

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007

Final: 9 May 2006

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

Information from National Reports will form the basis of the Stocktaking Report to be presented to Ministers when they meet in London in May 2007.

This template has three sections:

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

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

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

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

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Date	15.12.2006
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Main achievements since Bergen

<p>1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.</p>
<p>The reform in implementation of the Bologna process is outlined in the Decree on the Structure of Higher Education (04.04.2003) and was actually put in place from the academic year 2004-2005 on. The new structure is year after year replacing the older one definitively. In 2007-2008 all first cycle (bachelor) programmes and the first year of 2nd cycle (master) programmes are offered under the new structure with complete redesigned curricula. In 2008-2009 the reform process will be complete. All students at Flemish higher education institutions will then follow the new system and the old system will have completely died out.</p> <p>New legislation since Bergen :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education in Flanders of 16 June 2006 (official publication 12.10.2006), also called "Mini-decree for higher education" provided further measures facilitating the implementation of the Bologna process in Flanders. It includes measures in the area of validation/recognition of prior learning, flexible learning paths, quality assurance and accreditation. The overall aim was to enhance the autonomy of the HEIs in those areas and to achieve a better accountability. Another important measure was the authorization of the accreditation body to recognize foreign accreditations and quality judgements provided that they comply with the Bergen Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. - Decree on study grants and provision for students in higher education of the Flemish Community of 30 April 2004 (official publication 28.07.2004), adjustments of amount of grants 2005, 2006. - Decree on teacher training in Flanders (voted in plenary by the Flemish Parliament, 6 December 2006) <p>Legislation in preparation :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decree on adult education (will also include links to higher

education, draft decree adopted by the Flemish Government 29.11.2006)

- Decree offering a framework for pilot projects in preparation of the introduction of a short cycle degree in the Flemish higher education system (Decree foreseen for Spring 2007)
- Decree on a new model of funding higher education (Concept document adopted by the Flemish Government 14.07.2006, draft decree foreseen Spring 2007, operational start foreseen for 01.01.2008)
- New Decree on higher education in Flanders (putting together the older Decree on the Structure of Higher Education and later smaller Decrees in the field of higher education, including the future Decree on the new funding model) foreseen for 2008.

National organisation

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

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries
- how funds are allocated to HEIs
- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing.

No change since Bergen. Since 1989 in Belgium there is a complete devolution of competences in education to the (linguistic) Communities. In the Flemish Community two Ministries are involved (Ministries and Departments have been slightly renamed since 1.1.2006) : Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation. The former oversees all higher education matters (including the follow-up of the Bologna process) and issues of institutionally driven research, the latter is involved in broader research issues. Actual public funding model mainly based on input criteria (number of students etc.) but plans for reform taking into account more output criteria by Decree to be put in operation 01.01.2008. HEIs enjoy a large degree of autonomy since the reform of the Flemish higher education system in the beginning of the 90-ties.

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

Please include:

- the number of public/private HEIs
- are there different types of institutions delivering higher education (i.e. academic/professional, university/non-university etc.)
- the number/percentage of students admitted in academic session 2006-2007 to each type of institution
- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the

same regulations.

No significant changes in institutional structure since Bergen. Most recognised HEI are publicly funded but not necessarily pertaining to public law. HEIs funded only privately are still a marginal phenomenon. Free admission for all subjects and disciplines, academically oriented or professionally oriented. Entrance examinations or aptitude tests only for medicine/dentistry, art and music and nautical science but even in these cases no *numerus clausus*.

Partnership

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

Please include:

- the membership and role of any national Bologna group (for example policy committee, promoters' group)
- the membership and role of students, staff trade unions, business and social partners in any national Bologna Group.

The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training is in charge of the dissemination of information concerning the Bologna process.

For all matters of legislation on educational issues the Flemish Government is bound to seek advice of both the Flemish Education Council and the Social-Economic Council of Flanders, thus involving the main stakeholders (institutions, staff, students, employers...) in the process.

For the practical implementation working groups established by the 2 Rectors' Conferences (Flemish Interuniversity Council and Flemish Council of University Colleges) play an important role. These working groups are generally composed of representatives of higher education institutions, staff, students and public authorities.

Since July 2004 a Flemish Bologna Promoters team has been established with members from the Flemish Interuniversity Council, the Flemish Council of University Colleges and the Flemish Students Association.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Please include:

- precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies
- the role of students in the governance of HEIs
- the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

The involvement of students in the governance of HEIs has been made legally mandatory for universities in the Decree on Universities (12/06/1991) and for the university colleges in the Decree on University Colleges (13/07/1994). These statutes contained differentiated arrangements for public universities and university colleges, private but

state funded universities and private but state funded university colleges. These differentiated arrangements have meanwhile been harmonized by the Decree on Participation in Higher Education (19/03/2004). Besides harmonization this decree aims at widening and deepening student participation in the governance of HEIs with a view to create a genuine climate of participation. Every HEI is now required to have a student council which is democratically elected on a regular basis by all students of the HEI. The competencies of the student council depend on the policy option of the HEI. There are two possibilities. If a HEI chooses to include at least 10% of student representatives in all its governing bodies than the student council is an autonomous, advisory body. If a HEI does not wish to include (at least 10% of) student representatives in all its governing bodies than the student council receives the status of mandatory consultative body. In certain matters the HEI management is required to request the student council for a written reasoned advice. In other matters the HEI management is required to formally negotiate with the student council. Moreover the student council can appoint an observer in all governing bodies of its HEI. Public HEIs do not have policy freedom in this matter. They have to include 10% of student representatives in their governing bodies. All HEIs are currently implementing the provisions of the 2004 decree. The 2004 decree further requires a formal evaluation in 2009 of the participation structure it spells out. Concerning the involvement of staff trade union/representative bodies the state of affairs is more fragmented. There is a crucial difference to be made between public HEIs and private but state funded HEIs. Public HEIs are legally required to include democratically elected representatives of their staff (both academic and administrative) in their governing bodies. Private but state funded HEIs are not required to do this but can do it on their own initiative. Private but state funded HEIs however are bound by the labour participation legislation in force for private employers. On the basis of the Enterprise Organization Act (20/11/1948) they are required to install a Work Council and on the basis of the Workers' Wellbeing Act (18/11/1996) a Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work. The Council and the Committee are composed for 50% by representatives of the administrative staff which are democratically elected by all administrative staff of the HEI via trade union lists. The Council and the Committee guarantee involvement of administrative staff in the general management and the welfare and wellbeing policy of the HEI.

6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.

See Q. 4 : inclusion of main stakeholders (institutions, staff, students, employers, sectors... via involvement of the Flemish Education Council and the Social-Economic Council of Flanders in political decision-making process.

Apart from this, the Flemish Negotiation Committee for Higher Education (Decision of the Flemish Government 21 January 2005, official publication 18.02.2005) is the specific structure for involvement of higher education staff unions in the negotiations with the Government in preparation of new legislation concerning higher education. This Committee is a tripartite committee which consists of representatives of the minister, the HEIs and

the trade unions. It is responsible for negotiating and concluding collective labour agreements for the HE sector. It is also the forum for negotiating new proposals of legal acts in the field of higher education. The Service for coordination of Flemish public authorities involved in adult education and training (DIVA) has recently created a forum for national and international placements bringing together providers of education and training with business and industry.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07.

The new degree system is systematically replacing the older one (which is to die out) and has been introduced gradually year by year from the academic year 2004-2005 onwards (starting with ALL students in the first year of bachelor). In 2007-2008, all new enrolments in bachelor and first year of master are in the new structure. In the academic year 2008-2009 the process will be complete and the old degree system will have died out for all study years in first and second cycle, except for medical science, dentistry, veterinary science where the old programmes will die out 1 to 2 years later because of the longer study duration of the Master stage (3-4 years).

(Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

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

Please include:

- the percentage of 3rd cycle students following structured doctoral programmes
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes
- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills

integrated in doctoral studies

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

Although the organisation of doctoral studies is the autonomous decision of the universities (it can include courses or not, different subjects, different approaches to interdisciplinary training etc.) the common practice is already quite structured.

Hereby some elements :

- **Objectives of Ph.D. education in relation to the Ph.D. thesis are stipulated in the Decree on the Structure of Higher Education, 04.04.2003.**
- **No credit points are used for doctoral studies, although at one HEI ECTS is used for the course part of the programme.**
- **The normal duration of 4 years of full time study (6-7 years of part-time study) functions as standard for the doctoral grant system to Ph.D. students or research assistants.**
- **Each university has a set of rules and procedures on the supervision structure. Ph.D. students present a study and research plan to their respective Faculty or Department for approval. During the whole duration of the studies the student will be supervised by a supervisor and an accompanying committee of professors to which the student has to report at regular intervals (usually intermediate assessment every 2 years).**
- **The committee can impose a course programme to the student. This is not obligatory.**
- **There are no statistical data available on the % of students taking courses during their Ph.D. studies**

Access¹ to the next cycle

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

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle
- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle
- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle.
- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area
- any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles.

- **All first cycle qualifications give access to the second cycle, either directly if the 2nd cycle is in the same subject area as the 1st cycle, or through special bridging courses**
- **Only 2nd cycle qualifications give access to the 3rd cycle**
- **1st cycle qualifications give access only to the 2nd cycle, not directly to the 3rd cycle**
- **All second cycle qualifications give access to the third cycle**
- **No 1st cycle qualifications excluded from access to the 2nd cycle**
- **No 2nd cycle qualifications excluded from access to the 3rd cycle**
- **Bridging courses are to be followed when changing subject areas between cycles. As professional bachelor programmes typically don't have a 2nd cycle successor in the same subject area, the most common example of bridging courses is between professional bachelor and second cycle (master)**
- **No bridging courses required for transition between cycles in the same subject area**
- **Bridging and preparatory courses might be seen as measures to widen access to the next cycles for those students that prefer to change subjects.**
- **The bridging and preparatory study programmes will be fully funded on equal footing as the bachelor and master study programmes.**

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

Implementation of national qualifications framework

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

Please include:

- the stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared; has a timetable for implementation been agreed?)
- the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA
- the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.

- Legal framework for QF for HE :

Dublin descriptors and ECTS ranges for bachelor and master degrees and learning objectives for the Ph.D. in relation to the Ph.D. thesis are legally stipulated in the Decree on the Structure of Higher Education, 04.04.2003.

- Implementation on institutional level :

Implementation is going on at institutional level through a learning outcome oriented curriculum reform.

The Flemish Bologna Promoters' team plays an important role in animating this process by organising information sessions, seminars, discussion groups etc. The implementation is not limited to the generic QF but also applied in the context of concrete disciplines. On December 20, the Bologna Promoters' team will organise a seminar on which 3 pilot projects of a Flemish QF for specific disciplines will be presented (medical science, music, social work).

- Link with the EU Recommendation on EQF for LLL :

In the context of the future Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, the Flemish Community is preparing a Flemish QF encompassing all levels and sectors of education and training in which the existing Flemish QF for HE will be integrated.

The Flemish QF for LLL is described in a concept document drafted by a working group composed of different stakeholders. It is now under consultation with stakeholders and official advisory bodies and will lead to a Draft Decree once the EU Recommendation will be adopted (end of 2007).

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

Please include where possible:

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after

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

graduating in 2005/06

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third cycles in 2005/06
- the extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007.

First bachelors in the new degree system will graduate in 2006-2007. By consequence no data available yet.

The expectation is that most professional bachelors will directly enter the labour market, while most academic bachelors will continue to study in the 2nd cycle. The academic bachelor will therefore in practice function as a transitory degree for most students. Nevertheless it can be expected that a growing number of professional bachelors will continue their studies also in the 2nd cycle, while some academic bachelors might go directly to the labour market. It can also be expected that the prospects of the professional bachelors on the labour market will be at least as good as those for the 3-years one-cycle professional programmes in the old system. According to statistical data from the Flemish Employment Service, unemployment longer than 12 months among this category of graduates is a marginal phenomenon and nearly not existing for newly graduated bachelors.

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

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

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

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of the national quality assurance system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action that has been taken to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action planned to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

Standards and guidelines are close to fully incorporated in the actual procedures (see also Bergen report).

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

Recently remaining minor adjustments have been made :

- **the internal appeal procedure of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation has been reviewed**
- **the composition of the external evaluation teams has to be confirmed by the Committee for the recognition of higher education programmes in order to guarantee independence.**

The future new Decree on higher education (foreseen for 2008) will integrate the recent reviews of the quality assurance system.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

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

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system
- the scope of your external quality assurance system: does it operate at a national level; does it cover all higher education⁴
- which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:
 - internal assessment
 - external review
 - publication of results
- whether procedures have been established for the peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

See also Bergen report.

EXTERNAL QA AND PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Accreditation is carried out by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). The Flemish Interuniversity Council and the Flemish Council of University Colleges are legally responsible for organising and monitoring the quality assurance scheme for universities and university colleges respectively. They design the system, develop and update the protocols and guidelines, propose the expert panels to the Committee for Recognition of higher education programmes, receive the reports of the panels, publish them etc.

SCOPE

QA covers the whole of higher education in Flanders.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND EXTERNAL REVIEW

The HEIs have the legal obligation to engage in internal quality assurance mechanisms and to participate in external quality assessment (see above under external QA)

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

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

Please include:

⁴ 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.

- whether students are included in the following aspects of quality assurance:
 - the governance of national agencies for QA
 - as full members or observers in external review teams
 - as part of the decision making process for external reviews
 - in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)
 - in internal evaluations.

Students play an active role in the quality monitoring of the study programmes. The Decree on the structure of higher education (2003) stipulates the inclusion of a student in each programme review team. All external review teams consult privately with selected groups of students during site visits. During these conversations individual students can raise problems or make remarks on a confidential basis. The Accreditation Organisation has established a transnational advisory board which consists of representatives of the students and the HEIs.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

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

Please include:

- whether there is international participation in the following aspects of quality assurance
 - the governance of national agencies for quality assurance
 - the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies
 - teams for external review, either as members or observers
 - membership of ENQA
 - membership of any other international network.

- **The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) has a transnational governance structure.**
- **An external evaluation of NVAO is foreseen in the Decree and is currently in preparation in cooperation with the European Consortium for Accreditation.**
- **External evaluation teams have an international composition although the instruction language of the programme (Dutch) can be an obstacle to involve many different nationalities. For programmes taught in English a wider variety of nationalities participates.**
- **NVAO is a full member of ENQA and ECA**

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

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

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement
- which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:
 - issued in a widely spoken European language
 - free of charge
 - automatically
 - correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

In Flanders a compulsory DS has been awarded automatically to all

graduates since 1991 at universities and since 1994 at university college level.

The 2003 Decree on the Structure of higher education endorsed the concept of the DS and adapted it to the international one.

So all students receive the DS

- **automatically in Dutch and free of charge**
- **may apply for an English version, also free of charge**

Much attention is paid to the format to comply with the EU/COE/UNESCO DS format. A special Decision of the Flemish Governments has been made on the format both for the Dutch and the English version.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents⁵ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Please include:

- whether your country has ratified the convention (including depositing ratification instrument at either CoE or UNESCO)
- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents
- which of the following principles are applied in practice
 - applicants' right to fair assessment
 - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven
 - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted
 - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
- whether you have a fully operational ENIC
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

- **Ratification of LRC by Belgium is only possible after ratification of 4 parliaments (Flemish Community, French Community, German-speaking Community and Federal parliament). Flemish Parliament has ratified the LRC November 29, 2006. *Expectation to have the ratification for the whole of Belgium before the London conference.***
- **Flanders has a fully operational ENIC/NARIC incorporated in the Ministry of Education and Training**
- **Decree on the Structure of Higher education (2003) refers explicitly to LRC in the chapters on recognition and access to higher education.**
- **In principle recognition is granted if no substantial differences can be proven and a negative decision is always motivated**
- **Action plan for improving and simplifying recognition procedures and making them more user-friendly will be put into draft legislation before the end of 2007.**

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

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

⁵ 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)

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits.

A Flemish credit system based entirely on ECTS had been applied to university programmes since 1991 and university college programmes since 1994. The Decree on the structure of higher education (2003) the Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education (2006) the credit system endorses the basis of the existing credit system on ECTS.

- All programmes have adopted the ECTS system.

As a consequence of the decree the rigid year system as the leading organisational principle of the study programme has been replaced by a credit-based modular system.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications⁶? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

The Policy paper of the Flemish Minister of Education and Training 2007 includes plans for improving recognition procedures for higher education.

The aim is to move from the theory of the LRC (right to fair assessment, recognition unless substantial differences demonstrated, ...) which is guaranteed by legislation to the practice of implementation through improving of the procedures (more simple, user-friendly, faster decisions etc.) and the granting of automatic recognition as much as possible. The review of international recognition procedures will be carried out in parallel with that of the procedures of validation of prior learning in the perspective of lifelong learning.

The minister has presented the outline of the plan. The plan consists of three steps:

- **the full (automatic) recognition of the higher education degrees awarded by the Netherlands;**
- **the full recognition of the higher education degrees awarded in the Bologna participating countries provided that there is a Qualification Framework for Higher Education in place which complies with the Bergen Qualification Framework for higher education and provided that there is a system of quality assurance in place which complies with the Bergen Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;**
- **a review of the recognition procedures as outlined above.**

The new procedures will be put into a draft Decree by the end of 2007.

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

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

Please include:

- the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

The procedures for recognition of prior learning which were already integrated in legislation before Bergen (Decree on flexible learning in Flemish

⁶ ENIC/NARIC has produced guidelines for National Action Plans for Recognition.

Higher education – 2004) have been simplified and improved in the Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education (2006).

Each “association” (cooperation platform between universities and university colleges) is legally obliged to install an agency for the validation of prior learning. This validation of prior learning and/or of professional experience may lead to :

- access to higher education programmes
- shortening of study duration.

Procedure :

1. Applicants have to introduce a portfolio presenting prior learning experiences
2. Assessment by the validation agency of the “association” taking into account the learning outcomes of the programme applied for
3. Issuing of a competence certificate.

Note :

The system of appeal to the decision of the validation agency has been improved with the last Decree of 2006.

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

Please include:

- any flexibility in entry requirements
- any flexible delivery methods
- any modular structures of programmes.

See also Q. 20.

- **Flexibility in entry requirements** : procedures of validation of prior learning.
- **Flexibility in delivery methods** : the Ministry of Education and Training offers financial incentives to higher education institutions to the needs of adult learners, e.g. initiatives for work-based learning, e-learning initiatives
- Since the Decree on flexible learning in higher education (2004) a credit accumulation system has been established in order to create more flexibility for learners, especially those combining their studies with professional and/or family duties. This system has been refined through the 2006 Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education in Flanders. The study grant system has been adjusted accordingly in 2004 followed by adjustments of the amount of study grants in 2005 and 2006.
- The Flemish Education Council is currently carrying out several projects on bridging adult education study programmes to bachelor study programmes by making an inventory of the learning outcomes of different programmes.

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

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

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes
- whether joint⁷ degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

The Decree on the structure of higher education (2003) created a legal framework in which international joint and double degrees can be awarded and recognised at all levels and cycles.

The Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education (2006) made the awarding of joint and double degrees in the framework of cooperation of HEIs *within* Belgium more easy.

In practice we see most joint and double degrees at master level, where there is an growing number of programmes following the Erasmus Mundus model. All universities and most university colleges offering master programmes participate in joint programmes with joint or double degrees.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

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

Only figures available are on the spending of public budget to research. 51 % goes to universities (direct funding or through Research Councils), 49 % goes to other research institutions (project funding, applied public research, but about half of this funds find their way back to the universities). Universities are key players in research in Flanders.

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

The National Bureau of statistics is currently carrying out a survey on this

⁷ a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

% issue. No data available yet. Earlier surveys indicated considerable drop-out especially with female Ph.D. graduates.

Flemish Ministry of Economy, Research and Innovation has increased the appropriations to the universities and the research council for post-doctoral positions. There is also a small increase of the funds for tenure positions at the universities. The government will investigate the feasibility of tenure track positions at the universities.

The social dimension

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

Please include:

- any financial or other measures to widen access in higher education amongst socially disadvantaged groups
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to widen access to higher education, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the widening access measures already in place.

- **Adjustments in 2005 and 2006 to the Decree on study grants and provision for students in higher education of the Flemish Community of 30 April 2004 (official publication 28.07.2004) entail more and higher grants for more students.**
- **Monitoring is actually focussed on the access and retention by students from immigrants families. Special incentives are given to HEIs tackling this problem by study support facilities to prevent drop-out of students from disadvantaged social groups.**
- **Future decree on the funding system will be more output oriented and is expected to stimulate HEIs to pay attention not only to access but also completion of studies of incoming students.**

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

Please include:

- any guidance or counselling services and any other measures to improve retention
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to improve retention, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the retention measures already in place.

See also Q. 25

Mobility

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

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- any measures to increase outward student mobility.

- Inward mobility : many provisions exist. Foreign students can benefit from all social provisions on the same basis as the Flemish students. In addition, HEIS may allocate a fixed % of rooms in their own dormitories

to foreign students. Dutch language courses are organised but many programmes are also available in English or other widely spoken languages etc.

- **Outward student mobility** : for the Erasmus programme the Flemish Community offers top-up financing (in addition to the amount provided by the European Commission) to Flemish students on a means-tested basis.

- **Both inward and outward mobility** : the successful participation of Flemish HEIs in Erasmus Mundus has a catalyst effect for setting up similar joint programmes and thus boosting international curriculum development and international mobility.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

System of portable grants across the EHEA was in place before Bergen.

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

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward staff mobility
- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

Higher education institutions can autonomously decide on the recruitment of staff and the calculation of seniority.

Flemish staff will be able to validate foreign experience and there is no obstacle from a legal or social point to recruit foreign staff, that furthermore will be allowed to teach in a widely understood language if not able to use Dutch as instruction language.

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

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.
Measures include : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Odysseus programme of the Flemish Ministry of Economy, Research and Innovation has been launched recently in order to attract promising researchers to Flanders. Active participation of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training to the EHEF initiative (European Higher Education Fairs). The EHEF is financed by the European Union's Asialink programme. The event will provide a platform for representatives of EU member states and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to inform fair visitors about higher education opportunities in the different European countries (implemented by the consortium of Edufrance, DAAD, Nuffic and British Council).

Future challenges

31. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improving international recognition of degrees and qualifications: establishing practices of "automatic recognition" in the EHEA.- Reform of funding system- Stronger synergies between education-research-innovation at all levels, and more particularly in the at the level of Ph.D. training- Enhancing autonomy of HEIs- Current international trends in quality assurance and accreditation : accreditation of the HEI as a whole apart from programme accreditation- Role of HEIs as regional centres of knowledge embedded in their local social, economic and cultural environment- Achieving a better accountability in higher education- The internationalisation of the student body and the staff- Enhancing the attractiveness of research careers in higher education and the mobility of researchers between institutions and between academia and business- Increasing the number of tenure and tenure track positions at the universities.- Social dimension : improving participation and retention rates of students with non-traditional backgrounds, including from immigrant families.

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

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

Bologna Secretariat
May 2006