Transnational Synthesis Report
The Relation of the European Qualifications Framework and Higher Education in Five European Countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Spain

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1. Introduction

In 2006, the Leonardo da Vinci project "Competence Orientation and Learning Outcomes in Higher Education" was developed to link European and national developments in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the Bologna process in Higher Education (HE). The project which is supported by a partnership of 11 institutions from five European countries started in March 2007 (cf. http://www.he-leo-project.eu/). The project coordinator is the Danube University Krems (DUK), Austria. The other ten partner institutions are as follows:

Austria: 1) Department for Higher Education (for Universities and Fachhochschulen) within the Ministry for Science and Research (BMWF), 2) Graz University of Technology (TUG).

Bulgaria: 1) Ministry of Education and Science (MBG), 2) South-West University "Neofit Rilski" (SWU).

Hungary: 1) Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), 2) Szent István University (SZIU).

Germany: 1) Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (MWK), 2) University of Oldenburg (UO).

Spain: 1) Secretary of State for Universities and Research, Directorate General for Higher Education, 2) Technical University of Valencia - Centre for the Study of Higher Education Management (CEGES).

The overarching goals of this project are:

- to develop partnerships between national bodies for HE and HE institutions for developing mutual trust and exchange of experience with regard to competence orientation and learning outcomes for the HE sector related to the EQF;
- to link the discussions on the Bologna process of the HE sector with the EQF focusing on competence orientation and learning outcomes;
- a comparative synthesis of competence orientation and learning outcomes in the HE sector on the basis of pilot projects.

In order get a first overview on the current structure of the HE system in the partner countries and the ongoing discussion concerning implementing the EQF and a NQF, a questionnaire has been developed by the representatives from the government departments who participate in the project, which tackled the following key issues:

1) Legal basis of Higher Education and the role of Higher Education in the National Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework;

2) Current Content, Design and Objectives of the National Qualifications Framework;
3) Interfaces between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training;
4) Existing Descriptions and Definitions of Learning Outcomes;
5) Access to Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Learning Outcomes;
6) Legal Requirements for the Recognition of Prior Learning.

The results provided in this report are mainly based on the completed questionnaire called “national outlines” delivered by the following partner institutions:

- Austria: Edith Winkler, Sabine Pölzl, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research.
- Germany: Birgit Gutmann-Oks, Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony.
- Spain: Mora José-Ginés, Director Center for Higher Education Management, Technical University of Valencia.

The Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) in Vienna was engaged by the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research (Edith Winkler and Sabine Pölzl) to elaborate a "Transnational Synthesis Report" that provides a comparative analysis of the relation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Higher Education (HE) in the project partner countries.

In addition to the national outlines, we also analysed and used some further information such as the different national reports on the Bologna reforms and relevant documents of the European Commission Institutions. The literature used is listed in the section “references”. To prevent misunderstandings and make the report more readable, we decided to present our syntheses by using terms and explanations written down in the national outlines without using formal quotation.

The main task of this report is to synthesize the different national states of discussion and development regarding the relation between the EQF and HE. To this end, the syntheses provided are mainly done by building clusters of partner countries that are in a comparable stage of development.

In order to be in line with the composition of the national outlines, the structure of this report is similar to the composition of the questionnaire. We regrouped only few topics where it seemed to be helpful. In order to increase the comprehensibility of the results, a short summary of the national outlines of each partner country related to the different key issues of this report is given in the annex (Table 12-21).

The key addressees of this report are the project partners as well as other interested persons/institutions (stakeholders from the partner countries, stakeholders from other countries, international institutions, etc.).
Ultimately, it is our hope that this report will give a proper account of the national state of discussion on the EQF, the NQF and the ongoing Bologna process in the HE in the five partner countries and that it will serve as a valuable basis to support the achievement of the project goals.
2. Glossary

Country Codes
AT Austria
BG Bulgaria
DE Germany
ES Spain
HU Hungary

Some other frequently used terms and abbreviations
EQF: European Qualifications Framework
EHEA: European Higher Education Area
HE: Higher Education
NQF: National Qualifications Framework
QA: Quality Assurance
QD: Quality Development
QM: Quality Management
QF: Qualifications Framework
VET: Vocational Education and Training
3. Two Key Aspects of the Bologna Process

This chapter deals with two aspects which are meaningful for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area as outlined in the Bologna Declaration (1999):

- The Level of Implementing the Two-Cycle Degree Structure;
- External Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

On the basis of both current regulations and conducted measures in the fields of these two aspects we build clusters of countries that are in a similar stage of development. An extensive overview of the regulations and activities regarding the most important aspects of the Bologna Process separated for each partner country can be found in the Annex (see Table 12).

3.1 The Level of Implementing the Two-Cycle Degree Structure

When analysing the progress in the partner countries on implementing the two-cycle degree system we can draw the following conclusions (see Table 1):

- There are currently several reforms and changes going on in the HE systems. One central issue concerns the increase of autonomy of HE institutions (even though the alignment to the Bologna Structure means also a certain limitation of the institutional autonomy in curricula development). This and the circumstance that, for instance, Germany and Spain have a federal system of education contribute to the circumstance that the old and new degree structure currently exist in parallel in Austria, Germany, Hungary and Spain.

- As Bulgaria has already introduced a new degree structure in 1995, it has fully rearranged its study program system being in line with the two-cycle degree of the EHEA.

Table 1. Clusters of countries categorised by the level of implementing the two-cycle degree system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of implementation</th>
<th>Bulgaria: Fully implementation of the two-cycle degree system.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The majority of study programs are in line with the two-cycle degree system (&gt;50%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria: In winter semester 2006, 67.5% of university study programs and 77% of FH programs (where app. 10% of students are enrolled) follow the two-cycle degree structure.</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Germany As of March 2006, German HE institutions offered app. 33% of their study programs in the two-cycle degree system.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The minority of study programs is in line with the two cycle-degree system (&lt;50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary Two-cycle degree structure was launched for all programs in September 2006 (in a phasing-out manner), At the moment, programmes of the old system, leading to college or university degrees, are still in operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain Although the two-cycle degree structure has been ‘officially’ established in 2007, previous governments have encouraged the adaptation of existing programmes to the new structure. First master programs started in 2005. In order to promote the Bologna process, pilot projects have been launched on the implementation of the first degree. About 65% of Spanish universities, more than 50% of first degree courses are implementing the curricular reform within pilot projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 External Quality Assurance in Higher Education

In 2005, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), has published an report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which covers an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on QA and explores ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for QA and/or accreditation agencies. Therefore, the described standards and guidelines have a generic character in the meaning of setting up common reference points for QA.

When analysing the progress on implementing external QA systems we can state that the responsible legal bodies in all partner countries have launched several measures to improve the external QA in the HE field. Table 2 provides a short overview on the different regulations regarding external QA systems in the partner countries. The most common activity in this field was the installation of QA Agencies, whose main tasks are:

- The accreditation and continuous evaluation of the HE institutions and/or the individual study programs. The following institutions fulfil this task in the partner countries: the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) in Bulgaria, regional QA agencies in Germany, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) and national and regional QA agencies in Spain.
- The development of QA standards, assisting the HE institutions and/or the local QA agencies in their QA tasks and monitoring the evaluation procedures. The following institutions fulfil this task in the partner countries: the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) and the German Accreditation Council.
### Table 2. Clusters of countries categorised by the stage of development of external QA system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria: FH sector and private HE institutions:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory external QA procedures already exist</td>
<td>• The accreditation of study programs is compulsory for all Fachhochschulen and private universities (five year cycle). Accreditation is carried out by the FH Council respectively by the Austrian Accreditation Council (in the case of private universities).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Bulgaria:</th>
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</table>
| Compulsory external QA procedures already exist | • The responsible institution for accreditation in Bulgaria is the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA).  
• Since 2002, 80% of all HE institutions were evaluated for the second time (called post-accreditation) according to the new ENQA criteria.  
• Since 2002, each HE institution must have their own QA system covering both research and study programs offered.  
• The institutional and faculty leadership is responsible for the QA system.  
• Staff and Students are involved when the “quality policy” is developed at each faculty. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Germany:</th>
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</table>
| Compulsory external QA procedures already exist | • State HE institutions: At national level there is the German Accreditation Council that accredits and prescribes standards for several local quality agencies. At regional level: real accreditation is done by local agencies. Since 1998 these procedures are carried out by Peer Reviews (peers from other HEI and representatives from the private sector).  
• In addition to that regular internal evaluation of the study programs is prescribed by the HE-acts of the Länder.  
• Private HE institutions: The German Science Council carries out a procedure of institutional accreditation. If possible, prior to beginning operations, but at the latest prior to final recognition by the Länder. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Hungary:</th>
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| Compulsory external QA procedures already exist | • The ministry of education defines the national quality policy and supports institutional QA activities.  
• The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) carries out accreditation of institutions, faculties and programs in an eight-year cycle.  
• The method used includes an evaluation by external experts based on self-assessments and concluded with an evaluation report that, from 2004 on, is published.  
• Visiting committees have at least one student member since 2004.  
• Quality requirements have focused on input factors but a shift towards output factors is developing. Institutions are required to develop internal QA systems. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Spain:</th>
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| Compulsory external QA procedures already exist | • The National Ministry of Education created the ANECA (Spanish Agency for QA and Accreditation) in 2002.  
• There are 11 regional QA agencies. They evaluate the individual study programmes.  
• Self-evaluation, Peer Review, Evaluation reports are also mandatory for HE institutions. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria: Universities:</th>
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| External QA procedures are currently established | • Universities don’t need their study programs to be accredited, but the UG 2002 obliges them to implement a QM system (including continuous internal evaluation, evaluation of the activities and the performance of the teaching staff, external evaluation by the university council, the rector or the Federal Ministry for Science and Research). QA measures such as institutional evaluation, accreditations, certifications, and also quality audits are negotiated for the performance agreements (Leistungsvereinbarungen).  
• From this background the Austrian Rectors Conference (ORK) and the federal ministry founded a central Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA), which should support the universities in building QM systems. Internal evaluation (research and teaching) must be enforced by rectors on a regular basis.  
• Recently, AQA has developed an external Quality Audit procedure which is currently tested in a pilot project by 10 universities (with regard to different performance fields). The procedure is financed by the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research and contains three different modules: 1) Consulting and monitoring of individual performance fields. 2) Exemplarily audits of individual performance fields. 3) Certification of a university’s QM system. |
4. The National Qualifications Framework

The Commission of the European Communities (2006) recommends in its proposal for the establishment of the EQF that Member States should use the EQF as a reference tool to compare qualification levels used in different qualifications systems, relate their qualifications systems to the EQF by linking qualification levels to the corresponding EQF levels and, where appropriate, develop a national qualifications framework (NQF). Moreover, the proposal recommends that the NQF should be related to the EQF by 2009 and that new qualifications and Europass documents should contain a reference to their EQF level by 2011.

The EQF should, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common reference point and thus facilitate the placing of these qualifications within NQF. Last but not least the proposal also recommends designating a national centre to support and coordinate the relationship between the national qualifications system and the EQF.

There are already various forms of a NQF, e.g. in Ireland. Some include all levels and types of qualifications whilst others, for example, specifically separate HE qualifications from other types of qualifications. There are thus some national systems that employ a single framework whilst others have multiple frameworks that are generally integrated in a more or less formal way (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005).

4.1 Preparatory Work and Current Design of the National Qualifications Framework

The analysis of the preparatory work conducted in the partner countries to develop a NQF shows that steering committees for developing a NQF have been founded in nearly all countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary and Spain) and also a broad consultation phase including relevant stakeholders is part of the development process. Austria has already elaborated a first proposal of a NQF, which is currently discussed by the national supervision committee and the key stakeholders. With regard to the design of the envisaged NQF one can see that the responsible stakeholders seek developing a NQF which is in line with the EQF. Table 3 outlines the clusters of countries related to the preparatory work and current design of the NQF. Austria, Germany and Hungary have already formulated objectives related to the development of a NQF and some aims are even similar among those partner countries:

- Promoting national and transnational mobility and permeability across the different educational sectors;
- Improving the transparency of the educational system;
- Promoting the learning outcome orientation of qualifications;
- Supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning.
Table 3. Clusters of countries categorised by the preparatory work and current design of the NQF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria:</th>
<th>Germany:</th>
<th>Hungary:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Discussion of a proposal for a NQF | - The Austrian government decided to adopt a NQF and to connect it with the EQF. In November 2007, a research group presented their study on a NQF to the national supervision committee. Subsequently, the general consultation phase will start where all stakeholders are invited to make comments on the proposal. This consultation phase will end probably in June 2008. Parallel to the consultation phase several workshops with relevant stakeholders, researchers and members of the Ministry will be organised on the practicability of the proposed NQF. The results of these workshops will be integrated into the proposed NQF. The workshops will be finalized with the end of the consultation phase.  
  - The preliminary design of the NQF comprises 8 levels parallel to the 8 EQF levels but with more descriptions specifying the Austrian situation.  
  - The key objectives related to the NQF are: Translation of qualifications, implementation of a learning outcome approach, validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, connection between NQF and lifelong learning, a stronger cooperation between the different sectors, development of new national transnational mobility programs and implementation of new learning forms in all sectors. | - At the beginning of 2007, a process has been started to elaborate a German NQF. As both levels of government are concerned, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research conducts the process jointly with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. A steering group has been created with members of different departments within the ministries (primary and secondary education, vocational education, higher education). A secretariat is to be established with small staff to accompany the process during the next four years. Stakeholders are included by a working group that meets twice a year. The steering group of state representatives aims at obtaining consensus among the stakeholders.  
  - The design of the NQF is not clear yet, but techniques for assessing learning outcomes exist already punctually.  
  - The key objectives related to the NQF are: Promoting mobility and permeability across educational sectors, improving the transparency of the educational system, promoting the learning outcome orientation of qualifications and supporting the validation of prior learning. | - As a result of Hungarian consultations conducted on the EQF, the need for the creation of a single NQF emerged. Thus an interministerial committee was set up with the involvement of the Ministries concerned and the National Development Agency.  
  - The task of this committee is to develop a strategic plan for the Government on the implementation of the NQF concept. The strategic plan will be implemented in the framework of the Second National Development Plan (2007–2013). The Second NDP does not devote an individual action for the creation of the NQF; instead, developments are foreseen for the different educational sectors (public education, vocational education, higher education) through various actions.  
  - The design of the NQF envisages the EQF as the reference framework for development and it is thereto that the outcome requirements of each education sector should be adapted. The first step towards drafting the description of the NQF levels is to design a descriptor system which incorporates the outcome requirements of the educational subsectors currently undergoing transformation. After the completion of the development phase, each and every degree and qualification shall be assigned an NQF identifier, and classification under the NQF shall be indicated in every single document evidencing qualification (certificate, diploma). Parallel to the development of the qualifications and examination systems of the educational subsectors, the NQF should gradually become suitable for integrating informal and non-formal learning outcomes.  
  - The overarching objectives related to the NQF are promoting the planning of individual career paths, providing information for making individual decisions about learning and advising users of education services under the auspices of lifelong learning. The concrete aims of the preparatory work regarding the development of the NQF are: integrating various outcome requirements into a single system, harmonizing the outcome requirements, certifying individual competences and qualifications, providing information to employers, validating non-formal and informal learning and ensuring correspondence to the EQF. |
Spain:
- At the end of 2007 a Spanish Committee for the NQF was set up aiming to design the NQF by bringing together all the involved stakeholders. Its legal condition is still being processed. The committee is formed by representatives from the Ministries for Education and Labour, the General Council for Professional Training, Trade Unions, the University Coordination Council, Students, Businessmen, Public Administration and Industry, the ANECA and external experts. Moreover, a Working Group will act as an information and proposal provider for this Committee and has already met and worked together on several occasions.
- The design and key objectives of the NQF are not clear yet.

| Not yet started to work on a proposal for a NQF | Bulgaria |

4.2 The Level of Implementing a QF in Higher Education

The identification of first and second cycle studies within the Bologna Declaration (1999) was the first step towards developing an over-arching QF for the EHEA. By creating this initial division between cycles the first elements of a QF were established (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005). The next steps were several national and international initiatives, including the development by the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) of the ‘Dublin descriptors’ or the Trans-European Evaluation Project (TEEP).

When analysing the stages of development in the partner countries to develop a QF in the field of HE the following major conclusions can be drawn (see Table 4):

- Austria, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary have developed a QF for HE that is at least partly in line with the QF of the EHEA. Bulgaria has already set up a precise and comprehensive plan to fully adapt the QF of the EHEA in its HE sector by 2008.
- Spain is currently working on a Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES) which establishes learning and competencies descriptors for each of the HE levels. The framework aims to follow the recommendations of the QF of the EHEA and assures that MECES is compatible with the EQF. MECES should be implemented by 2010.

Table 4. Clusters of countries categorised by the level of implementing a QF in HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| A QF for HE is developed | • The University Act 2002 (UG 2002) taking effect in 2004 provides the legal framework for the full transition of degree programs to the Bachelor and Master structure and is in line with the Bologna aims.  
• Research studies of the relation of the EQF and the QF for HE were initiated and are partly finished (e.g. an analysis of the EQF in the context of tertiary education based on a comparison of selected countries). |
**Bulgaria:**
- Since 1995 by means of legislation a QF for HE has been introduced in Bulgaria and includes the three-degree system. The Bulgarian NQF for HE corresponds to a great extent to the QF of the EHEA.
- Further steps need to be taken for full alignment of the existing requirements of knowledge, skills and competence with the ones recommended in the QF of the EHEA as well as for the commensurability of the awarded credits (should be finished by 2008). It is expected that it will require amendments and supplements to the national legislation that covers these issues.
- Measures for strengthening the links between the education system and learning outcomes are foreseen in the draft of the National Reform Program of (2006 – 2009), e.g. defining common principles and requirements on state exams and diploma thesis defending together with related stakeholders; attracting people from the business as teachers in HE institutions, attracting people from the business in expert councils on quality in HE institutions.

**Germany:**
- In 2005 the “QF for German HE Degrees” was presented to the Bologna Conference. All players represented in the national Bologna Group were involved in the development of this QF.
- It was developed parallel to the QF resolved in Bergen for the EHEA using the Dublin Descriptors as a basis and includes formal aspects like credit points and requirements for access and applies to the Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate. A degree course must meet the “QF for German HE Degrees” in order to receive accreditation in Germany.

**Hungary:**
- The new degree structure based on three cycles was adopted in December 2004. The Decree of the Ministry of Education specifying the “Training and Outcome Requirements” (TOR) formulates learning outcomes and professional competences at a general level with the aim of providing orientation, while the TOR also contains input requirements thereby, to some extent limiting the teaching and learning paths available for the HE institutions. The outcome requirements, thus, leave considerable room for HE institutions; however, they offer hardly any assistance for the implementation of the new task.
- This twofold character (entry and content requirements plus elements of outcome requirements) gave rise to a particular discrepancy in regulation: the content requirements defined are not fully in line with the expectations reflected in the outcome descriptors. This aspect was studied by a subsequent, six-month-long project.
- The new regulation lays down in detail what data, information and descriptions are required for the specification of a program. These specifications are more or less different in the case of Bachelor’s programs, Master’s programs, and teacher training programs, and furthermore to a great extent, also preserve content, procedural and even entry-related regulatory elements.

**Spain:**
- One of the main challenges faced by the Spanish HE system is the full integration into the EHEA. The Organic Law of Universities (LOU), amended in 2007, formulates as a central goal to prepare the insertion of the Spanish university system into the EHEA and implement QA policies.
- In 2006, the government allocated €13 million specifically to encourage strategic planning and other measures taken by universities to be in line with the Bologna process, e.g. encourage teaching staff to fully implement principles underlying the ECTS, foster student participation, improving the coordination between university and pre-university education.
- Therefore, it is the political aim to develop a QF for HE (MECES) by 2010, which must set learning and competencies descriptors for each of the higher education levels. MECES has the following aims and requirements: to inform students on the requirements of each educational level and employers on the competencies of their employees; to promote international mobility and degrees and training recognition; to follow the recommendations of the QF of EHEA and assure that MECES is compatible with the EQF; to design a plan for the renovation and improvement of MECES; to use generic descriptors that are independent of disciplines and must be based on learning results; to take into account that eventually MECES’ levels must be certified by a nationally and internationally recognised body.

**Currently working on a QF for HE**

5. Interfaces between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training

The Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005) states a key aspect facilitating the creation of a successful NQF is that the development process for producing good frameworks is most effective when it involves all relevant stakeholders both within and outside.
HE. HE frameworks naturally link to VET and post-secondary education and as such are best viewed as a national initiative. This also makes possible the inclusion of other areas of education and training outside HE. Moreover, so the Commission of the European Communities (2006), the focus on lifelong learning began to influence reform processes, mainly due to its relevance to the changing needs of learners. It also gave rise to the emergence of new sub-sectors at the interfaces between basic education and VET, and between HE and VET.

When analysing the level of interface between HE and VET in the partner countries the following conclusions can be drawn (see Table 5):

- There is only a limited interface between the HE sector and VET providers in all partner countries. The most common linkage is the adjustment of vocational qualifications described in the study curricula regulating the access to higher vocational training programs (e.g. at the FH sector in Austria). Social partners (as key stakeholder of the VET sectors) and Ministries are involved when HE institutions develop their study programs in the field of advanced vocational training.

- Moreover, social partners, Ministries and HE institutions and collaborate when the recognition of prior exams or qualifications passed on the upper secondary level have to be regulated by law or by special agreements.

- Some (mainly technical) universities collaborate directly with VET providers.

Table 5. Clusters of countries categorised by the interfaces between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rather Informal interface and linkage between the HE sector and the VET sectors and/or VET providers</td>
<td>There is an interface between VET sector and FH study in relation of the curricula: Recognition of proven knowledge may lead to exemption from some program requirements (shortening the study duration). Thereby, the principle of course recognition applies: ascertainment of acquired knowledge in relation to the content and extent of study course. Passed exams will be recognised (knowledge test is not required).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The application for accreditation of FH institutions/programs has to describe the recognition modalities in conjunction with the recognition of documented knowledge and skills. Special work experience will be considered in the case of placements or courses which are particularly meaningful for part-time and partial degree programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bulgaria:            | There is an interface between VET sector and HE through a career guidance project, where all responsible institutions and stakeholders are involved and work on the development of a national policy document and on the establishment of a national forum for professional career guidance. |
|                      | Social partners, Ministry of Education and Science and stakeholders from HE update regularly the list of VET professions and the development of HE programs (including the programs for “Professional bachelor” (ISCED 5B). |

| Germany:            | As the VET field and HE sector are viewed as separate sub-systems, only few linkages exist. One interface is the supply of study programs where vocational qualifications are frequent or even obligatory for students. Here, general rules for the recognition of prior vocational qualifications are defined. Another linkage is the supply of “dual study programs” where work placements in companies are part of the study programs. |
|                      | There is currently a discussion how to improve the permeability between both fields. |
Spain:
The formal cooperation between HE and VET is very limited. The following exchange and linkages exist:
• Some technical universities and technical have some contacts with VET providers and VET expertise due to common interest.
• Admission formalities to HE also encompass the linkage between VET and HE as Spain offers study programs for vocational training at HE level which students gain access by entrance secondary education diploma or by a special test designed to demonstrate that the student has sufficient knowledge and skills.

Hungary:
• The only interface between HE and VET is the supply of advanced vocational programs offered by HE institutions which grant advanced vocational certificates defined in the National Qualification Register that lays down the outcome requirements in terms of specific vocational branches. The general structure of these programs are regulated by the pertaining Government degree, but the definition of these qualification requirements (including the ratio of work placements) are determined in cooperation with the social partners, who are concerned with the given vocational qualification. Governmental Degrees regulate also the framework of the recognition of examinations (minimum and maximum of credit points), but the HE institutions decide on any further details.
• The supply of these advanced vocational programs is approved by the senate of the HE institution and is launched with the consent of the Ministry being responsible for the given qualification after a simplified and accelerated accreditation procedure.

6. Learning Outcome Approach

6.1 Legal Regulations and the Current Level of Implementation

Building on previous agreements in Bologna (1999) and Berlin (2003), Ministers responsible for HE in 45 European countries agreed in Bergen in May 2005 on the adoption of an overarching QF for HE containing learning outcomes-based descriptors for the three HE cycles and introducing credit ranges for the first and second of these cycles (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

Both the EHEA and the EQF are essentially based on the description of learning outcomes: The description specifies what knowledge, understanding and skills a learner is supposed to have acquired upon completion of a given programme. The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) has submitted assessments of the relationship between EHEA and EQF and according to this assessment both frameworks differ in terms of scope and methodology, but are neither inconsistent nor incompatible. Each approach is based on outcome and competence orientation (Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber, Pellert, Cendon, 2006).

When analysing the regulations and current level of implementation in the HE field in the partner countries with regard to the learning outcome approach, the following conclusions can be drawn (see Table 6):
• Bulgaria has already introduced an overall definition of the term “learning outcome”.
• All partner countries stipulate by law to change the curricula of the study programs from input orientation towards outcome orientation.
- Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany and Spain call for precise information on the competences to be acquired during HE degree programs while Austria prescribes the description of qualification profiles (which have to be further specified in the FH sector related to knowledge and skills).
- Pilot projects in Hungary and at European level (e.g. Tuning Project) and workshops (e.g. in Austria) are conducted to support the adequate introduction of the learning outcome approach in the tertiary education system.

### Table 6. Clusters of countries categorised by the level of implementing the learning outcome approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Bulgaria:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Learning outcomes are defined and being implemented in the degree programs | - There is the following definition of the term “learning outcomes”: “Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that a student will be able to do as a result of a learning activity”.  
- Moreover, curricula have been changed towards the description of the expected learning results according to the educational contents. On this basis, the autonomous HE institutions are required to declare the acquired knowledge, abilities and competences in the qualification description of each study program including a reference to the potential professional sectors. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hungary:</th>
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</table>
| - There is no definition of the term “learning outcomes”. But new governmental Decrees (2005, 2006) demand the declaration of Training and Outcome Requirements (TOR) in the shape of general descriptors, program-specific descriptors by degree programs and outcome indicators for all Bachelor and Master study programs. The outcome requirements with regard to Bachelor curricula are described in terms of competences that comprises of “knowledge”, “abilities and activities demanded by the given professional area” and “personal competences”. The outcome requirements of Master curricula need to describe “knowledge”, “abilities” and “those personal endowments and skills that are required for pursuing the given profession”.
- A standard methodological guide as part of a special project supports the further development of outcome requirements in the shape of learning outcomes. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Austria:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - There is no legal definition of the term “learning outcomes”. Moreover, the term “learning outcome” is not used or recommended in the respective HE regulations. But first steps to attain this goal are taken:  
1. **Universities**: Legal regulations demand the formulation of “qualification profiles” (in terms of professional knowledge and methods) within each curriculum including the quotation of potential employment fields.  
2. **FH sector**: Legal regulations demand the description of a “qualification profile” (knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks at HE level shall be specified, technical and methodical skills as well as interdisciplinary qualifications) and the name of vocational fields of activity. Moreover, due to the modularisation partial qualifications can be acquired, i.e. definable competences are to be taught in the modules.  
3. **Private universities**: Description of Learning Outcomes (in terms of competences and qualifications, knowledge and skills) in the respective curricula.  
- Austria also plans further actions to promote the descriptions of learning outcomes: The topic “Learning Outcomes” will be discussed in several workshops between HE representatives and relevant stakeholders in the next years.  
- The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) is currently carrying out a project which – among other – analyses the systematics of describing learning outcomes in the context of designing Bachelor study programs (orientation towards EQF, Dublin descriptors, determination of workloads and modularisation).  
- Specific learning outcomes in doctoral studies shall be defined for individual disciplines and study programs. Moreover, doctoral curricula shall be more structured in the future. In some disciplines, this may also lead to more coursework.  
- The FH Council decided to commission a research project that aims 1) to foster the overall understanding of a learning outcome based approach in the Austrian FH sector, 2) to support the FH institutions in the process of designing curricula based on the learning outcome approach, 3) to strengthen the learning outcome approach in the system of external QA. |

First steps towards the implementation of learning outcomes in the degree programs are made (either by an overall definition or by describing learning outcomes)
Germany:

- There is no overall accepted definition of the term "learning outcomes". However, the use and description of "learning outcomes" in the new two-cycle degree curricula is prescribed. The description of the learning objectives in terms of learning outcomes is based on competences, which should cover scientific fundamentals, methodical competences and professionally-related competences. Competences and learning objectives have to be defined with a view to the requirements on the job market.

- But especially in the educational disciplines without clear professional profiles the implementation is difficult and learning processes are needed. Frequently, the outcomes of the Tuning-Project (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_en.html) and the Dublin Descriptors of the Joint Quality Initiative informal group (2004) are used by HE institutions as a basis for the definition and description of learning outcomes.

Spain:

- A new decree, recently issued, establishes the requirement for universities to define the learning outcomes within their new study programs.

- This decree proposes the Dublin descriptors as a main guideline.

Apart of that, some study programs have already developed a learning outcome approach in their curricula at an experimental level.

6.2 Potential Problems with the Implementation of the Learning Outcome Approach

The partner countries were asked on potential problems related with the implementation of the learning outcome approach and they referred to the following difficulties respectively further questions:

- As the orientation on learning outcomes entails a fundamental change of perspectives, the curriculum design requires an essential rethinking of people responsible for the design of the curricula.

- The description of learning outcomes is a difficult and challenging task for HE institutions.

- The implementation of a learning outcome based design of curricula requires adequate pedagogical and didactical concepts.

- The relation between expected learning outcomes and the contents of the teaching and learning process has to be taken into consideration.

- How can the achievement of expected learning outcomes be measured?

- How can the learning outcome approach be linked with external QA?

- The implementation of the learning outcome approach in educational disciplines without clear professional profiles is especially very difficult and needs time.

- In case of old study programs in operation a difficulty is that HE could not foresee the outcome requirements of new Master’s programs. As many old programs still foster contents of former university studies learning outcomes are unreal. Being now acquainted with current Master’s programs, the “redistribution” of training contents would be worthwhile.

- There is a need to align the elements of entry and outcome requirements at the level of the specific study programs, in other words, to clarify the paths leading to the actual learning outcomes.
Components of competences relating to knowledge, ability, views, commitment, autonomy and responsibility as well as references to key competences can be confusingly merged.

The descriptions of learning outcomes may not be systematic or do not follow clearly enough the triad differentiation: knowledge, application of knowledge, professional attitude and conduct.

6.3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Attention has also to be paid to the assessment of learning outcomes, because it needs to be assured that learning outcomes described for each study program are regularly checked and evaluated with regard to its quality and meaningfulness by own representatives and by independent stakeholders.

When analysing the assessment of learning outcomes in the partner countries (see Table 7) the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Spain (has just introduced the legal requirement for describing learning outcomes) and the FH sector in Austria require both the regular conduct of external evaluations (on the basis of QA systems) and the description of learning outcomes in the field of HE.

- The existence of functioning QA systems does, however, say nothing on the concrete assessment procedures of the learning outcomes. The quality areas in the HE field to be scrutinised are gradually changing from rather input indicators towards outcome and output indicators.

- Therefore, clear and precise descriptions and definitions of learning outcomes (cf. subchapter 6.1) ease the endeavours to assure the quality of learning outcomes, as they can be reviewed in the course of the accreditation and evaluation processes. Proper tools to measure the quality of learning outcomes are the inclusion of key stakeholders, which can be done, for instance, by student evaluations or employment analyses.

- Austrian universities are required to formulate qualification profiles of the individual study programs and to install an internal QM system, but the shape of concrete external reviews is currently elaborated and tested.
### Table 7. Clusters of countries categorised the assessment of learning outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria: FH sector and private universities:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes have to be described and external QA procedures are mandatory</td>
<td>• The FH study programs need to be re-accredited every fifth year where an evaluation report also refers to the adequacy of the intended learning outcomes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The FH institutions have to keep in touch with their alumni. Alumni analyses are carried out at periodic intervals and evaluated in relation to the degree programs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The knowledge and skills to be acquired in an FH degree program based on the vocational and higher education requirements need to be documented in a sufficient and transparent way within the scope of a qualification profile.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- An instrument needs to be developed to ensure the advancement of the qualification profile, the educational goals and the contents of the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The requirements imposed by the business community need to be reflected upon, in order to ensure that the contents of the courses are up to date in their specific vocational fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The achievements of the students need to be observed by means of a course progress analysis (e.g. analysis of the drop-out rates, failure to complete a degree program within the regular study period, etc.) and the results are integrated into improvement measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Private universities have to document alumni careers in their annual reports as well as during the re-accreditation procedure. They have to carry out continuous evaluations on their courses. An international expert team evaluates the learning outcomes with regard to the Dublin Descriptors.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Bulgaria:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The autonomous HE institutions are required to declare the acquired knowledge, abilities and competences in the qualification description of each study program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 2005, the NEAA published a list of criteria complying with the Standards for QA in Education in the EHEA (ENQA, 2005). These criteria were fully applied during evaluation procedures of HE institutions in 2006. The duration of accreditation awarded to a given HEI which fully meets the criteria of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency is between 3 and 6 years, depending on the awarded ‘assessment grade’. Each HEI is subject to regular reviews and reports at certain intervals of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional accreditation is now explicitly linked to the evaluation of the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes and structures. Program assessment methods encompass a program-by-program approach as well as subject-level evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moreover, post-accreditation monitoring has been introduced and different approaches have been used to ensure that students participate at all stages in the evaluation and accreditation procedures.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The use and description of “learning outcomes” in the new two-cycle degree curricula is prescribed. The description of the learning objectives in terms of learning outcomes is based on competences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 1998 an accreditation process was introduced for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system. The task of the accreditation process is the assurance of technical standards in regard to the content which includes reviewing the degree course concept, the educational feasibility of course options, the quality of instruction as well as reviewing professional relevance and promoting gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accreditation is a procedure of external QA. It is based on the principle of “peer review.” Alongside academics, participants include students, representatives from social partners as well as international experts. Thus, the accreditation in HE also includes the verification of the quality of the definitions and the assessment of learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hungary:
- There is a control of the learning outcome requirements (TOR) by the accreditation procedures, where the “Learning Outcome Approach” is regularly checked (somewhat interface with labour market, but not strong as employers are not part of the accreditation team).
- The Hungarian Accreditation Committee carries out mandatory accreditation of institutions, faculties and programs in an eight-year cycle. The accreditation procedure is mandatory and involves two separate procedures. On the one hand, it involves examining HE institutions (education and training activities and conditions, research activities and facilities, staff, organizational structure and infrastructure), and on the other hand, the degree programs themselves (curriculum content, the proportion of practical and theory-based instruction, qualified staff and infrastructure).
- In terms of internal evaluation, HE institutions are obliged to prepare their annual institutional evaluation report to be discussed and voted by the institutional council. As part of the accreditation procedure and the interim control procedure, they are also required to prepare self-evaluation documentation, for which the HAC provides detailed guidance. Students take part in the evaluation procedure at institutional level. The institution’s annual evaluation report is accepted by the Senate, which includes student representatives. The self-evaluation documents provide spaces for students to express their opinions.

Spain:
- The description of learning outcomes within HE study programs is now required by a recently issued decree.
- The Organic Law of Universities (LOU), introduced in 2001, focused among others on QA policies, strengthening the role of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the quality agencies in 11 autonomous regions. ANECA carries out its actions through four main programs: Accreditation Program, Institutional Assessment Program, Certification Program and European Convergence Program.
- Nevertheless, QA is still based on criteria covering input and learning process indicators than on learning outcome indicators.
- The new study programs should be accredited based on learning outcomes but the model has to be defined.

External QA procedures are currently established

Austria:
Universities:
- Universities are required to implement a QM system (including continuous internal evaluation, evaluation of the activities and the performance of the teaching staff, external evaluation by the university council, the rector or the Federal Ministry for Science and Research). QA measures such as institutional evaluation, accreditations, certifications and also quality audits are negotiated for the performance agreements (Leistungsvereinbarungen).
- Legal regulations demand the formulation of “qualification profiles” (in terms of professional knowledge and methods) within each curriculum including the quotation of potential employment fields.
- The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) is currently carrying out a project which – among other – analyses the systematic of describing learning outcomes in the context of designing Bachelor study programs (orientation towards EQF, Dublin descriptors, determination of workloads and modularisation).

6.4 The Linkage between Learning Outcomes and the ECTS

A key European tool that has been developed to help in the process of curriculum reform and recognition of learning outcomes is the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). It is important to refer to one particular key feature of ECTS: “The Credits in ECTS can only be obtained after successful completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved.”

ECTS is therefore a system that is at the heart of the reforms taking place in HE institutions. Previous trends studies have reported the continual rise of ECTS as the credit system for the

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1 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Key Features, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/doc/ectskey_en.pdf
European Higher Education Area. However, Reichert & Tauch (2005) analysed already in the EUA Trends IV report that many institutions called for “a more European implementation of ECTS that would preclude inconsistencies caused by national or institutional approaches”, indicating their concern that ECTS was still not always being used correctly. The extent and quality of the use of ECTS has thus become a matter of key importance to Europe’s HE institutions (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007).

When analysing the different linkages between learning outcomes and ECTS in the partner countries we can draw the following conclusions (see Table 8):

- Austria, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary stipulate the use of credit systems by law which are in line with the ECTS to a large extent.
- Bulgaria and Hungary set up further activities to support the adequate introduction and calculation of the new credit systems through visits by EC representatives and the establishment of Credit Transfer Committees.
- Some Spanish universities already developed pilot schemes of the ECTS and as of 2008/09 ECTS should be implemented into all new study programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria:</th>
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</table>
| ECTS credits are allocated in most study programs | - Law stipulates that the duration of study is expressed in terms of ECTS as a measure of student workload. At universities, the paradigm change to understanding ECTS in terms of student workload is still ongoing and should be promoted through the increased designs of modular organisation of curricular.  
- The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) is currently carrying out a project which – among other – analyses the systematic of describing learning outcomes in the context of designing Bachelor study programs (orientation towards EQF, Dublin descriptors, determination of workloads and modularisation).  
- FH sector: Whether the curriculum (i.e. courses, placements, diploma theses) of FH degree programs is manageable is determined by the workload measured according to the ECTS. ECTS is now clearly defined as: "The currency to measure student workload in terms of notional learning time required to achieve specified learning outcomes". Thus, the use of credits is the basis for quantifying the learning outcomes. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bulgaria:</th>
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</table>
| - Since 2004 a credit system being in line with the ECTS is applied to the Bulgarian HE field by law. Since 2006, all universities apply the new credit system. There are regular visits by EC representatives at the universities to advise the adequate introduction of this new credit system.  
- Universities are hold to fill in documents that refer to the provided credits with regard to the students’ workload during courses and beyond. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany:</th>
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</table>
| - Today, modularisation and credit points conforming to ECTS requirements need to be demonstrated in the German accreditation procedures for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system.  
- In the summer semester of 2006 the credit point system was applied in 74% of all Bachelors degree courses and 67% of Masters degree courses. |
Hungary:
- ECTS has practically been fully implemented. HE institutions are required by law to establish Credit Transfer Committees being responsible for the credit arrangement (e.g. measuring the external workload).
- But a modern approach to curriculum design and methods of education and assessment is impeded, because the recent HE law (2006) introduced the term "knowledge" instead of "competences" in the area of the credit recognition.
- Thus, the use of credits beyond formalities is at its very initial stage with a lot of problems still to be tackled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No credit system is in use</th>
<th>Spain:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Until now, the ECTS has been used to promote the transnational student exchanges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some Spanish universities developed pilot schemes of the ECTS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As of 2008/09 ECTS should be implemented into all new study programs (concurrently with the new bachelor degree courses).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Incorporating the Labour Market Needs into Higher Education Curricula Designs

Universities have the potential to play a vital role in the Lisbon objective to equip Europe with the skills and competences necessary to succeed in a globalised, knowledge-based economy. In order to overcome persistent mismatches between graduate qualifications and the needs of the labour market, university programmes should be structured to enhance directly the employability of graduates and to offer broad support to the workforce more generally. Universities should offer innovative curricula, teaching methods and training programs which include broader employment-related skills along with the more discipline-specific skills. To sum it up, one main purposes of HE is the preparation for the labour market (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005). Therefore, the standards and guidelines by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2005) indicate that stakeholders such as employers and labour market representatives should also have an opportunity to give feedback to HE institutions on the quality of the study program and the intended qualification profile.

When analysing the different national incorporation modes of the labour market needs into HE curricula designs (see Table 9) the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The five partner countries show different levels of involvement of external stakeholders to the HE curricula designs.
- Germany, Spain and the FH sector in Austria have found multiple ways of formal collaboration and cooperation between business world and HE institutions, but the most common approach is the external review process, where representatives of social partners or members with professional backgrounds belong to the Peer Teams respectively the Accreditation Agencies.
- Bulgaria has developed a project in the context of the EU PHARE Program whose purpose is to facilitate a good match between education and labour market needs through the development of educational plans determining the professional directions.
- Austria and Hungary are currently launching workshops with relevant stakeholders how to improve the coordination between labour market needs and HE curricula designs.

Table 9. *Clusters of countries categorised by the incorporation of labour market needs into HE curricula designs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria/FH sector and private universities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• The regulations regarding FH institutions (10% of students) ensure that labour market needs are considered in the study program development resp. evaluation phase: Development team of FH study programs comprises of at least two domain-specific professionals, Peer Team comprises of at least one professional experience, FH council that accredits FH study programs comprises of members with professional background, FH programs must collaborate with SME, part of teaching staff are part-time teachers with professional background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• The accreditation (and re-accreditation) rules demand that applicant institutions have to orientate their academic programme(s) towards their mission statement and employability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Germany:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• Representatives of employers have to be members of local accreditation agencies and accreditation procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• Unions and employers are especially active in promoting acceptance of the two-cycle degree system on the job market. The Employers’ Associations is member of the German Accreditation Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• There are various kinds of cooperation between HE institutions and companies related to R&amp;D and teaching.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Spain:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• The involvement of external stakeholders with professional background in curricula of study programs has been rather unusual. But many universities started to conduct regular graduates’ surveys. And since a main program of ANECA (established 2002) is the Accreditation Program the agency checks compliance with given criteria and established standards, while ensuring that education results are adequate and that the skills acquired by students meet the demands of the labour market. To this end, the external Peer Teams are made up also by experts in quality processes working in companies and industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• The National Institute of Qualifications studies the labour market needs and defines the qualifications sought by different economic sectors, including them timely in the National Catalogue of Occupational Qualifications. The Ministry for Education and Science, taking the qualifications listed in the Catalogue as a benchmark, establishes the higher vocational training courses that lead to diplomas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular involvement</td>
<td>• Higher vocational training courses have also a proper linkage with labour market, because all courses include a specific module carried out in the workplace.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Bulgaria:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>responsible persons for study programs in contact with stakeholders from the labour market</td>
<td>• In order to inquire the employers’ needs of working power with a given qualification, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has developed a project in the context of EU PHARE Program in 2006 whose purpose is to facilitate a new system ensuring a good match between education and labour market needs. The system will be introduced until 2008 all over the country and it should promote the development of educational plans determining the professional directions in order to promote the employability of pupils and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible persons for study programs in contact with stakeholders from the labour market</td>
<td>• The Ministry of Education and Science seeks the contact with the employers’ organisation for the provision of work placements of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible persons for study programs in contact with stakeholders from the labour market</td>
<td>• Universities were assigned new tasks and challenges for the development of “educational regions” and “local economies”. To this end, a conference was organised discussing the future of professional qualifications at the tertiary level and also promoting the interface between business partners and professional qualifications offered by the HE institutions. 24 HE institutions have set up centres for career development that serve – beside the professional orientation for graduates - as a bridge between HE institutions and employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible persons for study programs in contact with stakeholders from the labour market</td>
<td>• There are single agreements between technical universities and representatives of business leading to quick adaptations of curricula designs, if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria:</td>
<td>Hungary:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universities:</td>
<td>• There is only a little and not up-to-date research on the labour market needs with regard to the professional qualifications of the HE study programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is only a little interface between labour market needs and HE curricula designs. Therefore, this issue will be discussed with the relevant stakeholders in the course of the NQF negotiations.</td>
<td>• Moreover, program-specific descriptors of the “Training and Outcome Requirements” including particular knowledge, professional attitude and conduct, and application of knowledge” were not fully based on labour market needs.</td>
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<td>• Therefore, financial and counselling services, e.g. for the adequate design of learning outcomes for the new degree structure, discussion of the proposal with relevant representatives of the labour market, and grants for designing new curricula as part of the National Development Plan, have been introduced at national level by public authorities to encourage the full implementation of the three-cycle structure.</td>
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8. Access to Higher Education

A very important feature in the discussion of NQF and EQF is the access mode for non-traditional learners to the HE field. By opening new learning paths and facilitating the recognition of non-traditional qualifications, frameworks must be build which help opening HE opportunities for new learners who may never have seen such possibilities before. In the Bologna communiqué in Bergen (2005, p. 3-4), the Ministers recognized that “We see the development of national and European frameworks for qualifications as an opportunity to further embed lifelong learning in higher education. We will work with higher education institutions and others to improve recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programs. (…) The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counseling services with a view to widening access”.

Reflecting on this policy goal this issue focuses on the questions how the access regulations look like and whether there are alternative approaches for non-traditional students to attend a degree course at the tertiary level. To this end, Table 10 also portrays the numeric meaning of this particular group of students if data was available.

When analysing the different access criteria to the HE in the partner countries (see Table 10) the following overall conclusions can be drawn:

- The FH sector in Austria and some Länder in Germany have stipulated by law a very open access to their HE institutions as also vocationally qualified applicants have entry rights. However, the number of these non-traditional learners is very little, as just 10% of Austrian FH students and 1% of all German students belong to this group.
- Austria in general provides a rather open access to its tertiary education as it requires a general university entrance certificate, its foreign equivalent, the successful completion of a
special university entrance examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) or a vocationally-based examination acknowledged as equivalent to the higher secondary school leaving certificate (*Berufsreifeprüfung*).

- Spain has also a quite open system. For the most demanded programs a special entrance examination is required, but in general the final secondary certificate is sufficient. A proportion of places are reserved for people from vocational education. Adults without a secondary diploma can also enrol HE if they pass an entrance examination.

- Hungary offers a moderate access to its HE study programs as it demands a specific score calculated on the basis of the secondary school subject grades and secondary school leaving examination results.

- Bulgaria provides a rather limited access, because school-leaving certificate and entrance examination are required. Bulgarian HE institutions, however, can enroll also students without an entrance examination.

Table 10. *Clusters of countries categorised by the access to HE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>FH sector:</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant vocational qualifications have to be laid down in the application for accreditation. Only 10% of all FH students are belonging to this group of non-traditional learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Continuing education and training:**
Austrian HE institutions can offer continuing-education courses and they have also the right to determine the admission criteria. Universities offer continuing education and qualification upgrading in courses (*Universitätslehrgänge*) for both postgraduates and non-academics who satisfy other admission criteria, such as a minimum period of professional practice. These courses of study, which are designed in the same way as master’s courses, lead to a master’s degree or to the awarding of the prefix ‘*Akademischer...*’ before the graduate’s existing professional title. Most classes take place in the evenings or at weekends. In order to increase the accessibility of these courses, organisational forms that suit people in employment (evening or weekend sessions coupled with access to online resources) are being piloted. A centre for continuing tertiary education was created in 1994 with the founding of the Danube University Krems (*Donau-Universität Krems*), since 2004 established as the 22nd public university with exclusive focus on university continuing education. Its role is confined to the provision of courses at the postgraduate level and currently it offers about 133 continuing-education courses. Since 1 February 2004, providers of courses at Fachhochschulen have also been able to offer part-time continuing-education courses on the aforementioned university model in the subjects for which they are accredited (currently 47 continuing-education courses are provided). In the Winter semester 2006, 422 continuing-education courses were offered in Austria (188 of them leading to a Masters’ degree).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission to universities and equivalent HE institutions requires the “Allgemeine Hochschulreife” or the “Fachgebundene Hochschulreife”. Both are obtained after 12 or 13 ascending school years on completion of the gymnasiale Oberstufe or certain courses of vocational education at upper secondary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In almost all Länder there are other ways for vocationally qualified applicants without a HE qualification to obtain right of entry to HE. They must prove they have the essential knowledge and abilities for HE by undergoing an entrance procedure (e.g. by provisionally enrolling for a probationary period of study) or an examination procedure (e.g. placement or aptitude test, interview). Based on their previous vocational qualifications, they are usually granted a limited right to study only in a specified course of studies. About 1% of the students get access by this way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Austria:
**Universities:**
- Possession of a general university entrance certificate provides access to all Austrian public universities. The following documents give access: an Austrian university entrance certificate (secondary school leaving certificate/Reifezeugnis), an vocational matriculation examination certificate (Zeugnis über die Berufsmaturitätsprüfung); another type of Austrian certificate conferring entitlement to study a certain subject at a university (HE entrance examination/Studienberechtigungszeugnis); a foreign certificate which is equivalent to one of the above Austrian certificates owing to an international agreement, nostrification or a decision taken by the rectorate on a case-by-case basis; a certificate providing proof of the successful completion of at least three years’ studies at a recognised domestic or foreign post-secondary educational institution; in the case of art studies, confirmation that the applicant has passed an entrance examination; a certificate providing proof of the successful completion of a university-level course of at least three years offered by a non-university institution. Only in very few study programs entrance examination are required.

### Spain:
- To enrol in HE, students are required to have successfully completed the final non-compulsory stage of secondary education. Students have to pass an entrance examination to get enrolled in long cycle courses and the most popular short cycle courses. In the 2004-2005 academic year, 76.5% of students gained admission to university in this way.
- Students from vocational education and also adults with no formal education can enter HE.
- An average mark is obtained by combining the results of the entrance examination with the marks obtained by students in the final stage of secondary education. Admission to degree courses depends on the resulting average mark. Universities shall attempt, when possible, to establish study modes and timetables that facilitate the participation of different types of students in their degree courses.
- Universities may, furthermore, develop specific lifelong learning programs in the form of awards which are different from Grado, Masters or Doctorate degrees.

### Hungary:
- Admission to HE is based on a score calculated by the conversion of five secondary school subject grades and secondary school leaving examination results.
- In the course of assessing admission applications, applicants to be admitted are selected on the basis of a standard and unified ranking system as per field of training, branch of training and program.
- Flexibility in the requirements is also ensured by awarding extra points for some formerly acquired knowledge or skills, provided that these can be demonstrated. Thus the advanced level secondary school leaving examination, at least intermediate proficiency in a foreign language (if evidenced by a certificate), winning places at national, European and world education, scientific, innovation, art and sports competitions (generally, the first three places are eligible for extra points) merit extra points.
- It is important to note that a governmental Decree (2006) stipulates the conditions for admission to the various Master’s programs and it delegates the duty of the elaboration of the requirements for admission to Master’s programs to the competence of institutions.
- Another important issue is that the admission to Master degree courses depend on prior programs and credits and not on learning outcomes. Thus the meaning of learning outcomes should be more valid and important for employer than for university deans.

### Bulgaria:
- Usually, both school-leaving certificate and institutional examinations (developed by faculties) are held to decide admission to HE institutions. But HE institutions can enrol also students without an entrance examination (just with the matriculation examination).
- Moreover, a great number of the HE institutions provide college graduates the opportunity to pursue HE degrees. A part of the colleges set up agreements with single HE institutions where college graduates are trained under bachelor programs.
- For groups at risk and groups in unequal social status special terms and conditions for admission to the HE are implemented. These groups comprise candidate students, who have successfully taken the entrance examinations and are: disabled with long-term disabilities and reduced capacity to work; disabled soldiers; complete orphans; mothers with three or more children.
9. Recognition of Prior Learning

The concept of learning outcomes implies that the manner of the achievement of a qualification is not as important as the achievement of the qualification itself. This is very relevant to the recognition of prior learning, which is enhanced by the increased use of learning outcomes. A broad understanding of the recognition of prior learning in relation to qualifications is that this can be for the purposes of 1) Entry to a program leading to a qualification; 2) allocation of credit towards an qualification, or exemption from some programme requirements; 3) eligibility for a full qualification. The recognition of prior learning can also be directly relevant in terms of facilitating employment. Making a full qualification on the basis of the recognition of prior learning is a relatively new concept. Many countries are seeking to encourage the continuation, expansion and further development of processes for the recognition of prior learning (Bologna Working Group on Qualification Frameworks, 2005).

The concrete analysis of the national legislations in the partner countries with regard to the formal structures and legal entities concerned with the recognition of prior learning and professional experience indicates the following developments (see Table 11):

- The validation of prior learning and professional experience by official legal entities is still at initial stage in all partner countries.

- The recognition of prior learning and professional experience in the shape of shortening the study duration is applied in the FH sector in Austria and in Germany. But concrete procedures and certified institutions are missing so far in those countries as well. Therefore, the power and the concrete recognition procedure are mostly conducted by the HE institutions themselves, which lead to case-by-case decisions taken by the head of the degree program or the entire teaching board.

- Three partner countries are currently testing the following methods and standards by pilot projects and action plans of validating non-formal and informal learning processes:
  - Bulgaria: Training seminars have been carried out (2005–2006) in the course of a joint Bulgarian-German project called “Promoting Adults Vocational Training and Employability”, where experts from the ministries, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the Employment Agency and representatives from the social partners have participated. Validation of non-formal and informal learning process is foreseen to begin in 2007, after the methodological and organizational basis is assured.
  - Germany: The Federal Government and the Länder are promoting pilot projects for recognizing professional experience in HE degree courses including awarding credit points.
  - Hungary: The Social Renewal Operative Programme aims at the creation of validation systems. Such systems shall function to enable the assessment and
recognition of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings. The action plans relating to the programme are currently under development.

Table 11. Clusters of countries categorised by the recognition of prior learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Austria: FH sector:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal regulations have been set up aiming to recognise prior learning</td>
<td>Recognition of proven knowledge is provided which may lead to a shortening of study duration. With regard to the recognition of documented knowledge and skills, the principle of course recognition applies. Measures taken to promote the permeability of the education system from below shall be outlined in the application for accreditation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Qualifications for which no regulations have been laid down in the administrative decision granting approval will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the head of the degree programme or the FH teaching board.</td>
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<td>If the scientific and teaching concept of an FH degree programme is based on work experience, admission to this FH degree programme can be limited to a certain target group (target group-specific* degree programmes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuing education and training:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austrian HE institutions can offer continuing-education courses and they have also the right to determine the admission criteria. Universities offer continuing education and qualification upgrading in courses (Universitätslehrgänge) for both postgraduates and non-academics who satisfy other admission criteria, such as a minimum period of professional practice. These courses of study, which are designed in the same way as master’s courses, lead to a master’s degree or to the awarding of the prefix ‘Akademischer...’ before the graduate’s existing professional title. In the Winter semester 2006, 422 continuing-education courses were offered in Austria (188 of them leading to a Masters’ degree).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Germany:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal regulations have been set up aiming to recognise prior learning</td>
<td>Most Länder take into account the recognition of prior learning, i.e. applicants with vocational qualifications also have the opportunity to enter HE without an entry qualification. Since 2002 knowledge and skills acquired outside the HE system can be counted towards a degree by as much as 50%.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>However, clear rules are to be defined by the universities or the faculties being responsible for the HE study program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Federal Government and the Länder are promoting pilot projects for recognising professional experience in HE degree courses including awarding credit points.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>Spain:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently working out a law aiming to recognise prior learning</td>
<td>At the moment, Spain is developing a procedure to allow assessment and accreditation of vocational competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Organic laws make direct and explicit reference to the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and defines the action context in this field:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The Organic Law 5/2002 of 19 June assumes the objective of creating a “National Qualification and Vocational Training System” that will allow not only integrating initial, continuing and occupational training supply models but also the knowledge acquired through work experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The final objective of the “National Qualification and Vocational Training System” will not be only to promote, provide or incorporate training offers but also to assess and officially accredit vocational competences, regardless of how they might have been acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Through the decentralizing model of the State some regions are developing new paths for recognition and validation of prior learning and experience, e.g. Canary Islands: the Resolution of 20 May, 2005, contains instructions for the organization and development of the Initial Validation of the learner (VIA) for Basic Adult Education and Training within the Autonomous Community of Canary Islands and establishes the criteria to validation of informal and non-formal learning without accreditation.</td>
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</table>
Bulgaria:

- Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still at initial stage so far.
- The recognition of prior non-formal learning is not a popular practice for the HE institutions. Where separate cases have been established (mostly in the art academies, or in the philological faculties or in the faculties for ICT) this recognition undergoes testing procedures described for each separate case. If the candidate succeeds to cover the respective academic standards he can be granted the respective certificate or even educational credits for the given educational discipline.
- Examples for recognition of the Prior Informal Learning exist in the musical academies.
- At the present moment, a working group on development of a draft of Law on Recognition of Qualifications is established and is placed at the Ministry of Education.
- A step towards this end has been taken in 2004, when the Framework Programme E for further vocational training for actualisation or extension of already acquired professional qualification has been developed and approved by the Minister of education and science. With this respect, training seminars have carried out in 2005 – 2006 through a joint Bulgarian-German project “Promoting Adults Vocational Training and Employability”. Experts from the responsible ministries, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the Employment Agency and representatives from the social partners have participated.

Austria:

Universities:

- Just artistic activities at non-university institutions capable of providing vocational artistic training and research at business establishments or non-university research establishments capable of providing preliminary vocational scientific training may be recognised as equivalent to examinations.

Decrees for recognising prior learning are missing

Hungary:

- There is no legislation describing the recognition of prior learning experience acquired outside the formal system.
- Every HE institution implements Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at a formal level, but is conducted only by some of the HE providers.
- Its use beyond formalities is at its very initial stage with a lot of problems still to be tackled.
- In higher education, there is a strong resistance to the recognition of non-formal and informal both at the level of institutions and in the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The culture of knowledge transferred and supervised by the lecturer in a highly formal framework by means of old traditional methods still prevails.
- The Social Renewal Operative Programme also aims at the creation of validation systems. Such systems shall function to enable the assessment and recognition of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, the recognition of degrees and learning outcomes, and the adoption of procedures for translation into the outcomes-based indicators of the national and EQF (in HE) with regard to the bachelor, master and doctoral cycle, integrated programmes and integrated programmes leading to joint degrees. The action plans relating to the programme are currently under development.
10. Summary

A comparative analysis of the stages of development the five partner countries have reached in implementing main issues of the EQF in the tertiary system indicates that the achievements are quite heterogeneous, both between and within the countries. This means that each country has particular areas of strength, where sustainable improvements were made in the last years while on the other hand crucial steps towards further developing the tertiary system aligned to the EQF structure are still missing.

The following overview sums up the most important areas in both fields, i.e. areas for improvement and areas of strength at the level of the individual partner countries:

- **Austria**'s tertiary system and its reform power are strongly influenced by a strong disparity between the university sector and the FH sector with far reaching impacts regarding the implementation of the EQF. The former one is new, small and is therefore more flexible to react on new educational challenges and developments, for instance, the accreditation principle is safely anchored in the sector of Fachhochschulen; there is a stronger demand for gearing programs to learning outcomes, even though a consistently systematic approach to the description of learning is still lacking. Fachhochschulen have also dispositive powers in granting access by laying down relevant vocational qualifications in the application for accreditation (and thus entitlement). Key areas for improvement in the university field are the further development of external QM procedures, pilot projects covering non-formal and informal learning and its validation and considering labor market needs into HE curricula.

- **Bulgaria**'s tertiary system has made crucial developments with regard to the EQF through implementing the learning outcome approach in the HE curricula (describing acquired knowledge, abilities and competences). Moreover, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) evaluates all HE institutions according to the new ENQA criteria since 2002. Key areas for improvement are to develop a proposal of a NQF and to widen the rather strict access to its HE programs.

- **Germany** has a very decentralized HE system with the consequence that some Länder or HE institutions provide a rather open access to its study programs and also knowledge and skills acquired outside the HE system can be counted towards a degree. Another key area of strengths is the close cooperation between employers/unions and the HE field as they are members of accreditation agencies, evaluation procedures and collaborate at the level of individual HE institutions. Areas for improvement are the implementation of the learning outcome approach in HE curricula and a closer interface between HE and the VET sector (which is, however, needed in all partner countries).

- **Hungary** has made – similar to Bulgaria – considerable efforts in implementing the learning outcome approach, the installation of external QM systems and the
establishment of a credit system in the HE. Areas for improvements concern the small interface between labor market needs and HE curricula designs and the strong resistance to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

- **Spain** has placed its focus mainly on the strong interface between HE curricula and labor market needs through appointing employers as peers, surveys on study program graduates and regular studies by the National Institute of Qualifications (which are basis for higher vocational training programs). An important area for improvement is the complete implementation of ECTS into all study programs, which is planned by 2009.
11. References

1) Completed Questionnaires by the following Persons and Institutions:

- Austria: Edith Winkler, Sabine Pölzl, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research.
- Germany: Birgit Gutmann-Oks, Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony.
- Spain: Mora José-Ginés, Director Center for Higher Education Management, Technical University of Valencia, Spain.

2) Other Literature


12. Annex

12.1 Table 12. Legal basis of Higher Education in the Partner Countries

| Partner Country | Legal Basis: The Austrian HE system consists of universities (comprising around 90% of students in HE), private universities, Fachhochschulen - FH (or universities of applied sciences), teacher training colleges – TTC (actually transformed in Pädagogische Hochschulen - TTU), and postsecondary institutions (mainly medical technical academies as well as agricultural and military colleges). Already since 1999 (with the amendment of the Federal Law for University Studies in 1997 (UniStG), universities can award Bachelor and Master degrees instead of the traditional “Diplom” degrees (at Masters level). The University Act 2002 (UG 2002) taking effect in 2004 provides the legal framework for the full transition of degree programmes to the Bachelor and Master structure – in line with the Bologna aims. The only exceptions are teacher training (Lehramtsstudien) and medical studies (Medicine and Dentistry). However, already existing “Diplom” programmes in all subjects can be maintained. The implementation of the Bologna degree structure is thus an ongoing process. The Fachhochschule Studies Act (FHSIG) in 1993 has introduced a new institutional type, the Fachhochschulen, to provide practice-based vocational education at HE level. The amendment of the FHSIG in 2002 provides the legal base for Fachhochschulen to implement the Bologna degree structure. As in the university sector, Bachelor and Master programmes replace and complement the former “Diplom” programmes. Private universities can be established since the year 2000, following the UniAkkG 1999 (University Accreditation Act), the federal law on the accreditation of educational institutions as private universities. Here too, the legal framework for implementing the Bologna degree structure is in place. Bologna Structure at the National level: In Winter semester 2006, 67.5% of all university study programmes, and 77% of all FH study programmes, follow the BA/MA study structure. An amendment of the Universities Act in 2006 created the legal basis for introducing doctoral studies fully in line with the Bergen Communiqué. The minimum required study period for doctoral studies was changed to 3 years, without usage of credit points. Admission to doctoral studies, which is also granted to graduates of FH courses, requires a Master degree. After completion of at least 3 years of doctoral studies, the title of Doctor or PhD may be awarded. Dissertation agreements may be concluded between doctoral candidates, supervisors and universities. These agreements may, for instance, allow for annual evaluations on a candidate’s progress in addition to admission procedures. The stage of implementation of ECTS: It can be safely said that all Austrian universities are implementing the ECTS for all bachelor and master programmes. The missing finishing touches are due to the fact that not all of them are applying the student-work-load-centred approach strictly enough yet. The same is true for the FH. There are some fields of studies at some universities who are still discussing how to implement the 2-tier study system and, consequently, the ECTS. At TTCs, the ECTS is used voluntarily for the time being, and will be obligatory as of Oct. 1, 2007, when they convert to TTUs. Quality Assurance: The Universities Act 2002 (Art. 14) lays down the obligation on the part of universities to establish an internal QM system. Several elements are further specified: continuous internal evaluation, evaluation of the activities and performance of university teaching staff, and external evaluation initiated by the university council, the rector or the Federal Ministry for Science and Research. Performance agreements (Leistungsvereinbarungen) are a key concept in establishing profiles and services and provide a basis for the funding of public universities. University responsibilities and the achievement of stated goals are taken into consideration in the negotiation process. QA measures are considered in the performance agreements and are conducted in accordance with international standards. QA measures, such as institutional evaluations, accreditations, certifications and also quality audits are negotiated for the performance agreements. There is, however, no legal obligation to accredit public universities or their study programmes. The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (Österreichische Qualitätssicherungsagentur, AQA) was founded in late 2003. The AQA is an autonomous service agency set up to assist all HE institutions, i.e. the universities, the FH institutions and the universities of education, in creating their QM systems. The Agency’s responsibilities include the development of standards and procedures for QA in HE, the coordination of evaluation procedures for study programmes and institutions, supporting HE institutions in the implementation of internal QA processes, as well as the certification of QM processes. Recently, AQA has developed an external Quality Audit procedure which is currently tested in a pilot project by 10 universities. The procedure is financed by the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research and contains three different modules: 1) Consulting and monitoring of individual performance fields. 2) Exemplarily audits of individual performance fields. 3) Certification of a university’s QM system. |
New topics are the setting-up and support of an information system containing a register of HE institutions, the evaluation reports by the FH Council; Follow-up procedure; Publication of the evaluation results.

While the initial accreditation and the re-accreditation always refer to FH degree programmes, two evaluation procedures with different focuses have been carried out in the FH sector since 2003: institutional evaluations and degree programme-related evaluations.

The general aim of the evaluation is to determine to what extent the FH institutions successfully meet their responsibility for fulfilling their educational mandate as well as for ensuring the quality of the courses offered, thereby making it possible for the students to reach their educational goals. The evaluation in the Austrian FH sector is in accordance with international standards and consists of the following elements:

- **Student Participation:** At universities, students must be represented in the Senate. At least 25% of the persons making up the collegial body dealing with study-related matters must be students. At FH, the Evaluation Regulation of the FH Council determines the following: (1) Student representatives are to be involved in the process of self-evaluation in an adequate manner. (2) The course-providing body shall submit the self-evaluation report together with a student representatives' statement to the FH Council by 28 February of the same year in which the external evaluation takes place.

- **Cooperation with Business and Social Partners:** Universities invite experts from the world of business and industry to teach and lecture in various degree and non-degree programmes, and they ask for the input of business and social partners when it comes to designing curricula.

In the FH sector cooperation with the world of business and social partners is provided on a legal basis. FH study programmes are profession-oriented. The curricula are designed in close cooperation with experts from industry or the public sector following several analyses of the needs of the job market. There is a strong involvement of external experts both in teaching and in research. Furthermore, representatives of the world of work are involved in the external and internal quality assessment. At FH, the involvement of professionals in the external QA system of the Austrian FH sector takes place at five main levels: in the context of the design of new programmes the development team must include at least two experts with a professional background (legal basis); in the context of carrying out a programme teaching staff from business and industry play an important role (legal requirement); in the context of the evaluation of programmes or institutions – as a condition for the re-accreditation – a review-team must include at least one member with management experience gained in a business or non-profit organisation (institutional evaluation), and/or one member with relevant practical experience (programme-related evaluation); in the context of the decision-making body the FH Council must include at least eight members with professional backgrounds; in the context of applied research and development which the institutions are legally obliged to carry out, the FH Council requires e.g. that an application for accreditation provides also information about existing collaboration with R&D and scientific institutions at home and abroad as well as with enterprises (small- and medium-sized enterprises in particular).

- **Legal Basis:** HE institutions can be classified according to type and also according to their ownership. According to their type they are: universities, specialized HE institutions, and colleges; according to their ownership they are state-owned and private. The autonomy of the HE institutions is determined in Art 19 and the following articles of the Bulgarian Law on HE. HE institutions appear to independently govern their structure, content and the forms of studies, main directions of research. HE institutions select staff and students. The structure of the state universities is prescribed by the law (faculties and departments). The faculties are created by the government. The HE institutions have autonomy over management and governance, autonomy over academic matters, including programmes and curriculum and autonomy over financial matters. The decisions on how many students to admit and how much the tuition fees shall be are taken by the Government.

The **Council of Ministers** validates the guidelines of national policies in the field of HE; make motions to the National Assembly to establish, transform, rename or close down HE institutions, as well as propose the amount of annual budget subsidies to be allocated to each public HE institution; open, transform or close down faculties; determines the number of students to be admitted in public HE institutions; determines semester fees in public HE institutions.

The **Higher Attestation Commission** is an institution within the Council of Ministers and main focus on awarding and recognition of academic ranks and titles.

The **Minister of Education and Science** has the authority to coordinate, control and manage the HE system. New topics are the setting-up and support of an information system containing a register of HE institutions, a register of the academic staff, a register of current and suspended students and doctoral students according to their degree and professional field and a register of graduates.

- **Bologna Structure at the National level:**
The Law on HE (LHE) from 1995 introduced 4 stages:

- Specialist: 3 years of tuition (ISCED 5B)
- Bachelor: 4 years of tuition (ISCED 5A)
- Master: 1 year of tuition (ISCED 5A)
- Doctor: 3 years of tuition (ISCED 6)

The Republic of Bulgaria was among the first countries to sign the Lisbon Convention of Recognition as the Convention was ratified in 2000. When the Bologna Declaration was signed, Bulgaria was one of the few countries which had three-cycle system and had introduced the educational and qualification degrees – bachelor, master and doctor - in accordance with the Framework for Qualifications of EHEA. In 2006, 78% of all students are trained at the bachelor’s level and 18% - at the master’s level. In 2005/2006 about 20% of the students continue their training in master’s programmes.

From 2005 the attention was focused on the quality of the doctoral programmes, the development of interdisciplinary and joint (with other European universities) doctoral studies. The universities which will offer such programmes have been carefully selected and the condition of the scientific potential of the training unit – examined. In order to achieve the right to carry out doctoral training in a certain scientific field, the universities and the scientific organizations should receive a very good assessment for programme accreditation from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA). New criteria have been set up and they are linked with the following ratios: e.g. lecturers-students; successful graduates-total number of people trained; relative share of the people who are trained in joint projects with foreign universities. 2.5% of the students are trained at the doctor’s level.

- The stage of implementation of ECTS: The state sets the following requirements for graduates at bachelor level: they should have at least 240 credits and 10 of them should be for a passed state exam or a defence of a thesis.
  At master level: the graduates of the master’s programme after being awarded a bachelor's degree in the same programme should have gained at least 60 credits according to the training plan and 15 of them should be for a passed state exam or defended thesis. For programmes which have only master’s degree there should be at least 300 credits and 15 of them should be for a passed state exam or defended thesis.
  For the third degree – the doctor’s – credits are not awarded. The training institution independently determines the requirements of every scientific specialty for the successful completion of instruction and they should be in accordance with the received scientific accreditation.
  The graduates from the short cycle in colleges who have been awarded the degree “professional bachelor” should have at least 180 credits and 10 of them – for a passed state exam or defended thesis.
- QA: The NEAA under the Council of Ministers is the specialized state authority vested with the accreditation, assessment and quality control of the activities of the HE institutions. The Agency exercises post-accreditation, monitoring and supervision of the capacity of the institution and its primary units and affiliates to ensure high quality of education and research through an internal system for quality assessment and assurance and the fulfilment of the recommendations given in the course of the assessment and accreditation.
- Student Participation: The students gave the right to elect and be elected in governing bodies of HE institutions. The students’ council can elect its representative to the governing bodies of the HE. The Students' Council is a body which should defend the common interests of students and doctoral students. It arranges for the election of its representative into the governing bodies of the HE institution. The National Representation of students' councils is a national body defending the academic, social and cultural rights and common interests of the students and doctoral students. It has the right to present its opinion on the state budget, more specifically its part about education and science. The National Council for Solving Students' Problems is a consulting body with the minister of education and science.
- Cooperation with Business and Social Partners: The relationships among Ministry of Education, the national trade unions and the employers’ representatives have improved significantly due to the activities of the Sector Council “Higher Education and Science” of the tripartite cooperation. The democratic spirit of such consulting institution has a direct connection to the Bologna Process. The Ministry of Education seeks the participation and informs of its social partners in the preparation and discussion of strategic regulation documents.

Specific steps have been taken towards building stable partnerships and optimising the differences between the needs of business, employers and the qualification of graduates. At the initiative of the staff of “National Teams of Bologna Promoters” and the Council of Rectors the attention of the society has been focused on the regional dimensions and significance of university in the development of local economies and the stabilization of regions. A special conference was held which discussed the future measures for raising the level of demand for professional qualification and its connection to the reality of the human factor. After these debates the term "educational regions" gained popularity in the country, the same happened to the political understanding of concrete educational policies for stabilizing the connections between universities and business partners.

Another example of a stable partnership between universities and business is the creation of Centres for Career Development at HE institutions. Almost all HE institutions have appreciated the benefits of setting up career centres and at present such centres function in 24 HE institutions. The universities are changing their disposition towards the current changes at the labour market and they have started: Looking for a new balance between theory and practice, (for example through students’ participation in internships); updating qualification characteristics of programmes at a three-level structure; encouraging relations with business...
Through building bridges between the existing small and medium enterprises in some universities and attempting to make them high-tech business incubators for development and implementation of innovative products; signing of mutual agreements with representatives of business in the field of education, science and technology.

- **Legal Basis:** In Germany, responsibility for achieving the Bologna objectives rests with the HE institutions, the Länder and the Federal Government. HE institutions receive the greater part of their funding from the state. The budgets of the Länder cover the costs of staff, equipment, materials and investments. HE institutions receive additional funding from special programs financed by the Federal Government and Länder. In order to finance research projects, HE institutions also perform fundraising of state and private resources (third-party funds). The new study structure is implemented by means of Länder-laws or target-agreements between ministries and universities, often defining deadlines for the reform. Curricula design is under the responsibility of the Universities and their faculties. State-regulated study programs such as law, medicine and teachers' education are exempt from the universities' responsibility and - for the most part - also from the Bologna-reforms as such. In most Länder, new study programs must also be passed by the ministries, but this assessment is for the most part limited to formal aspects and the deployment of teaching personnel.

- **The Bologna Structure at the National Level:**

  By Amendments of the Federal Framework Law on HE (HRG) in 1998 and 2002, Bachelor and Masters programmes, which can be offered besides the traditional long first cycle degrees (Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen), but no conversion to the two cycle structure has been regulated at national level. In some Länder HE laws, this is already the case. In 2003, the KMK (ministries of education and science of the Länder) agreed on the policy objective of implementing the two cycle system, preferably nation wide, by 2010. The structure and curricular design of Bachelor and Masters degrees, with the Bachelor degree as a first degree "qualifying for the labour market", is also laid down in the guidelines. These apply to all subject areas but with the exemption of law, teacher education, medicine, pharmacy, food chemistry (Staatsexamens programmes in the old system), and higher arts and music education. In higher art and music education as well as teacher training. In law and medical subjects, a discussion is still going on about if and how the two-cycle degree system can apply.

  The majority of HEIs in Germany is in the process of adapting their programmes and curricula to the new structure. From March 1st 2006, German HEIs offered 2317 Bachelor and 1777 Masters degrees or 36.3% of all programmes (11283). 8% of students studied in these programmes in Winter semester 2004/05 (HRK 2006). So old and new degree structure currently exist in parallel.

  - **The stage of implementation of ECTS:** Modularisation and credit points conforming to ECTS requirements are demonstrated in the German accreditation procedures for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system. In the 2006 summer semester the credit point system was applied in 74 per cent of Bachelors degree courses and 67 per cent of Masters Degree courses.

  - **QA System:** QA in education and research at HE institutions in Germany occurs for the most part by means of procedures implemented since 1995 of internal and external education evaluation and by means of the accreditation of degree courses implemented since 1998.

    **Accreditation:** In 1998 an accreditation process was introduced for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system. With the law resolved on 15 February 2005 on the establishment of a "Foundation for the Accreditation of Degree Courses in Germany" the accreditation process was given a new legal foundation. The task of the accreditation process is the assurance of technical standards in regards to the content which includes reviewing the degree course concept, the educational feasibility of course options, the quality of instruction as well as reviewing professional relevance and promoting gender equality. As a rule, accreditation and re-accreditation are requirements for the introduction and receipt of Bachelor and Master degree courses. Accreditation is a procedure of external QA. It is based on the principle of "peer review." Alongside academics, participants include students, representatives from social partners as well as international experts.

    The accreditation system in Germany is characterised by local agencies, which carry out the accreditation of degree courses and one central accreditation establishment (German Accreditation Council), which accredits and reaccredits the agencies as well as ensures the basis requirements for the procedure by means of definitions so that accreditation is executed according to reliable, transparent standards. At the same time the German Accreditation Council makes certain that the concerns of the entire system, for which the community of Länder are responsible, are taken into consideration in the context of the accreditation procedures. The state is not directly involved in the accreditation procedures. The Foundation for the Accreditation of Degree Courses in Germany also acts as the central documentation centre for the accreditation system and administers the database of degree courses accredited in Germany.

    For non-state HE institutions a procedure of institutional accreditation was introduced. Private HE institutions have to be accredited by the German Science Council, if possible prior to beginning operations, but at the latest prior to final recognition by the Länder. In this regard, the German Science Council passed procedural principles and criteria for institutional accreditation on 16 July 2004.

    **Evaluation:** Evaluation has been stipulated by law as a general task of HE institutions since 1998. Germany has no nationally coordinating evaluation body, but it has, however, developed an infrastructure of institutions comprising initiatives at Länder level (agencies) or at regional and cross-regional level (networks and associations). In their design, the evaluation procedures largely meet Bologna requirements (in-house review, external peer review – often with international participation, involvement of student reviewers and
Student Participation: The involvement of students as members of governing bodies of HE institutions is defined in HE legislation in the various Länder. Participating in the self-administration of HE institutions is the right and obligation of all members of the institutions. All member groups must be represented in these governing bodies (educators, academic colleagues, students and other colleagues). The manner and scope of participation of individual member groups and within the member groups is determined according to the members’ qualification, function, responsibility and the extent the matter concerns them. Most of HE legislation provides for the establishment of "university councils" as steering bodies of HE institutions.

Cooperation with Business and Social Partners: Business and other non-scientific partners are very often involved in university governance by means of advisory boards. Moreover, business and social partner representatives are involved in all levels of the accreditation system and in all phases of the accreditation process (as members of the accreditation council, the accreditation agencies as well as review groups). In the education branch, there are many cooperation forms, in particular advisory councils on degree courses, joint advising of papers composed during and upon completion of studies, execution of dual degree courses.

Legal Basis: The Spanish Government has concluded its project to reform the Organic Law of Universities (LOU). This reform project has been initially passed by Parliament on 14th December 2006 and has been implemented in 2007. On 26th September 2006, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science presented a detailed working paper on the Organisation of Higher Education in Spain based on the guidelines put forward by the EHEA. On 14th November, this proposal was the object of a favourable report by the University Coordination Council, the highest Spanish consultative body on university matters. The LOU confirms the cyclic structure, improves the mobility and the EHEA principles and increments the coordination among the Government and the Autonomous Communities. The Ministry of Education and Science has set aside funding for universities for the 2006-2007 academic year to promote student and teacher mobility in the new postgraduate programmes.

Funding for visiting teachers has targeted official Masters degrees and quality-certified doctorate degrees and encourages the participation of teachers from other universities. At least 50% of foreign teachers must come from countries which have signed the EHEA agreement. Funding for students on Masters degrees and quality-certified doctorate degrees also encourages studying these degrees or at least part of them in other universities, including those in the Erasmus-Mundus programme.

The Bologna Structure at the National Level: Although the two-cycle degree structure has been officially established in 2007, previous governments have encouraged the adaptation of existing programs to the new structure. First master programs started in 2005. With this new decree, the Ministry of Education encourages universities to be more autonomous in the curricula design. Most universities are already adapting existing degrees to the EHEA, including a student centred approach based on the student workload, transforming old credits to the new ECTS, and introducing new methodologies. In order to promote the Bologna process, pilot projects have been launched on the implementation of the first degree. About 65% of Spanish universities, more than 50% of first degree courses are implementing the curricular reform within pilot projects. Universities will offer undergraduate programmes under general directions settled by the government considering broad areas of knowledge. During the 2006-2007 academic year, around 1,000 ECTS-based Masters degrees (Bologna) are underway. Most of these programmes come from previous doctorates. Most Master programmes are new. 93% of Spanish universities have launched specific plans for the implementation of the EHEA. The Government issued recently documents establishing a university structure with three differentiated levels "grado" (equivalent to bachelor), master and doctorate.

Postgraduate education: Master: The second university cycle comprises advanced, specialist or multidisciplinary training, with an academic or professional aim; it may also provide grounds for research. The successful completion of this cycle leads to a master’s degree.

Doctorate: The third university cycle provides students with advanced training in research techniques. It may require a Master degree or specific courses, and other research training activities. Successful completion of this cycle leads to the title of Doctor, which represents the highest level of advanced academic education.

The Act on Universities 2001 states the main arrangements linked to the Bologna process. Two Royal Degrees (from 2003) regulate the establishment of ECTS and the procedure for issuing the Diploma Supplement to all official university titles. Modifications to both the law and these Royal Degrees have been proposed by the new government. On 26 September 2006, the Ministry of Education published a proposal for the organization of university programmes in Spain. General directives for each first degree that had been proposed by the Council of University Coordination will not finally be developed. In the proposal of 26 September 2006, it is stated that the Ministry of Education will give general directives for first degrees within broad areas of knowledge.

Stage of implementation of ECTS: The ECTS unit of measure has generally been used in student exchanges and mobility. During 2006/07 around 23,000 Spanish university students completed a study period in European universities. Different pilot schemes have been carried out in Spanish universities to adapt the methodological aspects of the Bologna process and to calculate the student workload associated with each subject in terms of ECTS credits. Widespread ECTS implementation throughout the Spanish university system will take place as of
the 2008-2009 academic year. This is also the year in which the new Bachelor degrees are to be implemented.

- **QA**: The QA system in Spain is organised according to the de-centralised structure of the state, where the regional governments have competences in HE, mainly concerning funding public institutions, and providing a regional legal framework to HE. Therefore, the Spanish Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ANECA) was created whose competences range at the national level. But, as part of this de-centralised system, the same Law permits the creation of QA agencies whose competences range at the regional level. At the end of 2006, eleven QA agencies have been created in Spain. According to the University Law, the Spanish QA system introduces an accreditation system in relation to the individual study programs. The definition of the accreditation framework is also being adapted to the trends and debates arisen in the European setting along with the general effort of adaptation to the QF derived from the EHEA.

Furthermore, ANECA and the regional agencies have created a network called REACU to look for ways of co-operation, especially at the technical and methodological level concerning the procedures of the programmes.

The scope of the QA system concerning HE is a comprehensive one: reaching from bachelor to master and doctoral cycles. In Spain there is a sound tradition in doing an evaluation of Doctoral programmes by ANECA which implies the awarding of a “quality label” linked to financial benefits in terms of scholar-ships for students, funds for improving facilities and purchasing research infrastructure, etc.

The QA system includes a classical approach based upon: a self-evaluation report conducted by the institution, an external review by a peer-panel and the publication of a report including weaknesses and strengths as well as the improvement measures.

Generally speaking, the HE institutions have made a great effort to strengthen the self-evaluation procedures in the last ten years and every university has its own quality evaluation technical unit which centralises within the university all the issues related to the QA of the institution and gives a clear support to the people involved in the evaluations.

The external reviews are the responsibility of the QA agencies and are made up experts coming from the academic world (peers) and also by experts in quality processes in the companies and industry. The Peers act according to the procedures established by the agency but in an independent way and according to a code of good practice signed by them and including ethics issues and commitments to avoid mainly any conflict of interest.

- **Student Participation**: The aforementioned LOU reform project envisages the drawing up of a university student statute and the creation of the national University Student Council to coordinate essential student participation in the university system. Students currently make up between 20% and 30% of university Senates. This percentage is similar in the other governing bodies: the governing board, departmental boards, etc. This participation allows the students having information and participating in taking decisions.

From the viewpoint of the student involvement in the quality assurance system in Spain:

**Student participation at the institutional level.** There is a clear participation at the institutional level (university and faculty/school level) concerning the preparation of the self-evaluation report and the issues regarding the site-visit in the external evaluation stage (audiences of the panel with bachelor, master and doctoral cycle students, from the last three-years, graduated students from the last three-years, etc.).

**Student participation in the external site visit team.** This level has not yet been generalised at the moment. Some experiences in a pilot-project level have been accomplished by the quality assurance agency of Catalonia, focusing on the training of students for some particular programmes and then joining them to the evaluation teams. The experiences concerning the evaluation of the library services of universities were particularly successful.

**Student participation in the external review of agencies.** This feature is quite new and has not yet been implemented. Nevertheless, the external review of ANECA and AQU-Catalunya will be carried out by ENQA in the first semester of 2007, will include in the panel a student representative from an international union.

- **Cooperation with Business and Social Partners**: Social partners and business are an essential part of the Bologna process. Thus, the studies carried out on adapting each degree to the Bologna process (white books) have taken their opinions and suggestions into account for the first time and different meetings have been held to find out what these opinions and suggestions were. Work is also being carried out on the development of the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES). A national committee will be soon created in which a significant number of social partners and businesses will take part. Finally, the Ministry of Education and Science is drawing up a document which brings together the guidelines universities need to follow on how to put together a curriculum. This document contains a section which indicates that the curriculum should be put together in conjunction with external partners, students, employers and social partners.

**Legal Basis:*** In the Republic of Hungary, HE institutions may operate as state institutions or non-state institutions recognised by the state, the latter category includes private and church institutions and foreign HE institution that cannot be classified into either of the above two categories. **State HE institutions** are HE institutions founded by the Hungarian state and the powers of the maintainer are exercised by the minister of education.

In addition to the autonomy granted to HE institutions, the autonomy of HE also extends to bodies which, although they are not HE institutions themselves, but serve to safeguard scientific life from external
intervention, limit state interference when necessary and represent the special interests of HE. The bodies set up from the representatives of scientific life include the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee, the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference, the Higher Education and Scientific Council, the National Council for Doctoral Studies and the National Credit Council.

Pursuant to the new Higher Education Act, the rules for first cycle and master training, the structure of the divided and undivided training, the rules of multi-cycle education, the qualifications framework, the procedure of launching a programme, the rules of conferring doctorate degrees with honours, the general rules of statutory credit-based education are all subject to the consent of the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference.

The consent of the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee is required for the enactment of the government decree pertaining to the rules of doctoral studies. The Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee provides an opinion in the course of the procedure for the establishment, transformation of HE institutions, launching an first cycle or master training, or the establishment of a faculty or a doctoral school.

The National Bologna Board in charge of the co-ordination of the implementation of the Bologna process operates a teacher education committee responsible for the development of teacher training. Regular consultations are held with the participation of experts and specialists, with institutions, the bodies and organisations of HE concerning the implementation of the tasks arising from the Bologna process and the reform of Hungarian HE.

• The Bologna Structure at the National Level: The implementation of the tasks arising from the Bologna Process is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Culture. Similarly to the previous period, the National Bologna Board is in charge of the co-ordination of implementation, with the involvement of the relevant student, trade union, business and social partners. It maintains close co-operation with the field-specific Bologna Boards of the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference and the network of a Bologna Promoters and all other stakeholders interested in the implementation of the Bologna Process.

The 413 formerly available training programmes will gradually be replaced by 133 new bachelor programmes (in a phasing-out manner). The multi cycle system has not been adopted for seventeen programmes which remain undivided (i.e. not following Bologna) leading to a master degree in medicine, veterinary studies, pharmacology, dentistry, law, architecture and eleven arts programmes).

Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes were launched with countrywide scope in September 2006. At the moment, programmes of the old system, leading to college or university degrees, are still in operation.

The stage of implementation of ECTS: ECTS (that is the national credit system identical to ECTS) has practically been fully implemented. Half of the institutions have been employing the credit system as of September 2002, whereas the rest introduced it somewhat later in September 2003, mainly in a phasing-out system. In other words, all Hungarian public institutions and private, church and foundation institutions recognised by the state use the credit system both as a means of transfer and accumulation. Therefore, today all students – except those who enrolled for the last years in the five-year programmes – pursue studies in the credit system.

Given the fact that first cycle programmes were first launched in Hungary in 2004, and as from September 2006 only programmes in the multi-cycle system may be launched (except certain programmes, such as those in medicine and law), each first cycle programme operates under the credit system whilst second cycle programmes in Hungary will commence for the first time in the autumn of 2007, and will be delivered in the credit system.

• QA: Hungary has operated an external QA system since 1993. Thus, only a few elements needed to be upgraded after the Ministers’ Meeting in Bergen, to ensure its harmony with EHEA. The Ministry of Education defines the national quality policy and supports institutional QA activities. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee carries out accreditation of institutions, faculties and programmes in an eight-year cycle. The method used includes an evaluation by external experts based on self-assessments and concluded with an evaluation report that, from 2004, is published. Visiting committees have at least one student member since 2004. Quality requirements have focused on input factors but a shift towards output factors is developing. Institutions are required to develop internal QA systems.

The first Review of the “Hungarian Accreditation Committee” was conducted in 1999–2000. The next external evaluation is planned to take place in 2008. The procedure developed by ENQA will be followed; the Terms of Reference will be formulated by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee to be set up in 2007.

• Student Participation: The Union of Students may delegate at least one quarter but maximum one third of the membership of the Senate, which determines the education and research tasks of the HE institution and is chaired by the rector. HE institutions may only adopt decisions associated with the students (e.g. training and examination regulation, the principles of awarding and distributing scholarships, welfare benefits, accommodation grant, textbook grants, disciplinary sanctions) with the consent of the students, and/or the representation of students must be ensured in all executive boards and bodies (e.g. Registrars Board). These rights of the students are stipulated by law, and their scopes are specified by the internal regulations of the institutions. The law also provides that the representatives of students may participate in the work of any board or council set up by the Senate that also acts in issues affecting students.

• Cooperation with Business and Social Partners: Pursuant to the Higher Education Act of 2005 HE institutions operate an Economic Council participating in the preparation of the strategic business decisions on issues that concern the expedient and efficient utilisation of the resources, assets, public funds and
One of the prime objectives of setting up the Economic Council is to enable the HE institutions to react more flexibly to the needs of the economic and social environment and maintain closer ties with the stakeholders in the region. The law has sued all means to promote co-operation between HE institutions and the economy (e.g. by granting a high level of economic autonomy). The new Higher Education Act has lifted several former restrictions in order to allow HE institutions to more effectively and efficiently co-operate with the business and social partners in the fields of research and development, innovation, training and services. It facilitates the establishment of joint ventures with external partners, as well as the setting up or supporting of own undertakings (e.g., spin-off) and a venture capital fund, and the establishment of Regional University Knowledge Centres and Co-operation Research Centres. These activities permitted by the new legal regulations are also highlighted among the priorities in the recently launched 2nd National Development Plan pertaining to the co-operation between HE and the competitive sector and the enhancement of the competitiveness of the economy. At the same time, the law also provides that four members of the Hungarian Higher Educational Accreditation Committee must be delegated by chambers and national professional bodies involved in the operation of HE, while six members of the Higher Education and Scientific Council must be delegated by the chambers, one member each by the Trade Unions of HE Employees and three partner ministries.
12.2 Table 13. Preparatory Work and Current Design of the National Qualifications Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Preparatory Work</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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| AT              | • The Austrian government has decided to adopt a NQF and to connect it with the EQF. The discussion process on the topic has started in 2006.  
• The consultation process including all stakeholders has started in spring 2007 and is supported by a research group representing higher, vocational and adult education as well as several interest groups.  
• In November 2007, the research group presented their study on a NQF to the national supervision committee. Subsequently, the general consultation phase will start where all stakeholders are invited to make comments on the proposal. This consultation phase will end probably in June 2008.  
• Parallel to the consultation phase several workshops with relevant stakeholders, researchers and members of the Ministry will be organised on the practicability of the proposed NQF. The results of these workshops will be integrated into the proposed NQF. The workshops will be finalized with the end of the consultation phase.  
• The Ministry organized an information event to inform on and discuss the NQF. The results of the event can be read on the website: [http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/national/nqr/](http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/national/nqr/)  | A general study on the content and the way how to implement the NQF in Austria will be presented in November 2007. The study will propose 8 levels parallel to the 8 levels of the EQF but with more descriptions specifying the Austrian situation. |
|                 | • Translation and bridge function inside and outside Austria  
• Implementation of the learning-, teaching outcomes and manage processes  
• Introduction and validation of non formal and informal learning outputs  
• Connection between lifelong learning and NQF  
• Give the education system new impulses  
• Stronger cooperation between the different involved sectors  
• Development of national and transnational mobility programs and implementation of new flexible learning forms in all sectors | |
| BG              | A NQF is not yet planned or specified. |
| DE              | • At the beginning of 2007, a process has been started to elaborate a cross-sectoral, comprehensive German NQF. As both levels of government are concerned, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research conducts the process jointly with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. A steering group has been created with member of different departments within the ministries (primary and secondary education, vocational education, higher education).  
• A secretariat is to be established with small staff to accompany the process during the next four years. Stakeholders are included by a working group that meets twice a year. The steering group of state representatives aims at obtaining consensus among the stakeholders. |
|                 | The structure of the cross sectoral German Qualifications Framework is not clear yet. Techniques for the assessment of learning outcomes exist punctually. |
|                 | • Promoting mobility within the educational system and on the labour market, on both national and international level  
• Improving transparency of the educational system, in order to facilitate permeability across educational sectors, support quality assurance and facilitate assessment of qualifications for educational institutions and employers  
• Promote outcome orientation of qualifications  
• Support validation of prior learning |
| ES              | Regarding the NQF, a Spanish Committee for the NQF was proposed at the end of 2006 aiming to design the NQF by bringing together all the involved stakeholders. Its legal condition is still being processed. The committee is formed by representatives from the Ministry for Education and Science, General Council for Professional Training, relevant Trade Unions, the University Coordination Council,
students, businessmen, the Ministry of Labour, Public Administration and Industry, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and external experts.

- Moreover, a Working Group will act as an information and proposal provider for this Committee and has already met and worked together on several occasions.
- The initial agreement suggests that the NQF will be based on the QF of the EHEA, focusing on HE level qualifications. However, compatibility with the EQF will be required, representing an essential condition in the design in order to allow future integrations and validations.

**Design**

The Spanish Committee for the NQF is still being administratively created and there is no advance regarding the design of the NQF.

**Preparatory Work**

- As a result of Hungarian consultations conducted on the EQF, the need for the creation of a single NQF emerged.
- Following the national consultation on the concept of the establishment of the NQF, an interministerial committee was set up with the involvement of the Ministries concerned and the National Development Agency responsible for development policies. The task of this committee is to develop a strategic plan for the Government on the implementation of the NQF concept.
- The strategic plan will be implemented in the framework of the Second National Development Plan (NDP) (National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007–2013). The NDP 2 does not devote an individual action for the creation of the NQF; instead, developments are foreseen as per educational sectors (public education, vocational education, higher education) through various actions.

**Design**

- The professional design of the NQF envisages the EQF as the reference framework for development and it is thereto that the outcome requirements of each education sector should be adapted.
- Since one of the basic functions of the NQF is to ensure that the different branches and levels of education are built upon each other, an instrument is needed that, on the one hand, is capable of integrating existing systems of outcome requirements, and, on the other hand, serves as an orientation guide for the development of such systems.
- Accordingly, the first step towards drafting the description of the NQF levels is to design a descriptor system which incorporates the outcome requirements of the educational subsectors currently undergoing transformation. The objectives of the strategic preparatory work targeting the NQF are the following:
  - Supporting career guidance and counselling services;
  - Orienting the planning of training and educational programmes;
  - Integrating the various outcome requirements into a single system;
  - In the longer run, harmonising and systematising the outcome requirements, orientating the enhancement of the qualification systems of educational subsectors;
  - Coordinating QA systems and strengthening the external references thereof;
  - Certifying individual qualifications;
  - Providing information to employers;
  - Validating informal and non-formal learning;
  - Within the education sector, reinforcing policy co-ordination and consultation with social partners;
  - Ensuring correspondence to the EQF.
- After the completion of the development phase, each and every degree and qualification recognised in Hungary shall be assigned an NQF identifier, and classification under the NQF shall be indicated in every single document evidencing qualification (certificate, diploma). Classification under the NQF (individual correspondences) should be implemented in the course of the ordinary and practical operation of qualifications system of the specific educational subsector. The system designed on the basis of the NQF should involve public education, VET, HE and adult education alike. Parallel to the development of the qualifications and examination systems of the educational subsectors, the NQF should gradually become suitable for integrating informal and non-formal learning outcomes.

**Objectives**

- The overarching goals of the creation and the operation of the NQF are
  - to promote the planning of individual career paths,
  - to provide information for making individual decisions about learning and
  - to advise users of education services under the auspices of lifelong learning.
- The two major economic and social policy objectives underlying the development of the Hungarian education system are the 1) strengthening of the country’s competitiveness and 2) the enhancement of social cohesion. These goals can only be efficiently achieved by the means of education, if necessary developments pertaining to these objectives shall ensure that:
- the individual elements of the education system are linked,
- the outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning are linked,
- the range of education programmes is more flexibly adapted to learning demands and needs,
- the conditions for customised, individual and motivated learning are created,
- the ability to make individual decisions about learning is facilitated,
- the labour market and the social relevance of education services are strengthened.

• All these aims can most efficiently be achieved through the creation of a NQF, which guarantees the interrelatedness of the different means of outcome requirements in the diverse education systems.
### 12.3 Table 14. The Level of Implementing a QF in HE

**Partner Country**

**AT**
- The University Act 2002 (UG 2002) taking effect in 2004 provides the legal framework for the full transition of degree programmes to the Bachelor and Master structure and is in line with the Bologna aims.
- Research studies of the relation of the EQF and the QF for HE were initiated and are partly finished (e.g., an analysis of the EQF in the context of tertiary education based on a comparison of selected countries).

**BG**
- Since 1995 by means of legislation a QF for HE has been introduced in Bulgaria. It includes the following educational and qualification degrees: bachelors, master’s and doctor’s.
- During 2006 and 2007 the following measures were taken:
  - Research was done in this respect;
  - Experts were consulted;
  - The necessary alignments between the EQF and the QF of the EHEA were studied at the level of universities and within committees in the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA).
- The Bulgarian NQF for HE corresponds to a great extent to the QF of the EHEA. It is necessary that further steps are taken for full alignment of the existing requirements of knowledge, skills and competence with the ones recommended in the QF of the EHEA as well as for the commensurability of the awarded credits (should be finished by 2008). It is expected that it will require amendments and supplements to the national legislation that covers these issues.
- Measures and concrete activities for strengthening the links between learning outcomes, competence orientation and education and research are foreseen in the draft of the National Reform Programme of (2006 – 2009), as for example:
  - defining the common principles and requirements on state exams and diploma thesis defending together with related stakeholders;
  - attracting people from the practice and the business as teachers in HE institutions;
  - participation of representatives from the practice in state exam commissions;
  - attracting people from the business in expert councils on quality in HE institutions;
  - career centres establishment in the HE institutions for ensuring effective partnership with employers by supporting selection of students for work places and approbation positions.

**DE**
- On 21 April 2005 the “QF for German HE Degrees” was adopted and presented to the 2005 Bologna Conference. All players represented in the national Bologna Group were involved in the development of the Qualifications Framework.
- It was developed parallel to the QF resolved in Bergen for the EHEA using the Dublin Descriptors as a basis and includes formal aspects like credit points and requirements for access and applies to the Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate. A degree course must meet the QF in order to receive accreditation in Germany.

**ES**
- One of the main challenges faced by the Spanish HE system is the full integration into the EHEA.
- The Organic Law of Universities (LOU), introduced in 2001, and amended in 2007, formulates as a central goal to implement QA policies and prepare the insertion of the Spanish university system into the EHEA.
- In 2006 the government allocated €13 million specifically to encourage strategic planning and other measures taken by universities to be in line with the Bologna process. These funds are distributed among all Spanish universities via competitive call for proposals. In this first phase the aim is to encourage teaching staff to fully implement the principles underlying the new system of credits, give teachers and administrators the necessary mobility to train new methodologies, enhance the international standing of Spanish universities, foster student participation, organise the management of postgraduate studies and improve coordination between university and pre-university education.
- The autonomous regions have also allocated funds in their budgets to promote the adaptation to the new legal framework.

**Objectives regarding the implementation of a QF in HE:**
- To develop a Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES) which must be fully implemented by 2010.
- It must set learning and competencies descriptors for each of the higher education levels; i.e., doctorate, master, degree and an additional for technical training, discriminating between the two types of training offered in the country.
- MECES will have two main aims: on the one hand, to inform students on the requirements of each educational level and employers on the competencies of their employees. On the other, promote
international mobility and degrees and training recognition.
- Following the recommendations of the QF of EHEA and assure that MECES is compatible with the EQF.
- Design a plan for the renovation and improvement of MECES.
- MECES should use generic descriptors that are independent of disciplines and must be based on learning results.
- The design should take into account that eventually MECES’ levels must be certified by a nationally and internationally recognised body.

HU
- The organisation of the HE sector is governed by an ACT stipulated in 2005. The new degree structure based on three cycles was adopted in December 2004.
- The Decree of the Ministry of Education specifying the “Training and Outcome Requirements” (TOR) formulates learning outcomes and professional competences at a general level with the aim of providing orientation, while the TOR also contain input requirements thereby, to some extent limiting the teaching and learning paths available for the HE institutions. The outcome requirements, thus, leave considerable room for HE institutions; however, they offer hardly any assistance for the implementation of the new task.
- The Decree describing “Training and Outcome Requirements” contains a series of general descriptors, which comprise the outcome indicators of Hungarian Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes, and also include program-specific descriptors broken down by programme (mixing general and specific descriptors therein). According to the specifications of the Decree, such descriptors outline competences in terms of three components: a) knowledge, b) professional attitude and conduct, and c) application of knowledge.
- Specification and launching of Bachelor’s programmes could be proposed to the Ministry by consortia of HE institutions involved in the given field of training, with the Ministry then promulgating such programmes in a ministerial decree based on the opinion delivered by the HAC (Hungarian Accreditation Committee).
- The most striking feature of the new Decree is that the process of specifying an individual study programme became significantly shorter and simpler. On the other hand, at a given point, the Decree introduced competences and learning outcomes as descriptors of requirements.
- In addition, the Decree also retained familiar former elements of content and entry requirements, namely, the details concerning the commencement of programmes, the taxative list of the information and knowledge students are expected to acquire, the detailed regulation of examinations, and the definition of the features of the educational environment in which students are required to perform the prescribed tasks.

Problems with establishing a QF for HE
- This twofold character (entry and content requirements plus elements of outcome requirements) gave rise to a particular discrepancy in regulation: the content requirements defined are not fully in line with the expectations reflected in the outcome descriptors.
- This aspect was studied by a subsequent, six-month-long project. The new regulation lays down in detail what data, information and descriptions are required for the specification of a programme.
- These specifications are more or less different in the case of Bachelor’s programmes, Master’s programmes, and teacher training programmes, and furthermore to a great extent, also preserve content, procedural and even entry-related regulatory elements.

Potential problems between QF for HE and EQF
- Expert work underpinning the NQF reviewed the general requirements relating to the various levels (Bachelor’s and Master’s level degrees) of HE, and concluded that, compared to the descriptors of the various EQF levels, within these descriptors various EQF levels appear mixed-up, i.e. in the Hungarian general descriptions the descriptors are unevenly rendered to the various levels, and this is then partly mirrored in the specific course descriptors.
- A further problem of compliance is that there cannot be established a clear correspondence between the outcome requirements in HE (detailed in the Decree of the Ministry of Education) and the EQF descriptors in each case. Very often the knowledge description of the learning outcomes is of a lower level than the pertaining ability, autonomy and responsibility competences in the EQF. A typical difference is that responsibility for the performance of others is accorded high priority in the description of EQF levels as opposed to the general outcome descriptors, where this notion is absent and only emerges in the context of one’s own performance.
### 12.4 Table 15. Interfaces between Higher Education and VET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>FH sector:</th>
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</table>
| AT              | - The Austrian Fachhochschule (FH) sector was newly set up on a Higher Education level in 1994 and has a fairly short history.  
- In the case of FH study curricula: There is recognition from VET in HE. The FH Studies Act (§ 12 Abs 2 Z 6) lies down as a condition for accreditation that recognition of proven knowledge is provided which may lead to a shortening of study duration.  
- Accreditation Guidelines: “With regard to the recognition of documented knowledge and skills, the principle of course recognition applies. Upon application by the student, the equivalence of the acquired knowledge to the requirements profile as to content and extent of the courses, which the student has applied to be exempted from, will be ascertained. When it comes to ascertaining the equivalence, all passed exams will be recognised. In these cases, a knowledge test will not be required. Special knowledge or experience gained at work will be considered when it comes to the recognition of courses or the placement; this will particularly apply to part-time degree programmes or partial degree programmes.”  
- In the application for accreditation the recognition modalities will be described in conjunction with the recognition of documented knowledge and skills. |
| BG              | - Problems related to development of professional career guidance are discussed with representatives from the ETF by the project “Development of policies in the field of career guidance in Bulgaria” (2006). The following tasks are to be implemented by the project:  
  - development of a national policy document concerning professional career guidance in BG, with participation of all responsible institutions and all stakeholders;  
  - preparation of proposal and establishment of national forum for professional career guidance;  
  - development of a model for professional career guidance;  
  - development of a model for career information in lifelong guidance context.  
  - The Ministry of Education and Science undertook the following measures to reinforce the involvement of the social partners in educational agenda:  
    - Participation of social partners in up-to-dating the list of VET professions, the development of the bachelor and master programmes and programmes for the acquisition of “Professional bachelor in...” (ISCED 5B);  
    - Inclusion of employers in provision of work placements of students;  
- HE institutions provide vocational training for adults. Moreover, formal further training within the HE system exists (since 1980) for specialized and post-graduated training, re-qualification, and variety of qualification courses (for teachers, medical doctors, etc.). |
| DE              | - Traditionally, VET and HE are considered as separate sub-systems with few linkages. Currently, a discussion on ways to improve permeability is taking place. Certain vocational qualifications can give - or facilitate - access to HE; rules differ among the Länder.  
  - Cooperation is taking place:  
  - in so-called “dual study programs”, i.e. programs that integrate learning in enterprises. Mostly, these programs lead to qualifications of both types.  
  - in fields where vocational qualifications are very frequent among or even obligatory for students. Here, general rules for the recognition of prior vocational qualifications are defined. |
| ES              | - Formal cooperation between universities and VET is very limited. In the case of some Technical Universities the links are stronger due to the sharing of some common interest.  
- The Organic Law establishes that HE encompasses both university studies and vocational education. The final secondary education diploma (bachillerato) is required to enrol in the highest level of vocational education. Access to higher vocational education can be gained directly or by taking a special test designed to demonstrate that the candidate has sufficient knowledge and skills to benefit from a higher vocational course, without prior qualifications.  
- The academic requirements for direct access are either the certificate received on successfully completing the final, non-compulsory stage of secondary education, or one of the following academic qualifications or credentials: specialised technician, advanced technician or equivalent, university qualification or equivalent. |
| HU              | - The establishment of advanced vocational programmes was facilitated by the need for a broader-ranging and more practical tertiary level education. The peculiarity of these programmes is that even if they form part of HE programmes and the professional background of the training is provided by HE institutions, training provision can nonetheless be organised both at secondary and tertiary levels of education. Such training programmes are not associated with an independent institutional system. In terms of legal status, |
students pursuing such studies in HE institutions are considered students of HE, as opposed to those studying in secondary education institutions and are viewed as students of secondary education. Vocational qualifications awarded at advanced vocational programmes do not qualify as an academic qualification.

- Advanced vocational programmes grant advanced vocational certificates defined in the National Qualifications Register, which lays down the outcome requirements in terms of specific branches of vocational education. The definition of the qualification requirements, the ratio of in-company training during the advanced vocational programme, etc. are determined in co-operation with the economic and social partners, who are concerned with the given vocational qualification.

- With respect to the recognition of examinations in HE studies, the Higher Education Act of 2006 specifies the minimum and maximum number of credit points that can be taken into account (in the case of Bachelor’s programmes in the same field of training, this amounts to a minimum of 30 credits and a maximum of 60 credits), whilst HE institutions are entitled to decide about any related further details.

- Advanced vocational programmes are approved by the Senate of the HE institution concerned, and are launched with the consent of the Minister responsible for the given qualification after a simplified and accelerated accreditation procedure. Advanced vocational certificates are awarded upon passing a vocational examination.
### 12.5 Table 16. Legal Regulations, Current Operationalisation and Potential Problems with the Learning Outcome Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Legal regulations:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Universities:</strong> At this early stage it doesn’t exist a legal definition of the term “learning outcome”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>FH sector:</strong> An official and explicit definition of learning outcomes does not yet exist in the Austrian FH sector.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Private universities:</strong> Based on the accreditation (and re-accreditation) requirements the applicant institution is required to describe the learning aims and learning outcomes (in terms of competences and qualifications, knowledge and skills) in the respective curricula.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Operationalisation of “learning outcomes”:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Universities:</strong> But the legal regulation prescribes that each curriculum needs to have a qualification profile in which employability is especially taken into account (UniStG §12).</td>
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<td><strong>FH sector:</strong></td>
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<td>• The orientation on learning outcomes has been already put into practice as an application for accreditation has to contain a description of vocational fields of activity as well as a description of a qualification profile (knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks at HE level shall be specified, technical and methodical skills as well as interdisciplinary qualifications shall be taken into account).</td>
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<td>• The modularisation of the curricula is a requirement for obtaining accreditation from the FH Council. The curriculum shall be structured in modules and the modules shall be graphically presented.</td>
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<td>• The modularisation of the curricula of degree programmes (Studiengänge) entails a fundamental change of perspectives, which goes from an input focus to an output focus. The contents of the courses must be consistently and carefully structured in order to allow the modularisation of the curricula.</td>
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<td>• At first, the overall qualification and the competences that are to be acquired in a degree programme have to be described. Partial qualifications that can be acquired in the individual modules are to be derived from them, i.e. definable competences are to be taught in the modules. The partial qualification that can be acquired by completing a module is crucial for the composition of that module.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The descriptions of the qualification profiles play an important role in the accreditation and evaluation (re-accreditation) procedure of the FH Council and are checked case by case.</td>
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<td>• In order to decide on accreditation, the presented concepts for study programmes are examined as to whether they implement the educational mandate of FH institutions in a logical, conclusive and valid way.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The educational mandate is to provide a scientifically sound and practice-oriented professional education at a higher education level and particularly to provide their graduates with the skills to solve the tasks of the respective professional field in accordance with the latest scientific developments and the requirements in the professional practice. This educational mandate focuses in particular on the employability of FH students.</td>
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<td><strong>Characteristic features of a practice-oriented Bachelor’s degree programme:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relevant specialised knowledge in the scientifically related disciplines and methodical-analytical knowledge aimed at promoting the ability to independently assess and discuss technical and interdisciplinary issues.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Opportunities for specialisation by means of compulsory electives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relevant inter-disciplinary qualifications such as the ability to solve problems and make decisions on one’s own account and independently; the ability to filter, condense and structure knowledge and information; the ability to continue learning independently.</td>
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<td>• Integrated placement of approximately 6 to 15 weeks.</td>
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<td>• Drawing up of at least two independent written papers as part of the course work (Bachelor’s papers), which shall be proof of the ability to discuss a programme-relevant topic independently and in line with scientific methods within a specified time period.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Characteristic features of a practice-oriented Master’s degree programme:</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                 | • Master’s degree programmes are based on an already completed Bachelor’s degree and are meant to deepen and specialise or extend some of the competences/qualifications acquired.
• Relevant specialised knowledge in the scientifically related disciplines and methodical-analytical knowledge aimed at enhancing the ability to independently assess and discuss technical and inter-disciplinary issues.
• These scientific and methodical basics are to be taught at a higher level of depth and complexity than in Bachelor’s degree programmes.
• Imparting inter-disciplinary qualifications relevant to the profession and typical for HE such as: The ability to independently increase the acquired know-how and understanding and to apply it to new and unknown situations without guidance.

Private universities:
• Since the Austrian Accreditation Council requires the description of learning outcomes (December 2004) the degree of implementation of learning outcomes is growing.
• It is difficult to give a clear definition of “learning outcomes” because there is no NQF.

Further plans:
• The topic “Learning Outcomes in HE” will be discussed in several workshops between university representatives with the relevant stakeholders in the next years.
• The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) is currently carrying out a project which – among other – analyses the systematic of describing learning outcomes in the context of designing Bachelor study programs (orientation towards EQF, Dublin descriptors, determination of workloads and modularisation).
• Learning Outcomes and the third degree cycle (doctorate): Specific learning outcomes of doctoral studies shall be defined for individual disciplines and study programmes. Curricula of doctoral programmes shall be more structured in the future. In some disciplines, this may also lead to more coursework. Universities within their autonomy need to assume responsibility for ensuring that the doctoral studies include appropriate training in transferable skills as well as supervisory and assessment procedures. Dissertation agreements may be concluded between doctoral candidates, supervisors and universities. These agreements may, for instance, allow for annual evaluations on a candidate’s progress in addition to admission procedures. Interdisciplinary, inter-university and international aspects shall be taken into account in the composition of the supervisory teams. These recommendations are based on a national position paper, which also stresses that the purpose of doctoral studies is the advancement of a candidate’s aptitude to conduct original research on the basis of the qualifications that she or he acquired during Master-level studies.
• In order to further strengthen the orientation on learning outcomes the FH Council decided to commission a research project with the following aims: fostering the overall understanding of a learning outcome based approach in the Austrian FH sector; supporting the institutions in the process of designing curricula based on the learning outcome approach; strengthening the learning outcome approach in the system of external QA.

Difficulties in Implementing the “Learning Outcome approach”:
• As the orientation on learning outcomes entails a fundamental change of perspectives the curriculum design also requires an essential rethinking of people responsible for the design of the curricula;
• The description of learning outcomes is a difficult and challenging task for HEI;
• The implementation of a learning outcome based design of curricula requires adequate pedagogical and didactical concepts
• The relation between expected learning outcomes and the contents of the teaching and learning process has to be taken into consideration?
• How to assess the achievement of expected learning outcomes?
• How to link the learning outcome approach with external QA?

Legal Regulations:
• There is the following definition of the term “learning outcomes”: “Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that a student will be able to do as a result of a learning activity”.
• New study curricula are developed according to State Requirements, which state that the achievement of expected educational results should take into account the students’ individual needs and potential.
• The following issues have to be described in the curricula:
  - Objectives of each subject
  - Expected results according to the educational contents
  - Educational contents by itself
  - Specific methods and pupils’ evaluation forms
  - Brief methodical guidance notes for applying the curricula.
• Change in the educational structure is going along with training plans’ changes, curricular changes, and changes in textbooks (e.g. education in foreign languages and computer skills are increasing).

Operationalisation of “learning outcomes”:
Since 1995 by means of legislation a QF for HE has been introduced in Bulgaria. It includes the following educational and qualification degrees: bachelors, master’s and doctor’s. The state sets the following requirements for graduates at bachelor level such as:

- they should have a broad-scale training, basic knowledge, abilities and competence, connected with the wholesome idea of the essence of the professional sector and the programme;
- they are expected to have acquired a broad-scale theoretical knowledge and practical abilities;
- ability of adaptation in accordance with the ever changing conditions on the labour market;
- they should have acquired abilities for independent professional work and working as part of a team.

On this basis, the autonomous HE institutions are required to declare the acquired knowledge, abilities and competence in the qualification description of each study programme.

The state sets the following requirements for graduates at master level:

- they should have acquired fundamental knowledge and deep scientific and theoretical understanding of their programme;
- they should have learned the basics of the scientific research;
- they should have developed abilities for adaptation in situation with changing social, economic and technological conditions.

On this basis, the autonomous HE institutions are also required to declare the acquired knowledge, abilities and competence in the qualification description of each study programme.

The third level (doctorate level): The HE institution independently determines the requirements of every scientific specialty for the successful completion of instruction and they should be in accordance with the received scientific accreditation.

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<tr>
<th>DE</th>
<th>Legal Regulations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>No legal definition of learning outcomes can be found.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning outcome approach is obligatory for all newly established Bachelor- and Master-programs which count for more than half of all study programs in German universities.</td>
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<td>However, anecdotic evidence shows that implementation is not always up to the standards of the concept. This seems to be true especially in disciplines without clear professional profile. A learning process is taking place.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operationalisation of “learning outcomes”:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accreditation of study programs require descriptions of objectives in terms of learning outcomes based on competencies.</td>
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<td>The structure of the German qualifications framework for HE is very close to the Dublin descriptors (knowledge and understanding; four types of skills and competencies), and includes formal aspects like credit points and requirements for access.</td>
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<td>In conceiving the degree courses, the idea was central that Bachelor degree courses should lead to degrees resulting in professional qualification and which convey scientific fundamentals, methodical competences and professionally-related qualifications. Competences and learning objectives are defined with a view to the requirements on the job market. In addition, the acquisition of key qualifications is mandatory. Emphasis is placed on the conveyance of social skills, presentation abilities and skills not specific to a particular field, especially foreign language skills. Professional competences and key qualifications are reviewed in the context of the accreditation process.</td>
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<td>Frequently, the outcomes of the TUNING-project (cf. <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_en.html">http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_en.html</a>) and the Dublin descriptors are used by universities, scientific societies and professional bodies as a basis for the definition of learning outcomes.</td>
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<th>ES</th>
<th>Legal Regulations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is a new decree, which establishes the requirement for universities to define the learning outcomes within their new study programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operationalisation of “learning outcomes”:</strong></td>
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<td>The new decree includes the Dublin descriptors as a main guideline.</td>
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<td>Some study programs have developed a learning outcome approach in their curricula at an experimental level.</td>
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<tr>
<th>HU</th>
<th>Legal Regulations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Government Decrees (2005, 2006) describing the training and outcome requirements contains a series of general descriptors extending to the outcome indicators of Hungarian Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes, and also includes programme-specific descriptors by degree programmes.</td>
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<td>The linkage between Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes is detailed in Decree No. 15/2006 of the Minister of Education on training and outcome requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operationalisation of “learning outcomes”:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>According to the Decree, these general outcome requirements describe the competences in terms of three components: a) knowledge, b) professional attitude and conduct, and c) application of knowledge.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The descriptions of the learning outcomes related to the specific Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes deviate to a minor extent from the structure of general outcome descriptors. The outcome requirements of individual Bachelor’s programmes are organised around a) knowledge, b) abilities and activities demanded by the given professional area and c) personal competences. In contrast, the professional competences to be acquired in Master’s programmes list in addition to a) knowledge and b) abilities c) those personal endowments and skills that are required for pursuing the given profession.

The development of comprehensive systems of outcome requirements for the specific sub-sectors is currently underway.

An important aspect of the decree is that the admission requirements for Master’s programmes explicitly concern programmes and credits qualifying as preliminaries instead of referring to learning outcomes and competences acquired earlier. In this sense, the outcome requirements set for Bachelor’s programmes can gain more weight in the case of those students who exit education as opposed to other students wishing to pursue further studies of higher education.

The general description of Bachelor’s and Master’s outcome requirements in the Decree of the Ministry of Education contains certain elements of attitude and conduct which are the same in the case of both study programmes without any differentiation in terms of level (e.g. ability to critically evaluate one’s own performance, conscious efforts aiming at the creation and preservation of values).

The Decree on “Training and Outcome Requirements” encompasses criteria of both entry (areas of knowledge with decisive relevance to professional qualification) and outcome requirements (professional competences to be acquired).

Entry regulation includes the list of themes, the distribution of credits, the proportion of theory-based and practical instruction, and foreign language related requirements. The list of themes varies greatly in content: the list ranges from the various disciplines of science (e.g. applied mathematics) to specific, more concrete areas within a discipline (e.g. combustion and explosion physics), and further, from the classification of fields according to traditional sciences to a structural approach based on practical problems (e.g. safety technology and first aid).

The structures of Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes saw the standardisation of the main elements and proportions (by way of assigning credits to such elements) defined in entry regulations.

The new Higher Education Act (2006) introduced a new procedure regulation which is currently being applied in practice for the first time and already refers to certain components of outcome requirements:

A Outcome regulation is currently being developed, based on the outcome requirements drawn up for the four tiers of HE defined by the Ministers of Education in Bergen and on the Hungarian outcome descriptions (only the descriptions of the Bachelor’s and the Master’s levels have assumed regulatory function), which were formulated for the national application of the former outcome requirements.

In addition, the Government also specified Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes ready to be launched as well as the pertaining outcome descriptions per programmes. All these are laid down in a ministerial decree together with elements of process regulation, under the name of Training and Outcome Requirements (the TOR of several Master’s programmes are still in the phase of development).

Further Plans:

- The further development of outcome requirements in the form of learning outcomes, expressed in competences, is supported by a standard methodological guide prepared as part of a special project.

Potential Problems:

- In the case of Bachelor’s programmes already in operation, one can observe a difficulty originating in the fact that at the time of the elaboration of such programs, HE could not yet foresee the outcome requirements of Master’s programmes. This is due to this fact that many Bachelors’ programs still foster contents of former university studies, and therefore learning outcomes are unreal. Being now acquainted with current Master’s programmes, “redistributing” training contents would be worthwhile.

- Determination of the proportion and separation of theory-based and practical instruction in the framework of entry regulations do not serve the intensification of complexity expressed in learning outcomes and competences.

- There is a need to better align the elements of entry and outcome requirements at the level of the specific programmes and curricula, in other words, to clarify the paths leading to the actual learning outcomes.

- The Annex to the Ministerial Decree provides less structured definitions of the competences than those proposed by the QF of the EHEA. Apparently, these definitions represent inadequate help for Hungarian institutions in defining their training objectives and competences to be acquired due to the fact that these definitions take notice of general descriptors only in part and in an ad hoc manner. In other words, the systematising function of the qualifications framework – national general descriptors by level, and the specific professional descriptors there under by programme – could not fully develop.

- Thus, instead of assuming a systematising nature, finally a sort of eventuality developed. Expert analyses produced for the concept underlying the creation of a standard NQF also evidenced that although the description of outcome requirements does contain components of competences relating to knowledge, ability, views, commitment, autonomy and responsibility as well as references to key competences, these
are confusingly merged.

- To be exact, the description of the outcome requirement scheme is not systematic, nor does it follow clearly enough the triad differentiation (knowledge, application of knowledge, professional attitude and conduct) predetermined in the same description.
- At the same time, on certain levels, particularly in the descriptions of the Bachelor’s and Master’s levels, which have gained status of official requirements by being featured in the Annex to the relevant statutory regulation, all the above components appear and are present.
12.6 Table 17. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>FH sector:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>AT</td>
<td>In the Austrian FH sector the following approaches are used in the course of the application for re-accreditation:</td>
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<td>• Data on the work placements shall be provided on the acceptance and feedback of students and enterprises</td>
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<td>• A graduates’ analysis shall be carried out. This analysis should at least scrutinise the employment of the graduates, the relevance of the FH studies to their current jobs and the phase when the graduates enter working life; the analysis should also contain a summarising assessment of the course contents by the graduates with regard to their current job situation. Feedback should be gathered from enterprises and organisations that employ graduates. The results shall be clearly outlined and commented on.</td>
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<td>• According to the FH Studies Act the course evaluation by students is compulsory in the FH sector. In the application for accreditation the procedure for the course evaluation by students shall be described.</td>
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<td>• Initial accreditation is granted for a limited period of time not exceeding five years. The extension of accreditation requires the submission of an evaluation report. In the context of the evaluation standards the following approaches are used:</td>
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<td>- The FH institutions have to keep in touch with their alumni. Alumni analyses are carried out at periodic intervals and evaluated in relation to the degree programmes.</td>
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<td>- The knowledge and skills to be acquired in an FH degree programme based on the vocational and higher education requirements need to be documented in a sufficient and transparent way within the scope of a qualification profile.</td>
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<td>- An instrument needs to be developed to ensure the advancement of the qualification profile, the educational goals and the contents of the course.</td>
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<td>- The requirements imposed by the business community need to be reflected upon, in order to ensure that the contents of the courses are up to date in their specific vocational fields.</td>
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<td>- The achievements of the students need to be observed by means of a course progress analysis (e.g. analysis of the drop-out rates, failure to complete a degree programme within the regular study period, etc.) and the results are integrated into improvement measures.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Private universities:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Private universities have to document alumni careers in their annual reports as well as during the re-accreditation procedure.</td>
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<td>• Private universities carry out continuous evaluations of their courses.</td>
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<td>• An international expert team evaluates the learning outcomes in orientation of the Dublin Descriptors.</td>
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<th>BG</th>
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<tr>
<td>• With regard to QA at institutional level, all 51 accredited HE institutions have developed internal QA systems. The QA systems of 13 HE institutions are certified by ISO 9001:2000.</td>
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<td>• With respect to external QA, a new methodology for evaluation and accreditation has been introduced in 2004. It is a great extend in compliance with the European standards and guidelines for external QA, developed by the E4 group under the governance of the ENQA and adopted at the Bergen meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In HE system, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is the institution responsible for external QA and control. NEAA participates in all initiatives for development of the EHEA and for standardizing the evaluation criteria of the European evaluation and accreditation agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On these grounds, NEAA has developed own evaluation and accreditation criteria and recommendations. The NEAA criteria list has been announced in 2005. The regularity of evaluation and accreditation is established with the Higher Education Act and 80 % of the HE institutions in Bulgaria have been evaluated for second time according to the new criteria by November 1, 2006. First sector reports are published in the end of 2006 and they reflect the situation with HE in every separate professional sector. They are done on the basis of the ongoing programme accreditation of professional directions (sectors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The scope of the accreditation activity of NEAA encompasses all HE institutions, i.e. universities as well as specialized HE institutions and colleges. The accreditation scheme is unified for all and it is obligatory both for private and public institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accreditation decisions are based on evaluation performed by external independent experts and on internal self-assessment reports, site visits and evaluation report, which is submitted to the evaluation institution before final decision to be taken. The report is not publicly accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The duration of accreditation awarded to a given HEI which fully meets the criteria of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency is between 3 and 6 years, depending on the awarded ‘assessment grade’. Each HEI is subject to regular reviews and reports at certain intervals of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **DE** | - In 1998 an accreditation process was introduced for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system. With the law resolved on 15 February 2005 on the establishment of a “Foundation for the Accreditation of Degree Courses in Germany” the accreditation process was given a new legal foundation. The task of the accreditation process is the assurance of technical standards in regards to the content which includes reviewing the degree course concept, the educational feasibility of course options, the quality of instruction as well as reviewing professional relevance and promoting gender equality. As a rule, accreditation and re-accreditation are requirements for the introduction and receipt of Bachelor and Master Degree courses. Accreditation is a procedure of external QA. It is based on the principle of “peer review.” Alongside academics, participants include students, representatives from social partners as well as international experts.  
- Thus, the accreditation in HE also includes the verification of the quality of the definitions and the assessment of learning outcomes. |
| **ES** | - The description of learning outcomes within HE study programs is now required by a recently issued decree.  
- The Organic Law of Universities (LOU), introduced in 2001, focused among others on QA policies, strengthening the role of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the quality agencies in 11 autonomous regions.  
- ANECA carries out its actions through four main programs: Accreditation Program, Institutional Assessment Program, Certification Program and European Convergence Program.  
- Nevertheless, QA is still based more on inputs and learning processes than on learning outcomes.  
- The new study programs should be accredited based on learning outcomes but the model has to be defined. |
| **HU** | - Hungary has operated an external QA system since 1993. Thus, only a few elements needed to be upgraded after the Ministers’ Meeting in Bergen, to ensure its harmony with EHEA. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) carries out accreditation of institutions, faculties and programmes in an eight-year cycle.  
- The accreditation procedure is mandatory and involves two separate procedures. On the one hand, it involves examining HE institutions (education activities and conditions, research activities and facilities, staff, organisational structure and infrastructure), and on the other hand, the degree programs themselves (curriculum content, the proportion of practical and theory-based instruction, qualified staff and infrastructure).  
- Quality requirements have focused on input factors but a shift towards output factors is developing.  
- In terms of internal evaluation, HE institutions are obliged to prepare their annual institutional evaluation report to be discussed and voted by the institutional council. As part of the accreditation procedure and the interim control procedure, they are also required to prepare self-evaluation documentation, for which the HAC provides detailed guidance. Students take part in the evaluation procedure at institutional level. The institution’s annual evaluation report is accepted by the Senate, which includes student representatives. The self-evaluation documents provide spaces for students to express their opinions.  
- The new Higher Education Act (2006) introduced a new procedural regulation which is currently being applied in practice for the first time and already refers to certain components of leaning outcome requirements:  
  - A central process regulation is implemented in an indirect manner: the elements required for the establishment of study programmes, i.e. for the design and development of such study programmes, are laid down in legislation, which demand an obligation for the HE institutions and the organisations accrediting these programmes to take the above elements of process regulation into account. |
Moreover, the scheme of conditions applicable to accreditation is also stipulated by legislation. The result of developing new study programmes is manifested on several levels: New training courses may be launched according to the consent of the majority of the institutions involved. Such training courses, once they have been successfully accredited, are legalised by a ministerial decree.

Therefore, procedural regulation becomes twofold:
- first, it determines the elements and means of process regulation that are to be observed, and
- second, it elevates the framework of the accredited study programmes to the level of legislation.

The QA scheme of HE study programs faces transformation and will undergo further development, partly in consequence of the new HE law, which specifies the elements of the sectoral QD systems applicable to HE. These elements of the sectoral QD systems are the following:
- principles guiding sectoral quality policy,
- quality certification relating to the establishment and operation of institutions,
- institutional QD programmes.

Accordingly (in addition to preliminary and subsequent public accreditation of study program contents) the following quality issues will bear greater relevance in the future:
- institutional QA,
- the evaluation of institutional QD programs,
- increasing the role of student evaluations,
- the introduction of students’ career monitoring,
- the Quality Award to be established by the Government,
- the independent ranking of institutions based on various criteria and
- the opinions expressed by professional organisations and chambers.
### 12.7 Table 18. The Linkage between Learning Outcomes and the ECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| AT              | Universities: Law stipulates that the duration of study is expressed in terms of ECTS as a measure of student workload. At universities, the paradigm change to understanding ECTS in terms of student workload is still ongoing. According to a recommendation of the national Bologna Follow Up Group for the modular organization of the curricula, a module covers a formally structured learning process with:  
  - thematically determined learning and teaching  
  - fixed, coherent learning outcomes  
  - given workload which is expressed in ECTS credits and  
  - clear and transparent evaluation criteria.  
  Therefore modules require a thematic definition and demarcation of the learning outcomes and the skills and competencies desired from students. |
| BG              | Whether the curriculum of FH degree programmes is manageable is determined by the workload measured according to the ECTS. According to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS, 253/2000/EC, Official Gazette no. L 28 of 3 February 2000), credits are allocated to the individual courses (30 credits are given for each semester and 60 for each academic year). In this context, placements and diploma theses are to be considered equivalent to courses. ECTS is now clearly defined as: "The currency to measure student workload in terms of notional learning time required to achieve specified learning outcomes (cf. ECTS Users’ Guide, European Commission)". Thus, the use of credits is the basis for quantifying the learning outcomes. |
| DE              | Modularisation and credit points conforming to ECTS requirements are demonstrated in the German accreditation procedures for degree courses of the two-cycle degree system. In the summer semester of 2006 the credit point system was applied in 74% of all Bachelors degree courses and 67% of Masters degree courses. However, there is no concrete linkage between the measurement of ECTS and the learning outcomes. |
| ES              | The ECTS unit of measure has generally been used in student exchanges and mobility. During 2006/07 around 23,000 Spanish university students completed a study period in European universities. Different pilot schemes have been carried out in Spanish universities to adapt the methodological aspects of the Bologna process and to calculate the student workload associated with each subject in terms of ECTS credits. Widespread ECTS implementation throughout the Spanish university system will take place as of the 2008-2009 academic year. This is also the year in which the new Bachelor degrees are to be implemented. ECTS has practically been fully implemented. Half of the institutions have been employing the credit system as of September 2002, whereas the rest introduced it somewhat later in September 2003, mainly in a phasing-out system. In other words, all Hungarian public institutions and private, church and foundation institutions recognised by the state use the credit system both as a means of transfer and accumulation. |
| HU              | The implementation of a credit system in Bulgaria is stipulated by an amendment to the Higher Education Act (2004). It is in line with the ECTS and has an obligatory effect to all students since 2004. Students admitted before 2004 have the right to continue their education under the condition they started. In connection with the implementation of the new requirements the universities conducted fundamental changes in the programs and curricula. In the documents used by the HE institutions new rows were introduced to check the credits for learning at the university and beyond, the total number of credits for each school year, semester, subject, etc. EC representatives visited several Bulgarian universities in connection with ECTS label. Since 2006/07 all Bulgarian HE institutions apply the ECTS system. With regard to the academic programs of 2006/07 75-80% bachelor program students and 100%& master program students receive credits except those students that presently undergo their education in the 4th course (as for them it is not obligatory to follow the abovementioned regulation). |
Therefore, today all students – except those who enrolled for the last years in the five-year programmes – pursue studies in the credit system.

• Given the fact that first cycle programmes were first launched in Hungary in 2004, and as from September 2006 only programmes in the multi-cycle system may be launched (except certain programmes, such as those in medicine and law), each first cycle programme operates under the credit system whilst second cycle programmes in Hungary will commence for the first time in the autumn of 2007, and will be delivered in the credit system.

• Under the legal regulations providing for the statutory implementation of the credit system, HE institutions should set up their Credit Transfer Committees and this body will be responsible for the credit arrangement, i.e. for the recognition of formal and non-formal learning and the credit it has earned. Institutions set up the rules regarding the powers and functioning of the Credit Transfer Committee in their Rules of Operation.

• The principles of the Hungarian credit system are the same as those of the ECTS. Credit points are calculated on the basis of student working hours, which include contact hours plus time spent with independent work. So the latter component relies on non-formal and informal student work, yet here lies the main difficulty of application in Hungary as well as in Europe as a whole as there is no uniform and accepted procedure for measuring students’ individual work, and the system calculates with an estimated amount of time a student with average abilities spends at independent work.

• Therefore, the credit is a quantitative measurement: 30 working hours are awarded one credit. In Hungary the law lays down this value, so this is the basis of credit calculation in all cycles and forms of education at every Hungarian HE institution.

• Consequently, as a result of the ECTS, in theory there is no impediment to credit transfer between the various institutions, levels and programmes even at an international scale.

• The law promoted the transfer and recognition by imposing the obligation of recognition on HE institutions by the following prescription: “Student performance having earned credit shall be recognised by any other HE institution – provided that the relevant preconditions are met – irrespective of the HE institution and the level of training at which it was accrued. Recognition – on the basis of the programme in the subject concerned – shall exclusively be performed by way of comparing the knowledge content serving as the basis for the credit. The credit shall be recognised if there is a seventy-five percent overlap between the contents compared.”

• This is a rather formal prescription and is based on identical knowledge. The Decree of Implementation of the Higher Education Act states with regard to the awarding of credits in relation to knowledge acquired through informal learning: “Curricular requirements shall not have to be met if the student has mastered the relevant knowledge earlier and can serve sufficient proof thereof. In order to recognise the requirement met through work experience HE institutions shall verify the acquisition of relevant knowledge in the form of written, oral or practical examination.”

• However, this paragraph is about “knowledge” rather than “competencies”, and thus conveys traditional concepts to institutions. Moreover, the forerunner of the current Decree (effective from spring 2006) did not allow recognition acquired outside the system of HE.

• All in all, the credit system was implemented at a formal level, but it could not import new methods and innovative solutions in curriculum design and methods of education and assessment (as it was the main intent originally, and less the support of international mobility).
### 12.8 Table 19. Incorporating the Labour Market Needs into Curriculum Design of Study Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Universities: This issue will be discussed with the relevant stakeholders during the NQF negotiations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AT</strong></td>
<td><strong>FH sector:</strong> Several linkages as follows:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- in the context of the design of new FH programmes, the development team has to comprise at least two</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people with professional background</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- in the context of the re-accreditation of FH programmes or FH institutions, a review-team has to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>comprise at least one member with management experience gained in a business or non-profit organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(institutional evaluation), respectively one member with relevant practical experience (programme-related</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- in the context of the decision-making body the FH Council has to comprise at least eight members with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>professional background (legal basis)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- in the context of Applied Research and Development which the institutions are legally expected to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>carry out, the FH Council requires e.g. that an application for accreditation provides also information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about existing collaboration with R&amp;D and scientific institutions at home and abroad as well as with</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enterprises (Small and Medium Enterprises in particular).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- in the context of carrying out a FH programme teaching staff from business and industry plays an</td>
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<td></td>
<td>important role; e.g. the proportion of part-time lecturers was about 40 % in 2003/04</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Private universities:</strong> The accreditation (and re-accreditation) rules demand that applicant institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>have to orientate their academic programme(s) towards their mission statement and employability.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BG</strong></td>
<td>- In order to inquire the employers' needs of working power with a given qualification, the PHARE project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>was developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2006. Its purpose is to facilitate a new</td>
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<td></td>
<td>system ensuring a good match between education and labour market needs. The system will be introduced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>until 2008 all over the country and it should promote the development of educational plans determining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the professional directions in order to promote the employability of pupils and students.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The Ministry of Education and Science involves the social partners in educational agenda for an up-to-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>dating the list of VET professions and the development of the bachelor, master programmes and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>programmes for the acquisition of &quot;Professional bachelor in ..&quot; (ISCED 5B). Moreover, it fosters the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inclusion of employers for the provision of work placements of students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The universities are moving towards integrating the labour market needs in their study programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>through the following activities:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Looking for a new balance between theory and practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Updating the qualification profiles of study programmes. The goal is to make them clearer and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comprehensible for the employers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mutual agreements with representatives of business in the field of education, science and technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some technical universities are therefore able to react quickly to new professional opportunities and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elaborate adjusted professional qualifications with a view to curriculum design, competence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orientation and learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Moreover, specific steps have also been taken towards building stable partnerships and optimising</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the cooperation between business world, employers and the HE field:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- At the initiative of the staff of “National Team of Bologna Promoters” and the Council of Rectors the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>attention of the society has been focused on the regional dimensions and significance of university in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the development of local economies and the stabilization of regions. A special conference was held which</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discussed the future measures for raising the level of demand for professional qualifications and its</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>connection to the reality of the human factor. After these debates the term “educational regions” gained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>popularity in the country, the same happened to the political understanding of concrete educational policies for stabilizing the connections between professional qualifications and business partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Another example of a stable partnership between universities and business is the creation of Centers for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Development at HE institutions. The centres not only facilitate the professional orientation and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qualification of the graduates, but also serve as a bridge between HE institutions and employers. Almost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all HE institutions have appreciated the benefits of setting up career centres and at present such centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>function in 24 HE institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE</strong></td>
<td>- There is a dialogue between employers and HE on different levels:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- National Bologna group, which is coordinating the implementation of the ministers' declarations within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Bologna process on the national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Accreditation council, which is supervising the German Accreditation System in HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Unions and employers are especially active in promoting acceptance of the two-cycle degree system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on the job market.
- Commissions of accreditation agencies and individual accreditation procedures where inclusion of employers' and employees' representatives is obligatory
- Various kinds of cooperation between universities and companies, in research and development as well as in teaching

### ES
- A main program of ANECA is the Accreditation Program. The agency checks compliance with given criteria and established standards, while ensuring that training results are adequate and that the skills acquired by students meet the demands of the labor market and society as a whole. The external reviews are the responsibility of the QA agencies and are made up experts coming from the academic world (peers) and also by experts in quality processes in the companies and industry.

**Universities:**
- The links with the labour market are less obvious in the university sector. There are neither guidelines determining the market’s needs nor mandatory work placements within the study programs, i.e. the requirement of placements depends on the curricula of the study programs.
- Nevertheless, most universities (and study programs) have developed such work placements.
- Surveys with graduates are frequent in most universities.
- The involvement of external stakeholders in the design of study programs is still rather unusual.

**Higher Vocational Training:**
- The number of places available in higher vocational training has been adapted to the needs of the industry.
- The National Institute of Qualifications studies the labour market needs and defines the qualifications sought by different economic sectors, including them timely in the National Catalogue of Occupational Qualifications. The Ministry for Education and Science, taking the qualifications listed in the Catalogue as a benchmark, establishes the higher vocational training courses that lead to diplomas.
- Higher vocational training courses have also a proper linkage with labour market, because all courses include a specific module carried out in the workplace.
- Managers often employ those students, who have carried out their work placements in its company.

### HU
- The concept of the four levels of the tertiary education (advanced vocational programmes, Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD programmes) building on each other and to be in line with social and labour market needs is not yet mature.
- As for the development of the new Bachelor’s and, consequently, Master’s programmes, the way in which the two sub-sectors are built upon one another in terms of professional considerations seems to be the most developed area.
- However, when it comes to entry to the labour market, problems emerge. In preparing the “Training and Outcome Requirements” (specified by a Ministry Decree), only the existing and relatively scarce research on employer expectations could be relied on, and in many instances no such research was available (e.g. in the field of humanities).
- Another typical deficiency is that the “Training and Outcome Requirements” set for the different fields of training and programmes were not fully based on social and labour market demands.
- The new level of Bachelor’s courses, especially in those areas where no similar qualification existed before (e.g. behaviour analyst) contains several elements of uncertainty:
  - Labour market expectations are insufficiently articulated,
  - Learning outcomes do not always rely on real labour market demands.
- Moreover, the constant descending expansion of the labour market and students’ doubtful labour market prospects, lead to a process of an increasingly fierce competition to collect more and more “certificates” without due consideration.

Financial, administrative and counseling services (e.g. design of learning outcomes for the new degree structure, discussion of the proposal with relevant representatives of the labour market, and grants for designing new curricula as part of the National Development Plan) have been introduced at national level by public authorities to encourage the full implementation of the three-cycle structure. Applicants for grants may apply through tenders. The amount of the financial incentive may vary depending on the type and content of the application (e.g. new study program curricula, quality assurance, etc.). The use of grants is monitored.
12. 9 Table 20. Access to HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Universities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Possession of a general university entrance certificate provides access to all Austrian public universities. The following documents give access:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• an Austrian university entrance certificate (secondary school leaving certificate/Reifezeugnis) or an vocational matriculation examination certificate (Zeugnis über die Berufsreifeprüfung);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• another type of Austrian certificate conferring entitlement to study a certain subject at a university (HE entrance examination/ Studienberechtigungszeugnis);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a foreign certificate which is equivalent to one of the above Austrian certificates owing to an international agreement, nostrification or a decision taken by the rectorate on a case-by-case basis;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a certificate providing proof of the successful completion of at least three years’ studies at a recognised domestic or foreign post-secondary educational institution;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• in the case of art studies, confirmation that the applicant has passed an entrance examination; a certificate providing proof of the successful completion of a university-level course of at least three years offered by a non-university institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FH sector:

According to the FH Studies Act the admission requirements for bachelor’s and diploma degree programmes are secondary school leaving certificate or HE entrance examination or vocational qualifications. As to the HE entrance examination and the vocational qualifications the following has to be specified in the application for accreditation:

• The compulsory subjects of HE entrance examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfungen), which are a prerequisite for admission to an FH degree programme, are to be listed. In addition, those degree programmes shall be named which offer the indicated combination of required compulsory subjects. HE entrance exams that do not include proof of the command of the required foreign language at all or not to the level required can be found suitable on the condition that the command of the required foreign language is proven by the time of the degree programme’s commencement at the latest.
• The vocational qualifications relevant to the FH degree programme shall be specified and grouped into apprenticeships, secondary vocational schools and other qualifications. The additional examinations considered necessary need to be specified and shall be modelled on the listed examination subjects of the admission exams with regard to their content and level. It shall be specified which additional examination certificates need to be submitted and by when.

In the academic year 2006/07 the access rate of students with HE entrance exam or vocational qualifications was about 10%.

Private universities:

• As a basic principle the general university entrance qualification is required for access to HE. In case of private universities in addition to that different selection procedures and entrance examinations depending on the specific discipline are required.
• Alternative ways exist in terms of master programmes in continuing education (not more than 20 per cent of the students should gain access without general university entrance qualification).

Continuing education and training:

• Austrian HE institutions can offer continuing-education courses and they have also the right to determine the admission criteria. Universities offer continuing education and qualification upgrading in courses (Universitätslehrgänge) for both postgraduates and non-academics who satisfy other admission criteria, such as a minimum period of professional practice. These courses of study, which are designed in the same way as master’s courses, lead to a master’s degree or to the awarding of the prefix ‘Akademischer...’ before the graduate’s existing professional title, provided that the curriculum has a value of at least 60 ECTS credits. Participants are required to pay a tuition fee, which is set in the light of the actual cost of the course. Most classes take place in the evenings or at weekends. In order to increase the accessibility of these courses, organisational forms that suit people in employment (evening or weekend sessions coupled with access to online resources) are being piloted.
• A centre for continuing tertiary education was created in 1994 with the founding of the Danube University Krems (Donau-Universität Krems), since 2004 established as the 22nd public university with exclusive focus on university continuing education. Its role is confined to the provision of courses at the postgraduate level and currently it offers about 133 continuing-education courses.
• Since 1 February 2004, providers of courses at Fachhochschulen have also been able to offer part-
### DE

- In the last years the HE system transformed from an elitist to a mass system.
- Admission to HE institutions is based on successful entrance examinations. The type and number of these examinations are determined by the HE institutions and are closely linked to its respective profile. The requirements for enrolment, depending on the type of the HE institution and the subject you are going to read, comprise written competition exams (one or more), tests (varying in volume and structure in the different HE institutions), and a diploma of completed secondary education.
- The autonomy of HE institutions allows them to define themselves the requirements for enrolment every year. The procedure for application is determined on annual basis and made public in the reference manual of the higher school.
- HE institutions simplified the modes of admission aiming to attract more students (participation in preliminary entrance examinations is allowed, double entrance examination dates are announced, more rankings are introduced.
- With decision of the academic council, HE institutions are entitled to enrol candidate students without examination if they have successfully taken the matriculation examinations according to the Public Education Act, the comprehensive studies minimum and the curriculum. A part of the colleges set up agreements with individual HE institutions where college graduates are trained under bachelor programmes.
- Persons with double citizenship, one of which is Bulgarian, pay half of the fixed fee when they apply and are admitted according to terms and provisions, determined by the Council of Ministers. Students and doctoral students, admitted according to international agreements, do not pay fees when this issue is reciprocally settled.
- According to a Bulgaria–EU agreement, the opportunities for free admission of students, doctoral students and postgraduate students - citizens of EU and EEC member-states will be widened.
- The Higher Education Act foresees facilitated conditions and order for accepting disadvantaged students. Candidate-students that have successfully passed the entrance exam and are persons with durable disabilities and with decreased workability; war-invalids, complete orphans, mothers with three or more kids fall in this group.
- Training complete orphans, persons with durable disabilities and with decreased workability, war-invalids, persons who have grown up to 18 y. o. at homes for nurturing children without parents, students in higher military schools and doctoral student during the last 2 years of training is free of charge.
- During the recent years the Bulgarian HE institutions have implemented sustainable and targeted policy for improvement of training conditions for students with special educational needs, which to a great extent have already had positive implications. At a number of premises there are established platforms for access to educational halls; library places are adapted for the needs of disabled persons.
- For the needs of sport activities of students with physical disabilities National organization for sport and integration has been established and it uses the base provided by St. Climent Ohridski University of Sofia and organizes its activities jointly with the sport department. Training in sport games for disabled persons is offered to disabled students, as well as goal ball for blind students.
- Information database for disabled students from the University of National and World Economy, divided into specialties, will be implemented in the next year. It will provide specialized information for free positions, adequate for them, in the German enterprises with outsourced activity in Bulgaria.
- In 2007, few universities will start training of students in master programmes with one-year duration, as well as specialized post-graduate training for teachers will be launched, willing to work within multicultural and multiethnic educational environment.
- Specialized Bachelor programme for deaf-mute students is functioning at the National Academy of Theatrical and Film Art (NATFA).

### BG

- In the Winter semester 2006, 422 continuing-education courses were offered in Austria (188 of them leading to a Masters' degree).
- Admission to any course of study at universities and equivalent higher education institutions requires the Allgemeine Hochschulreife or the Fachgebundene Hochschulreife. The former entitles school-leavers to study at any institution of higher education in any subject or field, while the latter permits entry only into specified courses of studies. The Allgemeine Hochschulreife or Fachgebundene Hochschulreife is obtained after 12 or 13 ascending school years on completion of the gymnasiale Oberstufe or certain courses of vocational education at upper secondary level.
- In almost all Länder there are other ways for vocationally qualified applicants without a HE qualification to obtain right of entry to HE. They must prove they have the requisite knowledge and abilities for higher education by undergoing an entrance procedure (e.g. by provisionally enrolling for a probationary period of study) or an examination procedure (e.g. placement or aptitude test, interview). Based on their previous vocational qualifications, they are usually granted a limited right to study only in a specified course of studies.
• Applicants with vocational qualifications also have the opportunity to enter HE without an entry qualification. The requirements and concrete admission processes are governed by the various Länder. About 1% of the students get access by this way.
• Since 2002 knowledge and skills acquired outside the HE system can be counted towards a degree by as much as 50 per cent.
• To ease the transition from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to HE, the BMBF, KMK and HRK in September 2003 drew up a set of joint recommendations for HE institutions on counting course and examination work towards a degree.
• Flexible learning arrangements such as part-time studies, correspondence courses, e-learning and mixed forms are legally possible and will be allotted sweeping support, especially e-learning. Bachelor and Master Degree courses are to be modularised completely.
• Particularly talented secondary school students may carry out courses and examination work at HE institutions without being formally registered as students. Given a subsequent formal course of study, this coursework is to be recognised by all HE institutions according to the respective technical equivalence.

ES

• To enrol in HE, students are required to have successfully completed the final non-compulsory stage of secondary education. Students have to pass an entrance examination to get enrolled in long cycle courses and the most popular short cycle courses. In the 2004-2005 academic year, 76.6% of students gained admission to university in this way.
• An average mark is obtained by combining the results of the entrance examination with the marks obtained by students in the final stage of secondary education. Admission to degree courses depends on the resulting average mark.
• Universities shall attempt, when possible, to establish study modes and timetables that facilitate the participation of different types of students in their degree courses.
• A specific proportion of HE places is reserved for students from vocational education
• Adults with no formal education can also enter HE if they pass an entrance examination.
• Universities may, furthermore, develop specific lifelong learning programs in the form of awards which are different from Grado, Masters or Doctorate degrees. The names of these awards must not cause any confusion with the aforementioned degrees. Assessment systems will be established to check compliance with this requirement.
• In short, university lifelong learning courses should include not only degrees which are similar to traditional Masters, Expert or Diploma qualifications, but also to official degrees or specific parts of these degrees that are available at the universities and that can make a return to the classroom easier at any stage of a person’s professional life.

HU

• Admission to study programs offered by HE institutions is subject to strict regulations and recording obligations. An Government Admission Decree (2006) stipulates that Bachelor’s programmes, single-cycle study programmes lasting up to 5–6 years and advanced vocational training programmes shall be published in the Guide for Admission to Higher Education, and, at the same time, the Decree also details parameters to be published therein. The Decree also governs admission procedures and the related central registration processes.
• Admission to HE is based on a score calculated by the conversion of five secondary school subject grades and secondary school leaving examination results. Three subjects are mandatory (Hungarian language and Literature, History and Mathematics), while the other two of the two subjects are selected by the applicant (on condition that one of them is a foreign language).
• In the course of assessing admission applications, applicants to be admitted are selected on the basis of a standard and unified ranking system as per field of training, branch of training and programme.
• Flexibility in the requirements is also ensured by awarding extra points for some formerly acquired knowledge or skills, provided that these can be demonstrated. Thus the advanced level secondary school leaving examination, at least intermediate proficiency in a foreign language (if evidenced by a certificate), winning places at national, European and world education, scientific, innovation, art and sports competitions (generally, the first three places are eligible for extra points) merit extra points.
• The Decree (2006) stipulates the conditions for admission to the various Master’s programmes and it delegates the duty of the elaboration of the requirements for admission to Master’s programmes to the competence of institutions.
• No alternative access to HE exists beyond the ones laid down in the relevant statutory regulations. Pursuant to the HEA, the Government determines the scope extending to the requirements of preferential treatment. This scope in fact extends to applicants with disadvantaged backgrounds and persons with disabilities. Preferential treatment can only be provided in conjunction with the assessment of admission applications, and may not lead to exemption from academic requirements requisite to the award of a degree or to a professional qualification.
• Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is addressed by some of the provisions but only as a possibility. Every HE institution implements it at a formal level. Its use beyond formalities is at its very initial stage with a lot of problems still to be tackled. Even the credit earned at other Hungarian and foreign HE institutions are recognised with great reluctance.
### 12. 10 Table 21. Recognition of Prior Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Country</th>
<th>Universities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Universities Act 2002 provides regulation about the “Recognition of Examinations” as well as of specific professional experience and artistic skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Examinations passed by students attending</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- recognised Austrian or foreign post-secondary educational institutions,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- higher vocational colleges,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- colleges of education,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- recognised Austrian educational institutions where the general university entrance qualification is an admission requirement, or</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- university-level courses offered by non-university institutions, shall be recognised, provided that such qualifications are equivalent to those prescribed by the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scientific research at business establishments or non-university research establishments capable of providing preliminary vocational scientific training may be recognised as equivalent to examination, if the nature of the research and the research projects at the establishment concerned, and if the nature and the extent of the student’s participation or activities are comparable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Artistic activities at non-university institutions capable of providing vocational artistic training may be recognised as equivalent to examinations if the nature of the activities and the nature and extent of the student’s participation is therein comparable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FH sector:

The following legislation (FHStG resp. Accreditation guidelines FHR) can be mentioned:

- Recognition of proven knowledge is provided which may lead to a shortening of study duration.
- With regard to the recognition of documented knowledge and skills, the principle of course recognition applies.
- Measures taken to promote the permeability of the education system from below shall be outlined in the application for accreditation.

#### Admission to Bachelor’s and diploma degree programs:

In the case of Bachelor’s programmes, the grouping of candidates with different educational backgrounds shall be described; there shall be at least one group of candidates with the relevant vocational qualification (a completed apprenticeship, a completed vocational secondary school, other qualifications, all depending on the technical focus of an FH degree programme). It shall be noted that the size of the candidate groups shall be scaled down in line with the number of student places.

Qualifications for which no regulations have been laid down in the administrative decision granting approval will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the head of the degree programme or the FH teaching board.

#### Admission to Target group-specific degree programs:

- If the scientific and teaching concept of an FH degree programme is based on work experience, admission to this FH degree programme can be limited to a certain target group (“target group-specific” degree programmes).

#### Private Universities:

- Only studies/part of studies from other institutions of the tertiary education sector can be recognised in terms of existing legislation and requirements.
- Private universities have to follow the same rules and requirements as public universities.

#### Continuing education and training:

- Austrian HE institutions can offer continuing-education courses and they have also the right to determine the admission criteria. Universities offer continuing education and qualification upgrading in courses (Universitätslehrgänge) for both postgraduates and non-academics who satisfy other admission criteria, such as a minimum period of professional practice. These courses of study, which are designed in the same way as master’s courses, lead to a master’s degree or to the awarding of the prefix ‘Akademischer’, before the graduate’s existing professional title, provided that the curriculum has a value of at least 60 ECTS credits. Participants are required to pay a tuition fee, which is set in the light of the actual cost of the course. Most classes take place in the evenings or at weekends. In order to increase the accessibility of these courses, organisational forms that suit people in employment (evening or weekend sessions coupled with access to online resources) are being piloted.
- A centre for continuing tertiary education was created in 1994 with the founding of the Danube University Krems (Donau-Universität Krems), since 2004 established as the 22nd public university with
### BG

- Amendments of the VET Act (2005) have lead to amendments in the Higher Education Act (2005) related to confirmation of professional qualifications. These amendments establish the legislative base for the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. It contributes to the achievement of compliance with the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The practical implementation of this possibility requires further action on development of methodical documentation and handbooks, corresponding legal entities to be defined, and necessity for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning to be popularized among the potential users (employed, unemployed, employers, etc.) of this service.
- At the present moment, working group on development of a draft of Law on Recognition of Qualifications is established and is working at the Ministry of Education.
- Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still at initial stage in BG so far. The process of implementing measures targeted to identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning begins, using the common principles in this field from the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). Widening partnership between institutions and stakeholders will assure better trust, objectivity and trustworthiness of the processes that will start during the current year.
- Our expectations are the participation of stakeholders and social partners to grow up and greater responsibilities to be taken towards legislation development, institutional work out and strengthening, mechanisms for evaluation of competences – standards on competences, standards on validation, defining validation beneficiaries and quality assurance in this field.
- A step towards this end has been taken in 2004, when the Framework Programme E for further vocational training for actualisation or extension of already acquired professional qualification has been developed and approved by the Minister of education and science. With this respect, training seminars have carried out in 2005 – 2006 in Sofia and Thessalonica (Greece), through joint Bulgarian-German project on theme "Promoting Adults Vocational Training and Employability". Experts from the responsible ministries, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the Employment Agency and representatives from the social partners have participated in them.
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning process is foreseen to begin in 2007, after the methodological and organizational basis is assured.
- The recognition of prior non-formal learning is not a popular practice for the HE institutions. Where separate cases have been established (mostly in the art academies, or in the philological faculties or in the faculties for ICT) this recognition undergoes testing procedures described for each separate case. If the candidate succeeds to cover the respective academic standards he can be granted the respective certificate or even educational credits for the given educational discipline. Examples for recognition of the Prior Informal Learning exist in the musical academies. They determine high academic criteria and norms, which are to be covered and which also include obligatory candidate students’ exam prior to the awarding credits for specific achievements corresponding to the certain educational discipline.
- In HE institutions exists a well established practice for adaptation and recognition of prior formal learning, obtained in organized processes and attested with various documents for public recognition of the qualifications. The regulations of the independent HE institutions describe clear procedures, the order and conditions at which each specific transition is being affected.

### DE

- Most Länder take into account the recognition of prior learning, i.e. applicants with vocational qualifications also have the opportunity to enter HE without an entry qualification. Since 2002 knowledge and skills acquired outside the HE system can be counted towards a degree by as much as 50 per cent.
- However, clear rules are to be defined by the universities or the faculties being responsible for the HE study program.
- To ease the transition from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to HE, the BMBF, KMK and HRK in September 2003 drew up a set of joint recommendations for HE institutions on counting course and examination work towards a degree.
- HE institutions must also provide further education and training. With the introduction of the two-cycle degree structure, institutions are now able to provide options that are more flexible and better aligned to the needs of the jobs market.
- HE institutions also play a key role in Germany’s Lifelong Learning Strategy which was agreed by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion on 05 July 2004. To make the transition between the various educational sectors smoother, cooperation is promoted between HE institutions and schools, businesses, industry associations, job centres and further education and training institutions. Under the BMBF’s “Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks programme”, a large number of HE institutions contribute to the establishment and expansion of cross-sectoral education networks for the development and testing of innovative models for lifelong learning. For the period 2001 to 2007, a total of EUR 118 million has been made available to the 71 Learning Regions throughout Germany. The programme is jointly funded by the BMBF and the European Social Fund.
- Flexible learning arrangements such as part-time studies, correspondence courses, e-learning and mixed forms are legally possible and will be allotted sweeping support, especially e-learning.
- Bachelor and Master Degree courses are to be modularised completely.
- Particularly talented secondary school students may complete courses and examination work at higher education institutions without being formally registered as students. Given a subsequent formal course of study, this coursework is to be recognised by all higher education institutions according to the respective technical equivalence.
- The Federal Government and the Länder are promoting pilot projects for recognising professional experience in HE degree courses including awarding credit points.

### Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Two Organic laws make direct and explicit reference to the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and defines the action context in this field:

- The Organic Law 5/2002 of 19 June assumes the objective of creating a National Qualification and Vocational Training System that will allow not only to integrate the three vocational training supply models existing in Spain (initial, continuing and occupational) but also the knowledge acquired through work experience. At the moment, Spain is developing a procedure to allow assessment and accreditation of vocational competence based on this law.
- The Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May establishes the adoption of measures for assessment and validation of non formal and informal learning.
- The final objective of the National Qualification and Vocational Training System will not be only to promote, provide or incorporate training offers but also to assess and officially accredit vocational competences, regardless of how they might have been acquired.

#### Validation of non formal learning: The exemption from study program requirements:

- Access to the General Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education (Certificado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria - ESO) through tests.
- Access to University Education to adults older than 25 who haven’t completed upper secondary school through some equivalent exams established by the Universities for this purpose (since the General Law on education of 1970).
- Through the validation of informal learning the exemption from formal schooling degrees, e.g. the entrance examination to University for adults over 25 years does not award a VET college degree (Bachillerato) but the exemption of that degree in order to begin university studies.
- Access to middle and higher levels of vocational training cycles through tests to those with a specific age and do not meet all the academic prerequisites.

#### Validation of non formal learning: Partial or total recognition

- New regulations developed with regard to award credits or degrees: Since the Law 1/1990 the creation of tests to facilitate adults the acquisition of vocational training degrees is planned.
- The Spanish Constitution, in article 149.1.30 grants the State the right to regulate the procedures for obtaining, issuing and recognizing the academic professional degrees and diplomas. Based on this constitutional article, the central state department has the authority to define the general guidelines and the basic requisites that will guide the integrated system of the training offers and the learning acquired through life experiences.
- There are two departments that are fundamentally responsible for the planning and department of education and training: the educational department that takes care of the initial and formal training and all its different levels, and the labour administration, which has authority over the subsystems of occupational and continuing training.

The decentralizing model of the Spanish state maintains a policy of transferring responsibilities or competencies to regional authorities. The educational department has relegated all the authority of regulation, planning, organization and department of the educational system (formal and initial training) to the Autonomous Communities.

#### Regulations of the Autonomous Communities:

It is worthwhile to mention some developments of some Autonomous Communities that are establishing new paths for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The example of the Canary Islands:

- In Canary Islands the Law 13/2003 regulates the principles for the Adult Education and Continuous Training: Correlation between learning and formal, non-formal and informal educational contexts, in their different modes, with emphasis on distance learning: Validation and accreditation of formal and non-formal learning.
- The Resolution of 20 May 2005 contains instructions for the organization and development of the Initial Validation of the learner (VIA) for Basic Adult Education and Training within the Autonomous Community of Canary Islands and establishes the criteria to validation of informal and non-formal learning without accreditation.

- There is no legislation describing the recognition of prior learning experience acquired outside the
formal system.

- Every HE institution implements Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at a formal level, but is conducted only by some of the HE providers. Its use beyond formalities is at its very initial stage with a lot of problems still to be tackled. Even the credit earned at other Hungarian and foreign HE institutions are recognised with great reluctance.

- In HE, there is a strong resistance to the recognition of non-formal and informal both at the level of institutions and in the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The culture of knowledge transferred and supervised by the lecturer in a highly formal framework by means of old traditional methods still prevails.

- Higher education in Hungary is characterised by the humboldtian tradition of disregarding the educational relevance of the socio-economic environment of the educational institution. This contributes to reserve and exclusivity of academia, which considers external impulses as disturbing factors. In this respect it largely differs from the American model, for instance, which regards universities deeply embedded in their social environment.

- This concept does not include the idea of recognising non-formal and informal learning: it is met first by incomprehension, then rejection as it questions the general self and public concept of the exclusivity and omnipotence of professors to possess and transfer knowledge.

- The traditional field of university programs (full-time programmes) and the new field (short-time and part-time study programs for older students) decreased simultaneously, which resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of both applicants and enrolments.

- Moreover, the government imposes strict limitations on the numbers of students in the subsidized programmes. This means that HE institutions lose not only students but also income from the state and the market, as they have to compete for students with a growing number of small and flexible private institutions in a shrinking market. The effect of these processes is that several institutions struggle with lack of funds. The competition for students is very keen, so HE institutions are strongly opposed to any measures that might result in further loss of potential students.

- Thus, the establishment and operation of a procedure and the related institutional framework to certify vocational or higher educational qualifications by recognising knowledge and competences acquired in the context of non-formal and informal learning would be contrary to their fundamental interests.

- Conversely, a recognition practice within the HE system might be acceptable for them as it would make all those who do not have formal secondary or higher educational qualifications but are in possession of the required competencies "eligible for enrolment", which would increase the number of students in their programmes. Nevertheless, it will be a slow and difficult process for academia to recognise competencies acquired outside the formal framework, even if these competences are validated by a formal procedure.

- Within the formal adult learning’s settings there are pilot projects aimed at assessing competences of individuals acquired outside the school system. The link between adult learning sector and HE is, however, traditionally weak.

- The New Hungary Development Plan establishes the dissemination of new types of learning as a priority task to expand learning opportunities. By linking the formal, non-formal and informal systems the connection between the various stages and forms of learning shall be strengthened.

- The Social Renewal Operative Programme promotes the conversion of education and training in terms of both content and approach, and advocates the spread of individual competences. The draft plan of the Operative Programme formulates the NQF in alignment with the implementation process of the EQF, which shall ensure that competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning are recognised in the formal system and in the labour market, and design the tools for their outcome-based assessment.

- The Social Renewal Operative Programme also aims at the creation of validation systems. Such systems shall function to enable the assessment and recognition of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, the recognition of degrees and learning outcomes, and the adoption of procedures for translation into the outcomes-based indicators of the national and EQF (in HE) with regard to the bachelor, master and doctoral cycle, integrated programmes and integrated programmes leading to joint degrees. The action plans relating to the programme are currently under development.