

CRUS

Rektorenkonferenz der Schweizer Universitäten
Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Svizzere

Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities

Towards a “European Higher Education Area”

The State of Implementation of the Objectives of the “Bologna Declaration” in Switzerland (Spring, 2003) ¹

1. Implementation of the Bologna Reform at Universities, *Fachhochschulen* and *Paedagogische Hochschulen*

1.1 General Remarks

The initial evaluation of the Bologna Reform process in Switzerland began with an assessment of the status quo and an appraisal attempt in autumn of 1999. Soon thereafter, the **Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS)**, with the approval of the Swiss federal government, began to assemble an implementation project and coordinate among the universities.

In a similar fashion, the **Fachhochschulen (universities of applied sciences or FH)** also recognised the importance of this reform process and set out on its own parallel FH reform project in agreement with the universities in 2000. The Rectors' Conference of the Fachhochschulen (KFH), working together with the federal and cantonal authorities, acts as the coordinating body for the implementation process of the Bologna Declaration at the Swiss Fachhochschulen.

After the recently created **Paedagogische Hochschulen (schools of education)** started operations over the past few years, they also began a reform project, which was modelled closely on the projects of the Fachhochschulen and the universities.

A **steering committee**, made up of representatives from all three higher education institution types, officials from directly involved federal offices, and delegates from the Conference of the Cantonal Directors of Education, coordinates the implementation of the Bologna Declaration throughout Switzerland.

References:

The most important documents on the Bologna Reform process in Switzerland are available at the CRUS website www.bolognareform.ch or the Fachhochschule Conference www.kfh.ch (in German and French only).

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1.2 The Situation at the Universities

1.2.1 Regulations at a national and institutional level

In 2001 and 2002, the CRUS worked out the most important development parameters for university reform through various working groups, reports, discussions, and three national conferences. In doing so, the decision was taken to incorporate this reform process within the larger context of a **comprehensive process for the renewal of teaching policy** under “co-ordination and competition”, which has been the motto of Swiss higher education policy since the end of the 1990’s. The intention was to make it possible for the institutions of higher education to position themselves within the framework of a yet to be determined basic structure compatible with Europe while still providing for individual variations for course offerings in the educational market.

These considerations led finally to the **development of a two-tiered regulatory concept** for the implementation of the Bologna Process at the universities:

- At a higher level, to be embodied into law, the most important parameters of the organisation of study programmes will be spelled out through so-called “directives” from the Swiss University Conference (SUK) (“**Directives for the Coordinated Renewal of Teaching at University-Level Higher Education Institutions within the Framework of the Bologna Process**” of December 5, 2002 – *currently under consideration*);
- At a lower, inter-institutional level, detailed recommendations for the organisation and implementation of all target areas of the Bologna Declaration are being prepared by the Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities (cf. “**CRUS Recommendations for the Universities regarding the Coordinated Renewal of Teaching at Higher Education Institutions of Switzerland within the Framework of the Bologna Process**” of 20 December 2002 – *currently in the completion stage*).

The SUK Directives are to be approved and the “CRUS Recommendations” are to be completed and approved during the current year. At the same time, extensive “Recommendations for the Application of ECTS” are being worked on by the CRUS. The CRUS “Recommendations for the Introduction of the Diploma Supplement (DS) at Swiss Universities” were already passed in January 2002.

1.2.2 Institutional progress

While intensive work was being carried out in 2001 and 2002 on these regulatory instruments at the national level, individual universities decided to introduce already the first new degree courses in line with the two-tiered Bologna Model (3-year bachelor’s level, 1½ -2-year master’s level) either on a trial basis (or, in part, in final form). The most advanced is the University of St.Gallen, which in a single step has been examining, reforming, and presenting its entire course offerings in the new, tiered form, as of winter semester 2002. Subsequent to this, the (small) Universities of Lucerne and Ticino, individual departments of the ETH Zurich as well as various faculties at the Universities of Basel and Bern also sent a signal in terms of a new organisation for programmes of study.

This led to an extensive process of change throughout the entire Swiss university landscape. In the meantime, all of the universities are involved in the implementation of this great reform project in elaborately detailed concepts and preparations for their step-by-step execution.

An outline of the two-tiered study programmes that have already been introduced is available at <http://www.crus.ch/deutsch/Lehre/bologna/> ("Implementation Examples and Models in Switzerland"; numerous additional new study programmes are being prepared for Fall 2003).

1.3 The Situation at the *Fachhochschulen*

1.3.1 Regulations at a national and institutional level

The *Fachhochschulen*, while still new, in part include individual schools that are over a hundred years old. They want to take advantage of this opportunity to

- bring into line the formal structures of their degree programmes among the institutions, and
- completely re-draft their courses of study and study programmes. In particular, a greater emphasis is to be laid on the inclusion of independent study, and the degree programme structures are to be made more flexible through modularisation.

At the same time, the guiding concept among the three types of higher education institutions – universities, *Fachhochschulen* and Paedagogische Hochschulen – was coordinating the implementation the Bologna Declaration among the institutions and thus increasing accessibility to the system. This should also make the learning process among the institutions of higher learning easier.

A **two-tiered regulatory concept** was introduced for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration at the *Fachhochschulen* similar to the universities:

- At a legislative level, the **federal Fachhochschule law** is being revised in accordance with the Bologna Declaration. In addition, the Fachhochschule Council of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), which represents the common sponsoring body for the cantons, on 5 December 2002 issued **directives**, which contain the most important parameters for the new degree course structures at the *Fachhochschulen*.
- At the level of the *Fachhochschulen* themselves, **Directives for the Drafting of Tiered Study programmes according to the Bologna Model** are being drawn up by the KFH, in coordination with the CRS and SKPH which also contain the modularisation and the application of ECTS.

1.3.2 Institutional progress

The *Fachhochschulen* have decided to carry out the introduction of the tiered Bologna model study programmes in a coordinated fashion. The first bachelor study programmes are scheduled to start at all of the Swiss *Fachhochschulen* in the **2005-2006 winter semester**. From then on, no previous diploma study programmes will be offered. In the following years the master's study programmes will start at the *Fachhochschulen*, in the sense of a second basic education level.

In order to coordinate and broadly support this process, more than two years ago the KFH instituted a Bologna Commission with appointed representatives from all of the *Fachhochschulen* and all of the disciplines. The project organisation is through the KFH general secretariat.

1.4 The Situation at the *Paedagogische Hochschulen*

Guided by the recognition regulations issued by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), teacher education in Switzerland was moved into the tertiary sector in the past few years wherever this was not already the case. At the same time, a process of consolidation has taken place, since core responsibilities, such as research and development, could only be realised at the larger institutions. Prospective elementary and pre-school teachers to some extent previously attended “seminars”, which were established partly at the secondary II level.

The newly constituted *Paedagogische Hochschulen* for the most part already had the opportunity to prepare for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration during the drafting phase, which is why it should now be possible for the implementation to proceed quickly.

1.4.1 Regulations at a national and institutional level

As at the Fachhochschulen and the universities, the regulatory concept of the *Paedagogische Hochschulen* is two-tiered.

- The **directives**, which were passed by the Fachhochschule Council of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), apply not only to the Fachhochschulen but also to the *Paedagogische Hochschulen* (http://www.edk.ch/d/EDK/Geschaefte/fh/FHRat_d.html)
- At the moment, “**Recommendations for the Coordinated Implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Teacher Education**” is being worked on. These recommendations encompass all of teacher education (pre-school level, elementary level, secondary I and II levels and special education). They will have a model-like function for broad sectors.

1.4.2. Institutional progress

Individual institutions are very interested in the rapid implementation of the Bologna process and therefore have their concepts ready. In order for the introduction to succeed in a coordinated manner, higher-level authorities must caution to restraint rather than encourage individual institutions at the moment.

2. The Implementation of the “Bologna and Prague Objectives” at the Universities

2.1 Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

In conjunction with the introduction of the two-tiered system for all university-level study programmes (cf. Chap. 2.2), plans also call for a simplification and unification of the designations for diplomas according to an agreed national system. The corresponding proposals are presently under discussion at the CRUS.

Furthermore, the “**Recommendations for the Introduction of the Diploma Supplement (DS) at the Swiss Universities**” were approved by the CRUS in January 2002 (cf. http://www.crus.ch/navig/d/pulldown_frameset/diploma/). Their introduction at the university level throughout the country is currently in preparation.

2.2 Adoption of a system based on two main cycles

The previous single-tiered programme of study is divided generally into two tiers, the bachelor's degree programme (3 years or 180 credits) and the master's degree programme (1½ -2 years or 90-120 credits). The **orientation of the bachelor's level** aims at the conveyance of a fundamental, scientific education and methodical, scientific thought; the **orientation of the master's level** can vary among intensification in a specialised subject, interdisciplinary extension, or increased professional specialisation. A stated objective of the Swiss universities is to have the majority of students complete a master's degree in the two-tiered system as well.

The internal structure as well as the disciplinary and pedagogical arrangement of the study programmes are left to the individual universities and can vary considerably. A **modularisation** of the study programmes with corresponding **adaptations of the examination system** is recommended.

Admission to the bachelor's level corresponds largely to previous admissions practice; for **admission to the master's level** the universities may require, besides the bachelor's degree, specific additional academic achievements.

2.3 Establishment of a system of credits

A credits system (for accumulation and transfer) will be introduced throughout the system for all degree programme offerings in keeping with the ECTS system standard, which at present is taking shape in expanded form throughout Europe. ECTS applications already in existence at most of the universities will be modified or extended appropriately. While the structural minimum regulations at the legislative level are being codified (one credit corresponds to 30 hours of total workload of the student; credits are given only for examined achievement, cf. article 2 of the Directives of the SUK), the harmonisation of details is to be regulated and monitored by the CRUS. In March 2003, it approved a comprehensive paper on recommendations (cf. **CRUS Recommendations for the Application of ECTS at the Universities of Switzerland**, version 4.0 of 3/7/2003 – cf.: www.ects.ch) and a special coordination structure, developed in close co-operation with the universities.

2.4 Promotion of mobility

The systematic furthering of the mobility of students and lecturers in Switzerland goes back to the early 1990's and is supported by a series of national and international promotional and scholarship programmes. As a result of the Bologna Reform, it is to be expected that there may indeed be different and, in part, probably counter-effects on the mobility behaviour of students. The CRUS wants to establish mobility promotion through a series of **specific recommendations** already at the level of the study programmes as well as to observe attentively with **mobility-monitoring** the development and possible change of the mobility flow in the coming years (cf. for details "CRUS Recommendations for the Universities regarding the Coordinated Renewal of Teaching at Higher Education Institutions of Switzerland within the Framework of the Bologna Process" of 20 December 2002 – Chapter 7).

2.5 Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

The Bologna Declaration objective of promoting **European co-operation** for the development of comparable criteria and instruments for quality assurance, which has been endorsed not only by the Salamanca Convention but also by the Prague ministerial meeting, is actively supported by Switzerland as well. In 2001, the federal government set up a new independent **body for accreditation and quality assurance (OAQ) for this purpose** on whose board of trustees the higher education institutions are adequately represented. In the meantime, this body has developed Swiss directives for the accreditation of institutions and study programmes, with particular reference to the European quality assurance dialogue (within the framework of the ENQA and the JQI, among others) and is presently developing a **Swiss quality assurance dialogue** together with the Rectors' Conference and the universities. Nonetheless, the Rectors' Conference is of the opinion that the actual work of quality assurance must remain a university-level instrument. Therefore the universities are being asked to extend and strengthen internal quality assurance in the areas of teaching and learning where needed within the framework of the Bologna Reform.

2.6 Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The Rectors' Conference (CRUS) welcomes and supports all of the measures taken by the Swiss universities together with their European partner institutions, for the concretisation and stronger institutional establishment of the European Dimension in the area of higher education. This is particularly true with regard to joint European curriculum development projects, new inter-university forms of co-operation, integrated international study programmes (e.g., so-called joint-degree programmes), bilateral dual doctorate programmes, among others. The CRUS recommends an in-depth involvement with the various ongoing **European curricular projects** (e.g., those within the Socrates-Erasmus programme of the EU or the European Union's TUNING project for the definition of core curricula, learning outcomes, skills, competences, etc.) and supports the **development of own curricular co-operation programmes**. The Swiss higher education institutions are aware that additional intensive development work must still be carried out.

2.7 Support of lifelong learning

Since the beginning of the 1990's, a widely ramified and comprehensive offering of continuing education programmes of the most diverse kinds and durations has been developed at the Swiss universities with the active support of the federal government. This ranges from individual day courses to two-year diploma programmes. In connection with the Bologna Reform this offering is presently being reorganised and oriented in complementary fashion toward the new two-tiered system of degree studies. This

especially concerns the master's level, where quantitative and qualitative minimum standards have been defined. The ECTS system will also be introduced for longer courses. The dialogue that is currently taking place in Europe about the development of assessment instruments for the **recognition of so-called non-traditional educational achievements** (e.g., within the framework of the TRANSFINE project) is being observed closely and should gain acceptance in Switzerland at the appropriate time. The Swiss higher education institutions as well as the education policy authorities are indeed aware that considerable work must still be accomplished for the realisation of a comprehensive, inter-university system of lifelong learning.

2.8 Student participation in higher education Institutions

The student representation on all important university administration boards is guaranteed under the respective university laws. Within the framework of the Bologna Reform students are also included on the appropriate national boards, commissions and working groups. In February 2003, a national conference on the topic of "Bologna Reform and Social Issues" was carried out at the wish of the national student association. The most important criticisms from the students' perspective relating to the Bologna Reform were debated at this gathering with the active participation of many undergraduates (cf. the detailed conference report at www.bolognareform.ch).

2.9 Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Not least because of Switzerland's small size and land-locked location at the heart of Europe, its universities have had an international orientation for years, and the proportion of foreign students and faculty is relatively high compared with other European countries. For this reason, Switzerland has conducted higher education marketing on a very limited scale to date (only at European or American educational fairs). Swiss universities, however, are interested in intensifying their future higher education marketing efforts in Europe and are also closely monitoring the preparations presently being carried out by the Academic Co-operation Association (ACA) .

2.10 Taking into account the social dimension

The implementation of the Bologna Declaration will be carried out successfully only if it takes **the social situation of students'** into consideration. Therefore, the Rectors' Conference – and this not least through pressure from the students – has worked out specific recommendations in the areas of **scholarships, part-time study** (for full-time or part-time employed students), **maintaining or improving equal opportunity**, and **fostering junior academic staff**. It is up to the universities themselves to give the greatest possible attention to these sensitive issues within the framework of the drafting of the new, tiered study programmes (cf. the "CRUS Recommendations for the Universities regarding the Coordinated Renewal of Teaching at Higher Education Institutions of Switzerland within the Framework of the Bologna Process" of 20 December 2002 – Chapter 10).

3. Implementation of the Bologna and Prague Goals at the *Fachhochschulen*

3.1 Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

In close co-operation with the CRUS, the KFH also plans to introduce diploma denominations for all of its study programmes which are made more straightforward and unified nationwide. Universities and Fachhochschulen should apply the same denominations.

Beginning in Fall 2000, all graduates at the Swiss Fachhochschule have been awarded a **diploma supplement** in their language of study and in English.

3.2 Adoption of a system based on two main cycles

In keeping with the Bologna directives of the Fachhochschule Council of the EDK, the bachelor's degree programme will involve 180 ECTS credits and the master's degree study programme, 90-120 credits. At both levels, completion should lead to professionally qualified proficiency. Greater depth and interdisciplinary breadth is possible at the master's level. There is no intention of designating one of the two levels as the degree standard. Both the needs of students and the economy as well as financial means available determine the number of offerings at the master's level.

The development and structure of the study programmes is left to the individual Fachhochschulen and should leave room for a broad variety except for the structural touchstones resulting from legal issues and the directives of the KFH.

Admission to the bachelor's level corresponds to previous admission practice. For **admission to the master's level**, the Fachhochschule may have specific additional requirements in terms of content besides the bachelor's degree depending on the programme.

3.3 Establishment of a system of credits

With the change to the tiered study programmes as of winter semester 2005-2006, the **ECTS credit system** will be introduced integrally at all Fachhochschulen. Besides the definition of the range of studies for the bachelor's and master's degree programmes, the directives of the Fachhochschule Council of the EDK establish a further, binding point: an ECTS credit entails 30 hours of workload. Further harmonisation is sought at the Fachhochschulen through the directives of the KFH.

3.4 Promotion of mobility

Student mobility at the Swiss Fachhochschulen today is still underdeveloped. The reason for this is not least the prevailing, rather rigid structures with packed study programmes. With the implementation of the Bologna Declaration and modularisation the conditions for the fostering of student mobility should improve. The KFH proceeds on the assumption that the bachelor's-master's interface will lead to a considerable increase in student mobility and will work on **directives** as to how and through which programmes the student and faculty mobility could be promoted.

3.5 Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

All of the Fachhochschulen have introduced quality assurance systems since the beginning of this century. A joint commission of the KFHs defined standards for these systems. All of the study programmes of the Swiss Fachhochschulen underwent a **peer review process** in 2001-2003. This process, conducted by the federal government, resulted in a catalogue of requirements, which must be fulfilled before the final approval of the Fachhochschulen by the Swiss federal government after 2004.

According to the federal Fachhochschule law, the national government is the **accreditation authority**. The federal Fachhochschule commission – an advisory body of the Swiss federal government – has functioned as the accreditation body until now. In the future, it is planned that the study programmes of the Fachhochschulen will also be reviewed by an independent body for accreditation and quality assurance.

3.6 Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The KFH welcomes and supports all measures for the concretisation and increased institutional establishment of an European higher education area. In its **best practice** for the drafting of the tiered study programmes the KFH supports the European curricular projects as they are expressed in the European Union's TUNING project for example.

3.7 Support of lifelong learning

The continuing education offerings at today's Fachhochschulen are already quite extensive. Differentiation is made among postgraduate studies (60 ECTS credits), postgraduate courses (15 ECTS credits) and other activities. With the introduction of the tiered study programmes these offerings will be restructured and tailored to those holding a bachelor's degree as well or a master's degree.

3.8 Student participation in higher education institutions

The representation of students on the boards of the Fachhochschulen is individually regulated by the decrees of the individual Fachhochschulen. In February 2003, a joint Bologna meeting of the three Rectors' Conferences – KFH, CRUS and SKPH – was held with the Swiss Student Body Association.

3.9 Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

The Fachhochschulen of Switzerland are very interested in intensifying contact with partner institutions throughout the entire European realm of higher education. Networking in this area has increased significantly through membership in the European University Association. In addition, the Fachhochschulen benefit from the offerings of Erasmus and other international co-operation programmes. The Fachhochschulen hope to increase the proportion of foreign faculty and students. **Networks for master's study programmes** exist today where Swiss and foreign institutions of higher education participate with their modules. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration should strengthen these.

3.10 Taking into account the social dimension

The Bologna Declaration offers the Fachhochschulen the possibility to make their study structures more flexible. In so doing, the prospects for part-time studies as well as for equal opportunity improve. Together with the political bodies, the Fachhochschulen have

committed themselves to an expansion of the system of grants at both basic degree programme levels as well as to regulations supporting student mobility.

4. Implementation of the Bologna and Prague Goals at the *Paedagogische Hochschulen*

4.1 Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Current plans call for awarding a **bachelor's diploma** at the end of a training programme for pre-school-level and elementary-level teachers. Teachers at the secondary I level should have the possibility of finishing with a master's. It is still not clear whether a programme of study lasting four years (one year after the bachelor's) will be sufficient for teaching qualifications at the secondary I level as was previously the case.

4.2 Adoption of a system based on two main cycles

Generally speaking, a distinction is made between the bachelor's degree programme (180 credits) and the master's degree programme (90-120 credits). In the case of the secondary I level, the teaching credentials cannot be coupled with the bachelor's degree resulting in a gap in the requirements for the professional qualifications.

The study programmes are essentially modularised, which facilitates part-time studies.

4.3 Establishment of a system of credits

The ECTS system is already in use at the Paedagogische Hochschulen.

4.4 Promotion of mobility

The promotion of mobility was simplified through the introduction of ECTS. There are currently only a few arrangements with foreign higher education institutions for student exchanges. With the support of the Swiss Rectors' Conference for Paedagogische Hochschulen (SKPH), the individual Paedagogische Hochschulen are in the process of creating **networks with teacher education institutions** within and beyond Europe.

4.5 Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

The Swiss Rectors' Conference for Paedagogische Hochschulen (SKPH) has set up a **working group on quality management**; a **quality assurance dialogue** is being carried on within the Paedagogische Hochschulen. In the European context, individual institutions of higher education are working toward **European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) certification**.

4.6 Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The European dimension is promoted by stays in host countries, where as a rule the students have the opportunity to complete practical training at a school while gaining an in-depth understanding of the host country's culture. **Joint-degree programmes** are being discussed, but they are really difficult to realise because of the vast structural differences among the study programmes for teachers in the various European states.

4.7 Support of lifelong learning

The continuing education programmes were generally intensified even more through the founding of the Paedagogische Hochschulen. Lifelong learning is regarded as very important by all of the teaching professions. Through the modularisation of the study programmes, mobility within the individual teaching professions as well as into and out of the teaching professions has been improved.

4.8 Student participation in higher education institutions

The conversion of the previous training seminars into Paedagogische Hochschulen has brought with it the institutionalisation of student participation everywhere. At the moment this is occurring with varying intensity. The Bologna process has brought about increased contact among the student associations at the Paedagogische Hochschulen as well as with the associations from the universities and Fachhochschulen.

4.9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Because teacher training is largely tailored to the needs of Switzerland's educational system, limits have been set for international outreach. Modularisation and the introduction of ECTS have considerably increased the appeal for foreign students. Many students are interested in semesters abroad at other higher education institutions where a co-operation agreement exists. Yet the interest in being able to benefit from the attractiveness of the European higher education area as a free mover is just as great. The increased promotion of this foreign student category would probably contribute to a further increase in appeal.

4.10. Taking into account the social dimension

Together with the universities and the Fachhochschulen, the social situation of students was thoroughly discussed at a **conference ("Bologna Reform and Social Issues")**. Students and institutional representatives agree that equal opportunity must be preserved and that education must not be allowed to become a commodity. The individual higher education institutions are committed to a fair system of grants and loans within their outreach areas. Thanks to modularisation, the opportunities for part-time students who are employed or have family responsibilities have improved.

5. Outlook: Work in Progress

5.1 Universities

In summary, it may be said that by the end of 2003, Switzerland will have succeeded in preparing the various regulatory instruments needed for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration at a national and institutional level in quite an expeditious and coherent manner both in terms of content and the institutions. By 2005, all of the universities will have worked out the comprehensive implementation concepts and, by 2010, at the latest, the implementation of the new structures will have been completed in all of the study programmes.

Parallel to this formal reorganisation, the challenge of a **fundamental reform of higher education** remains the evaluation of the individual study programmes for content and method and their adaptation to the changing needs of the rapidly evolving knowledge society in terms of learning outcomes, competences, and skills.

5.2 Fachhochschulen

With the support of federal and cantonal government authorities, the KFH has drawn up a project organisation for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration that should ensure that the work proceeds in a co-ordinated manner and that the idea of the Fachhochschulen as 'learning institutions' can be implemented by its planned introduction in Fall 2005. Through this, the stated objective is that a student's learning process should take centre stage when new study programmes are drafted and the structures must be designed in a such a way that the Fachhochschulen can learn from other institutions of higher education.

5.3 Paedagogische Hochschulen

The Paedagogische Hochschulen benefit from the fact that they came into being at the same time as the start of the planning for the Bologna Reform. It is therefore possible to implement the Bologna model everywhere in a timely manner. What is important is that in the near future not only emphasis is placed on structural implementation but also that the content objectives from Bologna and Prague are also given priority.