

**Directorate-General
for Higher
education**

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Bologna Process 2005 – 2007

Report for France

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For the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG)

EN Version



A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Main achievements since Bergen

1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms since Bergen.

Since Bergen, the implementation of Bologna reforms in France was deepened and led to 4 main developments :

- ✓ evolution of the legislation about the award of degrees within international partnerships (joint degrees in particular) with the decree n° 2005-450 dated May 11th 2005¹ ;
- ✓ generalization of the 'LMD' reform, as we call it in France, (LMD standing for *Licence, Master, Doctorat*) to all universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) which sign 4-year contracts with the ministry of National education, Higher education and Research (MENESR) ; its extension to higher education and programmes depending on other ministries such as architecture (ie. the decree n° 2005-734 dated June 30th 2005 and two other decrees dated July 20th 2005) ; and eventually the integration of a short cycle qualification, the University degree of technology (DUT < *diplôme universitaire de technologie*) into the European higher education area (EHEA), in line with the overarching qualifications framework adopted in Bergen (ie. the decree dated August 3rd 2005 about the DUT and the EHEA) ;
- ✓ the new organization (after the decree dated April 25th 2002) of doctoral schools and doctoral programmes with the decree dated August 7th 2006 ;
- ✓ the completely revised French system for the evaluation of the quality of research and higher education, with the new evaluation Agency for research and higher education, namely the '*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*' (AERES), created by the Research planning law.

National organisation

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

Since Bergen, no significant change has come, as far as areas of activities the minister for national education, higher education and research (MENESR) is expected to deal with are concerned. The responsibility for higher education in France mainly goes to the MENESR in charge of 80% of post-secondary education, but the field of higher education is also a shared responsibility which falls within the scope of activities of other ministerial departments as well, responsible for their own higher education programmes, especially in the fields of Culture, Health, Industry, Agriculture or provided by higher education institutions depending on the ministry of the Defence.

¹ All legal texts mentioned in this report are available on the official French legal Web database : <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr>



On the other hand, a new agency for the evaluation of the quality of higher education and research was created in 2006 : the AERES (*'Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur'*) - see point 13.

In France, universities and other public higher education institutions are mainly depending on the MENESR for the number of jobs for civil servants they can have (Professors and administrative officers). The way this number is determined, like the financial support allocated by the MENESR, is based on two methods : distribution based on a similar pattern for everyone on the one hand ; and distribution based on the negotiation of the 4-year contract on the other hand. Institutions are free to use this financial support, as well as their own resources. It must be noticed that in research, universities are free to develop their own scientific activities as they wish, but they have to submit themselves to an assessment in order to have public funds. On the other hand, for their training activities, they can only set up programmes leading to national degrees once the ministry has allowed them to do so ; they can automatically get a public financial support then.

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

At the beginning of the academic year 2006, nearly 1 500 higher education institutions, public or private ones, contribute to the public service of higher education in France :

- ✓ 94 universities and higher prestigious institutions ;
- ✓ 30 university Institutes for teacher training (IUFMs, namely the *'Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres'*) ;
- ✓ 153 engineering schools ;
- ✓ 223 business, management and accountants' schools ;
- ✓ about 1000 other higher education schools.

Nearly 2.3 million students (2 274 000 exactly) are counted with, among these :

- ✓ 1 610 000 in universities ;
- ✓ 350 000 in the other public or private HEIs (including other ministries) : engineering schools, business schools, paramedical schools and schools for social care, architecture and art schools ... ;
- ✓ and 314 000 in higher education courses (STS < *'sections de techniciens supérieurs'* > – for BTS < *'brevets de techniciens supérieurs'* > ; and preparatory sections for *'grandes écoles'* (CPGE) for the *'grandes écoles'* 'competitive entrance examinations).

Partnership

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

The implementation of the so-called LMD reform (and its corollaries such as ECTS credit generalisation, design of teaching units- and semester-based programmes, and 'diploma supplement') which involves the overall French higher education system (on the basis of the framework-decree n° 2002 - 482 of April 8th 2002 implementing the EHEA principles in the French higher education system), is under the responsibility of the ministry for national education, higher education and research (MENESR).



Any change of the legal state-of-play about higher education organisation requires to consult, for texts in the making, representative bodies - such as, in particular, the CTI (*'Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur'* or Commission for Engineer Degrees), the *'Licence'* Follow-Up Committee, the Master Follow-Up Committee, Committees for DUT issues, CPC consultative Commissions involving professionals and focused on BTS for higher education issues -, where university professors and business partners are represented ; and above all, before any text is to be published, the National Council for higher education and research, the CNESER (< *'Conseil national d'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche'*) where institutions, teacher and student unions are represented on the basis of democratic elections has to be consulted.

In order to make the LMD reform's implementation easier in universities and other HEIs, especially in connection with the 4-year contracts developed by the Directorate-General for higher education, informal meetings involving the *'Bologna Promoters'* team which has 2 student representatives in it are regularly organized.

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

Students and teachers are systematically represented on the basis of democratic elections in all governing bodies that universities and other public HEIs have to set up (notably in universities, governing boards and < committees for curricula and student life called CEVUs – *'conseil des études et de la vie universitaire'* – and in national representative boards, the CNESER especially, which involves 11 student representatives out of its 60 members and where any draft text about higher education is to be presented and discussed.

Within universities, students and teachers are therefore systematically consulted, through governing bodies, on budget decisions and on any development project, particularly the institutional project, training programmes (*licences, masters, doctoral programmes* and doctoral schools) and the 4-year draft contract to be presented to the MENESR.

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

Business and social partners are associated in any reform, on the one hand, within national bodies as mentioned before (see point 4), and on the other hand, in internal bodies within institutions themselves.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

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

The overall legal framework for the so-called LMD reform, set ever since 2002 by the Decree of April 8th 2002 implementing the EHEA principles in the French higher education system and further implemented for each level of the L, M and D, was, since Bergen, subject to further developments (see point 1 above), especially for architecture programmes, doctoral programmes (see point 8 below), and the University degree of technology (DUT < *'diplôme universitaire de technologie'*) connected to LMD.



This overall framework should further develop with decrees on post-secondary education to be soon published : BTS (*'brevet de technicien supérieur'*), BTSA (*'brevet de technicien supérieur agricole'*) and post-secondary education provided in CPGE (*'classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles'*). A consulting process is also currently going on in order to bring further changes to the Master's degree, already re-organised in 2002 (by the April 25th decree), in connection with the 'Bologna dynamics' ; what is looked for in particular is to enable genuine integrated and 4-semester-based training programmes, to open up opportunities of joint '*habilitation*'² with any kind of HEIs and of degrees organised within international partnerships (following the Decree of May 11th 2005), and enhance what the 'Master's degree' actually means. Eventually, a consulting process has also been launched in order to implement the LMD approach in health programmes as well.

Therefore, from now on till 2010, the LMD reform which at the beginning of the 2006 academic year, is real for all universities and other HEIs with a 4-year contract with the State, will be implemented to the whole French higher education system.

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

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

Doctoral programmes were re-designed as early as 2002 with the Decree of April 25th. A new organization was necessary though to create a third cycle, clearly disconnected from the Master and corresponding to the PhD alone ; to further upgrade the quality of doctoral programmes, and to have doctoral schools structured in a different way. Therefore, through the main lines of the Research planning law of April 18th 2006 and the Decree of August 7th 2006 about doctoral programmes, the core objective is to ensure doctoral candidates a top level training and a better recognition of their PhDs, both on the academic level and in industry or service industries. Based on the genuine capacity of institutions, doctoral programmes provide doctoral candidates with the most recent state-of-the-art of knowledge.

Doctoral programmes, a research training, training through research and innovation training, are provided in doctoral schools accredited by the ministry in charge of higher education in the framework of their institutional contract. Lasting three years after graduation and award of a national Master's degree or on the basis of the recognition of a similar level, doctoral programmes lead to a Ph.D, after writing a thesis and presenting it before a qualified jury.

Adopted by all at the beginning of the academic year 2000, doctoral schools are linked to higher education institutions ; each one melds several research teams responsible for students' education and career potential. They provide the Ph.D graduate-to-be with high scientific supervision and training to integration into the labour market. Currently there are 305 doctoral schools (< september 2006 data).

The new decree about doctoral programmes is characterized by four main lines :

- ✓ created by law, doctoral schools are responsible for structuring doctoral programmes and contribute to make them more visible and attractive at the national, European and international level : a doctoral school links together, on a given spot, high quality scientific strengths into a coherent cluster of thematic issues ;

² '*Habilitation*' - Explanatory note : the French '*habilitation*' concept is not quite the same as the 'accreditation' one, since in France it refers to the State entitling a French higher institution to award one or several degree(s) on the basis of assessments made by several bodies, either evaluation bodies or accreditation bodies (such as the CTI – '*Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur*' – for instance).



- ✓ doctoral schools are accredited by the State on the basis of assessments made by the evaluation Agency for research and higher education (AERES): doctoral schools accreditations specify the scientific fields within the scope of their own activities, making it possible for doctoral candidates to register for, and be awarded a Ph.D in that field ;
- ✓ doctoral schools are acknowledged as a ‘vocational experience in research’ ;
- ✓ it is possible for any higher education institution to be accredited after a national assessment, provided it brings a significant contribution to scientific and academic activities to the doctoral school.

Made on the basis of a wide national consultation and in keeping with the provisions mentioned in the European Charter for Researchers, especially concerning the status of doctoral candidates, this text opens up doctoral programmes to all scientific partnerships with nothing but the care for excellence-seeking.

At the end of the 2005 academic year, 70 200 doctoral candidates (with 30% foreign students) were studying in the 305 doctoral schools with an accreditation by the MENESR. In 2005-2006, out of these 70 200, 12 000 doctoral candidates have a research grant and 1 200 of them have a CIFRE agreement (< industrial agreement for training through research).

Studies leading to a Ph.D last 3 years full time, generally speaking, and integrate a theoretical research training besides individual research supervised by a PhD supervisor, and eventually require a thesis defence.

No ECTS credits can be attributed whatsoever.

Actions are undertaken in order to enhance specific skills doctoral candidates have been developing when studying and favour their integration into the labour market, including other activities than research ; and in order to have the Ph.D recognized in collective agreements and to improve the ways of their integration into firms as well. The Ph.D which can be awarded by universities and public higher education institutions allowed to do so, alone or jointly, by a MENESR Decree, is part of the qualifications framework.



Access to the next cycle

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

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

All Bachelor ('*Licence*')s holders – that is, 180 ECTS credits - can have access to programmes leading to the Master's degree. The Master's degree – that amounts to 120 ECTS credits – is the degree required to apply to doctoral programmes. Doctoral candidates are enrolled by doctoral schools themselves (see above point 6). No first cycle degrees can enable anyone to have access to programmes leading to a PhD and doctoral programmes are not organised in ECTS credits.

Implementation of national qualifications framework

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

Since, through its '*habilitation*' decisions taken on the basis of independent assessments, the State gives the guarantee of quality for higher education qualifications, whatever their level, the concept of national qualifications framework has been real for a long time in France.

The care to enhance the qualifications readability in order to make it easier for graduates to get a job and move from one job to another underpins the national Register of qualifications (RNCP < '*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*') ; created by the Law of January 17th 2002, it is aiming to 'provide people and enterprises a constantly updated information about degrees and vocational qualifications as well as on qualification certificates which are mentioned on the lists set by national joint commissions for employment with professional organizations from various economic sectors (< Decret n° 2002 - 616 of April 26th 2002). The RNCP is the French national qualifications³ framework and is currently undergoing a thorough reshaping process for all the programmes design and content. It is available on the Internet (www.cncp.gouv.fr).

As far as higher education is concerned, the MENESR clearly underlined that any higher education qualifications, post-secondary education degrees which recognize the successful conclusion of a *Licence*, *Master* and *Doctorat*, as well as the short vocational cycle (DUT and BTS degrees), are professionally-oriented and are clearly connected to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA.

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

Ever since 1999, in order to enhance the employability of the '*Licence*' (Bachelor)'s degree holders, a vocational '*Licence*' was created ; it made the post-secondary education up to 3 years after the '*Baccalauréat*' ('*Bac +3*' as we call it in France) richer, consistent with the principle adopted by the Bologna Process about the labour market orientation of the 1st training cycle. At the end of the academic year 2005, 1 438 vocational *Licences* were counted, with nearly 40 000 enrolled students) ; at the beginning of the 2006 academic year, 225 new vocational *Licences* were created.

³ Qualifications : what the notion of qualifications actually means in the Lisbon Convention, that is : degrees, titles and certificates.



The issue of the link between higher education and jobs, of the labour market orientation of programmes provided at university is a major concern in France and has been, all the year 2006 long, at the core of all the debates. Currently, 37% of people quitting initial training – that is, about 280 000 young people a year – hold a higher education qualification. For 53.6% of them, this qualification recognizes a successful long cycle (Bachelor – *Licence* -' s degree and further than that).

In order to improve the graduates' insertion into the labour market, and although the way higher education and jobs are fitting with one another also depends on the economic situation of the labour market, the State is currently developing the following action lines :

- ✓ the labour market orientation of higher education with the increasing sandwich courses formula, the increasing amount of training schemes in enterprises, of partnerships with the economic sector ;
- ✓ the increasing evaluation of the quality of the Higher Education-Jobs relationship ;
- ✓ the improvement of student information and study and career guidance for students ;
- ✓ the balanced distribution, throughout France, of the labour market oriented programmes.

Quality assurance

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

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

Priority given to the evaluation of quality was mentioned in the April 2002 LMD texts, as in France, the State alone is responsible, and the one and only, for the quality of national higher education qualifications that HEIs are accredited (*'habilités'*) to award, on the basis of periodical external assessments (every 4 years for a university). Since 2004, within the framework of the university contract policy, universities are strongly encouraged to have their own institutional development based on a genuine self-evaluation process.

A whole set of indicators about students, programmes and qualifications, about research, and about resources help institutions in their own internal evaluation processes, according to the European Standards and Guidelines adopted in Bergen or according to the Handbook on Standards for quality management in French HEIs published by the CNE (*'Comité National d'Evaluation'*).

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

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

Until 2006 separate bodies were operational for the evaluation of programmes, of research and of institutions. As far as the HEIs' evaluation was concerned, it was done by the CNE on the basis of a self-evaluation, followed by a site visit and an assessment made by experts which was concluded by a report submitted to the institution concerned for any reaction before the report was made publicly available.



In the framework of the Research Agreement (*'Pacte pour la Recherche'*) with its legal set of measures, based on the Research Planning Law of April 18th 2006, France decided to deeply renovate its evaluation system, to adapt it to the European and international context, and to create a unique, independent body responsible for assessing, on the basis of transparent homogeneous criteria and far from any lobby, both higher education and research, that is to say, the new evaluation Agency for research and higher education (AERES < *'Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur'*) ; the way this new independent administrative body is organised and the way it operates were set by the Decree n° 2006-1334 of November 3rd 2006.

The AERES has the remit to assess :

- ✓ research and higher education institutions ;
- ✓ activities developed by research units of these institutions ;
- ✓ programmes and higher education qualifications ;
- ✓ and procedures for the assessment of research institution staffs.

The AERES will be evaluating but won't decide anything and its assessment procedures, the *curriculum vitae* of its members and scientists it will rely on, on the basis of proposals made by research and higher education players, as well as the outcomes of its works, following a contradictory debate with the assessed body, will be made public systematically.

The actual setting up of the AERES in 2007 will trigger off, in order to avoid any overlapping and double function, the closing down of current evaluation bodies, such as the CNE, the CNER (< *'Comité national d'évaluation de la recherche'* < National evaluation council for research) and the MSTP (*'mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique'* < Scientific, technical and educational mission) which is currently legally connected to the MENESR.

Level of student participation

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

Since 2004 and according to the spirit of the European standards about quality adopted in Bergen, the CNE has increasingly been involving students in its institutional evaluations. Therefore students were involved in 30% of the assessments made since then.

Systematically represented within HEIs on the basis of democratic elections, students are also fully involved in the internal evaluation processes developed by these institutions.

Level of international participation

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

The CNE (*'Comité national d'évaluation'*) – National Committee for Evaluation - and the CTI (< *'Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs'*) – Commission for Engineer Degrees - systematically involve international experts in their assessment processes ; these bodies are, the two of them, members of ENQA and of INQAAHE as well. The new agency AERES, which is to start its works and is currently in the making, will be run by a board with twenty-five members, French, European Community or international members, acknowledged by the quality of their own scientific works, as required by article 9 of the Research Planning Law of April 18th 2006.



Recognition of degrees and study periods

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

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

In order to improve the readability of learning outcomes (knowledge, competences and skills), the principle to issue the 'Diploma Supplement' or descriptive appendix attached to the diploma, was adopted by the decree n° 2002 - 482 of April 8th 2002 implementing the EHEA principles in the French higher education system, and then mentioned in each text which sets the ways each qualification is to be awarded.

This 'Diploma Supplement' does not concern all the HEIs in France yet but its actual implementation is being developed gradually. This document is free of charge and is issued automatically in French and in an other widely spoken European language as HEIs prefer ; it corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

In 2007 a small share of students will actually get it.

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

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

(* *Supplementary documents : 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) .*

As early as October 4th 1999, France ratified the 1997 the so-called 'Lisbon Convention' or Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region. Through recognition procedures developed by the national ENIC-NARIC centre (externalized body from the MENESR and currently connected to the CIEP since 2004), and via universities in the framework of recognition of prior learning, France sees to implement the above-mentioned principles about transparency and transparent reliable criteria. On this issue, it must be reminded that the requirement to give the grounds on which individual decisions, especially negative decisions, are based upon, is in France a fundamental principle required by the law n° 79-587 of July 11th 1979 about the justification for documents from the administration and about the improvement of relations between public services and citizens. Such a principle is of course to be implemented for decisions on academic recognition taken by the HEIs, and based on the *ad hoc* jurys advice.

In order to make the development and the recognition of genuine joint degrees easier – a joint degree is a single degree with the joint signature of several foreign partner universities put on the single diploma -, France made its legislation change by the Decree of May 11th 2005 (see points 1 and 22 in this report).



Stage of implementation of ECTS

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

The principle of implementing the European ECTS credit system for the whole French higher education system was adopted by the Decree of April 8th 2002 mentioned in point 16 above, implementing the EHEA principles in the French higher education system. This legal principle is then one of the basic pillars of each text setting the ways higher education qualifications can be awarded ; it is implemented by all universities and other institutions which signed a 4-year contract with the State (MENESR) and which therefore re-designed their whole training programmes and awards offerings in this perspective.

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

The national action plan produced to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications is attached to this report.

Lifelong learning

Recognition of prior learning

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

The movement towards full recognition of prior learning in France began in 1985 with the academic recognition and the recognition of prior learning and professional and personal skills in the perspective of access to higher education ; it was strengthened by the law of July 20th 1992 about the recognition of professional experiences. It came to a final outcome with the law on social modernisation of January 17th 2002 and the Decree n° 2002-590 of April 24th 2002, since these two legal texts broadened up opportunities for recognition of prior learning in higher education and for higher education graduation on such a basis. Indeed, from then on, arrangements for recognition of prior professional skills for graduation (VAE) mention such a principle in labour regulations and substitute it for the notion of professional experience recognition (VAP). In concrete terms, it is possible for anyone since then to have his/her professional skills recognized for a degree award, but also to have his/her skills developed from social or voluntary activities recognized as well ; through recognition of prior learning, one can also get the whole degree he/she is looking for, and not merely a part of the exams required for its award anymore. That does not mean there is an automatic right to any degree at all ; but that means there is a right given to everyone to have his/her prior experience recognized for a degree's award. In the same way, the Decree n°2002-529 of April 16th 2002 about the academic recognition of higher education period of studies allows anyone to ask for the recognition of the prior studies he/she has undertaken either in France or abroad.



In France, the Bologna Process implementation and the development of lifelong learning are closely linked to each other and are seen as parts and parcels of the same single approach and process. With the LMD pattern, within the heart of universities where the cut between initial training and continuing education is an idea which is over now and does not make sense anymore, the core idea is indeed to enable them to build up various flexible learning paths, with a teaching unit-based organisation of programmes, generalisation of ECTS credits linked to learning outcomes, broadened up recognition of prior learning, optimized paths, together with the increasing mobility between higher education training and professional life that anyone will necessarily have in the future.

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

In line with the EHEA area principles (ie. Decree of April 8th 2002, mentioned in the point 16 above) and in connection with the recognition of higher education periods of studies (ie. Decree n° 2002-529 of April 16th 2002) and the recognition of prior learning (ie. Decree n° 2002-590 of April 24th 2002), the concept of various flexible learning paths is made real with the LMD reform in France. It allows a flexible, soft, innovating approach, away from any national 'one-size-fit-for-all' framework set from the start and once for all, and stands as a strong feature of the new training programmes offerings to be built up in the French higher education system. This concept has therefore been developed for higher education programmes : the teaching-unit based organisation of programmes, the use of the ECTS tool, together with the recognition of prior learning allow flexible learning paths with unusual combinations of subject areas and knowledge, and at the same time, a coherent approach guaranteed by teaching teams for any learning path. The national feature of the degree is guaranteed by the '*habilitation*' and the acknowledgement of each single national higher education qualification is guaranteed by the State which sees to have qualifications and training programmes offerings consistent with and complementing one another, both on the national level and for a given spot.

It must be noted that the RNCP (see point 10), strongly linked to recognition of prior learning, is mentioning the ways on how to access to the training corresponding to each degree, title or certificate which is or will be registered in it.

Joint degrees

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

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

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

The building up of an attractive and competitive European higher education area requires the development of partnerships between universities from several countries in order to design common training courses and to award widely recognized joint degrees.



In order to adapt the French system to this new reality, and for all higher education degrees, whatever level, it was appropriate to set a framework :

- ✓ allowing to award joint degrees – while keeping the ‘double degree’ alive – in unquestionable quality conditions ;
- ✓ and ensuring the necessary reactivity of French institutions to make international agreements easily and quickly.

The principle we agreed on in France is simple : when a French institution is recognized by the French system to be competent to award, at a given level and in a given field, a State-guaranteed degree, from now on it can make an agreement with a foreign institution, which can award a degree at the same level and in the same field in its own country, in order to set up the training courses together and to award a joint degree. The French institution must develop the partnership in accordance with the quality requirements demanded by the French principles for evaluation and, at maximum, during the ‘*habilitation*’ period left to be run.

The quality of the international partnership, thus set up to organize the training courses and the qualification award process, and ruled by an agreement which details all the arrangements for it, will be assessed during the next cyclical national evaluation within the contract-making procedure.

This approach is therefore based on trust in arrangements for the quality assurance organization in the different countries without having to make these arrangements uniform.

All the State-guaranteed higher education degrees, university degrees and ‘*grandes écoles*’ degrees alike, are concerned : from now on, it will be possible for them to be jointly awarded with foreign institutions with the same quality ; and by doing so, it makes student and teacher mobility easier, and cooperation between French and foreign institutions as well, without creating any new binding formalities.

This new policy with an overall framework, agreed on by the three Conferences – the Rectors’ Conference < ‘*Conférence des présidents d’universités*’> (CPU), the Confederation of the Heads of engineering colleges and faculties < ‘*Conférence des directeurs des écoles et formations d’ingénieurs*’ > (CDEFI), and with the *Grandes écoles*’ Conference < ‘*Conférence des grandes écoles*’ > (CGE), was set by the decree of May 11th 2005, completed with a specific decree for the PhD degree (the decree of January 6th 2005 about the international joint supervision of doctoral thesis).

After a first investigation made in April 2006 by the MENESR to higher education institutions⁴, about Masters within international partnerships (MPI), 296 degrees of this kind were counted for 57 institutions and 119 MPI were planned to be launched at the beginning of the 2006 academic year by 68 institutions ; if double degrees have now an overwhelming share and are, most of them, embedded in bilateral partnerships, particularly with European countries, and most of all with Germany, the joint degree pattern should be increasingly spreading.

⁴ Investigation on the ‘*Masters en partenariat international*’ (April 2006) made by the MENESR (DREIC) to 145 higher education institutions (85 universities and 60 ‘*grandes écoles*’) > answering rate by more than 50%.



C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

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

In France, university is characterized by its link between higher education and research, which is not the case for all HEIs. Yet it was required that any Master should be backed up on teaching teams whose members are part of officially acknowledged research teams or laboratories.

We can roughly estimate that 60% of activities connected to public research are done in universities, all the more so as from now on, the universities – research organisations link is made as an organic whole by the widespread creation of mixed research units (UMR < *unités mixtes de recherche*).

A strengthened synergy between higher education and research is looked for in the framework of the 'Research Agreement' which was adopted by the French government last spring 2006 in order to deeply renovate the national research and innovation system. Indeed this reform which was realized by the April 2006 Research planning law enables to reach out ambitious goals, aiming in particular to :

- ✓ make the cooperation easier between all research players through research and higher education centres (PRES) and advanced research thematic networks (RTRA) ; and give them a leading role and an international visibility as well ;
- ✓ renovate our evaluation system for research and create an evaluation Agency for research and higher education (AERES) in order to have a systematic, transparent and homogeneous evaluation of the two types of activities ;
- ✓ and further enhance the embedding of the French system in the European research area.

The interest of research and higher education centres (PRES) must be underlined : indeed this new cooperation tool will enable public or private, research or higher education institutions or organisations, which are relatively close to each other locally, to pool together their activities and their resources in order to reach a genuine critical mass.



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

In 2004, 47% of young PhD holders who worked three years after their thesis took up the teaching career or research career in the public sector, while 19% of them were researchers in the private sector. The ways a thesis is funded has a great impact on the kind of job a PhD holder is doing three years after his/her Ph.D graduation : indeed, among CIFRE⁵-holders, 43% work in private research while less than 25% held a position in the public sector ; 69% of research grants have a job in the public sector, as compared to 15% in the private one. The subject area is also an important factor : if public research is still predominant in all subject areas, one PhD holder out of two in literature or humanities holds a position in higher education or public research ; but very few (5%) go to private research, contrary to exact sciences (from 22% for natural sciences up to 32% for computer science and engineering sciences) ⁶.

The Research Agreement (*'Pacte pour la Recherche'*) mentioned in point 23 above is aiming in particular to make scientific careers more attractive and to encourage young researcher recruitment. Within this context, what the reform of doctoral schools and doctoral programmes is made for is to strengthen up the quality of programmes and to make research careers more appealing, thanks to research training and training through research on the one hand, and on the other hand, with grants provided to doctoral candidates : research grants – that is, 12 000 in 2006 in total - with a monthly amount (of 1417 euros gross currently) which should be increasing significantly in 2007 ; CIFREs agreements which are based on a 3-year contract between the company and the doctoral candidate, which were recently increased, taking into account how valuable this scheme is for the development of technological research, for the sake of closer links between enterprises and universities and for researchers' jobs – in 2006 1 200 CIFREs were attributed, and since 1981, more than 15 000 CIFREs with convincing results : 94% of Ph.D holders after a CIFRE get a job once their thesis is done, and 80% among them are working in a company - ; higher education teaching assistantship with a training to the job of Professor (*'enseignant-chercheur'*) by CIES (centres for introduction to higher education), the support of an advisor and the allocation of an additional grant besides the research grant ; positions of temporary teaching and research *'attachés'* (ATERs < *'attachés temporaires d'enseignement et de recherche'*) meant to enable doctoral candidates about to graduate or waiting for a job to have a transition towards professors' jobs, thanks to the fixed-term contract formula which last one year generally.

⁵ CIFRE : *'Convention industrielle de formation par la recherche'* < Industrial agreement for training through research

⁶ Source : investigation *'Génération 2001'*, Céreq, Note Bref n° 220, june 2005



The social dimension

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

In France, the principle of equality of opportunities is quite a high value embedded at the very heart of the French '*service public*' of education and is therefore mentioned from the very beginning, at article 1 of the legal section of the Education regulations ('*Code de l'Éducation*')

'Education is the first national priority. The '*service public*' of education is meant for and organised for pupils and students. It contributes to the equality of opportunities. (...) The right to education is guaranteed to everyone (...). In order to guarantee this right in accordance with the equality of opportunities, support is given to pupils and students on the basis of the resources they can have and according to their own merits. (...) The learning of a general knowledge and the award of a recognized qualification is ensured to all young people, whatever their social, cultural or local backgrounds are' (< extracts from article L111-1 – '*Code de l'Éducation*').



Selection at the entrance to university is not allowed since holding the '*baccalauréat*', the graduation degree after secondary education in France, or the recognition of a similar title, is the only qualification which is required.

In order that the financial obstacle should not be a heavy deterrent factor for students from modest social backgrounds or faced with financial problems, tuition fees are remaining low, in comparison with other European countries. The French public grant and various support system also provides a whole range of financial support which can be given to students faced with the greatest needs. The cumulative logic which underpins the whole grant system also allows to make it easier for young people from modest social backgrounds to access to student mobility ; by doing so, it also contributes to make mobility more democratic. These grants with a social purpose are attributed :

- ✓ by the State, in particular with *grants for higher education based on social criteria – BCS* < '*bourses sur critères sociaux*' > - which concern nearly 500 000 students (496 427 exactly) during the 2005-2006 academic year (in total and since 2001, 3 students out of 10 are grant holders) ; *merit-based grants* meant to encourage some '*baccalauréat*' holders – with a 'very good' award and from modest social backgrounds – to go on studying in higher education – that is, 1 450 grants for the academic year 2006-2007 with an amount of 6 102 euros) ; the possible exemption from paying tuition fees and social security fees for grant holders ; interest free loans – '*prêts d'honneur*' - which can be paid back 10 years at the latest after graduation from higher education ; and *various grants available, notably study allowances and housing allowances* (social-based housing allowance – ALS – and personalized housing allowance – APL -). In total, about twenty different schemes can therefore be counted, which amounts to more than 1.3 billion euros for the ministry of Education alone, while the State budget for social actions for students is about 4 billion euros ;
- ✓ and by local authorities.

In total, student support provided in France amount to 6 billion euros for 2.2 million students. (< source : Wauquiez report).

In order to further develop the actual scheme aiming to provide more favourable perspectives to young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds, the MENESR is developing a policy based on equality of opportunities, with :

- ✓ the creation, at the beginning of the 2006 academic year, of the so-called ALINE allowance (< '*allocation d'installation étudiante*' – student settling-in allowance) intended to students holding a grant from the State, who are moving in a flat on their own for the first time ; this allowance based on an amount of 300 euros, allocated whatever the flat concerned is like, currently concerns nearly 65 000 students ;
- ✓ the support of innovating initiatives which answer to a so-called 'affirmative action' logic, such as the creation, in september 2006, of a 'preparatory course for higher education' (CPES < '*classe préparatoire aux études supérieures*') in order to make it easier for young people, from modest backgrounds and with a promising learning path at school, to sit for the '*grandes écoles*' competitive entrance examinations ;
- ✓ the emphasis on a better study and career guidance for students.



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

With the reorganisation of university programmes design and content, leading to the Bachelor's degree, in connection with the EHEA, the principle of a specific scheme for student welcome, counselling, guidance and support is adopted by the Decree of April 23rd 2002 in order to make it easier for new populations to have access to higher education, to upgrade the training and qualifications and to improve the student academic success.

This is a core element to be focused on by universities in the building up of their own LMD programmes and awards, and this is a major criterion which is taken into account by the MENESR when 4-year contracts are being negotiated. The qualitative efforts universities are being asked for in this perspective must concentrate on the following action lines :

- ✓ improving the study and career guidance framework for '*Baccalauréat*' holders, especially with links between secondary education and higher education made stronger ;
- ✓ setting up appropriate schemes to help students to succeed better ; setting up genuine educational teams, appointing one or more dean(s) to ensure the quality of the way programmes and courses and awards are organised, as well as counselling, welcome, study and career guidance for students, bridges-making, backing to the student's own definition of his/her training and professional project ... ;
- ✓ and improving the way success rate per institution is followed up.

Mobility

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

In France there is quite a number of incentive schemes to develop student mobility.

* Ingoing student mobility : among grants financed by the ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) for the access of foreign students to higher education in France, we can mention :

- ✓ the Major excellence-based grants ('*bourses d'excellence Major*') meant to attract the best foreign students to France for further studies in higher education (up to the Master's degree) ; these best foreign students must hold the French '*baccalauréat*' after their secondary education in French secondary schools and must have done a successful 1st cycle in universities with an excellence-based AEFÉ grant (AEFÉ < '*Agence de l'enseignement du français à l'étranger*') ;
- ✓ the *Eiffel excellence-based grants* ('*bourses d'excellence Eiffel*') from the level of the Bachelor's Degree ('*Licence*') up to the PhD ('*Doctorat*'), especially for 3 subject areas (engineering, economics-management , law-political science), and allocated on the basis of the student excellent level, the international policy of the institution and the MAE priorities round the world ; these grants are meant to be a support to French higher education institutions in their international policies for the recruitment of the best foreign students, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a tool to train foreign decision-makers-to-be in private and public sectors, with the exception though of job-careers devoted to education and research ;
- ✓ the French Government grants ('*bourses du Gouvernement français*') and *bilateral grants* co-funded within bilateral agreements devoted to Master students about to get their Master degrees in their second year.

Public funds for the support of foreign students studying in higher education in France are estimated to 2.4 billion euros.



* Outgoing student mobility : mobility grants that can be attributed by the State and local authorities are based on the following categories :

- grants attributed by the MENESR :
 - ✓ the *Erasmus top-up grants* (< '*Compléments Erasmus*') for the Erasmus French students registered in public higher education institutions within the scope of the MENESR activities, which currently amounts to a budget of more than 4.5 million euros a year ; such grants are not meaningless at all when the Erasmus grant from the European Community (as compared to 125 euros on average in Europe) only amounts to 95 euros per month on average for French students whose study periods in other European countries are 7 months on average. Among the 21 561 Erasmus French students gone abroad to study in Europe in 2004-2005, it must be underlined that 2 961 did not have any Erasmus grant from the European Community ;
 - ✓ the *higher education grants based on social criteria* (BCS < '*bourses d'enseignement supérieur sur critères sociaux*'), which by definition are portable for students who wish to go on studying abroad in one of the countries from the Council of Europe (which is also true for student loans) ;
 - ✓ the '*mobility grants*' ('*bourses de mobilité*') which, since the beginning of the academic year 2001, can be attributed to BCS grant- or study allowance- holders ; these specific mobility grants amount to 389 euros per month, for a study period of 3 months at least or of 9 consecutive months maximum (or of two study periods abroad with an overall duration up to 9 months only). In total, 45 000 monthly grants could be attributed through the 4-year contracts with universities ;
 - ✓ the *travel grants for individual training schemes abroad* (< '*bourses de voyage pour des stages individuels à l'étranger*') which are a support for the travel expenses and take the form of travel grants for students whose training schemes are compulsory for their studies in France within public or private institutions allowed to have grant-holders, and are done in a firm or a laboratory for a period of one month at least.
- grants attributed by the ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) : in particular the Lavoisier grants ('*bourses Lavoisier*') which can be attributed to doctoral or post-doctoral candidates for a period from 6 up to 12 months : students, selected on the basis of high-level research projects, have to stay in countries where top-level research is well known and acknowledged at the international level ;
- grants attributed by local authorities : local authorities ('*Conseils Régionaux*' especially) can indeed allocate a complementary financial support which is not meaningless and can vary according to regional areas. In total and according to ARF (< '*Association des Régions de France*'), the budget which is thus targeted on student mobility grants by local authorities ('*Conseils Régionaux*') can range from 0.228 million to 15 million euros per year.

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

The Council of Europe agreement of December 12th 1969 was signed and ratified by France as early as September 11th 1970. The portability of social criteria-based grants allowed for further higher education studies in another Council of Europe country is also valid for student loans.



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

In order to make the outgoing teacher mobility easier, France made its legislation change, ever since 2001 (by the Decree of May 16th 2001), in order to take the added value of periods abroad better into account when calculating the ‘seniority’ for Professors (*‘enseignants-chercheurs’*) who stayed abroad in their teacher career for the sake of a better recognition.

As far as ingoing foreign teacher mobility is concerned, France does have a welcome tradition especially through the formula of ‘associated’ or ‘guest’ Professor. Within the contract policy framework, the MENESR is encouraging universities to develop their recruitment of foreign teachers. Procedures about the submission, via on-line application forms, of requests when applying for the job of Professor in France are getting improved, in particular with the translation into English language of guides for procedures.

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

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

Since 2004, important and repeated actions involving French players (the MENESR, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the French Rectors’ Conference – CPU -), but also European players (Spanish, Italian or Portuguese Rectors’ Conference, as well as EUA) have been undertaken in order to promote the EHEA especially in Lebanon, in Syria, in Morocco, in Tunisia and in Algeria. Most often these actions are organized at the request of authorities in charge of higher education in the countries mentioned before ; France tried hard to give them a European profile. Other actions were also undertaken in the Sub-Saharan part of Africa.

Future challenges

31. Given an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.

The whole action being developed in France is aiming to reconcile the French university tradition based on the values which underpin the French *‘service public’* and which gives the State a strong power for regulation on the one hand, and on the other hand, the requirement to make the French system competitive in the European and international areas. Within this framework, the Bologna Process was implemented and the LMD (*‘Licence- Master-Doctorat’*) reform developed.

The 2006 Research Planning Law, - *with the creation of the AERES, with the reform of doctoral programmes, with the creation of research and higher education centres (which we call ‘PRES’ < ‘pôles de recherche et d’enseignement supérieur’, with the setting up of a support agency, the National Research Agency (ANR) in order to support projects-based research, and with quite a significant increase in financial support – provided higher education with new development tools, which are all of them ‘EHEA-compatible’.*

Everyone is aware that from now on, the next big work ahead of us must directly concern universities with their governance to be made more efficient, their autonomy strengthened up and their funding improved through a better account of their action’s outcomes. From this point of view, the fact that the higher education issue is now part of the key issues addressed in the programmes which are being developed by the main political trends within the presidential debate is particularly significant.



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