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**Ministry of Education and Science
Sweden**

Division for Higher Education

**National Report Sweden
- Report on the Swedish follow-up of the Bologna Declaration and the
Prague Communiqué**

This is a joint report from the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Agency for Higher Education, the Association of Swedish Higher Education (the Swedish rectors' conference) and the Swedish National Students' Union. It has been edited by the Ministry.

1. National Bologna follow-up group

In 2000 an informal national Bologna follow-up group was set up. The group consists of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Agency for Higher Education, the Association of Swedish Higher Education (the Swedish rectors' conference) and the Swedish National Students' Union. The group meets at regular intervals to discuss Bologna-related issues.

2. Developments since Prague 2001

In April 2002, a project group was appointed at the Ministry of Education and Science with the assignment to review certain issues in relation to university degrees (will henceforth be referred to as the *Degree review*). The review was called for both in relation to national developments the last decade and to the developments of the Bologna Process. The review group is assigned to review the degree structure – especially the level and status of the master degree, the formulation of the scopes and objectives of the degrees, the translation of the degree titles and to address the issue of adapting the Swedish credit system and grading scale to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) etc.

An interim report was presented in March 2003 and the final report will be delivered no later than 1 December 2003. The tasks of the Degree review will be presented more in detail in relation to the main goals of the process below. For further information about the Degree review project see:

http://utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/review_univdegrees.pdf

The government will consider the proposals from the Degree review when the final report has been delivered.

The government has also appointed a state commission to review certain questions regarding the system of doctoral studies and the period after the doctoral degree has been awarded. One of the tasks of the commission is to survey and elucidate how the Swedish system of doctoral studies relates to the educational systems of other countries and to the Bologna process. The report of the commission is due on December 31, 2003.

Bologna follow-up seminar on Joint degrees

The seminar, arranged by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, on the development of joint degrees took place on 30-31 May 2002 in Stockholm. The seminar was announced in the Prague Communiqué and in the work programme of the Bologna follow-up process. The purpose of the seminar was to explore the possibilities of further development of joint degrees, in particular from a national and legal point of view.

The seminar resulted in a common understanding on the nature of joint degrees and a common ground for further action. The conclusions and recommendations from the seminar are presented on the Bologna-Berlin website together with the results of the international survey on the development of joint degrees that was conducted in preparation for the seminar:

http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/en/bologna_seminars/index.htm

3. The main goals of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué

3a. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

In the bill "Reforms in higher education – a more open system" (2001/02:15) the government judged that a supplement should be appended to degree certificates issued after 1 January 2003 (a Diploma Supplement), describing the degree programme and its place in the educational system. Owing to this a Diploma Supplement is now issued automatically, free of charge and in English, appended to all degree certificates. The Diploma Supplement should, as far as possible, contain ECTS data.

Sweden ratified the Council of Europe and UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Convention) on August 23, 2001.

3b. Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

The Swedish degree system is divided into general degrees and professional degrees. The general degrees are:

- "högskoleexamen", at least two years of full-time study, 80 credit points (equals 120 ECTS credit points),
- "kandidatexamen", at least three years of full-time study, either of a general academic nature or professionally oriented, 120 credit points (equals 180 ECTS points),
- "magisterexamen", at least four years of full-time study, 160 credit points (equals 240 ECTS credit points),
- "licentiatexamen", normally two years of full-time study after the completion of at least three years of full-time study, and
- "doktorsexamen", normally four years of full-time study after the completion of at least three years of full-time study.

In addition, there are more than fifty *professional degrees* (in medicine, teaching, engineering etc.) organised according to a somewhat different structure and varying in duration. Most general academic degrees as well as professional degrees meet the formal requirements in order for the students to gain admittance to doctoral studies within the specific field.

The assignment of the Degree review entails an analysis of the Bologna Declaration's division of higher education qualifications/degrees into different cycles. The purpose of the analysis is to clarify the division given in the Declaration and to determine which degrees are affected by the division based on a system of Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

The issue as to which cycle the Swedish Master's belongs has been investigated by the review project. As part of the review, the question of the position of the Master's in relation to other qualifications has been considered and proposals put forward in the interim report. The proposal is being referred to the higher education institutions and the National Students' Union, among others, for consideration before resulting in a proposal from the government.

As has been mentioned previously a state commission is currently, among other things, surveying how the Swedish doctoral studies relate to the educational systems of other countries and to the Bologna process. Sweden wants to stress the important contribution of higher education to the creation of the European Research Area in the provision of doctoral studies and training of young researchers. It is therefore logic that the development of the European Higher Education Area includes the addition of a third cycle to the degree structure, consisting of doctoral studies.

3c. Establishment of a system of credits

The use of a credit point system is mandatory throughout the Swedish higher education system. The workload of the student is expressed in points where one week of full-time study equals one credit point (one year = forty credit points) and a degree is built upon an accumulation of credits. The Swedish credit point system is compatible to the ECTS.

The ECTS is used by the higher education institutions in relation to foreign students and some institutions have decided to use the ECTS points (and in one case the grading scale) as a general system alongside the national credit point system. The ECTS grading scale is not, however, being frequently used in Sweden at present.

The government has stated that a wider use of ECTS is desirable and the National Agency for Higher Education has been assigned the tasks to inform about the ECTS and to follow-up the use of the system. The Degree review shall address the issue of whether to adapt the Swedish credit system and Swedish grading scale to the ECTS. The Diploma Supplement should, as far as possible, contain ECTS data.

3d. Promotion of mobility

Universities and university colleges are responsible for the recognition of foreign diplomas and study periods abroad if the student is to continue his or her studies in Sweden. The National Agency for Higher Education evaluates study periods abroad and foreign qualifications in relation to the labour market.

Sweden wants to emphasize the importance of the social dimension of higher education and of the mobility of students. Sweden works very actively with broadening the recruitment to higher education using different instruments to ensure social, financial and geographical access to higher education. Sweden, for example, has a generous financial support system for its students. Since 1989, all Swedish students are also entitled to use their state grants and loans for studies abroad, provided that the institution to which they want to go is approved by a competent Swedish authority. The students also have a possibility to apply for an additional loan when studying abroad.

The International Programme Office for Education and Training has been commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science to analyse why the number of Swedish exchange students within Erasmus has diminished since 1998/99 and why the number of teachers participating in the exchange part of the programme is relatively low. The report was published in October 2002 and contains a number of proposals.

http://www.programkontoret.se/user_files/erasmusrep0403.pdf

The National Agency for Higher Education has analysed the legal rights of the Erasmus students in Sweden. As a consequence of the study and certain problems related to the situation of the Erasmus students the agency has made recommendations to the government and to higher education institutions.

Within the Nordic Council of Ministers a working group is investigating obstacles regarding the mobility of doctoral students and discussing how more information regarding doctoral studies can be disseminated in the Nordic countries. Another Nordic working group is looking into the different financial study support schemes in order to promote the possibilities to receive financial support when studying in another country.

At Swedish universities and university colleges, more and more courses are offered in English for both national and international students (some are translations of courses existing previously, others are specially designed programmes).

3e. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance

Since 2001 the National Agency for Higher Education performs national recurrent and comprehensive subject and programme evaluations. All programmes and subjects of higher education, including postgraduate training, are evaluated once every six years and the results are made public and available to students. Experts from Swedish as well as foreign higher education institutions take part in the evaluations together with student and labour market representatives.

Another quality assurance task of the agency is the assessments of the right to award degrees. The aim is to assess an institution's quality and its standard of education and research. Such assessments are made in response to demands from the institutions of higher education themselves when requesting the right to award a certain degree.

The agency also assesses an institution's right to award doctoral degrees. A fourth type of assessment relates to quality management at institutions of higher education. The agency examines quality management, i.e. the quality processes at the local level.

In some sectors, particularly the economics and business sector, international accreditation agencies also accredit Swedish programmes.

Sweden is a member of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) through the National Agency for Higher Education. There is also a Nordic Network of Quality Assurance Agencies that is to an increasing extent cooperating with the stakeholders, the institutions and the students, regarding quality issues.

3f. Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

Swedish universities and university colleges participate actively in the European Community programmes in the field of education and training. The institutions of higher education also increasingly integrate the European dimensions in their education.

Sweden increasingly promotes the development of international joint degrees. A working group has also been set up within the Nordic Council of Ministers in order to identify the legal, technical and practical obstacles to create joint degrees between the Nordic countries and to put forward proposals about how to solve these and how to promote joint Nordic degrees.

3g. Lifelong learning

Swedish higher education institutions have a long tradition of offering their courses and programmes to students with different backgrounds, students working part- or full-time etc. For example, many courses and programmes at the institutions are given as part-time courses or distance courses. The fact that the system of higher education is built on an accumulation of modules and credit points also enhances the possibilities for lifelong learning and to move in and out of the system.

The government has also taken the initiative to start a netuniversity (www.netuniversity.se) that coordinates and markets the distance education already offered by the institutions. The institutions are also initially given a financial incentive from the government to take part in the netuniversity. The netuniversity was established in order to widen access to higher education and to encourage lifelong learning.

Starting in the autumn of 2003 all higher education institutions will be obliged to assess prior and experiential learning of applicants that demand such an assessment and lack the formal qualifications (or the documentation of such qualifications).

The government has also introduced a new more professionally oriented master's degree (next to the existing more research oriented degree) in order to for example give the higher education institutions greater opportunities to provide continuation courses for those in employment. It will be an important element for lifelong learning within higher education.

3h. Higher education institutions and students

Universities and university colleges are autonomous institutions within a system of state management by objectives. Most of them are state institutions but there are also some private institutions receiving national grants. There is a continuous and structured dialogue between the government and the institutions and/or with their representatives.

According to the Higher Education Act the students have a right to exercise influence over higher education. The act also makes clear that the task of achieving quality is a common concern for the staff and students at the institutions. It is also stated in the Higher Education Ordinance that the students have the right to be represented in all decision-making and advisory bodies within the institutions, which are of importance for the education and the situation of the students. The students are represented in the quality assessment groups of the National Agency for Higher Education as well as in the board of the agency. There is also a continuous dialogue between the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Students' Union. The National Students' Union takes active part in ESIB – The National Unions of Students – at the European level.

3i. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Foreign students have the same right as the Swedish students to higher education without any tuition fees. It is also possible for foreign students to obtain scholarships from for example The Swedish Institute, The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education and The International Programme Office for Education and Training. The strong social dimension within higher education in Sweden in general is one important factor in increasing the attractiveness of studying in our country.

The Swedish Institute has a mission from the government to coordinate the institutions' marketing activities and to disseminate information about Swedish higher education to other countries. The institute has recently launched a website for foreign students: www.studyin.sweden.se.

4. Information activities

One of the tasks of the Degree review is to undertake information initiatives with a view both to augmenting knowledge about the contents of the Bologna Declaration and promoting involvement in the Bologna process among parties affected in Sweden (institutions of higher education, students, etc.). This has been and will be done in successive meetings with the higher education institutions, the National Students' Union and representatives of the labour market and the social partners. A fact sheet about the Bologna Process and the Degree review has been produced and a website set up (http://utbildning.regeringen.se/ansvarsomr/universitet/projekt/examen_sordningen/examen_bologna.htm).

Information activities related to the Bologna Process are also being carried out by the National Agency for Higher Education, the Association of Swedish Higher Education and the National Students' Union.