

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

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1. Main achievements since Berlin***1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms***

The introduction of the two main (bachelor-master) cycle structure, involving 60 ECTS-credits per year, which started in the academic year 2002/2003, is monitored and details are adjusted if experience shows the need. From the academic year of 2002/2003 onward over 80% of all higher education programmes are offered in a two cycle structure (apart from the PhD- third cycle).

By the end of 2004 an additional article has been included in the law which obliges the HE institutions to present all students with a Diploma Supplement (automatically and free of charge is implicit) written in the Dutch or English language.

By the end of 2004 the decision has been taken to investigate experimentally the usefulness of (re) introducing short cycle higher education.

A new funding scheme for higher education (both institutions and students) is proposed to be introduced by 2006, also taking into account joint programmes and joint degrees and mobility of students.

Recently work has started on a new law for higher education, to be introduced in 2007. This legislation will also take into consideration the possibilities of offering joint programmes and joint degrees.

The national accreditation organisation NAO is transformed into the supranational Dutch/Flemish organisation NVAO. Together with other accrediting agencies in Europe the NVAO formed the European Consortium for Accreditation, ECA. ECA aims at mutual recognition of accreditation decisions by the end of 2007.

2. National organisation***2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher***

education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies

(For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for higher education. For a few institutes who receive their funding from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, that ministry bears responsibility. However, both ministries have in general the same policy on education (The ministry of Agriculture joins in with main policies of the ministry of Education.)

Institutes of HE receiving public funding report to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (The ones receiving funds from the Ministry of Agriculture report to that ministry). Reporting is once a year.

The block grant is provided to institutions once a year.

On top of this

- NWO, the national science foundation, provides funding to research universities on the basis of proposals from which a selection is made based on the quality of the research proposed;
- the universities of professional education (hogeschole) receive funding for applied research organised in local/regional networks with employers/industry.

The institutes of Higher Education are responsible for the quality of their education. For the quality of the programmes they need to obtain accreditation (proof of quality of the programme) by the independent accreditation organisation NVAO.

Accreditation of a study programme by the NVAO (Dutch Flemish accreditation organisation) is required for students to obtain government grants, which is called study-finance. (Study-finance is also available for students enrolled in non-government funded private institutions, provided programmes are accredited by the NVAO.)

Accreditation of programmes is also required for government funding of universities for students enrolled (provided the universities are government funded.), and for government recognition of degrees.

The NVAO is government funded and is responsible for the accreditation of study programmes forwarded to them by the HE institutes. These proposals for accreditation of study programmes have to be accompanied by an external review of the programme. For the external review the institutes can use various organisations, experienced with reviewing programmes and acknowledged by the NVAO on the basis of applying criteria which match criteria of the NVAO. In addition, the NVAO carries out the initial (first time) accreditation of new programmes and installs the expert panels that advise the NVAO on the quality of these new programmes. An initial accreditation by the NVAO is a necessary but not sufficient condition for funding of new programmes; the ministry of education decides whether funding of new programmes is appropriate.

Both the rectors conferences, i.e. the VSNU for the research universities and the HBO-Raad for the universities of professional education, have an important role as partners in debates on preparation of policies.

The rectors conferences provide information on higher education and research. They voice opinions and arguments on policy development concerning higher education and research to the ministry, the parliament, and the public in general. The ministry consults them on all intended policy changes and counts on their co-operation for implementation of policy changes (regardless whether they are laid down in legislation or are otherwise agreed).

Student unions (ISO and LSVB) are likewise partners in debates on preparation of policies.

The Inspectorate for education (independent part of the Ministry of Education) is responsible for overseeing the quality of the entire education system and reports to the minister once a year.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

The Higher Education and Research Act which came into force in 1993 provides a single legal framework for the higher education system in the Netherlands. In 2002 legislation transferred the system in conformity with important elements of the Bologna declaration (two main cycle structure, ECTS-credits and accreditation for quality assurance of programmes).

The higher education system in the Netherlands is since 2002 based on a three-cycle degree system, consisting of a Bachelor, Master and PhD.

The Netherlands has a binary system of higher education, which means there are two types of programmes: research oriented education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs, WO), traditionally offered by research universities, and professional higher education (hoger beroepsonderwijs, HBO), traditionally offered by hogescholen, or universities of professional education. (Until 2002, the first two cycles at research universities were combined in a single integrated cycle. Degrees from this integrated system can be awarded until 2007-2009.)

In the public higher education system in the Netherlands there are 14 universities, which can be divided into nine general universities, one agricultural university, three universities of technology and the Open University offering distance education.

Professional higher education is provided by (in the year 2003) 49 hogescholen. It prepares students for particular professions and the education tends to be more practically oriented than programmes offered by research universities.

In 2003 (academic year 2003/2004) a total of 513.000 students was enrolled in these institutes of which 187.000 in research universities and 326.000 in universities of professional education.

The public HE system also includes a third branch, with a relative small number of students, known as international onderwijs (IO), or international education. IO offers advanced training courses, originally designed for people from developing countries whose jobs require highly specialized knowledge.

HE programmes must be accredited by the NVAO to become centrally registered and to entitle students to study finance and institutes to award degrees to graduates of that programmes in accordance with Dutch legislation.

In addition to the public higher education system, there are a number of privately funded institutes also offering higher education. It is possible for privately funded institutes to become recognized by the Ministry and receive the status of an "approved" research university or "approved" university of professional education, which can have their programmes accredited by the NVAO.

Only students enrolled in accredited programmes of "approved" institutes are eligible for

study finance and for being awarded academic degrees in accordance with Dutch legislation. "Approval" of institutes will not grant them government funding. Approved institutes can set their own tuition fees. (Publicly funded universities have to oblige to government ruling on fees).

Figures on the year 2004 show that there are 62 privately funded institutions offering around 500 programmes. The total enrolment is estimated to be 60.000 - 70.000 students, of which 20% receive public study finance.

The quality assurance of many programmes offered by privately funded institutions is reported by the Inspectorate as below standards.

2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country

(National Bologna group, thematic working groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)

- The Inspectorate for higher education oversees implementation of the two cycle system on behalf of the ministry (legal obligation). The ministry provided terms of reference for the monitoring by the inspectorate. The inspectorate is entitled to judge independently from the ministry. It monitors developments and provides public reports on a yearly basis. It reflects on modes of operation and presentation of results with help of a panel in which the ministry, students and universities participate.

In 2007 an independent evaluation will be conducted (legal obligation).

- The National Bologna follow-up group: ministry officials plus stakeholders (institutions and students) discuss and prepare implementation.

- Bologna Promoters boost implementation.

- Major policy changes and legislative or funding reforms are also discussed with employers' organisations in the preparatory phase, before proposals are sent to Parliament.

3. Quality assurance

The following questions have been included in the template at the request of the Working Group on Stocktaking.

3.1. National quality assurance systems should include a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please specify the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please refer to the information provided by Eurydice.

3.2. National quality assurance systems should include a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.

Describe the system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, if any.

See information provided via Eurydice.

3.3. National quality assurance systems should include international participation, co-operation and networking.

Are international peers included in the governing board(s) of the quality assurance agency(ies)?

See also information provided via Eurydice.

The governing board consists of Dutch and Flemish persons of high esteem in HE.

Please add any general comments, reflections and/or explanations to the material on quality assurance in the stocktaking report.

A mid term review of the NVAO and the accrediting system will be done in 2005 by the Inspectorate of Higher Education. An independent evaluation of the introduction of the Bachelor Master system and of accreditation is obliged by law in 2007.

4. The two-cycle degree system

The two-cycle degree system is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The implementation of the two cycle system has been done relatively quick. 82% of programmes was changed at the onset of the academic year 2002/2003. Details are adjusted following experience with the new system (see also item 1.1).

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

Recognition of degrees and periods of study is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been signed. Ratification is in proces. The proces of ratification is delayed due to discussion whether first changes in the legislation are required to implement the convention before ratification is possible, or implementation is up to the institutions which is already enforced by law, thus ratification is directly possible. Originally the ministry followed the latter track, but in doing so it encountered obstacels of judicial nature which might turn the proces towards the former track, i.e. at present new legislation proposals are being developed to further the process of ratification. (Before the Berlin meeting, 20 March 2003 the Dutch ENIC/NARIC, together with the ministry, organised a seminar to explain Bologna developments and the Lisbon Recognition Convention to the institutions for higher education.) The institutions have been encouraged to apply the Lisbon Recognition convention.

For assessment of prior experienced learning see item 10.

Accreditation of programmes has been introduced. It provides a positive hallmark to HE programmes of good quality, also to facilitate recognition of Dutch degrees abroad. The accreditation body has been transformed into a supranational body . Since 2004 the NVAO works for both the Netherlands and the Flemish community of Belgium.

A national qualifications framework exists, though not named like this. The general outline is described under the title of: The Education System in the Netherlands. The document carries the logo's of the Ministry, the Nuffic (agent for EU, national government and other mobility programmes) and of the rectors conferences VSNU and HBO-Raad. It is meant as the general document on the Dutch education system to be provided by HE institutions as annex to the Diploma Supplement (which is currently issued only upon request of students, see also item 1.1).

The content of accredited programmes is centrally registered and described by universities in terms of content, level, workload, profile, and ECTS-credits, in some fields in terms of learning outcomes and competences. Further steps to establish a national framework conform

the Berlin communiqué still have to be taken.

Dutch society, including employers, asked a clear distinction between graduates from research universities and graduates from universities of professional education. Therefore a distinction in names of degrees has been decided in such a way that research universities award the degrees of Bachelor and Masters of Arts or of Science, and the universities of professional education award the degrees of Bachelor or Master followed by the name of the subject. In international perspective this national divide results in injustice to students where similar programmes in other countries are awarded with degrees that are of higher esteem. Some obvious adjustments to current international practice have been made already. Recently an international (European) committee is installed to advise the parties concerned on the situation and possible future steps.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

In principle a master degree gives access (in terms of Lisbon recognition convention) to a phase of study and work qualifying for the title of Doctor. After the Master, students may obtain a paid function combining studying and teaching, or a scholarship, leading to the degree of Dr in (a formal term of) four years. The number of such places available for doctoral students is limited and varies per institute. It is within the autonomy of the institutes to determine selection criteria and procedures for those places.

The Board for Promotions (bodies in universities) and the entry to the promotion/degree awarding procedure is regulated by law.

The Board for Promotions has the legal possibility of allowing in principle anyone to present a substantial amount of original research and defend a substantial thesis in order to obtain the degree of Doctor. Thus incidentally persons are admitted for a promotion, who have not been awarded a Master or comparable degree.

Most PhD students work quite independently, conducting research and preparing a thesis based on that research. They sometimes follow courses, which are in most cases short high-level specialized courses.

6.2. What are the links between HE and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

Professors at research universities have a twofold task: conducting research and offering teaching.

The involvement of famous research professors in undergraduate and graduate teaching varies according to the strategies of institutions.

In 2004 a specific type of accredited "research master" programmes (120 ECTS credits) has started at the research universities, more specifically than other masters geared to a PhD third cycle phase and a career in research.

At the universities of professional educations, besides regular teaching staff, a limited number of "lectors" are employed, professors, with the specific task of combining teaching with performing applied research in collaboration with industrial activities in the region.

41% of R&D expenditures is spent in the public sector which is the HE and research sector (Key figures 1999-2003 on the basis of the national statistical bureau CBS).

According to OECD data R&D expenditures in the (semi-)public sector financed by industry is 12.1%.

National statistics show that the external income of universities in 2001 consisted of 593 million Euro of which 26% is commissioned by government, 26% by industry, 12% funded internationally and 35% by non-profit organisations.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country (For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)

According to a study published in 2004 mobility into the Netherlands is influenced by:

- visa and residence permit problems (on the basis of this study there have been recent improvements in the first granting of entry visa, see item 7.2)
- availability of scholarships
- existence and amount of tuition fees
- recognition issues
- language issues

Mobility from the Netherlands is influenced by:

- possibility to retain student support during exchange programmes
- availability of institutional scholarships
- availability of scholarships as part of mobility schemes:
 - * national (e.g. Huygens),
 - * EU-mobility schemes (e.g. Erasmus),
 - * international mobility schemes (e.g. Fulbright)
- recognition issues
- language issues
- free movers in the very last period of a studyprogramme. Explanation: the actual duration of studies often extends beyond the period of entitlement to study finance. This could coincide with a relative positive financial situation for students of well-to-do parents, as tax deduction for parents who support their children financially is only possible after entitlement for study finance of the child is exceeded, which means after the formal duration plus one year.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

For both incoming and outgoing mobility in 2004 a restructuring of the national mobility programmes has been prepared, aiming at increase of transparency of possibilities, and decrease of administrative procedures. The changes will be implemented from 2005 onward.

Special measures to improve mobility from the country:

- During the EU presidency the ministry took the initiative to study the situation of portability of loans and grants in Europe. It resulted in the installment of a EU-committee to study the portability of student grants and loans at EU-level.

Explanation: portability of loans and grants for full study programmes would result in a substantial risk for national higher education budgets. Legal obstacles need to be solved at the

European level before any further national steps can be taken.

Special measures to improve mobility into the country:

- In 2004 the process of granting visas to enter the country for study have been improved:
 - * foreign students, or staff on a short term exchange scheme, receive a visa in due time;
 - * "knowledge migrants" (newly employed university staff) receive their residence permits in due time;
 - * the cost of extension of the residence permit has been decreased to €50;
 - * the total visa and residence permit fees for a five year study decrease from €1620 to €624;
 - * after graduation the graduate is entitled to stay another 3 months in the Netherlands to find a job.

Other measures influencing mobility:

- The government launched a proposal to promote selectivity in incoming mobility by a policy transformation: the budget which has been part of the block grant to institutions, especially the part which figured in the formula funding for the number of non-European students, will be transformed into a fund for scholarships mainly for selection of incoming non-EU students. The proposal might enter into force by 2006.

It is unclear if and how this policy will influence the actual number of incoming students.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

No recent research data are available on teachers and staff mobility. There are indications that mobility is hampered by pension arrangements, the labour market and the situation that mobility of a staff member often also would include mobility of a partner with gainful employment.

Agreements between universities on co-operation and joint teaching and research facilitate staff and student mobility.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

The conditions for visa and residence permits have been improved in 2004 (see item 7.2).

Employment of staff is the responsibility of the universities. International experience is seen as an important argument in selecting staff.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

From 1980 onward the government started a process of enhancing autonomy of institutions. At present the institutions are responsible for the spending of their budget, which is provided by the government as a block grant. They select, appoint and employ professors and other personal and design their education programs. Together they negotiate the collective labour agreements with the trade unions. They are responsible for their own accommodation.

This autonomy is accompanied by a number of legislative obligations, such as maintaining a system of quality assurance, rights of students and obligations towards students and

accountability towards the government and society. This process of enhancing autonomy is still developing. Government policy is to give the institutions more freedom in order for them to work on their own (international) profiling.

Institutes can start new programmes, but degree awarding, (counting enrolled students in the formula) funding of institutes and study finance for the students is only possible after accreditation is obtained and the ministry has judged positive on the macro efficiency of the programme (distribution of programmes in the Netherlands).

Institutes are allowed to gain additional income for tasks related to their main function of teaching and research.

Figures show that the annual budget of universities for professional education is composed of government funding (69%), work for third parties (6%), tuition fees (17%) and other income sources (8%). For research universities the corresponding figures are: government funding 67%, work for third parties 18%, tuition fees 5% and other income sources 10%.

For each public university the government appoints the "Supervisory Council", a body similar in function to the Supervisory Boards of private companies in continental Europe. This Supervisory Council appoints the Governing Board. In privately founded universities in the public system, the Foundation Boards appoint the Governing Boards.

Most research universities have publicly appointed Supervisory Councils. All universities of professional education are privately founded, just as some research universities.

The government remains accountable for the functioning and efficiency of the system as a whole.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

- Bologna Follow-Up Group and seminar results are prepared by and discussed in the national Bologna follow up group. Its meetings take place approximately 4 times a year and are geared to informal policy discussions with the main stakeholders of rectors conferences and student unions.

- Formal policy proposals being discussed with (other relevant ministries) rectors conferences, student unions and employer organisation.

- Explanations in regular (an special) meetings of staff members responsible for policy planning and execution of internationalisation of institutions of HE

- In April 2005 a seminar is scheduled with the state secretary/vice minister for HE and Governing Boards of universities on some highlights of the Berlin - Bergen period and to prepare the Bergen ministerial meeting (as advised by the Bologna promoters).

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?

(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

Students are represented in University Council bodies at university and faculty level, which have an advisory role towards the University and Faculty Boards (obliged by law). The law also obliges faculties to incorporate students (half of the membership) in committees that advise and yearly comment on educational programmes.

Students also have a role in quality assurance (as member of the external review committee and student appraisal of teaching is taken into consideration in external peer reviews). The law obliges the accrediting organisation to consult student organisations in case of changes in the framework for accreditation.

Student opinions on HE programmes are structural part of the information data made available to (candidate) students.

At the national level student unions advise the ministry on policy issues. Before policy documents are sent to Parliament the advice of the two student unions is taken into consideration.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

Equality of access is warranted by

- access on the basis of successful completion of secondary education;
- a study finance (student funding) scheme for all students enrolled in accredited programmes.

The study finance scheme consists of a basic grant for every student enrolled in an accredited programme. The basic grant is topped up by additional funding in case parents income is below a certain level. On top of that all students can obtain a state loan. The interest rate is at the (low) level as of mortgage loans. The grants have to be refunded in case the student drops out.

A new funding scheme for the publicly funded institutes of HE is proposed for 2006. One of the key elements is the introduction of so-called "learning rights" of students. Students enrolled in accredited programmes are awarded "learning" rights, which entitles universities to several years of government funding. During this period of learning rights students pay a tuition fee which is fixed. When students have used up their learning rights prior to graduation, institutions may ask a higher tuition fee from the students.

This new principle for the formula funding of institutions is expected to do justice to the actual teaching efforts (for instance for mobile students who do not study at an institute for the full term, or for students of whom prior experienced learning is assessed and acknowledged). It is also expected to encourage students to complete their studies in time. Students who directly enter HE from secondary education are unhappy with these proposals. To maintain accessibility, students can obtain state loans to compensate for their tuition fees. State loans (or the grant received in case of drop out) normally have to be refunded. Only in case the graduate/ex-students income is below a certain level no repayment has to take place. The obligation to refund starts 2 years after finishing a study (either graduated or not) and lasts a maximum of 15 years.

There is attention for assessment of prior experienced learning (see item 10.2).

The transfer from post-secondary vocational education to higher professional education will be improved, for instance for students entering a teacher training programme, and in beta and technical subjects.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

Special funding facilitates co-operation between the Open University and the regular institutions of HE to stimulate e- and distance-learning.

Experiments will start with the (re)introduction of short cycle higher education, which is expected to be attractive for employees and small and medium enterprise employers.

The new university funding system based on "rights to learn", is expected to transfer the

system in the direction of a demand driven system (from a supply driven system).

A policy document on LLL has been sent to Parliament in November 2004, focussing on a new policy regarding short cycle higher education, the new funding scheme, based on "learning rights" of students, and the ambition of a substantial increase in number of 25-64 years old students in HE by the year 2010.

Universities (research- and -of professional education) are entitled to, and provide, post-initial training at the master level. These masters are also being accredited.)

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

In the years 2001-2004 the ministry financed a national knowledge centre on assessment of prior experienced learning. Task of the centre is development and distribution of knowledge on assessment of prior experienced learning in professional sectors, secondary education and HE. This knowledge centre will continue functioning in 2005, in which year it has to concentrate its task on:

- focussing on those parts of the labour market in which assessment of prior experienced learning is not yet known;
- quality assurance and control of assessment procedures;
- highlighting of limitations in current legislation (if any).

The ministry considers quality assurance of assessment of prior experienced learning important. In the new legislation it will be proposed to give the Examination Boards the legal task of overseeing the procedures of assessment, including assessment of prior experienced learning. Further to this it is envisaged that institutions for HE will need support in developing these procedures.

Student unions signal that students encounter problems in programmes linking professional and academic education. They lack a proper legal framework for bridging courses and note that expenses are above normal tuition fees.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1 Describe any legal obstacles identified by your country and any progress made in removing legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes

Universities signal that there is no mention of the possibility to award a joint degree in the Dutch legislation. According to some this would mean that it can be done, as it is not forbidden.

However, a proposal for new legislation is in progress which intends to make joint programmes possible and to offer the possibility of showing in the awarded degree that the programme is offered by various (national and/or foreign) institutes of HE.

11.1.1. Describe the extent of integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees

There are many examples of existing joint programmes which lead to double degrees.

- Many joint programmes are set up in the context of Erasmus-Socrates and Erasmus

Mundus

- Co-operations set up on the basis of bilateral agreements:

Along the borders between the Netherlands and Germany joint programmes leading to double diploma's have been developed in which students follow part of the programme in the Netherlands in the Dutch language and part of the programme in Germany in the German language. Thus students become familiar in both countries, obtain a degree from both universities involved, and their awards are recognised in both countries.

Similar arrangements exist between the Netherlands and Flanders.

There is a transnational university installed by the two countries, called the Transnational University Limburg, composed of faculty of the University of Maastricht (Netherlands) and the University of Diepenbeek (Flanders).

There also is a Frans-Dutch network promoting joint activities in HE and research, including joint programmes.

The NVAO cooperates with CTI (the French accreditation organisation for engineering programmes) in a pilot project to jointly accredit Dutch, Flemish and French engineering programmes.

Some of the joint programmes are, for the Dutch side, accredited by the NVAO, for instance occupational therapy a programme of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, together with institutions in Sweden, Denmark and UK.

Recently a joint programme coordinated by the Erasmus university Rotterdam has been awarded the Erasmus Mundus status. (This programme was entirely accredited by the NVAO.) Dutch universities participate in six other Erasmus Mundus programmes.

11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised? (joint admissions, mobility of students, joint exams, etc.)

Organisation depends on the programmes.

As far as is known at government level it always concerns:

- joint admission by two (or more) institutes involved;
- students studying in at least two countries;
- automatic recognition of course units successfully taken at the partner institution.
- The exams are done either jointly or separately by institute concerned on part of the programme which is known to the organisers participating in the programme (sometimes with external examiners from other institutions participating in the joint programme).

11.2. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

The government promotes and facilitates transnational co-operation.

- A treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders made the accreditation organisation into a transnational body. Since 2004 it is called the NVAO and it works for the Netherlands and the Flemish community of Belgium.

- The NVAO, in addition to participating as board member in ENQA and in the TEEP II project, has taken the initiative to set up the European consortium for accreditation in HE (ECA). The ultimate aim of ECA is mutual recognition of accreditation decisions by the end of 2007. The expectation is that this will contribute to student mobility and the recognition of qualifications, and make the accreditation of joint and double degrees easier. In December

2004, the ECA members have taken an important step by agreeing on a code of good practice for accreditation organisations. The code contains 17 standards and compliance to the code will be externally evaluated in 2007. ECA membership comprises currently 14 accreditation organisations from 9 European countries.

- Cross border co-operation in higher education and research is facilitated with Germany, Flanders and France.
- The joint quality initiative, an informal network of quality assurance agencies, similar to that in the Netherlands and Flanders, facilitates co-operation with a wider range of countries to further internationalisation of quality assurance, be it accreditation or otherwise.

A known example where a Dutch institution coordinates a joint programme is the European Master in Law and Economics (EMLE). This programme has been running for 10 years and recently received the entitlement of an Erasmus Mundus programme. The EMLE Erasmus Mundus programme consists of 3 terms in 1 year (60 ECTS) in 2 or 3 countries, of the 6 participating. Out of the 400 applicants 100 are selected for the programme. 41% are non-EU students.

The Workload is standardised.

Internal quality assurance consists of: board meetings on the appraisal of students, teachers meetings to co-ordinate the programme and input of students and alumni is structurally taken care of. Internal benchmarking of grading etc is done. Lots of statistic data are gathered. External examiners and joint examination boards are standard practice.

..After a review of an international panel the programme was accredited by the NVAO.

The tuition fee is €7000-8000. The success rate is over 90%.

Further to this example universities participate in 6 other Erasmus Mundus projects and in other joint programme projects.

Some universities participated in the EUA Joint Masters Project and/or in the EUA quality culture project.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension

(For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

As reported in 2003:

The universities are busy implementing the three cycle system. It implies the development of new, international comparable, bachelor- and master's programmes. The increase of "European" content is supposed to be part of that process.

Because of access of foreign students to programmes, in particular master programmes are offered in a widely spoken European language, mostly in English, instead of in Dutch.

At the research universities 385 of the 647 masterprogrammes in the academic year 2004/2005 are provided in the English language. Throughout the public system in total some 900 programmes are taught in English and an additional 20-30 programmes in German.

All professional education and various programmes at research universities require a traineeship/stage/internship in the relevant sector of the labour market. Many students follow their internship abroad, in other European countries for example.

Some university programmes (for instance "long" engineering programmes and international business management studies) even require an internship abroad.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA

- Programmes being offered in another language than Dutch (mainly English, sometimes German).
- Reflection on the usefulness to increase transparency of European institutions of HE, especially geared to facilitate the choice process of foreign students. A pilot project on typology of institutions has been subsidized by the EU.
- For transparency of programmes the internationalisation of quality assurance was put to the fore.
- The portability of loans and grants and the obstacles encountered within the EU was highlighted. An investigation by the EU was welcomed.
- A seminar on mobility to disperse knowledge on grantsystems and problems encountered and to promote typology and internationalisation of quality assurance has been organised.
- ICT is being stimulated.

And as reported in 2003 profiling of HE institutions:

Much attention in the debate on furthering development of Dutch HE is being paid to the development of institutions and programmes with different profiles, as this is seen as an important determinant of Dutch international attractiveness and competitiveness.

In addition many higher education institutions are participating in international consortia. The new three cycle structure offers new opportunities for the development of high quality internationally acknowledged master programmes with a selective admission.

In 2003/2004 universities have developed such programmes, amongst others, with special subsidies.

Recently the ministry commissioned a study with the aim of assessing excellence of higher education at an international level, like existing assessment of excellence in university research. The study will take into consideration the pilot on typology of HE institutes and the work of UNESCO-CEPES on criteria underlying ranking systems and league tables.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Implementation and further development of the three cycle structure including facilitation of joint programmes and joint degrees and furthering various internationally attractive "top" master programmes.

13.2. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country

Priorities put forward in the white paper on HE (HOOP) 2004 are:

- facilitating the knowledge society
- international profiling of HE in Europe and the globalising HE market
- challenging HE in which students from a complex of social backgrounds participate.

There is reflection on the system of accreditation of programmes; it will be maintained while at the same time procedures and costs need to be controlled/restricted.

In general the challenge is:

Maintaining and furthering a competitive higher education system which is accessible on the basis of merit, which provides good quality education and research, internationally recognised; all this within the given limits of public budgets.