



Completed National Reports and National Strategies for the Social Dimension should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by email (secr@bologna2009benelux.org) no later than

1 November 2008.

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2007-2009

Notes:

BFUG members are strongly encouraged to consult other stakeholders about the contents of their National Report.

Please complete your National Report in English using this template (shaded areas) and return it to the Secretariat by email. Where appropriate, please include precise web references to legislation or other documentation. Please add comments as appropriate under each question to describe the current situation. Please try to keep text brief, while aiming to answer all questions comprehensively.

National Reports will be posted on the Bologna website in their original form.

Information from National Reports will form the basis of the Stocktaking Report to be presented to Ministers when they meet in April 2009.

Details

Country	Republic of Bulgaria
Date	01.11.2008
BFUG member (one name only) Position	Svetomira Apostolova - Kaloyanova State expert Policy in Higher Education Directorate Ministry of Education and Science
Email address	m.kaloyanova@mon.bg
Contributors to the report	Ministry of Education and Science; National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

1. Main developments since London 2007

Please describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms and changes in institutional structures, since the London meeting in 2007.

During the reporting period, specific measures were developed for better adaptability of the higher education system. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the higher education institutions have done targeted specific efforts in the priority fields, defined at the meeting of European Ministers of Higher Education in London in 2008, as follows:

- Mobility – the state fosters all possibilities for mobility in Bulgaria and abroad for students educated in the Bulgarian higher education institutions (HEIs), incl. by participation in the Lifelong Learning Programmeme (2007 – 2013) and in mobility schemes based on international and bilateral agreements. The academic exchange with foreign HEIs is one of the criteria for institutional accreditation adopted by our National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.
- Social dimension – broadening of social dimensions and social coherence. Law for crediting students and doctoral candidates¹ has been adopted in 2008 (published, State Gazette issue 69 of August 5th, 2008). Its aim is to support the students and doctoral candidates to study in Bulgarian HEIs only. The maximum size of the loan depends on the size of the tuition fee for a duration equal to the rest of the period of study according to the syllabus for a given specialty and degree (Bachelor, “Professional Bachelor in..”, Master, Doctor).
- Data collection – the Ministry of Education and Science created an information database, which supports a Register of the current and suspended students and doctoral candidates classified by educational degrees to be acquired and by professional fields of study; Register of the academic staff members at the higher educational institutions; Register of legalized diplomas for higher educational degrees acquired abroad; Register of higher education diplomas issued by the higher educational institutions.

¹ It regulates the conditions and the order for crediting students and doctoral candidates by the Bulgarian state. Students and doctoral candidates - Bulgarian citizens, citizens of another Member State of the EU, EEA or Switzerland have right to submit documents for credit in accordance with certain eligibility criteria.

- Employability – adoption of a Lifelong Learning Strategy; improvement of practices for the impartial recognition of higher education in view of improving the employability;
- European Higher Education Area in a global context – development of a draft project for National Qualification Framework in the context of the Qualification Framework in the European Higher Education Area; the admittance of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency as a full member of ENQA; participation as a founding country in the General Assembly of the European Register of the Quality Assurance Agencies, and in its operative activity.

One of the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is to maintain the legislation regulating the higher education system, by creating conditions for its development in compliance with European tendencies and the Bologna process, in view of preserving its main achievements – accessibility and academic nature. The Higher Education Act grants academic autonomy to the higher education institutions and serves as a main reference point for all aspects of higher education. The process of modernization of Bulgarian higher education at this stage consists of two parts: integration in the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna process) and integration in the European Research Area.

During the last two years, the MES initiated a broad public discussion, related to defining the key elements of the future Strategy for development of higher education, which is meant to be the basis of a new Higher Education Act. Part of the measures offered were introduced by amendments and supplements of the current Higher Education Act (HEA). The changes introduced are a natural development to the Bologna Process in Bulgarian conditions and concern: the model for financing higher education, support for the financial autonomy of higher education institutions; introduction of modern forms of management of the higher education institutions, ensuring publicity and transparency; development of more specific accreditation criteria and a system for quality control of education. Through the changes introduced by the Higher Education Act, changes concerning the higher education institutions were also made. An explicit prohibition for carrying out of the educational process outside the main branches of the higher education institutions has been introduced. A part of the legislative changes aim at strengthening external control over the activity of higher education institutions in respect to observation of the HEA and the spending of public funds in a transparent manner.

The numbers of newly-admitted students was significantly increased, which provides the

opportunity for broader participation in programmes for acquisition of higher education, as an important element of knowledge-based society. The higher education institutions were encouraged to present a more attractive academic environment. State matriculation examinations (Matura) have been introduced for all secondary education graduates. The outcomes from the Matura may be used as an alternative “entrance” to the higher education system. Almost all higher education institutions welcomed this opportunity as they preserved the possibility for candidate-students examinations as well.

In view of increasing accountability and responsibility of the higher education institutions in the spending of public funds, HEA stipulates that the state subsidy should be based on the number of actually admitted students, not on the number of announced places for admission. It also provides that financial sanctions shall be imposed to those higher education institutions, which fail to work according to the capacity, defined for them by NEAA.

Other changes to the HEA are related to increasing the transparency of management of the higher education institutions, through the creation of Boards of Trustees. The HEA provides that each public higher education institution shall create such a body, which should also include external persons, incl. representatives of employers, branch organizations, etc. Until the present moment Boards of Trustees are functioning at 16 state higher education institutions.

MES works intensively to encourage cooperation between the business, the social partners and the higher education institutions. The aim is to achieve an adequate relation between the labour market demands and the quality of the human resources in order to ensure a long-term and sustainable employment of the young people.

A good example of building up a sustainable partnership between universities and the business is the increase in numbers of career centers, which have been established in the recent years at the higher education institutions. Such centers are functioning at 35 out of 51 higher education institutions.

In July 2008, the National Assembly adopted the Law for Crediting Students and Doctoral Candidates (publ., State Gazette, issue 69 of 2008). The law has been drafted with the support of the Ministry of Finance and the Association of Banks in Bulgaria, and was a subject of a broad discussion. Students and doctoral candidates who are eligible for such a loan are Bulgarian citizens, citizens of another Member State of the EU, of the EEA and Switzerland, and who have already gained their student rights until the moment of submitting their documents for concluding a contract for such loan and are eligible with respect to the requirements set by this law. The Bulgarian state provides financial support for crediting

students and doctoral candidates by guaranteeing the capital and the interests of the credit, returns the credit or a part of it in the cases stipulated by this law and pays to the bank a premium for a good management under certain conditions set by the law. In accordance with this law, it is envisaged two more registries to be set – a register of banks, included in the crediting system, and a register of credit agreements.

During the period 2007 – 2009, a draft project for National Qualification Framework in higher education was developed by a workgroup, joining representatives of the Rectors' Conference and the academic community. Thus, an adjustment of the existing qualification framework for higher education with the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area was drafted. Activities on the development of the draft project were finalized in March 2008. Currently, work continues on the development of a National Qualifications Framework in the context of the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning. This process is expected to finish in 2010.

2. Partnership

Please describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Through its Directorates “Policy for Higher Education” and “European Integration and International Cooperation”, the Ministry of Education and Science directly monitors and assists the development of the Bologna Process in Bulgaria.

The Rectors' Conference and the National Representation of Student Councils are other main structures, providing real partner support through their active and competent participation in all activities, related to the practical implementation of the main Bologna priorities.

Partnerships in the framework of the Bologna promoters have been established through Socrates/Erasmus National Agency. They organise informational workshops and conferences on the main parameters of the Bologna process. Thus, they contribute to making the academic community more active in the process of fulfilment and implementation of the Bologna reforms at a national level.

Bologna promoters in Bulgaria usually include a representative of the student community who works in close relationship with national students' organizations. Conferences and meetings are being organized to motivate and involve students to participate in the activities in the Bologna process. The Rectors' Conference also plays a significant role for implementation of the Bologna process in Bulgaria. As a result of its energetic activity, a number of actions were undertaken, which led to specific and real achievements.

a) Does your country have a national workgroup for Bologna follow-up

Yes 1 No 0

b) Does your national Bologna follow-up group include representatives of

Ministry

Yes 1 No 0

Other (please specify) -

c) Does your country have a Bologna promoters' group Yes 1 No 0

d) Does your national Bologna promoters' group include representatives of

Ministry

Yes 0 No 1

Rectors' conference

Yes 1 No 0

Academic staff

Yes 1 No 0

Students

Yes 1 No 0

Staff trade unions

Yes 0 No 1

National Quality Assurance Agency

Yes 0 No 1

Employers

Yes 1 No 0

Other (please specify) -

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

no

DEGREE SYSTEM

3. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

a) Please describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycles.

100 % of students from all professional fields of study are enrolled in the first two educational-qualificational degrees of Bachelor and Master.

There is a clear distribution and distinction of requirements toward syllabi and curricula for each degree. Permanent efforts are being made to update and achieve compliance with current requirements on the qualitative and quantitative distribution of new knowledge, skills and competences that characterise each single degree. The aim is to achieve an optimal balance in

the distribution of study load between the separate degrees.

b) Please give the percentage of the total number of all students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09.

Total number of all students below doctoral level - 262 019

Number enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09 - 262 019

% of all students enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09 - 100 %

c) Please add comments which accurately describe the current situation regarding implementation of the two cycle system in your country:

In accordance with the Higher Education Act (1995) and the Ordinance on State Requirements for Acquisition of Higher Education at the Educational and Qualification Degrees of Bachelor and Master, the Bulgarian system of higher education organizes training after completion of secondary education, consisting of the following degrees

1. Educational-qualificational degree of Bachelor, for the acquisition of which in accordance with the teaching plan are required:

- not less than 180 credits with a duration of study not less than three years – “Professional Bachelor in...” - (ISCED 97, level 5B);

Main characteristics are: fundamental theoretical knowledge with respect to the corresponding professional field; specialized, technological and practical knowledge, skills and competences according to the studied specialty; ICT skills and competences; other additional skills and competences; continuing education – access to a minimum 2-year Master degree courses, in a specialty from the same professional field;

- not less than 240 credits with a duration of study not less than 4 years – Bachelor’s degree (ISCED level 5A);

Main characteristics: basic multi-profiled knowledge, skills and competences related to the nature of the professional direction of the specialty; broad opportunities for employability and direct access to the labour market; continuing education – access to minimum 1-year Master’s degree courses.

2. Educational-Qualificational degree of Master (ISCED 97, level 5A), for the acquisition of which are required:

- not less than 300 credits according to the syllabus with a duration of study not less than 5 years;

- not less than 120 credits after an acquired educational-qualificational degree of “Professional Bachelor in..”;
- not less than 60 credits after an acquired educational-qualificational degree of Bachelor:

Main characteristics: extended fundamental training combined with profiled training within a given specialty; (in the corresponding professional direction); profiled training and expansion of knowledge, skills and competences acquired at Bachelor’s level; complementary multi-profiled and interdisciplinary training for students with Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in another specialty; extended theoretical training with research orientation and specialized training in the specialty and its professional direction; mastering of the fundamentals of scientific research, applied scientific and/or creative (artistic) activity.

4. Stage of implementation of the third cycle

Please describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of doctoral candidates following doctoral programmes including both taught courses and independent research
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- other elements apart from independent research that are included in doctoral study programmes
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- information on whether doctoral studies are included in your country’s qualifications framework and linked to learning outcomes
- information on whether interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills are integrated in doctoral studies
- information on whether credit points are used in measuring workload in doctoral studies.
- Information on the status of the doctoral candidates (students, early stage researchers, both)

Doctoral studies are included as a last third cycle in the the national qualification framework for higher education. They are in compliance with the requirements of the Qualification

Framework of the European Higher Education area, as well as with those of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. The subjects of doctoral programmes correspond to the specialties in the Classification of the Specialties of Scientific Workers ("State Gazette" No. 81 of 1995). The autonomous higher education institutions and scientific organizations determine the necessary knowledge, skills and competences, which the doctoral student should have acquired at the end of his/her study.

- The total number of doctoral candidates is 2 534 (i.e., 1,7 % of all students within the higher education system). Doctoral programmes include training courses and lecturing activity, as well as carrying out of independent research.
- Doctoral studies are with duration of minimum three years (regular form of study) or four years (extra-mural form of study). Higher education institutions and scientific organizations may grant the possibility to acquire this educational and scientific degree in certain scientific specialties, of which the institution has obtained programme accreditation.
- Doctoral studies are carried out according to an individual plan (which includes training and research activity), with the aim to prepare and defend a dissertation thesis. The syllabus includes: the subject of the dissertation, the preparation (attendance of a certain cycle of lectures and seminars, teaching activities, other taught courses, participation in courses, conferences and other public events), independent research tasks, deadlines for their completion and defence of the dissertation thesis.

During the last two years, attention was focused on the quality of the doctoral programmes, the development of interdisciplinary and joint (with other European institutions of higher education and research) doctoral programmes. In order to achieve the right to carry out doctoral candidates' training in a certain scientific field, universities and scientific organizations should receive a "very good" mark of the programme accreditation from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. New and demanding criteria have been set up (since 2005). They are linked with the following ratios: successful graduates-total number of persons trained; relative share of the persons who are trained in joint projects with foreign universities, etc.

- Training in the respective university is carried out under the guidance of a scientific supervisor, appointed by the Faculty Council of the respective higher education institution. Taught theoretical courses are included in all doctoral programmes in addition to individual research. The exact proportion in terms of the amount of time allocated to training and individual research depends on the respective higher educational institution (each with a high degree of autonomy), its profile and the nature of the intended dissemination of the

results (scientific/fundamental or practical). The higher education institutions are entitled to decide on the distribution of the theoretical disciplines within doctoral programmes or whether doctoral candidates must undergo theoretical training before proceeding to the more complex aspect of research. The doctoral candidates are examined according to the individual syllabus by a Commission consisting of at least three lecturers of academic rank and with the participation of the research supervisor of the doctoral candidate. Once a year, the scientific organization, which provides the doctoral programme discusses the doctoral candidate's individual plan, the research work performed and the current state of play of his/her dissertation.

- Interdisciplinary training is offered in view of developing the abilities of doctoral candidates to perform critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas in different fields.
- At this stage, there are no requirements for credit accumulation for doctoral candidates' training.

5. Relationship between higher education and research

a) Please describe the main trends in the role of higher education institutions in research in your country.

National policy in the field of scientific research is carried out by the Council of Ministers, the MES and the Parliament.

Bulgaria has undergone significant changes, aiming to break the existing stereotypes of Universities as pure educational institutions. A draft of a Strategy for Scientific Research and Development of the Republic of Bulgaria (2009-2019) has been developed and presented for approval. It offers an exhaustive and suitable set of goals and measures which Bulgarian science and research needs, in order to overcome the challenges before its development. The outlined objectives and measures correspond to the recommendations of the European Commission, laid down in the 2008 annual evaluation report of the status of Bulgaria, wherein the necessity of improving the effectiveness of Bulgarian scientific research system is emphasized. They also correspond to important issues, identified in the report of the Expert Group at the Scientific and Technical Research Committee of the European Commission – CREST in the framework of the fourth cycle of the Open method for coordination of policies in the field of scientific research.

MES has adopted specific measures to support the synergy between the higher education

institutions and the other research sectors, such as: special competitions for promotion of scientific research in the higher education institutions; modernization of scientific infrastructure; a pilot scheme for strengthening of public-private partnerships between higher education institutions and small and medium enterprises.

Through the Scientific Research fund at the MES, special schemes for implementation of fundamental, applied and experimental research projects gained ground. Through these projects, inter-institutional integration with other higher education institutions, scientific organizations, university hospitals and national centers is encouraged.

Target mechanism has been introduced for the financing of research activities at the higher education institutions, with which the principle of competitive target financing of projects was applied. The monitoring of the overall process is performed by the MES, by means of a range of performance indicators and achieved outputs.

In implementation of the policy for strengthening of research at the higher education institutions, the Scientific Research Fund organizes target competitions for higher education institutions, by giving them the opportunity to become leading partners and project coordinators. The main priorities in this direction are:

- Encouragement of scientific research at the higher education institutions, ensuring their quality, which support:
 - inter-institutional integration with other higher education institutions, scientific organisations, small and medium enterprises, university hospitals and national centers;
 - effective international cooperation and participation in the building of the European Research Area;
 - the intensification of the link “science – industry” by means of implementation of joint research projects with the participation of businesses;
 - the development of young scientists, doing their doctoral studies in company structures, with the active participation of higher education institutions.
- The improvement of the age profile of the research potential at the higher education institutions, aiming at the creation of a new generation of scientists.
- the creation of integrated research units at the higher education institutions in view of developing of perspective scientific laboratories and diversification of research activity.

Other notable opportunities, where the higher education institutions are eligible beneficiaries, are.

- Targeted research programmes, supporting the integrated research schemes in priority thematic fields, in compliance with the priorities of the European Research Framework Programme, which are also carried out by a consortium of at least three different research institutions, working on a common strategic research agenda.
- Support for the development of centers for high competence, aiming to concentrate all types of resources. There are 33 Competence Centers in existence, supported both through the target national programmes, and through the utilization of other instruments for financing.
- Internationalisation of research – various competitions under bilateral and multilateral programmes with partner countries from the EU (Germany, France, Greece, Romania, Slovenia), as well as with third countries (Macedonia, China, India, etc.). These programmes stimulate the mobility of researchers and the knowledge transfer.
- Support for doctoral programmes (both new ones and programmes under construction), and for the Programme for Development of Post-Graduated and Post-Doctoral Training, available through the Human Resource Development Operative Programme (2007-2013).

b) Please outline any measures to improve co-operation between higher education institutions and other private and public institutions that undertake research. Please include:

- percentage of GDP spent on research
 - o from public funds
 - o from private funds
 - total annual national research expenditure (expressed in national currency)
 - o from public funds
 - o from private funds
 - percentage of research carried out in higher education institutions (in terms of funding)
 - details of the funding mechanisms for doctoral candidates in your country
- Percentage of GDP, spent on research – 0,5 % of GDP (as consolidated budget)
 - ▶ from the state budget – 0,37%
 - ▶ from private sources – 0,13 %

- Total amount of annual expenditure for scientific research on a national scale (in national currency)
 - ▶ from public sources – approx. 450 000 000 BGN;
 - ▶ from private sources – approx. 50 000 000 BGN;
- % of the amounts for scientific research, carried out by universities (of the amount of general financing for higher education institutions) – 10 200 000 BGN (approximately – 10 %).
- Details on the mechanisms for financing of doctoral candidates in your country

The overall financing of doctoral candidates is performed through the national budget, which is being institutionally distributed between the higher education institutions and scientific organisations.

Through the Scientific Research National Fund, target schemes have been set to support doctoral candidates at the higher education institutions and scientific organizations through research projects for their dissertations. Along with this, all schemes for thematic research projects, scientific infrastructure, bilateral schemes and centers for research competence are open for the participation of young researchers (specialists, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students, by offering them special incentives).

Within the framework of the Human Resources Development Operative Programme (2007-2013), at the MES started the second phase of the Support for the Development of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Students, Post-Graduate Students and Young Scientists Programme, financed by the European Social Fund and the national budget with the total amount of 9 779 150 BGN.

c) Is there any tracking system to follow the further career of doctoral graduates?

Yes 0 No 1 If Yes, please specify:

At some Higher Education Institutions, systems for tracing the professional and career development of graduated doctoral candidates have been built.

6. Access and admission to the next cycle

Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and between the second and third cycles.

6.1 Access and admission between the first and second cycles

Please indicate:

a) the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle

All qualifications (100 %) of the first cycle give access to the programmes of the second cycle. Persons, who have acquired an educational-qualificational degree of “Professional Bachelor in..”, may continue their education in educational-qualificational degree of Master only in the same professional field in accordance with state requirements and under conditions, laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the higher institution.

The number of newly enrolled students – Bulgarian citizens for academic year 2007/2008 is 46.7 thousand, while foreign citizens are 1.8 thousand. Among the newly enrolled, the share of graduates from a general secondary education is the largest – 67.4 %, followed by vocational school graduates – 31.0 %.

The number of students, continuing their education in Master’s programmes after acquiring an educational-qualificational degree is 21.7 thousand. 2.0 thousand or 9.3 % out of them are enrolled in programmes after an acquired educational-qualificational degree of Bachelor, exercising their right in accordance with the amendments and supplements to the Higher Education Act (publ., State Gazette, issue 41 of May 22th 2007).

b) any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle (please specify)

no

c) any special requirements for access to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies: please tick whether graduates must:

sit entrance exam	Yes 1	No 0	In some cases 0
-------------------	-------	------	-----------------

complete additional courses	Yes 0	No 1	In some cases 0
-----------------------------	-------	------	-----------------

have work experience	Yes 0	No 1	In some cases 0
----------------------	-------	------	-----------------

If the answer to the last point is yes, please specify what type of work experience is required:

d) any further special requirements for access to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies

no

e) to which students the above special requirements apply (please tick):

all students	Yes 0	No 1
--------------	-------	------

holders of particular first cycle qualifications	Yes 1	No 0
--	-------	------

students of the same field coming from other HEIs	Yes 0	No 1
---	-------	------

f) which of the requirements apply to students coming from other fields of studies (please

tick):

entrance exam	Yes 0	No 0	In some cases 1
additional courses	Yes 0	No 1	In some cases 0
work experience	Yes 0	No 1	In some cases 0

6.2 Access and admission between the second and third cycles

Please indicate:

- a) the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
100% of all qualifications of the second cycle grant access to third cycle programmes.
- b) any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle (please specify)
No.
- c) any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles

No obstacles for transition between educational-qualificational cycles exist in the Bulgarian higher education system.

7. Employability of graduates/ cooperation with employers

a) What measures are being taken to enhance the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications? Please include the most recent statistical data on the employment status of graduates of all cycles.

If your higher education institutions also provide professional bachelor programmes, please provide employability data for both types of bachelors separately

b) To what extent there is a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers on:

- | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------|------------|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> curriculum design, work placements and international experience | Significant 0 | Some 1 | A little 0 | None 0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> accreditation/quality assurance | Significant 0 | Some 1 | A little 0 | None 0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> university governance | Significant 0 | Some 1 | A little 0 | None 0 |

c) Are first cycle graduates able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing with other graduates?

Yes 1	No 0	In some cases 0
-------	------	-----------------

d) Have you aligned recruitment procedures and career structures in the public service to take

account of the Bologna changes?

Yes 1 No 0 In some cases 0

If no, or in some cases only, please explain the current situation:

8. Implementation of national qualifications framework

Please answer the questions below. Please add comments which accurately describe the current situation in your country.

a) Has the national qualifications framework been prepared ?

Yes 0 No 1

Comment

The Bulgarian Qualification Framework for higher education corresponds to a great extent to the Qualification Framework in the European Higher Education Area. It is also in compliance with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. The Higher Education Act (1995) has introduced a degree structure, based on three cycles – Bachelor, Master and Doctor, which was fully implemented in the higher education system. Expected learning outcomes for each educational-qualificational degree as a whole correlate to the expected learning outcomes, as laid down in the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Decree No. 162 of the Council of Ministers (publ., State Gazette, issue 76 of 2002) determines the State Requirements on Acquisition of Educational-qualificational degrees of Bachelor and Master, while Decree No. 222 of the Council of Ministers (publ., State Gazette No. 90 of 2002) determines the State Requirements on Admission and Training of Doctoral Candidates. Ordinance No. 21 of 2004, issued by the Minister of Education and Science, determines the requirements and the procedure for implementation of the system for credit accumulation and transfer for individual degrees, as well as the correspondence between the six-grade evaluation system with the letter scale, used by the ECTS.

Further steps have to be taken for the full harmonization of existing requirements on knowledge, skills and competences with those used by the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area. It is expected that these actions will supplement national legislation in the respective field.

Since 2007, measures have been taken at the Ministry of Education and Science for the development of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) in the context of the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. The Bulgarian NQF is meant to be an integrated qualification framework.

The Deputy Minister of Education and Science responsible for the European Integration issues monitors the work on the drafting of the NQF. To this end two task forces were created by orders of the Minister of Education and Science – one concerning the higher education part and one for drafting the integrated NQF.

The first task force consisted of representatives of the Rectors Conference and the academic community. It was created with the task to draft a project of the National Qualification Framework in the context of the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area. In December 2007, the workgroup prepared a situational analysis, which was presented to Policy for Higher Education Directorate at the MES. In March 2008, the same task force drafted a project of the National Qualification Framework for Higher Education in the context of the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area. At this stage, public consultations, approval and adoption of the project are at hand.

The second task force was created in April 2008 and is still working, with the task to create a draft of an integrated National Qualification Framework implementing the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning - by developing: a comparative table for referencing the national educational degrees to the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning; a plan for the further activity for development and linking national sectoral qualifications to the EQF; a proposal for amendments and supplements to the national legislation.

b) Does the framework or proposed framework include generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences?

Yes 1 No 0

Comment:

The project of the National Qualification Framework for lifelong learning includes levels 6, 7 and 8, relating to higher education and contains general descriptors to separate educational-qualificational degrees, based on learning outcomes and acquired knowledge, skills and competences. It includes the necessary number of credits for the first and second cycle of education. At this stage, the broad discussion, approval and adoption of the project is at hand. Educational-qualificational degrees are visibly linked to learning outcomes and quality assurance procedures. The NQF draft includes the number of necessary credits for the first and second cycle of education and the already existing techniques for evaluation of learning outcomes.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is the institution, responsible for the external quality assurance and control. In 2005 it has developed new criteria for evaluation

and accreditation, as well as recommendations on the basis of learning outcomes. The autonomous higher educational institutions are required to indicate in its qualificational characteristics for each specialty the expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies). After adoption of the NQF, the higher educational institutions will be required to update their curricula in correspondence with the new requirements for expected learning outcomes.

c) Does it include ECTS credit ranges for the first and second cycle?

Yes 1 No 0

Comment:

Since 2004, a credit accumulation and transfer system, compatible with the ECTS, was introduced in the Bulgarian higher education system. It was introduced with Ordinance No. 21 of the Minister of Education and Science and contains the requirements and procedures for introduction of the credit accumulation and transfer system for each of the educational-qualificational degrees, as well as the transposition of the six-degree evaluation system to the letter evaluation scale of the ECTS. Since academic year 2004/2005, all higher educational institutions apply this system.

d) Has the NQF been nationally discussed with all stakeholders?

Yes 1 No 0

Comment:

The Ministry of Education and Science fully realizes the necessity of involving all stakeholders in the process of implementing the policy concerning the NQF. In relation to this, a number of workshops, thematic conferences, consultations with international and national experts were conducted. Thematic conferences were organized at national and regional level, as well as a thematic conference on the topic of NQF with the participation of leading European experts.

Bulgaria participates in the regional partnership for development of national qualification frameworks. This type of cooperation is of especial importance, as it gives the opportunity to countries to share their national experience in a circle of participants with good expertise. Bulgaria took active participation in regional conferences for South-Eastern Europe: in Belgrade, as a part of the programme of the Serbian Presidency of the Council of Europe, and in Cetinje, Montenegro – Conference on a Regional Network of Qualification Frameworks, co-organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro and the Council of Europe.

It is expected that the forthcoming changes will be broadly discussed with nationally

represented trade unions and employers' organisations. The MES is organizing a series of events, related to issues of the NQF. The results of all these events will be published at the web-page of the MES.

If the answer to d) is No, please answer question e):

e) has a timetable been agreed for consultations with all stakeholders?

Yes 0 No 0

Comment

If the answer to d) is Yes, please answer the following questions:

f) Are all formal arrangements/decisions for implementing the framework in place and have the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework been taken?

Yes 1 No 0

Comment:

Role of the national authorities:

- The Minister of Education and Science approves the NQF draft and submits it to the Council of Ministers for adoption.
- The Deputy Minister of Education and Science responsible for the European Integration issues submits the NQF draft to the Minister.
- A national contact point (NCP) and a national contact person concerning the NQF issues have been nominated. The NCP is European Integration and International Cooperation Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Science.
- The Integrated NQF compatible with the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualification Framework in the European Higher Education Area will be developed by the end of 2010.
- National legislation with respect to the National Qualifications Framework is to be updated.
- Active participation of the Rectors Conference, the higher educational institutions, students, institutions from the field of vocational education and employers, trade unions and other stakeholders in the preparation of the NQF.
- Creation of a web-page of the National Qualification Framework to the site of the Ministry of Education and Science is to be done.

g) How far has the implementation of the national qualifications framework progressed (please tick one)

- The framework is fully implemented. All qualifications have been added to the NQF through a QA procedure (e.g. accreditation)

0

- There is significant progress on implementing the framework 0
- The work of describing all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies has been completed 1
- There is a timetable for implementation and the work has started 0
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started but a timetable for implementation has been agreed 0
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started and there is no timetable for implementation 0

h) What is the stage of progress on the self-certification of compatibility with the EHEA framework ?

Completed 1 Started, but not yet completed 0 Not yet started 0

Comment

Self-certification was performed by the preparation of a Report and a Table of correspondence in October 2007.

i) Has the self-certification report been published?

Yes 1 No 0

Comment:

Peer learning activity (PLA) on implementation of the EQF/NQF in higher education has been organised in October 8th-10th, 2007 in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the framework of the cluster on Modernisation of higher education to the Education and Training 2010 work programme. The host was the Ministry of Education and Science. The Report on Self-evaluation and the Table of Correspondence were presented during the PLA.

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

Comment

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA (ESG)

9. Reviewing the QA system against the ESG and national support for implementation

a) Has your national QA system been reviewed against the ESG?

Yes 1 No 0 0 Not yet, but such a review is planned

(Please specify time)

b) If a review has been undertaken or is planned, please give further details of the review process.

In 2008 the NEAA has gone through external review procedures for full ENQA membership. They have started with the preparation of a self-evaluation report. ENQA appointed and approved an expert panel for a site visit. It also appointed the Spanish Agency ANECA as a coordinator of the review. In the period 17-18 June 2008, the expert panel visited the agency and held meetings with various stakeholders. In July, it prepared its final report with a proposition for membership. At the General Assembly of ENQA in September 2008, the ENQA Board and later the Assembly approved the NEAA's application for membership.

The main results are as follows:

The report of the external expert group found that NEAA, as a sole organization responsible for quality assurance in the whole system of Bulgarian higher education and scientific research has a clear and focused mission and is independent of the Government, as its powers are regulated by law. A number of developed procedures, activities on monitoring and control are in existence. NEAA has defined structured criteria and procedures for evaluation and accreditation, which are publicly available before the external procedure on quality assessment takes place. Programme and institutional accreditation usually follows the requirements and good practices, defined in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA. NEAA has introduced a system for regular participation of students in the external procedures on quality evaluation. International relations, maintained with partner agencies, allow the NEAA to be a part of the European community for quality assurance in higher education. The report of the external expert group formulated some recommendations, specifying areas where improvements may be introduced.

c) If a review process has been undertaken, did it result in any of the following:

Stakeholder consultation on changes required to the national QA system?

Yes 1 No 0

The introduction of specific financial or other incentives aimed at improving the internal quality assurance processes in institutions?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please give details of these incentives:

A detailed proposal for modification of expenses for salaries of experts, participating in

assessment procedures is to be submitted before the Government; this will allow remunerations of external experts to be reviewed, and will support the process of attraction of leading international experts.

Further work is to be done in order to attract a larger number of foreign experts as full-time members of expert groups in the procedures on evaluation and accreditation.

- Other measures

Yes 0 No 1

If Yes, please outline these measures

d) If incentives and/or other measures have been introduced with the aim of improving the internal quality assurance processes in institutions, has any evidence of the impact of these changes been gathered?

Yes 0 No 0

If Yes, please give details of how evidence of the impact of the changes was gathered, and of the main outcomes that it demonstrates

9.1. Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions

Describe the internal QA systems in place in your HEIs.

The list of the NEAA's criteria has been developed in compliance with the main European models for evaluation. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, all accredited higher educational institutions have built quality assurance systems at institutional level. These systems include mechanisms for approval, regular overview and monitoring of proposed teaching plans and curricula, and special attention is being paid to the structure and the educational contents, resource provision, reporting on student feedback and regular overview of syllabi. It has been found that there is development towards greater transparency in the criteria for evaluation of students. In some higher educational institutions, the tradition was reborn for mandatory inclusion of young and newly-appointed academic staff members in programmes for development of teaching skills. Progress was made in the renewal and modernization of training equipment and materials, used by students at the higher educational institutions.

The adopted criteria for institutional evaluation and accreditation are being further adjusted in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA.

Please comment in particular on the following aspects, giving references to relevant websites:

a) How many HEIs have published a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality?

All HEIs X

Most HEIs 0

Some HEIs 0 No HEIs 0

b) How many HEIs have arrangements in place for the internal approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards?

All HEIs X

Most HEIs 0

Some HEIs 0 No HEIs 0

Please describe what kind of arrangements are in place

The higher education institutions ensure the quality of education and scientific research through an internal system for evaluation and maintenance of the quality of training and of academic staff, which includes a study of student opinion, to be conducted at least once for an academic year. The aim of the system is to control, maintain and manage the quality of education in the offered areas of study in higher education and professional fields, as well as the quality of the academic staff. The functions and structure of the quality assurance system, as well as the order for evaluation of the students' opinions and the way of communicating the results thereof are regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the respective higher education institution.

Curricula are developed in the individual departments, by taking into account the opinions of students and employers.

Monitoring and periodical analyses are conducted on a regular basis. They lead to up-to-dating of the educational documentation, by means of quality assurance systems at institutional level. At every higher educational institution, these systems are managed by especially appointed body for quality assurance at all levels: individual lecturer (methods of teaching and methods of evaluation of achievements); department (updating of existing curricula, as well as approval of new ones, compatibility with academic standards, self-monitoring and internal visits, workshops and seminars for good practices); faculty (approval and introduction of changes to educational programmes, periodical overview of the state of all programmes).

In order to provide the bodies responsible for quality assurance at the higher education institutions with suitable and current information, several methods for data collection and analysis have been introduced, managed by a specialist or laboratory on quality, which regularly organizes studies among current and graduated students, lecturers, employers.

c) How many HEIs have described their programmes in terms of learning outcomes?

All HEIs 0

Most HEIs X

Some HEIs 0 No HEIs 0

d) Are student assessments at HEIs designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (based on published criteria) applied in a consistent way?

All HEIs 0

Most HEIs X

Some HEIs 0 No HEIs 0

Please describe how the above is achieved.

d)

Most higher education institutions develop and publish its rules and procedures, relating to examination and evaluation of achieved learning outcomes and granted credits.

The main principles of the system for evaluation of academic achievements of students, introduced in every higher educational institution are: systematic approach of evaluation during the whole educational process; objectivity in the evaluation of diverse academic achievements of each individual student both at theoretical and practical level; transparency of the evaluation mechanism through criteria announced in advance, and indicating the importance of participation of each individual student in the study activity for the final grade on each separate subject; correspondence of the result from the evaluation with the level of acquired competence according to current educational objectives for each subject; educational achievements, comparable to those of other higher education institutions.

The academic achievements of students are monitored through regular control and inspection of the work of every student during the semester, as well as through the written examinations, taken at the end of each semester on individual subjects. Most higher education institutions publish their evaluation criteria.

Therefore, the traditional and innovative methods for control, examination and evaluation, applied at different higher education institutions adequately reflect the achievements of the individual student and the knowledge, skills and competences, acquired by him/her.

e) How many HEIs publish up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmemes and awards offered?

All HEIs 1

Most HEIs 0

Some HEIs 0 No HEIs 0

Additional information if necessary

10. Stage of development of external quality assurance system

Describe the external quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

a) the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system

The NEAA Accreditation Council adopted a System for Quality Assurance of the NEAA's Activities. Its efficiency is permanently put to rethinking, analysis and evaluation, in order to take into account the progress achieved. Resources, necessary to NEAA, are also taken into account, as well as their long-term planning for the achievement of the objectives of NEAA and the requirements of stakeholders. The quality assurance system of NEAA is harmonizing its own standards for external evaluation. This ensured the higher reliability and validity of the evaluation and accreditation processes. The system was developed on the grounds of ENQA-ESG and tailored to our national experience and traditions in higher education. Policies, as well as respective procedures, are official in the guaranteeing of public access to them.

b) does your external quality assurance system operate at a national level;

Yes 1 No 0

If No, please specify:

c) does your external quality assurance system cover all higher education

Yes 1 No

If No, please specify which types of institutions or programmes are not covered by your external quality assurance system:

d) which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:

- self-assessment report Yes 1 No 0

- external review Yes 1 No 0

- publication of results Yes 1 No 0

- follow-up procedures Yes 1 No 0

e) has a peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA already taken place

Yes 1 No 0

If No is there a date set for the review? 1 Yes (please specify date 17-18 June 2008) No 0

11. Level of student participation

From the following, please indicate all aspects of quality assurance in which students are involved:

a) in governance of national agencies for QA.

Yes 0 No 1 In some cases 0

b) as full members in external review teams

Yes 0 No 1 In some cases 0

c) as observers in external review teams

Yes 1 No 0 In some cases 0

d) as part of the decision making process for external reviews

Yes 0 No 1 In some cases 0

e) in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)

Yes 1 No 0 In some cases 1

f) in internal quality assurance (e.g. periodic review of programmes)

Yes 0 No 0 In some cases 1

g) in preparation of self-assessment reports.

Yes 1 No 0 In some cases 0

h) in follow-up procedures:

Yes 0 No 1 In some cases 0

Please add any additional comments, especially if students are not involved in any of the aspects:

It is expected that students will be included as regular members of expert teams. Actualisation of existing legislation is necessary to allow for the regular membership of students.

12. Level of international participation

In which of the following is there international participation in quality assurance

a) the governance of national agencies for quality assurance

Yes 0 No 1 In some cases 0

b) the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies

Yes 1 No 0 In some cases 0

c) teams for external review of institutions or programmes, either as members or observers

	Yes 0	No 0	In some cases 1
d) membership of ENQA			

	Yes 1	No 0	In some cases 0
e) membership of any other international network			

Yes 1	No 0	If Yes, please specify:
-------	------	-------------------------

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency is a co-founder of the Central and Eastern-European Network of Evaluation Agencies (CEEN), and the President of the Agency is a member of its Managing Board.

NEAA has signed bilateral agreements with related foreign partner agencies for the conduction of joint evaluations and cooperation in the field of quality assurance, such as: The French Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (AERES), the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), The French Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), USA.

Please add any additional comments, especially if there is no international involvement in any of the aspects:

RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND STUDY PERIODS

13. Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country. Please include the percentage of all students graduating in 2009 who will receive a Diploma Supplement (if less than 100%, please explain)

The European Diploma Supplement was introduced in accordance with the amendments to the Higher Education Act done in 2004, and with the Ordinance on State Requirements to the Content of Main Documents, Issued by Higher Education Institutions of 2004. Since January 1st, 2005, the European Diploma Supplement is being issued for free to graduates at Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Bulgarian and in one of the most commonly used European languages. It is made in the format for Diploma Supplement, used by EC/CoU/UNESCO.

a) Is the Diploma Supplement issued to students graduating from:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|------|
| • 1st cycle programmemes | Yes 1 | No 0 |
| • 2nd cycle programmemes | Yes 1 | No 0 |

- 3rd cycle programmemes Yes 0 No 1
- remaining “old type” programmemes Yes 0 No 0 Not applicable 1
- short higher education programmemes Yes 0 No 0 Not applicable 1

b) which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:

- issued in a widely spoken European language Yes 1 No 0
- o please specify the language Английски
- issued free of charge 1 for a fee 0
- issued automatically 0 on request 1
- corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format 1
- a national Diploma Supplement is used that is different from the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format 0

13.1. Use of Diploma Supplement for recognition of qualifications

Please describe the way in which the Diploma Supplement is used for the recognition of foreign qualifications (or studies). Please comment in particular on the following aspects, giving references to any relevant websites and documents:

a) The Diploma Supplement is used as the reference document when admitting holders of foreign qualifications to the second and third cycles.

Yes 1 No 0

Comment

b) Holders of foreign qualifications who present a Diploma Supplement in a widely spoken language do not have to provide official translations of their qualifications.

Yes 0 No 1

Comment

c) Holders of foreign qualifications who present a Diploma Supplement in a widely spoken language do not need to prove through other documents the validity of the qualifications in the awarding country (for further studies or employment in the non-regulated part of the labour market).

Yes 1 No 0

Comment

The MES's Commission for recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher education institutions may request submission of extra information if more details are required to compare the relevant qualification to the state requirements.

d) Specific action has been taken at a National and Institutional level to enhance the use of the Diploma Supplement as a communication tool towards the labour market

Yes 0 No 1

Comment

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

Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

a) Does appropriate legislation comply with the Lisbon Convention?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

Republic of Bulgaria is among the the first countries that have recognized the Lisbon Convention on Recognition of Qualifications (1997). The Convention was ratified by the Bulgarian parliament on March 15, 2000 (publ., State Gazette, issue 25 of March 28th 2000). Bulgaria submitted its ratification instruments to the Council of Europe.

After ratification of the Convention, the necessary measures will be taken for further elaboration of the legislation regulating academic recognition. The issues relating to recognition of qualifications are settled in the Higher Education Act, Art 10, and in the Ordinance on the state requirements for recognition of the higher education acquired and periods spent in foreign higher education institutions, as adopted with Council of Ministers Decree No 168 dated 14. 08. 2000 (State Gazette, issues 69 dated 22. 08. 2000).

b) Does appropriate legislation comply with the later Supplementary Documents:

i) Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The above mentioned Ordinance on the state requirements for recognition of the higher education acquired and periods spent in foreign higher education institutions fully adheres to the principles of the Lisbon Convention on recognition of qualifications, in particular: the

right to impartial recognition of qualifications for all; recognition in all cases where substantial differences cannot be evidenced.

ii) Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The effective national legislation permits recognition of joint degrees. A number of Bulgarian higher education institutions award such degrees in cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

iii) Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education

Yes 0 No 0

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

c) which of the following principles are applied in practice

i) applicants' right to fair assessment

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level :

Each applicant is entitled to equal access to academic recognition. His/her rights are determined by the national legislation. Each application is processed and fairly evaluated in compliance with the provisions.

ii) recognition if no substantial differences can be proven

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level:

The national legislation determines this principle in the process of comparison with the state requirements as a prerequisite for academic recognition.

The activities for recognition of the higher education acquired and periods spent in foreign higher education institutions are organized by the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID), pursuant to the Ordinance on the state requirements for recognition of the higher education acquired and periods of study in foreign higher education institutions. At national level this process is governed by the activities of the Commission for recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher education institutions.

The issues relating to recognition of training periods spent in foreign higher education institutions are governed at institutional level. In such case the rector /provost/ of the relevant higher education institution is the competent body for recognition. The training period spent as a part of a higher education academic programme in an foreign higher education institution recognized by a competent national authority as being part of the secular higher education system of the relevant country is certified via academic record or an analogous document.

iii) demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level:

It is guaranteed at national level by the decisions of the MES's Commission for recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher education institutions concerning citizens completing their higher education abroad. The above mentioned Commission may provide recommendations for further steps to be undertaken by the applicant.

It is guaranteed also at institutional level by the decisions of the higher education institutions concerning students, who have been trained abroad for a certain period of time. Recommendations for further steps to be undertaken by the applicant may be provided as well, as for example passing of further exams, etc.

iv) provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please describe how it is done in practice

It is achieved at national level via detailed online and printed information, as well as through the information services provided by the MES and the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID), which operates as an ENIC-NARIC centre, and by the other national institutions in the higher education.

It is achieved at institutional level through detailed online and printed information about the current higher education curricula offered by the higher education institutions.

v) do you have a fully operational ENIC

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please describe the role of your ENIC in recognition and information provision a) nationally and

b) internationally

a) on a national level.

NACID operates as a Bulgarian ENIC-NARIC centre in pursuance of Bulgaria's international commitments and the decisions of the ENIC-NARIC network. The centre processes and disseminates information about the foreign higher education systems and offers information to the competent foreign authorities, higher education institutions, and to another users as well.

b) internationally.

The international role of the Bulgarian ENIC-NARIC centre in the process of recognition and delivery of information includes information services and dissemination of information about the Bulgarian higher education system to competent foreign authorities, higher education institutions, and users; dissemination of information about the state requirements to the recognition of the higher education acquired at foreign higher education institutions, as well as study periods passed at foreign higher education institutions.

d) As additional information, please describe any actions to implement fully the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

NACID supports the academic mobility by elaborating integrated criteria and procedures for academic recognition of the educational qualification, as well as by providing access to the educational systems.

15. Stage of implementation of ECTS

Describe the implementation of ECTS in your country.

a) Please include the percentage of the total number of higher education programmes in which all programme components are linked with ECTS credits

100% 1	75-99% 0	50-75% 0	<50% 0
--------	----------	----------	--------

The introduction of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) in the Bulgarian higher education institutions is legislatively secured through the amendments to the Higher Education Act and by Ordinance No 21 of the Minister of Education and Science on the accumulation and transfer of credits in the higher education institutions (publ. State Gazette, issue 89 of 2004). It is in compliance with the ECTS and has mandatory effect for all students enrolled in 2004/2005 academic year. Credits are allocated for all parts of all higher education programmes, excluding PhD programmes, which makes possible the transfer and accumulation of credits. Provision of educational credits may take place not only within the higher education system but also in the lifelong learning system, as for example the

2004. The student workload is measured through certain indicators and in relation to the external quality evaluation.

f) Are you taking any actions to assist HE staff or other stakeholders in applying ECTS.

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please explain:

There are various task forces, discussions and conferences concerning the practical implementation of CATS all with participation of the academic staff. The higher education institutions made fundamental changes in their syllabi and curricula. The documents issued by the higher education institutions contains special columns for recording the credit for in-class and extracurricular workload, the total number of credits awarded for each academic year, semester, subject, etc.

During programme or institutional accreditation, the staff of the higher education institution receives further practical guidance and information on the practical implementation of CATS. Several visits of EC advisors were made at some Bulgarian higher education institutions in view of the application for receipt of an ECTS-label.

LIFELONG LEARNING

16. Recognition of prior learning

Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning (RPL), including non-formal and informal learning (for example learning gained in the workplace or in the community).

a) Do you have nationally established procedures in place to assess RPL as a basis for access to HE programmemes?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please specify:

In Bulgaria, apart from the conventional scheme for acquisition of higher education and issuance of higher education diplomas, there is also a long-standing tradition to organize formal continuous training within the higher education system. The legislative basis is the Council of Ministers Decree No 42 on the establishment of the Single National System for Upgrading Staff's qualification (publ., State Gazette, issue 67 of 1980), which clearly states the principles of continuous education, its varieties, and the education and qualification documents issued. In accordance with the ordinances on the state requirements adopted in

subsequent years to the contents of the main documents issued by the higher education institutions, the documents varying in name have been incorporated to meet the duration and the type of study – specialized, post-graduate, retraining, as well as training related to specific sector (teachers, physicians) qualification courses. Nowadays, these documents are easily identifiable and relieve the processes of recognition of prior formal learning, since they now have clear comparability and comply with the continuous education defined by statute. These documents are recognized trouble-free both in some sectors (Education, Healthcare) and by the employers' organizations. Today accredited units for ongoing, continuous, and post-graduate training operate at almost all higher education institutions. In accordance with the state requirements and the specifics of the training held, the higher education institution will issue a vocational qualification certificate. Continuous education may be funded both by the post-graduate students themselves and by the labour offices, by private and/or government organizations or employer companies.

Bulgaria has an established practice for adjustment and recognition of the prior formal learning acquired in some organized training forms, wherefore the relevant education and qualification documents have been issued. A good example evidencing this practice is the national systems for qualification upgrades and career development of teachers.

b) Do you have nationally established RPL procedures in place to allocate credits towards a qualification?

Yes 0 No 1

If Yes, please specify:

The effective system allows granting of credits from continuous training recognized within the higher education system. Award of educational credits may take place not only within the higher education system but also in the lifelong learning system.

c) Do you have nationally established RPL procedures in place to allocate credits for exemption from some programme requirements?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes, please specify:

The legislation provides actual opportunities for free transition upon recognition of education already acquired, as relating to a staged transition from one educational degree to another, as well as from other occupational areas. The rules of the autonomous higher education institutions define clear procedures, order and conditions, with each individual transition

reviewed in compliance therewith.

d) To what extent are any such procedures applied in practice?

Comprehensively 0 Some 1 A little 0 None 0

Please describe the current situation:

Recognition of prior non-formal learning is not a widespread practice for the higher education institutions. Where individual cases were found (mainly in the Arts academies, the philological departments or the ICT departments), such recognition must pass through test procedures determined for each individual case. Should the applicant manage to meet the academic standards thus set, he may obtain the relevant certificate or even educational credits by a certain subject. There are actual examples of recognition of prior informal learning in the musical academies as well. They set high academic norms and criteria to be met, including mandatory passing of an undergraduate admission exams prior to award of credits for certain achievements consistent with a certain academic discipline.

The Higher Education Act has a provision stipulating that based on evidenced personal achievements acquired as informal learning applicant students may be admitted to higher education institutions, who have won awards at national or international educational Olympics, or have medals from Olympic, world, or European competitions, in the case where the admission exam for their desired major is consistent with the subject of the Olympic competition or the discipline.

17. Flexible learning paths

Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, to encourage participation by under-represented Bulgarian legislation ensures clear rules for expanded admission and provides good opportunities for flexible transitions in the higher education system.

a) Are there specific measures in place to promote flexible learning paths within the national qualifications framework?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

Autonomous higher education institutions may independently elaborate rules for introduction of flexible learning paths. Students may continue their education in Master's programmes different from the Bachelor's programmes they have graduated. It is permitted to study in

subjects beyond the mainstream academic plan or be trained under a package of subjects differing from the prior education completed. At a subsequent stage the credits received from such training may be recognized in the continuous education system.

b) Are there any measures to support HE staff in establishing flexible learning paths?

Yes 0 No 1

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

REgarding the teaching methods, flexibility may be applied by dividing the educational contents of the individual subject in levels, a part of them being compulsory for the relevant educational-qualification degree, while another part if provided as elective subjects. Thus the undergraduate/graduate students have the opportunity to shape the palette of their education, or place certain aspects therein, which they consider useful in their future careers. The flexibility opportunities are particularly evident where there is a stated wish for partial training in a certain scope of disciplines of specific duration – a month, a semester, etc.

c) Is there flexibility in entry requirements aimed at widening participation?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between the three Bologna cycles:

During the past few years there is a clear tendency towards transition from elitist to a mass system for quality higher education. There is a simplification of the admission rules on the part of the higher education institutions for the purpose of attracting more students (participation in preliminary admission exams, announcement of double dates for entry exams, introduction of more rankings, entry tests apart from the conventional written exams).

A large part of the higher education institutions, which have a college in their structure, offer the opportunity to undergraduate students graduating from the college to continue their education in a higher educational degree.

Persons with double citizenship, one of them being Bulgarian, pay half amount of the fixed tuition when they apply and are admitted under the conditions and order set by the Council of Ministers. No fees are paid by undergraduate students and doctoral candidates admitted under intergovernmental agreements where this issue is settled on a reciprocal basis.

Pending decision of the Academic Council the higher education institutions may admit without admission exams applying students, who have successfully passed the state matriculation exams pursuant to the Law on the Degree of Education, the General Education

Minimum and the Syllabus.

d) Are there any flexible delivery methods to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners

Yes 1 No 0

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between different Bologna cycle:

Relived terms and order for admission in higher education institutions are stipulated for the socially isolated and disadvantaged groups. These cover applicant students successfully passing the admission exams are persons with permanent disabilities and reduced working capacity, war invalids, full orphans, mothers of three or more children.

Exempt from payment of tuition in the state higher education institutions are full orphans, persons with permanent disabilities and reduced working capacity, war invalids, persons raised in orphanages; trainees in the military higher education institutions, and doctoral candidates during the last two years of study. They are also entitled to further reliefs stipulated in the higher education institution's internal rules.

e) Are there modular structures of programmemes to facilitate greater participation?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between different Bologna cycles:

The various higher education institutions have solid experience in the use of flexible pedagogical skills and teaching methods, which are specific to each professional field or major – ranging from use of up-to-date ICT instruments to juxtaposition and analysis of personal achievements though audio-visual recordings of concerts, performances, and others mainly related to the arts majors.

f) If possible, please provide any statistics on the results of measures taken to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, to encourage participation by under-represented groups:

During the past couple of years the higher education institutions have been implementing a consistent and purposeful policy towards improvement of the training conditions for students with specific educational needs, which has largely delivered positive results. Platforms and approaches to the classrooms are built in many locations, and library space is being accommodated for persons with disabilities. A stock of scanned literature offered for use by

blind students is stored as well. In a number of higher education institutions, especially those in Liberal Arts and in Economy, special library spaces are accommodated and furnished with Braille display, scanner, talking computer software, and Braille printers. For example, at New Bulgarian University - Sofia, these locations may be used free by students with disabilities trained in other higher education institutions. Some teachers offer their entire syllabus on electronic carriers, which is a huge relief for blind students and supports their independence.

The distance learning introduced in Bulgaria in 2004 proved especially beneficial to blind students since they receive electronically the entire information flow supporting their adequate training. The future development and expansion of this training form should take into deeper account the needs of students with locomotive disabilities as well, for the purpose of reducing the range of their social isolation.

The nationally represented unions of the blinds, physically disabled, and deafs provide specialized advice and information to students with specific educational needs. They provide extra opportunities for their financial and social support. Students are directed to the corresponding NGOs providing extra financial or specialized support.

There are other specialized facilities stipulated by the provisions of the higher education institution for orphans, blinds, deafs, and people with permanent disabilities of 70 % and above, war invalids, mothers of children under age of 6, and persons in hospital care. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy provides opportunities to graduating students with physical disabilities to take part in special programmes for employment aimed at providing jobs in the public administration.

JOINT DEGREES

18. Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

a) Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Are joint degrees specifically mentioned in legislation?

Yes 1 No 0

Does the legislation fully allow:

i) establishing joint programmes? Yes 1 No 0

If No please explain what are the obstacles

ii) awarding joint degrees? Yes 1 No 0

If No please explain what are the obstacles

b) Please give an estimate of the percentage of institutions in your country which are involved in

i) joint degrees

75-100% 0	50-75% 0	25-50%0	1-25% 1	0%0
-----------	----------	---------	---------	-----

ii) joint programmemes

75-100% 0	50-75% 0	25-50%0	1-25% 1	0%0
-----------	----------	---------	---------	-----

c) What is the level of joint degree/ programmeme cooperation in your country

In the first cycle?	None 0	Little 1	Widespread 0
---------------------	--------	----------	--------------

In the second cycle?	None 0	Little 0	Widespread 1
----------------------	--------	----------	--------------

In the third cycle?	None 0	Little 1	Widespread 0
---------------------	--------	----------	--------------

d) In which subject areas/disciplines is joint degree/programmeme co-operation most widespread (please list if possible)?

The Higher Education Act has provided the required legislation for study at joint degree programmes (national and international) for the three educational cycles. Favourable environment for studying at joint degrees' courses, incl. recognition of joint degrees has been established in Bulgaria. The requirement is that such joint programmes have to be accredited by the relevant institutions in each country participating in the programmeme. Thus, the quality of the programmeme is assured.

16% of the higher education institutions in Bulgaria offer joint degree programmemes. They are:: Technical University of Sofia, the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy - Sofia, the D.A. Tsenov Academy in Economy – Svishtov, Angel Kanchev University of Russe (as a partner in the Bulgarian-Romanian Inter-University Centre Europe BRIE); the University in Food Technologies - Plovdiv; New Bulgarian University - Sofia; St. Climent Ohridski University of Sofia, the University of Architecture, Construction, and Geodesy - Sofa; the International Higher Business School – Botevgrad, etc.

e) Estimate the number of joint programmemes in your country

Within the academic autonomy, the higher education institutions have the opportunity to cooperate among themselves and with European higher education institutions for elaboration of joint degree programmemes. Joint degrees are widespread in Bulgarian higher education

institutions and cover all three cycles. Currently, training under 8 joint Bachelor's programmes, 14 joint Master's programmes, and joint Doctoral programmes are taking place with German universities and the Francophone University Agency (AUF).

f) Describe any actions being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the restrictions to the European higher education institutions were removed and they are now free to open their branches in the country. The opportunities for students or professors from other parts of Europe wishing to study or teach in Bulgaria have expanded. This enhances integration between the higher education institutions and expands the scope of the joint degree programmes offered.

g) Are there any specific support systems for students to encourage joint degree cooperation?

Bilateral government programmes executed between Bulgaria and other countries stipulate grant exchanges on reciprocity basis. Autonomous higher education institutions have their independent systems for supporting and encouraging cooperation under joint degrees.

MOBILITY

19. Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility

a) What measures have been taken by your country both at governmental and institutional level to enhance student and staff mobility and overcome main obstacles?

Students' and professors' mobility in Bulgaria takes place primarily within the framework of the Erasmus programme. The Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC), which is an external unit to the Ministry of Education and Science and administers the Lifelong Learning Programme in Bulgaria, works on increasing the academic mobility both for incoming and outgoing Bulgarian students and academics.

The measures taken for increasing academic mobility may be summarized as follows:

□ For the purpose of better dissemination of information about the activities of the Erasmus programme among potential participants likely to become actual beneficiaries, HRDC holds informal drives by applying the following measures and activities in close cooperation with the higher education institutions partaking in the Programme:

- preparation and dissemination of information materials;
- holding of awareness events;
- elaboration and maintenance of up-to-date information about the Programme of the

HRDC websites, as well as on the websites of the higher education institutions partaking in the Erasmus programme;

- Encouragement of higher education institutions partaking in the Erasmus programme and of other organizations involved in the area of higher education in Bulgaria (student organisations, employers, municipalities, NGO's, etc.) to hold local and institutional awareness drives;

- Participation and active contribution from all national and international partners in the arrangement of events for dissemination of information on the topic of mobility and multilateral cooperation within the Erasmus programme.

- Implementation of scheme for allocation of grants to higher education institutions based on previous performance: number of students and academic staff funded for participation in mobility programmes, number of incoming students and teachers, geographical scope and scientific areas covered, etc. This system allows the higher education institutions with good performance in mobility area to be rewarded for their achievements. The higher education institutions are encouraged to seek and absorb extra funds to increase the number of students of the amount of funding.

- Organisation of training for the persons in charge of the Erasmus programme at the relevant higher education institutions. Such training aims at improving the Programme management, and correspondingly, the better achievement of its objectives.

- Ongoing support for all higher education institutions partaking in the Erasmus programme for the better utilization of the funds for the purpose of increasing the monthly grant amount.

- Rendering support to students interested in participation in the Erasmus programme.

- Organization of activities associated with dissemination and maintenance of up-to-date information – Erasmus students are usually invited to share their experience and the benefit obtained from spending periods of time in the host countries under the Programme.

- Monitoring and control on how Erasmus higher education institutions comply with their duties to facilitate and support mobility of students and teachers, as undertaken with the Erasmus University Charter.

b) Have arrangements for visas, residence and work permits been amended to enhance student and staff mobility?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Bulgarian diplomatic representations (embassies) render the adaptation assistance required by incoming students.

c) Is there financial support for national and foreign mobile students and staff?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Financial support of the mobility of students and teachers is mainly under the Erasmus programme.

d) Are study periods taken abroad recognised?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Higher education institutions are obliged, by means of the Erasmus University Charter and the contracts executed by them as prerequisite to receive Erasmus funding, to recognize the study periods spent by the students abroad. Nevertheless, certain issues relating to academic recognition still exist. The latter depends on the individual higher education institutions and on factors such as: student performance, documents issued by the receiving higher education institution, etc. Unfortunately, the significant differences in the curricula and fixed syllabi in some case made full academic recognition a really tough task but some progress is still registered.

e) Is there accommodation for mobile students and staff?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Higher education institutions support their students and academic staff in providing adequate accommodation in the receiving country. On the other hand, higher education institutions provide accommodation to incoming students and teachers. Our observations indicate that the incoming students and teachers are satisfied with the support rendered by the receiving Bulgarian higher education institutions.

f) Have any measures been taken to increase outward student and staff mobility?

Yes 1 No 0

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Information on this issue is provided above.

20. Portability of loans and grants

a) Are portable grants available in your country?

Yes 1 No 0

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants.

The bilateral government programmes executed between Bulgaria and other countries stipulate exchanges of financial subsidies on reciprocity basis. The banks in Bulgaria offer opportunities for student crediting. In 2008 the Council of Ministers increases the maximum student scholarships from BGN 90 to BGN 120. The eligible students should be citizens of Bulgaria, of another Member State of the EU, of the EEA or of Switzerland, and to be trained in a Bulgarian higher education institution.

Financial support is not bound to requirements placed by the host country or the receiving higher education institution, and is granted regardless of the study undertaken abroad.

The scholarships for doctoral candidates were almost doubled – from BGN 250 to BGN 450. A one-off bonus of BGN 1000 is granted if the doctoral candidate submits his / her dissertation in time. A further bonus of BGN 1000 is granted if the doctoral candidate defends his / her dissertation thesis within one year after its submission. Each university receives BGN 4000 for holding the dissertation thesis defence procedures.

Extra funding of BGN 10 million for student scholarships, BGN 2 million for practical internships and training at companies and organizations, and a further BGN 4 million to support doctoral candidates, post-doctoral students, and young researchers are provided by the Human Resources Development Operative Programmeme.

b) Are portable loans available in your country?

Yes 0 No 1

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of loans.

In July 2008 the Parliament has adopted the Law for Crediting of Students and Doctoral Candidates. Its draft was elaborated with the support of the Ministry of Finance and the Bulgarian Banks Association, and was subjected to broad public discussion.

• undergraduates, masters and doctoral candidates may apply for crediting if:

- aged up to 35;

- are trained for acquisition of a degree of Bachelor, “Professional Bachelor in ..”,

Master or Doctor in public or private higher education institution or research organization in the Republic of Bulgaria, established and operating in accordance with the law;

- have not suspended their training or left the training in their specialties;
- have not already acquired such educational degree.

• Loans are granted for either the entire study period or a part thereof to cover tuition and/or allowance. The right to use the credit for allowance occurs upon birth or full adoption of a child during training and is vested with the parent exercising the parental rights, or if both parents exercise these - to just one of them.

• Student credits are granted with a financial assistance by the state by:

- guaranteeing the loan, including principal and interest;
- covering payment of the entire loan or a part thereof in the cases prescribed by law;
- payment of the bank's credit management fees.

• The student are granted the following discounts:

- credits are granted without guarantees, fees, commissions, or other expenses;
- low interest rates – the Bulgarian National Bank's base interest rate increased by two

points;

- prolonged grace period – from credit contract signing date until up to a year after the first announced date of the last state exam or the graduation paper defence, or after the deadline for the doctoral programme. During the grace period the students do not pay the principal or the loan interest;

- long repayment period – up to 10 years after expiry of the grace period;
- opportunity to prepay without fees, commissions, or penal interest;
- relief from obligations under the loan - in the cases prescribed by law.

• Loans are granted by banks having executed a standard agreement with the Minister of Education and Science. These will be incorporated in a special electronic registry maintained by the Ministry of Education and Science.

• Establishment of a National Council for Student Crediting chaired by the Minister of Education and Science is envisaged, as well as preparation of a standard agreement to be offered to the banks.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EHEA AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

21. Implementation of strategy

a) Describe any measures being taken by your country to implement the strategy "European Higher Education in a Global Setting"

International cooperation in the field of higher education in Bulgaria is administered and coordinated at a national level by the Council of Ministers and by the Ministry of Education and Science. They prepare the interstate and interinstitutional agreements, programmes, and protocols for the country's inclusion into multilateral and bilateral governmental and non-governmental agreements for educational and scientific exchange; they provide information about foreign educational and research programmes and systems; they organize and implement the process of equalization of educational degrees; they elaborate and approve national policies in the area of education for the purpose of implementing the Community achievements in this area, as well as in view of achieving the objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

Integration of the Bulgarian higher education into the European and global processes and organizations is coordinated and governed by the Ministry of Education and Science through the directorates of European Integration and International Cooperation, Policy in Higher Education, Student, Doctoral Candidates, and Post-Doctoral Students, and the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID).

These coordinate: Bulgarian participation in the EURYDICE; activities associated with the ENIC/NARIC; the CEEPUS; national partnership in the Educational Reform in SE Europe Initiative; activities associated with the country's participation in the Higher Education and Scientific Research Steering Committee at the Council of Europe, Bulgaria's participation in the Enhanced Graz Process to the Stability Pact. Information on this issue is provided above.

One of the main instruments for integrating the Bulgarian higher education to the EHEA is the involvement in various international educational and scientific programmes and projects funded by the Council of Europe and by the EU.

Bulgaria successfully implements projects relating to European cooperation among the higher education institutions, the mobility of students and teachers, and the joint elaboration and mutual recognition of new curricula and programmes. Bulgarian higher education institutions are also actively involved in EU's science programmes.

Through its national institutions and the academic network institutions the party is a member of or maintains active contact with the World Association of Universities and Colleges, the European Universities Association, the European Organization of the Higher Education Institutions, the International Student Organization, UNESCO/CEPES, the Council of Europe,

and the European Commission.

Bulgarian higher education institutions regularly attend international fairs and exhibitions aimed at attracting third country students.

b) What has your country done to:

i) improve information on the EHEA outside Europe?

Republic of Bulgaria has established traditions of teaching foreign students from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. During the reporting period, joint missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science again visited various countries from these regions to familiarize the local authorities and higher education institutions with the opportunities to study in Bulgaria and other countries of the EHEA.

The steps undertaken are associated with: increased awareness; establishment of specialised platforms providing useful information to students and teachers for joining Bulgarian higher education institutions; presentation of Bulgaria as an attractive destination under the Erasmus mobility programme. These messages encouraged students and teachers from Europe and other parts of the world to choose Bulgaria as their receiving country.

Bulgaria's turning into an attractive destination may be measured through the increased interest in the intensive language courses under Erasmus. For the 6th year running Bulgaria has been staging and holding Bulgarian language courses for incoming students and teachers, which also cover interesting cultural and social events. Due to the increased interest in such course during the past academic year Bulgaria increased the number of the Erasmus language courses by admitting twice as many students compared to previous years.

ii) promote European higher education, enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness?

Based on long-term bilateral agreements between Republic of Bulgaria and third countries, the effective and executed programmes, agreements, and protocols stipulated that student exchange will take place throughout their duration. The documents meet the requirements of the country of origin and the receiving country as regards the applicant's documents and the financial terms for receiving local scholarship, boarding house accommodation, insurance, and social security. Applicant selection is made by the competent institutions in the country of

origin, and acceptance thereof is approved in compliance with Bulgarian laws.

In pursuance of the bilateral programmes, agreements, and protocol, during 2004 – 2008 Republic of Bulgaria granted scholarships to 154 international students to study at Bulgarian higher education institutions, from the following countries: Armenia, Vietnam, Iran, Korea, Kazakhstan, etc.

In accordance with Council of Ministers Decree No 103/2003 on carrying out educational activities among foreign Bulgarians, and Council of Ministers Decree No 228/1997 on the admission of Republic of Macedonia citizens as students in the state higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria, 550 student places are annually approved with a Council of Ministers Decree. Admitted are students from Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia, Republic of Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Albania, their number standing at approximately 1850 during the above period. Based on Council of Ministers Decree No 240/28.10.2003 on the provision of grant aid for Iraq's reconstruction under the aegis of the Madrid Donor Conference, 13 Iraqi citizens were admitted to study at Bulgarian higher education institutions during the academic 2005/2006 to acquire Master's degree. The tuition funds (including language and specialized courses), scholarship, living expenses, health insurance and boarding house accommodation are provided by Bulgaria.

iii) strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education?

The Higher Education Act entitles the autonomous higher education institutions to independently establish partner relations with foreign higher education institutions – elaboration of educational modules and programmes demonstrating Bulgarian national specifics, educational and cultural values. Serious achievements were registered in the Bulgarian art academies. In the course of the past two years only they have trained a considerable number of persons hailing from various countries, incl. USA, Australia, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Canada, Vietnam, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, and nearly all European countries. Teachers from these different parts of the world showed vigorous interest as knowledge of Bulgarian art enriches them professionally. It has become standard practice for them to visit art academies together with their classes of artists, orchestra musicians, choirs, etc.

Examples from the liberal arts professions – History, Thracology, etc. - can also be given. These examples, along with many others, serve as evidence of the high international esteem of Bulgarian higher education.

iv) intensify policy dialogue with partners from other world regions?

Bulgarian contribution is represented by the adopted political approach, which utilizes the

following mechanisms and tools:

Involvement in the Black Sea Educational Cooperation. The priorities adopted by the Black Sea Universities Network focus on creating competitive regional economic environment. By fulfilling its specific commitments to encourage the Bologna process in the network, Bulgaria is displaying a high degree of professional maturity through involvement and partnership in specific regional initiatives and projects.

v) improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions?

Dissemination of information through the National Centre for Information and Documentation, which operates as an ENIC-NARIC centre for the Bulgarian higher education system, as well as the rules and practices for recognition of foreign academic and vocational qualifications in Bulgaria. NACID examines and prepares information materials about best practices in the area of academic recognition and mobility to the national competent bodies, higher education institutions and other stakeholders in this sector, thus rendering assistance in practical activities concerning recognition of educational qualifications obtained in other areas of the world;

c) What measures have been taken in your country to implement the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education? Please describe.

Since these Guidelines are not legally binding, the member countries are expected to implement them in a manner befitting their national context. Bulgaria perceives cross-border higher education as higher education transcending the boundaries of a national jurisdiction, including the higher education provided by public-private establishments.

During the past few years our efforts were mainly focused on the full implementation and adjustment of the national quality assurance system to the relevant European standards and trends.

- The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) took part in all initiatives for standardization of evaluation and accreditation agencies for evaluation of higher education, and based on that it elaborated its own texts and criteria in compliance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act and the Quality Assurance Standards in the EHEA.

- The list of NEAA criteria covers the equality principle of the three main activity aspects of the higher education institutions: educational, scientific (artistic) activities and management. Thus, a favourable environment was created for harmonization of the criteria, procedures, and efficiency of the outcomes from evaluation and accreditation.

In the framework of Education for All, in 2007 the Ministry of Education and Science took

part in the International Symposium Cultural Corridors in SE Europe – Challenge to the Capacity Build-up, which was organized in cooperation with the CEPES, Bucharest, Romania.

Useful cooperation with CEPES was established in the area of higher education. UNESCO departments operate in some higher education institutions:

- UNESCO Department on the Culture of Peace and Human Rights, which was established in 1998 at the Bourgas Free University.
- UNESCO Department on Communications and Public Relations, which was established at Sofia University St. Climent Ohridsky, within the ORBICOM network.
- UNESCO Department on Culture Management and Culture Policies established at South-western University Neofit Rilski – Blagoevgrad.

d) Are the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education applied to

i) cross-border provision of your education programmes?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied :

UNESCO aims to encourage development of quality cross-border higher education fulfilling personal, social, economic, and cultural needs. The activities are focused on providing the students and other stakeholders with instruments for protection against low-quality higher education.

The Higher Education Act entitles the autonomous higher education institutions to independently establish partnerships with national and foreign higher education institutions.

The NEAA List of criteria for institutional accreditation requires existence of arrangements for developing cooperation and work under international projects and programmes.

ii) incoming higher education provision?

Yes 1 No 0

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied :

Please, see the notes in the previous section.

During the last few years the Ministry of Education and Science made great efforts to achieve principal understanding concerning the main challenges facing the higher education system and the steps to overcome these, taking into consideration latest European and global trends.

The most critical issue is to improve the accreditation regime and the quality control in the

higher education system:

- Availability of academic staff and suitable physical conditions was introduced as an absolute prerequisite to accredit the higher education institutions.
- A ban was introduced for the same member of the academic staff to take part in the accreditation of more than two higher education institutions.
- A requirement was introduced to at least once annually hold feedback survey of student opinions and publish the outcomes thereof.
- Each member of the academic staff now is obliged to elaborate and announce a description of their syllabus.
- A requirement was introduced to evaluate knowledge and skills in writing unless the specifics of the relevant area prevents this.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

22. Main challenges for higher education

Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for higher education and the Bologna Process in your country in the short and long term.

The higher education is a key factor in boosting employment, active citizenship, and personal and professional development. Bulgarian government is working towards adjusting the higher education system to a constantly changing environment while ensuring compliance with the European and international standards. The Bulgarian government's public responsibility is to ensure strategic development and modernisation of the Bulgarian higher education in its national and European context.

The main strategic objective we aim for is to do what is necessary for Bulgarian higher education institutions to offer quality, European-level higher education, with graduating Bulgarian professionals successfully competing and having careers on the European and global labour market.

The Bulgarian higher education is on its way to sustainable development for the purpose of achieving the common European and international objectives at the same time preserving its best traditions; to remain open for innovations and ensure transparency of the reforms carried out.

The main challenges in the area of higher education are:

- Implementation of the EHEA principles concerning provision of higher education having good quality and mobility;

- Absorption of funds from the EU Structural Funds;
- Ongoing work on the elaboration of a Strategy for Development of Higher Education;
- Start of the system for crediting students and doctoral candidates;
- Creation of tools for support of the educational institutions capable of offering competitive education within the EU;
- Strengthening the status of higher education institutions as research centres and development of applied sciences;
- Measures encouraging cooperation between the businesses and the higher education institutions;
- Increasing the investments in education;
- Measures complying with the adopted National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008 – 2013);
- Creating an attractive social package for young researchers (scholarships, support for participation in conferences and knowledge transfers);
- Setting up an academic campus for young researchers and their families;
- Supporting the higher education institutions as research centres.