

bologna process

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1. Main achievements since Berlin

1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms

Various aspects of the Bologna Process had already been implemented in Liechtenstein prior to the 2003 meeting in Berlin. The following two legislative milestones have been achieved since Berlin: Liechtenstein's Parliament has adopted a new scholarship legislation as well as a new Framework Act for Higher Education. The new scholarship legislation serves the improved promotion of occupational and vocational education and further training and equalises the promotion of occupational as well as vocational training. The new law on higher education provides the legal basis for the implementation of various objectives of the Bologna Process. In particular, it stipulates the bachelor / master structure, ECTS and diploma supplements and regulates quality assurance and development issues. Institutions of higher education are committed to internal quality management measures. In addition, they are legally required to undergo external evaluations in intervals of at least every six years.

Peer reviews were conducted at two of the three institutions of higher education in Liechtenstein in 2003 and 2004 as a quality assurance measure. All peers were Swiss university professors with extensive international experience in this area.

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 government acts as supervisory body of the institutions of higher education. It is supported by the local education authority, particularly the officials responsible for the higher education sector. The institutions of higher education are obligated to issue an annual report which is required to include the following: the number of students per course and term, a description of the teaching and research activities carried out at the institution, information regarding the knowledge and technology transfer as well as services offered within the scope of public relations, details on the collaboration with other local and foreign institutions of higher education as well as the quality management measures.

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?)

Liechtenstein has had its own higher education sector since 1992, it is small like the country itself, comprising just three officially recognized institutions: the public institution "Liechtenstein University of Applied Sciences" (which offers studies in architecture and economics) and the two private institutions "International Academy of Philosophy" and the "University of Human Sciences" which offer two year post-graduate courses. Students from abroad study at all three universities and form the majority.

All these three higher education institutions are covered by the same regulations.

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 local education authority, in particular its department of higher education, is in charge of implementing the Bologna Process. The chairman is a member of the Bologna Group and is therefore well informed of all current developments. Due to the small size of the country, the inclusion of the officials in charge can easily be achieved. Direct contact between the responsible authorities and the institutions of higher education takes place on a regular basis.

Regular contact with other countries, particularly with Switzerland and Austria is important (most students in Liechtenstein are from these two countries and most of Liechtenstein's students study either in Switzerland or Austria).

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.

Establishment and management of institutions of higher education are subject to government approval. According to the law on higher education, numerous requirements have to be met for obtaining this type of approval. As mentioned above, the government is also responsible for the general supervision of institutions of higher education. In this endeavour it is supported by the local education authority, in particular the department of higher education.

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.

The institutions of higher education are required to submit an annual report to the government. Among other things, part of the reporting is to demonstrate that quality management measures are in place. Moreover, the law stipulates an external evaluation in intervals of at least every six years. Peer reviews were carried out at two of the three institutions of higher education during the past two years, whereas for the third institution

such a review is scheduled to take place sometime in 2005. The next step will see the institutions of higher education have their courses of study accredited by international agencies. The University of Applied Sciences in Liechtenstein has already initiated this process for the study of architecture.

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)?

Due to its small size, Liechtenstein has no quality assurance agency and therefore relies on international collaboration. The country does not have the necessary resources to carry out external evaluations, peer reviews or accreditation processes at the institutions of higher education on its own. Collaboration particularly with Switzerland and Austria, but also with Germany is therefore essential. Consequently, Liechtenstein consistently relies on the support of institutions and experts from the neighbouring countries, as was the case for the peer reviews in 2003 and 2004 (see above).

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

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 Bachelor's/Master's system is already in place in Liechtenstein at the University of Applied Sciences. The Bachelor's course takes at least three years, and the Master's course at least three semesters. The two private institutions offer two year post-graduate courses.

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 following academic degrees are recognised in Liechtenstein: bachelor, master and doctor. A detailed designation of degrees is established in the study and examination regulations of the respective institution of higher education.

Credits/periods of study obtained by students abroad are accepted in Liechtenstein as long as a written agreement is drawn up between the student and the university abroad prior to the period of study, listing the classes to be attended and examinations to be taken, and evidence of fulfilment of the agreement is presented by the student on his or her return to Liechtenstein. Students from abroad are very welcome in Liechtenstein and are offered the same services.

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)

According to the law on higher education, doctoral study programmes are at least two years in length and require the completion of a relevant master study programme or equivalent study programme at an institution of higher education as prerequisite. The scope of the doctoral study programmes corresponds to the European system regarding the recognition of course credits. The required course credits are comprised of lectures and seminars, but mainly of independent study activities, writing of the thesis as well as examinations. The exact balance is not stipulated.

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?)

Public funding for the University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein amounts to approximately 75%. 15 percent of the budget are allocated to research. The objective of the University of Applied Sciences is to increase this amount to at least 20 percent over the course of the coming years. The university maintains close ties to industry and Civil Service. Several joint projects are currently being worked on. Although the University of Applied Sciences is conducting contract research, it is committed to study topics in the field of initial research which might trigger innovations.

For its doctoral study programmes, the University for Humanities likewise maintains a link to its network of local research laboratories, hospitals and institutions.

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)*

Student mobility is taken very seriously in Liechtenstein, and involvement in the Erasmus exchange programme operated by the European Union is considered to be of particularly great importance.

In the future students at the Liechtenstein University of Applied Sciences have to spend a semester abroad. For an institution of its size, the partnership programme operated by the University of Applied Sciences is impressive, comprising some thirty universities worldwide. The objective of the programme is to promote student and staff exchanges and run joint projects.

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No visa-related issues exist for students intending to study in Liechtenstein. If confirmation is provided that the living expenses will be covered, it is always possible to stay in Liechtenstein for study purposes.

Because both private institutions of higher education only offer doctoral study programmes, mobility plays a minor role in this case. However, these two institutions also maintain co-operation with the other institutions of higher education which benefits students and teachers alike.

In addition to the basic system of government funding in the form of grants or loans, students in Liechtenstein also receive generous support in the framework of the Erasmus programme. All Liechtenstein students in higher education abroad – and the majority of young people resident in Liechtenstein study in Switzerland or Austria – also receive government support to enable them to spend a semester in another country just like Erasmus students.

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

As mentioned above, mobility of students in Liechtenstein as well as of Liechtenstein students studying abroad is generously supported. Moreover, according to the new study schedule issued by the University of Applied Sciences, all students are required to study at a university abroad for one term.

The University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein has established a student residence for foreign students. This helps ease the living situation (house hunting, expenses) for foreign students who only intend to study at the University for Applied Sciences for a limited period of time.

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)

International collaboration is of strategic importance for the University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein. Therefore, it has gradually established a network of professors, universities and institutions of higher education with the objective of exchanging scientific knowledge in the fields of teaching, research and transfer. Today, common projects and workshops involving students and professors from other countries as well as mutual programmes are part of all higher education curricula.

Due to their small size, the two private institutions of higher education also rely on the co-operation with other institutions of higher education as well as research institutions on a contextual and personal level.

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

Improved staff mobility is one of the main objectives of the Erasmus exchange programme. Professors in Liechtenstein who opt to make use of this offer, are benefiting from generous support.

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?

Institutions of higher education of both the public as well as the private law are provided with the right of self-governance within the legal scope (in the case of the University for Applied Sciences in Liechtenstein a specific law is applicable in addition to the law on higher education).

According to the law on higher education, a number of requirements has to be met for the successful approval process. New courses of study, even if offered by accredited institutions of higher education, are always subject to government approval. The approval of an institution of higher education does not guarantee its entitlement to public funds. Public funds are distributed when the law explicitly stipulates payment to a certain institution of higher education (as in the case of the University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein) or on the basis of service level agreements.

The law on higher education includes various regulations concerning teaching staff, courses of study, conditions for admission, academic degrees, quality management measures, etc. The law further stipulates that the government is responsible for the supervision of the institutions of higher education.

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

The quality management measures implemented at an institution of higher education shall guarantee active participation of all partners.

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)

The institution of higher education has to guarantee the participation of students within the scope of its quality management measures. The special law of the University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein stipulates the inclusion of students on the institutional level in that the student body is a partial entity of the institution of higher education and therefore is part of the university council.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

The law stipulates equality with respect to the possibility of accessing higher education. The generous scholarship law ensures that members of all social levels have access to education and further training.

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?

Lifelong learning is part of the legal obligations of an institution of higher education. Moreover, it is in the institution's own interest to foster this process. Therefore, Liechtenstein's institutions of higher education have expanded their extensive range of general-interest courses in continuing education in Liechtenstein to include education at the

university level, ranging from public speeches, lecture cycles and seminars to courses and even post-graduate studies.

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

The entire school system is based on permeability which allows the transfer from one level to another at any stage. This is not only valid for the mandatory schooling but also for the upper cycle of secondary (Sekundarstufe II) as well as tertiary education. However, transfers are always based on certain requirements which have to be met.

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

No legal obstacles exist in Liechtenstein's legislation. .

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

Today, joint projects and workshops involving students and professors from different countries as well as common programmes are part of the curricula and the academic culture at the University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein. Due to their small size, the two private institutions of higher education are also relying on the co-operation with other institutions of higher education and research institutes on a contextual and personal level.

Actually there are no integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees, but they are planned in the near future.

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

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

Liechtenstein is a small country and as such is fundamentally dependent on transnational co-operation. It is part of the strategic objectives of institutions of higher education, particularly of the University for Applied Sciences Liechtenstein, to strengthen teaching and research activities and to improve the mobility of students and staff through the development of networks.

The government is promoting these efforts, particularly with respect to student and teacher mobility, by providing generous support measures.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

Due to the small size of the country, national and international orientation of the institutions of higher education is necessary in Liechtenstein. This holds true for all areas (see above).

The curriculum at the University of Applied Sciences stipulates the completion of a term at

an institution abroad. Close consultation and active exchange with the target institution is usual. Likewise, this type of intensive feedback exchange is also taking place with the source institution of the "incoming students".

A comparison with curricula across the border is self-evident. The experiences gained from the EU tuning project for establishing curricula for example has been adopted as far as possible. An important aspect of the orientation towards the European labour market has been the adaptation of the study programmes leading to qualifications in regulated professions to the requirements of the EU directives. First of all, it has taken place in professions covered by the EU sectorial directives (in Liechtenstein architecture).

Moreover, a number of modules taught in the master studies and in part in the higher semesters of bachelor studies are offered in English as well. Sometimes students of different language areas have the possibility to take their examinations in their mother tongue. The University of Applied Sciences Liechtenstein also offers a broad range of foreign language studies to its students (French, Italian, Spanish and Russian are offered in addition to English).

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

see above

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Despite its small size, Liechtenstein is proud to offer its own possibilities for higher education, on the one hand as a contribution to the business location Liechtenstein and on the other hand as a contribution to the region and beyond. It is important to establish the selection in areas where the country or region is able to supply its own expertise and which is of particular interest to the country or the region. It is clear that this is only possible to a limited degree because Liechtenstein will always depend on the possibilities for its students to study abroad, especially in its neighbouring countries.

Liechtenstein strives to continue to expand its own sector of higher education. The international orientation is crucial in this respect, which implies the implementation of the main strategies of the Bologna Declaration. By signing the declaration, Liechtenstein is obligated to implement these strategies and to follow the chosen path consistently.

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

The main challenges for the coming years include the following:

- Further internationalisation of the institutions of higher education through active exchange with institutions of higher education and authorities in other countries on all levels.
- Continuation of implemented quality assurance measures
- Development of a network comprising experts and quality assurance agencies from neighbouring countries.