



## **The contribution of higher education to the Lisbon strategy of the European Union – Developments in the EU and perspectives for accession countries**

Presentation by  
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Participants familiar with Bologna process. Bologna includes of course other than EU countries and was launched before the Lisbon meeting, but is now part of wider EU process aimed at achieving economic, social and environmental goals agreed at Lisbon.

*“The European Union must become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Council meeting, Lisbon, March 2000).*

To achieve this, not only radical transformation of the European economy, but also of education systems. Europe to become *“the world leader in terms of quality of its education and training systems”*.

Making this happen necessitates setting conditions for improved investment in knowledge and innovation and fundamental transformation of education and training – at the level of each member state and candidate country for accession to EU. Lisbon process for education and training at EU level has developed rapidly, involving collaboration in ‘open method of coordination’. The Education & Training 2010 programme (for more detailed information see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et\\_2010\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html)), including actions for higher education (‘Bologna process’) and vocational education and training (‘Copenhagen/Maastricht process’), has become clearer part of national policy landscape.

### **I. Common European education and training objectives and benchmarks**


Common objectives:

- Developing skills for the knowledge society;
- Ensuring access to ICT;
- Supply and training of teachers and trainers;
- Creating an open learning environment and making learning more attractive;
- Supporting equal opportunities (incl. ensuring social cohesion and active citizenship);
- Strengthening the links with working life and society at large;
- Implementing the Bologna reforms;
- Implementing the Copenhagen declaration/Maastricht Communiqué;
- Improving quality assurance in education and training;
- The recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

Other common objectives that have so far received too little attention:

- Increasing recruitment to scientific, mathematical and technical studies;
- Developing the spirit of enterprise;
- Improving foreign language learning;
- Increasing mobility and exchange (except in higher education);
- Development of a national or European Qualifications Framework;
- Developing national and European credit arrangements (except in higher education).

**European benchmarks** and how candidate countries compare against them:

 <b>The 5 EU benchmarks in education and training</b> Sources: Eurostat (Structural Indicators Webpage), OECD (PISA database), ETF (Key Indicators database) [*] Most recent year for which data is available					
EU Benchmarks Education and Training	EU 15	EU 25	CCs	EU 2010	US, Japan Russian F.
<b>Early school leavers (2004)</b> % of 18-24 with at most lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and not in further education	18.0%	15.9%	BG 22.4% HR* 8.4% RO 23.6% TR* 52.9%	10%	
<b>Youth educational attainment</b> % of 20-24 having completed at least ISCED 3 level (2004)	73.5%	76.4%	BG 76% HR* 90.7% RO 74.8%	85%	
<b>Total tertiary education graduates in maths, science and technology (2001)</b>	568 000	649 000	RO 18 400 BG 9 100	746 000 Increase by 15%	US 369 400 (2000) JP 233 400
<b>% of pupils with low reading literacy Level 1 or below (PISA 2003)</b>	OECD 19.1%	CZ 19.4% HU 20.5% LV 18%	BG* 40.3% RO* 41.3% TR 36.8%	Decrease by 20%	US 19.4% JP 19% RU 34.1%
<b>Lifelong learning (2004)</b> % of 25-64 participating in education and training	10.1%	9.4%	BG 1.3% HR* 2.1% RO 1.6% TR 2.3%	12.5%	

Graph compiled by: Mircea Badescu, ETF, January 2005.

## **II. Countries' lifelong learning policies**

By 2006 countries ought to have in place **comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning policies**. Strategies of southeast European countries often reflect rather compartmentalised approach (considering educational subsystem by subsystem) with overemphasis, in terms of policy and resources, on early years of education. Strategies to design learning as lifelong continuum, creating the conditions for and removing all obstacles to lifelong learning, in different forms and settings, both formal, non-formal and informal learning, such as educational institutions, community centres, at the workplace, through eLearning etc. Learning to be affordable/(co-)funded, accessible, meaningful and recognised – a strategy based on broad consensus with key stakeholders incl. social partners, public acceptance and geared to high learning participation. More emphasis on adult learning and work-based learning. Adults' current participation in candidate countries is around 2% (EU target 2010 for age group 25-64: 12.5%). Communication from European Commission on "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" from November 2001 may provide useful inputs into national lifelong learning strategies.

### **III. Current higher education (HE) reforms in EU and candidate countries<sup>1</sup>**

Current higher education (HE) reforms in EU and candidate countries in line with Bologna process focus on introducing three-tiered structure, credit point systems compatible to ECTS and issuing of diploma supplements. In several countries embedded in more far-reaching reforms in HE: quality reform in Norway, Master Plan for HE in Slovenia, the HE development programmes in Hungary and Lithuania. Bologna goals: increasing mobility of students and recognition of diplomas across Europe. Includes foreign students benefiting from the same provisions as national students, more courses offered in English, partnerships with HE institutions abroad and joint or double-degree programmes. National initiatives to promote advanced learning and innovation: centres of excellence (e.g. in Austria, the French speaking province of Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia). Strengthening university/ industry cooperation and knowledge transfer. Special funds for support of start-ups, spin-offs, incubators, science parks etc. (e.g. in Lithuania, Sweden, UK). Integration of post-doc opportunities in innovation activities (e.g. Spain). Ireland could serve as example of "good practice" concerning broad variety of measures and support to promote advanced learning and innovation. There is heavy investment in research & development by creating new centres and research programmes, by improving labour market skills of researchers, by creating new opportunities for university-industry research collaboration and by financially assisting higher education institutions to enhance and develop their research capabilities.

Signing of Bologna is firm commitment to objective of facilitating **international mobility of university students**. Improvement of professional and personal skills through international mobility are expected to contribute to enhancement of competitiveness of European economy with wider world. Mobility is likely to prepare students well for rapidly changing labour market because graduates are more flexible and adapt to change more easily. Student mobility also assumed to contribute to modernisation of education systems in Europe. For these reasons international mobility in education is regarded as one key element of Lisbon strategy. Appropriate measures include respective legislation and arrangements on (grant) funding e.g. in Ireland, Estonia, Austria, Greece, Poland, Slovenia, Malta & Germany. Grants are even given to foreign students in Denmark (only highly qualified students), Ireland, Slovenia & Netherlands. Measures to reduce cultural and language obstacles: foreign language teaching & programmes taught in foreign languages; central offices in charge of information & promotion of studies abroad, in addition to national agencies and ENIC/NARIC offices; mobility based on bilateral exchange programmes (e.g. Hungary, Liechtenstein, Austria and Malta) or as integrated part of study programme; simplified immigration and residence procedures; promotion of mobility of (incl. paid leave for) teachers and professors, in some countries as part of teachers' career development. Need for a system of recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications – very open one exists e.g. in Luxembourg. For new EU member states and candidate countries, problem of lack of information on ECTS or on content of courses or bad image of universities.

### **IV. Bottlenecks and actions proposed by the European Commission**

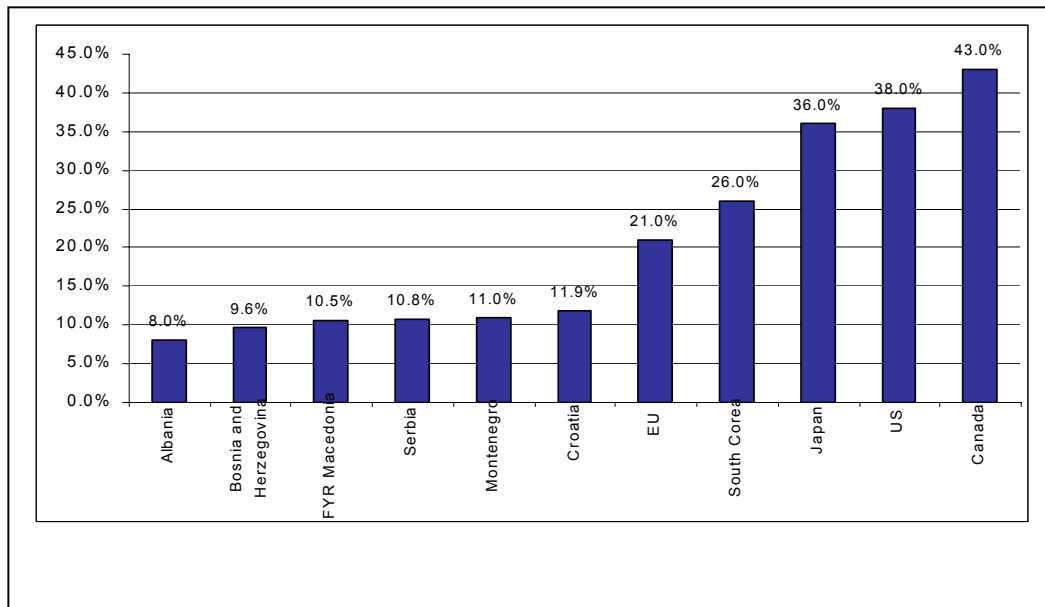
The Communication from the European Commission "**Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy**" (COM(2005) 152 final), underlines the importance of universities in three poles of knowledge triangle: education, research and innovation and calls for modernisation and quality of universities.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on developments and reform initiatives in EU and candidate countries has been taken from: Jean Gordon (EIESP) and Tom Leney (QCA): Joint Report Second Draft, August 2005, cross-country analysis, based on national reports, in preparation of the 2006 Joint Council/Commission Report on "The Modernisation of the Education and Training Systems towards the 2010 common goals".

### Tertiary education attainment

Europe certainly highly educated society. However, only 21% of EU working-age population have achieved tertiary education, significantly lower than in US (38%), Canada (43%) or Japan (36%), as well as South Korea (26%). In comparison: Albania (8.0%), BiH (9.6%), Croatia (11.9%), Macedonia (10.5%), Montenegro (11.0%) and Serbia (10.8%). Former three data from 2001, latter three from 2003.



Sources: Albania & Croatia, Census 2001; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Household survey 2001; Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, Labour Force Survey, 2003

### Bottlenecks in EU and candidate countries:

- Uniformity: mono-disciplinary programmes; traditional methods geared toward best achievers; too few centres of world-class excellence; lack of publicity strategies
- 'Insularity': fragmented network, different languages; insufficient knowledge-sharing & mobility between university and industry; result: lack of entrepreneurship and skills sought on labour market; most universities over-dependent on state and ill-prepared for competition
- Over-regulation: hinders modernisation, incl. curricular reform & interdisciplinarity
- Under-funding

### Suggested actions at the level of EU member states and candidate countries in three directions:

#### **1) Raising attractiveness: quality & excellence:**

- Increasing diversity: in terms of courses, target groups, teaching modes, entry & exit points, mix of disciplines and competencies in curricula, etc.
- Raising attractiveness for learners: profound curricular revision; inclusion of transversal skills in addition to specialist knowledge; broader access; more mobility across Europe
- Strengthening human resources: attracting, developing and keeping talent in the teaching & research career; public advertisement of vacancies, also internationally; performance-based compensation; retaining share of income from research contracts, consultancies, patents ...

All Bologna signatory countries have established **quality and accreditation agencies**. There is frequent reference to European Quality Assurance Standards adopted by Ministers at the Bergen conference in May 2005 (see annex). In some countries new study programmes are accredited not only by the responsible agency or council, but it must also be approved by ministry, which appears heavy procedure. Is this because the government does not want to provide institutions with the autonomy for such decisions? As regards quality standards for institutions, in the Netherlands, Ireland & UK HE institutions develop their own internal quality assurance systems which will then be evaluated by an external body. The 2<sup>nd</sup> approach is standards set by a national committee or agency, e.g. in Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia & Lithuania.

## 2) Better system and institutional management in HE:

- Public authorities to focus on the strategic orientation as a whole.
- Universities should be responsible for medium-term priority setting, managing and developing human resources, defining curricula and professionally managing their facilities and financial resources.
- Multi-annual agreements and empowering universities to take and implement decisions by way of leadership team which has sufficient authority and management capacity.
- Requires extensive training to enable university managers to plan & manage change in strategic way.
- Southeast European countries have to cope with problem that universities are rather fragmented due to too much independency of faculties and departments. Hence, institutional management reforms high on agenda.

## 3) Higher and more efficient investment:

- Higher funding not without profound change; additional funding only to those universities or groups within universities who are willing and able to change
- Higher education funding model to guarantee fair access for all qualified students
- Contributions from students and industry; part of tuition fees could be recycled into sound student aid system; tax incentives for industry to cooperate with universities?
- Make fullest possible use of EU financial instruments (grants finance for southeast European countries: CARDS/Phare and later European Social Fund; European Community Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013).

Review funding and monitor effectiveness & efficiency of entire education system: (i) **Measures to increase individual/household investment:** cost-sharing, e.g. tuition fees in higher education (Austria, Wallonia (Belgium), Denmark for foreign students, Romania, UK, Poland), tuition fees for adult learning; student loans (Finland, Latvia, Slovenia, Sweden, UK; in Norway & Netherlands loans can be turned into grants when studies within time limit); income tax subsidies/ exemptions (e.g. Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic; vouchers or co-funding through individual learning accounts/ lifelong learning accounts (Austria, Sweden, Netherlands).

**Measures to increase employer investment:** corporate tax subsidies/ exemptions (e.g. Austria, Estonia, Finland, France & Romania); levies = company payroll taxes for training (France, Spain, Greece; sectoral funds in Denmark & Netherlands); co-financing of workplace training; indirect measures to improve (supply side) relevance of qualifications and quality of training provision.

**Measures to increase efficiency of investment:** increasing institutional autonomy, incl. over budgets (Austria, Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia), but close monitoring to avoid unwelcome effects such as fragmentation and inequalities between institutions & regions; changes towards lump-sum budgets or block grants (e.g. Netherlands, Slovenia); performance related funding (Germany, Finland, UK); school mergers (e.g. Estonia) or better cooperation between schools (Flanders); institutional income generation, incentives for

students to reduce study time; indirect measures: improving public administration and institutional management as a means to greater efficiency, incl. use of management information and performance management systems, school heads' higher discretion over teacher pay...

**Monitoring effectiveness:** 4 elements: monitoring student, teacher, institutional and system performance. Institutional mechanisms including: government inspectorates, independent statistical and evaluation agencies, institutional quality assurance systems, student feedback procedures and national student testing systems. Most countries do not have fully-fledged system, have not developed full set of national performance indicators in line with Lisbon objectives nor collect necessary data. Evaluation related not only to issues of economic competitiveness and efficiency, but also equity, i.e. achieving greater access for currently marginalised groups => even dispersion of educational achievements and rectifying regional inequalities. Equal opportunities for access not only to higher education, but also to adult learning and workplace training – everywhere in a country, for everybody.

#### **V. Action at EU level:**

Cross-recognition of qualifications and competencies requires organisation at EU level. Two major objectives for 2006 are

- (i) to adopt **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** covering all types and levels of qualifications (see Annex 1, as well as Commission staff working document "Towards a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning" of 8 July 2005 - document downloadable from [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/consultations\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/consultations_en.html))

Conference participants from Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey invited to participate in consultations on EQF in their home country. Here in Croatia, the European Training Foundation will organise a workshop on the European Qualifications Framework on 29-30 November 2005. After consultation, countries are proposed to start developing a national qualifications framework possibly aligned with EQF. Use World Bank loan in Croatia to further work on it.

- (ii) to begin implementing the Recommendation on **quality assurance** (once adopted).

**European register of QA agencies** meeting standards defined at EU level (see Annex 2) and support to number of **EU-wide accreditation initiatives in specific disciplines**.

The European Training Foundation has been asked to carry out a study on university/enterprise cooperation in the framework of the Tempus programme which will come up with a cross-country analysis, examples of good practices and recommendations. Tempus counterparts are requested to cooperate on this.

Furthermore, European Commission examines possibility of providing support to postgraduate/doctoral schools and networks of European and worldwide calibre, and of establishing a European Institute of Technology.

#### **VI. Conclusion**

E+T 2010 objectives & benchmarks and JAP<sup>2</sup> process as guidance to reform systems; leadership with education ministry, but formal inter-ministerial, multi-stakeholder structure and processes

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<sup>2</sup> Joint Assessment Paper – structured employment policy review process led by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment & Social Affairs (DG EMPL) in cooperation with the labour and education ministries in candidate countries with a view to gradually align their employment incl. education policies with the European strategy.

required for design and implementation of reforms; policy reviews by external experts (OECD, ETF) can help shape policy.

**‘Putting more seed into the earth’** → broadening access to HE:

- upgrading skills of secondary school students and bridging programmes to HE
- higher education funding model to guarantee fair access for all qualified students; provision of financial support for students from low socio-economic backgrounds (and with other disadvantages),
- systems for recognition & validation of prior learning,
- open universities, distance and blended learning,
- creating flexible learning paths and
- creating closer links between post-secondary vocational education, continuing professional education and higher education.

**‘Giving plants air to breathe and water to grow’** → break with old stereotypes in system & university management; empower university (rather than faculty) leaders and teachers.

**‘Creating new species of plants, removing old ones’** → profound curricular revision; inclusion of transversal skills in addition to specialist knowledge (see eight key competencies defined in: EC DG Education & Culture: Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework, November 2004); cross-disciplinary knowledge & skills.

**‘Engaging in plant research and innovation’** → strengthen the research & innovation roles of universities (see also EC: “The Europe of Knowledge 2020”, A vision for university-based research and innovation, Outcomes of the stakeholders’ consultation, Liège, Belgium, 25-28 April 2004, downloadable at:

[http://europe.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/univ/pdf/univ\\_outcome\\_consult\\_en.pdf](http://europe.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/univ/pdf/univ_outcome_consult_en.pdf)

**‘Studying which plants your experienced neighbour gardener is growing’** → look beyond borders and promote mobility and, hence, inflow and outflow of knowledge of ministerial staff, university managers, teachers and students across Europe.

This and involving wider publics and more actors would be strong step forward towards improving education and training across all levels and forms, towards building knowledge society and becoming fully integrated with mainstream Europe.

## Annex 1

### **Supporting information about the levels in the proposed European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**

Level	Supporting information that is typical and indicative of qualification at each level
<b>1</b>	<p>Learning contexts are simple and stable and the focus is general learning of basic skills. Learning is normally developed during compulsory education and contributes to general education but is also achieved through adult learning programmes (including popular adult education) and through non-formal and informal learning opportunities.</p> <p>When formally taught to young people basic knowledge and skills are developed in a supervised environment by direct teaching methods. Learning usually based in a school, college, training centre, an out-of-school training programme or an enterprise. The content of learning is often well established and regulated. However the development of basic skills is also closely associated with informal learning contexts in workplaces and communities. Education and training regulatory bodies operate quality assurance systems on formal qualifications at level 1.</p> <p>The achievement of qualifications at level 1 leads to further learning opportunities and to access to unskilled employment that may include a further element of training. This level is often the entry point to a lifelong pathway for people with no qualifications.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>Learning contexts are stable and the focus is the broadening of basic skills (including key competences<sup>3</sup>)</p> <p>Learning at this level is formally acquired during compulsory education and can include an induction to work. Learning is usually based in a school, an adult education centre, college, training centre or an enterprise. Learning can also develop through non-formal means through work-based or popular adult education in communities.</p> <p>Knowledge and skill is learned formally in a supervised environment through direct teaching and coaching. The content of learning is well established and regulated. However the development of basic skills is often closely associated with informal learning contexts in workplaces and communities.</p> <p>Education and training regulatory bodies determine quality assurance of formal qualifications at level 2.</p> <p>The achievement of qualifications at level 2 provides entry into qualification-based training programmes and to access to unskilled employment that may include a further element of training. This level can be the entry point to a lifelong pathway.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>Learning contexts for developing and demonstrating competence at this level are generally stable but some factors change from time to time leaving scope for personal expression in improving methods used. People with this level of qualification will usually have some experience of the field of work or study.</p> <p>Level 3 achievement reflects formal learning in upper secondary education or adult education (including popular adult education labour market training) in schools, colleges, training centres or learning in workplaces. It also reflects non-formal learning through work. Normally associated with part of upper secondary education or basic training in an occupational field, these qualifications at level 3 recognise a general education and skills base suitable for many job functions.</p> <p>Direct teaching and coaching are the main characteristic of formal learning programmes. The content of learning is well established and regulated. Non-formal learning opportunities are available through work based and community programmes.</p> <p>Educational and sectoral regulatory bodies determine quality assurance of qualifications at level 3.</p> <p>Qualifications at level 3 typically provide access to semi-skilled employment, further training and higher education. This level can be a key stage in a lifelong pathway.</p>

4	<p>The context for developing and demonstrating competence at this level is usually predictable. There are many factors involved that can cause change in the learning context and some are related to each other. A person with this level of qualification will usually have experience of work or learning in a given field.</p> <p>Level 4 achievement typically reflects completion of upper secondary education and some formal learning in post compulsory education adult education including labour market training and popular adult education. It takes place in a range of institutions and also takes the form of non-formal learning through work. Level 4 qualifications are also used as gateways to learning opportunities in higher education</p> <p>Coaching is typically the main feature of the learning programme. The content of formal learning programmes is well established and regulated by competent bodies within the field. Quality assurance at level 4 is largely determined by expert review that is based on institutional or sector based agreements.</p> <p>People with this level of qualification typically have routes to further learning (sometimes including higher education) and to employment in skilled work. This level of qualification also supports further specialised training for those seeking job enhancement. Qualification at level 4 also provides access to employment in skilled work that can be performed independently and entail supervisory and coordination duties.</p>
5	<p>Typical learning situations at this level require that problems are solved in a predetermined learning process. There are many factors some of which interact and therefore change in the context is sometimes unpredictable. Learning is based on experience in a given field that is often specialised.</p> <p>Qualifications at level 5 typically follows completion of a post secondary learning programme, such as apprenticeship together with post programme experience in a related field. High-grade technicians and managers achieve these qualifications that often bridge secondary and tertiary education and training. Higher education qualifications at this level are associated with the 'short cycle' (within the first cycle) of qualifications in the framework developed under the Bologna process and are often supported by advanced textbooks.</p> <p>Learning at this level demands some independence from the learner and is typically achieved through coaching in well-established procedures and knowledge.</p> <p>Quality assurance is largely determined by expert evaluation coupled with institutional procedural requirements.</p> <p>The achievement of qualifications at level 5 provides access to higher education programmes at level 6 (often with some credit exemption), to employment in highly skilled work or to career progression through improved recognition of work capabilities. These qualifications can also provide direct access to job roles requiring managerial duties.</p>
6	<p>Learning situations are usually not stable at level 6 and require that complex problems are solved in the learning process. There are many interacting factors that mean change in the context is unpredictable. Learning is often highly specialised.</p> <p>Learning for level 6 qualifications usually takes place in higher education institutions. However work settings also provide a sufficiently demanding context and sectoral and professional bodies offer recognition of learning achieved by this route. Learning at level 6 builds upon the learning in general secondary education and, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, typically includes some aspects that are at the forefront of the relevant field of study. People working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions achieve these qualifications.</p> <p>Level 6 qualifications are associated with the first cycle of qualifications in higher education in the framework developed under the Bologna process.</p> <p>Experts normally lead learning either by direct teaching or by practical coaching. Learners have limited control over formal content and methods used but are expected to show independence of research and response to problems.</p> <p>Quality assurance is largely determined by expert evaluation coupled with institutional procedural requirements usually involving third party review.</p> <p>Level 6 qualifications provide access to professional employment opportunities and are often career entry qualifications for professional and managerial work. Level 6 qualifications also provide access to further learning opportunities in higher education.</p>
7	<p>Typical learning situations are unfamiliar and require solving problems that involve many interacting factors and not all of these may be obvious to the individual. Many factors are changing making the learning context complex and unpredictable. Learning is often highly</p>

	<p>specialised.</p> <p>Formal study for qualifications at level 7 usually takes place in specialist higher education institutions involving knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with level 6. Sectoral and professional bodies offer recognition for learning gained at this level in a work setting. Senior professionals and managers achieve these qualifications.</p> <p>Level 7 qualifications are associated with the second cycle of qualifications in higher education in the framework developed under the Bologna process.</p> <p>Learning is usually associated with independent working with other people at the same level or higher. There is some scope to develop the work or learning according to interest. Some guidance of others working at high level in the domain is normally expected.</p> <p>Quality assurance at this level is largely determined by expert peer evaluation coupled with institutional procedural requirements.</p> <p>Level 7 qualifications offer access to employment and to career progression within the specialist (or closely related) field. They also open access to further specialist learning in higher education.</p>
8	<p>Learning situations for level 8 qualification are novel and require solving problems that involve many interacting factors, some of which are changing and are not obvious to the individual and therefore cannot be anticipated making the context complex and unpredictable. Learning takes place in a highly specialised field.</p> <p>Study for these qualifications mostly takes place in specialist higher education institutions. Learners achieving a qualification at level 8 have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field.</p> <p>Level 8 qualifications are associated with the third cycle of qualifications in higher education in the framework developed under the Bologna process.</p> <p>Learning at this level is mostly independent of formal learning programmes and takes place through self-initiated actions guided by other high level experts. Individuals working at this level will often coach others to high levels of expertise.</p> <p>Quality assurance is largely determined by expert peer review coupled with institutional procedural requirements.</p> <p>Level 8 qualifications offer access to employment opportunities in specialised fields and career progression for those involved in jobs requiring research skills, scholarly work and leadership.</p>

## Annex 2

### **European Quality Assurance Standards**

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The standards are given here for easy reference. The complete set of standards and guidelines are given in the ENQA report "[Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#)".

#### **A. European standards for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions**

1. *Policy and procedures for quality assurance:* Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.
2. *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards:* Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
3. *Assessment of students:* Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.
4. *Quality assurance of teaching staff:* Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved in the teaching of students are qualified and competent with regard to teaching. The methods and procedures for ensuring that this is the case should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.
5. *Learning resources and student support:* Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.
6. *Information systems:* Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.
7. *Public information:* Institutions should regularly publish up-to-date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

#### **B. European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education**

1. *Use of internal quality assurance procedures:* External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part A above.
2. *Development of external quality assurance processes:* The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.
3. *Criteria for decisions:* Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.
4. *Processes fit for purpose:* All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.
5. *Reporting:* Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to their intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

6. *Follow-up procedures*: Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.
7. *Periodic reviews*: External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.
8. *System-wide analyses*: Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

### **C. European standards for external quality assurance agencies**

1. *Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education*: The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part B above.
2. *Official status*: Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.
3. *Activities*: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.
4. *Resources*: Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.
5. *Mission statement*: Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.
6. *Independence*: Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.
7. *External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies*: The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:
  - 1 a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
  - 2 an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
  - 3 publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
  - 4 follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.
8. *Accountability procedures*: Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.