



**Completed National Reports and National Strategies for the Social Dimension should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by email ([secr@bologna2009benelux.org](mailto: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	ESTONIA
Date	
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Position	
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Contributors to the report	Tiia Kurvits, the Chief Expert for Higher Education, Karin Klooster,

### **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.

The biggest changes for the higher education development in Estonia for forthcoming years are brought by the legislative amendments approved by the Parliament on June 19<sup>th</sup>, this year. The amendments create bases for

- more strategic steering of HEI-s on behalf of the the Cabinet of Ministers, at the same time maintaining or even extending the institutional autonomy of HEI-s. According to the approved legislation all HEI-s (not dependent of the ownership type) will be authorised by the Government to award state recognised diplomas in certain study fields and qualification levels based on the independent quality assessment given by the Estonian Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency. Differently from the current arrangements a HEI is requested to demonstrate the readiness for the provision of a quality education before formal opening of programs. The current arrangements stipulate the right of a HEI to award state recognised diplomas only based on a positive accreditation of a certain program. The new regulation will come fully into force since 1.01.2012.

- establishing an independent QA Agency for higher education. The founding of the Agency is expected by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009. The agency is a successor for the Estonian Higher Education Quality Assessment Council and the Higher Education Accreditation Center that have been responsible for the accreditation since 1996. Due to the small size of the country and a need for a larger objectivity accreditation in Estonia has always involved foreign experts but the suggestions for accreditations results had to be legally approved by the Minister as the state recognition of diplomas depended on the positive accreditation of a program. Under the new regulations state recognition of diplomas will be guaranteed by different rules (see previous point) and accreditation of programs and institutions (that will be compulsory) is more self-improvement oriented. The final decision regarding the quality of programs and institutional accreditation is made by the independent Agency.

- providing bases for joint programs and degrees. The legislative changes were developed based on results of numerous international discussions and projects (Council of Europe, UNESCO, EUA) and are applied alike to the joint programs offered solely by the Estonian HEI-s within national level cooperation as well as within cooperation with foreign HEI-s. However, there are minor differences for diploma recognition dependent whether the program is offered by the Estonian HEI-s or by international joint program;

- other amendments were focusing to the issues like extension of the institutional autonomy to use state resources for shorter continuous education courses, transfer to 3-years funding contract, extending the funding for PhD students' allowances from 10 months to 12 months, or formally listing the students' rights for learning and career related counselling.

All the above mentioned legislative amendments are based on the Estonian Higher Education Strategy for 2006-2015 (approved by the Parliament in November 15, 2006).

Another major change that is related to the Bologna process was adoption of learning outcomes in the national framework for higher education. The decision was made by the Cabinet of Ministers on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2007 (by the amendments to the decree of "The Higher Education Standard". HEI-s are required to change their programs according to the learning outcomes approach by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. During the two year transfer period HEI-s are supported with the centrally coordinated development program (for training, information dissemination, etc). The Amendments to the Decree also included general principles for accreditation of prior learning and professional experience in credit points.

Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions.

Internationalization activities have taken a priority position in our higher education policy after approval of the respective strategy in 2006. Among other activities foreseen by the strategy document was the signing of the code of good conduct in the internationalization of Estonia's higher education institutions. By today 21 HEI-s

out of 34 have signed to the Agreement. The intended target of the signed parties is to provide solely quality education, a modern work environment and the support services necessary for foreign nationals residing in Estonia. The code foresees good practice forms for any internationalization-related actions of participating higher education institutions, including actions funded by the commercial activities and services provided outside Estonia. Among the institutions that have signed the code are all major organizations (irrespective to their ownership status) active in internationalization field and they have taken the task to provide relevant and truthful information for international students regarding the studying conditions in Estonia. The code prescribes the duties of HEI-s in respect to International students and teaching staff and researchers. The compliance with the code is subject to the audit by the Estonian Rectors' Conference Special Auditing Commission. On principal level the Code reflects the values of the OECD Council's Recommendations for Quality Provisions in Cross-Border Higher Education.

Quality and innovation related activities on institutional level were coordinated based on the common platform called LÜKKA in the period of 2007-2008. The efforts were funded by the European Union Social Fund resources. Universities' lead project focused on issues like

- curricula development based on learning outcomes approach in various disciplines,
- improvement of teaching and advising skills of academic staff,
- strengthening the internal QA systems in HEI-s,
- mapping and analysing of internship models,
- developing counselling models for students' and training relevant personnel,
- analyses of students' socio-economic situation and development of new approaches for national regulation,
- analyses of practice how HEI-s apply accreditation of prior learning and working experience.

The cooperation in such a format was considered very successful and as a result, the cooperative efforts will be continued also during the ESF programming period for 2007-2013. It should be pointed out that regulations for learning outcomes approach and accreditation of previous study and work experience in the national legislation

were discussed and drafted (and passed in 16.08.2007 by the governmental decree RT I 2007, 50, 346) in direct consultation with the experts that worked for LÜKKA project.

## 2. Partnership

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

National BFUG that works on the bases of the Ministerial Decree.

- a) Does your country have a national working group for Bologna follow-up <sup>1</sup>
- Yes  No
- b) Does your national Bologna follow-up 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 type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| National Quality Assurance Agency | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Employers                         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please specify) representatives of ENIC/ NARIC Centre and Center responsible for academic exchange.

Further comment - although, the representatives of national QA Agency are not officially part of the follow-up group, they are in our mailing list for BFUG documents.

- c) Does your country have a Bologna promoters' group<sup>2</sup>
- Yes  No
- d) Does your national Bologna promoters' group include representatives of
- |                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Ministry                          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| National Quality Assurance Agency | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Employers                         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) _____      |   |  |

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

<sup>1</sup> A group that develops policy proposals for implementing the Bologna Process

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

## 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 legislation for adopting the two-cycle system has been in place since 2002/03 when the new model was enforced.

b) Please give the percentage of the total number of all<sup>3</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup>	% of all students enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09
65 787	Statistics for 2007/08 - 60 156	Statistics for 2007/08 - 91.4%

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

Out of the students enrolled in two-cycle programs:

- 22 918 students are enrolled in professional higher education programs that are according to the law considered first cycle programs;
- 27 696 students are enrolled in Bachelor or first cycle programs in universities;
- 9542 students are enrolled in Master level or second cycle programs.

Most of the students who are not studying in two-cycle system are enrolled in integrated programs (such as medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, architecture, civil engineering, class teachers teaching). These programs are called integrated programs and their nominal duration varies between 5-6 years (or 300 - 360 ECTS). The number of these students in 2007/08 was 3853 or approx 5.9%. The rest of students below doctoral level are students enrolled in "old degree programs", (where there is no admission since 2002/03), their number was 1778 or 2.7%.

### 4. Stage of implementation of the third cycle

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

<sup>3</sup> "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*

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

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 elements<sup>5</sup> apart from independent research that are included in doctoral study programmes
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- 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)

"The Higher Education Standard", the Decree by the Estonian Cabinet of Ministers states following:

§ 27. Doctoral study

(1) Doctoral study is study at the highest level of higher education during which a student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary for independent research, development or professional creative activity.

(2) Doctoral study consists of doctorate studies and extensive research, development or professional creative activity.

(3) In Doctoral study, research, development or professional creative activity (including the Doctoral thesis) shall constitute at least 70% of the study load determined in the curriculum. A doctoral thesis is an independent scientific research which presents a new solution of an essential problem of the corresponding scientific field, or a creative work.

§ 28. Commencement of Doctoral study

The pre-condition for the commencement of Doctoral study is a Master's level degree or a qualification equal thereto.

§ 29. Nominal duration and study load determined in curriculum

The nominal duration of Doctoral study is three to four years and the study load determined in the curriculum shall be from 120 to 160 credit points. Upon implementation of the European Credit Point System, the study load determined in the curriculum shall be from 180 to 240 credit points.

Usually, PhD studies take longer than the nominal period of studies. Only 10-17% defend their degrees during 3-4 years. On average, for 40% of PhD students it takes 8 years to complete their studies. 50% of PhD students who have defended their degrees have spent 10-15 years for their work.

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



Third cycle students in Estonia have a student status, although, many of them may have parallel status as an employee (working on the temporary contracts for an university's research groups). There have been discussions to change students' status into the early stage researchers' status (with all the consequent social guarantees), however, due to the budgetary limits this idea has not received sufficient political support.

Doctoral studies are included in the national learning outcome based qualification framework. National QF prescribes development of transferable skills as a part of formal education to all cycles, including third level cycle. One of the competence requirement is the a competence to share his or her knowledge by teaching, instruction or in another manner.

All PhD programs are "structured programs", including both taught courses and independent research. The volume of taught courses may vary and is decided upon university level. However, the minimum volume of independent research is regulated - according to the Decree "Higher Education Standard" - it must be at least 70% of a student workload.

Universities are autonomous under the University Act to regulate the supervisory and assessment procedures for third cycle students. However, recent amendments to the University Act state that each institution needs to develop relevant regulations (until June this year, having respective regulations were not compulsory).

## 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.

Universities are leading research institutions in Estonia - in 2007 57% of R&D personnel of the country worked for the higher education sector. However, on relative terms the share of HEI R&D personnel has decreased over the years due to the enlargement within R&D personnel working for enterprise sector. Just to give some indications about the trends (R&D personnel in full-time equivalents):

	HE sector	Government sector	Business/ enterprise sector
1998	68.6%	21.2%	9.8%
2007	56.4%	14.7%	26%

\* Private non-profit sector is not included in the tabel.

In the area of basic research ca 68% of all available research funding was spent in universities, in 2006. (there are no final numbers available for 2007 for this indicator). Regarding expenditure on applied research, the share of higher education sector was 54%.

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

2007 data: total percentage of GDP spent on R&D - 1.14% or 2 816 983 EEK.

This includes:

- state expenditure - 0.52% GDP or 1 240 100 EEK
- business sector expenditure - 0.47% GDP or 1 131 200 EEK
- higher education sector expenditure - 0.00% or 5 000 000 EEK
- non-profit sector expenditure - 0.01% or 23 500 000 EEK

- foreign funding - 0.13% or 317 200 EEK

Funding for PhD students has following elements: PhD students' monthly scholarships during 12 months, state subsidy for the education and training (regular state funding in the form of state-commission) and funding within larger research projects that are run by the established researchers.

There is also a smaller grant scheme for young researchers run by the State Chancellory in the areas of strategic importance for the Government.

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

Yes

No

If Yes, please specify:

There have been two surveys on the graduates of all HE cycles (2005, 2008), including graduates on PhD level. The analysis is based on the personalised social tax information from the Estonian Tax and Customs Board. The analysis is multi-dimensional and includes many aspects out of which most important are

- overview on economic sectors where graduate have taken up a jobs 1,2,3,4, or 5 years after graduation, and;
- estimated average salary levels of graduates within the field of study or graduation level (first, second or third cycle) 1,2,3,4, or 5 years after graduation.

## 6. Access<sup>6</sup> 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

Based on legislation, all first cycle programs need to give access to second cycle.

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

Not relevant.

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

<sup>6</sup> Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention: "Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education."

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>
have work experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

Restrictions are in force for the second cycle studies in professional higher education institutions where graduates of the first cycle need to have at least one year of work experience for continuing their studies in a second cycle. The work experience of a student is required to be in the broad area of a particular study program. It is within autonomy of professional HEI to decide exact requirements for admission.

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

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

all students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
work experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" 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

Based on legislation, all second cycle programs need to give access to third cycle.

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

Not relevant.

c) any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles

## 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

Statistics on "new bachelors" in 2006/07 academic year showed that only 44.4% of graduates continued their studies on the following academic year. Such a moderate number reflects the booming status of the economy at that particular time. In 2007, unemployment rates were very low and employers' often did not look for new personnel based on formal qualifications.

According to the statistics from the Income Tax and Customs Board (2006) on average 85% of "new" bachelors found a job in their first year after the graduation (that included also part-time jobs during the continuing studies). The data panel, however, does not give information regarding the nature of jobs of "new" bachelors. The unemployment figure for "new" bachelors was 2%, and that decreased close to nil on later years. The rest of the graduates stayed in maternity leave or went to military service.

The statistics for labour force participation (based on Tax and Customs Board data) for "professional bachelors" (or graduates from the programs of professional higher education as the name is in Estonian) did not differ significantly from "new bachelors".

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:

Legally, there are no restrictions for BA holders to enter public service, however, the functions they can perform are sometimes of assisting nature. It is up to each public authority to define the formal educational requirements for each civil service position.

## 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 prepared<sup>7</sup>?

Yes  No

**Comment** The national QF for higher education has been adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers within the "Higher Education Standard" as of 16.08 2007 (decision no 207, RT I 2007, 50, 346) coming into force 1.09.2009.

The overall national QF was adopted by the Parliament within the Professions' Act on May 28, 2008 (published RTI, 13.06.2008, 24, 156).

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

Yes  No

**Comment**

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

Yes  No

**Comment**

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

Yes  No

**Comment**

**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

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<sup>7</sup> A national framework of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA



**Comment** The preparation of the legislative amendments were worked out by the working group composed of all relevant stakeholders (including employers and labor unions representatives).

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**

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**

i) Has the self-certification report been published?

Yes       No

**Comment**

*Please add any additional comments if necessary:*

**Comment**

## NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA (ESG)<sup>8</sup>

### 9. Reviewing the QA system against the ESG<sup>9</sup> 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) It is planned for  
the second half of 2009

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

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:

- Knowledge distribution and mapping of the current internal QA practice as well as learning from partners' experience and training for HEI staff as part of the LÜKKA project as described earlier (p.1)  
- Internal QA in the form of collecting feedback from graduates and employers has been part of the requirement for positive accreditation of programs since 1996. (when the formal accreditation procedures were established).

• 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

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

<sup>9</sup> 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.

Although, all HEI-s have had internal QA mechanisms in some form always, the formal requirement for a HEI to have an internal QA systems for institutional performance has been introduced only recently, since fall 2008. According to the law all HEI-s need to pass institutional accreditation in every 7 years. The current practice for internal QA systems is diverse, often these QA efforts are related to the accreditation process for study programs (HEI-s needed to carry-out self-evaluation and meet other requirements prescribed by accreditation regulations).

During the period of 2005-2007 the special development project (LÜKKA) was carried out by the larger institutions with the aim of strengthening the knowledge about QA practice. Within the project activities like mapping the main and supporting processes for universities and professional higher education institutions, developing performance indicators and model QA handbook were done.

There is also a special Quality Committee under the auspices of Estonian Rectors' Conference with the mandate to monitor the quality related aspects in public and private universities.

In connection with the new requirement for institutional accreditation the centrally coordinated support for training the HEI-s personnel will continue in forthcoming years, funded by special development program called PRIMUS.

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

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.

Legal requirement that is compulsory to follow by 1.09.2009.

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 independent and correct information about the accreditation and licencing status of programs is publicly available via the Estonian Education Information System EHIS. <http://www.ehis.ee/>

## 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

There are different means that can be considered being part of the external QA system. Three main ones are:

- accreditation procedures that base on the self-evaluation reports and international peer visits;
- monitoring visits of the Ministry of Education and Research officials with the aim of inspecting the accordance of HEI-s' activities on legislation,
- follow-up visits by the Accreditation Center for reviewing the implementation of suggestions given by accreditors (as an opportunity prescribed in the legislation).

Currently, all HEI-s in Estonia have had experience of external QA in the form of accreditation. Since 1997/98 1275 programs have been part of the accreditation. Out of these 974 were assessed to be on a level to give a positive assessment for 7 years, 260 programs received assessment of conditional accreditation (positive assessment for 3 years) and for 41 programs external evaluation resulted with negative assessment. The detailed overview about the Estonian accreditation system is provided in stocktaking report for 2004-2005.

Another important development is establishing the Estonian Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance since 1.01.2009. The Agency will serve as a competence center for the Estonian HEI-s. According to the legislation the agency shall be given an independent status for all QA decisions. The Agency will emerge on the bases of the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Center (founded in 1996).

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

Yes  No

If **No**, please specify:

c) does your external quality assurance system cover all higher education<sup>10</sup>

Yes  No

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

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

<sup>10</sup> 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.

- |                          |   |                             |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| - 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"/> |

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 second half 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:

INQAAHE (The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)

CEE Network (The Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)

EQAN (Eurasian Quality Assurance Network)



*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)

Awarding of Diploma Supplement is free of charge to all students. For the graduates of Bachelor programs it is awarded on the request of a student. To the graduates of professional higher education, master and PhD programs it is awarded automatically.

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* English
- 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**

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** There is no need for DS in English or Russian languages. For all other languages official translations are required.

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** Additional documents are not required in the case of presenting the original copy of a document certifying the granting of access to higher education. If original documents are not presented, then presented copy needs to be authenticated notarially or officially.

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** At the time when DS was introduced there were special information seminars etc. At the moment the issue has not been in agenda for employers' or for any other group.

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

Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents<sup>11</sup> of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

a) Does appropriate legislation comply with the Lisbon Convention?

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please demonstrate how it is achieved: LRC was ratified by the Estonian Parliament 1.04.1998. The recognition procedures are regulated in more details by the Decree No. 89 of 6 April 2006 "Conditions and Procedure for Assessment and Academic Recognition of Documents certifying Education Completed in Foreign State and for Use of Title of Qualification Granted in Education system of Foreign State"

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:  
Issues falling under that matter are regulated by the Decree "Conditions and Procedure for Assessment and Academic Recognition of Documents Certifying Education Completed in Foreign Education System and for Use of Title of Qualification Granted in Foreign Education System " .

<sup>11</sup> 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)

ii) Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

**The para 3 states following (in Decree “Conditions and Procedure for Assessment and Academic Recognition of Documents Certifying Education Completed in Foreign Education System and for Use of Title of Qualification Granted in Foreign Education System “):**

**" (2)The assessment and recognition of qualifications issued through transnational educational programmes and study periods shall be based on the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education adopted by the Lisbon Convention Committee in Riga on 6 June 2001 and the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees adopted in Strasbourg on 9 June 2004".**

**Issues related to joint programs and degrees are in more details regulated at University Act para 22-1 - 22-2. The regulations adopted are bound to the recommendations of recognition of joint degrees and EUA suggestions for QA for joint masters.**

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

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

**See above the previous point.**

**Additionally, on December 6, 2007 Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia’s Higher Education Institutions was signed by six public universities. Later, bigger private institutions and state professional higher education institutions have joined the Agreement to apply these principles also in their internationalization practice.**

**The signatory parties have prescribed to the aim of providing solely quality education, a modern work environment and the support services necessary for foreign nationals residing in Estonia. The agreed principles are the foundation for any internationalisation-related actions, including not funded from the national budget and services provided outside the Estonian territory. The Agreement foresees responsibilities to provide timely and relevant information regarding higher education studies (including, accreditation results, the content and workload of a curriculum, quality requirements, linguistic competence required and services provided by HEI-s).**

**In the event that a HEI uses commercial agents in recruiting international students, the agents must also be bound by the requirements stipulated in the Agreement.**

**The Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education was used as one of the basic documents for founding discussion for the Agreement.**

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  
For principles of assessment and academic recognition the Governmental Decree establishes a direct link with LRC and its subsidiary documents.

ii) recognition if no substantial differences can be proven

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level  
See above.

iii) demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level  
Individual assessment of each diploma. In the event of substantial difference, the explanation is given what is the substance of differences.

iv) provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please describe how it is done in practice According to the Governmental decree the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre is the competent authority for assessment of foreign qualifications and qualifications issued through transnational educational programmes granting access to higher education and certifying higher education and of study periods. As the competent authority of assessment, the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre shall provide:

- 1) reliable and relevant information on education systems and qualifications of foreign states and institutions providing these;
- 2) reliable and relevant advice and information to competent authorities for academic recognition for the academic recognition of foreign qualifications and qualifications issued through transnational educational programmes and of the study periods.
- 3) assessment and comparison of foreign qualifications
- 4) providing information about foreign higher education systems and qualifications
- 5) providing information about the Estonian higher education system and qualifications
- 6) contact point for professional recognition
- 7) implementation of Bologna process in Estonia (recognition issues)

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

**The services of ENIC/ NARIC for academic recognition are used by the public as well as private sector organisations. Also, higher education institutions use the Center's services, especially for the assessment of diplomas from third country HEI-s as there is limited experience for the fair assessment.**

**Estonian ENIC/ NARIC representatives are active internationally in various forms.**

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

LRC and supplementary documents are fully in enforce in Estonia, no further action is needed on legislation.

## 15. Stage of implementation of ECTS<sup>12</sup>

Describe the implementation of ECTS in your country.

a) Please include the percentage of the total number of higher education programmes<sup>13</sup> in which all programme components are linked with ECTS credits

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

National credit system is compaticle with ECTS. After September 1, 2009 only ECTS will be in use (Government Decree from August 2007).

b) Are ECTS credits linked with learning outcomes<sup>14</sup> 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:

The current credit pint system is based on students work-load (40 hours work equals 1 credit point). Credits are used for both accumulation and transfer.

<sup>12</sup> Please refer to definitions in the ECTS User's guide,

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/guide\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/guide_en.html)

<sup>13</sup> Except doctoral studies

<sup>14</sup> 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

According to the University Act "credit point" means an unit in which study load is calculated. One credit point corresponds to 40 hours or one week of study by a student. The study load of one academic year is 40 credit points.

Since 1.09.2009 Estonia will adopt ECTS system, using both learning outcomes and credit points. Regarding other aspects of ECTS - we will maintain the national grading system also in the future.

i) is it compatible with ECTS? Yes  No

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

40 national credit points equals to 60 ECTS credits.

d) Are you taking any action to improve understanding of learning outcomes?

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please explain:

There is centrally coordinated support program for dissemination of information on learning outcomes, also there are trainings available. The program is supported via the European Union Social Fund resources.

e) Are you taking any actions to improve measurement and checking of student workload?

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please explain:

HEI-d have internal QA assurance mechanisms for checking students' workload (routine feedback collections as an input for curricula development). There are also appealing mechanisms available for students, these are more established in larger institutions.

f) Are you taking any actions to assist HE staff or other stakeholders in applying ECTS.

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please explain:

There are centrally organised development work and trainings for academic staff to use learning outcomes' approach. All these activities are funded by European Social Fund resources.

In general, using credit point system is widely in use already since the beginning of 1990's. Currently, it is often used also by HEI-s for activities in LLL areas - offering refreshment or continuous courses.

## 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:

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

Yes  No

**If Yes**, please specify: The Government Decree stipulates on very broad terms the aims and general principles for recognising previous study results and professional experience. (The Higher Education Standard, Chapter 5 para 33-1 - 33-4.)

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: The legislation has created opportunities for RPL, more specific regulations are adopted separately by each HEI.

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

Comprehensively  Some  A little  None

Please describe the current situation:

It is rather difficult to describe the situation briefly as the adopted practices are very heterogeneous. There are examples of practice like accreditation of learning that has taken place in schools for young scientists, or the excellent results in sport competition in international level. For most HEI-d this practice is, however, rather new and regulations are only emerging and their practical application is under discussion.

The application of RPL is somewhat easier in the areas where there is a high demand for specialists and qualification requirements for specialists in this area are set by the Government (e.g. teachers).



## 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.

The main policy instrument for creating flexible learning paths is related to the considerable autonomy institutions have in setting their admission criteria.

Measures offered are following:

- open university structures do not require certificates of state examinations for admission, the certificate for secondary education (from people who have completed their high school studies before state examinations were introduced in mid 1990-s) is considered sufficient. The admission to open education programs is based on a certificate of upper secondary school. The measure facilitates learning of more "mature" students in the age of 30+;
- similar kind of opportunity is provided for graduates of vocational education institutions to facilitate their entrance to higher education programs. This opportunity is mostly used by the professional higher education institutions;
- special support for students with Russian language background. Students may get an extra year for learning, with usual social guarantees;
- special study opportunities for people with disabilities. In the case of need, Ministry of Education and Research covers the extra costs for support services that makes participation in programs possible.

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

The national regulation for RPL state that HEI-s may consider previous learning and working experience throughout the programs with only one big limitation - in order to graduate HEI a student cannot use RPL for the final work (theses or project or exam), that has to be "one and only".

Another example is the admission of VET school graduates into HE programs described under previous point.

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  
There are special centrally coordinated support programs for training of staff and exchanging the good practice.

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  
There has been discussion of easing the entry requirements for more "mature" students by not requiring formal qualifications of the previous education qualification and allowing of RPL. However, the respective decisions are put on hold until 2011 due to the relicensing process of HEI-s that will start in 2009.

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  
E-university courses would be another major example of flexible learning paths. These opportunities add flexibility to the learning processes especially for the people from the regions, outside of two bigger cities. About 37% of all students enrolled in the Estonian HEI-s used e-learning opportunities in connection to their studies (survey from 2007). On average, one user participates in two e-courses. Due to the fact that many of our students work next to their studies e-courses provide very highly regarded flexibility of choosing the study time.  
  
Another example is that due to the situation that majority of our students work during their studies, most of the institutions have adjusted their study schedule according to the needs of students.

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 Modular structure of programs - where learning outcomes are described as well on modul level - may help

accreditation of prior learning and work experience as one does need to demonstrate obtained learning outcomes on a larger scale not per course.

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,

Unfortunately, there has not been a policy evaluation for these measures.

## JOINT DEGREES

### 18. Establishment and recognition of joint degrees<sup>15</sup>

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

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)?

<sup>15</sup> 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.

Very difficult to make generalizations as examples of cooperation come from various disciplines.

e) Estimate the number of joint programmes in your country

About 20.

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

The new legislation allowing joint programs and degrees is enforce since 1.09.2008. There will be special funding available to encourage joint programs with foreign institutions as well as within cooperation of domestic HEI-s.

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

Yes. The above mentioned funding stream will provide support for students to study in foreign institutions in the event they have been immatriculated into the study program offered jointly by the Estonian and foreign HEI. The support will be available to Estonian HEI since 2008/09 academic year.

On third cycle level, there are other type of special measures for facilitating interinstitutional cooperation (doctoral schools).

## 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?

There are three major action lines:

- developing legislative framework for visas and living permits for researchers from third countries;
- provision of financial support for mobility purposes;
- improving the recognition practices.

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: The enforcement of European Union Council's directives for admitting third country nationals for the purposes of conducting scientific research (approved by the Parliament in 14.11.2007).

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

Yes  No

**Please add** appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Scholarship schemes for mobile students from Estonian HEI-s

- Kristjan Jaak for short visits abroad
- For full PhD-degree studies in foreign universities.

There are different schemes available (support up to 21 days, 5 months or 1 year) and the size of the support depends of the country of destination (calculations are based on cost differencies).

For mobile staff there are support provided via the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

For last two years there are also special scholarships provided for PhD students coming outside Estonia. Two schemes are offered: 1) for degree studies on full-time, and 2) short-period studies up to 10 months.

For the period 2007-2013 an additional support program will be available for students in second and third cycle programs. This is a program supported by the European Social Fund resources. The aim is to integrate mobility opportunities - of at least 5 months - to all PhD programs by 2015 and give opportunity for international networking for considerable number of second cycle students.

d) Are study periods taken abroad recognised?

Yes  No

**Please add** appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

e) Is there accommodation for mobile students and staff?

Yes  No

**Please add** appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Usually, the support services of HEI-s for international students and staff help visitors/ guests in their relocation either directly or by providing necessary information.

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

Yes  No

**Please add** appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

Special support measures for all PhD level students, and considerable number of master students

## 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. The administration of the current students' grants system does not support the portability. However, students are supported via the state budget to cover their costs while mobile. The special mobility schemes take into account the differences of price levels between Estonia and other countries.

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"

Our activities in the promotional area on national level have started on a systematic basis only in 2008 when special unit was formed in the Foundation Archimedes (responsible to academic exchange programs on behalf of the Estonian Government). Due to this rather recent development we do not have concrete strategies in place yet, however, we are in the process of developing action plans. Yet, Estonian HEI-s have worked for international promotion on institutional level for number of years.

**b) What has your country done to:**

i) improve information on the EHEA outside Europe?

As part of the campaign "Study in ..." the development of central website for introducing the higher education system in Estonia

<http://www.smartestonia.ee/index.php?page=72&>

Dissemination of information about the Estonian higher education system via the Estonian embassies in third countries.

Participation in the EU funded and other international higher education fairs with the Estonian booth.

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

- Development of the national higher education brand as part of the national promotion activities (lead by the Foundation Enterprise Estonia).

- Offering nationally funded scholarship schemes for foreign students.

iii) strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education?

Estonian HEI-s participate in three Erasmus Mundus joint master program consortias (the first programming period)

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

Signing or preparing bilateral agreements with countries outside EHEA.

v) improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions?

There are preparations for recognition agreements with countries that are not part of LRC where there is a student exchange. However, all recognition procedures inside Estonia are based on LRC (independent from whether or not a certain country has signed LRC).

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.

The national strategy for higher education internationalization foresaw the agreement of code of conduct for internationalization by HEI-s. Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions is signed by 21 Estonian HEI-s active in internationalization (including public, state and private institutions). The Agreement has taken into account the principles prescribed in OECD/ UNESCO Guidelines.

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

Institutions have made the Agreement public for all international students. In the event there is a problem in following the principles of the Agreement by HEI there is a system of appeals for students.

The application of principles of the Agreement by signatory institutions is organised by the special Monitoring Committee under the auspices of Estonian Rectors' Conference.

ii) incoming higher education provision?

Yes  No

**If Yes** please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

Monitoring whether providers satisfy legal requirements for offering higher education programs in Estonia.

## **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.

- Limited funding for higher education is a foremost threat for the sustainable development of the sector;
- Crucially important for the future of higher education and industry is the strengthening of PhD training, and supporting technology transfer between higher education institutions and industry. Today the contacts between the academic community and the private sector are of a limited nature;
- insufficient internationalization in Estonian HE sector may strengthen the image among youth that it is more interesting to study abroad. The issue of brain-drain is getting more importance.
- decreasing number of students in age cohort of 15-17 is another aspect that will have a major impact to Estonian HEI-s in near future.



## 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: [secr@bologna2009benelux.org](mailto:secr@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?

- Male students form only 40% of all students. The participation of male students has decreased since mid-90s, especially within the age-group over 25. Also, drop-out rates are higher for males than for females (2004/05 respectively, 17.6% for male and 11.6% for female students). The main reasons for that are considered to be rigid regulations for social guarantees (i.e. part-time students do not qualify for study loans). On third cycle level the gender distribution is much more equal regarding graduation - in 2007, 51.6% of all graduates were female, however, regarding enrolled PhD students the similar trend appears - only 44% of all PhD students were male.

- Youth graduating from upper secondary schools where the main language of instruction is Russian has slightly more difficulties in entering state subsidized HEI-s. Data from 2007 show that success rate for youth who had the Estonian as the main language of instruction is 8% higher: the share of upper secondary school graduates that obtained state subsidised study was 48% for youth coming from schools where the main language of instruction was Russian in comparison of 55% of youth coming from schools where the main language was Estonian. However, statistics for students who interrupt their studies in higher education

level is higher for those who have graduated upper secondary schools with Russian as the language of instruction;

- there are equality issues in accessing HE for youth coming from family background where parents do not have third level qualifications. Children of a family where parents have third level qualifications are 20% more likely to take up studies on HE level, than youth whose parents do not have similar qualifications.

- there are limited possibilities for HE participation for students with physical disabilities. Currently, the statistics does not cover all students, however, available data shows that only 0,05% (ca 30 - 35 persons) of all students do have special support measures for studying in higher education level. This data represents only students, who apply for support. Generally, the obstacles for participation are: (older) buildings do not have special equipment to allow access for physically disabled students but also low awareness among teachers and other students about needs of students with disabilities. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs there about 1500 persons with disabilities in the age group of 16-29;

- in admission to HE level the distribution of high school graduates on region wide is not equally represented (difference might be up to 20%).The causes of problems can be different but one of the main ones is that there are too many small upper secondary schools and because of the small size they cannot provide equally strong quality of teaching.

At the same time there are also positive examples, like high proportion of students over 30 years of age in first and second cycle studies is relatively high by international standards. In 2007/08 the relevant figure was 20.1%. Also, the number of graduates from secondary vocational education institutions who have continued their studies in HE is relatively high - in 2007 8.7% of VET graduates (KKPB) continued their studies in HEI-s.

There is also a positive trend of increasing share of graduates from upper secondary schools where the main language of instruction is Russian to continue their further studies in higher education level. In 2005 the percentage of graduates who continued their studies was 60%. By 2007, the ration has increased to 67%.

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).

Students' social dimension is mentioned in two main strategies:

- Estonian Higher Education Strategy for 2006-2015;
- Life long learning (LLL) strategy 2005 - 2008.

The HE Strategy for 2006-2015 states the following "In order to make higher education more accessible and to include non-traditional learners in the higher

education system, measures will be developed which will enable the combination of studies, work and family life, and the taking into account of previous studies and work experience, as a significant part of completing the study programme. The system of recognition of previous learning and working experience (RPL) is applied on all levels in all fields of studies".

However, it must be stated that there have been little changes for social dimension since the last stocktaking report from 2007. The expectation has been that a special task force whom the Minister of Education and Research trusted (in spring 2008) the planning of new concept of students' support measures would complete its work by the end of 2008 and we will make steps towards means-tested support system. Unfortunately, financial situation of 2008 and expectations for forthcoming years have put all the plans for extending the support for students on hold. The current minister of education and research Tõnis Lukas has stated that the new principles of funding students' support structures will become available after 2011.

At the same time - the amendments of University Act from this year give HEI more flexibility in setting admission criteria for different student groups, incl disabled students. Also, there is a special financial support scheme available for students with physical disabilities during the period of 2007-2013. Actions will be supported from state budget and from ESF-funded development programme.

In order to increase access to higher education in regions, the opportunities provided by e-learning will be more actively utilised. Within the E-university framework HEI-s can provide e-courses in regional joint e-learning centres (mostly, university colleges). In the centres it will be possible to study any of the programmes of the higher education institutions that have joined E-university. Special funding is provided for support to such services like tutors or education specialists to make the technology based learning easy.

For lifelong learning there will be a goal to ensure access for 12.5% of the 25–64-year old population in life-long learning programs. In order to achieve this aim, the tax regime will be made more flexible and supportive also for studies in formal education.

For improving Estonian language skills of Russian-speakers there are programs available to create short flexible language-courses, improve methods of language-teaching and testing and issue new course materials and textbooks.

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.

The instruments provided currently are:

- the largest policy instrument is provision of subsidised learning opportunities in higher education level for at least 50% of graduates of upper secondary schools. The policy goal is defined in the higher education strategy document for 2006-2015;
- funding for students' grants. Basic allowance is meant to cover the minimum expenses for lodging, transport, food, clothing and study materials. Payments are allocated to students based on academic results, by the HEI-s. Supplementary allowance is meant to cover any additional residential and transport expenses of students, whose residence is located outside the local government in which the educational institution at which they study is located or outside the bordering local governments;
- state guaranteed students' loans for nearly every student.
- special support scheme for students in need. HEI-s are entitled to use up 5% of the basic allowance fund resources for students' financial assistance if they are enrolled in full-time or day study and their economic circumstances do not allow for further study (persons in demonstrated financial need; or with medium, moderate, severe or profound disability; persons who are orphans, from large families, parents of under-age children or whose parents are unemployed or retired, etc).
- pursuant to Income Tax Act a person is entitled to exemption from income tax in the extent of the amount spent on education and training costs.
- grants for studying abroad. Special instruments to cover all costs related studying abroad.
- funding for HEI-s supporting the assessment for prior learning and work experiences;
- transition to competence-based study programmes supported by information and training for academic staff, incl. covering the topics of modern teaching methods and assessment;
  - funding for learning Estonian language;
- introduction in legislation students' right for more wide counselling and guidance.

Regarding the problem of higher drop-out rates for boys in secondary schools (as a result of what less males continue their studies in higher education level) different instruments are used like boarding schools, more individualised study opportunities, teachers' training, etc.

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?

Data collection for students' social dimension has been actively initiated by the Federation of Estonian Students Unions and financially supported by the Ministry of Education and Research (ESF resources). Estonia is taking part of

Eurostudent - III and Eurostudent -IV surveys (2005/06 and 2008). In connection to that there are efforts to analyse the socio-economic situation of students as well as the assessment of the effectiveness of the support system operating on the basis of study performance in the creation of equal opportunities regarding access to higher education.

Adequate statistics is available via Estonian education information system for monitoring the trends within the system: graduation time and rate, termination of studies, etc.

In addition, systematic surveys are performed in the area of adult education: information on adult training needs, i.e. social and economic needs will be gathered and analyzed.

Also, special smaller-scale research is undertaken via the ESF funded development programme for 2007-2013 period to assess the impact of current policies.

### **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?

In spring 2008, the hope was to develop action plan for students' social dimension in the framework of preparing the legislative changes for relevant laws. The working group included also students' representatives. However, due to the financial difficulties all concrete plans for strengthening the students' support system are postponed. At the end of 2008, there is no formally approved action plan for social dimension in higher education. At the moment, the aim to maintain the support at least of the current level. At the same time, political negotiations about the possible features for the new means-tested support system continue.

(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).

- Provision of social guarantees to doctoral students (change of their legal status to enable them access better parental benefits, and pension schemes etc).
- provision of study allowances for part-time doctoral students;
- transfer into means-tested system of support for all students.
- provision of study allowances for disadvantaged students in part-time students, eligibility for allowance is guaranteed for the whole study period, that is not dependent of the nominal period of study time.

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

The cost of the current support system for students is annually 200.8 million EEK which is about 9.4% of costs covered by the Ministry of Education and Research for higher education (2008 data). According to the state budget project for 2009 the aim is to increase the spending for students' support to 223.5 million EEK, maintaining the overall percentage within the budget for HE on the same level.

Additionally, there is special funding available for monitoring the system, providing funding for students' with disabilities and piloting new approaches for counselling, learning outcomes' based studies, developing flexible learning paths, etc.

The fund for study allowances increased nearly 20% from 2007 to 2008 in state budget.

In 2008, legislative amendments were approved to extend allowances for PhD students from 10 month to 12 months.

The maximum limit for study loans has been increased per academic year, the maximum sum in 2008/09 academic year is 30 000 EEK, or 1915 EUR (for comparison - 2006/07 the maximum rate was 25 000 EEK or 1602 EUR).

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

There is no fixed timeline.

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

There is no special body designed for students' social dimension issues. For this topic - as for any other higher education instrument - monitoring is arranged:

- through the special advisory body for the Minister of Education and Research (The Council for Higher Education);
- ESF funded developmental programme PRIMUS has a special steering committee.

Students are represented in both bodies.

#### **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 responsible body is Ministry of Education and Research.



## **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?