



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

1 November 2008.

PART I

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2007-2009

Notes:

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

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

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

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

Details

Country	Belgium - French Community
Date	1 st November 2008
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Contributors to the report	- Directorate General for non-

	<p>compulsory education and scientific research;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bologna Experts team; - NARIC of the French Community - Agency for Education and Training (AEF-Europe); - Agency for the Assessment of the Quality of higher education; - Directorate for Equal Opportunities; - Cabinet of Minister Simonet; - Higher education institutions' councils.
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1. Main developments since London 2007

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

Since the last Ministerial Conference in London in May 2007, various legal and political measures have been put in place by the Ministry of the French Community. Those cover the main action lines as well as the policy areas which have been identified in the London Communiqué and translated in the workprogramme 2007-2009 by the Bologna Follow-up Group:

Three-cycle structure:

Following the adoption of the Act of 31 March 2004 (hereunder mentioned as the "Bologna Act"), the three-cycle structure leading to the delivery of bachelor, master and doctorate degrees has been progressively implemented in all higher education institutions (HEIs). From the academic year 2008-2009, only those degrees will be granted so that the structure is now fully implemented.

ECTS/Diploma Supplement:

Confirmed by the "Bologna Act", the ECTS is used by every HEI when defining their study programmes. While the "Bologna Act" made compulsory the delivery of the Diploma Supplement, new legal provisions have defined models of Diploma Supplement for all types of HEIs but also for joint/double degrees and programmes.

Mobility:

Mobility of students, researchers and staff remains a top-priority in the French Community. Following the creation of a special Fund supporting Student Mobility (Act of 19 May 2004), the Government adopted the Government Act of 13 July 2007 establishing the Superior Mobility Council ("Conseil supérieur de la mobilité étudiante"). The Council, comprising representatives of HEIs' councils, students' unions and the administration, is in charge of the management of the Mobility Fund, the Erasmus-Belgica programme as well as the European sectorial mobility programmes (Erasmus, Grundtvig and Jean Monnet).

Quality Assurance:

Established by the Act of 14 November 2002 and operational since 2004, the Agency for the Assessment of the Quality of HE has seen its independence reinforced as well as its financial means increased through the Act of 22 February 2008.

Recognition:

The Parliament and the Government of the French Community have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention through the Act of 19 July 2007. Due to the federal structure of Belgium, ratification is needed by all four Parliaments. We expect that the procedure of ratification to be completed by June 2009.

Qualifications Framework:

Following a major consultation initiated in 2007 by the Ministers in charge of education and training, the HE stakeholders have decided to adopt the HE Qualifications Framework. The Act of 9 April 2008 established a three-levels QF based on the Dublin descriptors and therefore in line with the European Qualifications Framework.

Social Dimension:

Even if the HE system is amongst the most democratic in Europe, the Act of 11 January 2008 modifying existing acts as well as the Act of 18 July 2008 go further in the democratization of HE. They specifically aim at supporting 1st generation students' success in all types of HEIs through the increase of financial means for their social services.

Financial incentives promoting equitable access in universities have been progressively put in place from 2006 to 2010, based on the Act of 27 July 1971 and subsequent. The same has taken place in the non-university HEIs: from 2008 to 2010, financial incentives will increase by one third every year.

Moreover, the Higher Education Observatory has been created and will be operational from 1 January 2009. It will be mainly in charge of collecting data, statistics and information related to higher education, students population, etc.

Lifelong Learning:

On 2 July 2007 an Act was voted providing for agreement of the French Community of Belgium, the Walloon Region and the Community Commission of the Brussels Region to cooperate in an integrated Community programme of action for education and training all life long and to create the Agency for Life-Long Learning. This Agency was created by a Government Act on 19 July 2007.

In response to the demand of HEIs concerning the financing of lifelong learning, the Act of 20 April 2007 has defined new modalities of financing programmes known as "formations continuées". In this framework, HEIs which organise lifelong learning programmes and recognition of informal and non-formal learning (known as "validation des acquis de l'expérience") may obtain additional financing.

European/Global Dimension:

In 2007, under the request of Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet, an expert group comprising representatives of HEIs' councils, the administration, Wallonia-Brussels International and the Cabinet, was set up to promote the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the French Community HE. The Attractiveness Group has actively contributed to the various Ministerial missions (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Canada, Israël, China, Vietnam, etc.). At institutional level, we have seen the merger of some non-university HEIs since 2007 in order to enhance their visibility, efficiency, competitiveness, etc. Finally, at ministerial level, the French Community has actively participated in the BFUG workprogramme through the working/coordination groups and the organization of the student mobility conference in May 2008.

Overview of the legal developments since the Ministerial Conference 2007:

- Act 31 March 2004: full implementation of the three-cycles structures in all HEIs since 2008-2009;
- Government Act 20 April 2007: new financial modalities for promoting lifelong learning and recognition of informal and non-formal learning;
- Government Act 13 July 2007: creation of the Superior Mobility Council;
- Act 19 July 2007: ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention by the Parliament and the Government of the French Community
- Government Act 19 July 2007: creation and administrative, budgetary, financial and accounting management of the French-speaking Agency for LLL
- Act 22 February 2008: new provisions to guarantee the independence and the efficiency of the Agency for the Assessment of the Quality of HE;
- Act 9 April 2008: setting up of the HE Qualifications Framework;
- Act 18 July 2008: creation of the HE Observatory and new measures for enhancing the democratization of HE;
- Act 28 August 2008: official recognition of a new students' union: "Union des étudiants de la Communauté française" (Unécof).

2. Partnership

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

The Cabinet of the Minister in charge of higher education and the Directorate General for non-compulsory education and scientific research have experts among their staff that follow closely the development of the Bologna Process. As hosts of the next Bologna Ministerial Conference in April 2009 with their Benelux colleagues (the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), the Ministry has appointed a representative in the Bologna Benelux secretariat for a closer link with the evolution of the Process and the preparation of the Ministerial Conference. The administrations of the various networks managing HE in the French Community see to it that the Bologna Process is correctly implemented in accordance with the acts and other government legislation.

- a) Does your country have a national working group for Bologna follow-up¹
- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|------------------------------|--|
- b) Does your national Bologna follow-up group include representatives of
- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ministry | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rectors' conference | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Academic staff | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Staff trade unions | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Quality Assurance Agency | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employers | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
- Other (please specify) _____
- c) Does your country have a Bologna promoters' group²
- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
- d) Does your national Bologna promoters' group include representatives of
- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Ministry | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rectors' conference | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Academic staff | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Staff trade unions | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Quality Assurance Agency | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employers | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
- Other (please specify) _____

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

The Bologna Experts Team has proposed its members a workprogramme that can be summarized like this:

- In the field of ECTS and academic recognition in the framework of mobility: a vade mecum of good practices in academic recognition and on the precise rules

¹ A group that develops policy proposals for implementing the Bologna Process

² A group that supports/advises HEIs on implementation of the Bologna Process

to be applied in ECTS-based recognition will be drawn up. This guide will be based on the ECTS key features, the ECTS Users' guide and the Learning Agreement. Institutions will be encouraged to apply for the ECTS and DS labels. The activities include the setting up of an international working group, a seminar and meetings with representatives of HEIs.

- Concerning the European Qualifications Framework and the three-cycle system, the group will concentrate on the link with the learning outcomes, their definition and drafting in some courses as examples of good practice. A working group will be set up and a seminar organized.

- The Bologna Experts plan to list the achievements in the field of quality in the HEIs; their collaboration with the new quality Agency aims at studying the feasibility of a Quality label for the HEIs of the French Community. A seminar on the subject will be organized in April 2009.

- There is a synergy with the Agency for LLL in the French Community of Belgium to make the Bologna Process better known in the various institutions. The work and the role of the Bologna Experts will be explained in a newsletter which will be published three or four times a year, intended for HEIs and other stakeholders.

DEGREE SYSTEM

3. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

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

The "Bologna Act" has introduced the three-cycle structure leading to the delivery of bachelor, master and doctorate degrees. Since 2004, all HEIs have progressively implemented the three-cycle structure so that from this academic year 2008-2009 only bachelor, master and doctorate degrees will be granted by HEIs. Programmes in all cycles are defined in credits (which are legally defined) and nearly all HEIs have started to base their programmes on learning outcomes. However, there is a need for clarifying the understanding and supporting the use of learning outcomes. In this perspective, as explained in point 2 (d), the Bologna Experts have planned in their workprogramme 2008-2009 to provide information, to help HEIs apply to the ECTS/DS labels and identify cases of good practices amongst HEIs.

b) Please give the percentage of the total number of all³ students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09.

Total number of all students below doctoral level	Number enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09 ⁴	% of all students enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09
TBC.	TBC	100%

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

n/a

4. Stage of implementation of the third cycle

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

Please include:

- the percentage of doctoral candidates following structured doctoral programmes including both taught courses and independent research
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- other elements⁵ apart from independent research that are included in doctoral study programmes
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies

³ "All" = all students who could be involved in 2-cycle system i.e. NOT those in doctoral programmes and NOT those in short HE programmes. *NB Students of ALL study fields are taken into account*

⁴ If countries have more recent data available after November 1, they can provide an update but no later than January 15, 2009

⁵ E.g. taught courses in the chosen discipline, other taught courses, teaching activities (if these are required as part of doctoral studies), etc.

- information on whether doctoral studies are included in your country's qualifications framework and linked to learning outcomes
- information on whether interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills are integrated in doctoral studies
- information on whether credit points are used in measuring workload in doctoral studies.
- Information on the status of the doctoral students (students, early stage researchers, both)

Organization of the third cycle:

The third cycle is accessible to holders of master's degree or any equivalent training of 300 credits at least. The third cycle corresponds arbitrarily to 180 credits but lasts generally over 3 years. It includes, on one hand, a doctoral training (60 credits) under supervision of teams associated in a Graduate College and leading to the research training certificate; and, on the other hand, the work related to the preparation of the doctorate thesis. The academic degree of doctor is conferred after the public defence of a thesis demonstrating the doctoral candidate's capacities of creativity, of undertaking scientific research and distributing its results. The doctorate examination consists thus of the drafting of an original dissertation in the discipline in the form of either a thesis of individual character, or an dissertation highlighting the interest of a coherent set of publications and results for which the candidate is an author or co-author; and the public presentation of this work highlighting its qualities, its originality as well as the candidate's abilities for scientific popularization.

The third cycle is exclusively organized by universities through the "Academies" (associations of universities). Three Academies have been created: the Louvain Academy (UCL, FUNDP, FUCaM and FUSL), the Wallonia-Brussels Academy (ULB, UMH, FPMs) and the Wallonia-Europe Academy: (ULg and FUSAGx). Their mission is to organize advanced courses and seminars which are part of doctoral training.

Graduate Colleges and Graduate Schools:

The Government has legally established 20 Graduate Colleges ("écoles doctorales près le F.R.S.-F.N.R.S."). Those inter-university and inter-academy Graduate Colleges are managed by the National Fund for Scientific Research and are in charge of hosting, coordinating and promoting the creation of Graduate Schools. Within the Graduate Colleges, one or more Graduate Schools may be established focusing on specific research field(s). Since a Graduate School may depend on one or more Graduate Colleges, the focus is clearly put on interdisciplinary research. Currently there are 44 recognised Graduate Schools. The Graduate Colleges offer numerous possibilities of doctorates in various disciplines. This range of programmes has been evolving constantly since the implementation of the "Bologna Act"

Graduate Schools presently offer few interdisciplinary training but some do so, such as the development of research or drawing up of research projects in the framework of the 7th EU Framework Programme ; the aim of the French

Community is to favour transversal trainings that can be developed with the private sector within Graduate Colleges.

The commissions of the F.N.R.S. guarantee the quality of doctoral trainings and provide Doctoral Schools with accreditation. Graduate Colleges are to submit an annual report to the FRS-FNRS commission of the Graduate Schools. Graduate schools themselves are regularly assessed by the FNRS every 5 years. The first assessment will take place in 2010.

HE Qualifications Framework:

The third cycle is of course included in the HE Qualifications Framework established by the Act of 9 April 2008. It corresponds to level 8 which puts forward the interdisciplinary aspects of the knowledge, the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques as well as the authority, the innovation and the autonomy in terms of competences.

Doctoral population:

All students-researchers registered since 2005-2006 depend on the new structure of Doctoral Schools. At the end of the academic year 2006-2007 (end of the old system of doctoral training), more than 9 per cent of all university students got a doctoral degree; on 1st December 2007 nearly 8.5 per cent of all university students were following structured doctoral programmes. For 2008-2009, the FNRS declares more than 1,300 doctoral students.

The doctoral student has a double status: he/she has to register with a university but his/her activities as a researcher make him/her a member of the university staff and give doctoral training the characteristics of actual professional experience.

5. Relationship between higher education and research

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

The objectives of HE are three-fold, according to the "Bologna Act":

- to ensure initial and continuous education and training;
- to carry out research;
- to ensure service to the community.

That is the reason why all non-university HEIs make a point of honour of doing research in one of their fields of study, even when funding is short.

Universities play a major role in the field of public research. Moreover, the researchers of the FNRS are carrying out their research activities within universities.

A slow process of mergers is taking place within the three Academies of the French Community. It should enable them to reach the critical mass necessary to compete at European level.

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

- percentage of GDP spent on research
 - from public funds
 - from private funds
- total annual national research expenditure (expressed in national currency)
 - from public funds
 - from private funds
- percentage of research carried out in higher education institutions (in terms of funding)
- details of the funding mechanisms for doctoral students in your country

The universities are committed to setting up "poles" of competitiveness in the Walloon Region. A pole of competitiveness can be defined as the combination, in a given area - namely, Wallonia - of businesses, training centres and public or private research units involved in a joint approach aiming at creating synergies around common innovative projects. This partnership is organized on a market and a technological and scientific field linked to it and must search the critical mass to be internationally competitive and visible. Seventy projects gathering businesses, universities, research and training centres are presently taking place within the poles of competitiveness. Since 2006 the policy of excellence programmes has been reinforced by the launching of new programmes (TECHNOSE, CIBLES, etc.)

Percentage of GDP spent on research (figures for 2006)

- Public funds: 0.62% (BE) Higher Education: 0.41%; other: 0.15%
- Private: (Figure for 2005): 1.25%

Total annual national research expenditure:

- Public funds: in 2007 the total amount for Belgium was shared as follows: Federal state (27%); Flanders (47%); Brussels Region (1%); French Community: (13%); Walloon Region (12%).
- Private funds (in 2006): 3,934,346,000 euros (BE)

The financial means allocated to fundamental research in the French Community have increased by 25.6% between 2004-2007.

Percentage of research carried out in HEIs:

- French Community Wallonia-Brussels: 81.3%. This rate is high as the French Community is specifically competent for teaching and fundamental research.
- Belgium: 22.3%

Funding mechanisms: scholarships and salaries.

The funding of doctoral studies can take three forms:

1) to obtain a job in the university: Contracts of assistantship of a maximum duration of 6 years' full time (renewable every two years) may finance doctoral studies. These contracts imply participation to activities of students' supervision (exercises, practical works, seminars, supervision of examination, etc.) for a maximum of 50% of the time. The remaining 50% are devoted to research activities.

2) to obtain a scholarship from the funding research organizations: doctoral scholarships are granted by big funds (FNRS candidates and FRIA grant holders). These fixed-term mandates of maximum 48 months (twice two years) can be obtained thanks to the good scoring of a research project assessed by a commission.

3) to earn an income linked to the execution of a research contract: a doctorate can be financed by a scholarship granted by the university (training, doctoral or post-doctoral grants) or by an employment contract of researcher obtained in the framework either of an agreement between the university and a public authority, or of a research partnership university-private sector. These vacancies are announced on the employment sites of the universities. A doctoral student who has obtained a grant or an employment contract is not expected to supervise students' training.

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

Yes

No

If Yes, please specify:

6. Access⁶ and admission to the next cycle

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

6.1 Access and admission between the first and second cycles

Please indicate:

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

As mentioned in article 51 of the Bologna Act and the following complementary texts up to 13 June 2008, any bachelor's degree gives access to the second cycle as far as it concerns the same study field. Therefore, we can assert that 100% of first cycle qualifications gives access to the second cycle. Moreover, in order to promote and facilitate flexible study paths, the Government has adopted several Acts allowing automatic bridging procedures ("passerelles"). Bridging is not only possible between different study fields, but also from one type of HEI to another.

In general terms, there are two possibilities of bridging:

1. The student must follow a preparatory year including 60 credits before acceding to the second cycle programme;
2. The student must undergo an admission procedure in which the required knowledge, competences and skills are examined. The admission procedure can be organised through a university or inter-university examination. Depending on the results of the examination, the student will be granted direct access to the second cycle with the possibility of 15 additional credits maximum, or will not be granted access to the second cycle and must follow a preparatory year.

In order to make the system as transparent as possible, the website of the Ministry provides all information needed as well as an overview of the bridging possibilities.

Figures are unavailable.

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

No. As mentioned in point 6.1 (b), all bachelor's degrees do give access to second cycle programmes. However, depending on the study field and the type of HEI where the student initially graduated, bridging procedures will apply.

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

sit entrance exam	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>
complete additional courses	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
have work experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>

⁶ 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 the answer to the last point is yes, please specify what type of work experience is required:

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

No

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

all students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
holders of particular first cycle qualifications	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
students of the same field coming from other HEIs	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

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

entrance exam	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
additional courses	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>
work experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>

6.2 Access and admission between the second and third cycles

Please indicate:

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

As mentioned in point 4, the third cycle is accessible for holders of a master's degree or any equivalent training of 300 credits at least. Therefore, holders of a bachelor's (180 credits) and a master's degree (120 credits) will directly accede to the third cycle. Therefore, we can state that 100% of second cycle qualifications (120 credits) gives access to the third cycle. Considering holders of foreign degrees, university academies are competent for granting access to the doctoral programme and imposing additional conditions.

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

No. When the applicant to doctoral studies requires more than 15 additional credits for bridging, the study programme extends over an additional year.

c) any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles

The bridging procedures are essential instruments for removing obstacles between cycles. Moreover, as the procedures are automatic and legally defined, they permit a great transparency for students willing to move from one to another cycle.

Besides the bridging procedures, there is the possibility for all types of HEIs to organize personalized admission procedures. Through those procedures, an admission board might grant courses/credits exemptions based on the formal learning acquired.

All types of HEIs are also competent for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning acquired in a professional context. The "Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience" permits individuals to be admitted in HE programmes and/or be granted courses/credits exemptions.

7. Employability of graduates/ cooperation with employers

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

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

- Bachelors who graduated in a non-university institution («Professional Bachelors ») have good prospects of finding a job corresponding to their training. However, due to the complexity of political structure of the country and the various fields of competences (the Regions, and not the Community being competent for employment), no figures can be given. The offer is relatively important in the eight categories: Agronomy, Applied Arts, Economic, Paramedical, Pedagogical, Social, Technical, Translation and Interpretation.

- HEIs have lately tended to open new courses leading to a professional bachelor after 180 ECTS credits as employers seem to appreciate both the academic and professional sides of the training of graduates. To respond to the demand, the Act of 18 July 2008, for example allows the creation of new curricula (a master's in social engineering and actions; one year of specialization in anaesthesia, in Arts therapy, in management of distribution; a Bachelor's in construction - option wood technology, in Biotechnics). Other specialisations (maximum 60 ECTS credits) are possible in some fields after the Bachelor's degree.

- Employers are represented in the management councils of HEIs and many take part in the juries set up during the examinations. These employers often hire graduates who made their training period(s) in their organization.

- The Walloon and Brussels regions have launched projects to enhance employability (Job Tonic, financial incentives for learning languages, Passport for a job, etc.) but these are not limited to graduates.

- Academics have launched various projects to enhance employability, such as Erasmus and Erasmus Belgica programmes, the "Printemps des Sciences", the "Jeunesses Scientifiques" projects, the Kurzweil software (to help dyslexics succeed in their studies), robotics prizes, and so on.

- The Walloon Agency for Exports offers opportunities of training periods abroad.

- The French Community of Belgium is one of the 32 countries that have adopted the Europass which aims at promoting mobility of all European citizens (students, workers or job-seekers).

- At the institutional level, cooperation with the working world is often maintained through seminars, mock job interviews, common work projects and research carried out in the HEIs in collaboration with businesses, hospitals or other research centres. Unfortunately, employability data are unavailable.

More than 95% of Bachelors from universities ("Academic or Transition Bachelors") go further in their studies to obtain Master's Degrees.

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

- curriculum design, work placements and international experience
Significant Some A little None

- accreditation/quality assurance
Significant Some A little None

- university governance
Significant Some A little None

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

Yes No In some cases

d) Have you aligned recruitment procedures and career structures in the public service to take account of the Bologna changes?

Yes No In some cases

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

The selection office of the public service (Selor) has adapted its terminology, using Bachelors and Masters.

For non-university institutions, the first cycle already extended over 3 years before the Bologna Act. It provided academic and practical training such as for the "professional bachelors". At university, the first cycle was extended to 3 years and is more "academic" so the vast majority of first-cycle students go on for a second cycle.

8. Implementation of national qualifications framework

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

a) Has the national qualifications framework been prepared⁷?

Yes No

Comment

By the end of 2007, Ministers in charge of education and training initiated a broad consultation process including the most relevant stakeholders in order to define, establish and implement a qualifications framework for the French Community of Belgium. However, the Minister in charge of higher education and scientific research, and the HE stakeholders decided to develop a specific qualifications framework for HE. The option was chosen due to the reforms already taking place in the HE sector (mostly the implementation of the three-cycle structures), the need for even more transparency and lisibility at the European and international levels as well as the consensus quickly reached amongst the HE stakeholders.

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

Yes No

Comment

The HE Qualifications Framework of the French Community includes generic descriptors for each level/cycle. Those descriptors refer to the competences, skills and knowledge corresponding to each level/cycle. Basically, they correspond to the European Qualifications Framework descriptors. When defining their programmes, HEIs are given the autonomy and the responsibility to translate those generic descriptors into learning outcomes, competences, skills and knowledge which are specifically designed for the programme/curriculum in question.

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

Yes No

Comment

As explained more in details in point 15, credits are used by all HEIs. The credit ranges for each cycle are legally defined. Basically, the first cycle includes 180 credits (bachelor degree) or 60 credits (specialization diploma after a professionalizing bachelor degree); the second cycle includes 60 credits (master degree - 60 credits), 120 credits (master degree - 120 credits), 180 credits (veterinarian doctor) and 240 credits (medical doctor). Moreover, the third cycle is also expressed in credits: it includes 180 credits.

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

Yes No

Comment

⁷ A national framework of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA

As explained in point 8 (a), a broad consultation procedure was initiated by the Ministers in charge of education and training by the end of 2007. The most relevant stakeholders (institutions, staff, students, administration, cabinets, inspectors, etc.) of the education and training sectors were invited to participate in the consultation. However, due to the complexity to define a unique framework for all the education and training sectors, HE stakeholders decided to focus on one framework for their sector. Within the framework of the Bologna Experts activities, discussions took place and it was advised to adopt a HE qualifications framework based on the EQF. Therefore, the Act of 9 April 2008 was adopted establishing the HE Qualifications Framework of the French Community.

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

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

Yes No

Comment

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

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

Yes No

Comment

There have been no formal arrangements concerning the implementation of the HE Qualifications Framework. Consultation and discussions between HE stakeholders mainly took place within the Bologna Experts group. Then, following the advice of the Bologna Experts, the government drafted a new Act establishing the HE Qualifications Framework of the French Community. In fact, the framework completes the structural and curricula reforms initiated in 2004 through which new degrees have been defined based on credits and learning outcomes.

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

- The framework is fully implemented. All qualifications have been added to the NQF through a QA procedure (e.g. accreditation)
- There is significant progress on implementing the framework
- The work of describing all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies has been completed
- There is a timetable for implementation and the work has started
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started but a timetable for implementation has been agreed
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started and there is no timetable for implementation

Comment

The Government has chosen to adopt a legal text establishing the HE Qualifications Framework. Within the framework, it is the responsibility of the HEIs to define more precisely their programmes in terms of learning outcomes, knowledge, competences and skills.

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

Completed Started, but not yet completed Not yet started

Comment

So far, there has been no formal decision on the self-certification process for the HE Qualifications Framework.

i) Has the self-certification report been published?

Yes No

Comment

n/a

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

Comment

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA (ESG)⁸

9. Reviewing the QA system against the ESG⁹ and national support for implementation

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

Yes No Not yet, but such a review is planned
(Please specify time) in the course of

2009

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

Our QA system has not been reviewed yet as the Act of 22 February 2008 has substituted that of 14 November 2002. The new act has created a new Agency for the Assessment of Quality of Higher Education organized or subsidized by the French Community of Belgium.

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

Stakeholder consultation on changes required to the national QA system?

Yes No

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

Yes No

If Yes, please give details of these incentives:

- Other measures

Yes No

If Yes, please outline these measures

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

Yes No

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

As part-time periods (to appoint "quality coordinators") and financial incentives are now being devoted to internal quality assurance processes, all HEIs are now in a continuous process of revising their procedures, in conformity with the Act on Quality.

⁸ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf>

⁹ ESG - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

9.1. Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions

Describe the internal QA systems in place in your HEIs.

The internal evaluation of quality in a HEI is now regulated by the Act of 22 February 2008. The Academic authorities form a Commission and appoint a coordinator. This commission gathers representatives of the academic, scientific, administrative and technical staff plus students. It can also require the help of other members of the institution or of its management and of former students who graduated less than three years before. This commission draws up a confidential report that will be handed over to the Experts Committee.

This report must analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and identify what can be improved.

In addition to this and always with a view to the improvement of quality well before it was made compulsory, many academic authorities had chosen to have their institutions analyzed using different tools, such as Quickscanproza, ISO (International Standard Organization), EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management), CAF (Common Assessment Framework), etc.

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

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

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

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

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

Please describe what kind of arrangements are in place

All HEIs have some freedom to review their programmes (article 63 of the Bologna Act). The academic authorities must see to it that these programmes respect legislation and tend to the general objectives of Higher Education and the specific objectives of the curricula in question, particularly concerning the criteria for access to the professional titles.

However, bachelor programmes at university in a same field of study must offer courses which are common in the French Community for at least 60%, corresponding to 108 credits. In non-university HEIs some 20% of the study programmes are left to the HEI's authorities to decide on courses that are better suited to the environment, the market demands, the region, etc.

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

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

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

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

Please describe how the above is achieved.

The Bologna Act provides for the modes of student assessments to be made public.

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

All HEIs

Most HEIs

Some HEIs

No HEIs

Additional information if necessary

The information provided by HEIs must be respectful of articles 86 and 87 of the Bologna Act. It is controlled by the government auditors and delegates

10. Stage of development of external quality assurance system

Describe the external quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

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

The Quality Agency consists of a Management Committee, a bureau and an executive cell. Decisions are taken by the Management Committee, which selects teams of experts for the study fields on the concerned Councils' proposals. As far as possible, a same committee of experts will be appointed to audit HEIs organizing the same or similar curricula. The external assessment will consist in an analysis of the self assessment report, a visit of the HEI, a preliminary report transmitted to the academic authorities concerned and a general report.

So far, programmes of study in the fields of Pharmacy (Bachelors and Masters) Agronomy (Bachelors), Architecture (Bachelors and Masters), Electronics and Electromechanics (Bachelors) have been audited. Masters in Physiotherapy, Social Assistants and Criminology are in the course of being audited. A ten-year plan covering all programmes of study for the period of 2008-2018 has been presented to the government, as requested by the Act.

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

Yes No

If **No**, please specify: As the French Community of Belgium is competent for HE in the French-speaking area, the French Community is considered as the national level.

c) does your external quality assurance system cover all higher education¹⁰

Yes No

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

However, doctorate programmes organized by universities are not covered.

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| - self-assessment report | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - external review | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - publication of results | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - follow-up procedures | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

¹⁰ Higher education: all types of courses of study or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to a country's higher education system.

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

Yes No

If **No** is there a date set for the review? Yes (please specify date in the course of 2009) No

11. Level of student participation

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

- a) in governance of national agencies for QA. Yes No In some cases
- b) as full members in external review teams Yes No In some cases
- c) as observers in external review teams Yes No In some cases
- d) as part of the decision making process for external reviews Yes No In some cases
- e) in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students) Yes No In some cases
- f) in internal quality assurance (e.g. periodic review of programmes) Yes No In some cases
- g) in preparation of self-assessment reports. Yes No In some cases
- h) in follow-up procedures: Yes No In some cases

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

12. Level of international participation

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

- a) the governance of national agencies for quality assurance Yes No In some cases
- b) the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies Yes No In some cases
- c) teams for external review of institutions or programmes, either as members or observers Yes No In some cases
- d) membership of ENQA Yes No In some cases
- e) membership of any other international network Yes No If **Yes**, please specify:

The French Community is amongst the founding members of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

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

RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND STUDY PERIODS

13. Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

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

The "Bologna Act" has introduced the use and compulsory delivery of the Diploma Supplement (DS) by all HEIs. Following the general provisions defined by the Bologna Act, subsequent Government Acts have been adopted in order to design a DS template for each type of HEIs:

- Government Act of 3 July 2003 related to the DS issued by the "hautes écoles";
- Government Act of 18 June 2003 related the DS issued by the art schools;
- Government Act of 2 June 2004 related to the DS issued by the higher institutes of architecture;
- Government Act of 20 July 2005 related to the DS issued by universities;
- Government Act of 4 July 2008 related to the DS issued in the framework of cooperation agreements (double/joint degrees).

The DS is automatically delivered by the HEIs free of charge in French and English on request. It corresponds to the DS format jointly designed by the EU/CoE/UNESCO.

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

- 1st cycle programmes Yes No
- 2nd cycle programmes Yes No
- 3rd cycle programmes Yes No
- remaining "old type" programmes Yes No Not applicable
- short higher education programmes Yes No Not applicable

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

- issued in a widely spoken European language Yes No
 - *please specify the language* French (and English on request)
- issued free of charge for a fee
- issued automatically on request
- corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format
- a national Diploma Supplement is used that is different from the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format

13.1. Use of Diploma Supplement for recognition of qualifications

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

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

Yes No

Comment

HEIs are competent for the recognition of foreign qualifications when admitting holders to the second and third cycles. Amongst the documents examined in the admission procedure, the DS is very relevant. However, besides the general information provided by the DS (educational system, recognition/accreditation of the foreign institution and programme, etc.), the admission responsible body will also examine the official detailed programme, the marks sheets, any document from the competent authorities, etc.

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

Yes No

Comment

As the recognition of foreign qualifications when admitting holders to the second and third cycles is the strict competence of HEIs, it is of their autonomy to organize the recognition in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Concerning the recognition of foreign qualifications when wishing to enter the labour market, the Ministry asks for the legal translation of some documents i.e. degrees, programmes and mark sheets. Other documents (i.e. thesis, internship report, etc.) may be translated by the applicant.

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

Yes No

Comment

Recognition is an individualized procedure based on a case-by-case analysis. Therefore, when there is any doubt about the validity of the qualifications, there will be a deeper analysis through various national, European and international resources.

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

Yes No

Comment

No specific action has been taken to promote the use of the DS as a communication tool towards the labour market. However, in their workprogramme 2008-2009, the Bologna Experts are supporting HEIs for applying the DS Label. One of the features on which they are working is indeed the value for the labour market. Moreover, the contact point for the DS is working in close cooperation with the Europass contact point in order to enhance synergies.

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

Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary

documents¹¹ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

a) Does appropriate legislation comply with the Lisbon Convention?

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) was signed by Belgium on 7 March 2005. Due to the federal structure and the procedures for ratification of international legal texts, the ratification has still to be finalized. However, the Parliament and the Government of the French Community have ratified the LRC though the adoption of the Act of 19 July 2007.

All of the principles contained in the LRC are applied in the regulations concerning equivalence (the demander's right to an equitable equivalence, granting recognition of a qualification if no substantial difference can be proved, justification of substantial differences when a request for recognition is refused, information provided to the public about study programmes and higher educational institutions and the existence of a NARIC centre).

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

i) Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The general principles of the "Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications" adopted in Riga on 6 June 2006 are applied by the authorities competent for the recognition of foreign qualifications i.e. the Ministry of the French Community and the higher education institutions.

The main criteria taken into account for granting academic recognition are:

- the requirement for acceding to the programme;
- the duration of the programme;
- the number of study hours and/or credits covered by the programme;
- the content of the programme including classes, traineeships, practical exercises, dissertations and theses;
- the marks obtained;
- the recognition and/or accreditation of the HEI and the programme by the foreign competent authorities.

The "Bologna Act" introduced the possibility of granting the equivalence of level with generic academic degrees of Bachelor and Master. This type of equivalence is awarded when it is obvious that the studies undertaken abroad are at the Bachelor or Master level but do not correspond, as far as content is concerned, to any programme organised in the French Community of Belgium. The criteria

¹¹ 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)

taken into account for granting the equivalence of level are identical to those used for academic equivalence except those relating to the subject studied.

All the documentation is available for users on the Internet. This can also be requested by electronic or surface mail, by telephone, or by visiting our office.

The translation of some documents (degree, programme, marks, etc.) is requested. An official translation of the main documents is required. The cost of the procedure is 124 euros, covering the administrative costs of the consultative commission. The duration of the equivalence procedure is four months (to organise the consultative commission) and forty days (to make a final decision) maximum.

Appeal procedures are in place: either the re-examination by the commission on the basis of new information, or the appeal before the State Council.

ii) Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The "Bologna Act" allows HEIs to conclude cooperation agreements with Belgian or foreign partners, for the organization of joint programmes. Henceforth, the Act allows the participation, in complete legality, in the organization of joint degrees and leaves HEIs the freedom to organize those programmes.

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

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

There is no specific legislation concerning the recognition of transnational higher education qualifications. To be recognised by the French Community, the degrees have to be awarded by a recognised HEI in the country where the institution is located.

c) which of the following principles are applied in practice

i) applicants' right to fair assessment

Yes No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level
Regarding the fair assessment of foreign qualifications, legal provisions provide for any applicant to have the right to introduce a recognition request without discrimination on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. Any academic recognition request is processed by the Service of Equivalences on an individualized and non-automatic basis within a reasonable time frame i.e. 4 months and 40 days.

ii) recognition if no substantial differences can be proven

Yes No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level
The academic recognition of foreign qualifications is an individualized and non-automatic procedure. The Ministry of the French Community is competent for the academic full recognition of second cycle degrees (university education), for the full and partial academic recognition of short- and long-type degrees (non-university higher education) and for the equivalence of level of second-cycle degrees. Following the reasoned opinion of an inter-university equivalence commission, a decision of equivalence is taken under the form of a legal act by the Director General for non-compulsory education and scientific research. Appeal procedures are in place: either the re-examination by the commission on the basis of new information, or the appeal before the State Council.

lii) demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted
Yes No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level
The "Bologna Act" introduced the possibility of granting the equivalence of level with generic academic degrees of Bachelor and Master. This type of equivalence is awarded when it is obvious that the studies undertaken abroad are at the Bachelor or Master level but do not correspond, as far as content is concerned, to any programme organised in the French Community of Belgium. The criteria taken into account for granting the equivalence of level are identical to those used for academic equivalence except those relating to the subject studied.

iv) provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
Yes No

If Yes, please describe how it is done in practice
Within the Ministry of the French Community, the Service of Equivalences for higher education degrees is accessible to all users – for general information as well as specific cases – by surface and electronic mail, as well as by telephone. The office is also open to the public two afternoons a week. Standard documentation exists and is sent to users on request. A project to re-structure and update the website is currently being studied
.
As far as the HEIs are concerned, admission services advise foreign students about the admission requirements.

v) do you have a fully operational ENIC
Yes No

If Yes, please describe the role of your ENIC in recognition and information provision a) nationally and b) internationally
Within the Ministry of the French Community, the NARIC is part of the Directorate General for non-compulsory education and scientific research. Through the ENIC and NARIC networks, it acts as a contact point providing information about higher education in a broad sense (recognition, programmes, institutions, etc.) and secondary education to foreign ENIC and NARIC, foreign HEIs and individuals. The NARIC actively collaborates with the activities of the EURYDICE unit, which is also part of the Ministry of the French Community. It currently employs six people who are mainly

assigned to the concrete treatment of decisions. The NARIC is also the contact point for the application of European Directives related to professional recognition. It is more and more active in events related to mobility and the recognition of diplomas and qualifications (NAFSA, EAIE, international fairs, etc.).

There is no specific budget allocated to the NARIC. It falls under the general budget of the Directorate General for non-compulsory education and scientific research.

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

As mentioned in point 2 (d) the Bologna Experts have identified the academic recognition in the framework of student mobility as one of their priorities for their workprogramme 2008-2009. They aim at drafting a vademecum of good practices amongst the HEIs when dealing with academic recognition of studies abroad.

15. Stage of implementation of ECTS¹²

Describe the implementation of ECTS in your country.

a) Please include the percentage of the total number of higher education programmes¹³ in which all programme components are linked with ECTS credits

100% 75-99% 50-75% <50%

Section 2 of the Bologna Act, complemented by the Acts of July 2005, June 2006 and May 2007 provide for the implementation of ECTS in all programmes at university or non-university HEIs. However, it is not totally completed in Higher Institutes of Architecture, Art Academies and Adult Education Institutions. For the latter, an act is expected in the following months.

b) Are ECTS credits linked with learning outcomes¹⁴ in your country? Please tick one:

No In some programmes In the majority of programmes
In all programmes

c) If you use credit system other than ECTS, please give details of your national credit system:

¹² Please refer to definitions in the ECTS User's guide,
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/guide_en.html

¹³ Except doctoral studies

¹⁴ Clarification: Learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills and competences are formulated for all programme components and credits are awarded only when the stipulated learning outcomes are actually acquired

i) is it compatible with ECTS? Yes No

ii) what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits?

d) Are you taking any action to improve understanding of learning outcomes? Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

Learning Outcomes have been formulated and ratified by the competent authorities for Adult Education since the Act of 1991.

All university and non-university HEIs have now their programmes expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be reached and no longer under the form of contents lists or chapter titles. Besides, learning outcomes corresponding to the levels 6, 7 and 8 of the Qualifications Framework are identified in Annex 3 of the Bologna Act.

Bologna experts participate in seminars and circulate information.

They also organized a seminar of information and consultation on the implementation of the European Framework of Qualifications in the Higher Education system of the French Community on 7 November 2005 and another symposium on a referential for competences on 17 October 2006. On 4 November 2008 a seminar on the Attractivity of ECTS/DS labels is to be held in Brussels; it will underline the exchange of good practice.

Within the institutions themselves, various initiatives have been taken to train teachers and professors or to inform them.

e) Are you taking any actions to improve measurement and checking of student workload? Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

Investigations have been carried out inside the HEIs under the responsibility of the academic authorities. However, the authorities have the final say in the allocation of credits.

f) Are you taking any actions to assist HE staff or other stakeholders in applying ECTS. Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

Article 26 of the Bologna Act explains that an ECTS credit corresponds to 24 hours of learning activity, whatever the form. Moreover, there is a tendency among HEIs authorities to harmonize the number of credits in the various fields of study. Let us not forget that the universities are held to a core curriculum

representing 60% of the credits; non-university HEIs have a core curriculum of around 80%.

LIFELONG LEARNING

16. Recognition of prior learning

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

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

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

In higher education recognition of non-formal and informal learning was introduced by the Acts of 16 April 1991 in Adult Education, 5 September 1994 in universities and 5 August 1995 in the hautes écoles. Universities were then authorized to organize, under specific conditions, the access, without holding the required degree, to a limited number of second-cycle programmes as well as to grant exemptions in order to reduce the length of programmes. Concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by the hautes écoles, the Act specified more precisely the recognition procedure: in the case of entering a second-cycle programme, applicants have to prove 4 years of professional experience at least and having the required knowledge and skills through an assessment procedure; in case of benefiting of exemptions, applicants have to prove 3 years of professional experience and the exemptions cannot exceed 20% of the total programme. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in art schools was introduced by the Government Act of 17 July 2002 and it concerns only the access to a second cycle programme based on professional experience.

The "Bologna Act", introduces the terminology "Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)" for higher education. The VAE is defined as a process of assessment and recognition of knowledge and competences of an individual wishing to enter a higher education programme. However, articles 53 and 60 distinguish two types of VAE:

1. VAE for admission to second cycle programmes or to non-degree granting training programmes (mostly "formation continue" or "continuous training"). To be admitted in a master programme, applicants have to prove 5 years of professional experience. Government is authorized to set up minimal conditions as well as the organization of examinations while HEIs are responsible for procedures.

2. VAE for exemptions in all higher education programmes. It allows students to reduce the duration of their studies. However, the duration of the programmes leading to the delivery of an academic degree cannot decrease below 60 credits. Therefore, applicants to this type of VAE will never be granted an academic degree based only on this procedure.

There is no common procedure for all HEIs organizing the VAE. However, different projects have been developed by university academies in order to define harmonized procedures through standards and guidelines.

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

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

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

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

As explained in point 16 (a), HEIs organize the VAE for exemptions in all HE programmes, which means that students are allowed to reduce the duration and the number of credits of their studies.

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

Comprehensively Some A little None

Please describe the current situation:

HEIs are responsible for the operational implementation of the VAE. Moreover, HEIs should also play a major role in the spreading of information towards the applicants but also the other stakeholders involved. Coordination and consultation at institutional level will facilitate the harmonization of procedures, the exchange of good practices and information, the collection of data concerning the VAE, etc. Moreover, different projects have been developed by university academies in order to define harmonized procedures through standards and guidelines.

17. Flexible learning paths

Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, to encourage participation by under-represented groups.

Amongst the missions of the HEIs defined in the "Bologna Act", the development of flexible learning paths, lifelong learning opportunities and the "formations continues" (adult HE programmes) is essential. As explained in point 1, the Act of 20 April 2007 has defined new modalities for financing programmes known as "formations continues". In this framework, HEIs which organise lifelong learning programmes and the VAE may obtain additional financing.

The Act of 16 April 1991 reorganising Adult Education provides for flexible learning paths leading to Learning Outcomes that can be sanctioned by degrees in long or short-type cycles.

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

There is no specific measure within the national qualifications framework. However, the "Bologna Act" and its complementary texts provide for bridging opportunities from one cycle to another, from one study field to another as well as from one institution type to another. Moreover, as explained in point 16, HEIs are competent for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through the VAE.

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

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

Yes No

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

The requirements for entering a HE programme (at any cycle) are strictly defined in legislation. The general requirement for entering a first cycle programme is to hold the secondary-school certificate. However, the HEIs and the Ministry of the French Community may also organise entry examinations in view of granting access to HE. Moreover, the Ministry is competent for the recognition of foreign secondary-school certificates.

Regarding the access to a second cycle programme, the general requirement is to hold a first-cycle degree in the same field or any equivalent degree. The HEIs are competent for the recognition of foreign qualifications. As explained before, bridging opportunities are offered in order to recognize formal learning. And the VAE allows the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

In order to widen the participation in HE, the French Community has always been in favour of maintaining very low tuition fees, amongst the lowest in the EHEA. The tuition fees are defined in legislation: they range from €150 up to €800. Moreover, the tuition fees may decrease depending on the social and economic conditions of students.

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

Yes No

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

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning aims specifically at adults who have already integrated the labour market and have acquired professional experience. Moreover, in order to carry out their mission of lifelong learning, the

HEIs organize also the programme of "formations continuées" as well as programmes with flexible schedule, aimed specifically at working people.

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

Yes No

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

All the HE programmes organized by the institutions of adult education ("promotion sociale") are structured in modules. Universities as well as non-university institutions may also structure their programmes in modules.

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

n/a

JOINT DEGREES

18. Establishment and recognition of joint degrees¹⁵

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

Are joint degrees specifically mentioned in legislation?

Yes No

Does the legislation fully allow:

i) establishing joint programmes?

Yes No

If No please explain what are the obstacles

ii) awarding joint degrees?

Yes No

If No please explain what are the obstacles

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

i) joint degrees

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

ii) joint programmes

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

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

In the first cycle? None Little Widespread

In the second cycle? None Little Widespread

¹⁵ A *joint degree* is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

In the third cycle? None Little Widespread

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

Currently, there is no exhaustive information available on the joint/double degrees and programmes organized by the HEIs. This is indeed the competence of the HEIs to organise to degrees and programmes. However, the HEIs have been quite active in the field through the Erasmus Mundus programmes, institutional networks, institutional cooperation agreements. The main study fields concerned by joint/double degrees and programmes are generally sciences and technology, economics and business as well as social sciences.

e) Estimate the number of joint programmes in your country

This information is not available as such. The HEIs can provide full information on the joint programmes they organize.

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

n/a

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

n/a

MOBILITY

19. Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility

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

Collaborations, agreements and partnerships may link the French Community and other HEIs from Belgium or abroad (Bologna Act, completed by the acts of June 2006 and July 2008).

A mobility fund, created by the Act of 19 May 2004, has been available since 2007. A minimum of 50% of this fund is devoted to students with scholarships. A Superior Mobility Council has been created to manage mobility programmes.

The Prince Philippe Fund offers grants to students and academic staff developin common projets between the Communities of Belgium.

The website of the French Community (<http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=25549&navi=99>) provides links to other website pages offering possibilities to students and staff.

More helpful data can be found on <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23805&navi=901>, giving the legal framework, useful links and the data of the contact person for the NARIC.

A new procedure for the academic screening of the students of the P.R. China has been put in place (<http://www.aps.org.cn>).

The General Commissariat for International Relations offers grants to study or specialize abroad.

A seminar was organized in May 2007 on "Fostering Student Mobility: next steps?" to analyze different aspects of mobility from the government, stakeholders and institutions' points of view: the inequitable balance of mobility in the EHEA, the portability of grants and loans and attractiveness of HEIs.

Since 2005 the French Community has adopted the Europass to promote the mobility of its citizens by offering them a tool showing their qualifications and skills in an understandable and standardized way. It consists in a portfolio of five documents: the Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV), the Europass Language Passport (both to be filled in personally), the Europass Certificate Supplement, the Europass Diploma Supplement (for Higher Education) and Europass Mobility (filled in and issued by competent organisations. In 2007 the number of Europass mobility documents more than doubled against 2006. They are issued by non-university HEIs, public agencies for education and training, the General Commissariat for International Relations, the Federation of the Technology Industry, the Walloon Agency for Export, etc.

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Student visas can be easily obtained for foreign students wishing to study in Belgium. The French Community has no competence in that field.

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Mobility grants amount to a minimum of €150 per month, with a maximum of €400 per month. The Government, on the advice of the Superior Council of Mobility, determines the conditions and modes of access to grants, as well as their amount, according to the student's personal income. For outgoing students the mobility fund (Europe and outside Europe) amounts to €1,070,000 in 2008.

Most HEIs try to complement the grants, particularly for mobile students. As for mobile academic staff, some organisations (such as the General Commissariat for International Relations or the Walloon Agency for Export) may allow grants for

specific trainings or job opportunities ("Explort", "Internation" or "Assistant de langue française" programmes).

d) Are study periods taken abroad recognised?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:
In the Erasmus programme and on the basis of the Learning Agreement signed before the student's departure.

e) Is there accommodation for mobile students and staff?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:
There is no step taken at the French Community level. The institutions themselves usually provide for accommodation of mobile students and staff or at least inform them of the possibilities of accommodation

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:
The steps taken are usually at institution level (cooperation agreements). Moreover, through charities, some institutions try to complement the mobility grant obtained thanks to the mobility fund.

20. Portability of loans and grants

a) Are portable grants available in your country?

Yes No

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants. Loans and grants are portable only when the learning programme does not exist in the French Community of Belgium.

b) Are portable loans available in your country?

Yes No

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

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

21. Implementation of strategy

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

No formal measures (through policy papers, legal texts, etc.) have been taken so far in order to implement the strategy "EHEA in a Global Context". Internationalisation of higher education in the French Community is the matter of many stakeholders including the Minister's Cabinet, administration, institutions of higher education, Rectors' Conference, consultative bodies, students, etc. Amongst those actors, we can distinguish three categories of bodies involved in the definition, implementation and assessment of international policies related to higher education:

- Public authorities: Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet, Vice-president of the Government of the French Community of Belgium, is responsible for HE, research and international relations. This triple competence enhances political orientations for the internationalisation of HE. The Ministry of the French Community, more precisely the DG for non-compulsory education and scientific research, is in charge of the implementation of HE and research policies. This includes legal affairs, academic and professional recognition, international representation, management of funds, collection of statistics and data, follow-up of regional programmes, etc. Since 1996 the French-speaking federal entities of Belgium (i.e. the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region) have agreed upon the reorganisation of their competences in international relations in order to offer Wallonia-Brussels greater visibility at international level. Therefore, the Commissariat général aux relations internationales and the Division relations internationales (CGRI-DRI) have been established as the new body responsible for international relations. In the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, higher education and scientific research are very important sectors.

- HEIs: Historically institutions enjoy a wide autonomy in organising programmes, managing the institution, defining access requirements, hiring staff, granting exemptions to students, etc. International relations are also part of those competences. For many decades institutions have developed a network of collaboration with institutions from third-countries especially developing countries. Since the 90's and the launching of the Erasmus programme institutions have designed new international strategies and developed new tools such as joint programmes, increased number of conventions, reinforcement of specialised administrative structure for international issues, etc.

- Consultative bodies: The Rectors' conference, the general council for hautes écoles, the general council for Superior Arts Schools, the general council for Higher Institutes of Architecture are examples of consultative bodies which represent collectively the institutions of higher education at national, European, international and sector level. Public authorities have also implemented consultative bodies whose field of activities concern internationalisation, for example the quality agency, the NARIC centre, the agency for lifelong learning, etc.

Due to the multiplicity of actors involved in the internationalisation of HE, Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet has requested to establish an expert group in 2007 . It comprises representatives of HEIs' councils, Ministry, Wallonia-Brussels International and the Cabinet. The main objective of this group is to promote the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the French Community HE

b) What has your country done to:

- i) improve information on the EHEA outside Europe?

The website and the brochure "Study in the Heart of Europe, in Wallonia and Brussels" have been recently updated with further information focusing on foreign students.

The website of the Ministry of the French Community has been redesigned: new sections have been added, new layout, new information. Yet, not all the pages are available in English or other commonly spoken languages but the work is in progress.

The Ministry has launched the idea of producing an information package for the HEIs, the Councils and all HE stakeholders in order to use harmonized information for international events.

The HEIs and their Councils have participated in the latest international fairs such as EAIE Conference, NAFSA, etc.

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

No specific measures have been taken at governmental level. However, the new legal provisions regarding the independence, the organization and the financing of the Agency for the Assessment of the Quality of HE will certainly have an impact on the attractiveness and the competitiveness of HEIs.

In the field of scientific research, the Walloon Region and the French Community support the creation of pluriannual inter-university excellence programmes. The teams in charge of those programmes are also present at international level and ensure that their results are industrially viable.

At institutional level, there is specific staff dedicated to international affairs. They are generally responsible for implementing the international policies developed by their institutions, for managing international cooperation agreements, for managing and seeking special funding for increasing the visibility, competitiveness and attractiveness.

iii) strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education?

Since 2007 the Minister in charge of higher education and scientific research has carried out several official missions in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Israël, Canada, USA, China, Vietnam, etc. The main HE stakeholders have participated in those missions in order to meet the counter-parts in the visited countries. Thanks to those missions, various cooperation agreements between institutions have been signed.

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

Besides the official ministerial visits, the Ministry is very active in the regional fora organized at governmental level. In May 2008 the French Community took part in the first ASEM Conference of Education Ministers. The French Community will continue to participate actively in this process through the follow-up expert group who will meet by the end of 2008 in Frankfurt.

The Ministry has also participated in the Joint Committees meetings organized in the framework of the cooperation agreements between EU-USA as well as EU-Canada.

v) improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions?

The NARIC is actively participating in the ENIC and NARIC activities. Although no project have been launched by the NARIC of the French Community because of lack of resources, the centre contributes to the developments and the progress made in the recognition issues. For example, the NARIC have participated in a project carried by the Netherlands on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The NARIC has also expressed interest in participating in a new project proposed by the Italian CIMEA on the development of national qualifications framework and their influence on the recognition of foreign qualifications. Lastly, the NARIC has taken part in the UNESCO Portal on HEIs. This project concerns mainly the information provided across the world on the recognized HEIs and programmes.

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

No specific measure has been taken up to now.

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

i) cross-border provision of your education programmes?

Yes No

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

ii) incoming higher education provision?

Yes No

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

FUTURE CHALLENGES

22. Main challenges for higher education

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

In view of the Belgian presidency of the European Union, Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet has defined the main challenges for HE in the French Community:

1. Stimulate the access to HE for all:

In Europe social and economic conditions are still factors determining the access to HE. Even if the grants and loans system is an essential tool for democratization, there is an urgent need to elaborate and implement an information strategy in order to "demystify" higher education. Such a strategy should target the families and the pupils from a very early stage at schools. At the same time, HEIs should develop new dynamics in welcoming new students from different social and economic background. In the context of lifelong learning, HEIs should adapt their programmes for the working population and generalize the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

2. Promote the sciences and technologies amongst women:

Our knowledge-based society fails in attracting women in the sciences and technologies fields. Therefore, there is a need to develop new measures in order to promote those studies as well as the careers.

3. Guarantee the quality of HE

In the context of globalization, we are facing a multiplication of education and training providers. Even if this is not the case of every new educational provider, this development threatens the quality of our HE system. Besides ensuring the quality of the institutions and the programmes as well as promoting a quality culture, we have to be conscious that the demands for education and training are growing constantly. Our ageing population needs new opportunities and therefore this is the responsibility of the authorities and the institutions to respond positively to this demand.

4. Promote a mobility of quality

Even if more and more students, researchers and staff become mobile every year, there is still a long way to reach the objectives set up at the EU level. The HEIs should be encouraged to sign more cooperation agreements with partner institutions, and not only within the EHEA but also outside Europe. Moreover better information is essential for those wishing to be mobile in order to show the added-value of a period abroad. In the same way, recognition of study period abroad cannot be an obstacle to mobility. Therefore, HEIs, Government as well as other HE stakeholders should cooperate to enhance a mobility of quality for all.

5. Maintain the HE as a public good and reinforce its funding:

While private financing should be encouraged amongst the HEIs, the public authorities should remain the main source of funding. Besides being the main funding authority, the Ministry should also reinforce its functions as designer of long-term strategies, orientations and quality provider while enhancing the HEIs' autonomy.

PART II

TEMPLATE for NATIONAL STRATEGIES on THE SOCIAL DIMENSION of THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Practical instruction

The answers to this questionnaire will be included in the general national report on the implementation of the Bologna Process and reach the Bologna Secretariat (e-mail: secur@bologna2009benelux.org) by November 1, 2008. **Please do not exceed the length of 10 pages for the national strategy on social dimension.**

The questions in Annex C are not included in the questionnaire itself but are to be considered as reference material which could facilitate the drafting of the information on the national strategy.

I. Definition of the Social Dimension in the London Communiqué

"We strive for the societal goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity."

II. AS IS SITUATION (Current state of affairs)

1. Which groups in society are still underrepresented in your national higher education system? What are the main obstacles to participative equity in terms of access and successful completion of studies?

Underrepresented groups in HE:

1. Female students:

72% of boys and 78% of girls with a secondary education certificate go on studying in Higher Education. On 1st December 2007 there were 32,464 male students (46.56%) and 37,259 female students (53.43%) at the university; in non-university HEIs, they were (...). At that level, however, women are underrepresented in some sectors (usually scientific such as Agronomy or Applied Sciences), while they are overrepresented in others (Pedagogy, Human and Social Sciences).

2. Students from lower social or economic backgrounds

3. Disabled students.

Obstacles to participative equity:

1. Female students:

The obstacles to equality male and female students take various forms: the image and the motivation of parents and students, girls usually preferring "to be useful to others"; the early orientation at secondary school level; the sexist stereotypes; the difference in attitudes in case of failure, girls tempted to reorientate to "softer" options; and the lack of information on the professions.

2. Students from lower social or economic backgrounds:

For students coming from families with lower incomes it is easier to choose a HEI for its proximity than a university which would imply higher expenses (accommodation or transport, tuition fees and courses). The high number - particularly in the Walloon region which has encountered socio-economic difficulties for a few decades - of non-university higher education institutions providing one-cycle and two-cycle studies has encouraged students and parents to opt for a nearby HEI - whatever the type of studies offered.

2. Please describe what measures your Government is taking to increase the representation of the groups identified in the question above. Please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility (see Annexes A and B to this document).

The students - male or female, whatever their background - elect among themselves those who will represent them in the various Councils managing the HEIs.

Admission rules and equivalences (recognition of prior learning outside the French Community) are provided for by Act.

The possibility to extend the duration of studies over the length of time usually foreseen is provided for by Decree.

A social service is available in all HEIs. Its minimum budget is linked to the cost of living index. Many HEIs complement it when necessary.

All HEIs either provide accommodation - at least to first-year students - or have a counselling service to help them find a room in town. The universities and some non-university HEIs have an on-line service showing vacancies.

In 2007 the Social Fund of the "Commission Paritaire Nationale Auxiliaire pour Employés" offered a premium to the students who had completed a bachelor's degree leading to a profession for which there is a shortage on the labour market.

When registered, a student gets a "student's card", allowing him/her to have reduced tariffs for transport, leisure, sports, etc.

Female students:

- A study was carried out by the services of the French Community on the participation of women in scientific fields of Higher Education. This study called Newtonia dates back to 2002 but its findings are still valid. This report shows that the selection of studies at HE level is linked to the choices made at secondary level and to the social and economic status of parents. It also shows that women tend to disperse in HE, even those who had chosen a "Maths" section at secondary school. The report makes recommendations, mainly to better inform parents, students and teachers.

(See:

www.egalite.cfwb.be/enseignement_et_recherche_scientifique/recherche_newtonia)

- The Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique has also tried to analyze the problem of inequality. According to them, about 61% of students of one-cycle studies are girls; they are 45% in two-cycle studies.

- The Direction for Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of the French Community has analysed problems concerning equal opportunities, including for women and men in the various levels and types of training, education, scientific research, culture, life long learning, etc.

- The Government of the French Community has adopted a Programme of Action for the promotion of equality women / men, of multiculturalism and social integration.

Students from lower social or economic backgrounds:

- The Law of 29 May 1959 regularly amended until 25 April 2008 already provided for some categories of students (the unemployed in some cases, the disabled and people with very low incomes) to be exempted from tuition fees in Adult Education and non-university HEIs.

- The Act of 18 July 2008 aims at democratizing HE, enhancing success in studies and creating the Observatory of HE provides for (among other things):

~ Non-university HEIs to devote from 1 to 3% of their annual budget to "first generation" students to help them succeed in their studies in various ways; universities must spend at least 10% of their basic allowance to first generation students; academies are given the possibility to spend the equivalent of 7.5 full-time jobs to coordinate and guide any initiatives leading to success for first-year students;

~ A system of tutoring for first-year students in difficulties by students from upper years who receive a basic allowance for this help;

~ A system of assessment of academics will be put in place every two years from 2008-2009 onwards and the participation of the students in that assessment is compulsory; the result of that evaluation is analyzed by the various Councils inside the HEI;

~ When written support is foreseen for courses, they have to be distributed within 20 days from the start of the course;

~ HEIs authorities must organize trainings for the first-year students to develop their basic skills and help them acquire development tools and working methods to succeed in HE.

~ At the end of the first semester, the first generation student who has failed is taken in charge by the academic authorities who propose a charter by which both the HEI and the student commit to use all means to succeed.

~ A student can extend the duration of his/her studies, in agreement with the HEI authorities.

- The "Fondation Roi Baudouin" and the government of the French Community are developing specific actions aiming at supporting equality of opportunities in higher education and specifically orientated towards students from difficult social-economic backgrounds.

- Adult Education ("Social Promotion Courses") aims at helping adults (those who have passed the age of compulsory education) find their personal fulfilment by better professional, social, educational and cultural integration; it also responds to the needs and requirements for training coming from businesses, industries, administrations, teaching world, etc. Thirty percent of all programmes are at higher education level, whether short or long type in the following seven categories: technical, economic, agricultural, paramedical, social, pedagogical and maritime. Its flexibility and modular structure allow people at work to benefit by life-long learning at their own rhythm and those with experience acquired outside school to validate it. The degrees obtained are equivalent to those acquired in day classes and sanction learning outcomes which have been declared as such by the Government.

- An Observatory for HE has been founded to collect and analyze statistical data relating to HE; to issue yearly a picture of HE; to provide Parliament and the

Government with data and benchmarks for the measures taken; to contribute to the development of analysis and assessment tools of HE and take stock of the studies and scientific research carried out in that field at the Community, European or international levels; to promote any initiative for the improvement of success in HE; to serve as a source of information for the Quality Agency, the Superior Council of Mobility, the HEIs' Councils as well as the auditors and Government delegates; and to implement the measures of the European Parliament and Council concerning the data relating to LLL. The statistical data will contribute to identifying the needs of HE and making policy in the field.

3. Describe what measures are being taken by the Government to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background. Again, please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility (see Annexes A and B to this document). Please indicate whether the measures apply to all students or only to certain levels or types of higher education institutions.

- A system of scholarships is available up to the age of 35 on certain conditions related to income.
- The amounts of tuition fees are established by law. From 2006-2007 onwards the additional expenses that non-university HEIs were entitled to demand in addition to the tuition fees have been capped and will be gradually reduced. Universities and non-university HEIs have to provide for a lower tariff for students with scholarships and an intermediate one for those whose parents' incomes are moderate ("modest students").
- Social subsidies in non-university HEIs and Architecture HEIs have been increased.
- A grant holder can repeat one of the three years of the Bachelor level without losing his/her right to the scholarship.
- A jury can decide that a student has passed a year of study if he/she has acquired at least 48 credits; in this case the remaining 12 credits must be obtained in the course of the following year. If the student must repeat the year of study, he/she may get credits from the following year up to the limit of the number of credits for which he/she is exempted.
- Non-university institutions may organize an entrance examination for those students who have not the Certificate of Secondary Education.
- A budget of €1.86 million has been released to enhance quality and increase supervision means with a view to success.

4. Does your country have statistical and/or other research evidence at disposal to underpin the identification of underrepresented groups and the main obstacles to participative equity (see Q 1) ? If yes, please specify. Or are regular student survey organised with the aim to provide data concerning the social dimension?

Yes, data appear on the following websites:

- for HEIs: www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=25384&navi=331;
- for universities: [/www.cref.be/Statistiques.htm](http://www.cref.be/Statistiques.htm)

III. PROCESS TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (strategy for the future)

5. How do you plan to tackle the challenges identified under Q 1 in the near future (2008-2010)?

(a) Which concrete goals do you want to achieve?

- Equitable access to all, whatever the social or economic background;
- Better information on the studies, grants, professions and mobility possibilities to attract the underrepresented groups;
- Data on mobility in its different forms;
- Tracking of graduates.

(b) What actions are planned for the different target group identified above to overcome the obstacles in access, participation and completion of studies by students? Please refer to Annex B and to the suggested approach outlined in the 2007 report from the Bologna Process Working Group on the Social Dimension and Mobility (Annex C to this document).

n/a

(c) is there a specific budget for these measures for underrepresented groups ? If yes, please provide details

A budget of €1.86 million has been released to enhance quality and increase supervision means with a view to success. All the subsidies are linked the cost of living index.

d) is there a timeline for action? If yes, please provide details.

n/a

6. What arrangements are planned for monitoring progress towards more equitable access, participation and success?

n/a

IV. INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Please indicate which authority or other actor is responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategy and describe the way in which the various stakeholders are involved. Did your country designate (a) contact point(s) for the national strategy? If so, please add the coordinates of the national contact point(s).

The French Community Government and its respective administrations are in charge of the national strategy.

National contact point: Chantal Kaufmann, Director General for non-compulsory and scientific research - chantal.kaufmann@cfwb.be.

ANNEX A

Actions mentioned by the Bologna countries in the 2007 national reports

Financial

- scholarships - means tested
- scholarships - merit based
- research grants
- grants for studying abroad
- grants or loans for (nearly) every student
- unspecified social support system
- free education (at least 1st cycle)
- reimbursement of tuition fees for certain groups
- financial assistance for certain groups/areas
- improved funding systems

Structural

- new /expanded routes of access
- broader teaching or learning strategies
- information and preparation at secondary schools
- increase student places
- indirect aid schemes (tax relief, family allowance)
- subsidised residences/meals/transport/books
- provision of student welfare services (health care, day care centres)
- counselling/guidance services

Certain groups

- measures for ethnic minorities (not financial)
- measures for disabled (not financial)
- measures for disadvantaged groups (not financial)
- allocation of study places to certain groups
- promote access from all national areas

Policy and practice

- explicit widening access policy (devoted funds/units/laws)
- carry out surveys (study & work, disabled students,...)
- evaluations/research of policies and practices
- monitoring access (and retention) by students

ANNEX B

Possible actions and tools identified by the 2007 Bologna Working Group on the Social Dimension and Mobility

Measures to promote equal opportunities for access, participation and completion

- Anti-discrimination legislation covering higher education
- Admission rules that are simple, fair and transparent

Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education

- Outreach programs for underrepresented groups as defined nationally
- Flexible delivery of higher education
- Flexible learning paths into and within higher education
- Transparency of qualifications and recognition of prior learning
- Incentives for higher education institutions to take action to widen access and participation

Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience

A, Provision of academic services

- Guidance (academic and careers) and tutoring
- Retention measures (modification of curricula, flexibility of delivery, tracking academic success etc.)
- Working tools and environment (well functioning libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms, internet access, access to scientific data bases etc.)

B, Provision of social services

- Counselling
- Targeted support for students with special needs and students with children
- Appropriate housing conditions for all students
- Provision of healthcare
- Provision of transportation, student canteens etc.

Student participation in the governance and organisation of higher education

- Legislation or other measures to ensure student participation in higher education governance
- Provisions for the existence of and exercise of influence by student organisations
- Student evaluations of courses, programmes and institutions, including action plans and follow-up of actions taken

Finances in order to start and complete studies

- Financial and legal advice for students
- Appropriate and coordinated national financial support systems that are transparent
- Targeted support for disadvantaged groups as defined nationally
- Support measures for students with children

ANNEX C

Suggested approach of the work on national strategies on the social dimension

In time for the next ministerial meeting in 2009 the Working Group suggests that the countries should report to the BFUG on their national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to show their impact. All stakeholders concerned should actively participate in and support this work at the national level.

The development of a strategy should be followed by a national action plan that includes monitoring mechanisms. Ideally, the strategy and action plan will be based on a national debate on the social dimension and the future priorities of that country depending on the current situation. In order to facilitate a national debate on the social dimension the Working Group proposes the following structure and topics for such a debate:

- Measures to promote equal opportunities

What obstacles are there to equal opportunities within higher education? What protection is there if a student is discriminated when applying for, being admitted to or carrying out studies? Is there a framework for appeal? What action would be the most effective to achieve equal opportunities in higher education?

- Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education for underrepresented groups (gender, ethnic origin, immigration, socio-economic status and background, disability, geography etc.)

What groups are under represented in your national higher education system today? Is there data to show access to higher education by gender, socio-economic background, disabilities, prior immigration, region etc? What obstacles to widened access and participation are there within your higher education system? At other education levels? What actions would be appropriate for the different groups to achieve widened access? Are targeted outreach activities needed?

- Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience

A, Provision of academic services

B, Provision of social services

What kind of academic or career guidance is provided for the students in your country? What is the student – staff ratio? Are there retention measures adapted to different groups or individuals with different needs? Is the academic success of student tracked? What would be/has proven to be the most efficient retention measures? What kind of study environment is there at the higher education institutions? Do student have access to information, electronically or by other means? What is the condition of libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms? How do students in your country live? Is housing available, of acceptable standard and affordable? Is targeted support provided or needed for specific student groups? Is counselling available if students run in to personal difficulties?

- Measures to increase formal and actual student influence on and participation in higher education governance and other higher education issues

Are there formal provisions for student influence and participation at all governance levels, in consultative as well as decision-making bodies? Are there formal provisions for student evaluation of the education? Are the formal regulations followed-up with actual practices? Are there informal ways of student influence and participation as well? Do students have an influence on all issues related to higher education? Are students aware of their rights? Do students have organisations that

can organise elections to fill elective posts? Is it possible to find enough candidates to fill the posts available? If not – how could this be improved?

- Finances in order to start and complete studies

What kind of information and guidance is provided for students regarding financial issues? How does the average student make his or her living during studies? What kind of state support is provided? Is it appropriate for all groups and individuals? Do certain groups run the risk of being excluded from, or not able to finish their studies, due to financial reasons? Which are these groups or individuals? What could be done to help them? Are students informed about possible employment possibilities after finishing their studies? How is the labour-market relevance of the studies secured? Are former graduates tracked to follow-up their employment rates?

- Monitoring: The participating countries should establish national measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of the national strategy and action plan.

What monitoring mechanisms would be the most appropriate? How could success in strengthening the social dimension be measured short-term and long-term? What quantitative and qualitative data are needed? How is the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation allocated and divided? Are there student surveys carried out to measure the impact of a social dimension strategy? How can student surveys be used in this work?

- Stakeholder involvement

Which stakeholders should be involved in the development of a strategy and an action plan? What should be the responsibility of the different stakeholders when carrying out the agreed strategy and plan?