided into facultades universitarias, escuelas técnicas superiores, escuelas universitarias, institutos universitarios, and other centres, notably the colegios universitarios. The Consejo de Universidades (where the Ministry, the Comunidades Autónomas and the Universidades are represented) coordinates the activities of state and private institutions and propose the main lines of educational policy. It also sets up guidelines for the creation of universities, centres and institutes. It can also propose measures concerning advanced postgraduate studies, the defining of qualifications to be officially



recognized throughout the country and standards governing the creation of university departments. The legislation on university autonomy provides for administrative, academic and financial autonomy. A new law on Universities (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades* n° 121/000045)) was voted on 20 December, 2001 and is being implemented.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The main arrangements linked to the Bologna Process are specified in the Organic Act on Universities (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*, or LOU) and the Organic Act on Qualifications and Vocational Training, adopted in December 2001 and June 2002, respectively. Third-cycle university studies are regulated by the Royal Decree 1998 on the awarding and issuing of the *doctor* title and on other postgraduate studies.

On 21 January 2005, the Council of Ministers passed the Royal Decrees regulating the three-cycle structure consisting of graduate (first cycle) and postgraduate (second and third cycle) education and studies in accordance with the general lines emanating from the European Higher Education Area. This transformation will take place progressively until 2010.

The degree structure based on **two main cycles** has not yet been implemented for 2004/05. **Doctoral programmes** are offered by the various faculty departments, and are administered under their supervision and academic responsibility. Some departments do not offer doctoral studies and others offer more than one programme. University institutes may also propose and co-ordinate doctoral programmes under the academic guidance of one or more departments. In order to be accepted for doctoral studies and obtain the *Doctor/a* title, a minimum of 300 Spanish credits (one Spanish university credit corresponds to 10 teaching hours) must have been completed in university studies.

Candidates must hold the *Licenciado*, *Arquitecto*, *Ingeniero* or equivalent degree, attend and satisfactorily complete the courses, seminars and guided research of the doctoral programme



concerned, as well as submit and defend a doctoral thesis consisting of original research in their chosen specialised subject. The doctorate courses or programmes last a minimum of two years and aim at specialisation in a specific scientific, technical, or artistic field, as well as training in research techniques. With regard to the thesis, those who wish to obtain the 'doctor' title have to submit and pass the corresponding doctoral thesis. There is no fixed time limit for the completion and presentation of the thesis. The doctoral programmes correspond to 32 Spanish credits, divided into two parts. The first is the teaching part, in which a minimum of 20 credits must be completed. Up to five of these credits can be obtained by attending courses or seminars which are not considered to lie within the programme (subject to prior authorisation from the tutor). Satisfactory completion of this teaching part leads to the awarding of a certificate. The second part focuses on guided research, which is aimed at student specialisation in a particular scientific, technical or artistic field, as well as training in research techniques. A minimum of 12 credits must be completed in this part. Students must prepare one or several supervised research assignments within the department, and the research must be submitted and approved. Once the student has passed both parts, the knowledge acquired is assessed by means of a public presentation before a board, which is different for each programme. Satisfactory assessment is a formal indication of the research ability of the doctoral student. Each university regulates the organisation and approval of courses, seminars and supervised research, as well as the board's assessment of the knowledge acquired. By agreement, universities can organise joint doctorate programmes leading to just one official *Doctor* title, which may be taken at two or more Spanish or foreign universities. The agreement specifies which of them is to be responsible for registration of the title.

Following the new decree from January 2005, the first cycle will cover basic, general and professional training (between 180 and 240 ECTS credits) leading to the corresponding title. The second cycle (between 60 and 120 credits) will aimed at either an



academic or professional specialisation or at promoting an introduction to research tasks. Students will obtain the *Máster* title. The third cycle of university studies (postgraduate) will aim at advanced training in research techniques and may include courses, seminars or other activities. It will include the preparation and presentation of the corresponding doctoral thesis, consisting of an original research work. This leads to the Doctor title, certifying the highest academic rank and entitling the holder to teach and conduct research.

The University Coordination Council (*Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria*), comprising all universities and those responsible for higher education in the Autonomous Communities, will propose the list of new graduate qualifications, to be revised and authorised by the Ministry of Education and Science by the middle of 2005. The drawing up of the specific guidelines for each qualification will begin, to be completed in October 2007.

The 5 September 2003 Decree on the establishment of **ECTS** and the grade system for official university titles valid nationwide, states that these credits must be applied to the guidelines for official university titles approved by the government as well as to the related syllabuses. The courses of study leading to recognised qualifications are still described using Spanish credits. In that sense, ECTS is used for credit transfer and not for credit accumulation. Spain is currently adapting the system and ECTS is to be applied to all course units in all degree programmes before 1 October 2010.

The 1 August 2003 Royal Decree on the establishment of the procedure for issuing the **Diploma Supplement** applies to all official university titles valid nationwide. The Supplement is issued on request free of charge, in Spanish and another official EU language as determined by the university concerned.

Universities in Autonomous Communities with their own joint official language can issue the Diploma Supplement in that language.

In accordance with the 2001 LOU, university **quality promotion and assurance** at national and international levels is one of the



prime aims of university policy. In compliance with the Act, the Ministry of Education and Science created the National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (*Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación*, or ANECA) in July 2002. The main purpose of ANECA is to contribute, through evaluation reports and other reports leading to certification and accreditation, to measuring the performance of higher education as a public service. The Agency also seeks to reinforce transparency and comparability as a means of promoting quality and quality assurance in universities and, by the same token, their integration into the European Higher Education Area. It also seeks to establish accountability criteria. ANECA carries out its actions through four main programmes.

The **Accreditation** Programme constitutes its main action. The Agency checks compliance with given criteria and established standards, while ensuring that training results are adequate and that the skills acquired by students meet the demands of the labour market and society as a whole. The Programme consists of three stages, namely the *internal assessment*, *external assessment* and *final report*. To validate this process, ANECA has established a National Accreditation Committee (*Comité Nacional de Acreditación*) whose members have a national and international reputation in the fields of teaching and academic research, as well as in the business and professional sectors. The Institutional Assessment Programme assesses university studies leading to officially recognised qualifications so that improvement plans can be monitored. The criteria and indicators used in this process are the same as those in the accreditation process, and it too has three stages. The Certification Programme is an external assessment process to verify compliance with a set of previously established specifications. Its main purpose is to check quality and introduce a methodology for promoting the continuous improvement of university programmes and services.

The European Convergence Programme aims to promote actions facilitating the integration of Spanish higher education within the European Higher Education Area. ANECA fosters institutional



relations with international public and private agencies and organisations, and is notably a member of two of the most relevant associations concerned with matters relating to higher education accreditation and evaluation.

The Agency publishes all its documents, findings, details regarding committee membership and relevant aspects of its programmes on its website, in the *AneQualitas* corporate bulletin and via other media, so that public authorities and universities have the information needed to take appropriate decisions within their remit.

Internal evaluation is in line with each university's evaluation plans and with the II Plan for University Quality (*II Plan de la Calidad de las Universidades*), whose objectives are now being developed and promoted by ANECA. ANECA is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and, since January 2003, has been represented on its steering committee. In February 2003, the Agency also joined the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and in November 2003 joined the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).



SWEDEN



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Swedish system includes not only traditional university studies but also different kinds of Teacher Training, Health Care Training, Technical Training, etc. It is the responsibility of: the central government, regional authorities and private interests. All institutions of higher education fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education except the University of Agricultural Sciences (Ministry of Agriculture). Higher education is divided into undergraduate studies (courses combined towards a first



degree) and postgraduate studies and research. The present Act on Higher Education in Sweden and a Higher Education Ordinance became effective on 1 July 1993.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance came into force in 1993. An appendix to the Higher Education Ordinance contains the Degree Ordinance laid down by the government.

The current degree structure consists of long course programmes followed by doctoral programmes. A structure based on **three main cycles** also exists in the case of certain programmes. In April 2002, a project group was appointed within the Ministry of Education and Science in order to review issues, such as the degree structure, from an international perspective. The final report was submitted in February 2004 and a government bill introducing a new two-cycle structure will be presented to Parliament in May 2005.

The **doctorate** (*doktorsexamen*) is the result of a programme of research training worth 160 Swedish credits (240 ECTS credits), which is the equivalent of four years of full-time study. The dissertation must consist of at least 80 credits (120 ECTS). It is possible to take a shorter programme and receive a *licentiatexamen* (licentiate degree). This degree corresponds to 80 credits (120 ECTS), of which at least 40 (60 ECTS) must be obtained from writing a paper which meets high academic standards. To be admitted to doctoral studies, a student must have basic qualifications of at least 120 credits (180 ECTS), i.e. three years of study. Applicants must also fulfil any special requirements of the faculty board, and be considered capable of successfully completing the programme. In practice, a Master's degree or an equivalent is often required. Different forms of preparatory programme exist but are not compulsory. In practice, they may be necessary for continued doctoral studies in the chosen field, depending on the competition between applicants.



These preparatory programmes often entail up to one year of study and include some kind of 'rotation' between different research groups. Doctoral studies in Sweden include taught courses. The scope of these courses varies from subject to subject, but they are usually worth 40-60 credits (60-90 ECTS credits) and in any event no more than 80 credits (120 ECTS). In March 2004, two official reports were published with proposals for the structure of doctoral studies. Joint degrees consisting of one degree awarded by two or more universities are not possible, although joint study programmes do take place. Use of the Swedish credit point system has been mandatory throughout the higher education system since 1969.

One credit in the Swedish system is equivalent to 1.5 **ECTS** credits. There is no national application regarding ECTS. However, separate universities and university colleges are using ECTS on their own initiative in their description of single courses. In such cases, ECTS serves as both a transfer and accumulation system.

To improve international 'transparency' and facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications, a **Diploma Supplement** in English has been issued with all Swedish higher education qualifications since 1 January 2003. It is mandatory and free of charge.

Since January 2001, **external quality assessment** has been carried out more and more regularly by the National Agency for Higher Education (*Högskoleverket*, or HSV) and covers all subjects and programmes. It was established in 1995 as the highest administrative authority for universities and university colleges. The Agency is independent of the government and higher education institutions. The National Agency for Higher Education supervises, promotes and assesses the quality of higher education institutions. One of its tasks is to collect and circulate information about them. An important function in this context is to carry out quality audits. The Agency also performs national evaluations. A national evaluation relates to subjects in undergraduate and postgraduate education, entire programmes of



education or specific aspects of them such as examinations. When a programme is evaluated, performance is assessed at every institution in the country which offers it. The emphasis in quality assurance is on improvement rather than control. All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are to be evaluated within a period of six years.

The National Agency conducts programmes leading to the award of general and vocational qualifications, and evaluates postgraduate programmes. These evaluations also include appraisal of the right of higher education institutions to award degrees. Institutions that are not generally empowered to do so must apply for the necessary authorisation from the Agency, which then examines the quality of the programmes on offer. Appraisals are based on self-evaluation and a site visit by a panel of external experts, and generally conclude with the publication of a report. The panels of assessors for the evaluation of subjects and programmes always include professionals in the fields concerned and international assessors, usually from the other Nordic countries. About 60 % of the subject experts come from outside Sweden.

Students also take part in quality assurance and evaluation both formally and practically. Students are selected for quality evaluations in accordance with certain criteria. A list of students satisfying these criteria is forwarded to the Agency by the institution and local student union. At least one undergraduate and one postgraduate student represent the students. The gender aspect is also taken into consideration, together with the stage that students have reached in their education. The National Agency of Higher Education is also concerned with the legal rights of students and with investigating and evaluating the system of higher education, evaluating foreign education, and supporting the renewal and development of higher education. The Agency also evaluates qualifications awarded on completion of higher education programmes outside Sweden. This evaluation determines the Swedish programme to which the foreign programme corresponds. The design of quality assurance is based



on a consensus between the government and higher education institutions. The Agency also performs national evaluations of entire education programmes and subjects. In national evaluations, performance is assessed at all institutions of higher education which offer a particular programme or subject. Starting in 2001, the Agency will perform recurrent and comprehensive subject and programme evaluations. All programmes of higher education, including postgraduate training, will be evaluated once every six years and the results will be made available to students. The Agency also assesses an institution's right to establish areas of research and, where applicable, its right to university status, although decisions on such matters are taken by the government. A fourth type of assessment relates to quality management at institutions of higher education. The Agency examines quality management, i.e. the processes that result in quality at the local level. The National Agency of Higher Education has participated as a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2000. In addition, a Nordic Network of Quality Assurance Agencies has been co-operating increasingly in quality issues with stakeholders, institutions and students.



SWITZERLAND



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In Switzerland, the higher education system at University-level is provided by ten cantonal Universities and two federal Institutes of Technology. However, higher education is also provided by the seven newly created Fachhochschulen and advanced Vocational Colleges. This sector is currently being reformed on a global scale. Private Universities are basically only to be found in the field of post-graduate studies. There is no numerus clausus for subjects studied at University, except for Medicine at the German-speaking Universities. Studies in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, Chemistry and Surveying must follow national requirements and are regulated by the Federal Government.



Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

Due to a complex system of shared responsibility between the federal and cantonal authorities, legal competence for implementation of the Bologna reform at university level has been delegated by federal law to the Swiss University Conference (CUS), the cooperative body of the federal government and the cantons. In December 2003, the CUS approved directives for the coordinated reorganisation of teaching at Swiss universities. These directives constitute the legal basis for the reform. For the *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) and *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (institutions for teacher education), similar directives for the Bologna reform were adopted by the Council for Universities of Applied Sciences in 2002.

A structure based on **two main cycles** has been partly introduced in the universities and the *Pädagogische Hochschulen*. Since the beginning of the 2004/05 academic year, a considerable number of study programmes have adopted the Bachelor's/Master's structure. The *Fachhochschulen* are implementing their Bachelor's programmes in the autumn of 2005. Fifty percent of first-year students are currently entering the new system and, by 2010, all institutions and study programmes will have been completely reorganised.

The structure and content of the **doctorate programmes** are not organised in a uniform manner but established independently by individual universities. The completion of a Master's degree or its equivalent is required for access to doctoral programmes and there are no compulsory preparatory programmes. Some universities offer theoretical courses that students take while pursuing their individual research.

No joint or double doctorates are awarded by two or more Swiss universities. At European level, joint degrees can be awarded in cooperation with a French or Italian university in accordance with bilateral treaties concluded by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS). The two federal universities (federal



institutes of technology) do not yet participate in these programmes.

ECTS is being introduced at the same time as the Bachelor's and Master's study programmes (180 and 90-120 credits respectively). In 2005, all universities must have prepared their institutional regulations for introducing the new two-cycle study structure including ECTS which is used for both transfer and accumulation. By 2010, all study programmes will have incorporated ECTS. The *Pädagogische Hochschulen* have already introduced the system across all their programmes. While ECTS is mandatory for further education Master's programmes (Master of Advanced Studies), as well as normal Bachelor's and Master's courses, this is not the case for doctoral programmes.

In 2002, the CRUS issued recommendations for introducing the **Diploma Supplement** at universities and these are now due for implementation. The Supplement will be available at all institutions and for all degree programmes free of charge. It will be issued automatically to all students with their qualification, in the language of the university (e.g. German, French or Italian) and in English. The *Fachhochschulen* have issued the Diploma Supplement since 2000 on the basis of a voluntary agreement with no legislation. The *Pädagogische Hochschulen* are also currently preparing to introduce the Diploma Supplement, possibly in the 2005/06 academic year.

The body responsible for **external quality assurance** is the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss universities (OAQ) established on 1 October 2001. It receives half of its funding from the university cantons, and the other half from the federal government. It currently operates solely at national level and reports back to the CUS. It performs its tasks in close collaboration with the CRUS.

On behalf of the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER), the OAQ has to check every four years whether the quality assurance systems of the universities are compatible with internationally accepted standards, and whether they result in high quality output in education and research. Federal funding of the



cantonal public universities is partly linked to the results of these so-called 'quality audits'. On 1 July 2003, audits were started at the 10 cantonal universities. On-site visits were conducted by experts with reference to the self-evaluation reports. On the basis of the experts' reports, the OAQ then wrote final reports in July 2004. The audit process was itself evaluated.

In all forms of external quality assurance, an **internal assessment** (self-evaluation) precedes external assessment. OAQ procedures and quality standards are based on international good practice. OAQ performed an in-depth review of foreign accreditation and evaluation systems before developing its own procedures. Students do not take part directly in the governance of OAQ, but they are involved in all quality assessments (in producing the self-evaluation reports, and as interview partners during on-site visits).

OAQ is carrying out various forms of quality assessment such as **accreditation** (procedures at institutional and programme levels in both the public and private higher education sectors, and for 'conventional learning' and distance learning/e-learning), quality audits and evaluations of institutions as part of federal recognition of new institutions. In addition to these tasks, the OAQ is also offering services in the field of quality assurance. The OAQ Scientific Council includes several academics of international standing. The Council prepares accreditation decisions on behalf of the CUS. The expert groups established for external evaluations and accreditation procedures must include a majority of peer members employed outside Switzerland. An accreditation system has been in place since 2002. It is open to public and private academic institutions and their study programmes. Accreditation is a three-stage procedure consisting of self-evaluation by the unit undergoing accreditation, an on-site visit by an international group of independent experts and then the accreditation decision based on the first two stages. The main focus of accreditation is teaching and learning. If the result is positive, the unit will either be granted unconditional accreditation for seven years, or conditional accreditation for a set



period during which it has to rectify shortcomings observed during the process. Accreditation is a voluntary process (particularly for universities). The objective is not to accredit all institutions or all programmes on offer, but rather to use accreditation in cases in which it will be of particular benefit to the academic units concerned. Following a revision of the law relating to *Fachhochschulen* due to take effect from 2005 onwards, accreditation will become mandatory for these institutions and their study programmes.

Accreditation results have to be published, although under national data protection laws, negative accreditation decisions cannot be published. *Pädagogische Hochschulen* are subject to a specific evaluation procedure. The Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Education is responsible for evaluating and recognising the study programmes of these schools. Evaluation and recognition procedures comprise the following steps: submission of a report to the authorities; a preliminary decision on the basis of the report; an on-site visit by a team of experts; a proposal for a decision by the recognition commission; and a decision by the Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Education. International experts from a related field, as well as students, are involved in the evaluation and recognition procedures. OAQ actively participates in several European networks for quality assurance and accreditation. Memberships include the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA, cofounded in 2003), and the regional network D-A-CH (founded in 2003). Switzerland has also expressed an interest in joining the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2005. In addition, it is a member of the corresponding quality assurance networks and organisations at international level (INQAAHE), UNESCO/OECD forums on accreditation/QA and on cross-border education.



TURKEY



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by 53 state universities, including 2 higher institutes of technology, and 23 foundations (private universities). The supreme authority for the regulation of higher education is the Council of Higher Education, which is a fully autonomous national board of trustees without any political or government affiliation. The Interuniversity Council consists of the rectors of all the universities and one member elected by the Senate of each university. Universities, faculties, institutes and four-year schools are founded by law, while the two-year vocational schools, departments and divisions are established by the Council of Higher Education. The foundation universities are under the supervision of the Council of Higher Education and their programmes must be regularly accredited. In the universities,



the medium of instruction is Turkish. Some universities use English, French and German as the language of instruction with one preparatory year.

Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

The Higher Education Law of October 1981 governs the activities of the entire higher education system in Turkey, including the short cycle of higher vocational schools. The universities are founded by law, whereas their faculties, institutes and four-year (vocational/professional) higher schools are founded by decision of the parliament. The new two-year vocational higher schools and their departments are established following approval of a university request by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which is a constitutional, non-political state body responsible for the organisation, planning, recognition and supervision of all higher education institutions.

Since 1981, the Turkish higher education system has consisted of a structure based on **three main cycles** – Bachelor's, Master's and doctorate. In the fields of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, programmes are based on a one-tier system, equivalent to combined Bachelor's and Master's programmes. The theoretical part of the PhD/Doctorate (*Doktora Diploması*) programmes contains a minimum of seven courses (21 national credits). A recent change in the Regulations on Graduate Education of 1 July 1996 (August 2003), allows Bachelor's degree holders direct access to doctoral programmes provided that their performance at the Bachelor's level is exceptional and their applications are approved. For these students, the theoretical part of the doctoral programmes consists of a minimum of 14 courses, with a minimum of 42 national credits.

There is no legal obstacle to the establishment and recognition of **joint degrees** and/or joint study programmes. Universities can set up and offer joint degree programmes through international partnerships following approval by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).



ECTS was first introduced in higher education institutions in 2001 and has been officially implemented in most universities within the context of EU student mobility programmes. There are plans to make it compulsory by the end of the 2005/06 academic year. In Turkey, ECTS is used solely for credit transfer.

In general, all higher education institutions in Turkey also use the independent national credit system which is not fully compatible with ECTS. The existing credit system is based on contact hours (i.e. theoretical or practical hours per week).

The **Diploma Supplement** (DS) was first introduced in higher education institutions in 2001. It is not mandatory yet but will be compulsory from the 2005/06 academic year onwards. The national DS template has been formed in line with UNESCO-CEPES, European Commission and Council of Europe standards. In the meantime, universities have been required to prepare sample copies of the DS for all degree programmes, including doctorates. Some universities have already completed all the preliminary work required to issue the DS in June 2005. The DS is to be issued to students free of charge on request, in English and in one other widely used European language (German or French).

In October 2002, the regulations on academic assessment and **quality control** in higher education were initiated by the Inter-university Board. The Commission on Academic Assessment and Quality Control in higher education, established by the Inter-university Board, has been in place since the 2003/04 academic year. The regulations involve the evaluation of all higher education degree programmes. At this stage, the emphasis will be placed on **internal evaluation**, except in the case of doctoral degrees, which will be subject to evaluation by an external committee.

The Commission examines the reports and submits them to YÖK and the Interuniversity Board. While the Turkish higher education system does not yet have a national **accreditation** system, programmes are adopted if they meet YÖK criteria. Efforts have been stepped up during the 2004/05 academic year to establish



national accreditation and quality assurance. At present, the system is open to evaluation from abroad – a practice widely adopted by many universities. Student unions in the Turkish higher education system meet on a regular basis and have a council which is independent of YÖK. For the time being, there is no national-level student representative in Turkey. In 2001, YÖK approved the regulations on university student councils proposed by the Inter-university Board to establish a student council in each higher education institution. According to these regulations, each class, department or programme, and each faculty or four-year higher (vocational) school must have a student representative. The student council (UOK) at higher education institutions consists of representatives of the faculty and four-year higher (vocational) school. When matters concerning students are on the agenda, the president of the student council and faculty representatives are invited to the senate and board meetings by the rector or deans, though they do not have voting rights. Students contribute to internal evaluation by completing questionnaires for each course at the end of every semester. The questions concern the course material and the conduct of teachers. Several universities have adopted this procedure for all their programmes for over 10 years, while others have started to do so in the accreditation of their engineering programmes.

The draft proposal for the national student council is being submitted to the May 2005 meeting of the Inter-University Council (ÜAK) and then to the YÖK. No bodies responsible for quality assurance have applied for membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



UNITED KINGDOM



STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Higher education is provided by three main types of institutions: universities, colleges and institutions of higher education and art and music colleges. All universities are autonomous institutions, particularly in matters relating to courses. They are empowered by a Royal Charter or an Act of Parliament. As a result of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, the binary line separating universities and polytechnics was abolished and



polytechnics were given university status (i.e., the right to award their own degrees) and took university titles. The Council for National Academic Awards was abolished, leaving most institutions to confer their own degrees. Higher Education Funding Councils were created for England, Scotland and Wales, replacing the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. Most universities are divided into faculties which may be subdivided into departments. Universities UK examines matters of concern to all universities. Many colleges and institutions of higher education are the result of mergers of teacher training colleges and other colleges. The Department for Education and Skills is responsible for all universities. Students have to pay a maximum fee of £1,075 a year (2002-2003). Non-university higher education institutions also provide degree courses, various non-degree courses and postgraduate qualifications. Some may offer Higher Degrees and other qualifications offered by most non-university higher education institutions are validated by external bodies such as a local university or the Open University. An institution can also apply for the authority to award its own degrees but it must be able to demonstrate a good record of running degree courses validated by other universities. Institutions can apply for university status but must satisfy a number of criteria, including the power to award its own first and higher degrees. Some higher education is also provided in further education institutions. This provision is funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils and the Department of Education Northern Ireland. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 allows for the transfer of further education institutions to the higher education sector, if 'the full-time enrolment number of the institution concerned...for courses of higher education exceeds 55% of its total full-time equivalent enrolment number'. A new national body, the Institute of Learning and Teaching, is being established in 1999 to set up an accreditation scheme for higher education teachers and to encourage innovation in teaching and learning.



Reforms made associated with the Bologna Process

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Higher education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are autonomous bodies established by Royal Charter or legislation, and most are part-funded by government. Many of the changes and reforms in higher education which have taken place over recent years followed from the recommendations of the 1997 Dearing Report (the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education). The 2004 Higher Education Act (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) will introduce variable tuition fees from 2006 onwards. A Government decision on university title (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) has changed the basis on which the university title is accorded to an institution, removing the requirement for research degree awarding powers and spread of subject areas. Criteria for taught degree awarding powers have been strengthened to require a more extensive scholarly environment. England, Wales and Northern Ireland have responded in a positive way to the developments arising from the Bologna Process.

The degree structure in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is based on **three main cycles**. The first cycle also includes a wide range of different short-cycle qualifications at different levels. This structure meets the basic Bologna requirement since, for full-time students, the first cycle is generally either three or four years. Although students typically enter **doctoral programmes** following a Master's degree, there are some subject areas where students can enter such programmes without a Master's degree if they have good results in a Bachelor's degree with Honours in a relevant discipline, along with the agreement of the supervisor(s) to take on the particular student. A PhD does not include training for teaching in higher education; this takes place separately where required. Some bodies which fund postgraduate studies require one year's training in research methods (the MRes) before the



Doctorate, but this can equally form the first part of doctoral studies, which may also include short courses. There are no legal obstacles to awarding joint or double degrees provided the institution has appropriately formulated its statutes and regulations. Titles of degrees are not regulated by law but generic descriptors for higher education qualifications, including those at doctoral level and advice on qualification nomenclature, are included in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). These descriptors provide guidance on qualification nomenclature to assist institutions in achieving consistency in the ways in which qualification titles convey information about the level, nature and subjects of study.

Credit accumulation and transfer systems developed by consortia of HEIs have been used widely, but not universally, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland over recent years. One academic year is equated with 120 UK credits or 60 **ECTS** credits, but hours/credit differ from the averages identified in the ECTS Guidelines. Credit in the UK is always based on learning outcomes recognising notional student workload. In Wales, since 2003, all accredited learning has been gradually brought into a single unifying structure referred to as the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The majority of Welsh universities continue to work collaboratively on its implementation, while considering its integration with ECTS. The framework includes a credit accumulation and transfer system and vocational qualifications. While large numbers of universities in England and Northern Ireland also use a credit system and have done so for a number of years, credits do not form part of the English and Northern Irish qualifications framework. This issue will be discussed in 2005. Since its introduction in 1989, ECTS has been widely used by institutions participating in the Socrates-Erasmus programme. Most of them use ECTS for transfer. As institutions increasingly look to acquire the ECTS label, more institutions will be using ECTS for all first and second-cycle programmes alongside Welsh, Northern Ireland and English



credits where they operate. Following from the Dearing Report, England, Wales and Northern Ireland were committed to the development of a Student Progress File with two elements – the first matching in large part the requirements of the **Diploma Supplement**, the second providing a personal development file. With the encouragement of the Government and the sector-wide Europe Unit based at Universities UK (UUK – a consultative and advisory body which represents university interests and speaks on behalf of all UK universities), higher education institutions are implementing the Diploma Supplement. This is issued free of charge, in English and in Wales there are plans to provide the Diploma Supplement in Welsh as well as in English. Together with the key organisations in the sector, the National Academic Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC) as a member of the European ENIC/NARIC network, also supports and promotes the implementation and promotion of the Diploma Supplement in the UK. The development of the Diploma Supplement has been further enhanced by higher education institution conferences and other events offered in collaboration between the UK Socrates-Erasmus Council, the UK NARIC and the Europe Unit. Progress is expected towards 100 % implementation over the next two years. A comprehensive system for the maintenance of quality and standards in institutions has been established, broadly following the pattern proposed by the Dearing Inquiry in 1997.

The current **external quality assurance** processes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland focus on institutional management of quality and standards. They are predicated on higher education institutions having robust internal quality assurance mechanisms capable of providing verifiable information to the public about quality and standards at programme level.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for the UK higher education sector. The Agency is an independent body funded by subscriptions from higher education institutions and through contracts with the four higher education funding councils in the



UK. The Agency's role is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. It does this by reviewing quality and standards and by publishing external reference points for quality that help higher education institutions to define clear and explicit standards. These external reference points include: the frameworks of higher education qualifications, which include descriptions of different HE qualifications; subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects; and a ten-part Code of Practice for Quality Assurance.

QAA reviews and audits are evidence-based processes using materials produced by institutions, including a self-evaluation document. The integrity and consistency of the QAA's review processes, which are peer reviews, is largely dependent on the participation of well-qualified and trained reviewers. The QAA publishes a person specification for reviewers setting out the qualities and experience they should have, and in selecting reviewers tries to maintain an overall balance in respect of aspects including gender, geographical location, subject balance and ethnicity. The Agency does not currently specifically seek nominations for reviewers from outside the UK, but has involved international colleagues in the review of some of the elements of the academic infrastructure. The QAA Board includes a student observer. Students play an active role in the review processes: they make a separate written submission to the audit/review team, and meeting(s) with students are an element in every audit programme. The Agency produces material on quality directly targeted at students, and has a member of staff dedicated to student matters including liaising with the National Union of Students on training in quality assurance for its members.

All QAA review activities result in published reports. These reports include judgments about quality and standards, and are available in hard copy and through the internet on the Agency's website, as are all documents relating to the Agency's standards



and processes. The Agency does not have the power to close institutions or programmes or withdraw funding, but should a 'no confidence' judgment be made, the institution would have a period of one year to recover the situation either by improving or closing the provision. Should this not be achieved, then the appropriate Funding Council would take action. One year after an audit report has been published, institutions are invited to comment on the actions they have taken in respect of recommendations made in the report.

Higher education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have operated **internal quality** mechanisms for many decades.

There is no system for **accrediting** higher education institutions, but the right to award degrees and use university title is protected by the Government. Institutions without degree-awarding powers may provide courses leading to degrees validated by institutions with degree-awarding powers (mainly universities and university colleges). There are many statutory and regulatory bodies associated with particular professions which accredit higher education programmes and/or individual graduates according to their specific requirements.

The Department for Education and Skills in England is committed to the continued expansion of higher education and moving towards half the population entering higher education by the age of 30. The Welsh Assembly Government has targets to increase the participation of Welsh-domiciled higher education students studying in higher education institutions in Wales. The bulk of the expansion of higher education provision will come through new types of qualification, in particular, through foundation degrees. These two-year vocational awards are designed specifically to offer opportunities to progress to a Bachelor's degree.

The QAA is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and its Chief Executive is one of the Vice Presidents of the Network. The Agency has participated in a number of ENQA projects including the Transnational European Evaluation Projects (TEEP) and the



Quality Convergence Study (QCS), and is a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). It also has bilateral links with other agencies throughout Europe and in other parts of the world. The Agency participates actively in OECD and UNESCO higher education activities. The QAA publishes a code of practice on collaborative provision covering transnational provision originating in the UK which is delivered in other countries through partner institutions.

Scotland

Arrangements linked to the Bologna process are mainly regulated by the Scottish Higher Education Framework adopted in 2001 and completed in 2003, and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) adopted in 2001. Developments related to the Bologna Process are monitored through the Scottish Bologna Stakeholder Group. This group includes members of the Scottish Executive (the devolved government for Scotland), representatives from Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA Scotland), the National Union of Students Scotland (NUS Scotland) and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC).

The existing degree structure is traditionally based on **three main cycles**. The traditional Honours degree takes four years to complete (480 national credits or 240 ECTS), and most postgraduate Master's courses can be completed in one calendar year (180 national credits with no current ECTS equivalent). There are some exceptions to these general arrangements in the case of professional qualifications, and where flexible patterns of study are created to support lifelong learning policy objectives.

The requirements for achieving a **doctorate** vary by subject area, institution and type of doctorate. In all cases, the candidate must provide evidence that he or she has made an original and significant contribution to knowledge. The structure of doctorate programmes is similar to that in place elsewhere in the UK. It



comprises four kinds of doctorates: the traditional research-based doctoral degrees (PhD or DPhil), the doctorates with a substantial taught core (now available in some vocational areas including engineering, business and education), the professional doctorates (available for people who wish to research their professional practice), and the doctorates by publication (awarded on the basis of the submission of high-quality previously published work written by the candidate, supported by a substantial critical appraisal of this work). Part-time study is common, and therefore the duration varies from between 4 and 6 years. There is no single model for joint or double degree programmes. Arrangements are negotiated on an individual basis between partner institutions.

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and programmes use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which defines programmes and courses in terms of credit points and credit levels. SCQF has been compatible with **ECTS** (2 SCQF are equivalent to 1 ECTS) since 2001. ECTS is commonly used for credit transfers and SCQF is used for accumulation, given that the Framework contains levels whereas as ECTS does not. Qualifications are defined in relation to SCQF in terms of qualification descriptors, credit points and credit levels.

The **Diploma Supplement** has not been implemented yet, but HEIs expect to do so by the end of June 2005. The Diploma Supplement will be available free of charge and will be published in English. It will include a national description of the Scottish higher education system developed by QAA Scotland and the Scottish higher education sector.

External evaluation is conducted by QAA, a UK-wide body with a separate office in Scotland. This independent body was established in 1992 to ensure public confidence in the quality and standards of higher education and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of its quality. In addition to QAA, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) established in 1992 has statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of provision within publicly funded institutions. SHEFC discharges the responsibility through QAA Scotland and the



ELIR review process. QAA Scotland has developed its own distinctive approach to quality assurance and enhancement in partnership with SHEFC and the Scottish higher education sector. This approach is known as the Quality Enhancement Framework. It operates according to the following main elements:

- HEIs conduct internal reviews at subject level.

QAA runs a cycle of four yearly external institutional reviews conducted by peers, based on a combination of self-assessment and visits.

- NUS Scotland (the student representative body) manages a national development service financed by SHEFC to support student engagement and participation in quality enhancement within their own institutions.

- All HEIs publish information on the quality and standards of their provision in accordance with guidance issued by SHEFC, and make this available to the public on the Higher Education and Research Opportunities website.

QAA facilitates a series of sector-wide 'Enhancement Themes'. These are designed to enable the sector as a whole to undertake collective work to enhance the quality and standards of provision. The focus is on reviewing an institution's ability to assure its own quality. Newly designated institutions, or institutions that appear to be failing, will undergo a more rigorous external review at programme level until there is confidence in their internal systems. HEIs take account of the QAA's national code of practice for quality assurance and national subject-level 'benchmark statements' when designing their internal processes.

HEIs conduct **internal evaluation** at subject level in accordance with guidance issued by SHEFC. HEIs are independent and selfgoverning bodies. Degrees and other higher education qualifications are legally owned by the awarding institution, and not by the state. HEIs determine the degrees they offer while Government holds a list of institutions with powers to award degrees, as well as other recognised institutions. HEIs have to meet strict criteria before they are given degree-awarding powers. Qualification standards and the quality of the student learning



experience are maintained by a range of processes including the extensive use of external examiners. Quality assurance arrangements for higher education place particular emphasis on student participation in review processes. Student representatives have had full involvement in the design of processes which focus on the student learning experience.

In addition to the above arrangements, many Further Education Colleges provide short courses at higher education level whose quality is ensured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Their standards are also monitored by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. A small number of colleges also offer degree provision which is accredited by the partner higher education institution.

QAA is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



CONCLUSIONS & RECCOMENDATIONS

- All participating countries have functional accreditation systems for study programs and for higher education institutions.
- All participating countries have major concerns about the quality assurance process in higher education institutions. However, the preoccupations are mostly at individual level, missing the levers of imposing such systems at a global scale.
- The quality assurance systems, mainly in the last ten member states and in the acceding countries were regarded with reticence, being many times assimilated with pure control systems.
- The Diploma Supplement is half-functional (an average of the situation existing in the participating countries), but from the academic year 2005-2006 it will become compulsory in most of the countries.
- The European model of Diploma Supplement should be detailed according to the existing professional qualifications, not only with the academic ones. Perhaps a new European Document should be developed.
- There is a communication gap between Ministries of Education (or equivalent) and Ministries of Labor (or equivalent).



- The preoccupation of higher education institutions for developing study programs responsive to the real needs of the labor market is increasing.
- There is a real need for consultative commissions with representatives from Ministries of Education (or equivalent) and Ministries of Labor (or equivalent).
- The entrepreneurship spirit should be promoted within the higher education institutions in order to make more active the preoccupations for becoming more competitive.
- The higher education institutions should developed steering committees, which involve representatives of academic staff, students and other representatives of the civil society in order to be more realistic in developing teaching and research activities.