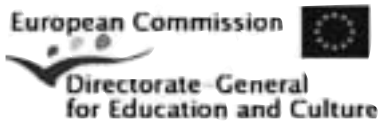




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## **Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe**

September 2002

by Christian Tauch and Andrejs Rauhvargers

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This survey is undertaken with the financial support  
of the European Commission, through the SOCRATES Programme.





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## FOREWORD

Questions related to the duration and architecture of Master level degrees across Europe as well as to the development of joint degrees offered in partnership by institutions from different countries are particularly high on the European higher education political agenda. It is for this reason that the European University Association (EUA) commissioned this study, which has been carried out with the support of the European Commission through the SOCRATES programme. It includes an analysis of Master degrees in the European Higher Education Area undertaken by Christian Tauch (German Rectors Conference) and a study of joint degrees prepared by Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvian Rectors Conference).

This survey represents the first attempt to describe and analyse systematically the present state of the art in respect of Master level

degree programmes and joint degrees offered across Europe. The results show that in these two important, and often interrelated areas, further reflection and action are needed to clarify and define both the architecture of Master degrees and the “joint degree” concept in Europe.

The EUA will use the results of this survey in preparing the Graz Convention of Higher Education Institutions which is being held in May 2003 to prepare the input of Europe’s universities to the Bologna Process follow-up meeting of European Ministers of Higher Education, scheduled for September 2003 in Berlin. The results will also feed into the pilot project on Joint Master programmes in Europe which EUA is presently implementing, also with the support of the European Commission through the SOCRATES programme.

Lesley Wilson

Secretary General  
European University Association

## METHODOLOGY

### SURVEY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### Introduction

A single questionnaire was designed for the studies on the development of Master degrees and joint degrees in Europe, and accordingly organised in two parts. It was sent out to the official contact persons for the Bologna Process, the Rectors' Conferences (or equivalent) and the NARIC/ENIC offices of each country covered by EU SOCRATES programme. The above respondents in the countries were asked to cooperate with a view to sending a single country answer agreed by all parties.

Answers from 31 higher education systems were received. Most countries concerned sent in one agreed answer as requested. Portugal and Spain chose to delegate the answering to several individual universities, which made the interpretation of the results of these countries somewhat more complicated. One country, Luxembourg, did not respond to the questionnaire and is therefore not represented in the survey.

Compared to the answers to the Master degree part of the questionnaire, the answers to the part concerning joint degrees were less clear and informative. There may be two main reasons for this: a lack of a clear and generally agreed definition of the joint degree; and, as the answers demonstrated, very little information regarding the development of joint degrees at central level. Thus,

while respondents often were aware of developments, they were not in a position to provide any statistical information and sometimes even concrete examples to illustrate the trends.

Some additional information channels were therefore very useful for this portion of the study:

- A slightly modified joint degrees' part of the questionnaire was sent out to the international networks cooperating in the Tuning project and to some joint degrees' consortia: 30 answers were received. These answers were particularly useful for interpreting the portion of the study concerned with procedures of joint degree awards and recognition issues.
- The seminar on Joint degrees organised by the Swedish Ministry of Education, in Stockholm in May 2002, clarified some issues addressed in the above survey and identified new ones. Some information was taken from the answers of country representatives to the questionnaire circulated by the Swedish Ministry of Education.
- Individual consultations with country representatives to clarify particular issues were widely carried out during a number of international meetings, such as the above seminar in Stockholm, the Bologna follow-up group meeting in Santander (24 May 2002), ENIC/NARIC meeting in Malta (6-8 June 2002), and others, as well as by correspondence and telephone interviews.



## MASTER DEGREES IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

by Christian Tauch

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The main conclusion of the survey is that, although there is still a significant variety with regard to the duration and architecture of degrees in the European Higher Education Area, there is a dominant trend towards Master level degrees that require the equivalent of 300 ECTS credits, although examples of slightly longer and slightly shorter courses can be found.

2. It is suggested that in the further discussions on the Bologna Process and in particular in the preparation of the Berlin Conference 2003 the participants agree on the definition that a **Master degree in the European Higher Education Area requires normally the completion of 300 ECTS credits, of which at least 60 should be obtained at the graduate level in the area of the specialisation concerned.**

This would allow for the following patterns:

- 180 credits Bachelor + 120 credits Master
- 240 credits Bachelor + 90 to 120 credits Master (of which up to 30 or 60 may be waived in view of previous studies during the final Bachelor year, provided the minimum number of 60 credits remain at graduate level)
- 300 credits Master (integrated programme).

3. It became obvious that medicine and related disciplines require a different scheme in most countries but this is not in contradiction to the quite homogeneous pattern that prevails in all other disciplines. When a country, as e.g. Denmark has done, decides to introduce the Bachelor-Master system also in the medical fields, it is likely to fix the required number of credits for the Master at 180 ECTS credits, in order to maintain the overall length of study of 360 ECTS credits.

4. In a number of countries there are cases of extremely long courses of 5–6 years duration that are considered “undergraduate” courses. This is clearly out of line with the international definitions of “undergraduate” and “(post)graduate” and weakens the European and international competitiveness of these countries. There is an urgent need for them to

reassess, in their own interest, both the structuring and the labelling of their courses.

5. The realisation of the European Higher Education Area requires more guidance as to the number of credits required for the completion of what is internationally regarded as a degree at Master level. Courses that are too short may find it very difficult, if not impossible, to get transferable accreditation when it is generalised in Europe.

60 credits Master should allow the completion of a 300 credits degree only if they follow a 240 credit Bachelor in the same or a closely related field.

It seems therefore wise that the majority of countries and institutions seem inclined to offer 90–120 Master programmes. It is of course always possible to waive some of these credits for certain students if their previous qualification suggests it.

6. In some countries, the differentiation between more “academic” and more “professional” Master degrees seems irrelevant whereas others distinguish quite clearly between the two, and have in many cases decided to introduce new professional Masters.

7. In all countries where long (270–300 ECTS credits) and short (60–120) Master programmes exist in parallel, their academic value is considered to be the same. Therefore, in many countries, little attempts are made to differentiate between the two in terms of nomenclature. One rather relies on the Diploma Supplement to explain the exact nature of the programme.

8. The general requirement for access to a postgraduate Master programme is usually the completion of an undergraduate degree at Bachelor level, but a growing number of countries are allowing access to holders of equivalent, often less formal, qualifications and provide more bridges between the professional higher education sector and the universities.



9. Credit systems have been or are being introduced in almost all countries and there is a clear trend to use ECTS. Equally, the Diploma Supplement is used or being introduced in a majority of countries.

10. Few higher education institutions feel the need to seek accreditation from foreign agencies, as national and regional accreditation agencies are developing rapidly in most parts of Europe.

## TYPES OF DEGREES AT MASTER LEVEL

*Preliminary remark: ECTS credits rather than semesters or years are used throughout this text to describe programme prerequisites for the different degrees. This is in line with the requirements of Lifelong Learning, the outcomes of the project "Tuning Educational Structures In Europe", etc., but ECTS is unfortunately still not fully applied in all countries in the European Higher Education Area.*

### The Anglo-Saxon tradition

There is a group of countries, consisting of the **United Kingdom**, Ireland and Malta that have always used the two-tier system. In the United Kingdom, Master degrees of mainly the 90 and sometimes the 120 ECTS credits type have been such a longstanding part of higher education that individual institutions have the power to award their own degrees, under various legal instruments that sometimes developed over the centuries. In addition, there are deeply rooted differences between England and Scotland that also extend to the higher education systems. These factors explain why the UK represents probably the most varied and complex picture with regard to (post)graduate degrees.

Short Master degrees are awarded in all disciplines and require normally 1 or 2 years full-time studies after a Bachelor. The 2-year programmes may include a major dissertation or thesis and involve significant amounts of research.

It has to be said, however, that there are also "long" integrated Master degrees, lasting normally one year longer than the Honours degree in a similar discipline. Universities may give students the choice of orientation in the penultimate year of the Bachelor programme: either the student finishes the remaining year of the Bachelor programme or he/she opts at this stage for a Master degree that will require two more years. Especially in the last 25 years, various institutions have made use of

their right to introduce long programmes, mainly in business administration, mathematics, sciences and engineering.

In **Ireland**, a Master degree, following a Bachelor of 3–4, requires 1–3 years of study. All types of higher education institutions are entitled to offer Master programmes. As in Great Britain, there are historical particularities that do not fit into any standardised system. This is e.g. true for the M.A. from Trinity College which is awarded to holders of a B.A. after 3 years, as an indication of "maturity" and without further examination.

There are no long integrated Master programmes in Ireland.

The University of **Malta** functions exclusively on a two-tier basis. Master programmes of 1 to 1,5 years duration after a Bachelor degree are offered in all disciplines, often in a very differentiated and interdisciplinary manner to cater to the different needs of students. Thus a Master of Philosophy is offered in medicine and in engineering, and alongside the Master in Law, a Master in Human Rights and a Master in Financial Services can be obtained.

### The Nordic countries: deepening the reform

**Denmark** belongs to the countries that have introduced a two-tier system several years ago, parallel to the traditional one-tier system. At the end of the 1980s, Denmark started to offer Bachelor programmes of 3 to 3,5 years and Master programmes of another 2 years (3 years in the humanities). Under the impulsion of the Bologna discussions, the conversion process has now gained speed and the introduction of a two-tier structure in **all** disciplines has been decided and is almost completed: medicine (3+3) and dentistry (3+2) should have adopted the two tiers by September 2002. Pharmacy, veterinary science, architecture and theology are still

awaiting conversion. Master degrees are only offered at the universities.

In **Sweden**, there are no long integrated Master degrees, Swedish higher education following a two-tier model. Master degrees of 60 ECTS credits, following a Bachelor of 180 ECTS credits, are being offered in all disciplines. Swedish Masters are therefore awarded at the level of 4 years/240 ECTS credits. In addition to the existing degrees, a new type of professional Master degree has been introduced only recently, called *Magisterexamen med ämnesbredd*. This new professional Master degree is designed as an important element of lifelong learning, aiming at candidates who are already in employment. The fact that Swedish Masters are awarded after only 240 credits might create difficulties when transferable accreditation is introduced in Europe. All the more so as various other countries are abolishing or restructuring their traditional degrees at the 240 credits level to be more fully in line with the Bologna principles.

The parliament of **Norway** adopted a new degree system in June 2001 which will be introduced between autumn 2002 and the end of 2003. The new system follows the 3+2+3 pattern. In addition to the 120 ECTS Master, there is an international Master (60–90 credits) and an experience-based Master (60–90 credits). All public higher education institutions – universities and state colleges – will offer the new degrees.

**Finland** is currently introducing the new type of Master programmes. The Ministry of Education is promoting the development of a “real” two-tier system, as the Bachelor programmes that were introduced in the 1990’s did not lead to independent degrees but were part of the Master programmes of 5 years.

With the new structure, Finland wants to increase the international comparability of its degree structure and national and international mobility as well as cater to the needs of working life. The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) published an evaluation report on the existing Master programmes in February 2002. In the academic

year 2000/01, there were already 167 programmes in 19 universities.

Meanwhile, an advisory group has been set up by the Ministry to develop a strategy until the end of 2002 for the introduction of the two-tier system.

Due to a special support programme by the government, most of the new Master programmes are in technology (IT), business and arts. Medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry are excluded. The new Master programmes take normally 2 years to complete and are offered only at universities.

In **Iceland**, Master programmes of the 90–120 ECTS credits type, building on a Bachelor of 180–240 credits, have been introduced by the University of Iceland as early as 1923. This degree, called *Meistarapróf*, is offered only at the university and in all disciplines except medicine, pharmacy, midwifery, psychology and dentistry. In the latter disciplines there are long integrated Master programmes of 300–360 ECTS credits, leading to an academic/professional degree called *Candidatus (Kandidatsprof)*. In some disciplines like theology and law, both *Candidatus* and Master degrees are offered. The long Master programmes account for only 4 percent of all graduate programmes. Some faculties that still offer the *Candidatus*, like the law faculty of the University of Iceland, are considering changing their structure into a 3-year Bachelor and a 2-year Master programme.

### **The Baltic countries: well advanced in the reform process**

In the Baltic countries, postgraduate Master programmes have been introduced in most disciplines a decade ago.

Thus in **Estonia**, where all higher education programmes had traditionally been of the one-tier structure and lasted 240 to 300 ECTS credits, the majority of programmes today is structured in two tiers. Since the Academic Year 2002/03, the Master degree (*Magistrikraad*) requires 60 ECTS credits if it follows a Bachelor of 240 credits and 120 credits after a Bachelor of 180: the total number of credits for a Master degree has to be

300. The 3+2 model is more common than the 4+1 model.

The two-tier structure applies to most disciplines, with the exception of medicine, pharmacy, stomatology, veterinary medicine and architecture, where a Master degree traditionally is awarded after one long cycle of 300 or 360 credits. It is interesting to note that new one-tier programmes are being introduced in 2002/03 in two more disciplines, i.e. civil engineering and teacher training for primary schools. These long programmes are called "integrated *Bakkalaureus*- and *Magister* studies" and lead to a degree called *Diplom* or, as in the 3+2 programmes, a *Magistrikraad*. There are no plans at present to introduce a two-tier structure in the disciplines mentioned above.

According to the draft new higher education law, not only the universities but also the professional higher education institutions (*Rakenduskõgkool*) may offer Master degrees, starting only in the Academic Year 2005/06 and in accordance with public needs.

In **Latvia**, graduate Master degrees (of 60 to 120 credits) were initially understood as a purely academic degree and were not used for professional training after the Bachelor. Instead, post-Bachelor professional programmes were created and led to professional diplomas not giving access to doctoral studies. The amendments to the Latvian Higher Education Law of 2000 introduce professional Master degrees, thus solving this problem.

Both universities and academies on the one hand, and professional higher education institutions on the other may offer the new Master degrees. The total duration of studies should not be less than 5 years (300 ECTS or 200 Latvian credits). This means that 3+2, 4+1 and 4+2 structures are legal and do indeed exist. In addition, there are some examples of 3+3 structures at Riga Technical University.

In **Lithuania**, only the universities offer 90–120 ECTS Masters in all disciplines except medicine, pharmacy, agriculture, etc. In these fields, so-called integrated programmes are offered, leading to a Master or a professional qualification. It has to be pointed out, however, that the short Master degrees build on Bachelor

programmes requiring 240 credits, thus bringing the overall length of study to more than 5 years or 300 credits.

### **Western and Southern Europe: Bologna boosts reforms**

In many Western European countries, Bologna has boosted ongoing reform discussions.

**Italy**, as host country to the conference that gave shape and name to the Process, took a particularly thorough approach to its reform. A Ministerial Decree of 1999 re-defined the structure of Italian higher education degrees. At the undergraduate level, the *laurea* is now being awarded, normally after 3 years or 180 ECTS credits. At the graduate level, two degrees are awarded. The most important one is the *laurea specialistica* which is awarded at a level of 300 credits and therefore requires normally 2 years or 120 credits of study. There is also a postgraduate specialisation degree, the *Master universitario di primo livello* (1 year or 60 credits), but it is not part of the consecutive two-tier system.

The new law mentions three more degrees: a research doctorate, a *diploma di specializzazione* (1–5 years/60–300 credits, providing skills for particular professional activities) and a *Master universitario di secondo livello*, of 1 year/60.

The new *laurea specialistica* is offered at universities and other academic institutions. The implementation of the reform started with the Academic Year 2001/02. The higher education institutions have 30 months to complete the adaptation of their learning structures to the new law. No specific difficulties in implementing the new degrees are reported. The institutions started in autumn 2001 by introducing curricula leading to the *laurea*. They are now preparing the curricula for the *laurea specialistica*, to which enrolment will be possible starting from the Academic Year 2002/2003.

The first higher education degree in **Greece** is the *Ptychio* or *Diplom*, awarded after 4–5 years (6 in the case of medicine). The universities offer one type of Master degree of 1–2 years, called "postgraduate diploma of specialisation". Although the Greek system consists for-

mally of two tiers, the large majority (around 75 per cent) of the students leave the system with the *Ptychio* and do not continue their studies towards a Master or a Ph.D. There is general opposition from the universities, the students and the government to a shortening of the *Ptychio* to 3 years. Also the recent proposal of the government to introduce a second type of Master degree, called “diploma of advanced studies” and offering a broader profile than the existing Master degree, was withdrawn as a result of the opposition of universities and students. The proposed new higher education law provides for the introduction of new integrated programmes of at least 5 years duration, mainly in engineering, architecture, agriculture, etc. They will lead to a *Diplom* in engineering and a *Ptychio* in the other fields, but these degrees will have the same academic value as the existing Master. Master degrees are and will be offered exclusively by universities. However, a recent change of law upgraded the Technological Educational Institutions (TEI), making them part of the Greek higher education system. This means that TEI, after successfully passing a quality assessment procedure, may now cooperate with universities in Master programmes, contributing their staff, facilities or equipment. The Master degree will, however, in all cases, be awarded by the university.

The University of **Cyprus** (and some private colleges in Cyprus) offer short graduate Master programmes. They last 1–2 years and are offered in all disciplines. There are no long integrated programmes.

**Spain** took an important step in the direction of the Higher Education Area by adopting a law in December 2001 that states in a rather general way that the “necessary measures to fully integrate the Spanish system into the European Higher Education Area” will be undertaken by the government, the autonomous regions and the universities. The law mentions the introduction of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement as useful tools that will have to be implemented but gives no details as to how exactly introduce the Bachelor/Master structure into the Spanish higher education system. There exist at present all sorts of postgraduate degrees of 1–2 years called “Master”, often of a professional

orientation, but they are not centrally regulated or recognised. They are “owned” by the university that offers them and they are not part of a two-tier system, e.g. they do not give access to doctoral studies (a *licenciatura* is required for that).

Universities, the Rectors’ Conference, the government and an expert group nominated by these players are currently discussing how the Spanish system should be adjusted and it can be expected that a decree will be proposed in the near future, spelling out the operational details of the reform.

Also **Portugal** is still in the discussion process, although there is agreement among the principal actors on the objectives of the Bologna Process. The problem is how to adjust the existing four academic degrees Bachelor/*bacharel*, *licenciado*, *mestrado* and doctor to the Bologna principles. The Portuguese Rectors’ Conference (CRUP) adopted a statement in April 2002, proposing pragmatic solutions for the present situation and calling on the government to provide concrete definitions of the different cycles for the future, the specific distribution of tasks in the binary higher education system, requirements for accreditation and provisions for life-long learning. For the time being, the transparency of Portuguese degrees should be increased by applying the following principles: the first level of graduation should be the *licenciatura* after 4 years, to be followed by a postgraduate formation of 1 year which corresponds to a professional Master degree (M.Sc.). The *licenciatura* can also serve as a starting point for an academic Master programme of two years or give access to a doctoral project. The discussion on whether to introduce a Bachelor-type degree after 3 or 4 years and the different implications that will have for the structure of the degree at Master level are still going on.

**France** has taken an important reform decision. Since the Attali report of 1998 (proposing a 3-5-8 years structure for French higher education) and the beginning of the Sorbonne – Bologna – Prague Process, there have been numerous discussions in the French higher education world (universities and ministries) on the necessary reforms. A

first outcome was the decision in 1999 to make the *licence* a genuine terminal degree relevant to the labour market, and to launch the "*licence professionnelle*". In April 2002 the government signed several legal texts, pertaining amongst other matters to the introduction of a 3+2 structure in the universities, with a *licence* and a *Master*, starting with the Academic Year 2002/03. There will be two different profiles of Masters – research Masters and professional Masters (*diplôme national de "Master", à finalité "recherche" ou finalité "professionnelle"*, the latter possibly requiring an internship). At present, there are some pilot projects running that offer Master degrees of 60 credits, building on the existing *maîtrise* level of 240 credits, thus also requiring 300 credits altogether. Medicine and related areas will be excluded from this reform for the time being.

All higher education institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Education are concerned by the reform. Also the *Grandes Écoles* will begin to introduce the new Master degree even though this confronts them with certain structural difficulties.

A new law on higher education in the **Netherlands** comes into force in September 2002, introducing Bachelor and Master programmes. The universities will convert their one-tier programmes into Bachelors and Masters (some have already started to do so in the past years). The existing *hogescholen* degrees will be turned into Bachelors but both the universities and the *hogescholen* may offer Master degrees, provided these are accredited.

The nature of the programme rather than the type of institution will determine whether the programme is accredited as "higher professional" or "academic". The differentiation between the two types of degrees will be achieved by adding "of arts" or "of science" to the academic Master degrees. Masters will require a minimum of 60 ECTS credits. In engineering, agriculture and the sciences, 120 will be required, and in medicine (should it be introduced: no decision has been taken yet) it would be 180. The combination of a 180 credits Bachelor with a 60 credits Master might cause recognition problems in the European Higher Education Area.

In both parts of **Belgium**, the Bologna Process has led to lively discussions on possible reforms of the higher education system, as neither the Flemish nor the Wallonian system is presently structured into an undergraduate and a graduate phase.

In **Flanders**, the first university degree (*licentiaat/engineer/pharmacien/dentist*) is presently awarded after 4 of 5 years, the intermediate degree after 2 years, called *kandidaat*, not being relevant to the labour market. As a reaction to Bologna-related discussions a new higher education law has now been proposed that will restructure university study programmes into a Bachelor programme of at least 180 ECTS credits and a Master programme of at least 60 ECTS credits. Both the universities and the *hogescholen* will offer the new degrees. Only the *hogescholen* which are already offering a *licentiaat* programme will be entitled to offer Master programmes, provided they are associated with a university of their choice. Thus a sufficient quality control and the necessary link to research will be guaranteed. *Hogescholen* offering only professional Bachelor degrees will not set up Master programmes.

The law foresees the introduction of the new Bachelor programmes by 2004/05 and of the Master programmes by 2007/08 (in time for the first Bachelor graduates). From 2010/11, the two-tier system should have fully replaced the existing one.

The existing study structure in **Wallonia** resembles very much that of Flanders: the programmes at universities and *Hautes Écoles* are formally divided into two cycles, the first one leading to the intermediate degree of a *candidat* after at least two years and the second leading, at least in the universities, to a degree at Master level after another two, three or even four years. The *candidat*, however, is not really "relevant to the labour market" in the sense of a Bachelor degree, even if it gives access to certain jobs in the public service, etc.

The degree awarded after the second cycle is called *licencié, maître, ingénieur, pharmacien, docteur en médecine*, etc. for the university programmes and *licencié, ingénieur commer-*

*cial/industriel, architecte* for the programmes at the *Hautes Écoles*.

As in Flanders, the Bologna Process has led to discussions on a possible adaptation of the programme structures at universities and *Hautes Écoles* to the pattern of the Bologna Declaration. At a joint meeting in March 2002, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the rectors came to an agreement in principle on the introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees.

No legal decision has been taken yet but the following structure is being considered: a two-tier structure with a first degree after three years/180 ECTS credits and a *maîtrise* degree after one to two further years (60–120 credits), depending on the discipline. Studies of architecture and arts have so far been left out of the discussion. As in the case of the Netherlands and Sweden, Belgian Master degrees awarded after a total of only 240 credits might find it difficult to obtain full recognition within the European Higher Education Area.

In **Germany**, the two-tier structure has been introduced in 1998 on an experimental basis: parallel to the existing long one-tier programmes, universities and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) were allowed to introduce Bachelor and Master programmes, applying either a 3+2 or a 4+1 model. All new programmes have to undergo accreditation, a quality assurance procedure that was hitherto not applied in Germany. However, the number of new Bachelor and Master programmes rose so rapidly (representing more than 10 per cent of all study programmes by spring 2002) that this led to a very large “tailback” of programmes awaiting accreditation.

There are some problems still to be solved with regard to the degree system. Thus the positioning of the new degrees in the career structure of the public service is still to be defined. As in other countries, the introduction of the two tiers also causes some problems in the regulated professions such as law, medicine, pharmaceutical studies and food chemistry, that in Germany are traditionally organised along state examination regula-

tions (*Staatsexamen*). All in all, however, it has to be said that the introduction of the new degrees is changing German higher education more rapidly and profoundly than any other reform measure during the last decades. Interestingly, most higher education institutions indicate the need to internationalise themselves (and not the need to reform the curricula or to shorten the duration of studies) as their prime motive for the reform.

In **Austria**, the possibility to offer Master programmes of 60–120 credits (and Bachelor programmes of 180–210 credits) at universities has been introduced in 1997. The new Austrian higher education law will also entitle *Fachhochschulen* to offer Bachelor and Master programmes. Similar to the German situation, some problems regarding the professional status of the new degrees, in particular the Bachelor, still have to be solved. This is reflected in the relatively low number of programmes of the new type that have been offered so far: by April 2002, there were only 12 Master programmes, representing 3 per cent of all programmes at graduate level. A strong increase is however expected for 2002/03 as the new university law, adopted in July 2002, stipulates that all new study programmes – with the exception of medicine, etc. – have to be organised in the Bachelor/Master structure.

A national directive is under preparation in **Switzerland** that introduces a new, Bologna-compatible degree structure: Bachelor degrees will require 180 ECTS credits, Master degrees 90 ECTS credits. As in Germany and Austria, Swiss higher education in the universities used to be organised in a one-tier system with programmes leading after 5 years (minimum: 4 years) to a *Licentiat* or *Diplom*, equivalent to a Master. The *Fachhochschulen/Hautes Écoles Spécialisées (HES)* awarded a *Diploma* after 3 to 4 years.

There are no difficulties of principle in introducing the new Master degrees but it will be necessary to distinguish clearly between the new degrees and the existing Master degrees in the continuing education sector.

The new degrees will be introduced at the level of each individual university, once the

respective university laws have been adapted. The time frame for the introduction ranges from now 2002 until 2010.

Their exact name – in German, French, Italian and English – still has to be decided on. Neither have the competent authorities decided on the disciplines in which the new Master degree will be introduced. For the time being, medicine and pharmacy have been excluded from the discussions.

Also the *Fachhochschule* in **Liechtenstein** recently introduced Bachelor and Master degrees in all disciplines except architecture.

### **Central and Eastern Europe: the reform continues**

The situation in **Hungary** is changing with regard to consecutive two-tier degrees. Colleges have been offering Bachelor programmes of 3–4 years, and universities one-tier Master programmes of 5 years (6 in medicine). As a new feature of Hungarian higher education, two-tier programmes are now being introduced of the 3+2 model (5 years, 300 credits).

Thus, holders of a Bachelor degree from the colleges can also apply for admission to a Master degree: normally this requires that the students take additional subjects before or during the Master programme (2 years, 120 credits) that are included in the first three years of the long one-tier Master programme but not in the Bachelor programme.

If a university intends to introduce a consecutive Bachelor/Master programme, it has to be accredited by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. Only universities are entitled to offer these programmes. They may be introduced in all disciplines except medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary studies.

In **Bulgaria**, the two-tier system was introduced in 1995 with the new Higher Education Act. Only the universities and specialised higher education schools at university level offer a Master degree of 1 year, building on a Bachelor of 4 years. There are still some long integrated Master programmes of 5–6 years, e.g. in architecture, law, pharmacy or medicine.

**Poland** belongs to the countries where the new two-tier structure had until recently not succeeded in attracting sufficient interest from students and employers, who preferred the traditional form of study programmes. These take 5–5.5 years and lead to a degree at Master level called *Magister (Jednolite studia magisterskie)*. In addition, there were (and still are) professional programmes of 3–3.5 years, finishing with a *licencjat* degree (in arts, science and related areas) or programmes of 3.5–4 years, finishing with an *inżynier* degree (in engineering, agriculture, management and related areas). There has been the possibility for holders of a *licencjat* or *inżynier* degree to do a Master degree (usually 2 years), but this possibility has not been used widely.

However, “Bologna” has introduced some dynamics into this picture: over the last couple of years, many higher education institutions have abandoned the traditional model of 5-year integrated Master programmes and moved to two-tier programmes in which the first degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*) corresponds to a Bachelor degree, to be followed by a Master degree (*Uzupelniajace studia magisterskie*) of 1.5 to 2 years. These first degrees are considered to be more academic than the traditional professional *licencjat* and *inżynier* degrees but this difference is not reflected in the name of the degrees. The process of moving towards a two-tier system has been quite spontaneous and was not coordinated by any central authority. As a result, different institutions have developed different versions of the system with regard to the length of the first and second tier and the conditions for moving from the first one to the second one.

There are no specific difficulties in introducing the two-tier structures, and higher education institutions do so largely on their own initiative. The legal regulations simply exclude medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary science, psychology and law from the two-tier structure. On the other hand, the new structure is particularly favoured by certain disciplines such as fine arts, archaeology, etc.

Not all higher education institutions are entitled to offer Master programmes (short or long): certain requirements with regard to staff, research activity, etc., have to be fulfilled.

Table 1 – Types of degrees at Master level

	Master of 60–120 ECTS credits	Master of 270–300 ECTS credits	Different models
<b>Country</b>			
<b>Type of institution</b>			
<b>Austria</b>			
Universities	•	•	
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>	• <sup>1</sup>	–	
<b>Belgium (Fl.)</b>			
Universities	• <sup>2</sup>	•	
<i>Hogescholen</i>	• <sup>3</sup>	–	
<b>Belgium (Wa.)</b>			
Universities	(•) <sup>4</sup>	•	
<i>Hautes Écoles</i>	(•) <sup>5</sup>	–	
<b>Bulgaria</b>			
Universities	•	•	
Colleges	–	–	
<b>Cyprus</b>			
University	•	–	
Higher education schools	• <sup>6</sup>	–	
<b>Czech Republic</b>			
Universities	•	•	• <sup>7</sup>
Higher education institutions	–	–	
<b>Denmark</b>			
Universities	•	• <sup>8</sup>	• <sup>9</sup>
Non-university institutions	–	–	
<b>Estonia</b>			
Universities	•	• <sup>10</sup>	
Applied higher education institutions	• <sup>11</sup>		
<b>Finland</b>			
Universities	• <sup>12</sup>	•	
Polytechnics	<sup>13</sup>	–	

1 Master at *Fachhochschulen* will be introduced by the new higher education law which will come into effect by autumn 2002.

2 The introduction of Bachelor degrees of at least 3 years as of 2004, and of Master degrees of 1–2 years as of 2007 has been decided.

3 *Hogescholen* may offer Master degrees only in cooperation with universities.

4 Discussions about a possible introduction of a Bachelor of 180 ECTS credits and a Master of 60–120 ECTS credits have started but no decision had been taken yet by summer 2002.

5 The *Hautes Écoles* would probably be entitled to offer Master programmes in cooperation with universities, following the Flemish model.

6 Some private institutions have received accreditation for their Master programmes.

7 Some of the new Master degrees may require as much as 180 ECTS credits.

8 Long Master programmes still exist, e.g. in pharmacy, veterinary science, theology and architecture, but the two-tier structure will be introduced in all disciplines.

9 In Denmark, there are also Master programmes of 180 ECTS in the humanities.

10 Only some programmes are still of the one-tier kind.

11 According to the draft new higher education law, applied higher education institutions may also offer Master programmes, starting in 2005/06.

12 A working group is currently preparing a plan for the introduction of a “real” two-tier system since the Bachelor degrees, introduced together with the Masters in the early 1990s, had never been really accepted.

13 A new postgraduate degree will be introduced but it will not be equivalent to a Master.



	Master of 60–120 ECTS credits	Master of 270–300 ECTS credits	Different models
<b>Country</b>			
Type of institution			
<b>France</b>			
Universities	•	(•) <sup>14</sup>	
<i>Grandes Écoles</i>	–	•	
<b>Germany</b>			
Universities	•	•	
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>	•	–	
<b>Greece</b>			
Universities		• <sup>15</sup>	• <sup>16</sup>
Polytechnics (TEI)	<sup>17</sup>	–	
<b>Hungary</b>			
Universities	•	•	
Colleges	–	–	
<b>Iceland</b>			
University	•	•	
Non-university institutions	–	–	
<b>Ireland</b>			
Universities	•	–	
Institutes of technology	•	–	
<b>Italy</b>			
Universities	•	•	
Non-university level	•	–	
<b>Latvia</b>			
Universities & Academies	•	•	
Professional higher education institutions	• <sup>18</sup>	–	
<b>Liechtenstein</b>			
University level	•	–	
<i>Fachhochschule</i>	• <sup>19</sup>	–	
<b>Lithuania</b>			
Universities & academies		•	• <sup>20</sup>
Colleges	–	–	

14 France did not have Master degrees at the 300 ECTS credits level, only the DEA (*diplôme d'études approfondies*, research orientation) and the DESS (*diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées*, professional orientation).

15 The proposed new higher education law provides for the introduction of new long programmes in architecture, engineering and agriculture, requiring at least 5 years of study and leading to a degree at Master level, called *Diplom* or *Ptychio*, like the existing undergraduate degrees of 4–6 years.

16 Postgraduate intermediate specialisation degree at Master level, 1–2 years, after the first degree *Diplom* or *Ptychio*.

17 A polytechnic may from now on cooperate with a university in offering a Master programme, but the degree has to be awarded by the university.

18 Professional higher education institutions need a licence to run Master programmes.

19 Only in architecture, all other study programmes are organised in two tiers.

20 There are Master programmes of 90–120 credits in most disciplines, building upon Bachelor programmes of 240 credits and thus leading to a total length of study of 330–360 credits.

	Master of 60–120 ECTS credits	Master of 270–300 ECTS credits	Different models
<b>Country</b>			
Type of institution			
<b>Malta</b>			
Universities	•	–	
College	–	–	
<b>Netherlands</b>			
Universities	•	•	
<i>Hogescholen</i>	• <sup>21</sup>	–	
<b>Norway</b>			
Universities	• <sup>22</sup>		• <sup>16</sup>
State colleges	•	–	
<b>Poland</b>			
Universities	• <sup>23</sup>	•	
Schools of higher vocational education	–	–	
<b>Portugal</b>			
Universities		(•) <sup>24</sup>	• <sup>25</sup>
Polytechnics	–	–	
<b>Romania</b>			
Universities & academies	• <sup>26</sup>	–	
University colleges	–	–	
<b>Slovakia</b>			
Universities	•	• <sup>27</sup>	
Non-university institutions	• <sup>28</sup>	–	
<b>Slovenia</b>			
Universities		–	• <sup>29</sup>
Professional colleges	–	–	
<b>Spain</b>			
Universities		•	• <sup>30</sup>
<b>Sweden</b>			
Universities	• <sup>31</sup>	–	
<b>Switzerland</b>			
Universities	•	•	
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>	•	–	
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
Universities	•	•	

21 *Hogescholen* are converting their existing degrees into Bachelors but may also apply for the accreditation of Master programmes.

22 According to a parliamentary decision of June 2001, a 3+2+3 degree system will be introduced in Norway.

23 In all disciplines except medicine, law and other regulated professions.

24 The most common degree in Portuguese higher education is the *licenciatura* that requires 4–6 years, but is not generally recognised as equivalent to an international Master standard of 300 ECTS credits.

25 There are 2-year *Mestrado* courses in all disciplines, but they build on *licenciatura* degrees that can last 5 or even 6 years.

26 Master programmes in Romania last 1, sometimes 2 years, following a first degree of normally 4, in some disciplines 5–6 years.

27 Long integrated programmes continue to exist only in medicine and veterinary sciences (legal requirement) and are favoured by certain disciplines, such as architecture and forestry: each long programme, however, is considered an exception requiring ministerial approval.

28 Non-university institutions, created by law as of 2002, may offer Master programmes if they are accredited.

29 In Slovenia, 2-year Master degrees are offered but they build on undergraduate degrees that require 4–6 years of study.

30 Spanish universities offer various “Master” degrees after the *licenciatura*, often of a professional profile, that are “owned” by the universities, do not form part of a two-tier system, and are not required for admission to doctoral studies.

31 In Sweden, a 3+1 model applies: a 60 ECTS credits Master follows a Bachelor degree of 180.

Thus only around 40 out of more than 200 private institutions are authorised to run Master programmes. Whether the institutions decide to make use of this possibility is a different matter: most technical universities have introduced the two-tier system. In the other universities, the situation is less cohesive: some departments may have introduced the new structure while others did not. No urgent need is felt by the key players (Ministry, higher education institutions, students) to change the present situation of two systems existing in parallel.

In the **Czech Republic**, the type of short Master programmes, building on a first university degree, was formally added to the traditional one-tier programmes in 1990 and described in more detail in the Higher Education Act of 1998. Higher education institutions, however, did not make real use of the new option. Only over the last four years has the majority of Czech higher education institutions begun to introduce “short” Master programmes. The major obstacle to introducing the new system was the amount of work required to adapt the curricula from a one-tier to a two-tier system. Higher education institutions have understood that simply dividing the existing curricula into two will not meet the criteria of a real two-tier system.

There were reservations among higher education institutions, students and the labour market but the situation is now quickly changing.

The introduction of short Master programmes was once more presented, in a more detailed way, by the amended Higher Education Act of April 2001. The two-tier curricula are more and more replacing the one-tier programmes. Non-university higher education institutions have traditionally been concentrating on Bachelor programmes and only very few among them also offer some Master programmes, the large majority of which is run by universities.

The new Master degrees can require 60 to 180 ECTS credits, most of them being of the 120 credits type. They are offered in engineering, economics, forestry and military disciplines (*inzenyr*), in architecture (*inzenyr*

*architect*), in the arts (*magistr umení*) or in other disciplines (*magistr*).

In medicine and related fields, law and some other disciplines, the two-tier system has not yet been introduced.

Also **Slovakia** is in the process of re-orienting its higher education system along “Bologna” lines. Thus, the new Slovakian Higher Education Law of 1 April 2002 distinguishes between study programmes of the first level (Bachelor), second level (Master) and third level (Ph.D.). Master programmes may last between one and three years. Three types of degrees at Master level exist: *Magister (Mgr.)*, *Magister umenia (Mgr.art)* and *Inzinier (Ing.)*.

All study programmes are offered in the two-tier mode with the exception of medicine and veterinary medicine, which are explicitly excluded by law. Only in exceptional cases and after authorisation by the Ministry may universities combine programmes of the first and the second levels into one long programme.

All higher education institutions that received accreditation for postgraduate programmes can offer Master programmes. However, they will remain more typical for higher education institutions of the university type than for the non-university type institutions which were introduced by the Higher Education Law of 2002.

The traditional long programmes (4–6 years) still exist but will from now on be offered only in special areas and cases. They lead to the same degrees as the new, short Master programmes, namely: *Magister*, *Magister umenia*, *Inzinier*. Apart from the medical disciplines where the two-tier structure is excluded by law, the long programmes are particularly favoured by forestry, architecture and certain fields of study at military higher education institutions.

In **Slovenia** postgraduate degrees of 2 years/120 ECTS credits at Master level have been introduced by law (Higher Education Act of 1993, amended in 1999) and are offered in all disciplines by universities and other higher education institutions with

faculty status. The Master programmes build on undergraduate degrees that require normally 4, but in some disciplines also 5 or 6 years of study. Since the study structure foresees one additional year for the preparation of a thesis, the overall duration of study for a Master degree goes well beyond the 5 years/300 ECTS credits that emerge as a standard in the Bologna Process.

The universities have already begun to develop new curricula on the 3+2 model but the existing legislation does not allow such structures yet. This is, however, a pressing

problem that is, incidentally, shared by other States of former Yugoslavia and that needs to be addressed in the near future.

In **Romania** there are Master programmes of 1, sometimes 2 years duration in all disciplines. They are offered only at universities and build on undergraduate programmes of normally 4, in some disciplines 5 or 6 years. While the system consists formally of two tiers, the relatively long undergraduate degrees make the majority of graduates leave after the first degree. The situation therefore resembles that of Slovenia.

### “ACADEMIC” VERSUS “PROFESSIONAL” ORIENTATION

The European situation is quite heterogeneous regarding the perceived need to differentiate between different profiles of Master degrees. In some countries this plays no role at all, in others it is at the very heart of the reform.

**Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Slovakia** indicated that they do not distinguish in principle between different profiles. Italy knows no differentiation at the level of the *laurea specialistica*. **Norway** relies on its higher education institutions to find appropriate and informative names for their programmes but makes no distinction in principle.

In **Austria**, while there will be no differentiation between academic and professional Masters, there are some Advanced Master degrees (following either a Bachelor or a *Magister*) that are strictly professional and do not give access to doctoral studies. Also in **Iceland** there are some Master programmes like MBA that are considered somewhat more professional than the usual M.A. or M.Sc.

In the **Netherlands**, both the universities and the *hogescholen* will offer “academic” and “higher professional” Master degrees, depending on the profile of the programme.

In **Germany**, the differentiation between various types of Master programmes is expressed by the terminology applied: programmes with a more academic orientation lead to a Master of Arts or Sciences, while a more

application-oriented programme leads to a Master of Engineering, etc. The terminological differentiation does not imply differences of level or standing.

Similarly, in **Switzerland**, there is no systematic differentiation between “academic” and “professional” degrees. For the time being, the exact names of the future degrees have not yet been decided upon. It is expected that, generally speaking, universities will offer programmes of a more academic nature and *Fachhochschulen/HES* rather application-oriented ones, but there is no legal obligation to do so.

On the other hand, in **France**, the clear distinction between the two types of Master programmes is at the heart of the reform: from the start, the student will have to choose between a professional profile and a research profile but there will be bridges that will allow him/her to change at a later stage. The research-type Master degree will make the student immediately eligible for doctoral studies but the holder of a professional Master degree will also have possibilities to be admitted to doctoral studies.

In **Greece**, the government has proposed in spring 2002 to introduce a second type of Master programme of a more general character than the existing degree and leading to a very specialised qualification but, the proposal was turned down by universities and students.

The **United Kingdom** and **Ireland** do not differentiate between more “academic” and

more “professional” Masters: all degrees are considered academic. Rather, the differentiation takes rather place between “taught Masters” and “research Masters”. A taught Master in Ireland can normally be obtained after one year of study, a research Master after one to two more years.

In the UK, a taught Master requires normally a full calendar year’s work and sometimes even slightly more, equalling therefore 90 ECTS credits. The research Masters, often called M.Phil., will normally last for two years and can be upgraded directly into a Ph.D. if the quality suggests it.

**Latvia** differentiates between academic and professional Masters (and Bachelors), both in names and standards. This is a rather new

development, as the Master was initially understood as a purely academic degree and was not used for professional training after the Bachelor. Instead, post-Bachelor professional programmes were created and led to professional diplomas not giving access to doctoral studies. The amendments to the Higher Education Law of 2000 introduced professional Master degrees, thus solving this problem.

**Sweden** has just introduced a new type of professional Master degree that is to play an important role in lifelong learning.

In **Finland**, some polytechnics will introduce a new postgraduate degree on an experimental basis but it will not be a Master degree.

## “OLD” VERSUS “NEW” MASTERS

In all countries where long (270–300 ECTS credits) and short (60–120) Master programmes exist in parallel, their academic value is considered to be the same. Therefore, in many countries, little attempts are made to differentiate between the two in terms of nomenclature. One rather relies on the Diploma Supplement to explain the exact nature of the programme. This is e.g. true for **Lithuania, Norway and Hungary**. In **Bulgaria**, there is not even a distinction between long and short Masters for statistical purposes.

In some countries, the difference between the two types of degrees, in spite of their identical academic value, is made obvious by a different denomination. Thus, in **Austria**, the traditional degrees were called *Diplom*, the new ones will be called *Magister*. Similarly, in **Switzerland**, the traditional *Licentiat/Diplom* is now issued in parallel to the new Master. In **Germany**, the new Master/*Magister* is of the same academic standing as the traditional *Magister, Diplom* and *Staatsexamen*.

As for **Belgium**: in **Flanders**, the draft new higher education law proposes to call the new postgraduate degree of 60–120 credits Master whereas the traditional degrees are called *licentiaat/engineer/pharmacist/dentist*. The situation in **Wallonia**, where the reform is still in the planning stage, might be comparable (*maîtrises* as opposed to *licencié, ingénieur*, etc.).

In **Iceland**, the degree at the end of short Master programmes is called *Meistaraprof*, as opposed to the *Kandidatsprof* at the end of traditional long programmes.

**Italy** has undergone a complete renaming of its higher education degrees: the traditional title at the end of long one-tier programmes, the *laurea*, is now used to designate the Bachelor level, whereas at the end of the second tier either the *laurea specialistica* or the *Master universitario* are awarded.

Also in **France**, a new nomenclature is being introduced. The only postgraduate degrees proper at the level of 300 credits used to be the DEA and the DESS, the *maîtrise* comprising only 240. The new Bologna-inspired degrees will be called *Master à finalité “recherche”* or *Master à finalité “professionnelle”*.

Sometimes the long traditional and the new short master-level programmes are called the same and, in addition, there are a few degrees that are only awarded at the end of long programmes – normally in those fields where the two-tier structure is (still) excluded by law.

Thus in **Latvia**, the new Master degrees are called *magistra grads* whereas the long programmes in medicine and dentistry lead to *arsta grads* and *zobarsta grads*.

In **Estonia**, the *Magistrikraad* is awarded at the end of both long and short Master programmes, but the *Diplom* only at the end of some long programmes.

In the **Czech Republic**, all degrees at Master level are called the same (*inženýr, magistr,*

etc.) but there are also specific degrees awarded in medicine and veterinary medicine.

In **Slovakia**, the situation is quite similar.

## ACCESS TO MASTER PROGRAMMES

The basic access requirement for a Master programme in all countries is a first degree at Bachelor level, normally in combination with more specific requirements defined by the department offering the Master programme. There are, however, some interesting particularities: in the **Netherlands** and in **Flanders**, each Bachelor degree must give the graduate direct access to at least one Master programme, without further entrance exams.

Generally speaking, along with the trend to introduce new or more “professional” Master degree, there is a tendency to open Master programmes also to holders of non-university undergraduate degrees. In **Denmark**, holders of a professional Bachelor degree of a college are eligible for a university Master programme in the same field. In **Norway**, a Bachelor or a professional qualification give access to a Master programme.

Equally, **Estonia** has opened the access to university Master programmes for holders of a professional degree of a non-university institution. Moreover the latter will be entitled to run Master programmes as of 2005/06.

In **Sweden**, a Bachelor is still required for admission to a Master programme but this might change as a result of the recently introduced professional Master degree: new methods for validating professional experience, using credit systems, are being developed.

A new law in **France** provides for the recognition of alternative routes of learning, taking

into account personal or professional experience and skills.

The newly created postgraduate Master programmes in **Hungary** are also open to Bachelors coming from the colleges, but they have to take some additional “bridging courses”.

In **Ireland**, admission to a Master programme in the absence of an honours degree would normally require the completion of a Master qualifying course or an associated postgraduate diploma course. The Dublin Institute of Technology assesses professional qualifications as possible equivalents to an honours degree (e.g. a professional qualification in accountancy might give access to an MBA programme).

The higher education system in **Italy**, while generally requiring a *laurea* for admission to a *laurea specialistica* programme, makes an exception for holders of vocational qualifications in the health disciplines.

In **Finland**, there is for the time being a large variety of standards and regulations for admission to Master programmes and the ongoing reform is expected to provide some common standards.

Also **Poland** is for the time being faced with various types of models of passing from the first to the second tier.

## CREDIT SYSTEMS, DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT AND ACCREDITATION

### Credit systems

The Bologna Declaration mentioned the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) only by way of example but it is clear that no other European credit system is emerging. Basically the participating countries can be divided into two groups: those with a nation-

al credit system in the past, which is (being made) compatible with ECTS, and those without a tradition of credit systems and having used ECTS so far only for mobility purposes. The latter countries are now using the Bologna reforms to introduce ECTS together with the two-tier degree system and quality assurance.

Table 2 – Credit systems

	ECTS compulsory or applied voluntarily	National credit system	Credits not compulsory
<b>Country</b>			
<b>Austria</b>	•		
<b>Belgium (Fl.)</b>	•		
<b>Belgium (Wa.)</b>	•		
<b>Bulgaria</b>			• <sup>1</sup>
<b>Cyprus</b>		•	
<b>Czech Republic</b>	•		
<b>Denmark</b>	•		
<b>Estonia</b>		•	
<b>Finland</b>		•	
<b>France</b>	•		
<b>Germany</b>	•		
<b>Greece</b>	•	•	
<b>Hungary</b>	•	•	
<b>Iceland</b>	•	•	
<b>Ireland</b>			• <sup>2</sup>
<b>Italy</b>	•		
<b>Latvia</b>	•	•	
<b>Lithuania</b>	•	•	
<b>Malta</b>	•	•	
<b>Netherlands</b>	•	•	
<b>Norway</b>	•	•	
<b>Poland</b>			• <sup>3</sup>
<b>Portugal</b>	•	•	
<b>Romania</b>	•		
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	•		
<b>Slovenia</b>			• <sup>4</sup>
<b>Spain</b>	•	•	
<b>Sweden</b>		•	
<b>Switzerland</b>	•		
<b>United Kingdom</b>		• <sup>5</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> The use of a credit system is not compulsory, but various institutions have begun to introduce ECTS for exchange purposes.

<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> Not compulsory, but many higher education institutions are using ECTS for mobility purposes.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to national systems, many higher education institutions are using ECTS for mobility purposes.

An example for this group is **Germany**, where the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) decided in 1999 that the new two-tier programmes would need to have a modular structure and use credits (180–240 ECTS credits for a Bachelor and 60–120 credits for a Master).

Also **Austria, France, Italy, Hungary, Slovakia** and some other countries are linking the introduction of new degree structures with that of ECTS.

The **Netherlands, Malta, the Nordic and Baltic countries** are assuring the full compat-

ibility of their national system with ECTS, and in some instances it has been decided to replace the national system by ECTS.

Even in those countries where there is no legal obligation at all to use credits, such as **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland or Slovenia**, ECTS is now commonly used for

mobility purposes and may be applied to accumulation some day.

### Diploma Supplement

Also the Diploma Supplement (DS) is already widely used in many countries. Some countries have made – or are making – its

**Table 3 – Diploma Supplement**

	Regular or compulsory delivery of DS	Introduction of DS being prepared	No DS (yet), national transcripts
<b>Country</b>			
<b>Austria</b>		• <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Belgium (Fl.)</b>		•	
<b>Belgium (Wa.)</b>		•	
<b>Bulgaria</b>			•
<b>Cyprus</b>			•
<b>Czech Republic</b>	•		
<b>Denmark</b>	•		
<b>Estonia</b>	•		
<b>Finland</b>	•		
<b>France</b>	•		
<b>Germany</b>		•	
<b>Greece</b>		•	
<b>Hungary</b>		•	•
<b>Iceland</b>		•	•
<b>Ireland</b>			•
<b>Italy</b>	•		
<b>Latvia</b>		•	
<b>Liechtenstein</b>	•		
<b>Lithuania</b>		•	•
<b>Malta</b>		•	
<b>Netherlands</b>	(•) <sup>2</sup>		
<b>Norway</b>	•		
<b>Poland</b>			•
<b>Portugal</b>			•
<b>Romania</b>			•
<b>Slovakia</b>	•		
<b>Slovenia</b>	•		
<b>Spain</b>		•	
<b>Sweden</b>	•		
<b>Switzerland</b>		•	
<b>United Kingdom</b>		•	•

1 Compulsory as of 2003/04.

2 Some institutions use the official DS while others have developed their own models.

introduction a legal obligation. In others, it is delivered on a regular basis, although there is no explicit obligation. The **Czech Republic, France, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway, Slovakia,**

**Slovenia and Sweden** belong to these two groups.

In a number of other countries, the implementation of the DS is being prepared or underway,



e.g. in **Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Greece, Latvia** and **Spain**.

As with credit systems, there are countries, like **Bulgaria, Iceland, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania** and the **UK** that have a tradition of national transcripts. Some of them are thinking of replacing these by the DS or amending the national forms to comply with DS requirements.

### **Accreditation by foreign agencies**

The introduction of new degree structures and programmes goes in many countries hand in hand with the implementation of new quality assurance mechanisms, often in the form of accreditation. However, this topic was not a focus of this study and a few examples may suffice. Thus, **Norway** is planning to set up a new body for accreditation and evaluation. **Latvia** finished in November 2001, after 5 years, its first round of quality assurance and accreditation of all study programmes, while Sweden has just embarked on a 6-year project of evaluation of all programmes. The Minister of Higher Education and Research of the French-speaking community of **Belgium** announced in spring 2002 the creation of an Agency of Quality Control in Higher Education. In **Germany**, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education has decided in spring 2002 to apply the accreditation procedure to all existing and future study programmes, not just the newly created Bachelor and Master programmes. In **Poland**, the State Accreditation Commission, established in June 2001, watches over minimal quality requirements while the Accreditation Commission of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) certifies particularly high standards of selected programmes.

These manifold initiatives in quality assurance at the national level explain why a relatively

small number of higher education institutions seem to feel the need to apply for accreditation by foreign, including non-European, agencies. It is not easy to obtain reliable data on this matter, as the higher education institutions in most countries are not obliged to inform any central office of their accreditation initiatives. In **Austria**, e.g. accreditation takes place on a voluntary basis at institutional level. Also the Higher Education Ministries of **France, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Norway, Lithuania** and **Slovenia** reported that such information was not available to them.

In the relatively few instances where accreditation by foreign agencies has taken place, it mostly applies to business programmes and the accreditation was done by EQUIS.

E.g. in **Flanders** and the **Netherlands**, some Master programmes have been accredited by foreign agencies but, for the future, the accreditation, of all study programmes by a Dutch-Flemish accreditation body is envisaged. Also in **Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Slovakia** and **Poland**, some institutions have sought foreign accreditation, mostly by EQUIS. The medical faculties in the **Czech Republic** are regularly accredited by NCFMEA (USA). An economics programme at one **German** university has been accredited by AACSB (USA). In **Switzerland**, some institutions have already expressed interest in foreign accreditation, as the national accreditation agency is only being built up. In **Latvia**, no programme has been accredited by foreign agencies but the national accreditation teams are all international, consisting of one Latvian expert, one from Estonia or Lithuania, and at least one from Western Europe or sometimes North America.

In the **UK**, apparently a British university has accredited some courses that are offered at US universities based in Great Britain.

## **MAIN REFERENCES**

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## JOINT DEGREE STUDY

by Andrejs Rauhvargers

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Joint degrees are high on the European political agenda. At the 2001 Prague Higher Education Summit, Ministers called upon the higher education sector to step up the development of modules, courses and curricula “offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree”.

Expectations regarding the development of joint degrees as a means of achieving the goals of the Bologna Declaration are high. Respondents believe that such an initiative is relevant to virtually all the goals and will boost the development of joint quality assurance, recognition, and the transparency and convergence of higher education systems throughout Europe, as well as student and staff mobility, graduate employability, the European dimension of studies and the attractiveness of European education in general.

In the vast majority of countries taking part in the EU Socrates programme, higher education institutions have to some extent already engaged in joint degree partnerships with foreign institutions and this trend is intensifying. Bilateral partnerships are still more common than multilateral ones, but strong joint degree networks along subject lines have already emerged.

Joint degrees in Europe exist in most fields of study. The present survey shows that they are most commonly established in economics/business and engineering, followed by law and management. European studies/political science, communications and media, foreign languages and social sciences are also often cited. The languages of tuition are usually those of the partner countries and/or English.

Joint degrees are more common at Master and doctoral levels than at first degree level or outside the university sector. ECTS (the European Credit Transfer System) or compatible credit systems are used for the award of most joint degrees at Bachelor and Master levels.

While the allocation of funding for degrees awarded jointly with foreign institutions usually follows the same rules as in the case of national programmes, more funding is normally required, at the very least to ensure the joint development of programmes, and student and staff mobility.

Joint degree programmes are usually based on inter-institutional rather than intergovernmental or other higher level agreements.

Very few countries have specific legal provisions regarding joint degrees. While this does not normally deter the establishment of joint programmes as such, it can cause serious problems for the award and recognition of the joint degrees.

The award of a single degree in the name of several institutions is still legally difficult. Joint degrees are therefore usually awarded either as double degrees (two separate national qualifications), or as one national qualification with reference to the fact that it results from a joint programme. This may range from an unofficial joint certificate giving the names of all partners to the barest of indications that cooperation has occurred at all.

Parts of joint programmes undertaken by students at partner institutions are often recognised automatically. Recognition of joint degrees by the partners is usually ensured through cooperation agreements.

The situation is less straightforward where national and international recognition are concerned. When a joint degree is awarded as a national degree, it is recognised nationally and regarded internationally like any other foreign degree. However, if it is a real joint award, it falls outside the framework of both national and international legislation and therefore encounters problems of recognition.

Several issues have to be addressed in the near future in order to promote the further development of joint degrees. They include the national legal framework for degrees, the

issues of national and international recognition and quality assurance, and support for student and staff mobility. There is also a need to agree

upon a common definition of the “joint degree” concept.

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Joint degrees are high on the European political agenda. In a *communiqué* at the 2001 Prague Higher Education Summit, the European Ministers of higher education stated:

*“In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability, Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with ‘European’ content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree.”*

Countries committed to the Bologna Process indicate<sup>1</sup> that the development of joint degrees is highly relevant to achieving most – if not all – objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

**Quality:** the most frequently mentioned aspect. Several countries indicate that the establishment of joint degree programmes will necessarily involve examining and recognising the quality offered by partners. Common efforts in the field of quality assurance will lead to international standards for programmes and the further development of joint quality systems.

**Recognition:** country representatives stress that the establishment of joint degrees will inevitably lead to sounder recognition, above all, solving the remaining recognition issues of study periods and credits by partner institutions. Some countries acknowledge that joint degrees will require them to be more familiar with each other’s education systems, which will also encourage more effective recognition throughout Europe.

**Transparency of systems:** several countries say that joint degree programmes will stimulate a comparative approach to various fields of study, so that European higher education systems become more transparent for everyone, including employers. Efforts to develop joint degrees will promote the use of transparent mechanisms such as ECTS and the Diploma Supplement,

which are particularly useful in these programmes.

**Mobility:** joint degree programmes, in which mobility is an essential component, will naturally boost the mobility of students, teachers and researchers, and ultimately bring down the formal barriers to mobility. As Norway notes, the formalities surrounding academic exchange will have to be dealt with systematically in advance.

**Convergence:** it is expected that the development of joint degrees should have a positive impact on efforts to make higher education systems more compatible and to integrate their curricula. As France recognises, cooperation to introduce these degrees requires a reference structure, which today inevitably means a two-tier structure.

**Employability:** several countries say that joint degrees will create a broader European labour market and increase the international employability of its graduates.

**European dimension:** not surprisingly, countries consider that efforts to establish joint degrees should strengthen the European dimension of education, introduce an international element into curricula and foster understanding of other cultures.

**Attractiveness of European education:** a number of countries are also fully convinced that the offer of joint degrees will strengthen in various ways the attractiveness and competitiveness of European education.

**Additional aspects:** in encouraging the development of joint degrees, it needs to be borne in mind that they should not become the sole European prototype, as diversity is also required (the Netherlands). Development of joint degrees has not yet been sufficiently analysed and discussed with higher education institutions. Further analysis and discussion with them, as well as the possible preparation of guidance material could be useful (Poland, Switzerland).

<sup>1</sup> In the replies of their representatives in the Bologna follow-up group to the questionnaire sent out by the Swedish Ministry of Education before the Stockholm seminar, and in opinions expressed during several Bologna Process events that followed the Prague summit.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY **Definition of joint degrees**

At present, an agreed definition of a joint degree in Europe is still lacking. In order to separate joint degrees from pure student exchange on the one end, and pure cooperation in curriculum development on the other, the following working definition of joint degree was used in the study and in the questionnaire:

*Joint degrees are normally awarded after study programmes that correspond to all or at least some of the following characteristics:*

- *the programmes are developed and/or approved jointly by several institutions;*
- *students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other institutions;*
- *the students' stays at the participating institutions are of comparable length;*
- *periods of study and exams passed at the partner institution(s) are recognised fully and automatically;*
- *professors of each participating institution also teach at the other institutions, work out the curriculum jointly and form joint commissions for admission and examinations;*
- *after completion of the full programme, the student either obtains the national degrees of each participating institution or a degree (in fact usually an unofficial "certificate" or "diploma") awarded jointly by them.*

It was also stressed in the questionnaire that not all joint degree programmes necessarily have to fulfil all the above conditions, especially if they are still in the development phase.

The results, however, indicated that, because of different reasons grounded in the national legislation, in a number of countries it was difficult to fulfil the last point of the definition – in fact, just national degrees/diplomas of one institution were awarded to the graduates of joint programmes (this issue is discussed in chapters "Joint degrees and national qualifications", p.35, and "National legislations", p.36). Thus, several countries indicated that they have no joint degrees although their higher education institutions, in fact, were involved in development of joint programmes and just could not fulfil the last point of the definition regarding the award of joint degrees.

For this reason, the definition was "softened" for the purpose of this study by separating the **cooperation in establishing the joint programmes** from the **procedure through which the degree/diploma is awarded upon completion of a joint programme**.<sup>2</sup> This allowed to obtain a much better picture on the actual scope of cooperation in Europe.

In order to distinguish between degrees awarded jointly in the name of all participating institutions and such cooperation where just a national degree is awarded upon completion of a joint programme, the former will be regarded as "real" or "genuine" joint degrees in the text of the report.

### **Scale of cooperation**

In the vast majority of countries committed to the Bologna Process, higher education institutions have at least to some extent established joint degrees with foreign partner institutions.

In all, 26 education systems, namely those of Austria, the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom confirm that their higher education institutions offer joint degrees.

Austria, Lithuania and, in some respects, Bulgaria admit that their joint degrees "are not real joint degrees" meaning that, on completion of a jointly developed programme, graduates still receive just one degree from their home institution. **The same comment may also relate to difficulties encountered by other countries.**

Among countries which state that they have no joint degrees, the reasons given vary. For example, in Hungary there is legislation for cooperation with foreign higher education institutions in the provision of study courses and the award of degrees. However, in practice, this has to date served as a basis for transnational education rather than for joint degree programmes with institutions abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Separation of cooperation in the establishment of joint programmes from the procedure of degree awarding was also one of the suggestions made at the Stockholm seminar.

Greece refers to its legislation and occasional inward-looking attitudes on the part of its universities, although the forthcoming law on postgraduate studies will increase scope for the award of joint degrees. In Slovenia, regulations regarding the language of instruction are the main obstacle. In Cyprus, the law has

taken a firm stand against unreliable providers of transnational education, with the result that it is difficult to offer degrees in cooperation with higher education institutions abroad. Steps are being taken to ensure that this kind of cooperation is established, at the latest by the time Cyprus joins the EU.

## JOINT DEGREES: A NEW TREND

Replies from countries as a whole indicate that, in many cases, cooperation to develop joint degrees depends solely on the initiative of individual institutions so that the central authorities are often not in a position to provide statistical data on the scale of the phenomenon, or more concrete examples of its occurrence.

Austria, Denmark, Finland, Malta and Norway view the establishment of joint degrees as a rapidly growing trend. Quite a few countries estimate that the number of joint degrees to date is very small, which they claim is why they found it difficult to answer the questionnaire (the Czech Republic, the French Community of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). As the French Community of Belgium put it, replying to the questionnaire was more a matter of theoretical speculation than an exercise based on concrete experience.

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, some institutions have started to cooperate with foreign partner institutions in a way not yet really acknowledged in legislation. However, there are plans to draw up a regulation for joint degrees, with specific conditions relating, for example, to the minimum period spent by students at partner institutions, and certain procedures for joint curriculum development and the exchange of staff. An interesting development between the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands is the establishment of the *Transnationale Universiteit Limburg* (involving cooperation between the Dutch *Universiteit Maastricht* and the Flemish *Limburgs Universitair Centrum*) which, at present, offers the only recognised joint degrees in the Flemish Community.

Malta says that the development of joint degrees is being consolidated with participation of the University of Malta in the Bologna Process.

Only a few countries have been able to give any figures or estimates indicating the scale of their joint degree partnerships: the Flemish Community of Belgium refers to between five and ten programmes; Estonia reports on a partnership in its first year, involving just one institution; France puts the number of its joint programmes at some 200, excluding jointly supervised doctorates believed to involve around 1000 students; and Germany gives an estimate of 1140 programmes, of which some 300 might be "real" joint degree partnerships, while the remainder are joint study agreements with only the home institution diploma awarded on completion of the course. About half of the German programmes are with French partner institutions, although the DAAD (the German Academic Exchange Service) has started running a special support initiative to promote joint degree programmes with specific countries (the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy and Hungary). Furthermore, a Bulgarian/Romanian Interuniversity Europe Centre (BRIE) in Rousse (Bulgaria) and Giurgiu (Romania) has been founded with the support of Germany, and Master programmes in European studies and business informatics lead to a double degree awarded by the University of Rousse and a German University.

Iceland has three joint degree programmes in one of its eight higher education institutions. Poland reports that the number of joint degree programmes stands between 10 and 20 while, in Spain, the estimate given by one university is under 6 per cent of all degree programmes.

There are joint arrangements between Baltic and Nordic countries in, for example, technical and agricultural disciplines, but these often lead to the award of the home institution degree only. The Netherlands reports that nearly all the *hogescholen* have developed joint arrangements, although some of them involve the franchising of foreign degrees rather than real joint degrees.

#### Bilateral cooperation

Although very little quantitative information is available, country replies suggest that bilateral cooperation is more widespread than are multilateral joint degree networks which, however, appear to be growing in number.

Bilateral partnerships are either the only type of cooperation or the dominant one in e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. A number of countries also said that both types of cooperation are possible (the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom). However, some of these countries indicate that cases in which there is more than one partner institution/country are less widespread (the French Community of Belgium and Latvia), more difficult to establish (Finland) or more recent (France).

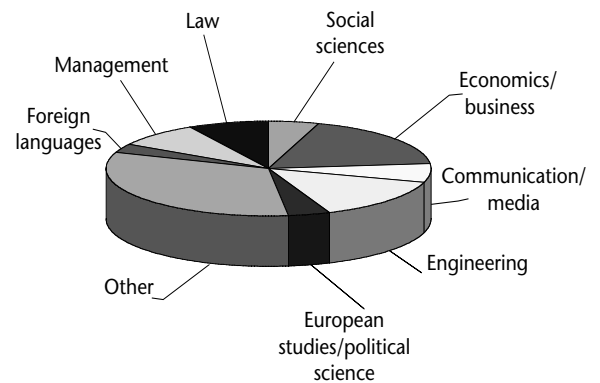
#### Joint degrees and fields of study

Most common and desirable fields of study are often the same.<sup>3</sup>

Countries agree that joint degrees in Europe exist in virtually every field of study. However, most countries could not provide any statistical information regarding fields of study in which their institutions had joint degrees. The frequency with which fields were specified in country replies was therefore taken as the basis for estimating the breakdown of joint degrees along subject lines.

**Joint degrees are most commonly awarded in economics/business and engineering, followed by law and management.** European studies/political science, communications and media, foreign languages and social sciences are also more frequently cited than other subject areas.

**Chart 1** – Estimated distribution of joint degrees by field of study<sup>4</sup>



Country replies regarding the most desirable fields for establishing joint degrees point to no clear favourite: economics/business, engineering, political science, European and international law, history, philosophy, literature, communications, architecture, pedagogy, health care and life sciences are all noted with roughly the same frequency.

It follows from the information available that in most of the foregoing fields, the development of joint degrees in Europe is already well underway.

#### Regulated professions

Replies to the question on study fields in which it might be particularly difficult – or, on the contrary, especially easy – to establish joint degrees yielded interesting findings.

**Table 1** – Comparison of fields of study in which it was reported to be particularly difficult and/or particularly easy to establish joint degrees

Difficult	Easy
Architecture	Architecture
Engineering	Engineering
Medicine, nursing, pharmacy	Medical and paramedical studies
Pedagogy, educational science	Natural sciences, including mathematics
Banking and finance	Business education
Political and social sciences	Foreign languages
Regulated professions	Regulated professions

<sup>3</sup> Replies to the questionnaire distributed by the Swedish Ministry of Education before the Stockholm seminar are taken into account in this analysis.

<sup>4</sup> No statistics are available. The chart is no more than an estimate of the relative distribution.



The ambiguity of replies regarding the regulated professions is immediately apparent. The regulated professions in general, as well as specific professions such as architecture, engineering and medicine, are considered by some respondents to be especially difficult fields for the establishment of joint degrees and particularly easy by others.

Indeed, on the one hand, these fields are the subject of strict national regulations. On the other hand, however, the education and training to which they correspond are now far more compatible throughout the EU and EFTA/EEA countries and are becoming more so in the EU candidate countries, at least in the case of professions covered by the EU sectoral directives on professional recognition that require a certain “harmonisation” of the education leading to the profession. Not only should this trend facilitate the establishment of joint degrees; it also seems desirable that education and training in the fields concerned should be more closely integrated with the support, where appropriate, of further legislation.

In the case of all the other regulated professions (to which the general systems of recognition apply), it seems vital that efforts to establish joint degrees should be used to eliminate any *substantial differences*<sup>5</sup> in education and training for these professions in different countries. The issue of the regulated professions is a complex one that requires more thorough analysis involving specialists in higher education, lawyers concerned with internal market issues and professional bodies at European level.

### **Joint degrees at Master and doctoral levels**

#### Doctorates

Award of joint degrees at doctoral level is mentioned in the answers from the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Replies from Spanish universities refer to joint doctorates with Italy and France and forthcoming cooperation

with Cuba. Switzerland awards joint doctoral degrees with France. In Poland, the award of such degrees is being organised on a personal level by those involved (doctoral students and their supervisors), although the process is still at an early stage. Greece reports that its forthcoming new law on post-graduate study provides for common courses leading to joint degrees at both doctoral and Master levels. In the Netherlands, joint Ph.D. programmes have not yet been formalised, although various forms of collaboration exist as regards arrangements for research and its supervision.

Several countries report that most of their joint doctorates to date have involved the joint supervision of theses (the French Community of Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands and Spain). There are signs that joint doctorates, and particularly joint thesis supervision, may be more widespread than the central authorities realise. Where there are no joint programmes even though doctoral students have two supervisors in two different countries and pursue their studies in both of them, arrangements are always made on a personal level, so there may be no information about them at central level. It is also worth noting that when higher education staff in the central and eastern European countries were “upgraded” in the 1990s under the TEMPUS programme, they often had to study for doctorates, spending some time at a western partner institution under the supervision of one of its own staff. Examples of such cooperation have involved the Baltic States and Nordic countries, Romania and France, and several eastern European countries and Belgium.

As far as the award of joint doctorates is concerned, the situation varies from one country to the next, even in cases where theses are jointly supervised.

Award of only one degree seems to be the dominant trend in France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Romania and the United Kingdom. However, where this occurs, the degree may sometimes be a joint award, but sometimes also just a single national degree. While, in Germany,

<sup>5</sup> “Substantial differences” in education and training are the legally stipulated reason for non-recognition of foreign professional qualifications or for insistence on additional requirements, cf. directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC.

the degree is awarded on one common certificate entitling its holder to assume both the German title of *Doktor* and use the corresponding degree in the country of the partner institution, in e.g. Latvia and Slovakia, certification may be from just one country alone. According to the new law on higher education in Slovakia, the degree awarded by the foreign university at which students defend their thesis is recognised in Slovakia, while Slovak universities in turn may award doctorates to foreign university students who defend their thesis in the country.

In cooperation between the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands, a joint doctorate can be delivered on behalf of the *Transnationale Universiteit Limburg (TUL)*.

In cases in which a Dutch and foreign university share responsibility for the part of a programme that involves research, the Dutch university has to award the doctorate.

Under the forthcoming new law in Greece, students are expected to receive a normal doctorate from one of the partner countries together with a statement indicating that the thesis was approved by all the cooperating institutions.

Meanwhile, the universities in Iceland, Spain, Switzerland and Portugal, in cooperation with their foreign partners, award two separate doctoral degrees from two countries. With the exception of degrees awarded by the *Transnationale Universiteit Limburg*, this also currently applies to the Flemish Community of Belgium. However, a new Flemish Community decree is planning for the possible joint award of a single degree, so that actual practice will then depend on the participating institutions and partner countries.

In France, the award of two degrees by a mixed board of examiners is becoming increasingly the norm in joint degree arrangements with other European universities, under which doctoral students spend 3-month to 6-month periods of study in the partner institution each year.

The United Kingdom normally expects only one doctoral degree to be awarded, without

ruling out the possibility that, in some cases, institutions may choose to award two degrees.

The joint supervision of theses in the French Community of Belgium takes different forms. Either students carry out most of their activities at their home university, or they divide their time between the two partner institutions. In the first case, the home university degree is awarded, with a note referring to the cooperation concerned; in the second, students may receive a double degree awarded by both partners.

#### Master degrees<sup>6</sup>

Joint degrees at Master level exist to a greater or lesser extent in most respondent countries.

In the French Community of Belgium, respondent universities refer mainly to cooperation at postgraduate level for doctorates or advanced study for the *diplôme d'études approfondies (DEA)* or *diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées (DESS)*.

In France, joint degrees are mainly for the *maîtrise*, but also established at Master level in the engineering schools and management and political science institutions.

As regards new programmes in Germany, joint degrees at Master level exist both in universities and *Fachhochschulen*. Joint programmes also exist at **Diplom** level in both sectors.

In Italy, provision for joint degrees involving Italian and French universities at the level of the Italian *laurea* and French *maîtrise* date from 1984 (Legge 18.10.1984, No. 761: "The universities of the two countries may sign agreements making provisions for integrated study programmes resulting in a double degree, that is the Italian *laurea* and the French *maîtrise*, having the same validity").

In the Netherlands, some joint Master degrees are already awarded at universities. From September 2002, Dutch universities are implementing the Bachelor/Master course structure. Phasing out the long Master programmes is expected to have an impact on the implementation of joint programmes. In

<sup>6</sup> Including cooperation at *maîtrise* level in France, as well as cooperation in the final stages of the long programmes leading to what is regarded as Master qualifications in the *Trends and Learning Structures in Higher Education* reports.

cooperation between the Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium, joint Master degrees are awarded by the *Transnationale Universiteit Limburg*.

At the Dutch *hogescholen*, many Master programmes are offered in partnership with United Kingdom universities. However, most of them are UK programmes taken under franchise by *hogescholen*, with the degree awarded by the UK partner. These qualifications are thus not joint degrees in the full sense, even though the name of the Dutch *hogeschool* is included on the degree document.

In Poland, the vast majority of existing joint programmes are at Master level.

At postgraduate level (the DESS) in Romania, there is cooperation with French institutions in the field of civil engineering.

In Switzerland, there are some joint programmes at traditional diploma level but no joint Master programmes yet in the strict sense.

The forthcoming law on postgraduate studies in Greece will provide for joint degrees at Master level. As in the case of all joint degrees in Cyprus (see "Scale of cooperation", p.30), the appearance of the joint degrees at this level so far has been delayed. However, creation of genuine joint programmes with foreign higher education institutions should just be a matter of time.

#### Bachelor degrees

At Bachelor level, joint degrees appear to be less widespread. Several countries have said that they have no joint degrees at this level (the French Community of Belgium, France, Iceland, Slovakia and Spain). With no joint degrees whatsoever, Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia also fall into this category.

At this level in Germany, joint degrees exist both at the universities and *Fachhochschulen*.

In Finland, there are no joint Bachelor degrees at the universities, but some exist in the polytechnic sector.

In the Netherlands,<sup>7</sup> joint degree cooperation at Bachelor level in the university sector is expected after introduction of Bachelor degrees in this sector in 2002.

At least a small number of joint Bachelor degrees exist in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

#### The non-university sector<sup>8</sup>

Certain developments in this sector are at Bachelor level (as indicated in Finland above); otherwise, there is little evidence of joint degrees in the sector.

Joint programmes leading to non-university qualifications exist in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

In both the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, joint degrees in the non-university sector are not widespread. Some examples of joint programmes are known but they stand outside the official system of qualifications and are therefore not recognised by the governments of the Communities.

France reports cooperation with at least seven European countries for two French professional diplomas at *Bac+2* level<sup>9</sup> in the fields of hotel catering and automobile studies. However, the respondent admits that this is more a matter of gearing partner country curricula to the award of French qualifications, than of true joint curriculum development.

In Poland, only one higher education institution is known to offer some form of joint degree programme.

In Slovakia, joint degrees in the non-university sector are theoretically possible but no such initiative has been reported.

Norway has replied that the question is not applicable to its unitary system of higher education, as is arguably the case in Sweden also.

Estonia, Latvia and Italy say they have no joint degrees in the non-university sector.

<sup>7</sup> With the exception of joint Bachelor degrees awarded by the *Transnationale Universiteit Limburg*.

<sup>8</sup> German *Fachhochschulen* and Dutch *hogescholen* are regarded as "universities of applied sciences" in Germany and in the Netherlands respectively, and their qualifications are at Bachelor or Master levels.

<sup>9</sup> Two years after the *baccalauréat*.

## Joint degrees and national qualifications

The way in which joint degrees are awarded in practice<sup>10</sup> varies both within countries and from one country to the next. Replies point to a number of possibilities as follows:

### 1. The award of a “real” joint degree on a single degree certificate<sup>11</sup> in the name of both or all participating institutions.

Until now, this has been feasible solely in the United Kingdom and Italy. It might also become possible under the new decree in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Romania says that it is in favour of a single degree certificate issued by all institutions, but the proposal has not been implemented yet.

### 2. The award of two separate degree certificates (a “double degree”) appears to be a fairly common practice, especially if the cooperation is between two countries/institutions, although double degrees also exist in multilateral partnerships. The practice is reported by the Flemish Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania and Switzerland. Double degrees may also be awarded in Italy (at Bachelor and Master levels), Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. In Hungary, where double degrees are currently non-existent, the preference is thought to be for two separate degree certificates. Two degrees have also been awarded in instances in which programmes have been established by much broader multilateral partnerships or consortia. For example, in the case of the CIDD consortium<sup>12</sup> of university business schools, a joint degree programme has been developed by all members of the consortium, but students study at just two of them from which they receive their double award (two degrees). Much the same applies to the TIME consortium.<sup>13</sup>

The award of more than two degree certificates from all participating institutions is less common, although some countries indicate that it may occur.

### 3. One degree certificate awarded in the name of the participating institution at which the student is registered.

In many cases, the legislation of participating countries is such that neither “joint” nor “double” awards are possible.<sup>14</sup>

Where the joint degree is awarded in the name of just one institution, several different methods are used to provide evidence that the award does actually result from a joint programme:

- An unofficial<sup>15</sup> degree certificate is awarded on behalf of the whole partnership, in addition to the national degree, to testify that the programme has been developed and taught jointly. This is the practice in several joint degree partnerships in Europe, such as the consortium awarding an M.Sc in European Construction,<sup>16</sup> a consortium offering joint doctoral degrees in biology, and one awarding a European Master in Business Science.<sup>17</sup> The same practice is also noted in the replies from Iceland, Poland, and Romania (in the case of jointly supervised doctorates and joint degrees at postgraduate level), and in one of the replies from Portugal.

- A degree certificate awarded by one of the partner institutions is also signed by representatives of all the others. While this procedure is often cited as the most logical approach to the award of joint degrees, replies to the questionnaire supplied little evidence of its use in practice.

- A degree certificate, awarded and signed by representatives of one of the participating institutions only, notes clearly that its holder has followed a jointly developed programme and lists all the other partner institutions. The French Community of Belgium and the Netherlands state explicitly that this procedure is sometimes used by their higher education institutions to award joint degrees and the practice may be more widespread still. However, an additional note on the degree certificate/diploma may not be legally possible

10 The procedure of degree awarding upon completion of a joint programme should however be considered separately from joint degree cooperation as such, see chapter “Definition of joint degrees”, p.29.

11 Some countries call this document a “diploma” rather than a “degree certificate”.

12 CIDD stands for Consortium of International Double Degrees, <http://www.cidd.org>

13 Top Industrial Managers for Europe.

14 See chapter “Problems resulting from lack of legislation”, p.37.

15 In most European countries (see below), such a certificate has no legal ramifications and, therefore, can officially serve as a source of additional information only.

16 <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/se/ec>

17 [http://www.sam.sdu.dk/doc/edu/ode/igp/studyguide02\\_03/15.pdf](http://www.sam.sdu.dk/doc/edu/ode/igp/studyguide02_03/15.pdf)  
[www.sdu.dk/Adm/Educ/office/dansk/udrejs4e.html](http://www.sdu.dk/Adm/Educ/office/dansk/udrejs4e.html)

in countries whose legislation includes regulations governing the text for inclusion on nationally recognised certificates.

- One normal degree certificate is awarded by a single institution in the partnership. The fact that this often occurs, even in jointly developed programmes with student and teaching staff mobility, is surprising. The procedure is reported by Slovakia, and applies to the award of joint doctorates by the French Community of Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition, it is the most commonly adopted method of awarding joint degrees in Iceland, and a possibility also in Portugal and the United Kingdom. In Malta, graduates may receive a single degree from either the University of Malta or its one or more partner institutions in accordance with a prior agreement between them. The award of one degree by a single institution is the more widespread of two options in Norway, and national degrees only are awarded to graduates in joint programmes in engineering and agriculture between universities in the Nordic countries and Baltic States. Finally, graduates from German joint programmes may receive only one qualification, unless they have simultaneously satisfied the conditions for the award of degrees in both Germany and the partner country.

### **Credit systems in joint degrees**

ECTS (the European Credit Transfer System) or an ECTS-compatible system is used in all – or virtually all – joint degree cooperation in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal. The United Kingdom says that it always uses a credit system, except at doctoral level, and the same may be true for other countries as well.

In France, Italy and Slovakia, credit systems are already used in some partnerships and are becoming compulsory under new legislation.

In the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria and Poland, credit systems are used in at least some partnerships.

Replies from the joint degree networks also point to the widespread adoption of credit sys-

tems. ECTS itself is used in 23 out of 30 respondent networks, while five networks use ECTS-compatible systems and only two use no credit system whatever.

### **Language of tuition**

As regards the use of languages in joint degree partnerships, several countries emphasised that the use of a particular language was not regulated, and that institutions were therefore free to decide on their preferred language(s).

In some cases, the partner institutions have a common language (as in the case of cooperation between the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands, or joint degree partnerships involving Spanish universities and Latin American institutions).

In most instances in which countries specified the languages used in partnerships, they referred to the languages of partner countries, with English as the third language, as was the case in the French Community of Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Romania. Some of them said that, on occasion, instruction in the language of the host country was a formal objective. Iceland, Latvia, Malta and the Flemish Community of Belgium (except in cooperation between the Flemish Community and the Netherlands) said that English was the main language used for purposes of cooperation.

In general, two or more partner country languages are used in Bulgaria, Ireland and Spain (except in cooperation with Latin America). France reports no instances in which English is used in joint degree cooperation.

A few countries (Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia) legislate to protect use of their national language as the language of instruction. However, exceptions are usually possible as in the case of foreign guest lecturers and the tuition of foreign students.

### **National legislations**

Scarce legislation

The majority of respondent countries have no legislation specifically concerned with the

development of joint programmes and the award of joint degrees (Austria, the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, the power to award degrees lies with the universities, so the lack of legislation implies that there are no restrictions on their award.

In Germany, the legal situation with regard to joint degrees is set out in two decisions of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Culture (KMK), the first in 1991 and the second (on jointly supervised doctoral theses) in 1996. Minimum requirements for joint degrees include the following: programmes should be offered jointly with at least one recognised foreign institution; they – and any examination procedures – should be drawn up jointly; each partner should offer a substantial part of the programme; and programmes should reach a level commensurate with the award of a German degree.

In Italy, the initial legislation in 1984 was devised to promote university cooperation between France and Italy. General provision for all university institutions is part of the recent (DM 509/1999) reform which enables them to award degrees in cooperation with foreign universities. Procedures for the award of joint degrees are decided by the individual institutions acting autonomously, and have to be provided for in their teaching regulations (*regolamento didattico di ateneo*).

In Hungary, the 1993 Higher Education Act states that a Hungarian higher education institution may conduct joint programmes at all levels provided that the foreign institution(s) and the degree concerned are recognised. This legislation has so far provided a basis for transnational education rather than the award of joint degrees.

In Cyprus, because of the reasons described above (p.30), joint degrees are at present often harder to establish. Yet legislation more conducive to development of joint degree programmes is now expected.

Problems resulting from lack of legislation

**The absence of legislation concerned specifically with joint degrees does not normally prevent the establishment of joint programmes with foreign institutions**, as this is an area in which universities are generally free to act as they wish. Thus, most countries report that their institutions have no difficulty in establishing joint programmes with institutions abroad (the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Romania). In some countries, however, there may be legislation that indirectly hinders the establishment of joint programmes (see the example of Cyprus, p.30). In a small number of countries the hindrance lies within legislation regulating the language of instruction (see chapter “Language of tuition”, p.36).

By contrast, **absence of legislation on joint degrees may give rise to serious problems as regards their award and national-level recognition** on completion of the programme concerned. In most countries with no specific regulations for the award of joint degrees, national legislation does regulate the award of national degrees and qualifications. In such situations, joint degrees may only be awarded in accordance with the same procedures as national ones.

For example, France says that the award of joint degrees poses no legal problem as long as the partners agree to comply with the French model, namely the curriculum submitted to the Ministry of Education, which the French institution has been authorised to follow. Yet, because any requirements or obligations of the partners also have to be respected, two national degrees, instead of a single joint qualification, are normally awarded. France refers to ongoing negotiations with other countries to examine the feasibility of an authorisation procedure in which a team of different country representatives would develop a curriculum for consideration by a joint committee in accordance with agreed criteria. Its authorisation by all interested parties would then guarantee recognition in the countries concerned and also result in establishment of the appropriate administrative proce-

dures for the award and signing of qualifications, as well as for references to the cooperation programme on the certificates themselves. The above procedure would, however, seem best suited to a situation in which either the education systems of the partner countries, together with some of their legislation, are fairly similar, or one in which one of the partner countries deliberately adapts its national degrees to those of the other(s).

University-level education in Iceland has to be approved by the Minister of Education.

Although, in the French Community of Belgium, higher education institutions may establish joint programmes with partner institutions abroad, problems may arise in the award of the final qualifications. To be awarded a Belgian French community degree, it is not enough that a student of a partner institution attends a joint programme and spends periods of studies at the Belgian French Community institution. If students from the partner institution(s) are to receive a French Community qualification carrying full academic and professional rights, they have to be enrolled in the Belgian French Community institution at least for the final year of studies. Before the planned new legislation is adopted, the rules seem to be similar also in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

Besides the countries already referred to, Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Spain all emphasise that, at present, all the procedures for the award of joint degrees must comply with the same legal requirements as those applicable to national qualifications. Similar regulations may also exist in other countries.

Regulations for the award of national degrees often include requirements that are entirely appropriate to the national context but which may represent obstacles when applied to joint degrees:

- The requirement that students should be officially enrolled at an institution in order to receive its degree is understandable. However, they are not always allowed to

enrol at two (or more) institutions at the same time. Under such circumstances, there is little alternative to awarding just the “home” university qualification, even though the participation of students in a joint programme may be necessary to obtain it.

- Even though it may be legally possible for students to enrol simultaneously at two or more joint programme partner institutions, the minimum period of study or number of credits required at the home institution for the award of a nationally recognised degree may be nationally determined. If this minimum is set above 50 per cent, double degree cooperation may become impossible.
- A fairly widespread practice is for an institution to award its degree if students have been normally enrolled in its final year of study and/or defended their final thesis there. Yet this automatically results in the award of just a single national degree, even though a joint programme may have been completed.
- There may be national regulations governing the precise text that appears on degree certificates or diplomas, so that it is not legally possible to add information about the joint programme or name the partner institutions.

Poland says that the name of a particular programme (field of study) has to be taken from a list of such fields approved by ministerial ordinance. The same applies to certain other countries. There are known cases in which joint degree cooperation has been compromised because a programme name which satisfied the regulations in some partner countries, did not do so in the others.

As the Netherlands and Latvia point out, joint degree programmes in most cases have to comply with the same quality assurance procedures as national programmes.<sup>18</sup>

Further developments in joint degree legislation are currently anticipated in Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Latvia and Romania.

18 See also chapter “Joint degrees as a national qualification”, p.39.

### Inter-institutional cooperation agreements

The vast majority of respondent countries reported that inter-institutional agreements constitute the main basis for joint degree partnerships. However, such agreements may themselves be the natural outcome of inter-governmental agreements on cooperation in education, education and culture or education and research.

Very few intergovernmental agreements are thought to be concerned specifically with joint degrees. Among rare examples are the already-mentioned agreement between the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands (on the establishment of the Transnational University of Limburg) and intergovernmental agreements reported also by Italy, Portugal and Spain.

### Recognition

Proper national and international recognition is of utmost importance for further cooperation in the development of joint curricula and the award of joint degrees. Several aspects of the recognition of joint degrees were analysed in the present survey which sought answers to the following questions:

- Are study periods at the partner institutions recognised by all of them?
- Are joint degrees nationally recognised?
- Are the joint degrees recognised by other institutions in the participating countries?
- Are joint degrees recognised by third countries?<sup>19</sup>

### Recognition among partner institutions

**Periods studied at partner institutions are often recognised automatically.** Replies from many countries indicate that, where the curriculum has been jointly developed and approved by the partner institutions, recognition of parts of programmes undertaken at the partner institution is either automatic or provided for in inter-institutional agreements.

However, some countries say that their own institutions sometimes assess and recognise parts of the curriculum studied at the partner institutions although, in the case of joint pro-

grammes, the procedure may be simpler (the French Community of Belgium, Estonia, France, Iceland, Lithuania and Spain).

Out of the 30 joint degree consortia that replied to this question, 26 said that recognition of parts of the curriculum studied at partner institutions was automatic, while three said that it was not.

**Joint degrees are automatically recognised by the partner institutions.** Nearly all respondent countries<sup>20</sup> and joint degree consortia said that the degrees were recognised by all the partner institutions. Several replies emphasised that recognition of the jointly awarded degrees was usually part of the inter-institutional cooperation agreement, so that recognition by the partner institutions was normally automatic.

### Joint degrees as a national qualification

**National recognition poses no problem when the joint degree is awarded as a national qualification.** Replies clearly indicate that recognition of a joint degree by a country poses no problem as long as it is also a national degree. Thus, several respondents point out that the only legal option so far is to award joint degrees as national degrees: they include Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Germany (within the context of its federal system) and a number of other countries.

France, the French Community of Belgium and Spain state that joint degrees can be recognised nationwide, if they fulfil all legal requirements for nationally recognised degrees in general.<sup>21</sup> Other countries (the Netherlands, Latvia and Romania) say that national recognition of joint degrees is based upon the results of the national assessment of the quality of the programme in question, and this assessment will be done in accordance with the same regulations applicable to national degrees. If the quality assurance procedures differ substantially between the countries where partner institutions are located, it may cause difficulties to award joint degrees and once again lead to just one national degree.

<sup>19</sup> Meaning countries that have not been party to the degree award.

<sup>20</sup> With the exception of a few in which such information was not available at central level.

<sup>21</sup> Besides nationally recognised degrees, higher education institutions in some countries may legally award "university" degrees with no official national status (in some other countries such degrees are not legally possible). If joint degree cooperation results in the award of such a qualification, its holder may not be entitled to its full academic (and professional) recognition and legal rights, in some cases, even in the partner countries. For this reason, it is recommended that degrees standing outside national systems should not be a basis for cooperation of this kind.



Replies also indicate that in the case of two (or more) national degrees, those awarded by the partner countries will be treated in the same way as any other foreign degree. As stated in some replies, the joint degree certificate is not recognised in law if awarded as a single document on behalf of two or more institutions, because national legislation does not explicitly acknowledge the existence of such degrees.

**Joint degrees are often recognised by other institutions in the countries concerned.** From most country replies it is clear that, provided the joint degree is a recognised national qualification,<sup>22</sup> it will also be recognised by other institutions in the same country, and thus regarded in the same way as any other “normal” degree awarded by the same institution. The experience of the joint degree consortia was less encouraging. Almost half of the respondents (48 per cent) said that the degrees were not automatically recognised by other institutions in the countries in which their partner institutions were located, and almost a third (30 per cent) claimed that they would not even be automatically recognised by other institutions in the same country.

Furthermore, if joint degree certificates were awarded as a single document on behalf of all partner institutions, other institutions in the same country might be hesitant to recognise it.

International recognition<sup>23</sup> of joint degrees

**Joint degrees awarded as recognised national degrees pose few unfamiliar problems.** With regard to the award of joint degrees as one or more national degrees, most countries replied that, while further experience had to be acquired in this area, recognition would be the same as in the case of any other foreign degree. Three countries said that, in the case of joint degrees, recognition would be more difficult and another one claimed that a foreign joint degree would not be recognised at all. Two other countries believed that recognition might be easier provided the partner institutions were recognised.

Countries have raised the following aspects of joint degree recognition:

- for recognition of a joint degree, all partner institutions have to be recognised in their own countries (French Community of Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia); the Netherlands considers that at least one of the partner institutions has to be recognised;
- checking the status of each partner is time-consuming and could cause delays in recognition (Slovenia);
- recognition of a joint degree might be more difficult if several foreign institutions are involved in awarding it (Finland);
- recognition of joint degrees might be easier in cases in which there are bilateral agreements between some or all of the countries whose institutions are party to the joint degree (Czech Republic and Poland);
- France notes that, theoretically, problems might arise from the authorisation system (habilitation) for French higher education institutions, but says there is no evidence of such difficulties in practice to date;
- the German ENIC/NARIC highlighted an interesting problem quite possibly faced by other countries. It may well be that in the particular country in which recognition of a joint degree is sought, the original national qualifications underpinning recognition are regarded as being at different levels. In such instances, the joint degree will most probably be recognised at the lowest of the two or more levels concerned.<sup>24</sup>

**If the joint degree certificate is a real joint award on the part of several institutions, this is not formally recognised in law.** It is clear from country replies that there is, at present, no specific provision for recognition of joint degrees in national legislation. With regard to joint degrees comprising a single award on the part of two or more institutions, therefore, no legal basis for recognition in third countries currently exists.

As regards international legislation more generally, the main legal instrument for academic

22 Some countries emphasise that the joint degree really has to be a national qualification and not one awarded by a recognised institution outside the national qualifications framework.

23 Meaning recognition in countries other than those in which the partner institutions are located.

24 For example, a joint degree might be awarded as two national qualifications – a Bachelor degree from country A and a Bachelor degree from country B. On the basis of previous experience, the third country might recognise the degree from country A as a full undergraduate degree, but the degree from country B as credits for just two-and-a-half years of study. Under these circumstances, the joint degree would probably also be recognised as two-and-a-half years of study and not as a full undergraduate qualification.

recognition in Europe is the Lisbon Convention. Under the Convention, each State Party to it shall recognise qualifications from the national higher education systems of the other Parties (provided that differences between the qualifications concerned are not substantial). The underlying concept for recognition is that once a foreign qualification officially belongs to a national higher education system, it fulfils certain national quality requirements set by the country where it has been awarded, and therefore can be considered for recognition. Where a joint degree is a genuine joint award in the name of several institutions located in different countries, it is not a national qualification for any of them and is therefore, strictly speaking, outside the framework of the Convention. For this reason, a jointly awarded degree certificate is usually not considered for recognition unless it is supplemented with a national qualification.

Yet the Lisbon Convention does not rule out the recognition of qualifications standing out-

side national qualification frameworks. A *Code of Good practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* was adopted by the Lisbon Convention Intergovernmental Committee in 2001. It stipulates the requirements that should be satisfied by transnationally awarded qualifications in order for them to be eligible for possible recognition under the Convention.

The issue of extending the Convention framework also to joint degrees was raised at the Joint Degree seminar in Stockholm in May 2002. A week later, the European recognition networks ENIC and NARIC decided at their meeting in Malta, to examine the international legislation and prepare proposals for the next Lisbon Convention Intergovernmental Committee, with a view to bring jointly awarded qualifications within the scope of the Convention.

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## PRIORITY ISSUES

The replies to our questionnaire on Master and joint degrees in Europe, along with the response to the questionnaire circulated by the Swedish Ministry of Education before the Stockholm seminar and the results of several Bologna Process events, all point to a small set of priority issues in stimulating the development of joint degrees as part of the Bologna Process. They are listed below in order of the relative frequency with which they are cited:

- **Recognition issues** come first, especially as regards recognition of joint degrees that are real joint awards by several partner institutions. Both the national and international recognition of such awards remain unresolved issues, even though a “real” joint degree is attractive in highlighting the international dimension of joint programmes and the experience of the graduates concerned, and can help to enhance their subsequent career, whether in studies, research or other forms of employment.
- **Quality assurance issues**, whether from a national or international perspective.

From the **national** angle, countries believe that national quality assurance mechanisms should take proper account of programmes conducted by higher education institutions with partner institutions in other countries. From the **international** angle, two avenues should be explored: first, the possibility of considering joint degree quality assurance in conjunction with European cooperation in subject area quality assurance; and, secondly, using the results of national quality assurance across Europe as an agreed basis for recognising the quality of joint degrees.

- The **national legal framework**: where possible, national legislation should be amended to ensure that regulations for the award of degrees or for national quality assurance are not insuperable barriers to the development of joint degrees. Attention should also be devoted to identifying an appropriate legal status for the latter, especially as regards its professional implications. National legislation needs to be examined still further with a view to eliminating obstacles to student and teaching staff mobility.

- The feasibility of **student support systems** and even international agreements on funding should perhaps be examined.
- **A common definition (and typology) of joint degrees** is also required, along with a

clearer perception of the added value of joint degrees for students, institutions and employers. This might lessen misgivings on the part of students and institutions about the value of time invested in joint degree activity.

## OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. As emphasised in the Prague ministerial *communiqué*, joint degrees are now high on the political agenda: they are seen as an important means for creating the European Higher Education Area.
2. The analysis shows that efforts to establish joint degrees are relevant to most objectives of the Bologna Process: joint degree cooperation will boost the development of joint quality assurance, the recognition of degrees and qualifications across the European Higher Education Area, the transparency and convergence of higher education systems, student and staff mobility, the international employability of graduates, the European dimension of studies and the attractiveness of European education.
3. The overall effect of a programme is greater than the sum of its parts. Each partner institution covers that part of the joint programme for which it is most competent and technically advanced, with the result that the same resources achieve a far greater impact.
4. In most countries involved in the Socrates programme, cooperation leading to joint degrees in one form or another is already underway. Yet a more precise common definition of "joint degree" is still required.
5. Joint degrees in Europe exist in most fields of study and are most common in economics/business, engineering, law and management, European studies/political science and a number of other fields.
6. The most recent efforts to establish joint degrees are in line with the Bachelor/Master course structure and **thus stimulate the implementation of the two-tier structure.**
7. Joint degrees are more common at doctoral and Master levels than at first degree level or outside the university sector.
8. ECTS or compatible credit systems are used for the award of most joint degrees at Bachelor and Master levels.
9. The languages of tuition are usually those of the partner countries and/or English.
10. Few countries have legislated specifically for joint degrees. While this does not normally prevent the establishment of joint programmes, it may create problems for the award of the degrees.
11. The award of one degree in the name of several institutions is still legally difficult. Joint degrees are therefore usually awarded either as **double degrees** (involving two separate national qualifications) or as one national qualification, possibly with some reference to the fact that it is the outcome of a joint programme.
12. Partner institutions often recognise parts of joint programmes studied abroad as a matter of course. Recognition of joint degrees by the partners is usually ensured through cooperation agreements.
13. Joint degrees awarded as national qualifications pose no particular problems of national and international recognition.
14. If a joint degree certificate is awarded in the name of all partner institutions, it falls outside both the existing national and international legal framework for recognition.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A more precise common definition of a “joint degree” is required. It should in particular specify the following:
  - the minimum number of participating institutions;
  - the joint nature of the curriculum;
  - the minimal requirements for student and staff mobility;
  - the procedures for award of the degree.<sup>25</sup>
2. National governments should be encouraged to examine and amend national legislation with a view to:
  - ensuring that development of joint programmes with foreign institutions is legally possible;
  - ensuring that award of degrees jointly by several institutions from different countries is legally possible;
  - removing indirect obstacles to the establishment of joint degrees, which result from regulations concerned with the award of degrees or what may actually be written on certificates, as well as with the enrolment of students, the language of instruction, or the use of funding, etc.
3. Every effort should be made to facilitate the international recognition of jointly awarded degrees. The possibility of amending international legislation in order to extend the scope of the Lisbon Convention to such degrees should be examined by the ENIC and NARIC Networks.
4. Even wider use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement is required to ensure the transparency of the joint programmes and as a means of providing information about the joint nature of the award.
5. There is a clear need to develop common mechanisms for the quality assurance of joint degrees. This could be done through the EUA's institutional evaluation activities which involve teams of European rather than national experts. In addition, the EUA Joint Master Pilot Project to be launched in September 2002 will provide additional experience. It is of crucial importance that the EUA's European evaluations of Joint Degrees are further recognised and/or taken into account in the accreditation of programmes by national quality assurance agencies and disseminated through the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA).
6. The European employability of graduates is one of the most important goals of the Bologna Process. Attempts to establish joint degrees in professional fields, and particularly for the regulated professions, should therefore be strongly encouraged. The feasibility of exploiting the compatibility of different forms of training for certain regulated professions, as well as the EU directives on professional recognition, should be further examined.
7. Additional funding should be sought from national sources and European cooperation programmes in order to support student and staff mobility, in the latter case with a view to financing the development phase of joint curricula. Countries are encouraged to ensure that students on a joint programme of study abroad can transfer their national study allowances to the country concerned.

<sup>25</sup> Ideally, the degree should be awarded as one certificate in the name of all the partners, provided that national and international legislation is adapted to the recognition of such certificates.

**WHAT IS EUA ?**

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both European universities and national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. Its membership includes 609 individual members, 34 collective members and 7 affiliate members in 45 countries throughout Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members, to enhance their contributions to society and the quality of their core activities.

EUA focuses its policies and services to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research. More specifically, EUA's objectives are to develop consensus on

- a European higher education and research identity based on shared values;
- the compatibility of European higher education structures through commonly accepted norms;
- convergence of the European higher education and research areas to strengthen further the sector's attractiveness in Europe and beyond.

**QU'EST-CE QUE L'EUA ?**

Organisation représentant à la fois les universités européennes et les conférences nationales de recteurs, l'Association Européenne de l'Université est le principal porte-parole de la communauté de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe. 609 membres individuels, 34 membres collectifs et 7 membres affiliés dans 45 pays d'Europe en constituent les forces vives.

L'EUA a pour mission de favoriser la mise en place d'un système cohérent d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche en Europe en orientant ses membres vers une amélioration de la qualité de leurs activités fondamentales, soutenant ainsi activement leur apport à la société.

L'EUA articule sa politique et ses services autour de la construction d'un espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche. Plus spécifiquement, elle vise à rassembler ses membres sur:

- une identité européenne de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche qui se fonde sur des valeurs partagées;
- la compatibilité des structures de l'enseignement supérieur européen à travers des normes acceptées en commun;
- la convergence en un espace européen des systèmes d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche pour renforcer l'attrait des institutions en Europe et dans le reste du monde.

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