

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007

Draft: 12 April 2006

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

This template has three sections:

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

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

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

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

Country	Albania
Date	14.12.2006
BFUG member (one name only) Position	Anila Theodhori Specialist Ministry of Education and Science
Email address	atheodhori@mash.gov.al
Contributors to the report	Anila Theodhori Ministry of Education and Science Aleksander Xhuvani

Main achievements since Bergen

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

1. Constitution of the Albanian BFUG, divided into three subgroups focusing on:
 - Curricula development and National Qualification Framework,
 - Standards, Quality Assurance and academic workload,
 - Diploma and prior education recognition and social dimension.
2. Organisation of seminars and workshops with European experts on curricula development and National Qualification Framework.
3. Organisation of several meetings and workshops in view of establishing the “State Matura”- a better way of students’ recruitment in the HEIs.
4. Drafting the Albanian Master Plan of Higher Education in Albania;
5. Presentation of the new Law of Higher Education draft
6. Amendment of the Law n.8461 about “Higher Education in Republic of Albania” of 25th February 1999 and modified in 2006, in which several important elements of Bologna Process have been added to.
7. In compliance with the above-mentioned Law of “Higher Education in Republic of Albania” the Albanian Government has emitted several normative acts, decisions, directives and decrees, which have qualitatively influenced the process of Bologna Chart implementation. The Ministry of Education and Science in co-operation with the other governmental institutions and Albanian HEIs has brought another climate in the reforming processes led in the country to its main goal the real integration in the EHEA. More concretely:
 - It has been implemented in all Albanian public universities and most of private ones the three cycles of studies following the scheme 3+2+3, 4+1+3 or 3+1 leading in Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees;
 - From the academic year 2005-2006 all Albanian public universities have adopted the new curricula according to Bologna Chart. Curricula reform and establishing the ECTS at a national level have made possible, from the legislative point of view, the mobility of students from one university into another within the country and their credits, when 70% of study plans and programmes for the same subject are common;
 - Efforts done to building-up the internal and external Quality Assurance system have let universities, both public and private, to adopt structures and European experiences in the field. The Albanian Agency of Accreditation on Higher Education has been the promoter of several seminars and workshops in order to sensitise and train the actors of that process;
 - The deep reform in the admitting process into the Albanian HEIs through “State Matura” has changed the image of the state procedures and put the candidates at the same starting point – a real guarantee for equal opportunities;
 - Compiling process of the National Qualification Framework has started with a seminar with European experts and stakeholders in the area and is based on a European model in order to integrate them within the deadline of 2010;
 - Free and democratic elections for student governance bodies took place and opened the door to their real participation in the decision-making and governing bodies of the HEIs in Albania.

National organisation

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

Please include:

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

1. As it has been evoked in the last national report, the Ministry of Education and Science (**MoES**) is the state authority, responsible for the higher education in Republic of Albania.

Other higher education stakeholders in the higher education are:

DHEDR (Directorate of Higher Education and Diploma Recognition) and **DR** (Directorate of Research) at MoES.

AAHE (Agency of Accreditation of Higher Education)

CSQ (Commission of Scientific Qualification)

All these higher education bodies and agencies are directly accountable to the Ministry of Education and Science.

RCAU (Rectors' Conference of the Albanian Universities) which is an autonomous and collegial organism of highest leading authorities of the Albanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). RCAU performs activities of drafting and proposing strategies of evolution in the area of higher education and scientific research over the country.

In the new Law draft, appear the Council of Higher Education and Science (**CHES**) as an advising body near the Minister of Education and Science, the task of which is writing the higher education and science policies of development. CHES formulates proposals about national strategies and programmes, about the orientation of the respective policies, about the axis of national scientific development, about the budget dedicated to the higher education and science, about the methodology of evaluation and accreditation of the Albanian HEIs, about the way of determining criteria for awarding scientific degrees and academic titles, as well as preparing laws and by-laws of this area.

2. The budget is allocated to the universities by the Ministry of Education and Science in co-operation with them. Before the budget comes into the power the Ministry of Education and Science invites the universities to deploy their needs and draft a estimable one. During the year 2006 the Albanian Government has allocated more funding means to the universities, than they had requested and will be the same for the year to come.

3. The universities have the institutional autonomy and the academic freedom to decide about curricula development and changes as well as the right to elect their leading and governing bodies.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure

Please include:

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

- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations.

For the time being, in Republic of Albania there are 11 public universities and 15 private ones. Albanian universities are academic (teaching) institutions, but there are also non university and professional establishments.

The total number of students for the academic year 2006-2007 is 74070, 69052 of which have enrolled public universities and 5018 private ones.

The number of students registered in the first year of studies for the academic year 2006-2007 in both public and private HEIs is 26475, or 35.7 % of the total number of students registered in all Albanian HEIs.

All activity of the public and private, civil and military HEIs is managed by the same Law of Higher Education, which consists of a general frame, giving the possibility, this way, to make finer arrangements with by-laws.

However, the law guarantees the same standards about study plans, programmes and curricula for both private and public HEIs.

Partnership

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

Please include:

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

The Albanian BFUG leads the process of the implementation of Bologna Process and draws-up the national periodical reports about this process. It has been constituted under the Decision of the Minister of Education and Science n.172 dated 15.05.2006 "About constituting the Working Group of the curricular reform in accordance with the Bologna Declaration" The Albanian BFUG is composed by three subgroups.

In the process of collecting opinions and drawing-up the national reports on Bologna Process the Albanian BFUG has integrated the representatives of employers and social partners. The role of the students in the higher education governing bodies has known a real growth: besides the participation in the Academic Senates, their opinions and taking part in the university elections have given to the student organisations a specific weight in the university life.

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

Please include:

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

For the time being, students are part of governing bodies inside the university structure, such as Academic Senate (at university level) and Scientific Councils (at faculty level).

In the new Law draft of higher education, the growth of student participation in the university governance has been accentuated.

Student Councils are independent, non-political and non-profit organisations. They promote student participation and coordinate for a real representation of students in the higher education decision-making bodies and institutions.

Student Councils can freely and openly express opinions and make proposals about all relevant and important issues regarding dynamics and evolution of the HEIs, such as study plans and programmes, university regulations and statutes, right to study, quality of services offered, tuition fees, scholarships, process of detailing the budget as well as organising diverse cultural, sporting or artistic events.

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

In the HEIs governing structure, according to the new Law draft of higher education, the Administrative Councils will be set up and composed by representatives of business world, civil society and students besides the representatives of the academic and research world. The Administrative Council main task is to supervise and audit the activities of the HEIs, related to the economic and funding activities as well as to the governance of their goods.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle.

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

Please include:

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

The number of students enrolling the first two cycles of studies according to the concept of Bologna Declaration in the academic year 2006-2007 is 37012 or 50% of the total number of students in Albania. 35651 from them have enrolled public universities and 1361 the private ones.

The new system of studies is extended over all disciplines and specialities in the Albanian HEIs, besides the Faculty of Medicine at Tirana University, the Faculty of Veterinary at Agriculture University of Tirana and the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at Polytechnic University of Tirana.

Since the academic year 2005-2006, Master studies have started in the Department of Electronics at Polytechnic University of Tirana, area of Computer Science, Telecommunication and Electronics. In different universities, performing in the same field, there is almost 70% of study programmes and plans in common. There is, also, a good effort paid in converging study programmes and plans for 70% in the area of teachers' education at national level.

(Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

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

Please include:

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

- As Albania signed its membership in the Bologna Declaration community in September 2003, there is no yet any initiative of detailing the third cycle of studies (PhD studies) over the country.
- .Nevertheless the path of completing the PhD studies continues under the old scheme. Full time students usually complete PhD studies within three years of time.
- In a few cases there are doctoral subjects the students take, but, generally, the PhD period of studies is much more dedicated to the research programme, finalised with a PhD thesis
- Ministry of Education and Science and HEIS supervise very carefully doctoral studies.
- Doctoral studies are part of the Albanian Qualification Framework, where Dublin descriptors as well as learning and skills outcomes are drafted in.
- The Albanian BFUG has made a proposal to give the doctoral studies 60 credits, but this issue is still under discussions.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access¹ to the next cycle

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

Please include:

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

As mentioned, the second and third cycle of studies in the sense of Bologna Chart will start at national level starting from the academic year 2008-2009. This way, modalities for joining the second and third level of studies are going to be defined later on, but potentially all Bachelor studies will give access in the Master ones with the exception of those students, who will be graduated in nursery.

There is a real debate on the modalities for reaching Master studies: at the time being the weighted average mark could be an important indicator describing this transfer.

However, very clear and transparent criteria of transferring students from one cycle of studies into the next one will be set up very soon.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Implementation of national qualifications framework

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

Please include:

- the stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed

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

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

between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared)

- the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA
- the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.

In the national subgroup dealing with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), part of the Albanian BFUG, take part academic and scientific experts, tightly co-operating with the representatives from the world of business, civil society, and social partners.

The Albanian model of the NQF is based upon the British one.

The outcomes of the above-mentioned work can be summarised as follows:

1. NQF is based upon a European model, to which it will officially fit up to 2010,
2. NQF will be written in Albanian and English,
3. These university levels are proposed so far:
 - Post secondary level, finalised with a certificate – up to 120 credits,
 - First university level, finalised with an “Ordinary Bachelor” diploma with at least 180 credits,
 - Second university level leading to a “Bachelor with Honours” diploma with at least 240 credits,
 - Third university level leading to a Master diploma with at least 300 credits,
 - Fourth university level leading to a PhD which is at the same time a scientific degree and the highest level of a university diploma.
4. Level descriptors are already drafted in Albanian language.

The overarching frame of qualifications including the pre-university levels will be based on the British model and the Chart of academic titles delivered in the Republic of Albania will be one important annex of Albanian NQF.

During its meetings the national subgroup of NQF has asked the expertise and the consensus of the higher education stakeholders and it is foreseen to have a complete picture of it by the middle of 2007. Based on that, a draft of law will be presented to the Albanian Government to follow, then, its natural way of ratification at the Albanian Parliament.

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

Please include where possible:

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

The number of students, who have been awarded a first cycle title of Bachelor, is 57 so far, too small to make any conclusion, but 100% of them have already had a job.

40% of the Bachelor graduates have reached Master studies and this figure will remain unchanged for this academic year.

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

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

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

Please include:

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

The quality assurance (QA) system of higher education in Albania is developing according to the European standards and guidelines.

The Albanian QA institutions are:

- Agency of Accreditation for Higher Education (AAHE) and
- Council of Accreditation (CoA)

under the kindness of the Ministry of Education and Science.

AAHE is responsible for the evaluation of quality at the Albanian HEIs. It designs the criteria and the procedures of quality evaluation, after having had the consensus of the HEIs to be evaluated. Later on, it makes a proposal to the CoA to get approved from and let it know to the HEIs.

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

AAHE prepares and monitors the mechanisms for internal evaluation and assists the HEIs in building-up a quality assurance institutional system inside of them.

In order to assure the implementation of standards, AAHE has published two guide booklets on internal and external evaluation procedures and has organised two international seminars in 2006.

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

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

Please include:

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

The system of quality assurance covers all Albanian higher education area. The quality evaluation on the Albanian Higher Education Area (AHEA) is run both on study programmes level and institutional one. Each evaluation process is composed by:

- internal evaluation and
- external evaluation in accordance with the procedures proposed by AAHE and approved by CoA.

The internal evaluation is run by the university itself, while the external one is led by both national and international experts, who have not any conflict of interest towards the university to be assessed. On the basis of the two evaluations, AAHE publishes a final report and submits it to the Ministry of Education and to the given university.

AAHE is responsible for the publishing of the results after having had the approval of the CoA.

During the years 2005-2006 AAHE has evaluated all pre-university diplomas as well as the university foreign language diplomas delivered in Albania.

AAHE has, also evaluated two private universities and is in the process of evaluating all public universities.

⁴ higher education: all types of courses of study or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to a country's higher education system.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

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

Please include:

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

Lastly the students have been actors in the AAHE structure.

They hadn't been directly part of the decision-making structures regarding the external evaluation processes, but they have been subject of opinion surveys led during this process.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

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

Please include:

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

AAHE keeps tight links and performs common activities with European agencies and organisations of the area. It is member of three international networks (INQAAHE), CEE-Network and EAIE), AAHE isn't yet member of ENQA.

During the procedures of external evaluation AAHE has involved foreign experts.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

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

Please include:

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

MoES in co-operation with HEIs is writing the plan of implementing diploma supplement starting from the year 2007-2008.

20% of the students, who are going to graduate in 2007, will be provided with diploma supplement in two languages: Albanian and English. It will be also handed to all of them who will ask for.

The model for diploma supplement will be the one corresponding to the model of Council of Europe / European Commission and UNESCO

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

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

Please include:

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

Albania has signed Lisbon Convention, Albanian Parliament ratified it on 06.03.2002 and it came into the power on 01-05-2002. The recognition of diploma and certificates awarded by foreign HEIs and schools means the official recognition by the MoES of the education or training periods obtained and assures equal opportunities with the education and training in Albania.

DHEDR has drafted the guidelines and regulations for diploma recognition procedures. HEIs are, nevertheless, autonomous in defining the qualification recognition procedures.

For further implementation of Lisbon Convention and other important documents, approved by the European Institutions, with the decision of the Minister of Education and Science in January 2006, a working group has been set up. It was composed by experts from the MoES, the HEIs and representatives from the business and civil society. In the basis of the recommendations of that group, MoES drafted and proposed a legislative frame with regard to an enhanced recognition procedure, which will diminish the execution time of the existing frame. It is to underline the fact that today exist a limited list of academic titles delivered by foreign universities, automatically recognised by the Albanian state. For the time being, the maximal delay for recognising an academic title is 90 days.

The above-mentioned legislative frame guarantees the full recognition of qualifications, which do not have substantial differences compared to the certified ones.

On the MoES website, there is a particular page entitled "Diploma Recognition", where one

⁵ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

may find the laws and by-laws handling the whole process of recognition of Bachelor degrees, the application forms as well as the list of applicants, who have to take the official recognition paper.

This kind of web page is still missing over the Albanian HEIs websites, which continue to perform their own recognition procedures of Master studies, case by case.

Over the 2007, a new qualification recognition web page will be "on air", including the procedures of Albanian HEIs and a direct link to the ENIC-NARIC, web as well.

In Albania, there is no any "classic" ENIC-NARIC centre so far, but the competencies, for the moment, are assumed by one officer of DHEDR at MoES. Very soon, a real ENIC-NARIC centre with three officers will be attached to the structure of MoES.

The new Law draft contains particular articles, dedicated to the process of qualification recognition in accordance with Lisbon convention.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

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

Please include:

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

In the academic year 2006-2007 over all disciplines and specialities of the Albanian HEIs, the massive implementation of ECTS has already started.

As there was no another credit system, Albanian HEIs have accepted the ECTS without major problems or concerns. Most of them have also published the due information of its implementation.

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

Yes, it has. The national plan for improving the process of diploma recognition has been written by the third subgroup of the Albanian BFUG. It gives a clear picture of the inventory of the existing laws and by-laws of the area since the date, when MoES initiated that process, the bilateral agreements signed by the Albanian Government with foreign governments and revising of criteria and procedures of diploma recognition in accordance with Lisbon Convention. There is, as well, a part dedicated to the existing documents related to all above, to the plan for recognising joint diplomas and degrees and to the actual and future institutions, which manage the procedures of recognition (in attachment the National Plan of Diploma Recognition).

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

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

Please include:

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

Albanian HEIs offer the possibility of transferring credits and students within the same cycles of studies or from one cycle into another and within the same HEI or from one HEI into another. There is, as well, the possibility for transferring credits and students from the traditional (should we say “old”) study programmes into the new ones. The final decision of transferring, fully or partially, of the credits belongs to the hosting HEI, according to its statute and internal academic regulation.

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

Please include:

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

One of the most important achievements for the academic year 2006-2007 was undoubtedly the implementation of the “State Matura”, as a “première” over the pre-university system, as it was for the first time in the country that pupils of secondary education took an external evaluation of their earned knowledge. Besides the positive impact “State Matura” had in improving learning outcomes quality in secondary schools, it was of good help in lightening the procedures of admittance in HEIs by applying the principle of equal opportunities. This academic year, the liberalisation of students number admitted in some particular specialities at the Albanian HEIs has been implemented. This process should take place without touching the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. In some branches, has started the process of restructuring the curricula by modules, but it still remains embryonic.

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

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

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes
- whether joint⁶ degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

In the new Law draft on higher education, the process of joint degrees keeps a particular place.

The study plans and programmes finalised with a joint degree are written by the HEIs, involved in the academic consortium, which offers the education or training.

The new Law draft opens the doors to the possibility of establishing such kind of activity, always under the focus of Bologna Chart. Actually, there are some initiatives, taken mostly by the private HEIs.

Although the existing law doesn't include them, two private universities, *University of New York in Tirana* and the *University "Zoja e Keshillit te Mire"*, have established joint degrees with their partners. There are also three public universities, which have implemented Master studies:

- *Tirana University* in
 - "Master European studies",
 - "Master in economic studies"
- *Polytechnic University of Tirana* in
 - "Master in enterprise management"
- *Agricultural University of Tirana* in
 - "Master in veterinary medicine"

According to that draft of Law, only HEIs fulfilling academic standards are allowed to propose joint degrees.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

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

In Albania a deep institutional reform is going on the area of higher education and research. Its main goal is build-up a contemporary system of science. The reform tends to integrate research institutions, existing under diverse ministries or the academy of science, with the research units of the HEIs.

⁶ a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

It has been decided to propose universities as institutional research centres at national level by an organic symbiosis with those existing research institutes via study plans and programmes and research subjects, as well.

The main goal of the reform is to create an Integrated Scientific System, in the heart of which will be the research HEIs. The research will be performed only in the HEIs, which will be accredited for and it will be funded on the basis of competitive grants and in the fields, considered as a priority regarding the national strategy.

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

More than 65% of PhD students continue their research career and with the process of integration of higher education HEIs and research institutes, this number will know further growth.

The social dimension

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

Please include:

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

The students enrolling public HEIs can be awarded scholarships under two schemes:

- as an economic support, (reserved to the students with low revenues),
- as a motivation support (reserved to the students with excellent results).

The scholarships are funded by the state budget or by legal donations. MoES defines the criteria and the procedures of awarding them. HEIs can also award scholarships by their own budget or via community of business according to their statutes or internal regulations.

A particular attention is paid to raising the number of qualitative students with low revenues by managing their residence in the university campuses.

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

Please include:

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

already in place.

Important measures have been taken in order to give access to the students in difficulty, in reason of their economic and social background, by awarding special scholarships.

Mobility

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

Please include:

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

In Albania, TEMPUS Programme has offered an inestimable support to increase outward student mobility. In particular, when CD JEPs have been implemented, HEIs have paid a good attention to assure student mobility in view of finalising their diploma work near the academic units of western partners.

Another possibility in this area is CEEPUS Programme. There is a quite good work done by the public universities such as Tirana University, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Agriculture University of Tirana, Shkodra University and Elbasan University.

Concerning ERASMUS MUNDUS Programme, 6 Albanian Master students have been awarded scholarships.

TEMPUS Office in Tirana regularly organises information meetings about existing European Programmes and promotes the new ones. In this meeting student organisations are invited and sensitised to be part of the projects.

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

Staff and student mobility in the country is some how difficult, as a consequence of the impossibility of grants and loans portability. The two main reasons of that are:

1. quite limited free mobility abroad (mostly in EU countries) for the higher education stakeholders - too hard to obtain a visa within the deadline of the projects or academic and research events,
2. still important life standard difference between Albania and western countries.

In the future some measures will enter into force for alleviating this phenomenon.

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

Please include:

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

The most ordinary obstacle observed about the outward staff mobility has been the language, phenomenon which has drastically decreased with the important progress of

European programmes in country, such as TEMPUS, CPERNICUS, CEEPUS and ERASMUS MUNDUS.

As these programmes don't cover inward staff mobility, its cost has to be covered either by the budget of the MoES or by any bilateral agreement with EU or regional countries.

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

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

The entire ongoing reform in the area of higher education and research, followed by a raising budget up to the regional and European standards and the process of liberalisation of HEIs would have an important impact on the EHEA attractiveness.

The curricula reform and three cycle study system to a market oriented education could render the Albanian education system attractive for bilateral or multilateral co-operation.

Future challenges

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

In front of Albanian higher education there are quite a good number of challenges:

- Writing and approving process of the Master Plan as the strategic and the major document in the area of HE and R&D,
- Approval and ratification of the new Law of Higher Education with a maximum consensus by all higher education and research stakeholders, business community and social partners,
- Keep continuing with Bologna Process in line with European partners in the fields of :
 - Institutional autonomy and good governance of HEIs,
 - Curricula reform in accordance with NQF to fit with the EU standards,
 - Assuring a QA and a fair Accreditation system as guarantee to the service rendered to the society,
 - Integration of the teaching process and the scientific research,
 - Diploma and prior qualifications recognition system and infrastructure,
 - Preparing the conditions for Long Life Learning,
 - Increasing student mobility and participation,
 - Giving higher education system a better social dimension,
 - .. so be part of EHEA within 2010.

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

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

Bologna Secretariat
April 2006