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REPORTS FROM
POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

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1. Towards Bologna***1.1. Give a brief description of policy developments and legislative reforms in higher education in your country***

According to the newly adopted law on higher education establishing sound and responsive higher education system that meets European standards has become a top priority. Attaining this goal in a relatively short period of time, through the given resources and in line with the progressive development is an essential precondition for sustainable development, social cohesion, economic growth and international co-operation. Despite the multiple attempts of the Georgian government to restructure the old soviet system since 1991 (see Appendix II.), the progress was not tangible. Quite opposite, the mix of old and new models engendered considerable repercussions, such as corruption, favoritism, nepotism and the most alarming - dilution of quality. The first actual steps towards legislative reform had been taken in June 2001, when the parliament of Georgia initiated a project aiming to determine the main directions of higher education development in Georgia. A task force of Georgian and European experts had been immediately set up. Consequently, eleven background papers had been drafted on the higher education system of Georgia. The papers covered such topics as, accreditation, attestation, licensing, quality assurance, student admission, academic staff, financing, evaluation, governance, private higher education institutions (HEI), and labour market. Students were involved in drafting the texts alongside with more than 20 local and international universities and institutions. In March 2002, the parliament adopted a decree on the "Main Directions of Higher education Development in Georgia". The decree contains the aims, objectives and principles of Georgian higher education system that are also defined in the recently adopted Georgian Law on Higher Education (December, 21, 2004). After having adopted the decree, the Speaker of the Parliament and the Head of a Subcommittee for Education, Science and Technology addressed the Council of Europe, Open Society Georgia Foundation, and the International Institute of Education Policy Planning and Management with the request to proceed works on the draft Law on Higher Education. Those institutions set up an expert group composed of more than 40 representatives of various leading HEIs, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The group convened almost weekly during September 2002 - February 2003. In November 2003, it was put high on the agenda to enforce the draft law. Therefore, from August till November 2004, the meetings had been

held in all parts of the country and the draft law had been presented to all the stakeholders. The remarks expressed at the meetings had been taken into consideration to the maximum. Eventually, the parliament adopted the law on December 21, 2004. The law serves as a driving force towards integrating Georgia with the Bologna Process. Namely, the law stipulates that all HEIs should move to three-cycle degree system (bachelor, master and doctoral). Although, in Georgia all HEIs are officially declared autonomous since 1992, the newly adopted law reformulates the essence of institutional autonomy and further approximates it to the definition formulated in the Prague Communiqué. The Law also stipulates the introduction of modular programmes; tools for recognition of degrees such as diploma supplement and ECTS, Unified National Admission Exams based on the principles of transparency and meritocracy; system of quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation. Also, the law envisages changing the system of financing, enhancing student self-governance and their participation in decision-making, as well as life-long learning, internationalization, accessibility, and synergy between research and education etc. In March 2004, according to the presidential decree № 81, former Ministry of Education of Georgia had been entirely reorganised and it became The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

2. National organisation

2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies (For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

The official bodies responsible for higher education at central level are the Parliament of Georgia (the Committee of Education, Science, Culture and Sport), the Government, The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport. The Parliament of Georgia determines the basic directions of higher education policy and elaborates appropriate legislative acts. Also, occasionally hears the reports from the Minister of Education and Science about the state policy implementation, financial activities and execution of state educational programmes. The government of Georgia carries out the state policy in the area of higher education. Determines the amount of state grants and establishes a legal entity of public law - HEI. The Prime Minister is authorised to appoint the directors of Unified National Examination Center and the State Accreditation Service. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is entitled to carry out a unified policy in higher education, prepare basic document containing the indicators on higher education, present to the government the volume of state grants, the terms of reference and amount of money for social programmes, issue licences to private HEIs, determine the conditions for recognition of foreign degrees etc. The Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport is entitled to establish in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia a legal entity of public law - the HEI of arts and sport. Besides, the Ministry is responsible for carrying out normative acts in those specific HEIs as well as provides programme financing of HEIs of arts and sport.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure (For example, number of public/private universities/other higher education institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector)

Nowadays two types of HEI-s operate in Georgia: University and Institute. University represents a multi-disciplinary higher education institution that is entitled to award bachelor, master and doctoral academic degrees in various fields of science. Institute is entitled to

award only the the bachelor and master degrees in one or several cognitive disciplines (See statistical data in the Appendix 1.). The HEIs encompass faculties, library (one or more) and auxiliary structural units such as rector's office, office of a chancellor, chancellery and secretariats of the governing bodies. The governing bodies of a HEI are Academic Board, Senate, Rector, Chancellor and a Quality Assurance Service. The heads of the governing bodies are elected according to the universal, direct and egalitarian elections through secret ballot. The rector is elected by the Academic Board through secret ballot. Academic Board facilitates integration of Georgian higher education system with the European area of higher education and elaborates cooperation, mobility, integrated study and scientific research programmes etc.

2.3. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?

To date, both the state and private HEIs are covered by the Georgian Law on Higher Education (2004). The law regulates legislative and financial aspects of higher education, defines the objectives of different degrees, prescribes division of responsibilities between executive and legislative powers, defines admission criteria and provides regulations for licensing and accreditation of higher education institutions. However, governance of private HEI-s is regulated by the appropriate legislation. Besides, the “Georgian Law on Basics of Issuance of Licenses and Permits for Entrepreneurial Activity” (1999) considers activities of private HEI-s as entrepreneurial and makes them subject to licensing (Appendix II). However, both state and private HEI-s have to undergo accreditation and all accredited HEI-s have the same rights.

3. Quality assurance

If the answer to any of the questions 3.1. to 3.3. is no, what are your plans in the respective direction?

3.1. Does your country have a national quality assurance system? What are the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved?

The quality assurance system is being developed in Georgia. A number of universities have already set up the quality assurance bodies within their structures and they are responsible for assuring high quality education through up-to-date provision and evaluation methods. Besides, through the two year TEMPUS-TACIS project, launched in 2001, the committee and center for quality assurance has been established at the Tbilisi Grigol Robakidze University and Batumi State University. In 2004, the Batumi State University prepared a comprehensive report on the quality assurance mechanisms and procedures based on their own experience. The present law on higher education stipulates that all HEIs should have quality assurance services within their governing bodies and they should be entitled to supervise, control and ensure the quality of education at the appropriate institution. The quality of study and research activities at a HEI as well as of the staff is subject to systematic evaluation. Students shall take part in the evaluation process and the results will be public and accessible to everybody. The quality assurance services of a HEI are required to establish tight cooperation links with the appropriate bodies abroad in order to ensure transparent criteria for quality control and to formulate up-to-date methodologies for quality control. Academic Board of a HEI is authorised to nominate the Head of the Quality Assurance Service and Senate is entitled to approve him/her. The Quality Assurance Service prepares the

self-evaluation reports for accreditation.

3.2. Does your national quality assurance system include evaluation of programmes or institutions, external review, international participation, participation of students, the publication of results? (If yes, please describe)

According to the Georgian Law on Higher Education, the quality assurance system includes evaluation of HEIs and programmes through self-evaluation, external review, participation of students and publication of results. Through the evaluation of HEIs compliance of the material and human resources of a HEI with the minimum criteria stated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is assessed. All the state and private HEIs have to undergo the procedure, otherwise it might become a reason for not issuing license or shutting down an institution. Evaluation of programmes includes assessment of credibility of aims, objectives and content of a programme; its methodology, organization and assessment criteria; achievements of students and individual work with them, resource provision for teaching; potential mechanisms for raising the quality of teaching etc.

3.3.. Does your national quality assurance system include accreditation, certification or comparable procedures? (If yes, please describe)

Quality of higher education is the top priority of the Georgian Law on Higher Education. The law envisages introducing the system of accreditation as a mechanism for quality assurance. Accreditation is the process of quality evaluation that confirms the correspondence of a HEI with the minimal requirements of the quality of higher education. Only the accredited HEI exercises a right to issue the state recognized diplomas. Besides, only the accredited HEI may receive the state financing. In order to assure the state accreditation process, the law envisages setting up an accreditation body at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Unfortunately, so far the Constitution of Georgia does not allow setting up an independent accreditation body. For that, it is necessary to introduce amendments within the Constitution. After introducing the amendments the Ministry will be limited to a right to recognize the results of the accreditation body and grant the accreditation. Accreditation is obligatory for the state HEIs and voluntary for private HEIs. The accreditation process has two forms – institutional and programme. Institutional accreditation is the process of evaluation of the basic resources and capabilities of a HEI and is the precondition for a programme accreditation. Should a private HEI wish to undergo the accreditation process, it has to apply to the state accreditation service. The latter sets up a commission of experts that carries out the procedure within this institution. In case if the study and teaching conditions meet the minimum quality standards, the HEI or the programme will be accredited. As a rule the accreditation is granted for maximum 5 years and for 2 years in case of granting conditional accreditation. In 2004-2005 the accreditation process will determine the list of state and private HEIs that will be granted a right to participate in the Unified National Admission Exam system. The accreditation shall also determine the maximum number of places to be occupied within each accredited HEI. The first institutional accreditation will be entirely financed by the state. Afterwards the HEIs will be required to cover the accreditation expenses themselves.

4. The two-cycle degree system

4.1. Has your country introduced a national degree system for higher education based on

two main cycles (equivalent to a BA/MA structure)?

(If yes, please describe - for instance, are two-cycle degrees optional or obligatory for the institutions? - If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?)

The two-cycle degree system has been introduced in Georgia since 1992. Presently, the law stipulates introduction of a three cycle degree system - bachelor, master and doctoral. The system is obligatory and duration of a bachelor programme should not exceed 4 years or be less than 3 years, a master programme should not be less than 2 year and a doctoral programme 3 years. After completion of each stage, a diploma is issued together with the Diploma Supplement. A person with a secondary education or education equal to it may commence studies at a bachelor level. A person with a bachelor degree or equal to it can enter the master degree studies. Bachelor studies is the first stage of a higher education and encompasses such programmes that envisage extended theoretical teaching of subjects necessary for admission to a master level or applicable at a labour market. The aim of master studies is to upgrade qualification, change profession or train a specialist for a research work or pedagogical activities at HEIs. The master degree studies should contain a research project of such a quality that can significantly enlarge the stock of knowledge and be regarded as a qualification work.

4.2. Are different orientations of degrees embedded in the system e.g. through a legal division between academic and professional degrees, or through a binary system of institutions?

The law on higher education stipulates that a one stage degree programme should be established for providing professional qualification and it should last for 3-5 years (5-6 years for medical professions). The aim of the programme is to equip an individual with practical skills and knowledge. The graduate shall receive an appropriate diploma, that gives him/her access to labour market or a master programme provided that the total amount of credits corresponds to bachelor degree requirements.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

5.1. If your country has not ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, when do you plan to do so?

Georgia signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1997 and the Parliament of Georgia ratified it in June, 1999. The official body responsible for academic recognition in Georgia is the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia that also serves as a Georgian ENIC. It was first founded in 1994 when the Division of Science was being commissioned to evaluate diplomas issued by universities of foreign countries and confirm the authenticity of diplomas issued by Georgian HEI-s. At an institutional level the academic board of a HEI sets the rules for recognition of degrees issued by other HEIs.

5.2. Does every student graduating in your country receive the Diploma Supplement?

- *automatically and free of charge?*
- *in a widely spoken European language?*

If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?

The law on higher education defines that the Diploma Supplement is a document issued by a HEI automatically. Several universities in Georgia (Tbilisi Medical State University, Georgian Technical University, International Black Sea University etc) have already issued

the DS in English and free of charge. In October 2004, a special seminar on the Diploma Supplement was held at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. At the seminar, it was explained in details how to fill in the diploma supplement and the representatives of HEIs had been required to issue it automatically, free of charge and on one of the internationally spoken languages in 2005.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

According to the Article 49 of the law on higher education the rules for awarding the doctoral degree are:

1. The right to take doctoral courses exercises the holder of a master's degree or a person having qualifications equal to the master's degree;
2. The HEI shall provide the doctoral student with a supervisor, create appropriate conditions for conducting valid and reliable research and assist a student to integrate with the international pool of researchers.
3. After successful defense of the dissertation, a doctoral candidate shall be awarded an appropriate academic degree;
4. An academic degree of a Doctor shall be awarded by the Dissertation Board of the faculty attached to the higher education institution according to the established requirements.

However, until June 30, 2006 the old two-tier system (Candidate of Science and Doctor of Science) of scientific degrees will exist in parallel with the academic degrees. It will be supervised by the Board of Scientific Experts of Georgia

6.2. What are the links between higher education and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

According to the law on higher education, one of the main priorities of the state policy is to assure academic freedom of study and research, provide and develop the necessary conditions for research and approximate the Georgian research system with the European standards. Besides, the law on higher education underlines the primary significance of the research within HEIs. The Academic Board of a HEI is entitled to approve the research programmes and determines the rules of evaluation of a research work. The law stipulates that funds for conducting a master and doctoral degree research will be extracted from the state research fund on a competitive basis and in view of priorities determined by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country *(For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)*

The law stipulates creating appropriate conditions for encouraging mobility and free movement of students, teachers, professors and researchers. Currently, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has established bilateral cooperation agreements with

Russia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, Romania, the Baltic States, The Netherlands, England and Japan. In order to facilitate the mobility of students at the accredited HEIs foreign citizens can also be enrolled provided that their prior qualification is compatible with the local requirements. The share of annual state grant on foreign citizens is determined as 2% of total and the available places for foreign citizens at accredited HEIs can be 5% of the total. Also Georgian students may take their study grants to any accredited university abroad. Problems connected with issuing visas still exist in Georgia. However, study visas are obtained more easily than other types of visas.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

Georgian students actively participate in international exchange programmes and pursue their studies in Germany, France, USA, UK, Sweden, Switzerland etc. The main funding and advising international institutions in Georgia are: The International Student Advising Center (ISAC), The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Open Society-Georgia Foundation (OSGF), International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic), the British Council, and the Fulbright commission. The World Learning/START Caucasus Georgia has also started to administer similar programmes for USAID. Besides, a considerable number of students have acquired education abroad through Muskie/FSA Graduate Fellowship and the Swedish Institute/Sida programs. Apart from it, Georgia participated in the higher education cooperation programmes of the EU, such as TEMPUS - TACIS etc. In order to facilitate mobility of foreign students to Georgia a number of HEIs offer both degree programmes and modules in widely spoken international languages (mainly English, German and Russian). It is stipulated that the introduction of the Diploma Supplement and ECTS at all the accredited universities will significantly facilitate mobility of students and staff.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

Until now the basic factors facilitating mobility of teachers and staff were the grant schemes supported by a number of international organizations. Currently the law stipulates that international cooperation and mobility of teachers is the basic precondition for ensuring high quality at HEIs. The ongoing reform envisages attaching a great importance to constant professional development of teachers and staff; therefore, their participation in mobility schemes shall be supported at a state level.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

Pursuant to the law on higher education, teachers are entitled to take a one-year leave of absence for a research work or update their qualifications locally or abroad. Besides, HEIs attach greater importance to the skills of a teacher to travel and teach or study abroad (such as language skills etc.). Recently, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has signed a number of cooperation agreements with Spain, Romania, Lithuania etc. where it is stipulated to exchange higher education teaching staff, doctoral students etc. (2 persons annually per country) and provide them with appropriate conditions for living, teaching and research.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

The law on higher education provides solid basis for the autonomy of HEIs. It is especially important for the state institutions. Autonomy of HEIs includes academic autonomy and self-governance. Pursuant to the law, academic autonomy means freedom of a HEI to determine independently its strategy, methodology and contents of teaching and research. Self-governance implies that HEI itself determines the governing bodies, distributes its financial resources (including the state allocations for teaching), disposes its property, employs staff and decides about the internal personnel policy, employment criteria, the forms and amount of remuneration, the quota of students and additional criteria for their admission, the norms of ethics and disciplinary responsibilities. The state HEIs can be established only according to the criteria stated in the law. In addition, the law determines the title, aims, function, activities and property of a HEI. According to the law, state HEIs elect the members of a Senate and Academic Board. The Senate consists of representatives elected at faculties through the quota system (associate professors, assistant professors, professors and students). The number of students within the Senate should not be less than 1/3. The Academic Board consists of professors elected at faculties (one from each faculty). The Academic Board elects the Rector. The Rector nominates the candidacy of a Chancellor and the Senate approves him/her. The Chancellor is the highest administrative post of a HEI and it is the head of Senate. The Rector, Chancellor and Academic Board jointly elaborate a budget proposal that should be approved by the Senate. The Senate approves a Charter of the HEI and introduces amendments if necessary. It also approves the terms of employment, norms of ethics and disciplinary responsibility. It hears and approves the annual reports of the Chancellor. It is also entitled to take decision about termination of responsibilities of the Chancellor before the term of office expires. An Academic Board approves the strategic plan of a HEI, the study and research plans and programmes, and the academic degrees awarded by the faculty. According to the legislation, Rector is the highest governing post in a HEI and acts as a head of Academic Board. The essential part of the governance of HEIs is the Quality Assurance Service – the main body responsible for the quality of teaching. The law separates the functions of a HEI and its structural units – faculties, as the governing bodies. The rights and autonomy of faculties have increased significantly. While elaborating the budget, Academic Board relies on the suggestions of the faculties. The Academic Board only approves the teaching and research programmes and plans elaborated by the faculty. The faculties themselves may confer academic degrees.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

The fact that all the stakeholders took active part in drafting the Georgian Law on Higher Education already indicates to the strong will of the government to involve them at all levels of higher education governance (See 1.1).

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level? (For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

The Law on Higher Education stipulates that students shall have the right to: a) get quality education; b) take part in scientific activities; c) utilise technical, librarian, informational and other facilities of a HEI; d) get comprehensive information regarding the activities of a HEI

including financial and economic information; e) elect and be elected in the management bodies of a HEI and the faculty; f) move to another higher education institution and request to transfer his/her own funding allocated by the state; g) get scholarship, financial or material aid as well as other types of benefits from the state, a HEI or other sources; h) elect the teaching programme and relevant teaching force in the case of option provided; and i) take part in formulation of individual teaching plans. The student self-governance body is set up at a HEI through universal, egalitarian and direct elections. Student self-governance envisages: a) student participation in the governance of higher education, b) observation of student rights, c) election of representatives at faculty Boards, d) elaboration of proposals directed towards improvement of quality and the governing system of a HEI. The proposals may be presented to a faculty Board, Senate and Academic Board. The administrative bodies of a HEI are not allowed to intervene in the activities of student self-governance.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

In Georgia everyone has a right to get a free education in any state HEI regardless of gender, race, nationality, social and economic status, type and nature of activities, world views, belonging to parties, attitude towards religion, religious conscience, state of health, place of residence and other circumstances. This right shall partly be secured by the new admission system. The law stipulates that since 2005-2006 academic year, totally new model of entrance exams will be introduced in Georgia. The exam is referred to as "Unified National Entrance Exams" and will be held by the examination center that is not affiliated to any HEI and is accountable to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. All the accredited HEIs shall be required to enroll students only through the National Exams and everyone with the documentation of a completed secondary education has a right to pass the exams. Those students who accumulate the highest scores will get the state grant that is absolutely flexible and ranges from 900 GEL (approx. 360 EUR) to 1500 GEL (approx. 600 EUR) depending on the requirements of the field of study. For the fields of arts and sport the grant may be as high as 5000 GEL (approx. 2000 EUR) The new type of financing system completely alters the long-established practices at Georgian HEIs. The law stipulates only the goal-oriented financing – the state will finance a concrete student at a HEI. Besides, the state will finance a research work only within the framework of a specific programme by means of a special fund. Also, in order to attract students, it will be possible to introduce financial incentives for such fields of study that are not popular but prioritized by the state. According to the law on higher education, all HEIs are obliged to provide allowances for disabled students in order to guarantee their equal access and high-quality education.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

The law stipulates acquiring education life-long and life-wide through formal, non-formal and informal sources. It is essential to notice that in Georgia collapse of the Soviet Union left much adult population without the skills and knowledge relevant for the contemporary labour market. Therefore, many HEI-s offer special courses or programmes where adult population can study and upgrade their knowledge and skills. The first actual steps in this direction were taken in 2002, when the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

together with the representatives of trade union and entrepreneurs addressed the German Authorities with the request to assist in developing professional education, adult education and life-long learning in Georgia. The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV) actively took part in the process and a number of actual measures are already being taken. Besides, distance learning is becoming increasingly popular in Georgia and several universities already offer such courses to anyone interested.

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

HEIs are autonomous to decide about the procedures for recognition of prior learning paths. At the national level the issue is not clearly defined yet.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

In the course of the last five years, a number of Georgian HEIs have been actively involved in scientific activities. At the Tbilisi Iv. Javakhishvili State University a number of research projects are financed by NATO, EU such as TEMPUS-TACIS, INTAS etc. As a result of cooperation scheme with the European Union (TACIS), a master degree courses of European Law and Economics had been introduced in English and German Languages. Research activities under the grant projects are implemented on the faculty of Medicine in cooperation with international organizations of healthcare (UNICEF, organizations from the USA etc.). The purpose is to facilitate fighting against the most spread and dangerous diseases of the modern world. The Georgian Technical State University is involved in a number of international projects on technology development issues in cooperation with the universities of Europe, Japan, the USA etc. and the international organizations such as INTAS, OSGF, ISTC, TEMPUS-TACIS, CRDF USA, NATO, SHEVRON (corp), UNDP etc. Since 2001 about 13 research projects had been implemented. At the University, the new criteria of knowledge assessment and qualifications have been introduced and the international faculty was founded jointly with a German institution. The University is a member of the European Universities Association that oversees promotion of European Union programmes in the framework of co-operation with universities of Athens, Manchester, Lunenburg and Limerick. Under the TEMPUS-TACIS project the engineering curricula has changed to meet the modern demands. The Georgian State Agrarian University is a member of the Global Consortium of Agricultural Universities and trains MA students in Agro-business management. Besides, up to 1500 persons have been retrained at the TACIS State Servants College, which was founded under the patronage of the European Union. Tbilisi State Medical University cooperates with the following universities: Turkey Hajetep University, Varna Medical University of Bulgaria, Jena University of German, Cairo University of Egypt, Leuven University of Belgium etc. The University is a member of many international organizations, including International Association of Universities, European University Association, European Medical Education Association, etc. The military medical faculty of the University is integrated with the NATO training programme.

11.2. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

One of the major changes in the curriculum reform for the past decade was the removal of so-called “ideological” subjects (i.e. history of political parties, dialectical materialism, scientific communism, etc) taught during the Soviet regime. This allowed for the allocation of more hours for teaching various core subjects. Instead, a number of subjects had been introduced that reflect contemporary problems and disciplines in Europe. Such as, European Law, European Studies, Global Studies, Human Rights, Conflict studies etc. In addition, many HEIs offer courses in internationally spoken languages.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe any actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of European higher education

The basic tools directed towards promoting the attractiveness of European higher education in Georgia are the scholarship programmes of a number of international organizations, such as DAAD, Swedish Institute, Nuffic, OSGF etc. At present, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia actively works for establishing the cooperation links with a number of European countries aiming to promote the attractiveness of the European higher education.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

In November 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Council of Europe organized an international conference where members of the Bologna Follow-up Group, the administrative and academic staff of Georgian HEI-s and students participated. The conference was dedicated to the higher education reforms in Georgia within the context of the Bologna Process. The experts gave a highly positive evaluation of the ongoing reforms in Georgia and shared their views and suggested recommendations on further actions to be taken towards joining the Bologna Process.

The transitional provisions of the law on higher education stipulate that all HEI-s shall ensure complete adoption of the three cycle degree system before 2007-2008 academic year. The ECTS shall be universally introduced before 2009-2010 academic year. In 2006-2007 the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia shall examine the licensing conditions of those private HEIs that do not take part in institutional accreditation before the year 2006-2007. In 2006-2007 the duration of master programmes at all HEIs should not be less than 2 years. The overall programme accreditation shall commence in 2007-2008 academic year.

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

Transition to the new model of higher education system requires much effort and mobilization of human, material and financial resources. The government of Georgia is committed to assisting the process by all possible means. Therefore, it is crucial to provide conditions for high quality education, life-long learning, innovative research and mobility. T present, the crucial challenge ahead for Georgia is to implement the Georgian Law on Higher Education effectively and efficiently. As noticed above, the law envisages approximation of the Georgian higher education system with the European standards. In this regard, wider social participation especially student involvement as well as international cooperation plays a vital role. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia together with the HEIs and

civil society is committed to collaborating in making Georgia one of the most dynamic and competitive places in Europe where it is desirable to teach, research and study.