

**BOLOGNA PROCESS
TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007**

Final: 9 May 2006

Notes:

The deadline for submitting National Reports is **Friday 15 December 2006**.

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

Please complete your National Report in English using this template and return it to the Secretariat by email. Your report should not exceed **20 pages in length**, using Times New Roman font size 12. Where appropriate, please include precise web references to legislation or other documentation. For any topic where there has been no change since 2005, please refer to your National Report for the Bergen conference.

Please attach your country's action plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications.

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 London in May 2007.

This template has three sections:

- A. Background information on your Higher Education system
- B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements
- C. Current issues in Higher Education.

Elements that will inform the scorecard element of stocktaking are clearly indicated in the template.

Information for the stocktaking, including the scorecard element, will also be drawn from the Eurydice survey "Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe". These elements are also indicated in the template. Please use your National Report to supplement, but not repeat, your country's input to the Eurydice survey.

National report on the implementation of the Bologna process in Latvia

A. Background information on Latvian Higher Education system

Details

Country	Latvia
Date	December 2006
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Main achievements since Bergen

<p>1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.</p>
<p>A number of the main Bologna process reforms have been implemented in Latvia quite some time before the Bergen-London period. The three-cycle degree system has been introduced in the whole higher education by 2000. External quality assurance system was fully implemented by 2002; Diploma supplement and a credit system were fully implemented by 2004.</p> <p>The main achievements of the post - Bergen period have therefore been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Accreditation regulations have been adopted (Cabinet Regulation No 821 of October 3, 2006) which, apart from dealing with external quality assurance influence a number of other aspects e.g. promote move towards access between cycles, promote outcomes-based curricula, move HEIs towards introduction of quality assurance systems inside HEIs that lead to continuous improvement • Draft Higher Education Law to replace the existing Law on Higher Education Institutions has been prepared and submitted for Government approval and further submission for adoption by the Parliament. The draft law takes up numerous more recent Bologna process issues. To name but some: qualifications framework, outcomes- based qualifications, flexible learning paths, recognition of prior learning, encouraging joint degrees and many others. • The principles of Latvian qualifications framework have been elaborated, cycle

descriptors formulated and discussed with the stakeholders

- Amendments to the existing Law on Higher Education Institutions have taken place in March 2006 that:
 - partly lift the language restrictions allowing studies of foreign students in Latvia in languages other than Latvian and allowing Latvian students to take up to 20% courses in foreign languages
 - introduce some additional requirements for quality of staff, particularly rising the requirements for number of staff with doctoral degrees and requiring references from abroad at election to senior staff positions.
 - 0,5% of total HEI budget is allocated for funding student union proposed activities
- Research funding has been increased (over 70 million Euro in 2006 compared to 34 million in 2003). The funds are taken from both from State budget and EU Structural Funds. In addition to the above, a specific funding 6.6 million Euros to support research at higher education institutions has been allocated from State budget in 2006.
- A substantial rise of higher education staff salaries is taking place as of September 1, 2006 (+58% to minimum salary at each staff position)
- Financial incentives and other measures have taken place to encourage more applicants to choose studies in natural sciences and engineering and it has given positive results already in this period.

National organisation

2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries

Yes, ministries of, Agriculture, Culture, Defence, Health and Interior oversee higher education institutions of the appropriate profile. At the same time, all the higher education institutions are covered by the same law and a number of regulations and it is the Ministry of Education and Science that monitors observance of the higher education legislation in all the HEIs, even if some of them are funded through and to some extent overseen by other ministries.

- how funds are allocated to HEIs

State-owned HEIs receive funds from the state which are allocated proportionally to the number of state-funded study places. There is a formula for calculating this funding where there are different factors used for different study areas and levels of study.

Privately established HEIs charge tuition fees.

As regards research funding, it is quite diverse, including contest for research grants, applied research projects, support for particular research fields and, since this year, the abovementioned state funding to support research at HEIs (see answer to Q.1).

- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing.

HEIs can freely choose ways how they fulfil their tasks and objectives, ensure quality of

studies and research.

HEIs have the rights of drawing up and adopting their bylaws, select staff and students, to determine contents and forms of studies, admission requirements in addition to those set by the state, main directions of research, their own organisational and governance structure, staff salaries (as long as they are not lower than the minimum set fore each staff category by the Cabinet regulation).

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.

Please include:

- the number of public/private HEIs

At the moment of filling out this questionnaire there were 20 accredited public higher education institutions, out of these 5 universities, 12 accredited private HEIs

In addition, there are colleges providing short higher education programmes only. There are 16 accredited public and accredited private colleges of this type

- are there different types of institutions delivering higher education (i.e. academic/professional, university/non-university etc.)

There is actually no binary system of HEIs in Latvia. The categories academic/professional or university/ non-university are rather applied to programmes than to institutions, as all HEIs except short-cycle colleges may (and do) run both academically and professionally oriented programmes.

the number/percentage of students admitted in academic session 2006-2007 to each type of institution

total number of students is 129,000. Of them 118, 000 (91%) study in HEIs and in 11,000 (9%) colleges providing short labour-market oriented HE programmes only.

- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations.

Same laws and cabinet regulations cover all of higher education institutions. HEIs are divided into three groups: universities, academies (there are 8 academies in Latvia) and other higher education institutions (“augstskolas”) and each group have different requirements for proportion of staff with doctoral degrees and for the number of research areas covered. The laws and regulations also contain separate articles covering peculiarities of colleges providing short higher education.

Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Bologna process in Latvia is being coordinated through cooperation of the three leading organisations in higher education: the Ministry of Education and Science, the Rectors’ Council and the Higher Education Council

- membership of national Bologna promoters group comprises representatives of Rectors’ Council, Higher Education Council, Student Union, ENIC/NARIC centre and National ECTS Coordinator
- students, staff trade unions, business and social partners are participate through their representatives in the Higher Education Council and are thus

involved in the decision making. Student representative is also member of at Bologna Promoters' Group.
<p>5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.</p> <p>Please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies: <p>Law on Higher Education institutions Sect 15 (3,4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of students in the governance of HEIs: <p>According to the law there are at least 20% of student members in the Senates of the HEIs, at national level students are represents in the Higher Education Council and Accreditation Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs. <p>75% of Senate members are staff representatives (Law on Higher Education institutions Sect 15 (1)) Staff members have the right to participate in formulation of decisions and to be present at senior management meetings, (Law on Higher Education institutions, Sect 26 (3)). Membership of the HEC includes a representative of staff trade union and a representative of Professors' association, Law on Higher Education institutions, Sect 66 (1).</p>
<p>6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.</p> <p>Employers' and employees' organisations participate through membership of HEC and are being invited to the policy meetings and seminars where the implementation of Bologna process in Latvia is being discussed</p>

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements
Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)
<p>Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle</p> <p>7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.</p> <p>The first and second cycle have been introduced in Latvia since early 1990's. The main tasks regarding two cycle system were re- definition of bachelor and master in Bologna terms as well as consolidation of the two-cycle system by restructuring of the few professional higher education programmes remaining after introduction of professional bachelor and master degrees in 2000 into bachelor and master ones.</p> <p>Please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07. (98,6%) <p>some programmes e.g. medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine lead directly to a second cycle qualification without a bachelor phase</p>
(Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of 3rd cycle students following structured doctoral programmes

At HEIs all (100%) students admitted to doctoral studies study in structured programmes. A possibility to defend doctoral thesis without doctoral studies however still remains and is being used by some candidates working at research institutions outside HEIs.

- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies

3-4 years according to Law on Higher Education institutions Sect n57 (5)

- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only

Doctoral programmes include taught courses of several types, usually advanced studies in the chosen field, research skills in the field, teaching skills in higher education and one deepening generic skills. The credit system is introduced also in doctoral studies concerning both the taught courses and the work at doctoral thesis.

- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies

each doctoral student has an individual supervisor with whom he/she meets regularly. There are different approaches in different fields, but generally doctoral students participate in scientific colloquia and seminars where newest challenges of the chosen area are being analysed. Doctoral students are 1) assessed by staff in charge of the taught courses of doctoral programme and 2) once a year the supervisor has to write an overall evaluation of the progress.

- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes

yes, a national descriptor for the doctoral level qualifications has been included in the proposal for national qualifications framework

- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills integrated in doctoral studies

In principle yes, but the amount can vary case to case

- are credit points used in measuring workload in doctoral studies?

yes

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access¹ to the next cycle

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

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle – close to 100%

¹ Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education.

- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle – not applicable
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles – not applicable
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle (estimate) – 85% (see explanation below)
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle

there can still be an insignificant number of undergraduate professional programmes running that do not meet the “bachelor standard”. These may have been accredited some time ago for 6 years and continue until the students complete their studies

- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle.

There are some qualifications that are post-bachelor but that can not be qualified as second cycle completion qualifications as they do not meet the descriptor of a master degree (the type of qualifications in some countries would be regarded to as *graduate diplomas* or *post-graduate diplomas*). Typical examples are teacher training programmes after a bachelor degree in the particular subject.

- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area

In most cases bridging courses are not necessary. Some additional work could be required when applying for master studies in another HEI in which the bachelor degree in the subject in question requires 4 year studies from an institution where it is 3 years, or switching between more academic and more professional studies when transferring from first to second cycle.

- any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles.
 - 1) In the draft law to be adopted the degree system is further clarified and aligned to Bologna cycles
 - 2) implementation of outcomes- based qualifications aligned to cycle descriptors after adoption of the law will do the necessary changes in the institutional practice
 - 3) The new Accreditation regulations (Cabinet Regulation No 821 of October 3, 2006) stimulate access between cycles: the self-assessment reports of the programmes submitted to accreditation should demonstrate the further study possibilities of the graduate.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA².

Please include:

- the stage of development of your national qualifications framework
 - working group has been established in 2005
 - outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications defined (2005),
 - national qualifications framework has been discussed with the relevant stakeholders (2005),
 - the law on HE which will legally introduce a qualifications framework has been

² A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

drafted and submitted to Government but has not yet been adopted,
- timetable of further activities pending on the law coming into force

- the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA

national qualifications framework has been drafted with a view to be compatible with the EHEA framework – outcomes based, -descriptors compatible with the EHEA cycle descriptors - credit ranges according to the EHEA framework

- the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.

- drafting group membership included representatives of the ministry, Rectors' Council, HEC (representing various stakeholder groups), students, ENIC/NRIC and ECTS coordinator

- a wide representation of staff, students, employers and staff trade union was always invited to seminars where the draft was discussed.

- stakeholders will have a great role in the next phase of implementation when individual programmes will be re-worked to make them outcomes based.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

In Latvia there is a high percentage of graduates who don't have employability problems. In fact, just around 1.5% of graduates do not find employments until October of the year of graduation (graduation month in the majority of cases is June). This fact however is not trivial and the results can not be immediately used as argument for high quality of education. There are several additional factors reducing the number of unemployed graduates, such as:

- a great proportion of students work in parallel to studies so there are cases where they simply don't have to seek a new employment after graduation,
- due to the fast economic growth of the country the request for highly educated employees is rapidly growing,
- the labour force as a whole is shrinking – both due to demographic issues and to the fact that in the recent years a number of people have found employment in other EU member states.

The main measures to increase employability are:

- requirement of compliance of the professional programmes with the profession standards that are formulated in cooperation with employers and approved by the Cabinet. The compliance is checked by the experts in the process of accreditation
- requirements to have sufficiently big (30 ECTS credits) practical placements in the professional study programmes,
- the move to outcomes-based curricula.

Please include where possible:

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after graduating in 2005/06

50% (estimate)

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third cycles in 2005/06

50% (estimate)

- The extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007.

No major changes expected as there were no major changes between the previous two years.

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA³

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of the national quality assurance system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

As regards the S&G for External quality assurance and for QA Agencies (parts 2 and 3 of the S&G), we consider that the system in Latvia in most points is in line with the Standards and guidelines.

As regards the S&G for the internal quality assurance of the HEIs, there are several elements that we already consider at least partly in line with the S&G – such as the internal approval/monitoring of programmes, ensuring quality of teaching staff, information systems of the HEI and public information. Some other elements are not yet sufficiently developed, but most importantly, the elements have not yet been put together to form a quality culture penetrating through all the levels of institutions. The main issues to address are: a greater cooperation with employers, developing methodologies for assessing learning outcomes, including more objective student assessment procedures and marking criteria.

- any action that has been taken to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

New Accreditation regulations have been adopted (Cabinet Regulation No 821 of October 3, 2006). Internet address: <http://www.aiknc.lv/kopmat/MKnot182.pdf> (text in Latvian. English translation is being prepared).

The Regulations set criteria for accreditation of institutions and programmes (Appendix 3 of the Regulation) that actually require that the HEIs implement the EHEA Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance, see below:

- clear mission statement, goals and objectives,
- internal quality assurance systems leading to continuous improvement,
- clearly formulated learning outcomes,
- objective assessment methods of knowledge, skills and attitudes,
- monitoring graduates' perspectives in the labour market,
- student support systems,
- relevant information systems

- any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

Setting deadlines will be done at adopting the Law on Higher Education – the deadline will be set as the implementation deadline for the Law section in question.

- any action planned to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

Implementing the Regulation on Accreditation will include the introduction of S&Gs in

³ <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

the area of internal quality assurance in the HEIs. This means that over the next accreditation cycle of 6 years the regulations should be fully implemented, hence, the system should be in line with the S&G.

A series of training seminars is foreseen in 2007 to support transformation of the existing elements of internal quality assurance into a genuine quality culture.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system
system fully implemented, includes both institutional and programme accreditation, functions since 1996, first accreditation round of institutions and programmes was completed in 2002, and second round is ongoing. There is cyclic accreditation in Latvia with evaluation each 6 years and HEIs are submitting interim self-assessments each year after the first accreditation.

- the scope of your external quality assurance system: does it operate at a national level; does it cover all higher education
yes, it operates at national level and covers all higher education

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

- internal assessment - yes
- external review - yes
- publication of results - yes

- whether procedures have been established for the peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

The cyclical reviews of QA agency are foreseen in the draft Law on Higher Education which has been submitted for adoption.

However, the Higher Education Council has already taken a decision to initiate the first evaluation in line with the Standards and Guidelines. No particular deadline has been set yet but the discussions on assessment procedure have started

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether students are included in the following aspects of quality assurance:
 - the governance of national agencies for QA

students are participating in solving methodological problems of QA as members of Higher Education Council and Accreditation Commission. Students participate in the management of national QA agency using their representatives in the senates of the HEI, which are founders of QA agency and monitor the work of QA agency. They are however not involved in the Board of the QA agency.

- the external expert teams

Yes, students are involved in all external review teams as a rule as observers but in some cases also as experts. In reality however students do not always use the possibility to

participate in the evaluation activities.

- as part of the decision making process for external reviews

Yes, students are involved in the Accreditation Board (takes decisions on programme accreditation and in Higher Education Council (takes decisions regarding programme accreditation)

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

Yes, peer review team always meets students and usually also graduates and representatives of students' self government.

- in internal evaluations

Yes, all internal evaluations of HEI are monitored and approved by Senate, where students hold at least 20% places. Students are always informed about the internal evaluations.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether there is international participation in the following aspects of quality assurance
 - the governance of national agencies for quality assurance

Yes. The Board of national QA agency consists of seven national members with full voting rights and two foreign advisory members.

- the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies

The first evaluation of QA agency is just being prepared. The preliminary decision of the Higher Education Council is to include foreign experts in the external evaluation of QA agency.

- teams for external review,

Yes - there are foreign members in the teams for external reviews and English language is used as working language of these teams

- membership of ENQA –

Yes, it is a full member of ENQA

- membership of any other international network.-

Yes, Latvian QA agency is full member of INQAHE, CEE (Central and Eastern Europe Network of QA agencies), MEDIN

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country. - yes

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement

100%

- which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:
 - issued in a widely spoken European language
- **yes**
 - free of charge
- **yes**
 - automatically
- **yes**
 - correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO DS format.
- **yes**

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents⁴ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Recognition of foreign qualifications or study periods is legislated for in Articles 84 and 95 of the Law on Higher education institutions. The law does not contradict with any of the principles of the Convention but also doesn't specifically mention them. The principles are directly addressed in the Recognition Manual produced by the Latvian Academic Information Centre - the ENIC centre. According to the law a foreign qualification is evaluated by the ENIC centre and a statement resulting in a statement on recognition. When making recognition decisions, HEIs have to take into account the ENIC statements. Thus, in practice the principles of the legal framework of the Convention are applied in Latvia. The new law on Higher Education will mention the Convention principles explicitly.

Please include:

- Latvia ratified the Convention in 1999
- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents-
yes
- which of the following principles are applied in practice
 - applicants' right to fair assessment –
yes
 - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven –
yes
 - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted-
yes
 - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
yes

⁴ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

- whether you have a fully operational ENIC
- yes
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents. Not applicable

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007

Credit transfer and accumulation system is fully operating in Latvia since 1998. It is compatible with ECTS, but uses 40 credits per year. For transfer purposes ECTS is being used, accumulation is carried out in Latvian credit points. Complete switch to ECTS is foreseen in the draft of the new law on Higher Education

- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007

100% programmes use credits: ECTS for transfer and Latvian credits for accumulation

- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits.

The current credit system is compatible with ECTS but it uses 40 credits per year, thus, a Latvian credit point is 1.5 times bigger than ECTS one

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications⁵? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

Yes

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Efforts to address the prior learning issue are reflected in the draft law on HE (see below). Before adoption of that law no other legislative measures are possible.

Please include:

- the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning

Draft of the new law on HE includes clauses for creating regulations for recognition of prior learning

- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE

none

⁵ ENIC/NARIC has produced guidelines for National Action Plans for Recognition.

- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

Draft of the new law on HE stipulates that HEIs can assess learning outcomes gained in any prior learning or professional experience and allocate credits for these learning outcome. It also stipulates that detailed regulation should be approved by the Cabinet.

At present a system for recognition of prior learning effectively works in a specific case of teacher training for vocational education.

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Please include:

- any flexibility in entry requirements

In admission to HE: there are special measures for access for those who completed secondary education before 2004 and don't therefore have certificates of the centralised national secondary school leaving examinations.

Secondary education certificate is a prerequisite for access. There is a possibility to obtain secondary education certificate studying externally and taking secondary school examinations individually.

- any flexible delivery methods

Most HEIs offer possibilities to combine e-learning with class learning, classes in the evenings, on Saturdays and Sundays.

- any modular structures of programmes.

So far there are few programmes having a modular structure.

Draft of the new law on HE encourages for more modularity and for creation of learning paths for lifelong learners.

Remark: One should note that in the 1990's there have been cases of abuse of "flexibility" by some less serious HE institutions resulting in low quality education in these cases. The recent need to eradicate such cases is the main reason why the legislators slowly accept the idea of more flexibility and out-of-class possibilities

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes

Legislation explicitly allowing and encouraging joint degrees has been drafted as part of the draft law on higher education which has been submitted for adoption.

- whether joint⁶ degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation

The current existing legislation does not mention joint degrees at all.

As a result, it is not forbidden to establish joint programmes, but the ways of awarding degrees after completion of such programmes can only take place as awarding one (or several) national degrees of the partner institutions or a national certificate plus an unofficial certificate in the name of the whole consortium

⁶ a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles –
There is no difference between the three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries

Around 10% of institutions have joint programmes, some of them issuing double degrees.

Another 15% of institutions are currently working with foreign partners to establish joint programmes

- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.
Lifting language restrictions in the existing legislation (done in March 2006), work for adoption of the new Law on Higher Education

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sector

In the recent two years several positive changes have taken place with regard to research at HEIs:

- over the past two years the funding for research carried out by HEIs has grown substantially (from 14,2 million Euro in 2003 to 28,5 million Euro in 2005)
- the estimate is that at present about 2/3 of research funding is spent in the HEIs
- there are specific funds allocated for the development of research at HEIs, including the funds for research infrastructure (compared to just grant funding for particular research project that was the only research funding for a number of past years)
- besides the state funding for research, the funding from the European Regional Fund and European Social fund is also available for research and it has a positive impact.
- HEIs are now entitled to establish their own research institutes that have legal status of public agencies inside the HEIs. Before this change the existing research institutions were formally associated with the HEIs but were reporting to the ministry directly. This hindered a real integration of the in research institutes into the universities. Current change of status of the institutes will lead to integration as the research institutes are subordinated to the HEIs.

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

- it is difficult to give any numbers of percentages of doctoral candidates who continue research careers.
- there are several measures to keep young doctors in research: there are grants for young researchers from the Regional Development Fund and there is a special state programme for support of young researchers within the first five years after they defend their thesis.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

Please include:

- any financial or other measures to widen access in higher education amongst socially disadvantaged groups

the financial incentives for disadvantaged groups are the following: for orphans allocation of state-funded study place and non-repayable study loans, for students with children and handicapped students – exemption from paying back the study loans, support from ERDF and ESF to handicapped people with limited motion abilities

- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to widen access to higher education, including results if possible

There are no monitoring procedures yet

- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the widening access measures already in place.

A concept document on the development of Latvian educational system has been adopted in 2006 that stresses the need for widening access. Yet, no following legislation has been adopted so far.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

Study loans are available, some private foundations offer scholarships for socially disadvantaged students

Please include:

- any guidance or counselling services and any other measures to improve retention

In the recent years 8 HEIs have opened centres that provide study and career guidance and counselling. The estimate is that more than 50% of students can now receive this guidance in their institutions.

- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to improve retention, including results if possible

There are no monitoring procedures yet and it would be premature to expect measurable results so far

- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the retention measures already in place.

no

Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- increasing number of courses in English in the last 2 years,
- creating interdisciplinary courses in English for use of foreign students coming to different faculties,

- improving living conditions of foreign students,
- growing participation in international student fairs within and outside Europe
- amendments to the law with regard to the language of studies, explicitly allowing to use foreign languages in programmes where foreign students participate
 - any measures to increase outward student mobility.
- Over the last 2 years the Latvian state funding to complement funding from EU programmes has substantially grown (from 200,000 Euro in 2005 to 500,000 EUR in 2006). The increased budget is especially important because too little funding has been the main obstacle for outward mobility for many years.
- In order to ensure that funding provided through EU mobility programmes is fully used its usage in HEIs is being monitored and flexible re-allocation of funds between HEIs is being apply in order to ensure full use.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country?

Yes, both loans and grants are portable

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

The main obstacles

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward staff mobility

With the general improvement of budgets over the last 2 years the HEIs have started to allocate funds for inviting foreign staff. The general understanding has grown that “internationalisation a home” is important so institutions and individual faculties strive to invite guest lecturers

As regards mobility in terms of EU programmes, the funding mechanism has become more flexible and that helps mobility.

Certain improvements have also taken place with regard to issuing labour permits to the elected guest lecturers, but the procedure is still cumbersome- especially in the case of staff from non-EU countries.

- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

Staff outward mobility is also growing, both within EU programmes and direct cooperation/exchanges with partner institutions. Staff mobility for longer periods unfortunately may sometimes lead to brain drain. Mobility for short periods is growing intensively since there are less funding obstacles to travelling. The fact that experience in foreign HEIs has become an important factor at staff election and re-election is also a stimulus for greater outward mobility.

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

- Staff of Latvian HEIs increasingly participate in Europe’s common measures for promoting attractiveness of the EHEA: through EUA activities - as experts in projects taking place in the new Bologna countries or outside the Bologna area; as European speakers in conferences outside Europe;
- Latvia is hosting conferences/ seminars on European higher education with participation of non-European countries;
- When organising international conferences, Latvian HEIs often invite representatives

from the neighbouring non-EU countries, mainly Belarus and Russia

Future challenges

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

The main expected challenges in Latvian higher education:

- re-working all the programmes, formulating the overall learning outcomes and linking learning outcomes of each component to the overall learning outcomes – the culture has yet to be created,
- joining all existing internal quality culture elements in HEIs and turning them to full-fledge internal quality management systems
- full integration of the short higher education programmes into the first cycle – especially in those cases where the short HE programmes have grown out of vocational institutions,
- raising the number of doctoral studies and improving the proportion of those who successfully defend their PhD thesis after completion of doctoral studies,
- ensuring knowledge transfer and innovation,
- increasing inward mobility of foreign students and staff,
- fully integrating lifelong learning into HE and establishing a system of recognition of prior learning,
- greater support to students to insure a greater proportion of students who do not work in parallel to studies
- continue raising staff salaries to ensure that employment options in HE are competitive compared to employment in industry businesses.

Completed National Reports should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by email no later than **Friday 15 December 2006**.

Please remember to attach a copy of your national action plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Bologna Secretariat
May 2006

Link to current Latvian Law on HEIs

http://www.ttc.lv/index.php?squery=E0833&search_sbm=Search&srctype=trans&id=2&l=EN&seid=search