BOLOGNA process

The Bologna Process

in Hungary

Report

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IN HUNGARY

REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

AIMS

The present study has been compiled on behalf of the Tempus Public Foundation, in the frame of the Bologna Promoters Network programme, financed by the European Commission. Its aim is to provide a snapshot on the current situation of the Bologna Process in Hungary. As such, it is strongly linked to the snapshots, reports and evaluations prepared regularly (biannually) in the frame of the process. In the spring of 2008, in the middle of another two-year period – lacking the current data – it is difficult to provide more information on the current situation than the national data supplied in the annual *National Report for the Bologna Process* (NRH, 2007) or the *Stocktaking report* (Stocktaking, 2007), in the autumn of 2006. Highly significant, substantial changes regarding the data in these reports, related to the implementation of the Bologna objectives cannot be detected, even though the process has evolved in some subdivisions, with special regards to implementing and starting MSc programmes.

We wish to provide more detailed information than that included in the reports mentioned above insofar as we attempted to add the element of evaluation to each unit of the snapshot. Relying on the Hungarian interim conclusions of international survey as well as Hungarian surveys and opinions and the results of comparing these to the international situation, we do not only wish to demonstrate not only the current position of Hungarian higher education but also to provide an evaluation on the developments so far, the current situation and to identify major challenges.

METHODS

Due to the conditions relating to the preparation of this evaluation, it is necessarily subjective, yet we hope it will not prove to be arbitrary. For several years, Hungarian members of the Bologna Promoters' Network have been making their best efforts to collect general, yet specific information on the process of the reform of the Hungarian higher education system, and at the same time also promoting this transformation. While completing this task, they actively participate both at international seminars and conferences addressing the major issues of the process and events organized for participants of the Hungarian higher education to promote joint thinking while analyzing cases. This way, they had the opportunity to acquire detailed information on the results and difficulties of both the national and international transformation processes. Relying on these personal experiences and the results of a questionnaire-type survey, one of them prepared the working draft of the study to be commented, amended and refined by several advisors and another

12 tutors and managers. Thus, the present study compiles the joint experiences and views of several participants, though the author is taking full responsibility for the contents, including the format of remarks and comments inserted into the final version (even if changes were justified only by editing requirements).

The European University Association (EUA) also prepares its biannual trend report titled "Trends" on the Bologna Process (the fifth report was issued just recently), based on questionnaire-type surveys, interviews and visits to institutions (Croiser et al., 2007). The present study aims at complying with its structure. According to preliminary considerations, replies to the Hungarian questionnaires for *Trends V* would have constituted a basis for a separate analysis, but the compilers of the report received only 19 replies from Hungary, not to mention the fact, that the code table containing Hungarian data could not be handed over for secondary analysis, to protect the rights of the suppliers of data. Thus, the original project plan had been modified in a way that Hungarian higher education institutions had been surveyed with a customized questionnaire (*Magyar Bologna felmérés, Hungarian Bologna Survey* [HBs], 2008).

This Hungarian questionnaire considered the questions and criteria for the *Trends V* report, but simplified as well as amended them, according to the Hungarian situation. Eventually the questionnaire addressed the subdivisions related to the major directions and objectives of the Bologna Process with all together 71 questions in 9 topics (Education structure and curricula; Evaluation, credit system and recognition; Student services and participation; Quality; Lifelong learning and degree framework; Social dimension; Attraction and the external dimension of the EHEA; Higher education policy; General questions). The questionnaire included a separate sheet for Erasmus coordinators of the institutions, too. They helped in forwarding the questionnaires to tutors working in higher education institutions then sending the filled forms back to the Tempus Public Foundation. We have received 136 filled questionnaires from a total of 26 institutions (divided as 11 state universities [including one art university], 7 state colleges, one private university, 4 private colleges, two universities and a college maintained by one of the churches). Out of the received questionnaires, 104 were filled in by tutors (69 head tutors and 35 other tutors) and 32 ones by other staff – mostly Erasmus coordinators. Out of the respondents, 41% had been working in higher education for more than 20 years, 37% for more than 10 years, 10% for more than 5 years and 12% for less than 5 years. The distribution of respondents according to type of institution, job, teaching status and time spent in higher education is not even among institutions (to provide for an even distribution would have exceeded the time and money allocated for this study). Thus, the received data cannot be considered representative. However, the data are not significantly biased either, regarding any background variable. The data above describing respondent sample predict that results arrived from a diverse environment so they may be considered to approximate a reflection of the real situation.

We may summarize the information above stating that the objective lens that took the snapshot is subjective to the same extent as 1-1.5 year old statistical data, the respondent sample of the questionnaire and the distribution of those commenting in writing deviates from the representative sample of Hungarian higher education. Furthermore, evaluation can never be independent of the personal opinion, professional belief and professional approach of evaluators.

CONTRIBUTORS

Several people contributed to the compilation of the present study, in several ways. Questionnaires for the survey were distributed in institutions and collected back by Erasmus/Socrates coordinators of the surveyed institutions. Responding tutors and other staff of higher education institutions invested much time into filling in the questionnaires. Contributors to the improvement of the first draft of the study involved 12 further tutors, former or still working heads of institutions, education experts[1], who supplied valuable written comments, recommendations and supporting material. The program coordinator of the Tempus Public Foundation, Mr. Gábor Dobos, and Ms. Katalin Kurucz, head of the Bologna Promoters Network in Hungary contributed to the preparation of the study with organizing activities. Mr. József Temesi, Bologna promoter, made useful comments and observations, from the very beginning. Hereby we would like to express our thanks for their contribution and support that helped us formulate a comprehensive picture of the situation.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of the study, as it was mentioned above, obviously corresponds to that of the *Trends V* report, although it is simpler at some points and more detailed at others. The study also contains two new topics compared to the *Trends V* report. The similarity between our study and the *Trends V* report is justified by our aim to make these documents comparable while reading. This aim is supported by two arguments: first, *Trends V* contains numerous conclusions and implications that apply also to the situation in Hungary and it appeared to be unnecessary to repeat all these in a shorter summary and second, the situation Hungary and the current state of transformation regarding the Hungarian higher education system can be interpreted adequately and evaluated realistically only if they are viewed from the perspective of the transformation process of the European Higher Education Area. The *Trends V* report provides an excellent background and overview for the realization of these aims.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BP   Bologna Process
DOR   Degree and output requirements
HAC   Hungarian Accreditation Committee
HBC   Hungarian Bologna Committee
HBs   Hungarian Bologna survey
EHEA   European Higher Education Area
HRDOP   Human Resource Development Operative Programme
LLL   Lifelong Learning
NHDP   New Hungary Development Plan
QF   Qualification Framework

1. STRUCTURAL REFORM: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THREE-CYCLE DEGREE SYSTEM

The transformation of the structure of education and its harmonization within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) form the most prominent objective of the Bologna Process. Many – mostly outsiders but often participants in higher education as well – appear to identify changes with this single priority and view everything from its perspective. Indeed, the implementation of the multi-cycle degree system is an objective of the utmost importance and has resulted in significant changes in EHEA countries. However, other objectives have also been defined by the participants of the transformation process that would yield even more significant results, even if in the long run.

The objective and necessity of transforming the degree system is the most often discussed, issue in Hungarian higher education, where no consensus could have been reached up to now. Many advantages of the dual degree system have been mentioned whereas its disadvantages seem to have been somewhat neglected. In the meanwhile, the advantages of the multi-cycle degree programmes have not received enough attention even though they were discussed at several national, regional and local events with several hundred participants. Public discussion addressed rather the difficulties of implementing the new system than its benefits. However, public discussion was not intensive enough and the majority of stakeholders – tutors, other professional staff, students as well as parents, employers and professional organizations – were not involved. The government created a further problem when failing to adequately communicate the objectives and elements of the EHEA, while incorporating reform elements in the relevant legislation (e.g. reform of institutional management, increasing the number of classes per week for tutors) that gave rise to ambivalent feelings, even discredited the Bologna principle. The lack of public consent on the aims and relevance of changes

caused many people to view the reform legislation as a despotic reform order. We may regard it as a typical instance of Hungarian practice, where representatives of a dominant interest declare a policy mainstream, discredit deviating views and then (try to) force a model having no public by legislative tools. (Please note that this practice does not qualify whether the policy is otherwise adequate regarding the given issue or not.)

Changes are concerned with serious doubts. In February 2007, in accordance with the data of Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2007b), 42% of Hungarian teaching staff were of the opinion that it would have been better to preserve the traditional "long cycle" degree system. From the 31 EHEA member states only Germany and Estonia scored higher in the survey regarding this opinion. This resistance appears to be only slowly softening. New ideas are accepted slowly, even when the attitude of rejecting changes due to conservatism or laziness is not considered. In the Hungarian survey of March 2008 [HBs, 2008], "only" 37% of the respondents rejected the principle of degree cycles and its implementation in the home institution. (Differences in the results of the surveys separated by a whole year may have arisen from the different methodology applied.)

1.1. IMPLEMENTATION OF DEGREE STRUCTURES

One of the reasons for diminishing resistance may be the presently completed, large scale, overall transformation into the multi-cycle system. One of the most significant changes in the EHEA (and also an extraordinarily fast one, at least under the typical conditions characterizing higher education) is the transformation into the three-cycle degree system in almost every member state. In most of the 46 Bologna signatory countries, the transformation is completed or is well advanced. By 2006, practically every state had completed the implementation (Eurydice, 2007), except for Andorra, the German speaking community of Belgium and Sweden (although in the latter case, the legislation ordering the implementation came into force in the summer of 2007) and 82% of the institutions performs their educational activities in the frame of the multi-cycle degree system (Crosier et al, 2007). After some years of delay caused by the hesitation of the higher education policy and the resistance of the higher education sector, Hungary started preparing and then implementing the multi-cycle degree system in 2003. The 3-4 years of arrears still characterizes the process in Hungary, yet the speed and the scope of transformation to the multi-degree system are similar to those measured for the majority of the EHEA states. Each Hungarian higher education institution participates in the transformation and most degree programmes – with the exception of 17 faculties – have been re-structured. Already in the 2006/2007 academic year, 91000 students participated in BA programmes (NRH, 2007), whereas in the 2007/2008 academic year, 147000 students participated in BA programmes and about 1000 students in MSc programmes (Ministry of Education and Culture – OKM, 2008). For the 2008/2009 academic year, about 6000 students submitted their applications for 87 different MSc programmes (source: webpage of OFIK, the National Student Information Centre).

a. Regulation of the 3-cycle degree system

The new degree system was basically implemented through legislative measures, without achieving public consent or the support of the significant majority of the higher education sector, as mentioned

above. This tendency was clearly indicated by the legal fuss accompanying the implementation of the 3-cycle degree system. An attempt to create the legislative background for implementing the 3-cycle degree system and starting the first pilot programmes was based on the Gov. Decree Nr. 252/2004, justified by the "old" Act on Higher Education granting the necessary authorisation to the Government. Opponents of the implementation successfully contested this at the Constitutional Court. The legal problem was technically solved by the Government through the Act on the Budget; later the Gov. Decree Nr. 289/2005 was prepared based on it and eventually the new act on Higher Education that defined several elements of the reform, besides determining the new degree system and its implementation as well as the phasing out of the old system. The lack of public consent is illustrated by the fact that both this new Governmental Degree and the Act were contested again by several opponents at the Constitutional Court. The Government had to amend the Act on Higher Education several times to create a constitutionally acceptable legislative framework. Later on, also an implementing regulation (Gov. Decree Nr. 79/2006) and a ministerial decree (Min. Decree Nr. 15/2006. of the Ministry of Education) were passed. The latter one defines the frame of degree programmes and publishes the establishing documents of the new BA and MSc programmes; its annexes are continuously amended and extended.

These pieces of legislation determine a relatively rigid three-cycle degree system, basically divided in a 3+2+3 years structure and only allow for limited deviations or exceptions. It means that legal or medical studies degree programmes, and some art or theology degree programmes were not transformed into the 3-cycle degree structure and the traditional, 5- or 6-year long university degree programmes were maintained. Altogether 17 such long degree programmes are available at the moment. Kindergarten teacher and primary school teacher degree programmes also preserved the traditional system, though they were classified as BA cycle. The duration of these programmes had been lengthened from 3 to 4 years a few years prior the structural reform. Degree programmes lasting 3.5-4 years, (which is a deviation from the 3-year long BA cycle determined by the relevant legislation [Gov. Degree 289/2005]), could be established in agriculture and engineering as well as in business, social and medical sciences, teaching, special needs education, architecture and construction at BA level, with the restraint that the longer duration of the BA cycle must be compensated for by shorter Masters' programmes, i.e. the total duration of the first two cycles cannot exceed 5.5 years in these cases either. The practical implementation, however, was not consistent and in some sectors and programmes 2-year-long MSc cycles were nevertheless introduced.

The legislation does not only regulate the different levels (i.e. cycles) of the degree structure and their durations, but also the scope and potential disciplines of programmes. Thus, the lawmakers determined areas of training based on international classification systems (Frascati, ISCED) and the Hungarian academic classification, defining within these areas the potential BA programmes and making preliminary recommendations on MSc programmes. This way the National Training Register was established. It also reduced the number of programmes, from the former 500 programmes of the dual structure (often unmanageable and non-transparent regarding targets and contents) to about 100, in a transparent structure. In the case of BA programmes, the legislation also regulated which former, traditional programmes could be considered as precedent. The lawmakers intended to facilitate the reform with this and to prevent institutions from starting new, previously non-existent BA programmes. This inherent rigidity of managing the reform later softened so most institutions could start providing previously non-existent BA programmes. The former rigidity of the National

Training Register (i.e. the legislation allows only a periodical joint review for BA programmes) is also softening, new BA courses could be established before the end of the 3-year period and the Register contains a diverse selection of degree programmes by now, compared to the original preliminary recommendations on MSc programmes. The version[2] of the Register from 26 March 2008 contains 131 BA programmes and 179 MSc programmes (and a further 16 MSc programmes in religious studies), in 14 training fields. Furthermore, an MSc programme for teachers (with more than 50 professional modules) has been established in a separately regulated process and several other MSc programmes are being established. These numbers also illustrate that the original intention to clarify and properly manage issues could partially be realized only, due to the pressure from different professional lobbies and attempts at restoration could already be observed in the initial phase of reform.

Besides establishing the Training Register that determines degree programmes, the system of criteria and the process of establishing and implementing degree programmes were also regulated in detail. It profoundly preserves the mechanism of the preliminary accreditation of programmes; also the structure and contents of the documentation of establishing and implementing programmes are stringently regulated in detail. A new element of output control, the use of learning outcomes, is also introduced.

Without questioning the efforts of higher education governance to avoid or at least minimize the difficulties of reform as far as possible, we have to realize that Hungary has created an uniquely overregulated system for degree programmes, unparalleled within the EHEA (except for maybe Russia). This system renders developing and establishing new degree programmes as well as their ensuring their high quality difficult and leaves only limited freedom for the autonomy of institutions and for innovation. This might be the area where we can really put our finger on the "failure" of the degree structure reform: rigid and restricting regulations and accreditation criteria virtually tie up innovative, creative energies, pioneering institutions, workshops and tutors. At present, the most important task of smaller (rural) institutions is to make their programmes similar to those of major universities, to allow for the successful accreditation of programmes, at the same time when the strength of smaller institutions would be their flexibility, speed and readiness for innovation. Due to the degree structure reform, this mobility and its advantages appear to be lost for the economy and the society, though hopefully only temporarily.

b. Determining degree and output requirements

One of the elements of the legal background of degree programmes is the completion and exit requirements (CER) that replaced the previous qualification criteria for a degree. Several countries use national standards that serve as the major framework for the quality management of degree programmes. The function of the Hungarian CER, together with the accreditation process linked to them, is to guarantee the quality of nationally certified degrees.

The legal status of CER is a ministerial decree and, regarding its format, it contains the most important data, standards and requirements of the degree programmes in the National Training Register. One part of the requirements are learning outcomes. It was adopted due to the impact of

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2 Source: *http://www.okm.gov.hu/doc/upload/200804/kepzesi_es_kimeneti_kovetelmenyek_080402.pdf*

the new control philosophy based on outputs and competence that is spreading in the EHEA. However, the CER still include control elements related to programme contents and procedures that remained from the previous degree requirements (degree programme modules/phases, subjects, determining credits in detail with legally defined number of classes). On the one hand, it questions the purpose of adopting output requirements, on the other hand, it discredits CER as the most important governing forces of curriculum development, as output standards and the control elements related to content and procedures are frequently incoherent. Instead, the CER serve as a central curriculum in practice, leaving only minimal freedom for institutional curriculum development. Institutional freedom was further restricted by the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (HAC), when it defined study fields that had been originally created as wider standards as subjects in the curriculum in the accreditation process; now it evaluates degree programme applications according to the latter. These measures created uniformity of Hungarian degree programmes, while Bologna Process documents define diversity[3] as one of the most important values of the EHEA. This contradiction could be further enhanced by the practice preferred by the HAC which, besides standardizing its own degree model, requests the harmonization of the degree programme with the highly distinct curricula of the international practice during the pre-accreditation processes for degree programmes. Applying the conditional refers to the fact that this intention cannot be realized in practice, despite all the efforts.

The completion and exit requirements would have served one more purpose according to the original intention to control degree programmes: they would have formed an element for the national adaptation of the qualification framework (QF) for the EHEA, confirmed by the Ministers for Higher Education in Bergen. At the moment, the Hungarian NQF defines the outcomes for the three cycles of higher education at two levels, in the form of learning outcomes defined as competences: Annex 1 of the referred Min. Decree 15/2006 by the Minister of Education contains the output standards for BA and MSc degrees (that closely comply with the similar outcome criteria of the QF), while the CER for the different programmes contain the relevant output standards. However, the subsequent analysis of the completed CER shows[4] that the output standards defined at faculty level do not comply with the relevant national standards for the given degree. Furthermore, as it was mentioned above, the control elements related to contents do not comply with the output standards of the faculties, so it is difficult to belive that the institutional degree programmes conform with the national standards. (We must not forget, however, that there are no relevant studies in this field, in fact such studies could not have been completed as yet as the first BA courses are just finishing.) At the same time, the output standards for higher vocational education programmes of the first cycle and the national output standards for PhD programmes are not in force yet, though they have been elaborated by the National Bologna Committee (NBC). Thus, the national qualification framework cannot even formally be considered complete.

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3 By now, the Training Register (the sum of CER) has become a massive document of 959 pages, with the 132 pages of CER for teachers attached as an annex.

4 The project "*Cooperation between higher education and employers in developing MSc degree and output requirements*" was implemented in the spring of 2006, supported by the Ministry of Education and the Hungarian Institute for Higher Educational Research. Results of the project are published in (Temesi, 2006); for its details and supporting material see *http://www.kreditlap.hu/kkk/*.

The interviewed experts reported several inadequacies in the CER preparation process that probably originated from its novelty. The definition of criteria was not preceded by surveys on what the professional qualification obtained by graduating from BA or MSc programmes enables the owner of the degree, with regards to performing or solving concrete tasks. With some exceptions, the users' sphere has not become involved. The work of committees was not preceded by substantial preparations that could have promoted the interpretation of concepts, in order to establish a system of criteria based on a truly new approach.

c. Ascending appearance of the degree cycles and phasing out of the traditional degrees

In Hungary, two of the three degree cycles had already functioned before the Bologna Process. Professional oriented degree programmes of short duration (higher vocational education programmes – ISCED 5B) had been being offered for several years. Unlike the practice followed by the majority of European countries, Hungarian "doctorate" programmes (that corresponds more or less to the PhD cycle) used to work mostly and typically like an study programme (or contained at least formal educational elements). Thus, the transformation of the traditional dual cycle degree programmes (college and university education) and the implementation of BA and MSc programmes represented the most challenging tasks when developing the new 2-cycle system. The most important challenge here was the "breaking" of the undivided 5-year long university programmes. The higher education policy considered implementing the BA programmes of the first cycle in a gradual system as the most feasible way. After their spreading, MSc programmes were implemented. Some BA programmes started (in an experimental fashion, in the field of informatics) as early as 2004. Then, in September 2006, BA programmes had to start in every institution and in every training field, replacing traditional programmes, as prescribed by the legislation, except for the permitted exceptions mentioned before. Though the idea was supported by many and several countries actually implemented it, Hungary and some other countries chose not to implement the new Bologna programmes while allowing the continuation of the traditional programmes. It might have caused at least as many, if not more organizational, administrative and capacity problems as the solution where the new programmes "push out" the traditional ones from the degree system. At the moment, BA programmes are operating nationwide in all three grades. What is more, some students have already graduated from some early, experimental programmes, that is the first BA programmes became popular. Some MSc programmes also started in the academic year 2006/07 (one in engineering studies and one in military studies – defence), whereas in the academic year 2007/08, universities experimented with starting several new MSc programmes, even in cross register system, counting on graduates traditional college programmes. As a result, now about 1000 students participate in the MSc cycle (OKM, 2008).

The gradual implementation replacing the old system also created several problems (and these problems are still present)[5]. Two of these problems are of greater significance while a further one is not as important as it is generally considered. The first one is related to designing and developing degree programmes: ascending implementation unavoidably led to an uneven management of the first two

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5 For further references see the proceedings of the V. Országos Kreditfórum (National Credit Forum) Budapest, November 2007., *http://www.kreditlap.hu/forumok/5kreditforum.asp*.

cycles, i.e. it was the BA programmes that policy makers, education legislation and the institutions themselves first paid attention to, while MSc programmes were dealt with only later, thus these cycles were not considered as equal parts of a coherent system. This approach seriously hindered the harmonization of programmes, the signs of which were perceived already in the development phase of the MSc programmes. Some critics of this solution committed themselves to inverse implementation (i.e. first implementing the MSc programmes, followed by the BA programmes) while others preferred joint implementation (i.e. implementing BA and MSc programmes together). We cannot know for certain whether the problems related to these solutions would have been lesser or easier to manage, whether at system or institution level.

Another significant and long drawn out problem is managing students lagging behind from the last years of the traditional end-of-series programmes for different reasons. For these students, the subjects offered by traditional programmes have to be maintained for years to provide for the compliance with degree requirements. However, there might be minor or major differences between curricula and subjects of the previous traditional programmes and the ones of BA and MSc programmes taken up, thus maintaining the different subjects of the old and new programmes means significant extra costs for the institutions.

The third problem is the uncertainty of the stakeholders in higher education, related to the success and quality of programmes as well the ability of students to complete them, that will last till the full implementation of the new degree system. This uncertainty related to the applicability and usefulness of the given degrees also characterizes students, parents and the labour market but is expected to diminish with time. This expectation is justified by the experiences of countries further ahead in transforming the education structure. On the other hand, these worries are partly artificially evoked, partly virtual by nature: thus far, each and every education system was subject to such uncertainties and opponents are always eager to exaggerate their significance. After the full implementation, these interests will lose their relevance so probably they will not be able to maintain the uncertainty any more. Nevertheless, this uncertainty (or rather the belief) had a significant impact on designing and implementing degree programmes and resulted in sub-optimal solutions.

1.2 EMPLOYABILITY

Employability has been considered since the beginning in the development of the multi-cycle degree system. The higher number of formal outputs compared to the old system (and the resulting qualifications and skills) may provide better opportunities for students to obtain the most adequate degree or to carry on with their studies if they wish; the labour market may also benefit from diversifying the output of institutions. Critics of the traditional dual cycle degree system emphasized the difficulty of mobility between the two degree programmes (colleges and universities) that takes time and costs money for students and the high number of students in university programmes that result in over-education, thus increased burdens on the society.

The other, substantive aspect of employability has also been continuously considered: more emphasis is laid on practical and professional issues in BA programmes and on the skills and qualifications of graduates that are relevant for the labour market. Debates on how to provide for employability together with preparations for the MSc cycle have never completely ceased.

The framework of BA programmes was essentially developed by stakeholders in higher education (consortiums of higher education institutions, participated by tutors or even deans). Their priority was to "save" as many subjects and contents from the traditional programmes as possible and to include them in the new BA programmes. The good intentions regarding transformation were biased by local interests (of institutions, departments, tutors) that rooted in the interest of institutions to maintain the employment of their staff on the one hand and in the natural reflexes of tutors to protect their jobs on the other hand. At the same time, institutions did not respect the principle of diverse approaches to BA and MSc programmes regarding education methods in higher education when separating these cycles, thus no methodological differences are perceivable now between the two degree programmes. Furthermore, in the developing phase of MSc programmes, developers had to realize that tutor capacities, topics and subjects, still available after BA programmes, were insufficient. As a result, not only traditional elements of the Hungarian higher education system such as the "general courses for the intellectual" were abandoned (even though these courses benefitted employability), but also methods, tools and procedures that would have been necessary for the successful implementation of the new programmes. Regarding this latter issue, not even discussions were initiated.

However, the public is indubitably aware of the importance of employability. At present, three quarters of the stakeholders in higher education considers employability of graduates a highly important criterion when developing or reforming curricula; a further 24% also considers it important, even if to a lesser extent. It means that only very few consider this aspect negligible (HBs, 2008).

It is an undeniable fact, that parties interested in promoting employability (students, professional organizations, employers) were rather unfamiliar with the objectives and purpose of the cyclic degree structure (not necessarily by their own failure, although the necessary information was accessible for all those interested). Thus, even in those cases where the good intention to involve these parties was obvious, they could not provide help, or only to a very limited extent. The situation was aggravated by the lack of dialogue that prevented parties from understanding each other's viewpoints. As a result, programmes organized to promote discussion frequently turned into "stage events" where participants held lectures on their views without listening to their opponents – not only due to avoiding the articulation of real interests that so often characterizes discussions in Hungary[6]. It served as a reason for many to demand much stronger co-ordination activities on behalf of the Ministry. However, at certain fields (e.g. engineering), where the link between major employers and education institutions was traditionally strong, consultation was more successful, according to the education institutions, their new BA programmes comply with the requirements of employability. For those who do not proceed to MSc programmes but cannot get employment cannot be advised at the moment as to other available options. However, the fist graduates are entering the labour market only now so we have to wait a few more years to be able to draw conclusions.

Regarding employability, the Hungarian higher education policy called upon institutions long before the starting of the Bologna Process to respond to the requirements of the labour market and

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6 Conferences organized in the frame of the HRDOP 3.3 tender announced to promote the development of BA curricula, participated by tutors and employers, were typical examples of this inability to reach a consensus, according to participants.

the economy in a more flexible manner. (This demand has been known in international practice for more than a hundred years [Grubb & Lazerson, 2004]). At the same time, the legislation for degree programmes and the structure and decision making processes of institutions prescribes and maintains mechanisms that hardly allows for the compliance to this demand, for the management, tutors and professional staff of institutions. (For example, decision preparing, permitting, accreditation and legal-administrational procedures related to the development and starting of new degree programmes take almost two years even in the best case; the Act on Public Sector Employees and the Act on Higher Education limit the application of procedures to incite tutors, take sanctions or dismiss them, according to their performance; the two-thirds consent of the Senate of the institution, necessary for awarding reader or professor positions paves the way for bargaining that will not consider quality and/or will result in neglecting professional criteria; the decision making competence of the Senate regarding the structural reform of institutions makes adopting the measures necessarily linked to the conflict of interests practically impossible, etc.) The same restrictions affect private institutions to a much lesser extent. Regarding mobility and flexibility, these institutions will ultimately outpace state institutions on an education market under transformation which induces an ever increasing competition.

1.3 JOINT PROGRAMMES AND DEGREES

The aim of establishing joint degree programmes was adopted relatively late and only to a low extent by Hungarian institutions. The low level international embedding of Hungarian institutions is one of the reasons for this, as well as the limited information we have on international processes (e.g. EHEA processes), but we also have to mention the lack of tutors, essential for joint degree programmes, who are able to teach in foreign languages. Regulative deficiencies and – where the term regulation applied at all – overregulation also hindered the establishment of joint degree programmes. From the 26 responding institutions in the survey of March 2008, 16 indicated they had no joint degree programmes whatsoever, whereas a further two institutions mentioned the futility of starting such programmes (HBs, 2008). The country-dependent implementation of higher education restructuring within the EHEA and the diversity of interpretations and technical approaches essentially render the consultation of degree programmes difficult. Several Hungarian institutions reported the incompatibility of the extensive curricula and teaching practice (that had characterized the previous, traditional degree programmes and were transferred to the new, multi cycle programmes) with the intensive education being adopted all over the EHEA (but characterizing the Anglo-American education system for a long time) and their inability to communicate and establish joint programmes with universities following the intensive education model.

Another reason might be that in the EHEA, joint degree programmes are mostly realized in the MSc cycle and MSc programmes are just starting in Hungary. In the coming few years, we may expect the establishing of significantly more joint degree programmes, compared to their current numbers.

2. BOLOGNA TOOLS FOR MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION

The Bologna signatory countries have developed several tools that can promote the harmonized operation of higher education institutions in the EHEA, thus the realization of the major Bologna objectives. Some tools have been being developed for a longer time, so they are better known in Hungary, such as the credit system or mobility programmes. Others such as the Diploma Supplement were created rapidly, thanks to the significant support of the European Parliament and national governments. There are initiatives that were phrased only a few years ago, considered as novelties in higher education in most EHEA states, including Hungary. Their use is subject to intensive discussions, also at international level. The qualification framework, the outcome-driven organization of education or the use of learning outcomes can be considered as the new tools pertaining to the latter category.

2.1 CREDIT SYSTEM

The credits belong to those tools that had been used at some institutions and had been considered for implementation by the higher education policy in Hungary even before the Bologna Process. So, the credit system is not considered to be a new tool by Hungarian institutions by now, even though diverse problems may be detected around the use of the general credit system. The implementation of the credit system was resisted to the same extent as the restructuring of the degree system, but from the part of the institutions that introduced the former on a voluntarily basis. From the second year of implementation, it became obvious that the creditisation of curricula was an effort wasted, as Hungary signed the Bologna Declaration and the multi-cycle degree system was to be prepared. From 2002 on, credit-based degree programmes could be maintained for a further 4 years, as the new BA programmes started in 2006.

The Hungarian approach and the policy intentions relating to the credit system put the emphasis rather on the accumulative function of the system and its potential beneficial impacts than on the credit transfer function. As a result, problems related to the application of the credit system emerge mostly around the credit transfer function.

a. Credit transfer

The aim of credit transfer is to ensure the portability of the credits that recognize the acquired knowledge and skills, so as to promote students' mobility among institutes and countries. In a slightly broader sense, transfer can work between education programmes, even between different modules or sections within the same curriculum. In the course of the early discussions on the use of the credit system it emerged innumerable times – especially while preparing the related legislation and when this entered into force – that institutional commitment is needed for using credit transfer. In previous years, nationwide surveys were conducted several times on the implementation and application of the credit system in Hungary. These surveys revealed that credit transfer was the least

used and operational element of the system, with special regard to the recognition of the credits gained at other institutes by the home institution. We may presume that the main reason for this is the lack of commitment on behalf of the institution and the teaching staff towards this. As we understand from many reports and student feedbacks, the recognition of credits acquired at another institution is often rejected by teachers even if the student acquired the credit within a European Community mobility programme that prescribes the recognition, and the institution had agreed to the recognition when it joined the program (e. g. in the *Erasmus University Charter*). A data collection in 2005 (Illés et al., 2005) revealed a high demand on behalf of students, not only for full-time or part-time studying abroad or at another institute in Hungary, but also for having the acquired credits recognized (82% of students would require it). However, the survey showed that 36% of students were unsuccessful and a further 36% were partially unsuccessful in having the acquired credits recognized. Data provided by teachers are more detailed. In the survey of March 2008, 12% of teachers (from 8 different institutions) said that many of their students faced problems when having their credits acquired abroad recognized; while 65% of the teachers said that only some of their students faced this problem. Only 12% of teachers (from the 8 institutions) said that their students did not have this type of problem (HBs, 2008). Hungarian institutions and students are not the only ones facing these difficulties, nearly half of the institutions in the EHEA report problems related to their students' credit recognition (Crosier et al., 2007).

Mobility is limited due to the difficulties of credit recognition and there is a strong tendency to bind students. At the other side, the process of binding the teachers is also being completed recently and, as a joint result, most students are deprived of the possibility of meeting impressive professors and innovative personalities. It is important to keep in mind that this process also hinders the scholars' inspirational influence to be felt at different places.

Probably the main sources of the insufficiency of credit transfer and credit recognition are an administrative and a structural problem, beside many other things. The administrative problem consists of negligent management of student mobility in the Community mobility programmes, insufficient consultation between partners while establishing learning agreements, or the failure to conclude agreements in advance, which render students vulnerable later, during the credit recognition process. The structural problem can be identified as the structural differences between the curricula of Hungarian and foreign institutions, mainly due to the different philosophical approaches to the functions of degree programmes. As a consequence, Hungarian curricula greatly differ first of all from those of the Western and Northern European institutions, regarding the number and credit value of the subjects to be completed in each semester. Therefore, due to the rules of credit recognition, it often occurs that the 30 credits collected by a student completing 4-6 subjects can be recognized only as 8-12 credits at the Hungarian home institution. The problem persists in incoming mobility, too, as foreign students cannot collect 30 credits within one semester in a Hungarian institution because of the low credit value of the subjects.
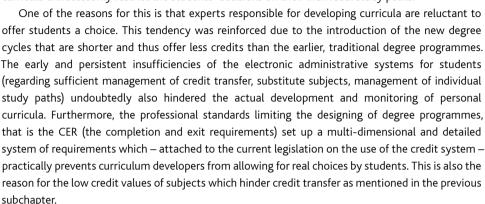
b. Credit accumulation

The accumulation of credits has been working full-scale since a governmental decree that came into force in 1998 made it obligatory for all Hungarian higher educational institutions from 2002. The majority of institutions implemented the credit system in a phasing-out system; by

now, credit accumulation works in every degree cycle (also in the traditional degree system) and in every degree programme. Teaching staff regard the operation and impacts of the credit system rather with mixed feelings. One reason for this is that the implementation of the credit system could easily be blamed for some phenomena (e. g. the expansion of higher education, cultural changes related to studying, lower standards etc.) that Hungarian higher education had to face at the time of its implementation. Neither can students use the full potential of credit accumulation, insofar as the curricula unnecessarily restrict the students' decisions on their individual study paths.

One of the reasons for this is that experts responsible for developing curricula are reluctant to offer students a choice. This tendency was reinforced due to the introduction of the new degree cycles that are shorter and thus offer less credits than the earlier, traditional degree programmes. The early and persistent insufficiencies of the electronic administrative systems for students (regarding sufficient management of credit transfer, substitute subjects, management of individual study paths) undoubtedly also hindered the actual development and monitoring of personal curricula. Furthermore, the professional standards limiting the designing of degree programmes, that is the CER (the completion and exit requirements) set up a multi-dimensional and detailed system of requirements which – attached to the current legislation on the use of the credit system – practically prevents curriculum developers from allowing for real choices by students. This is also the reason for the low credit values of subjects which hinder credit transfer as mentioned in the previous subchapter.

The other factor hindering the operation of the credit system is that its implementation was rather formal than effective. While applying the credit system although the Hungarian credit system is in line with the main characteristics of the European credit system, the ECTS, i.e. credits are based on student workload, including independent studying, independent studying is not taken into consideration sufficiently when the system is applied[7]. This means that when the curricula are developed, credits are not allocated on the basis of the actual proportions and quantity of student workload, but on the basis of the limitations prescribed by the CER and the legal regulations, as mentioned before. It is not an expectation to require or evaluate student workload expressed in credits either during designing or when implementing the curricula (i.e. teaching), mainly because of local interests or strong conservatism. The average proportion is 1:2 (as a result of comparing the legal minimum of 300 classes for a semester that is worth 30 credits and the total 900 hours of study), that is 2 hours of independent studying can be associated, on average, to 1 class. This is a rather poor proportion that clearly indicates the low level of the independent study obligations in the Hungarian higher education. The research mentioned previously (Illés et al., 2005) demonstrated that in the case of one third of the subjects taken and completed (i.e. those for which credits were awarded), students performed less activities than that expressed by the number of credits, whereas in the case of another third, they performed much less activities (half or even less of that expressed by the number of credits), and still successfully met the course requirements of the subjects. (The expected student workload expressed by the number of credits and the actual work done by students matched only in 10–14% of the cases!) Considering that one of the aims of creating and implementing the

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7 For example the law specifies a rather high number of lessons which contradicts the principles of the European credit system.

credit system – besides promoting the transfer – is to strengthen the role of independent study, we may conclude that serious changes are necessary in this field.

c. Study results

The use of learning outcomes in the higher education is one of the relatively new development tools of, related to the use of the credit system, that were introduced into the Bologna Process only a few years ago. Though it is not totally new for some of the BP countries (its introduction in the UK started 10-12 years ago), according to their reports these countries have also hardly passed the learning phase of the application yet. In spite of this the commitment to the use of learning outcomes spread in the EHEA countries surprisingly quickly. This innovation was introduced in Hungary as well, what is more, it also became part of the regulations quite early (cf.: Gov. Decree 289/2005, Decree of the Ministry of Education 15/2006). Hungarian higher education however appears to be only starting the learning process of understanding and accepting the aims and methods of its use. This uncertainty may be illustrated by the results of the questionnaire-type survey of March 2008, completed in Hungary. Here, the proportion of negative answers to the questions related to learning outcomes or the answers proving the lack of knowledge in this field was high, 35% (HBs, 2008). Because of this, it is hard to evaluate the answers which state that learning outcomes needed for employability were examined at each faculty, and that they were applied at curriculum and subject level. One of the tutors participating in the process says that even if learning outcomes were considered during the establishment of certain faculties, they must have been considered negligible while designing the curricula, and they were hardly ever integrated at subject level.

The aim of the already mentioned project of spring 2006 (see footnote 4) was to compare the requirements of the qualification framework expressed as learning outcomes and the learning outcomes included in the relevant CER, and draw posterior conclusions.

As a result, it became clear for the participants that the tutor teams developing the CER did not fully understand the aim and point of applying learning outcomes, had no information on the use of learning outcomes, so the well-intentioned but non-professional transformation of the national standards into specialized output requirements led to incoherent and dysfunctional results (Temesi, 2006). Just like the institutions and their teaching staff in most states of the EHEA that have just begun to realize the importance of the efforts that inspire the use of learning outcomes (Crosier at al., 2007), neither have Hungarian institutions and tutors recognized this, so the comprehension and integration of the approach based on learning outcomes may be one of the important middle-term aims of Hungarian educational policy.

2.2 RECOGNITION (RECOGNITION OF DEGREES, CREDITS, FORMAL AND INFORMAL STUDY ACTIVITIES)
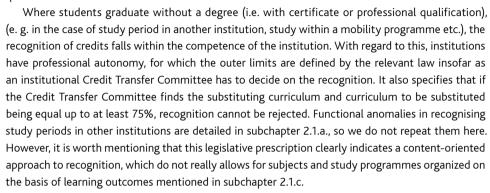
The European policies and the Bologna Process have for a long time also considered the recognition of knowledge, credits and degrees acquired elsewhere as an important issue to be addressed. The *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon Convention) was published in 1997, but it has not been ratified by several member states

up to now. Hungary was among the first countries to ratify it and passed laws on the recognition of diplomas and degrees in 2001 (Act XCIX and Act C, 2001). An effective professional network has been built since to promote recognition (ERIC/NARIC), whose national office in Hungary also deals with the registration of certificates (degrees and professional qualifications) acquired abroad. In addition, several bilateral intergovernmental agreements regulate the mutual recognition of degrees. On the other hand, the registration processes related to the recognition of the overwhelming majority of the degrees and professional qualifications acquired in another country need to be done individually. In the European Union, however, in the case of regulated professions, mutual recognition of the qualifications is automatic.

Where students graduate without a degree (i.e. with certificate or professional qualification), (e. g. in the case of study period in another institution, study within a mobility programme etc.), the recognition of credits falls within the competence of the institution. With regard to this, institutions have professional autonomy, for which the outer limits are defined by the relevant law insofar as an institutional Credit Transfer Committee has to decide on the recognition. It also specifies that if the Credit Transfer Committee finds the substituting curriculum and curriculum to be substituted being equal up to at least 75%, recognition cannot be rejected. Functional anomalies in recognising study periods in other institutions are detailed in subchapter 2.1.a., so we do not repeat them here. However, it is worth mentioning that this legislative prescription clearly indicates a content-oriented approach to recognition, which do not really allows for subjects and study programmes organized on the basis of learning outcomes mentioned in subchapter 2.1.c.

The data collection of March 2008 gives a positive picture on the extent to which Hungarian institutional practice is regulated. According to the results, regulated procedures were established in the overwhelming majority of the institutions to manage different situations of recognition (in 10 out of 26 respondent institutions these procedures serve the recognition of foreign degrees, in 23 the recognition of [part-time] studies abroad, in 10 the recognition of degrees acquired in other national institutions, in 16 the recognition of [part-time] studies in other Hungarian institutions). There are some institutions that have regulations for several different situations. There is none that does not have any procedures at all (HBs, 2008).

Recognizing the results of non-formal and informal studies and transforming these into credits are major challenges for the higher education, both in Europe and Hungary. The institutions never or seldom face such demands, so they have not developed the relevant practice. The dominance of traditional, formal methods of education and the tutors' specific views on the teachers' role in the learning processes of students hinder the explicit appearance of any emerging demand. Yet a moderate, slow change may be detected here. Two years ago, an experiment failed dismally to collect the opinion of stakeholders in higher education on this matter, due to incomprehension related to the question. But the international impact of the issue itself is becoming increasingly significant; it is also included in the development projects of the 2nd National Development Plan. These considerations together will probably soften the current strict rejection.

The recommendations of the National Credit Council on how to apply the credit system and the relevant legislation, published for the institutions years ago, only indirectly referred to these possibilities. When the new Act on Higher Education of 2006 was amended in 2007, the intention to settle this matter was already reflected explicitly in the amendments. The amended act maximized at 30 the number of credits to be awarded for recognized subjects completed in a non-formal or

informal way for the institutions. The uncertainty related to this issue is characterized by the fact that the representatives of the educational governance viewed it as an important step forward that the possibility of expression and recognition were adopted by the act and they did not understand the suggestions which contrasted the limit of 30 credits set by the act to the theoretically unrestricted practice of previous years. The participants of the V. National Credit Forum (*V. Orszá-gos Kreditfórum*) organized by the National Credit Council in autumn 2007 already described the problem in their feedback as one of the most important and desirable issues of future credit forums. In the questionnaire survey completed in Hungary in 2008, 5 institutions indicated that they recognized the subjects completed this way, and they had recognition procedures as well. Another 12 institutions stated that they managed demands on an individual basis. However, the actual situation could be accurately grasped, because there could have been significant differences between answers coming from the same institution. For example, there were two institutions from which answers were controversial as some of their members mentioned the existence of a recognition procedure, while other members indicated total rejection. Many respondents (24% of the total) claimed there was no demand for recognition, while 10% could not answer the question (HBs, 2008). These proportions might indicate the uncertainty of the knowledge of the actual situation and the confused views within the institution. This presumption is reinforced by the answers to a more specific question. This question was about whether credits recognising knowledge gained through non-formal or informal studying might substitute a completing a given course. This practice was totally rejected by 17% of the respondents, while 57% found it acceptable only in very specific, justified cases. This highlights that institutional regulations may be more advanced in certain fields than the level of understanding of the problem or the acceptance or support on behalf of teachers would allow. As mentioned before, creating regulations and attempts at establishing the formal frameworks often precede the proper addressing of problems. This attitude is felt nationwide. (And sometimes it is a technical measure to conceal the lack of discussions necessary for reaching consensus.)
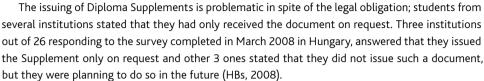
2.3 DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS

The recommendation of the European Community related to the supplements to certificates and the using of Europass documents was quickly adopted by the Hungarian education governance. The Ministry of Education introduced the obligation to provide the certificate supplements in a wide range – although only in BA and MsC programmes – partly by legislation, partly with the help of the National Europass Centre (NEC) which belongs to the Educatio Public Benefit Company and is financed by the European Commission. The NEC performed the organization tasks and led the information campaign. Since 2006, Hungary took the lead in applying the Diploma Supplement that promotes mobility and the transparency of certified degrees and qualifications since it became obligatory to provide Diploma Supplements to all degrees in Hungarian and English free of charge (moreover – at the student's request – also in the language of the relevant minority group, in case of national or ethnic minority education). This is illustrated by the fact that in 2007 the number of visitors of the Europass homepage was 127000; 43000 CVs and 1300 language passports were filled in Hungarian, while 800 Mobilities, 16000 Certificate Supplements and 31000 Diploma Supplements were issued in Hungary (source: CEDEFOP, Europass portal statistics 2007). However,

turning the Diploma Supplement that had had an information purpose in the first place into an authenticated document in Hungary probably deviated from the original goal of applying this tool: the steps to promote information exchange between the partners in higher education make real sense beyond the gesture only if they are taken by the institutions voluntarily and in a committed way. Since it became an authenticated document, the Diploma Supplement is treated in a way that may easily obscure its original purpose and use. Nevertheless, the Diploma Supplement as an authenticated document is unquestionably more difficult to be misused, and any misuse leads to strict consequences.

The issuing of Diploma Supplements is problematic in spite of the legal obligation; students from several institutions stated that they had only received the document on request. Three institutions out of 26 responding to the survey completed in March 2008 in Hungary, answered that they issued the Supplement only on request and other 3 ones stated that they did not issue such a document, but they were planning to do so in the future (HBs, 2008).

In addition to the institutional production costs, the smooth management of the document is also hindered by problems of adapting the electronic administrative study systems. The proper management of data related to studies at another institution, especially abroad and the recognized credits seems to be a typical problem, as these data must be entered into electronic administrative study systems separately, so that they can be included in the Diploma Supplement in turn. In spite that the implementation of the Diploma Supplement was intensive, the emerging difficulties illustrate that intervention into a complex system has a significant effect on other elements of the working process and reveals hard-to-predict problems, even if it is apparently as insignificant and simple as issuing a document with the details of study.

2.4 MOBILITY

Mobility is not only a success area of the Bologna Process, but also Hungary participates in it successfully. The number of outgoing Hungarian students and teachers visiting institutions abroad increases every year as well as that of incoming students and staff in the framework of Community mobility programmes. The successful operation of mobility programmes is being made possible by the work of the Hungarian national agency as well as by that of institutional mobility coordinators and teaching staff. In more than half of the 26 responding institutions in the survey completed in March 2008 in Hungary, the number of both incoming and outgoing students increased significantly in the past 3 years. In one third of the responding institutions, this increase was less significant and only one institution reported the decreasing number of outgoing students. In another one the number of incoming students diminished (both of these latter institutions are "fachhochschule"-type) (HBs, 2008). This corresponds to the trend observed in the EHEA countries (Crosier et al., 2007).

In 38% of the HEIs, the number of incoming and outgoing students is balanced but in 58% of them there are number significantly more outgoing students than incoming ones. Only one institution reported the number of incoming students being significantly higher than that of the outgoing ones, but this private HEI specializes in teaching foreign students.

In 27% of the institutions the mobility of teaching staff increased significantly in the past 3 years, whereas in 58% of them the increase was only a minor one; and in 12% no changes occurred.

However, no institution reported a decrease, meaning that trends are favourable in this area, too. Every institution has a registry on mobile students; more than a third of these registers also include students outside the Community mobility programmes. We may consider it a positive achievement that all but one institution provides assistance for the incoming students regarding linguistic and cultural difficulties; 31% of institutions provide this service not only for international students but for any student requiring it (HBs, 2008). The service is provided at several institutions with the participation of the Student Union; this arrangement significantly facilitates the integration of international students. A good example is the system of student mentors ("buddies"), introduced by some institutions, which means bonus points when evaluating the student's application for mobility at the institution.

But this area also has to face several problems, aside from the positive impacts and developments. Within the EHEA, the most important problem is that students select target countries and study areas in an unbalanced way. Students from Eastern Europe and the post-soviet block of independent states wish to study in Western Europe while Western European students tend to target North America and the Far East. This means that a significant percentage of students do not wish to participate in mobility programmes within the EHEA but outside it. On the other hand, the implementation of the multi-cycle degree system impairs the selection of the most adequate date for mobility (institutions and teachers prefer student mobility in the MSc cycle; whereas the shorter duration of this cycle restricts possibilities especially if the degree programmes are not flexible enough).

The management mobility faces problems in Hungary, too. In February 2008, at the consultation[8] on internationalization organized by Tempus Public Foundation, institutional coordinators of international affairs unearthed the following major problems: 1. the choice of target countries is still unbalanced, regarding the number incoming and outgoing students (as the mobility routes described above already referred to it) 2. differences between the living standards in the different countries as well as the higher costs of living abroad hinder the mobility of Hungarian students or result in shorter periods spent abroad; 3. visa problems and lately diplomatic and administrative problems arising from Hungary's joining the Schengen Area. In addition, Hungarian HEIs do not publish detailed enough information about themselves, their degree programmes and the subjects taught in foreign languages. As we mentioned in subchapter 2.1.a, highly extensive Hungarian curricula frequently create a situation that foreign students especially those participating only in a certain part of the degree programme are almost unable to manage as they are used to a completely different education philosophy. International coordinators in HEIs try to bridge the gap between European and Hungarian attitudes with different techniques and tricks but these attempts degrades the international reputation of Hungarian higher education. Last but not least, the lack of high quality client-friendly student services (not only accommodation and catering but also general and study-related administration or information in foreign languages) also represents a serious problem.

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8 Good practices and possibilities of internationalising higher education in Hungary; Regional workshop on 26 February 2008 at Kecskemét, Hungary (A felsőoktatás nemzetköziesedésének jó példái és lehetőségei Magyarországon. Regionális konzultációs nap – Kecskemét, 2008. február 26.), *http://www.tpf.hu/pages/subpage/index.php?id=1014&page_id=407*

2.5 INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalizing has been emphasized since the beginning of the Bologna Process, as it is the ultimate goal of several objectives and tools. Used in a particular sense, the term means the level and quality of the international networking activity of institutions, their international presence and the degree programmes and research work with the participation of foreign students. A further indicator of the level of internationalizing, that has been put forward recently, is the number of degree programmes developed together and implemented in an integrated fashion with other, foreign institutions. Regarding this latter aspect, Hungarian universities do not perform very well and it is not solely due to the delayed implementation of the multi-cycle degree system that provides the natural framework for joint degree programmes. Legislative and accreditation limitations and the lack of a teaching staff that is able to teach in foreign languages equally contribute to the lag. According to the data of March 2008 (HBs, 2008), 39% of Hungarian institutions do not participate at all in joint degree programmes (though their vast majority is planning to develop such programmes in the future) and only 8% provide study programmes leading to a joint degree in each of the 3 cycles. However, the proportion of institutions that participate in joint degree programmes in the first cycle is relatively high (27%). Joint degree programmes in the second cycle are provided at 25% of the institutions, which is a rather high proportion especially if we consider that MSc programmes are being introduced now. 11% of the institutions reported providing joint programmes in the PhD cycle, which may be considered a rather low percentage, as doctoral programmes have been operational for a long time in Hungary and PhD programmes are the most international by nature.

Regardless of the actual level of internationalisation, the eagerness to enhance and increase the international appeal of institutions is high; 88% of the respondent institutions indicated the wish to become more attractive. It is interesting to take a look at the international regions targeted by institutions. Western Europe is ranked first (30% of respondents mentioned it), followed by Central Europe (25%) and the Far East (15%). North America was mentioned surprisingly rarely (6%), as states of the former Soviet Union are mentioned almost as frequently (7%). The Arab World, Latin America or Africa were mentioned only a few times (HBs, 2008). This illustrates the uniformity of the plans of Hungarian institutions regarding internationalizing: strategies do not differ profoundly.

As the most preferred target region is Europe, at least according to our data, it is worth examining the information institutions have on the opportunities offered by the EHEA. 31% of the responding institutions stated that the EHEA provided opportunities only for the most competitive institutions and only 18% said the opportunities were equally available for every institution. The same percentage thinks good opportunities are available only for institutions offering transnational programmes. (17% gave the answer "we do not know"). Targets, considerations related to chances and opportunities and future prospects (e.g. directions of programme development that may be considered a challenge) do not seem to be harmonized (HBs, 2008).

Indeed, institutions are rather poorly informed on the EHEA (45% of the responding institutions stated that they were only poorly informed on the creation of the EHEA, 10% hardly had any relevant information; while 5% had no information at all). Thus, it might not be surprising that 44% of the respondents stated the situation was not yet ripe to establish the EHEA no matter how good the original idea was, 7% were sceptic in the matter (they did not believe in the EHEA principle); while 15% had no opinion on the EHEA (HBs, 2008).

One of the conclusions of the workshop on internationalizing (mentioned in the previous subchapter) was that Hungarian HEIs consider incoming international students primarily as a potential financial source (with special regard to the Far East), while the beneficial effects of domestic internationalization on students, tutors and professional staff are less emphasized. However, in the case of the inter-institutional programmes, one of the main goals of partner institutions and their students is to avoid paying tuition fees. Thus, a unique conflict emerges here, between the desired international presence of the institution, to be promoted by partnership co-operations, and the wish to generate income. At the same time, international students cannot be easily lured by Hungarian programmes; Hungarian institutions rarely offer specialized or interdisciplinary courses, especially in foreign languages mainly sought after by international students. Another hindering factor is that reliable information on Hungarian institutions and their programmes is not readily available. The common practice of separating foreign students from Hungarians and teaching foreign language courses separately (especially when the number of students is high) reduces the appeal of these programmes and hiders internationalizing. The "mingling" of foreign and Hungarian students could contribute to intercultural studying and promote the acquisition of the special language of the chosen profession (thus preparing for prospective study trips abroad). Unfortunately, experiences show that foreign students are difficult to retain, as a result of several interacting factors, not mentioned here. According to the first experiences, a significant percentage of students from the Far East quickly left from Hungarian programmes.

3. STUDENT SERVICES AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

3.1 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student support services, with regard to study and career consultancy, are a rather neglected field in the EHEA. Student services are hardly mentioned among the issue important at discussions on professional policies (Crosier et al., 2007). The situation is the same in Hungary, except for career consultancy that has spread fast in recent years in Hungarian institutions, as a result of a Regional Operative Programme related to subsidizing such services[9]. Beside the fact, that the Bologna reforms serve most of all the interests of students, the field also deserves more attention because an increasing number of students in higher education institutions would need more help or support than previously, due to the expansion of higher education in Hungary. Providing equal opportunities (or rather diminishing current inequalities) in access to higher education and participation in tertiary

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9 Approaching the end of the duration of the programme (the end of compulsory sustenance of project results), it is doubtful whether the participating institutions will further support consultancy services.

studies renders the availability of supporting services for individuals particularly important, with special regard to the disadvantaged. As the availability of professional, customer-oriented services has become natural in an increasing number of areas of life also for young people, the unavailability of these in education is increasingly apparent which decreases the attractiveness of higher education institutions. Information services for students, the client management norms and practices of registry offices lag behind other services of everyday life by decades, though they have improved significantly in the recent years.

a. Language training

In Hungary, the position and presence as well as the methods of foreign language training have been subjects for debate for long. The old practice of foreign language departments at universities providing language learning possibilities for free or for symbolic fees was abolished by the austerity measures commonly known as the "Bokros package" (1995) in Hungary, as institutions closed down foreign language departments first (these departments provided different services, among them language training). Since having a state-accredited language certificate (intermediate level) became a prerequisite of issuing degrees, it has been debated even more fervently, whether providing for this prerequisite is one of the regular tasks of higher education institutions or not. It seems that cost reduction criteria have higher priority than the advantages of improving services, despite of the rescripts from the ministry that aimed at clearing the situation. Thus, language learning opportunities (apart from language faculties) vary from institution to institution today. Indeed, secondary education seriously lags behind in this field, with special regard to vocational secondary schools, while higher education did not or would not take over the task, as HEIs generally expect (probably rightfully) secondary schools to provide for foreign language skills while they themselves are willing to participate in providing for the special language skills at best. Yet, this is the field where the economy sets the highest and most obvious demands for graduates.

Most institutions offer Hungarian language training for foreign students. However, in most institutions the inability of students to participate at courses held in foreign languages due to the lack of necessary language skills poses a serious problem. It all points to the fact that diminishing language services works against internationalizing.

b. Student consultation services

Student consultation is an umbrella term for several services. These include, among others, study planning consultation services, developing learning skills (psychological aid) on an individual basis, career consultation services and study information (on studies in the parent or other institutions or in different cycles). The distribution of these services is rather uneven in Hungarian HEIs. In March 2008, 85% of the institutions operated study consultation services; psychological consultation was available in 46%, career consultation in 88% and information on the programmes of other institutions in 62% (HBs, 2008). These proportions are rather favourable. Yet the performance of these services is uneven, according to other surveys. According to the findings of the credit monitoring survey in 2005, students identified insufficient information as one of the most important problems in organizing their studies or participating in the programmes of other institutions (Illés et al., 2005). It is not

very surprising that the comprehensive instrument that is used for organizing the process of higher education which is presently undergoing change, and which allows for decisions on study paths and on mobility at the relevant moments that is the credit system has become significantly more complex. The majority of students can only find their way in the credit system with appropriate and regular study consultation services. However, study consultation services are identified with the information provided by registry offices on the regulations of studies and exams, semester timetables and study schedules. One of the questions of the HBs 2008 also detected uncertainties as to the nature of these services: 18% of respondents stated not knowing what the term referred to; while 45% indicated the incomplete operation of consultation services in the given institution.

There is no expressed demand yet for career consultation on behalf of students. Institutional career offices are trying to survive, so they substitute classical career consultation, i.e. preparing students for getting informed on the labour market and for searching successfully for a job, by business activities hardly compatible with consultation activities, such as supplying labour force, advertising jobs and organizing job fairs.

c. Supporting part-time and parallel degree students

A high proportion of students complete their studies while working or in parallel degree programmes. Hungarian institutions consider their requirements and time management issues as these degree courses operate on a market basis: the majority of these students pay a high tuition fee ("reimbursement of expenses"). Thus, services for these students are provided with more care, if not of higher quality. However, just like in many other European countries, "pseudo part-time" studies are gaining also in Hungary. It means that full-time students that also work besides studying in fact complete their studies in a part-time arrangement. Mass education institutions cannot consider the requirements of the pseudo part-time students and cannot be flexible enough regarding the organizing of courses. Taking the time schedule of students participating in parallel degree programmes into consideration is equally difficult. It particularly puts those students at a disadvantage that do parallel studies in programmes with less flexible curricula. Although some good practices are also known, studies of both (pseudo) part-time and parallel degree students are typically hindered by the poor modularity of Hungarian curricula, even in fields that would allow for it. As mentioned before, curricula usually do not support selection and, being overregulated, flexible individual study arrangements. This is not a new development but a long lasting, chronic problem.

d. Student welfare services

The term covers accommodation (halls of residence) and organizing and information services related to it as well as the provision for sport facilities and organizing community and cultural events. From the responding institutions, 92% provides for accommodation, all but one offers sport facilities and organizes community and cultural events. Though physical education is not compulsory in several institutions, most of them make an effort to provide the facilities for the individual sports needs of students (HBs, 2008).

3.2 STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN PROCESSES AND DECISION MAKING

In Hungary, the high proportion of students participating in the formal decision making bodies of universities and colleges is guaranteed by the law. However, it does not mean that students actively participate in the discussions related to reforms or in the preparation and implementation of changes. It is not only because of the students' relative indifference to higher education issues but also because of the fact that teachers and other professional staff do not involve students in preparing discussions beyond formal situations, so students are poorly informed and do not commit themselves. It is possible of course that students would not gain too much if they were offered higher participation in the discussion of the academic community at a time when Hungarian teaching staff is under-informed and highly sceptical regarding the objectives and the sense of the Bologna Process. Nonetheless, according to the opinion of 52% of teaching and professional staff, students are only moderately interested in the Bologna Process, while 12% stated that students are not at all active in this field. Only 25% thought that students were highly active and inquiring (HBs, 2008).

In the meanwhile, not surprisingly, each institution indicated in its feedback that students were involved in the main decision making bodies whereas only a third of them reported the involvement of students at department level. In two thirds of the institutions, information is provided only in a passive manner and little feedback was received on the involvement of students in other discussions. On the other hand, 10% of the respondents indicated they did not know how to involve students, which is a surprisingly high proportion (HBs, 2008).

The involvement of students (also their voluntarily involvement) is hindered by the operational and election regulations of Student Unions. In many institutions, representatives are elected annually and following the frequently unsuccessful first turn, the election process is drawn out for weeks. The management of institutions, however, has to keep the deadlines. Furthermore, committees and other bodies are filled up with new students after each election and it takes time before these newcomers become fully familiar with the issues. These factors hinder the smooth process of joint thinking and discussions. However, as one head of institutions phrased it, the students are "*partners in everything, provided we convince them that our intentions are honest and we want to improve the quality of higher education together. We even undertake to allow them to express their opinions, horribile dictu to give them a serious thinking. This kind of openness, however, is not characteristic of our public life.*"

The lack of joint thinking with students is regrettable as a major part of the Bologna Process and the changes themselves are implemented for their sake and they are directly affected by most of the changes. Their involvement as well as considering their suggestions and aspects may reduce conflicts and tensions and promote both satisfaction regarding results and the community building activities of citizens of higher education institutions (i.e. tutors, students, professional staff).

4. QUALITY CULTURE, QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality has gradually become a more and more important dimension of the Bologna Process since its beginning. Now, after the completion of structural reforms and with the appearance of Community education policy, it is one of the most important objectives. Questions addressing quality assurance has been in the spotlight since the Ministers responsible for Higher Education declared in Berlin, in 2003, that "*the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.*" Putting forward the quality assurance of institutions represents a significant shift in emphasis and attitude. This shift led to the publication of the document *European Standards for Quality Assurance in the EHEA*, developed by ENQA and approved in 2005 at the Bergen Conference, after thoroughly consultations. Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) also started to disseminate these standards for Hungarian higher education institutions, in order to stress the importance of external and internal quality assurance of institutions. The new Act on Higher Education, that entered into force in 2006 and a governmental decree providing the details for it (Gov. Decree 221/2006) orders the naturalization of the European Quality Award (EFQM Excellence Award), in the form of the Hungarian Quality Award. In 2007, the first call for applications and the evaluation of the applications took place for the Higher Education Quality Award. As this was a public process, it, must have promoted voluntary familiarization with quality assurance issues.

These processes contribute to the ongoing development of a community within higher education that manages quality assurance. Academics are also beginning to see quality assurance as a legitimate profession.

4.1 INTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION

Certain elements of internal quality audits have been present in Hungarian HEIs for a long time, even if in a very different form. The evaluation of teaching staff by students and the assessment of the scientific activity of teachers and researchers form a more or less regular and widespread practice in several Hungarian institutions, though in most cases the consequences of this evaluation practice are not formally regulated. By now, as prescribed by the law, human policy regulations of institutions include detailed regulations and criteria regarding the regular evaluation and progress of teachers. A growing number of institutions also have detailed quality assurance procedures, as a result of quality assurance projects of previous years. Some institutions even operate fully developed, conscious quality assurance systems.

According to the responses, quality assurance managers work in all of the 26 institutions surveyed in March 2008, at institution or faculty level. This must be a well known fact within institutions, as the rate of "I do not know" answers is very low (3%) compared to the average answer pattern. The employment of quality assurance experts may yield significant changes, as illustrated by a personal remark of one respondent: "*Employing quality assurance experts is a great achievement, but the*

expert has to face extreme resistance, as transparency and high quality are not in the interests of some colleagues. I do hope we will be able to keep this expert for a longer time, without ruining his enthusiasm" (HBs, 2008).

65% of respondents indicated that their institutions regularly evaluated their degree programmes, while a further 24% claimed their institutions conducted such internal evaluations irregularly. Only one respondent reported the lack of such internal evaluations, while 10% of the respondents (representing about one third of the institutions) said they did not know whether their institutions operated such a system. As half of the respondents belonging to the latter group work as leading teaching staff, the result may indicate at least a certain level of uncertainty regarding the evaluation of programmes.

86% of respondents stated that their institutions operated individual evaluation processes for teaching staff. Only 6% claimed they had no such system while a further 6% did not know the answer to this question. Respondents giving "No" or "I do not know" answers form a very diverse group regarding jobs, ranks, time spent in higher education and employing institution, so these answers cannot be linked to the poor knowledge of a well defined group of teaching staff or professional staff, or to institutions where no practice exists for the evaluation of teaching staff.

If the question related to evaluation processes is presented regarding researcher groups, the results are much less favourable: 16% of the respondents answered with a definite "no" (most of them from universities) and 32% stated they did not know the answer. Only 28% said their institutions conducted regular evaluations and 23% have irregular evaluations (HBs, 2008).

Uncertainty and the lack of information are even more characteristic regarding the evaluation processes of study supporting services (e.g. libraries, study consultancy, etc.). 42% of respondents "did not know" the answer, 28% indicated regular, while 19% irregular evaluation and 10% said their institutions had no relevant evaluation processes. These results suggest that evaluations of study support services are scant and the related information within the institution is insufficient. These results correspond to findings from all over Europe (Crosier et al., 2007).

The picture is slightly different when reviewing the activities related to the monitoring of specific fields and the relevant data. Quantitative data related to research activities are collected regularly or occasionally in the vast majority of institutions ("I do not know" answers represent 9% in this case).

From the 26 responding institutions in the survey of March 2008, 13 operate career monitoring for every graduated student, while 12 institutions operate a similar, but partial system. Only one institution stated that there is no such system. These results signify large improvements, even though the collection of data from graduates is prescribed by the law, especially when one considers that only a few years ago, alumni clubs, associations and foundations could only be found in a few institutions, and even these worked on a voluntarily subscription basis.

Quantitative data on study activities (subjects taken/abandoned/cancelled, classes, credits) are collected regularly, according to 62% of the respondents, while 22% reported irregular data collection; 13% "do not know" (HBs 2008). These data are surprising, with special regard to the fact that every institution operates electronic administrative study systems. Respondents probably do not consider data input as targeted and conscious data collection; similarly, the vast majority of institutions do not know what to do with the collected data. More detailed questions on the data collecting practice provoke an even higher number of "I do not know" or "no" answers; after all, the lack of interest on behalf of teachers and professional staff regarding institutional data collection

practices is understandable. We have to note though, that these detailed questions addressed the education process and its methods and performance, thus the assumption that respondents are informed regarding these fields might have been a trivial one.

Considering other sources as well, we may conclude that the processes of internal quality assurance are probably not yet fully developed in the institutions, they do not cover sub-processes thus teachers and professional staff do not yet have sufficient information regarding this field. The lack of quality culture is indicated by the fact that where no external forces (e.g. legislation) prescribes compulsory quality evaluations, accreditations or other forms of monitoring, institutions almost naturally "forget" to implement such processes (such as in the case of professional advanced training programmes that may be established and started within institutional competence).

Participants in the survey were allowed to phrase their remarks related to quality assurance. These remarks support the previous assumption and provide an insight into the everyday problems of institutions: "*criteria would be essential to operate the whole system in a purposeful way. They are not yet developed, unfortunately.*" "*The axioms of quality assurance in higher education are immature and obscure at the moment. It is difficult to force teaching staff (and other staff) to accept quality assurance procedures without properly motivating them, as they are overburdened anyway*". These remarks indicate that quality assurance in Hungary has not yet adopted the principles of the referred European Quality Award. Tutors are not only unfamiliar with the goals of quality assurance but they consider it as a "necessary evil" and mock it at every possible occasion. To change this approach and create a positive attitude are challenging tasks indeed.

4.2 ACCREDITATION

Several types of accreditation are in use in Hungarian higher education. Institutions have to be fully accredited every 8 years where the process includes the review of degree programmes, too (the accreditation of PhD schools is a separate process). The new, multi-cycle degree programmes have to be accredited when established and they cannot be started without programme pre-accreditation. A new achievement is the introduction of capacity accreditation for institutions that, in practice, refers to determining the highest number of students the institutions is able to host. Some accreditation criteria are regulated by law, others are prescribed by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC). This arrangement resulted in two approaches and systems of criteria that do not necessarily correspond to each other. Further problems resulted from that no adequate professional forum had been created to determine the overall objectives and criteria of the degree cycles and the criteria for establishing and starting degree programmes. Evaluation criteria were established rather controversially by the HAC, which is also responsible for auditing quality. It means that the roles of the client and the auditor are not separated, which in turn boosted the activity of certain higher education groups lobbying to promote their own causes to have the criteria established according to their interests. As a result, criteria change frequently and their nature renders their objective evaluation and control extremely difficult. The HAC is independent according to the word of the law yet is unable to exercise its independence in practice due to its size. The processes it operates and the accreditation decisions serve latent education policy goals, sometimes they even become a battlefield of interests for various lobbying groups. Considering these facts, the low confidence

regarding both the HAC and the non-transparent decision making process might not be surprising (see Eurobarometer; European Commission, 2007b). Consequently, the initiative of the HAC to put more emphasis on internal quality assurance processes and make them subject to external quality evaluation may be misconceived, as the spoilt reputation of the HAC might affect the attitude towards internal quality evaluation processes as well.

As the comparative European studies of *Trends V* pointed out, harmonizing provident internal quality assurance systems with the accreditation processes may give rise to enormous problems in several cases. Indeed, the Hungarian situation illustrates this finding: the accreditation body mainly performs prescriptive tasks related to the control of the various degree programmes and applies an inconsistent system of criteria when providing a posterior and detailed evaluation for existing programmes and institutions. In those countries, where the accreditation processes target rather the processes and not the institutions themselves, a prevalent tension between accreditation and institutional quality development policies and processes may be observed (Crosier et al. 2007). Accreditation processes "*stand in the way of curricular innovation and reforms, hindering for example interdisciplinary programmes and impeding experiments in the new, multi-cycle degree systems*". As we have pointed out at the end of subchapter 1.1.a, this statement, based on international experience, corresponds to the processes observed in Hungary. Reviewing the list of programmes in the BA and the MSc cycles in Hungary, we may have similar impressions. It is also verified by the international experience mentioned in chapter 2.5, i.e. that foreign students do not find the programmes offered by Hungarian institutions attractive. The finding of the *Trends V* report may also apply to Hungary: "*the accreditation objectives do not necessarily match those of the Bologna Process*".

5. LIFELONG LEARNING AND WIDENING ACCESS

The concept of lifelong learning (LLL) is being adapted in an increasing circle, more and more countries develop their own national strategies related to it, in accordance with the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy of the European Union. The government of Hungary approved the Strategy in 2005 and defined 5 priorities. These priorities are: a) promoting the role of education and training in giving a chance to individuals to fulfil their potential; b) strengthening the links between education, training and the economy; c) adopting new governing methods and public policy procedures; d) improving the efficiency of education and training, increasing investments from society in general; and e) improving the quality of education and training. National objectives are prioritized not only in the LLL strategy but also in the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP). There are also some steps and measures that are not labelled as lifelong learning provisions, yet they promote it. These measures strongly influence higher education, too. Stakeholders in higher education, however, interpret LLL primarily as a synonym for adult education. Clear interpretation and the definition of unambiguous concepts

are not necessarily promoted by the fact that key documents of the Bologna Process also reflect an uncertainty regarding approaches, that may be traced in the strategies of Hungarian institutions, too (Derényi, 2007a). The survey of March 2008 also reflects it: 20% of the respondents stated that LLL was a high priority in their institutions; 49% thought that LLL was a priority along other priorities; while 24% said it had no prominent priority but might gain it later. Four respondents – from four different institutions – indicated the low chances of LLL ever becoming a priority in their institutions (HBs, 2008).

5.1 LIFELONG LEARNING IN PRACTICE

Hungarian higher education institutions, due to the emerging double market fall, recourse to adult education to an increasing extent instead of making an effort to develop traditional degree programmes or reach and involve traditional students. In an international comparison, the number of participants of LLL is low, just as the proportion of those adults within this who participate in adult education. Due to this fact, LLL appears to be a field where higher education institutions may expect to successfully increase their presence.

It is promoted by significant simplification of establishing and launching processes for post-graduate training programmes (institutions may decide about them). As a result, the number of registered postgraduate training programmes, together with those still in the registration process, had exceeded 1000 by the autumn of 2007[10]. The latest amendment of the Act on Higher Education clearly opened the way for HEIs to enter other training fields (see the Act on Higher Education, Art. 4. point [2].) and obviously even further promoted their penetration in the market of adult education (Act on Higher Education, Art. 11. point [4]). These measures were indeed necessary, as the provision of higher education institutions in this field, regarding short term programmes (courses, postgraduate courses, retraining courses) is rather limited, with special regard to those programmes that do not lead to a degree or certificate, only to a qualification. To the relevant question of the national survey of March 2008, 38% of the respondents answered that 10-30% of their programmes may qualify as LLL programmes; whereas 16% mentioned an even higher proportion (30-50%). A proportion lower than 10% was given by 10% of the respondents; while 24% "did not know" (HBs, 2008). Answers do not reflect a pattern that might relate to institutions, i.e. there is no sign of LLL receiving more emphasis according to their regional location, type or size.

However, LLL obviously does not only include adult education or postgraduate study programmes, even though these dominate amongst those defined as LLL in HEIs at the moment. This is also true regarding the number of participants (the ratio of participants over 30 years old is 19.6%; whereas those over 40 represent only 5.5% of all students in Hungarian higher education [European Commission, 2007a]). Activities linked to LLL in the EHEA, such as diplomas for those in work (post experience), continuing professional development and vocational training, staff development, open courses,
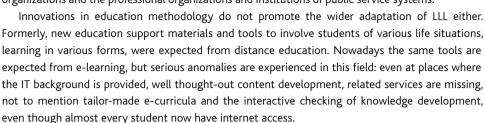
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10 Source: Bulletin of the Higher Education Registry Centre of the Educational Authority (Oktatási Hivatal Felsőoktatási Regisztrációs Központ közleményei), *http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php? folderID=1406&articleID=229459&ctag=arti clelist&iid*

regional development and innovative practices such as junior or senior courses (Crosier et al., 2007), are very poorly represented in Hungary: some institutions already offer vocational (development) programmes and staff development but novel, innovative solutions are still rare. Knowledge transfer by higher education and the educational demands of the wider public have not been harmonized as yet. This task would require active co-operation with regional and municipal forums, non-profit organizations and the professional organizations and institutions of public service systems.

Innovations in education methodology do not promote the wider adaptation of LLL either. Formerly, new education support materials and tools to involve students of various life situations, learning in various forms, were expected from distance education. Nowadays the same tools are expected from e-learning, but serious anomalies are experienced in this field: even at places where the IT background is provided, well thought-out content development, related services are missing, not to mention tailor-made e-curricula and the interactive checking of knowledge development, even though almost every student now have internet access.

To promote the wider adaptation of LLL, it is obviously important to widen access to higher education, to improve on equal opportunities, to change the attitude of students and teachers to studying (2.1.c), to integrate the studies conducted outside the formal programmes and to recognize the knowledge gained from these (2.2) and to improve study consultancy services (3.1.b,c). Some aspects have already been mentioned in the chapters referred to, though in different contexts; the rest are detailed below.

5.2 LIFELONG LEARNING, WIDENING ACCESS AND THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

An important element of strategies at European level is the widening of access to higher education programmes (in order to promote preparing for the challenges of the knowledge-based society) including the involvement of equity aspects and the promotion of equal opportunities. In the EHEA, 97% of HEIs support extended student participation, though only 17% believes in improvement regarding equal opportunities (Crosier et al., 2007). The opinion of teaching and other staff in Hungary is pessimistic from a different angle: in the survey of March 2008, 50% of the respondents considered increasing and widening access as a highly important aspect, whereas according to a further 23%, it was moderately important. Only 4.5% considered this aspect as insignificant, yet 22% opted for the option "I do not know". This latter value may refer either to the intangible presence of this principle in the institution or to ongoing discussion related to the issue (HBs, 2008). Other relevant results suggest the same conclusions.

Regarding the chances of socio-economically disadvantaged students for having a better opportunity to access higher education in the future, only 6% of the respondents thought they would have much higher chances. The ratio of those who said they might have somewhat more opportunities to access higher education was 22%; while according to 25%, nothing will change i.e. opportunities will be the same as now; 24% thought opportunities will diminish to some extent; and 20% said disadvantaged students would have significantly fewer opportunities to access higher education. These opinions are reflected in other dimensions, too: 18% of the respondents thought the EHEA offered better opportunities mainly to wealthier students. This depressing image of the future particularly accentuates the following data: only 32% of the respondents stated

that their institutions needed further measures to widen the access of disadvantaged students; whereas 38% thought such measures were unnecessary. A further 15% said they did not deem such measures necessary as they considered the improvement of equal opportunities to be a task outside the competence of their institutions. ("*It is the Ministry of Education that could or should support disadvantaged students, with special regards to mitigating the problem at a regional level, and not individual, underfinanced institutions*"; "*the national system [related to the application process] is unfair*"). The proportion of those who could not commit themselves in this matter was also 15% (HBs, 2008). The answers may be considered mostly coherent, insofar as the vast majority of those who mentioned the responsibility of the government indicated when answering another set of questions that their institutions did not have the autonomy to make their own decisions or conduct their own businesses for the benefit of the students and the society. However, insufficient autonomy was indicated by more respondents than the proportion of those who named the government as being primarily responsible for providing equal opportunities. Among those who expected the improvement of the future opportunities of disadvantaged students, the proportion of those indicating the insufficiency of institutional autonomy was higher, i.e. these respondents indeed perceive responsibilities beyond the authority of the institutions. Among those respondents that expect no changes regarding the opportunities of disadvantages students or foresee minor restrictions, the proportion of those indicating sufficient levels of autonomy is higher. As for the respondents being the most pessimistic regarding future opportunities for students, again the vast majority also perceived insufficient institutional autonomy. We may conclude that respondents do not consider the potentials of their institutions favourable. Another conclusion that may emerge is that this issue is not yet considered as a priority yet it is one of those problems where tutors and professional staff tend to disclaim institutional (and personal) responsibility.

5.3 LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
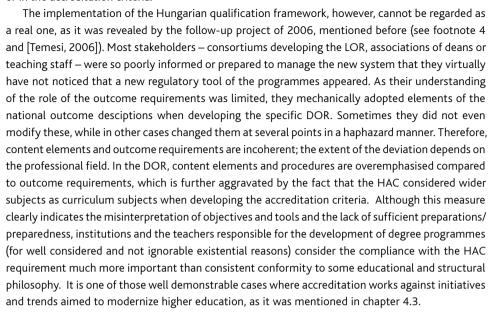
The European Qualification Framework and its predecessor, the higher education qualification framework for the EHEA, approved by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Bergen for implementation is a tool that is designed with the aim of making qualifications and degrees more transparent and the designing and completing of learning paths more flexible. LLL will be one of its most important and most effective tools of the framework. Once the European Qualification Framework is approved by the Parliament, preparations for implementation can start also in Hungary. Formally, the implementation of the framework system is completed by now. The national outcome criteria for the two major cycles of higher education (for every Bachelor and Master programme), defining the learning outcomes identified in the competences, have been developed and published in the form of an annex to the ministerial decree (Annex 1 and its updated amendments to the Min. Decree 15/2006. of the Ministry of Education 15/2006.). These criteria have also been specified at programme level in the completion and exit requirements (CER) for individual Bachelor and Master programmes. This means that the establishment of the qualification framework for two cycles is completed. The National Bologna Committee, phrasing the outcomes adopted from the partial

results of European developments, recommended outcome standards also for higher vocational education and PhD programmes, but these have not yet been incorporated as yet either in the law or in the accreditation criteria.

The implementation of the Hungarian qualification framework, however, cannot be regarded as a real one, as it was revealed by the follow-up project of 2006, mentioned before (see footnote 4 and [Temesi, 2006]). Most stakeholders – consortiums developing the LOR, associations of deans or teaching staff – were so poorly informed or prepared to manage the new system that they virtually have not noticed that a new regulatory tool of the programmes appeared. As their understanding of the role of the outcome requirements was limited, they mechanically adopted elements of the national outcome desciptions when developing the specific DOR. Sometimes they did not even modify these, while in other cases changed them at several points in a haphazard manner. Therefore, content elements and outcome requirements are incoherent; the extent of the deviation depends on the professional field. In the DOR, content elements and procedures are overemphasised compared to outcome requirements, which is further aggravated by the fact that the HAC considered wider subjects as curriculum subjects when developing the accreditation criteria. Although this measure clearly indicates the misinterpretation of objectives and tools and the lack of sufficient preparations/preparedness, institutions and the teachers responsible for the development of degree programmes (for well considered and not ignorable existential reasons) consider the compliance with the HAC requirement much more important than consistent conformity to some educational and structural philosophy. It is one of those well demonstrable cases where accreditation works against initiatives and trends aimed to modernize higher education, as it was mentioned in chapter 4.3.

6. OTHER SYSTEM-LEVEL PROBLEMS

At most of the objectives and development activities of the Bologna Process, touched upon by previous chapters, dysfunctions and insufficiencies may be detected. The extent and quantity of these may hardly be explained solely by the lack of information related to the given issue or the conflict of interests on behalf of some lobby groups. We can safely assume that reasons for the described cases are deep-rooted structural and cultural problems. Therefore, it is worth briefly considering the national status of certain fields, neglected by the BP yet in the focus of attention of EU higher education policy.

6.1 HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AT NATIONAL LEVEL

a. Hungarian higher education policy and the BP

The Hungarian Universitas Program (HUP) published in 2004 (OM, 2004) may be considered as the national higher education policy document as no document has been published ever since to replace, modify or amend this one. However, the objectives determined in the HUP are only partially followed by education governance and the system of higher education. New legislation and development programmes are not necessarily coherent with each other and the transformation of some system elements does not always follow logically from previous processes (see for example the regulation of entrance exams and enrolment; contractual financing; or the introduction of development contribution).

Looking back from where we are now, the most important goal of the Hungarian higher education policy appears to have been the transformation of the degree structure while implementing the BP in Hungary, which it realized by means of regulative decrees without plans or support for implementation. (In the HRDOP 3.3. programme, the subsidy for establishing BA programmes was received post festam by the eligible institutions whose applications were approved after the BA programmes had been modified and submitted for accreditation.) Education governance attempts to implement the other objectives of the BP also by administrative means. Serious deficiencies may be detected concerning the detailed informing of stakeholders and their active (and not only formal) involvement, the wide-scale consultation regarding their points of view as well as relying on the opinion of the management, staff and students of institutions. It was already obvious at the time of officially signing the Bologna Declaration that preparations for the implementation started with a significant delay (in 2002, instead of 1999/2000) and even then in a very hesitative fashion[11]. These preparations were completed rather in a narrow circle (Higher Education and Research Council and experts) than with the participation of institutions. Participants of the consultations, discussions that started in the meantime complained that the path from recommendations to legislation was untraceable.

Many countries have established committees or councils with the participation of stakeholders to coordinate the Bologna reforms. This happened also in Hungary in 2003, when the Hungarian Bologna Committee (HBC) was founded based on the request of the minister for education. However, this body does not have either authority or a budget, it represents higher education stakeholders only in the narrowest sense by its members. Consequently its operation does not bear any actual significance, neither is it transparent; and the committee cannot perform actual coordinating activities. The example of the Teacher Training Subcommittee of the HBC illustrates that relying on more diverse participants and conducting consultations at a wider scale may promote the success of coordinating the reform and of reaching compromises. Attempts have already been made, for

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11 The hesitation of the education policy regarding the BP is well illustrated by the following case: in 2000, when the Széchenyi College (a Fachhochschule-type HEI) was transformed into a university, the institution asked for permission to develop its MSc programme for the college faculties following the Anglo-American model, as a Hungarian pilot institution. The HAC strictly turned down the initiative.

example when the degree programmes for teachers were inserted into the new multi-cycle system, though these attempts in themselves do not mean there were (and are) no heated debates regarding this issue.

b. Management of higher education and the reactions of institutions

However, staff and students of institutions and higher education as a whole view the Bologna Process as a change that conflicts with their interests and goals, with special regard to the changes being forced upon them mostly by means of legislative tools (this attitude is also provoked by reasons mentioned in previous chapters). The acceptance of the Bologna Process is very low, and the confidence in the education governance that implemented the reforms without previous consultation is similarly diminished. It is not only another example of the generally low acceptance of any reform or change in education. This general problem is further aggravated by the formality of consultations i.e. that these had no practical relevance and the legislation does not reflect their results; and the lack of feedback as to who and why had deviant opinions. It also demonstrates the relationship and the poor communication between teaching staff communities and the management and representative bodies of education (Deans' Colleges, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference).

As for the respondents of the survey of 2008 March, only 5% claimed that professional communities are sufficiently involved in the preparations related to higher education policy. The majority of respondents said that this involvement is only partial (45%) or does non-existent (40%). 9% of the respondents chose the "I do not know" option. The result is similar where the question focuses on the extent to which the opinions of institutions are taken into account, instead of the involvement of professional communities: 2.7% of the respondents stated that the opinions had been fully taken into account, while 43% thought that this had happened only partially and a further 43% said it had not happened at all. The rate of those who could not answer this question was also high (10%). Considering all this, it is not surprising that the respondents deem their institutions only moderately successful in attempting to influence the trends of the Hungarian higher educational policy, to enforce their own interests. Only 2 respondents out of 136 indicated that their institutions were successful; while 43% said that their interventions were partially successful. A further 37%, however, gave a definitely negative answer. The rate of respondents who could not answer reached 17% (HBs, 2008). It is remarkable what a high proportion of higher education stakeholders is at a loss when they have to evaluate the capacity of their immediate working surroundings (professional and institutional dimension) for cooperation and intervention and their success regarding the latter. At any rate, we may conclude that this proves the lack of interest and information with regard to higher education policy and its institutional, professional implementation, which is attributed to insufficient information exchange, involvement and professional communication. This finding reflects that these inefficiencies are present not only in the national education governance in Hungary but also at the level of institutions. However, there are also significant differences between institutions (between institutions in Budapest and in the countryside; between universities and colleges) in this respect.

This is also supported by the fact that only 40% of the respondents consider themselves fully informed on the developments within the EHEA; while 45% feel informed only to a small degree and 10% say that they know hardly anything about it. Further 5% state they know nothing about EHEA at all.

On the basis of the above it seems adequate that 13% of the respondents think that Hungarian education policy fully promotes the implementation of the main objectives of the Bologna Process in Hungary. 57% of them reckoned that this was only partially true; while 14% said that the education policy targeted different aims. Four respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the Hungarian education policy and 13% could not answer the question (HBs, 2008).

6.2 ANOMALIES OF INSTITUTIONAL DECISION MAKING AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The indicated lack of enquiry and information within institutions is explained by the fact that 42% of the respondents of the survey of March 2008 said that the Bologna Process was mentioned only rarely or not often enough; while only 19% described the relevant communication as sufficient.

Loyalty to the governance of institutions is also strong: according to two respondents, their colleagues fully agree with the decisions of the management, while a further 64% claim they usually agree. The respondents themselves are even more supportive: 14% of them fully agree with the decisions of the management, while 68% usually agree. Only 15% of the respondents indicated a more critical approach on behalf of their colleagues or themselves. Other questions prove the same approach: 79% and 73% of the respondents, respectively, fully agree with the middle-term institutional plans related to various fields (education, profile), which indicates an extremely convincing support towards the management (HBs, 2008). This level of accord is surprisingly high when compared to the poor communication mentioned before. Studies conducted at micro-level might be able to reveal more detailed relationship structures which are sometimes indicated by the unexpected events or phenomena.

Ignoring conflicts related to reforms is not typical; 55% of the respondents say that they attempt to solve problems by discussions, involving the people concerned (it is worth referring back again to the contradiction between the communication considered as insufficient and this sort of conflict management); while 34% reported on management decisions and a conflict management performed by mediation.

It refers to the effective preparation of decisions that the institutional senate rarely refuses proposals or recommendations according to 56% of the respondents; although it is remarkable that 35% could not answer the question related to this issue (HBs, 2008).

These answers – provided we assume them to be sincere – depict a unique situation of institutional management where the latter works with the agreement and strong support of the senate and the staff and solves conflicts by involving stakeholders; while the interest in reforms is low and information and communication related to them is insufficient. There are several possible explanations regarding this finding. On the one hand, the indifference of stakeholders, and on the other hand, a management style settling conflicts at a personal level instead of in line with reforms and a strong loyalty to the management may be the respective of even the joint explanation of this situation. Meanwhile, another picture may be drawn relying on interviews with managers of institutions and members of economic committees, and on the strategic decisions of institutions as well as the pressure represented by market conditions and the financial restrictions: the present senates that work as representatives of interests are unable to make decisions and the actions of

institutions serve direct, short-term interests (Derényi, 2007b; Matiscsák & Krémer, 2008). Does it imply a double strategy on behalf of institution management? Do they avoid measures that might generate conflicts for the sake of peace within the institution, and implement the necessary changes without the approval of the senate and their staff, based on their own authority?

At the same time it is obvious that the Hungarian higher education system is overregulated: detailed and minute regulations control the operation of institutions, the procedures related to a wide range of activities and the rights, competences and obligations of stakeholders (managers, various groups of teaching and other staff, students). This partially limits the possibilities of institutions, deprives them of flexibility and restricts them from creating and following their own strategies. This restriction may result in indifference within the institution ("everything is prescribed and regulated"). It also diminishes the responsibility of management, while, as a result, success will be interpreted only within the limits of lobbying with officials and education management. The ownership and management structures of institutions as well as their interference play a major role in the development of the present situation.

However, as we understand, the importance of the competitiveness of institutions is recognized by teachers and other staff as well. 31% of them is of the opinion that the EHEA offers the best possibilities mainly for the most competitive institutions, and only 18% reckons that the EHEA benefits every institution (HBs, 2008).

By all means, further research is necessary to clear this interesting as well as controversial image and to understand it in depth.

6.3 SIZE OF INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK – STATE, PRIVATE AND CHURCH INSTITUTIONS

Nowadays, one of the questions asked most frequently and also in the most various contexts is the situation of institutional network in Hungarian higher education. In the previous decades the Hungarian institutional network, often formed by political interests, consisted of some major and an excessive number of minor and specialized state institutions. The number of higher education institutions well exceeded the needs of the country. This network eventually became integrated (i.e. the minor HEIs were merged into major universities with several faculties), by the year 2000, as ordered by the Act LII/1999, after a long period of preparation and lobbying that were biased by political interests as well. Individual institutions operating in the same town were merged into one HEI belonging to the town. In many cases, institutions of minor towns were annexed to the HEIs 50-60 kms away which had headquarters in bigger towns. This merger took place in Budapest as well, where naturally several major universities were formed by the end of the process. As a result, the number of state institutions decreased significantly. However, some of them, both major and minor ones, "managed" to stay out of the process. Besides reducing the number of institutions, the compulsory integration had a more practical and substantive goal as well: to allow for the reduction of operational costs by ending or merging parallel structures, organization and research units and activities within the established major, multi-faculty institutions. The number of state institutions that underwent this transformation is 31 at present (source: Education Office). According to the relevant experiences, the success of this goal of the integration process is rather doubtful: the

willingness of faculties and organization units to cooperate is worse than it was nearly a decade ago. Due to the forced nature of the merger, the isolation of institutions and the protection of organizational "autonomy" is much stronger than it was before the integration; the separation of previously individual institutions is reproduced to an extreme extent within the integrated institution, by the separation between faculties and institutes. This tendency is indicated by processes such as providing partial inner autonomy for certain professional fields (it is also included in the legislation as a result of lobbying see e. g. health centres, agricultural centres); following this model inner organizational structures are designed in a way to recognize the autonomy of previously independent institutions (e.g.: by today, the centres of the University of Debrecen copy the structure existing before the integration). The assurance of (inner) autonomy blocked active cooperation as well. Today, faculties of institutions – especially those that used to be independent institutions, farther away from the headquarters – hardly know each other, neither do they cooperate, and in many cases the management is busy maintaining the fragile balance created between them. The work of decision making forums is basically determined by the fact that representatives of faculties, entering temporary coalitions, protect their own interests instead of considering the long-term interests of the institution. This archaic and chaotic situation resembles the present state of higher education in the South-Eastern European (post-Yugoslavian) countries, while the other member states of EHEA do not even hide their "horror" when faced with it (Crosier et al., 2007).

The questions raised by the integration of the institution system (size efficiency, extreme number of institutions) highlighted two processes that counteract integration. On the one hand, the integration did not, could not cover private institutions. The overwhelming majority of church-financed institutions are extremely small colleges providing religious education. There are 26 church institutions in Hungary at present. For the top maintainer of institutions, the Roman Catholic Church, the agreement signed by Hungary and the Vatican, and the act (LXX/1999) ratifying it guarantees that "*the rate of state-funded students cannot be less than it was in the first academic year in 1997*". Thus, the demand of state institutions that emerged during the discussions on the preparation of the new act on higher education that came into force in 2006 – i.e. they asked to be treated the same way as church institutions – is justified to some extent.

Not only the number of church institutions, but also that of private institutions (maintained by foundations and businesses) increases continuously. There are two private universities and 12 private colleges in Hungary at present and the establishment of further 7 institutions is in progress[12] . After the accreditation procedure, the Hungarian State recognizes and grants a licence for operation to these; some of them even admit state-funded students. Thus, the number of national institutions by today well exceeds that before the integration, and the proportion of minor colleges is high. This process still outrages those units of the integrated HEIs that used to operate individually before being legally forced to merge, 8 years ago.

In addition, there are also 20 foreign HEIs in Hungary, although their overwhelming majority reflect a virtual situation and they only became visible due to the latest legislation. If a Hungarian HEI – as a contracted recipient institution – offers the programme of a foreign institution, it has to be

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12 Source: the homepage of Education Authority, *http://www.oh.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=1347*

licensed and the foreign institution will be registered at the Education Authority. The headquarters and postal addresses of these foreign institutions, with a few exceptions, are registered at Hungarian institutions.

Meanwhile, representatives of state education management often declare, referring to the data on demographic decrease, that there are too many HEIs. They established a competition-based admission procedure whose unconcealed aim is to induce the liquidation of the institutions less successful in enrolment. However, in 2007 and 2008, this procedure had a negative impact mainly on state institutions operating in small towns. These institutions started to collect information on the possibilities of merging with major state institutions; one of the colleges already implemented the merger (Berzsenyi Dániel College). Due to the partial autonomy ("regional centre") provided by the law, the merger does not however make a significant difference either regarding the competitiveness of the rural institutions or of the major recipient ones, as a result of the aforementioned reactions that prevent integration from reaching its aim. At the same time, this situation geopardizes higher education provision in rural areas (counties and small regions) and the degree programmes available for them, thus hindering their development. It may easily and rightfully turn into a political issue, if a small town loses its traditional image, intellectual background and identity because of the liquidation of the institution that has been operating there for decades. It is a significant problem that Hungarian higher education governance did not have a coherent concept on "higher education geography", did not resist the multiplication of providers and is unable to compensate the draining effect of the capital and to protect the small institutions that are have a long history and are locally important in their own right. The gaps opening on the market are aggressively filled by private institutions, most of which are established in Budapest. (Four out of 5 private HEIs recently established function in Budapest). These institutions take advantage of the extremely strong attraction of the (scientific, professional and cultural) infrastructure of the capital, thus strengthening the process that inspired several state and private institutions with headquarters outside Budapest to establish training places in Budapest as well.

These processes and the reactions of the education governance suggest the lack of a coordinated higher education policy concept for the complex managing of a conscious institutional network development, regional development objectives and the reduction of unequal opportunities between state and non-state funded institutions.

7. FUTURE CHALLENGES

A major 3-year tertiary education survey of the OECD, that will be completed in a few months time[13], which revealed general trends by a thorough and diverse analysis of tertiary education situation in 26 countries, identified challenges and defined goals for tertiary education policy in 8 areas (Santiago et al., 2008). All of them should be given consideration also for Hungarian higher education (even though Hungary did not participate in this large-scale survey). Listing general challenges would probably be hardly relevant enough. Challenges faced by the Hungarian higher education are better summarized while considering the problems identified in the previous chapters of this study. However, we must to consider international experiences, too.

1. The reform of the degree structure will come to an important phase in the near future: the ascension of Master programmes will allow us to review the whole degree process. It will be possible to compare the original concepts and the actual implementation regarding education development. We will be able to examine how successfully Master programmes are built upon the Bachelor programmes and how they both prepare students for the PhD cycle. All this create an opportunity to revise curricula and rearrange contents and outcomes of Bachelor and Master programmes. However, this revision needs to be coordinated. There is no point in examining Bachelor and Master programmes separately again.

In addition, it will be possible to analyse experiences of employers and alumni related to the first Bachelor graduates entering the labour market, which may provide further data for the improvement of degree programmes. We need to identify coordination mechanisms that help the well-balanced implementation of this manifold revision and allow for considering the processes and demands of the labour market in curriculum development.

2. A major challenges to be faced by Hungarian education governance is the duly prepared cutting down of the jungle of regulations that paralyze Hungarian higher education. It is especially relevant in order to loosen the overregulation of establishing and launching study programmes and to eliminate the obstacles raised by the pre-accreditation of programmes; so that HEIs gain sufficient independence and that they can establish and launch innovative study programmes or specialised inter- and multidisciplinary courses. Reforms must take place in order to reflect the functional diversity of the institution system in the areas of the provision of study programmes and of institutional profiles. However, current overregulation prevents these actions.

The restrictive legislative framework need to be softened so as to develop curricula, introduce new, innovative educational methods and implement study-oriented techniques. According to extensive international experiences, creativity and innovation are in direct proportion with the autonomy of institutions and their freedom to choose their own markets and design adequate programmes, methods and forms according to the demands of the chosen markets. The nature

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13 The original study was prepared in November 2007. The OECD Tertiary review was accomplished in May 2008. (Translator's note)

and allocation of responsibilities related to these tasks also need to be determined, as without these the freedom of movement and innovation cannot be interpreted.

3. All these developments in education are impossible to implement without the substantial revision of degree and outcome requirements and without abandoning the counterproductive components of content and procedural elements. Also, an extensive revision program with many participants may create the opportunity to address the details, difficulties and advantages of outcome regulation and to learn its use. Without this deeper understanding, of the diverse possibilities created by the use of outcomes cannot come alive.

We have to mention here the change of attitude that helps students in designing their study paths and making decisions, to promote LLL. This change of attitude requires, on one hand, a more effective cooperation with the institutions of other educational subsectors and the extension of partnerships, and, on the other hand, the proper, practical and purposeful use of qualification frameworks and their tools.

Besides increasing autonomy and independence, considerable implementation programmes have to be launched to promote the renewal of approaches and methods. However, this is not merely the responsibility of education governance; higher education bodies – with special regard to the Hungarian Rectors' Conference – have to cooperate actively in their successful implementation. International experiences demonstrate that change is really successful only where various stakeholders realise their objectives together, by means of intensive discussions and colliding their opinions in continuous debates. Georgia sets a good example that may be an instructive model for this approach (Crosier et al., 2007). In Hungary, such an approach would require a profound change in attitudes, though.

4. A major challenge, affecting almost every stakeholder, is represented by the speed and scope at which Hungarian institutions will be recognized by international higher education. Key factors may be the launch of joint degree programmes, joining degree consortiums and partnership networks and the urgent development of degree programmes available in foreign languages regarding their numbers, quality, and integration within the institution. Besides the primary criterion of internationalisation, the next few years will prove how appealing the international image of Hungarian institutions will be (including cooperations related to degree programmes in Hungarian language in the Carpathian Basin), whether institutions will be able to find their niches in international higher education according to their competitiveness and provide quality services there. The ability of institutions to internationalise within campus also represents a challenge for the future.

5. Social and demographic changes in Hungary emphasise the importance of guaranteeing equal opportunities and equity. These aspects not only affect enrolment, but also presume the improvement of student support and consultation culture within the institution. Regarding enrolment, it is a basic challenge whether education governance and higher education institutions will be able to manage the challenges emerging from the different institutional roles and the various demands for higher education in certain regions. Furthermore, teachers and professional staff have to face the challenge of easing the mounting tension raised by the demands for innovative, increasingly complex teaching methods to manage a student population much more diverse than previously regarding both composition and goals, also burdened with unequal opportunities, on the one hand, and those for preserving the teaching traditions of higher

education that are based on research, on the other hand. Involving students in joint thinking and discussions on how to solve these problems appears to be as essential as improving the quality and customer orientated approach of student services.

6. Another big challenge is to support the reform of the accreditation culture in order to promote inner processes of quality assurance based on standards and trust, and a new quality culture, building on the external evaluation of these processes.

7. Increasing the independence of institutions and promoting their freedom to decide, as mentioned before, are also key elements. They include the principle of unrestricted choice regarding mechanisms of management, organization and decision-making, in order to meet external requirements successfully. In this respect, challenges are represented not only by the conflicts arising as a result of unorthodox choices and implementing or experimenting with new mechanisms. The problems caused by the unfruitful past history of the new Hungarian Act on Higher Education (unfruitful in this respect, at least) and the limits represented by the legally excluded solutions also need to be considered.

8. To be able to successfully respond to all these challenges, it is essential to measure the performance of teachers (and of other professional staff) at work, to render accountability a common practice and to implement the application of incentives and sanctions, because significant changes will be impossible without reforming the present working culture of higher education. In addition, the commitment of staff has to be improved, too: as long as tutors do not consider their institutions as their own and they do not feel that their future is in their own hands, they will 'vote for today' without any further consideration. All their opinions will be those of "a stranger and not of the inner improver". This is obviously not only a financial issue, although it is hard to achieve significant changes in this matter without suitable resources.

These challenges will not be manageable without restoring the diminished trust of stakeholders. The restoration and maintenance of this trust requires the participants' constant cooperation and efforts. Important elements are the effective participation in the development of higher education policy, assuming roles with clear contents, transparent articulation of interests, and providing for the harmonization of opinions and individual aims regarding stakeholders. This is the field where first an innovative agreement needs to be concluded in Hungary before signing the new one between higher education and society, as recommended by one of the basic documents of Community higher education policy (European Commission, 2005). The revision of processes so far suggests, however, that a system is probably unable to cope with both structural and contextual changes, happening at the same time. Thus, the development of a clear higher education policy should be essential, within the frame of the urged "general agreement", where various tasks should be scheduled carefully, in order to prevent their counteracting or the (re)emerging of demands and tasks impossible to fulfill.