

Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009

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**Report from working groups appointed by the
Bologna Follow-up Group to the Ministerial
Conference in Leuven/Louvain la Neuve,
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Andrejs Rauhvargers,

Chair, BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking

April 2009

Outline of the 2009 Stocktaking report

This report on the Bologna Process stocktaking was prepared by the Stocktaking Working Group for the Leuven/Louvain la Neuve Ministerial meeting in April 2009.

Based on the analysis that is described in detail in the main part of the report, the working group has drawn conclusions about the progress that has been made towards achieving the goals that were set by the Ministers in London. The report looks at the action lines in an integrated way, in recognition of the strong interdependence between them, and in particular the link between learning outcomes and other elements such as qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition and lifelong learning. The working group has formulated recommendations for the future arising from the findings of the 2009 stocktaking.

The Executive summary at the beginning of the report includes the conclusions and recommendations of the stocktaking. The main text of the report is in four parts:

Part 1 explains the background to the 2009 stocktaking exercise, linking it to the findings of the 2005 and 2007 stocktaking reports and to the London Communiqué. It describes the methodology that was used in the 2009 stocktaking and it examines the progress across the various action lines in an integrated way, in response to the recommendation in the London Communiqué that the 2009 stocktaking should attempt to do this.

Part 2 includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of the stocktaking results, including the elements that were covered by the scorecard indicators and the other aspects that were mentioned in the London Communiqué.

Part 3 includes the scorecards.

Annex: Since the ministers requested that the social dimension be included in the 2009 stocktaking, the report of the Social Dimension Coordination Group is attached as an annex to this report.

Executive Summary

The indicators for the 2009 stocktaking were designed to verify whether the original goals of the Bologna process - which were expected to be achieved by 2010 - were actually being achieved in reality. Whereas in 2005 it was sufficient to show that work had been started, and for the 2007 stocktaking it was often enough that some work towards achieving the goals could be demonstrated or that legislation was in place, in 2009 the criteria for the indicators were substantially more demanding.

Because of the more demanding indicators, the overall picture for the whole EHEA is not as "green" in 2009 as it was in the two previous stocktaking reports in 2005 and 2007, although there are a number of countries that have improved their scores in this stocktaking exercise (see the summary for the various action lines below).

The more detailed analysis that was applied to the information provided in the 2009 national reports clearly showed whether the reforms really concerned the whole higher education system or applied only to parts of it. It is likely that this has lowered the scores of some countries that might have given an overall answer "yes" in 2007, when in fact some parts of the HE system were not actually covered by the reforms.

Degree system

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

Achieving the goal of implementing the first and second cycle degree system across all higher education in the EHEA seems to be only a question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still low, mainly because these countries have just recently started admitting students to bachelor and master programmes.

In some countries certain regulated professions and some specific disciplines are not yet included in the two-cycle system. With the present criteria these countries can still be in the "green" category. It will take more time and effort to include these disciplines and professions into the two-cycle system.

Access to the next cycle

The overall picture for this indicator looks very "green", which demonstrates that there are no obstacles to access in legislation. However, the additional analysis shows that progress is not as significant as this suggests; in a number of countries graduates have to meet additional requirements to actually gain admission to the next cycle.

It is surprising that examinations, additional courses or work experience are quite often required when seeking access to next cycle in the same field of studies. This might suggest that HEIs do not fully recognise qualifications, even in the same field, issued by other HEIs in their own country.

Some countries have two levels of bachelor degrees, both of which are regarded as first cycle end qualifications, but which do not actually offer the same access to the second cycle. Some other countries have introduced two levels of master degrees with different rights in the labour market and admission to the third cycle.

Implementation of the third cycle

Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing: the number of structured doctoral programmes is growing; more universities have established doctoral schools; the use of ECTS in the third cycle is becoming more widespread; more doctoral programmes include taught courses, and there are supervisory and assessment activities in place. There is no single model for the status of doctoral candidates: they may be considered students, early stage researchers or both; however in some of the new structured doctoral programmes, there is now a movement to introduce dual status. In some countries it seems that the need for interdisciplinary training and the need to provide doctoral candidates with the transferable skills for employment outside academia have not yet been fully understood.

Implementation of national qualifications frameworks

There has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks and some progress has been made since 2007, however the deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Measuring success against the expectations for 2010, the picture is now less optimistic than it was in 2007 when countries only had to have started implementing their qualifications frameworks.

Six countries - some of which already had qualifications frameworks in place before 2005 - have completed self-certification of their NQF with the EHEA overarching qualifications framework, and some more are close to completion, while many are still at the early stages of development. There are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of national qualifications frameworks will take some time.

There is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately.

Employability

While countries say that employability is important, they have not gathered sufficient data to support this assertion. Due to the rapidly changing economic environment and its impact on labour markets, there is an urgent need for countries to set up systems to track the employability of graduates in the future. The number of bachelor graduates is growing and therefore the efforts to ensure employability of bachelor graduates need to be strengthened.

The acceptance of graduates in the labour market varies significantly: countries that have had a bachelor-master system for a long time see no specific problems and some other countries report increasing acceptance of bachelor graduates in the labour market, but there is a third group of countries with no bachelor-master tradition where the labour market seems to completely reject bachelor graduates.

It appears that the acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market can depend as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Quality assurance

Implementation of internal quality assurance systems in accordance with ESG

While the implementation of external quality assurance is proceeding at a rapid pace, development of internal quality assurance (QA) systems at HEIs is progressing more slowly, especially because in some countries the internal QA systems are still thought to amount only to writing a self-assessment report for external review. As regards fulfilling Part I of the ESG on internal quality assurance, there has been good progress in some of the areas that have been established in HEIs for a long time, such as internal approval of programmes and publication of information. It is clear however that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take longer to implement. The 2009 national reports demonstrate that learning outcomes are often confused with overall programme goals which are not measurable and therefore cannot be used in student assessment.

The 2009 stocktaking clearly indicates that fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010. It is important therefore to disseminate more actively the 2009 edition of the ESG where the link with learning outcomes is clearly underlined.

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

All countries have introduced external QA systems including self-assessment and external review; nearly all publish assessment results and carry out follow-up measures. However, the requirement to have carried out an assessment of the QA agency or at least to have fixed the date for such assessment shifted some countries from the "green" zone in 2007 to "yellow" in 2009. The fact that just 15 countries have organised assessment of their QA agency suggests that while the scheme of external QA has been widely implemented, in some countries it may not yet operate entirely in accordance with the ESG.

Level of student participation in quality assurance

Overall, student participation in QA has progressed since 2007; however the analysis of answers to additional questions pointed out some gaps: students often participate in

reviews only as observers, they are not always involved in preparing self-assessment reports and they are very seldom involved in follow-up measures.

Level of international participation in QA

With the requirement that international participation in review teams AND membership of an international QA network are now needed to score at least “yellow”, the number of countries in the “orange” category has substantially grown since 2007.

It is surprising that quality assurance agencies from only 22 countries are full members of ENQA. Given that full membership of ENQA requires compliance with ESG, this suggests that the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance and the work of QA agencies may not yet be fully implemented in some other countries.

The work on compiling the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was just started in 2008 and the register as yet includes only a small number of agencies, therefore it was not considered appropriate to use the listing of the QA agency in EQAR as a criterion for this indicator in 2009.

Recognition

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

It is clear from the results that the Diploma Supplement (DS), which is an important transparency instrument, is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the DS to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, only half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.

While the overall proportion of countries in the “green” zone is a little larger than in 2007, the more detailed questions on the issuing of Diploma Supplements shifted some countries substantially backwards compared to 2007. Countries in the “yellow” zone mainly fail to issue the Diploma Supplement to ALL graduates, or to issue it automatically.

Stage of implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention

This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation (or rather national legislation not being in conflict) with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). It is “greener” than in 2007 but the indicator alone does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the HEIs. Complementary analysis of the National Action Plans on Recognition submitted before the London conference shows that there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA.

As regards the practical implementation of the principles of the Convention, the analysis of the National Action Plans shows that the interpretation of these principles, as well as recognition procedures and even terminology used in different countries, differ enormously.

There are still legal problems in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and its subsidiary texts, sometimes because the LRC is considered as a threat to the autonomy of HEIs: it is not fully understood that the LRC can enable HEIs to use their autonomy to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications and thus support both mobility and their own internationalisation. Some countries have found a good solution by including institutional recognition procedures in the list of aspects evaluated within both internal and external QA.

Stage of implementation of European Credit Transfer System

To score “green” or “light green”, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores of some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was used for both credit accumulation and credit transfer.

Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. ECTS credits are widely used for both credit accumulation and transfer, but there are two main challenges in fully implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of student workload and linking them with learning outcomes.

Recognition of prior learning

While a small number of countries have quite advanced systems for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the answers from many other countries suggest there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007.

In some countries RPL appears to be included in national policy but it does not seem to be applied in practice; in other countries it happens in practice without any national procedures or guidelines being in place. Even where RPL systems exist, individuals are often insufficiently aware of the possibilities to have their previous learning assessed and recognised.

Some countries are using RPL to encourage more adults into higher education, thus improving the social dimension of higher education and promoting the inclusion of previously under-represented groups and improving the skill levels of the workforce. In some countries, the practice of RPL appears to be better developed in the non-university HE sector, although formal partnerships and linkages for RPL do exist between universities and other types of HEI in some parts of the EHEA. In a few cases, additional measures are being taken to increase access to HE by facilitating RPL for specific target groups.

It will not be possible to overcome the demographic and economic challenges through lifelong learning until RPL is systematically implemented in all countries. This requires firstly a change of culture in HEIs and secondly that credits are linked with learning outcomes, with appropriate methods developed to assess the full range of learning outcomes.

Flexible learning paths

Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks, and this is an obstacle that prevents people who are already in the labour market from becoming involved in education. In addition, very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

Joint degrees

Three quarters of the countries have amended their legislation to allow awarding of joint degrees, but half of the countries estimate that only between 1% and 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. It is evident that joint degrees are being established in all areas of study: engineering and natural sciences are clearly the most popular, followed closely by economics, business administration, social sciences, information technologies and health sciences. European studies, teacher training and environmental studies are also mentioned frequently. A number of actions are being taken to stimulate joint degrees: the most frequently mentioned are legal measures; support of joint programmes by additional funding; quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes; codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees.

In a number of countries there is specific support allocated for students studying on joint programmes, but several countries state that such students receive the regular student support.

European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting

It is clear that the Bologna Process has enhanced the cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. Considerable progress has been made in the fields of information, promotion, recognition and policy dialogue.

Social dimension of the European Higher Education Area

Virtually all countries take some action in order to enhance participative equity in their country, but only a minority of the countries has set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. Still fewer countries show evidence for an integrated strategy with synergies between social policy, government action and institutional practice, for example on matters such as funding arrangements, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning.

There is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of populations in the EHEA.

Conclusions of the 2009 Stocktaking

There has been further progress in the Bologna Process since London. Even though the overall picture may not look quite as green as it did in 2007, there are encouraging signs in that some of the action lines are almost complete and some countries have considerably improved their scores over the two-year period. The collective and voluntary inter-governmental approach has worked well in defining the shared vision of a European Higher Education Area and in encouraging a significant programme of reforms at institutional, national and European levels. Effective tools have been created that have enabled countries to implement wide-ranging changes in their higher education systems. Stocktaking continues to play an important role in the Bologna Process, and the method of collaborative peer-reported self-evaluation has been an effective catalyst for action at national level; it has also provided a way for countries to benchmark their progress and to set concrete targets for each two-year period. However, two significant factors have had an impact on the pace of progress: firstly, new action lines and activities have been added over the years, not least a change of paradigm with a shift to towards outcomes-based qualifications frameworks; secondly, countries have started the reform process at different times depending on when they joined the process. The 2009 stocktaking shows that not all the goals of the Bologna Process will be achieved by 2010. The following is a summary of the main conclusions of the 2009 stocktaking.

Degree system

1. Achieving the goal of implementing the first and second cycle degree system across all higher education in the EHEA seems to be only a question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still relatively low, mainly because they have just recently started admitting students to bachelor and master programmes. Also, in some countries certain regulated professions and some specific disciplines are not yet included in the two-cycle system.
2. The overall picture on access to the next cycle looks very “green” which suggests that there are no obstacles to access in legislation. However, on the ground the progress is not as significant as it might seem: graduates in a number of countries have to meet additional requirements such as examinations, additional courses or work experience to actually gain admission to the next cycle, even in the same field of studies. There are also some countries where different types of qualifications in one cycle do not offer the same access to the next cycle.
3. Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing: the third cycle is being included in the national qualifications frameworks; ECTS is being widely used in the third cycle, and the pattern of at least three-year doctoral studies is

strengthening. However, it seems that in some countries the need to provide doctoral students with transferable skills for employment, whether in or outside academia, has not been fully understood.

4. There is no single model for the status of doctoral candidates: they may be considered students, early stage researchers or both, however there seems to be a tendency in an increasing number of countries that doctoral candidates are treated as early stage researchers whether they have student status or not.
5. The employability of graduates, especially those with bachelor degrees, varies significantly across countries: it appears that the acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market depends as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning

6. There has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks and some progress has been made since 2007, with six countries having already completed the self-certification process. However the deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. There are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of national qualifications frameworks will take some time.
7. While a small number of countries have put in place quite advanced systems for recognition of prior learning, in most countries there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007. More systematic development and application of RPL requires firstly a change of culture in HEIs; it also requires that credits are linked with learning outcomes and that appropriate methods are developed to assess the full range of learning outcomes.
8. Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks, and this prevents people who are already in the labour market from becoming involved in education. In addition, very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.
9. There is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 Stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately. The 2009 stocktaking clearly indicates that fully-fledged introduction of a lifelong learning culture - based on full implementation of a learning outcomes approach - across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010.

Quality assurance

10. All countries have introduced external quality assurance (QA) systems including self-assessment and external review; nearly all publish assessment results and carry out follow-up measures. The fact that just 15 countries have organised assessment of their QA agency suggests that there is a long way to go before there is clear evidence that all countries are working according to the ESG. Some countries with small higher education systems do not have a national QA agency but they organise external QA and international participation in other ways.
11. In most countries HEIs have established internal QA procedures, although some are much stronger than others. While systems for approval of programmes and qualifications are well developed, it is clear that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take longer to implement.
12. Overall, student participation in QA has progressed since 2007; however students often participate in reviews only as observers, they are not always involved in preparing self-assessment reports and they are very seldom involved in follow-up measures.
13. There has been some progress towards achieving a greater level of international involvement in the critical areas of *participation in external review teams* and *membership of ENQA or other international QA networks*, but there are still quite a large number of countries whose quality assurance agencies are not yet full members of ENQA.

Recognition

14. The Diploma Supplement (DS) is being implemented but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the DS to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, just over half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.
15. There seems to be widespread compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, yet there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA. The interpretation of the Convention's principles, as well as recognition procedures and terminology, differ enormously across countries. The contemporary approaches use quality assurance status, learning outcomes and level as the main criteria; some others first look at formal issues, content of the curriculum and the duration of studies.
16. ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999 and credits are widely used for credit transfer and accumulation but in a number of countries ECTS is still not fully implemented. There are two main challenges that are encountered

in fully implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of student workload and linking them with learning outcomes.

Joint degrees

17. According to national reports, three-quarters of the countries have amended their legislation in order to allow awarding of joint degrees. Joint degrees are being established in all areas of study but half of the countries estimate that only between 1% and 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. A number of actions are being taken to stimulate joint degrees, including legal measures; additional funding to support joint programmes; quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes; codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees.

Social dimension

18. Although almost all countries have taken some action to enhance participative equity in their country, only a minority have set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. There is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of our populations.

19. National approaches to the social dimension are not yet successfully integrated with qualifications frameworks, strategies for lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning, flexible learning paths and support for mobility.

20. There are not yet sufficient data about the social dimension and mobility. The Eurostat and Eurostudent report is a first step in closing the information gap about participation rates and educational attainment levels in each country.

Global dimension

21. The Bologna Process has enhanced cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. While many countries report that they promote their own higher education systems internationally, very few of them seem to focus on promoting the EHEA.

Recommendations of 2009 Stocktaking

General recommendations to all stakeholders

Creating a dynamic and high-achieving EHEA will help the whole region to meet future challenges and adapt skilfully to a rapidly-changing global economic, political, social and technological environment. All stakeholders must re-affirm their full commitment to the goals of the EHEA and play an active part in the process of achieving them.

There is a need for continued close cooperation among all stakeholders to make the EHEA work successfully, guided by the collective vision of the participating countries. This collaboration will also enhance the effectiveness of links between the EHEA and other world regions.

Using the tools that have already been created within the Bologna Process will help to create a true culture of lifelong learning throughout the EHEA, with explicit links between learning outcomes, qualifications frameworks, quality assurance systems and recognition practices.

It is essential to adopt a more systematic approach to collecting and analysing data, to monitor progress on the agreed actions and to facilitate evidence-based policy-making and planning for the future.

Recommendations to countries

The following recommendations constitute concrete goals to be achieved in the short term.

Include all fields of study in the Bologna degree structure and promote greater awareness of the relevance of the degrees, both for employment and for access to the next cycle.

Implement a qualifications framework that includes all higher education qualifications.

Work towards achieving coherence in describing all higher education programmes using learning outcomes, to enhance the transparency of qualifications and to facilitate the full implementation of ECTS and the diploma supplement.

Ensure that the three parts of ESG – covering internal QA, external QA and the functioning of QA agencies - are fully implemented.

Engage fully in developing and implementing coherent and transparent practices for the recognition of higher education qualifications, so that a qualification has the same value across the EHEA.

Make lifelong learning a genuine reality for all citizens in the EHEA, by encouraging higher education to fulfil its public responsibility in enabling learners of all ages to participate in relevant programmes, enhancing the use of flexible learning paths and facilitating recognition of prior learning.

Promote greater mobility for students within and between cycles, exploiting fully the potential offered by the three-cycle system, using ECTS and increasing the supports for students studying abroad.

Collect and develop sound data and indicators to measure progress on the social dimension and on mobility.

Recommendations on the future stocktaking process

Stocktaking should continue, since it is widely acknowledged to have worked well as an integral part of the Bologna Process strategy. The methodology should be further refined based on the experiences of 2005, 2007 and 2009, with particular attention to simplifying the procedures and instruments, rigorously maintaining the reporting deadlines, and more effectively integrating data from sources such as Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent. This will minimise duplication of effort and provide a sound objective data-set as a basis for quantitative analysis; additional complementary material for the qualitative dimension of the stocktaking can then be drawn from national reports.

There should continue to be a group that is given the responsibility of stocktaking, combined with a broader monitoring role. The functions of this group might be to:

- Propose the issues for monitoring and stocktaking
- Identify the data required
- Analyse the data from various sources and compile stocktaking/monitoring reports at specified intervals
- Make recommendations based on the findings of the stocktaking/monitoring exercises.

Bologna Stocktaking 2009

1 Overview of 2009 stocktaking

Part I of the report explains the background to the 2009 stocktaking exercise, linking it to the findings of the 2007 stocktaking report and to the London Communiqué. It describes the methodology that was used in the 2009 stocktaking and it examines the progress across the various action lines in an integrated way, in response to the recommendation in the London Communiqué that the 2009 stocktaking should attempt to do this.

The role of stocktaking in the Bologna Process

The first stocktaking of progress in the Bologna Process was carried out in 2005, following a decision taken by the Ministers at their 2003 meeting in Berlin. When the stocktaking working group presented its report to the ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005, the Ministers agreed that a second report should be prepared for their meeting in London in May 2007. In the London Communiqué, the Ministers asked for a further stocktaking report to be presented at their 2009 meeting in Leuven/ Louvain la Neuve.

Since 2005, stocktaking within the Bologna Process has involved collaborative peer-reported self-evaluation, which has encouraged countries to take action at national level. All countries have made progress towards achieving the goals of the Bologna Process, and stocktaking has made the progress visible. The 2007 report recommended that the stocktaking exercise would continue and this was endorsed by the Ministers in the London Communiqué.

This report presents the results of the 2009 stocktaking, which was designed to check the progress that participating countries have made on the aspects of the Bologna Process that were included in the London Communiqué. The report gives an overview of progress since 2007 and also of progress towards achieving the 2010 goals of the Bologna Process.

Building on the findings of the 2007 stocktaking

The 2007 stocktaking report concluded that very good progress had been made on achieving the targets in three priority action lines set by Ministers in the Bergen communiqué: implementing the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance, and recognition of degrees and study periods. However, the 2007 report also identified a number of challenges that needed to be addressed if the Bologna goals were to be fully achieved by 2010.

Implementing the three-cycle degree system

The 2007 stocktaking found that the three-cycle degree system was at an advanced stage of implementation across the participating countries; the access from one cycle to the next had improved since 2005, and there was a growing trend towards providing structured doctoral programmes.

Work had started on implementing national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Some elements of flexible learning paths in higher education existed in all countries. In some countries they were at a more developed stage and included procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

Quality assurance in higher education

The 2007 stocktaking found that implementation of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, adopted in Bergen, had started on a widespread basis.

Student involvement in quality assurance had grown significantly since 2005, while there was still more work to be done on extending the level of international participation.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

The 2007 stocktaking found that there had been good progress towards incorporating the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in national legislation and institutional practice. However, not all countries had yet ratified the Convention. In 2007, all countries had to submit National Action Plans for improving recognition and these were analysed over the 2007-2009 period.

The 2007 stocktaking also found that there was potential for an increase in the number of joint degrees awarded in two or more countries, as legal barriers to the recognition of joint degrees had been removed in most countries.

While it was found in 2007 that higher education institutions had begun to recognise prior learning (including non-formal and informal learning) for access to higher education programmes and qualifications, it was recognised that there was more work to be done in this area.

Linking higher education and research

The 2007 stocktaking found that many countries had begun to strengthen the links between the higher education and research sectors, and some had concrete plans to increase the numbers of doctoral graduates taking up research careers.

Achieving the 2010 goals of the Bologna Process

The 2007 report concluded that while the outlook for achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010 was good, there were still some challenges to be faced, especially since progress was not uniform across all countries and all action lines.

In addition, while the 2007 stocktaking found that there had been good progress on specific action lines and indicators, it was considered important to look at these in a more integrated way because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. The report pointed to two themes that link all action lines: a focus on *learners*, and a focus on *learning outcomes*. The 2007 report suggested that if the Bologna Process was to be successful in meeting the needs and expectations of learners, learning outcomes should be used by all countries as the basis of their national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, diploma supplements, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance. This was considered the critical precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010.

The London Communiqué: issues for stocktaking in 2009

At the London Ministerial Conference in 2007, Ministers agreed that in the two years to 2009 they would concentrate on completing the agreed action lines, giving priority to the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. They also agreed that they would focus in particular on the following areas for action:

- **Mobility** of students and staff
- The **social dimension** of higher education
- **Data collection** to measure progress towards the overall objectives for the social dimension and mobility
- **Employability** of graduates from each of the three cycles

- **The European Higher Education Area in a global context:** to improve the information available about the EHEA and to improve recognition based on the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

In the London Communiqué, the Ministers charged the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) with continuing the stocktaking process based on national reports¹ in the period leading up to the 2009 Ministerial conference. They directed that stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the European Standard and Guidelines (ESG). They requested further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. In addition, with a view to developing more student-centred, outcomes-based approaches to learning, they recommended that the 2009 stocktaking should address a number of themes in an integrated way: national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

¹ National Reports on 2007-2009 period can be found at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>

2 Methodology

Terms of reference of the 2009 Stocktaking Working Group

The BFUG allocated the following specific tasks to the Stocktaking Working Group:

1. Identify the key issues to be addressed through the stocktaking and identify which issues should be covered by the quantifiable indicators
2. Develop the methodology to be used in this exercise, in particular addressing the requests by the ministers as stated in the London communiqué:
 - identify the ways to further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking and
 - identify the ways to address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning
3. Collaborate with partner and other organisations in order to maximise the use of data sources;
4. Prepare the structure for the national reports to be submitted by member States and used in the 2009 stocktaking
5. Prepare a report for approval by the BFUG in advance of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Conference in 2009.

Steps in the stocktaking process

In the period from November 2007 to March 2009 the working group met four times and, supported by the secretariat, it completed the following steps in the stocktaking process:

- defined the stocktaking methodology to allow for quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from various sources
- developed the stocktaking indicators and criteria for the 2009 scorecard
- formulated questions and devised the template for national reports
- gathered data by asking countries to submit national reports
- analysed data from national reports and other sources
- prepared the stocktaking report.²

² The working group met on 8 November 2007; 7 February 2008; 26-27 January and 13 March 2009.

The framework for stocktaking in 2009

The 2009 stocktaking built on the methodology that was developed in 2005 and further refined in 2007. It combined a quantitative and a qualitative approach to assessing progress within the Bologna Process. As on the two previous occasions, the working group decided that clearly measurable information would be included in the scorecard and other related issues would be covered in the text. In this way, the stocktaking exercise was manageable within the available resources.

It was decided that the data for the stocktaking would be drawn mainly from national reports submitted by all countries, backed up and validated by data from a number of other working groups. These groups have produced reports on the *EHEA in a Global Context*, *Data Collection*, *Mobility*, *Employability* and *Qualifications Frameworks* which are published separately. The report of the Social Dimension Coordination Group is annexed in full to this stocktaking report. The Stocktaking Working Group compared its findings with those of other groups and the results of the other groups are mentioned in this report where relevant to stocktaking. The Stocktaking Working Group also included a member from Eurydice, one from the EUA and one from ESU, which made it possible to share data.

The 2009 scorecard: stocktaking indicators and criteria

The working group used the 2007 scorecard indicators as a starting point, and made changes to take account of the progress that was expected to have happened within the two years since the previous stocktaking³. This meant that some of the 2009 indicators were omitted and some of the criteria for the colour categories were changed. The indicators for the 2009 stocktaking were approved by the Bologna Follow-up Group in April 2008.

National reports

The 2009 stocktaking was similar to the 2007 exercise in that the scorecard criteria were agreed at an early stage in the process. However, the 2009 template for national reports included a series of more detailed questions to elicit the appropriate data. It was sent to all participating countries in May 2008 together with the scorecard.⁴ This meant that all countries knew in advance the criteria against which progress on the indicators would be assessed in the stocktaking exercise. The deadline for submitting national reports was 1 November 2008, but very few national reports had arrived by the end of November; 39 countries had submitted their reports by the end of 2008. The total number of reports was 48: there are 46 countries in the Bologna Process,

³ Bologna Stocktaking report 2007 can be found at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Stocktaking_report2007.pdf

⁴ The 2009 scorecard criteria and the template for national reports are at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/bfug/workinggroups/documents/stocktaking/Template_stocktaking_final_220708.doc)

with two reports each for Belgium and the United Kingdom.⁵ As on the two previous occasions, a few countries delayed the stocktaking process by submitting their reports very late - in several cases over three months late.

Analysing data from national reports and other sources

In their national reports, countries provided data about their progress on the Bologna action lines. They also described the processes initiated at national level to support implementation of the Bologna reforms. All national reports conformed to the template that was supplied, and the revised format of the questions seemed to make it easier to elicit the required information. However, some countries were later asked to supply more information on specific aspects that were unclear in their reports.

The secretariat sent the first draft of country scorecards to the countries for checking at the end of January 2009. If countries saw grounds to have a score revised, they were asked to supply relevant evidence to justify the revision. Some scores were changed on the basis of the new information that the countries submitted. In some other cases, it was decided that the score would not change but an explanatory note would be added to the text accompanying the country scorecard in the report.

While this stocktaking report presents an overview of the situation at the end of 2008, it is important to recognise that the situation is dynamic and ever-changing. Some countries have made more progress since scores were assigned on the basis of the information they gave in their national reports. This is mentioned in the note that accompanies each country scorecard, where appropriate.

When the analysis of stocktaking results from the national reports was complete, the working group had an opportunity to validate the findings against the reports of the other working groups, where they were relevant to stocktaking.

Integrating the Bologna action lines

The 2007 stocktaking report pointed out that while there had been progress on specific action lines and indicators, it was not enough to look at these in isolation because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. The report suggested that there were two themes that linked all action lines: a focus on *learners*, and a focus on *learning outcomes*. The London Communiqué clearly signalled that an important goal of the Bologna Process is “the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning” and indicated that the 2009 Stocktaking exercise should “address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.” The endorsement of learning outcomes by the Ministers was a significant development, since the 2007 stocktaking report identified implementation of learning outcomes as a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010. It remains equally true in 2009 that

⁵ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>

learning outcomes are central to the development of qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance.

In effect, the success of the Bologna Process depends on the comprehensive implementation of a learning outcomes approach in higher education. Learning outcomes are used in the Dublin descriptors, which are the basis of the three-cycle degree system. They also feature in the overarching framework of qualifications in the EHEA with which national frameworks are being aligned. They are an essential ingredient in quality assurance systems and in ECTS-compliant procedures for credit accumulation and transfer. They make transparency and recognition of qualifications more easily manageable. In short, learning outcomes encapsulate a learner-centred approach and shift the focus in higher education away from the traditional teacher-centred or institution-centred perspective.

A recent CEDEFOP study addressed the shift towards learning outcomes in European education policies and practice in the 32 countries taking part in the *Education and Training 2010* process⁶. The study found that there is broad agreement among policy-makers, social partners and education and training practitioners that learning outcomes can improve access to and progression within education, training and lifelong learning. The authors note that the shift to learning outcomes is important for several reasons: firstly, it moves the emphasis from *providers* of education and training to *learners* and it increases the transparency of qualifications, which is of benefit both to individual learners and employers. Secondly, it introduces a common language that can promote greater understanding, reducing barriers and building bridges between different education and training sectors and systems. Thirdly, it is an important tool for international cooperation, because learning outcomes focus on the profile and content of qualifications, rather than on the institutions that award them. The increasing use of learning outcomes is expected to have an impact on the organisation of institutions, as well as on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and quality assurance.

The study shows, however, that countries still have a long way to go in implementing learning outcomes in their higher education systems: this is seen as partly attributable to the “bottom-up” institution-led approach, as opposed to an externally-imposed direction. It is as yet unclear how long it will take to implement the widespread reform at institutional level, which is where it counts most. This echoes the findings of the Bologna 2009 stocktaking exercise that the movement towards adopting a learning outcomes approach in higher education takes time. This is particularly evident in the slow progress that has been made on establishing national qualifications frameworks and arrangements for the recognition of prior learning. Very few countries have put in place national qualifications frameworks that provide seamless progression for learners throughout lifelong learning.

⁶http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_download.asp?pub_id=525&dl_id=1663&pub_lang=EN

The CEDEFOP study notes that

The potential and widespread significance of learning outcomes is only just beginning to be realised. Their introduction is designed to facilitate the fundamental reform of existing qualifications and the creation of new ones fit for the 21st century. It is arguable that the main end product of the Bologna reforms is better qualifications based on learning outcomes and not just new educational structures. For this sort of bottom-up approach there is a need for fundamental change at institutional level where academics are responsible for creating and maintaining qualifications. This transformation from using traditional input/content approaches to output/outcomes approaches to conceive, validate, monitor and express qualifications is proving slow and difficult...The ministers responsible for implementing Bologna have supported profound changes driven by the adoption of learning outcomes, which are arguably the single most important catalyst for transformation working alongside credits and new style qualifications frameworks. (Ibid. p.82)

Learning outcomes provide a common language that is used in the development of qualifications frameworks, which in turn have been found to improve the transparency, quality, accessibility, linkages and public awareness and labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally. Such frameworks also establish inter-relationships between qualifications for the purposes of recognising equivalence and for articulation and progression between qualifications. When they are based on learning outcomes and include arrangements for credit transfer and accumulation, qualifications frameworks support the recognition of prior learning - including non-formal and informal learning - for the purposes of access and the award of credits towards qualifications. From the learner's perspective, qualifications frameworks also improve access to learning opportunities for all, thereby promoting social inclusion; they open up alternative routes of entry to, progression within and exit from higher education; they provide greater opportunities for lifelong learning and they support the mobility of learners and workers.

As education and training systems have become more dynamic and diverse, and as economic and social demands upon them increase, it is not surprising that governments should regard qualifications frameworks as useful policy instruments. They bring a degree of co-ordination and coherence to disparate qualifications arrangements, and to the institutions and providers that award qualifications. Many of the national qualifications frameworks that have been developed in the participating countries share common features of improving access and progression, reducing sectoral boundaries and rigidities, providing for broader recognition of learning outcomes, flexibility and seamlessness. They seek to reconcile the tensions between the need for greater flexibility at individual level and the rigidity of institutional arrangements, between a focus on the learner and a focus on the system. National qualifications frameworks therefore can be seen as adding important value to the qualifications system by making it more transparent, more coherent, more accessible, more flexible, more consistent in quality and generally more responsive to the needs of learners, society and the economy.

However it is clear that very few countries in the Bologna Process will have completed the implementation of national frameworks for higher education by 2010: the deadline set by Ministers will not be met. Although some progress has been made since 2007, only a small number of countries have fully implemented qualifications frameworks and many are still at the early stages of development, so the full implementation of qualifications frameworks in all countries of the EHEA will not happen for some time.

The ECTS is a mechanism for the recognition of smaller “bundles” of learning outcomes than those associated with traditional qualifications, for the purposes of credit accumulation and transfer. It is particularly relevant in promoting student mobility and providing flexible pathways for lifelong learning, since learners can gather credits towards qualifications over a longer period if the conventional model of whole-time study is not suitable to their personal circumstances. Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. In the 2009 stocktaking, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores on this indicator shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that ECTS was used for both credit accumulation and credit transfer. This indicates that there is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 report. Many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately without paying adequate attention to how they could be integrated in policy and practice.

There is ample evidence to support the important role played by qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning. In 2002-2004, the OECD undertook a project which sought to examine countries’ experiences of dealing with the pressures and demands on qualifications systems over the previous decade, identify common policy issues and challenges, and share experience and instruments for designing and managing qualifications systems, including frameworks of qualifications. Each participating country produced an extensive background report and the resulting analysis is included in a 2007 publication⁷, which provides valuable insights into the impact of qualifications systems on learners, education and training systems, societies and economies. The findings of the project suggest that mechanisms such as qualifications frameworks, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning, and stakeholder involvement are especially powerful in promoting lifelong learning.

While the 2009 stocktaking has not allowed for a formal statistical correlation of countries’ scores on the various indicators, it is clear from the analysis of national reports that the most “successful” and high-scoring countries are those where learning outcomes have become embedded in higher education practice. These countries have generally made most progress on implementing national qualifications frameworks, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. Their quality systems are also more fully developed, and they have fully implemented the diploma supplement and ECTS.

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear both from the 2009 stocktaking and from other international studies that effective implementation of learning outcomes is linked to

⁷ http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3343,en_2649_34509_38465013_1_1_1_1,00.html

successful achievement of major Bologna Process goals, including in particular the development of national qualifications frameworks integrating the three-cycle degree system; credit transfer and accumulation; recognition of qualifications and of prior learning, and provision of flexible learning paths as part of the lifelong learning continuum. Conversely, the slow movement of many countries towards adopting a learning outcomes approach is an obstacle to progress on these other important goals. This represents a significant challenge for ministries and higher education institutions over the coming years. Many countries are still in the early stages of developing and implementing learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. The support that the Bologna Process provides for collective efforts and sharing of practice among peers will be especially important as the work progresses in these countries.

3 Analysis of 2009 stocktaking results

This part of the report analyses the results of the 2009 stocktaking, showing where there has been any notable progress or lack of progress towards achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010. It includes results, comments and analysis for each indicator in the scorecard and also for the other aspects of the stocktaking that were not included in the scorecard. The level of progress is assessed by comparing the 2009 data with the 2007 stocktaking results, where the indicators are directly comparable.

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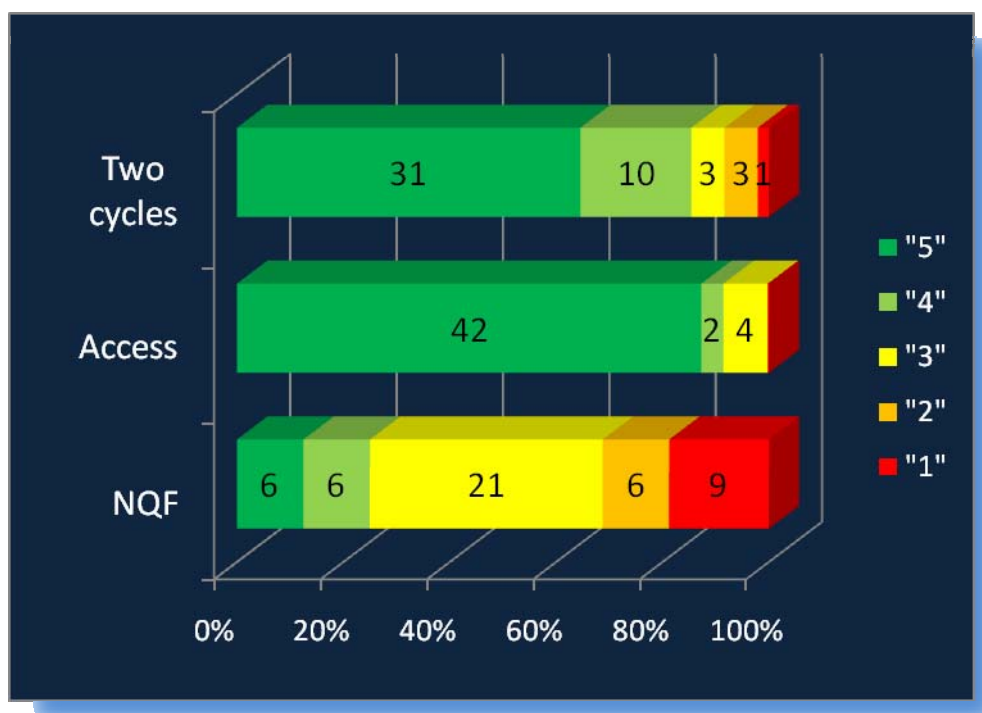
3.1 Stocktaking on the Degree System

Scorecard indicators 1-3

Table 1. Number of countries in each colour category for indicators 1-3

DEGREE SYSTEM	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	31	10	3	3	1
2. Access to the next cycle	42	2	4	0	0
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	6	6	21	6	9

Figure 1. Degree system: number and percentage of countries in each colour category for indicators 1-3



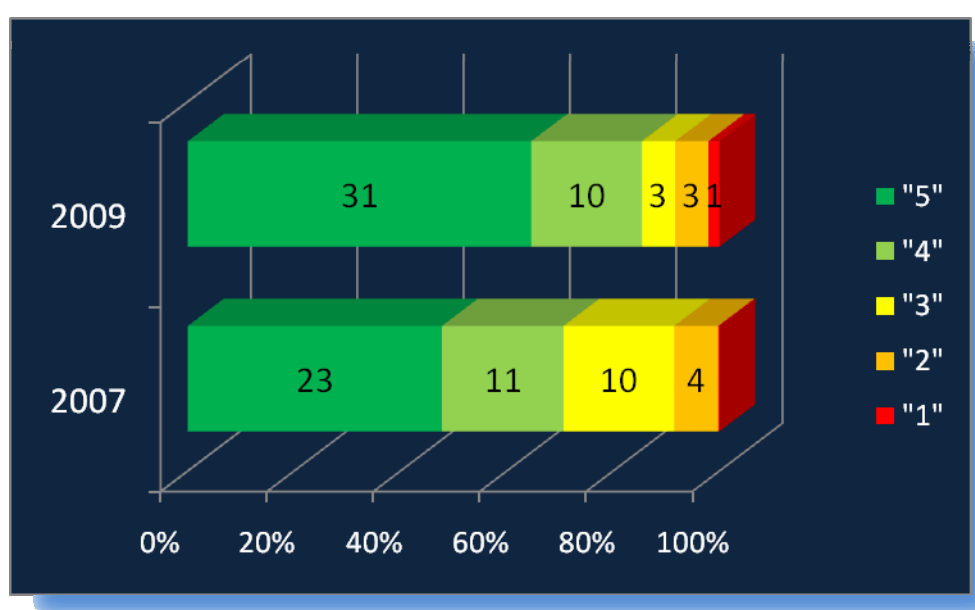
Indicator 1: Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 1	31	10	3	3	1
Green (5)	At least 90% of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Light green (4)	70-89 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Yellow (3)	50-69 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Orange (2)	25-49 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Red (1)	Less than 25% of students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				

This indicator measures progress on implementing the Bologna reforms in the degree system. Countries were asked to give the percentage of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two-cycle degree system.

Achieving the goals seems to be only question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still low.

Figure 2. Indicator 1: Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle. Number and percentage of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009



The results show that in around 85% of countries all or almost all students below doctoral level are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system in accordance with Bologna principles.

In both the 2009 and 2007 stocktaking, Indicator 1 measured the level of student enrolment in the two-cycle system. Figure 2 shows that there has been good progress on implementing the first and second cycle since 2007: even though the indicator was more demanding in 2009, the results are substantially better.

Most countries have completed the process of introducing the first and second cycle of the degree system: however there are still four countries that have less than half of their students enrolled in the two-cycle system. While it seemed from the results of the 2007 stocktaking that this action line would be fully implemented by 2010, the 2009 stocktaking shows that there is still a little way to go before this particular goal of the Bologna Process is achieved. In most cases this means that little or no additional effort is needed – for example in countries where the legislation is in place and students have already been admitted to the two-cycle system, it is just a question of time until all the students who were enrolled in the previous system have graduated.

Conclusion

The criterion for “green” on this indicator is that 90% of students are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system. This takes account of the fact that in some countries certain regulated professions (e.g. medicine) and some specific disciplines (e.g. art and music) are not yet included in the two-cycle system. With present criteria these countries can still be in the “green” category. It will take more time and effort to include these disciplines and professions into two-cycle system.

Recommendation

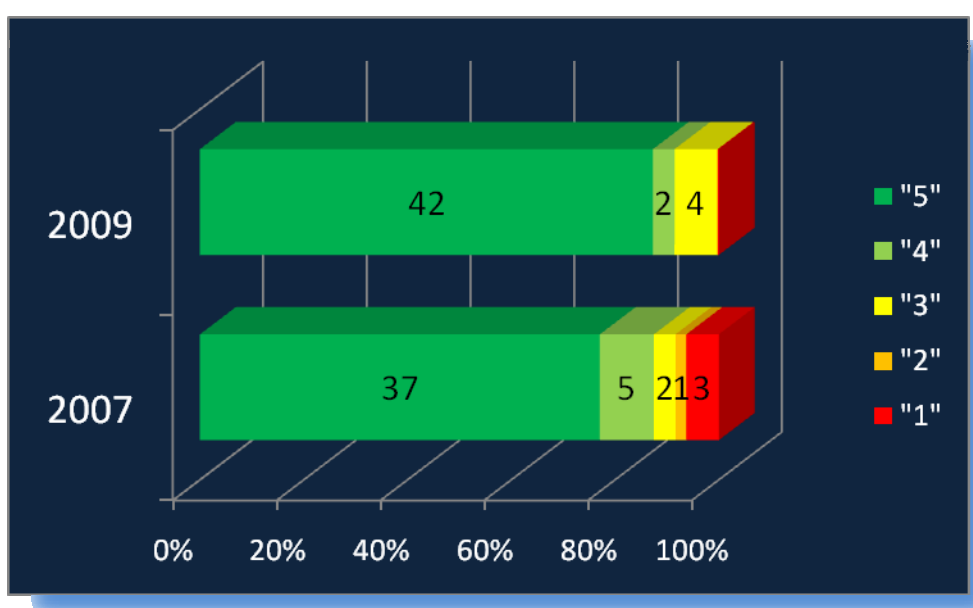
Efforts to include the professions and disciplines that are currently not included in the two-cycle system should be supported, and progress should be monitored in the coming years.

Indicator 2: Access to the next cycle

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 2.	42	2	4	0	0
Green (5)	All first cycle qualifications give access to several second cycle programmes and all second cycle qualifications give access to at least one third cycle programme without major transitional problems				
Light green (4)	All first cycle qualifications give access to at least one second cycle programme and all second cycle qualifications give access to at least one third cycle programme without major transitional problems				
Yellow (3)	There are some (less than 25%) first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle and/or some second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle				
Orange (2)	A significant number (25-50%) of first and/or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle				
Red (1)	Most (more than 50%) first and/or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle OR there are no arrangements for access to the next cycle				

Figure 3. Indicator 2: Access to the next cycle. Number and percentage of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

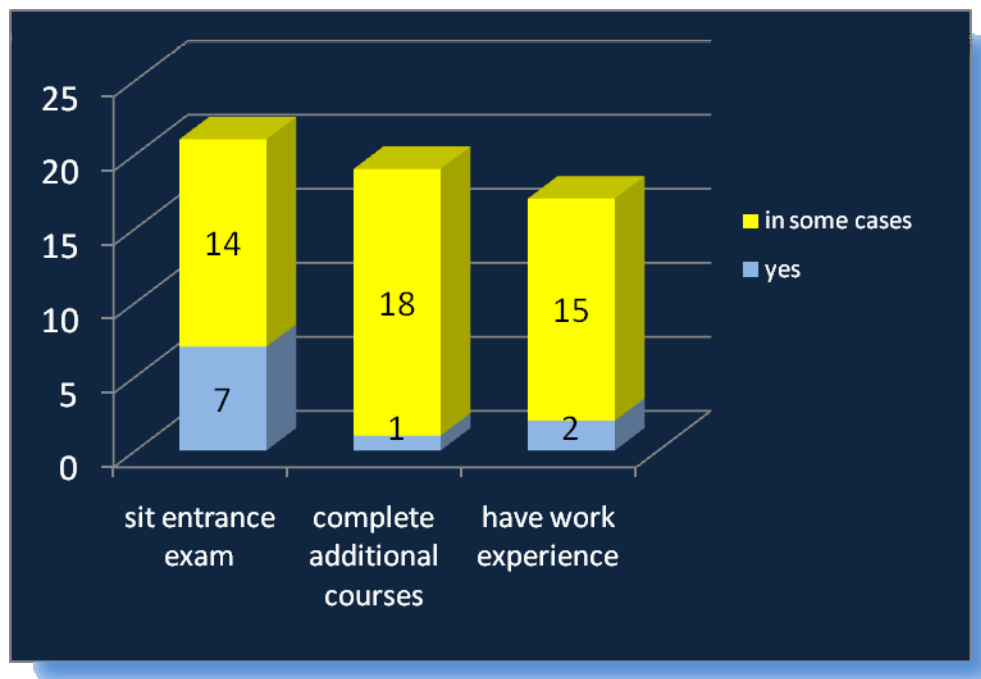
The results look good, but the additional analysis shows that the "green" is not so green in this indicator as in a number of countries students have to meet additional requirements to actually gain admission.



This indicator was meant to check whether national higher education structures ensure that students completing a Bologna cycle have access to the next cycle. The countries were asked to report the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle, the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle, and to specify any qualifications that did not give access to the next cycle. They were also asked to indicate whether there were any special requirements for access to second cycle programmes, including entrance examinations, completion of additional courses or work experience. As in the 2005 and 2007 stocktaking, access was defined according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention as “the right of qualified candidates to apply and to be considered for admission”. Thus, the indicator measured whether students had the *right to apply* and be considered for admission, rather than the actual student numbers progressing to the next cycle.

In 2009, indicator 2 was exactly the same as in 2007, so it is possible to compare the results and monitor change over the two-year period. Fig 3 shows that there has been some further progress on access to the next cycle since 2007: there are no longer any countries in which first or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle.

Figure 4. Number of countries applying special requirements for admission to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies

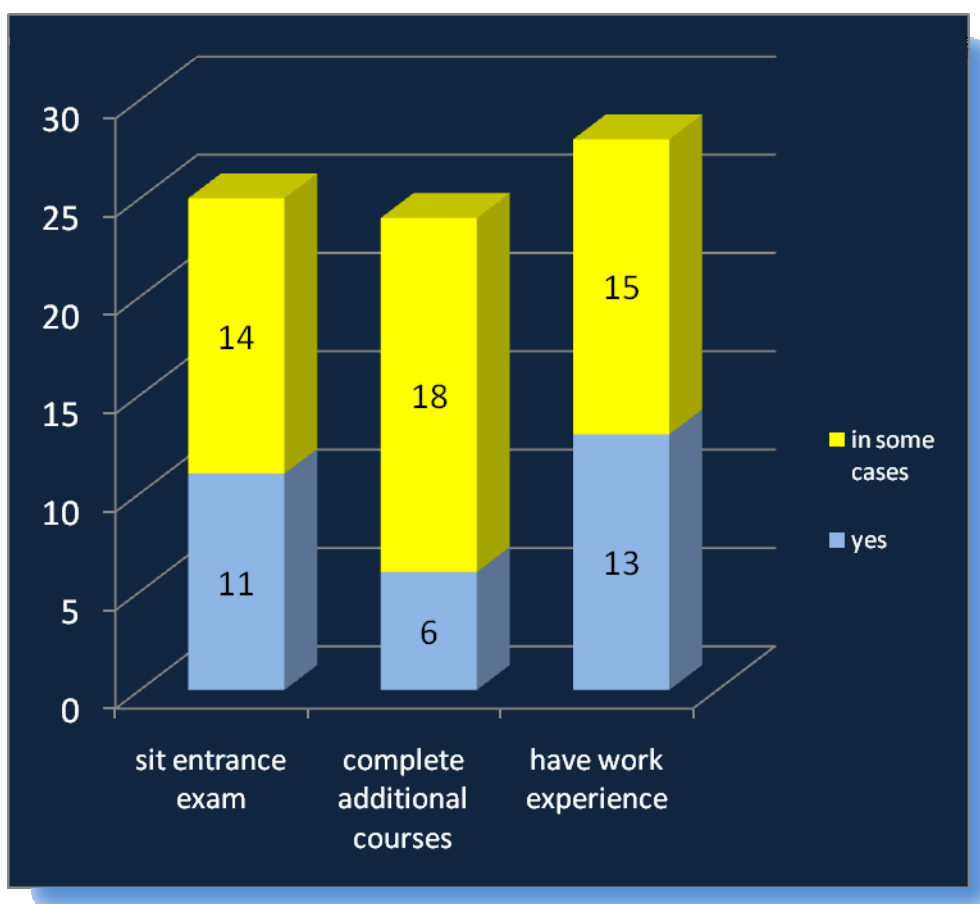


While almost 90% of the countries reported that there is access to the next cycle without barriers, there are nevertheless many cases where there are “special requirements” for progression from one cycle to the next cycle (Fig.4). In some countries entrance examinations, additional courses or work experience are required for progression either within the same field OR to different study fields, or when students switch from specific first cycle qualifications, for example in a professional

discipline. Although the countries and the HEIs do not regard these as “major transitional problems”, students and graduates may often have a different view. Fig.4 shows that in over one-third of countries some or all first cycle graduates must sit an entrance examination, complete additional courses or have work experience before progressing to the second cycle in the SAME field of studies.

Countries were asked which groups of students must meet these special requirements: all students; holders of particular first cycle qualifications, or students of the same field coming from other HEIs. The most common answer, given by nearly half of countries, is that the requirements apply to ALL students. More than 25% of countries report that holders of particular first cycle qualifications must meet the special requirements. This includes graduates from professional or vocational first cycle programmes who want to progress to academic study in the second cycle. In addition, some countries have two levels of bachelor degrees that match the Dublin descriptors, but some of these qualifications do not give direct access to the second cycle, so bridging courses or a period of relevant work experience may be required. Such measures are seen by those countries as ways of widening access to the next cycle.

Figure 6. Number of countries applying special requirements for admission to a second cycle programme for students coming from other fields of studies



First cycle graduates who want to progress to the second cycle in a different field of studies are even more likely to have to meet special requirements than those

progressing within the same field. Almost two-thirds of countries expect such graduates to have work experience, half require them to complete additional courses, and in 40% of the countries they have to sit an entrance examination.

Conclusion

Although there is some progress since 2007, there are still many first cycle graduates who have difficulties when seeking admission to the second cycle. Some of these difficulties arise in countries where there are two levels of bachelor degrees, each of which matches the first cycle descriptor but not all of which give direct access to the second cycle. This different treatment of bachelor degrees means that some of the qualifications that match the first cycle descriptor are not regarded as “end of first cycle” qualifications. This presents a challenge to the overarching qualifications frameworks in an EHEA context.

Recommendation

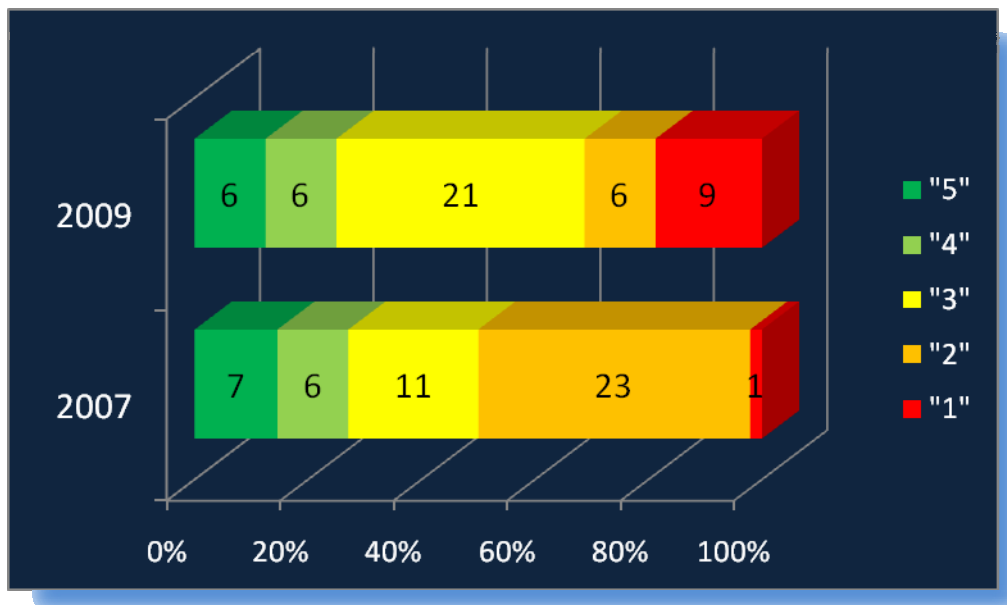
There should be more open and transparent information about the admission requirements at all levels - particularly for the second and third cycles - so that students do not interpret these as “major transitional problems”. On the contrary, in many cases the requirements can be a way of widening access to the second and third cycles for holders of professional qualifications or for people returning to higher studies following a period of work experience.

Indicator 3: Implementation of national qualifications framework

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 3	6	6	21	6	9
Green (5)	<p>A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed, and all national qualifications are visibly linked with learning outcomes</p> <p>National qualifications have been included in the NQF through a quality assurance procedure</p> <p>The agreed self-certification procedure with participation of international experts has been completed, including publication of a final report.</p>				
Light green (4)	<p>A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all necessary the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have been taken • implementation of the NQF has started • the agreed self-certification procedure has started 				
Yellow (3)	<p>A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been discussed at the national level but the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have not yet been taken</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been prepared and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes generic cycle descriptors based on learning outcomes • includes ECTS credit ranges in the first and second cycles <p>and a timetable for consulting relevant stakeholders has been drawn up but the consultation process has not yet been completed</p>				
Red (1)	<p>The development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been completed but no timetable for consultation or adoption has been established or the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been launched but has not been completed or work on the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has not been launched or is at a preliminary or exploratory stage.</p>				

Figure 6. Indicator 3: Implementation of national qualifications frameworks. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

Measuring success against expectations for 2010, the picture is less optimistic compared to 2007, when countries just had to start implementing their qualifications frameworks – in 2009 only a small number of countries have fully implemented qualifications frameworks and many are just beginning the process.



This indicator was introduced in 2007, to monitor the stages of progress towards implementing a national qualifications framework in line with the framework for the EHEA that was adopted by the Ministers in Bergen. At the London conference in 2007, the Ministers noted that some initial progress had been made towards introducing national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort was required. In the London Communiqué, they stated their commitment to implementing national qualifications frameworks for higher education and having them certified against the overarching Framework of Qualifications in the EHEA by 2010.

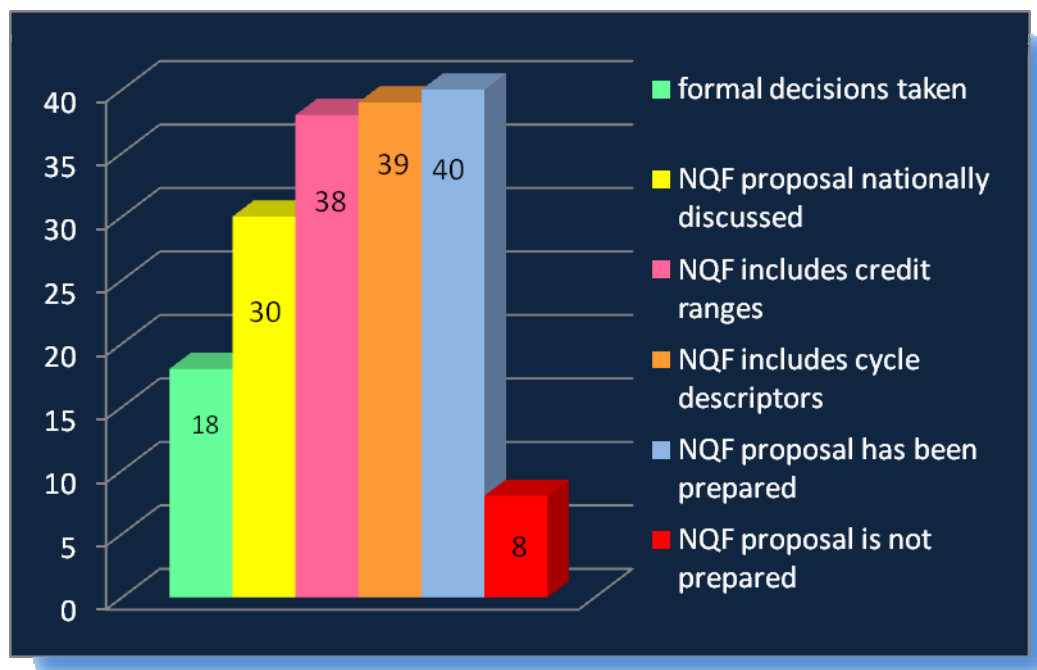
The indicator was substantially more demanding in 2009 compared to 2007: to be scored "green" in 2009 a country was required to have its national qualifications framework for higher education implemented and also to have completed self-certification of the NQF with the EHEA overarching framework. In addition, while in 2007 it was sufficient to have established a working group to score at least "orange", in 2009 it was required that a proposal for a national qualifications framework for higher education had already been prepared.

Even though the picture in 2009 looks less green than in 2007, there has been quite significant progress over the period. While only a small number of countries managed to complete the self-certification and score "green", a considerable number have prepared a national qualifications framework proposal and some of them have started implementation.

Figures 7 and 8 show more details on the status of the national qualifications framework proposal, implementation of the national qualifications framework for higher education at national and institutional levels, and the self-certification respectively.

Figure 7 reflects the situation in designing the national qualifications framework with cycle descriptors and credit ranges, discussing the prepared framework proposal nationally with all the stakeholders and making the necessary arrangements or formal decisions so that the NQF is officially approved.

Figure 7. Number of countries having fulfilled each step in preparing the national qualifications framework proposal for higher education

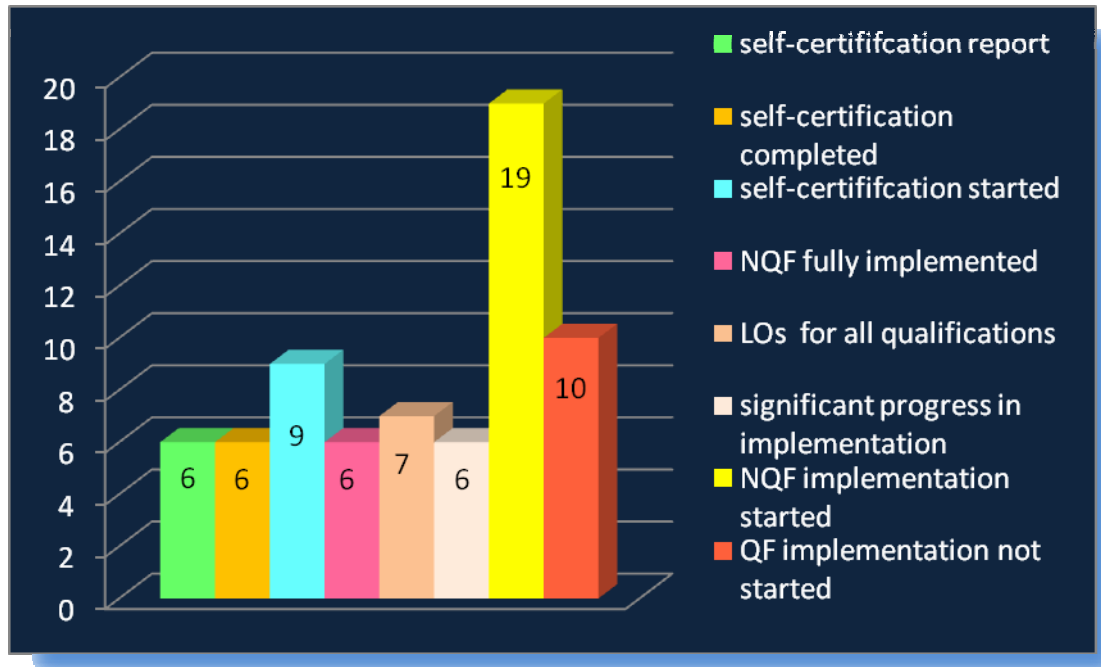


Four years after the commitment was made to develop NQFs in the Bergen Communiqué, more than 80% of the countries have prepared their NQF proposals; a couple of countries that have not completed the NQF proposal report that they have already prepared credit ranges or cycle descriptors, but almost a quarter of the countries still have not prepared a NQF proposal with cycle descriptors.

Thirty countries have discussed the national qualifications proposal with all the relevant stakeholders. Having the national qualifications framework proposal discussed is an important landmark in the development of the national qualifications frameworks, as at this point it is possible in principle to start implementation of elements of the NQF in practice even if the necessary arrangements and decisions for implementation of the NQF are not yet completed - which only 18 countries have managed to do so far.

According to the findings of the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group, most countries are in the first five out of the ten steps towards developing NQFs: this is reflected in the report of the group.⁸

Figure 8. Number of countries having fulfilled each step in implementing the national qualifications framework



Six countries have already fully implemented the national qualifications framework, completed self-certification and published the report – but these mainly are countries that started to introduce their qualifications frameworks long before 2005. Another six countries report that there has been significant progress in implementation and seven answered that the work of describing all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies has been completed.

Ten countries have not yet started implementation of their national qualifications framework and nineteen countries state that while they have started implementation, they have not completed the formal arrangements and taken decisions on national qualifications framework implementation, which means that the implementation, if started, is still at an early stage. Thus, the data on Fig. 8 show that in more than half the countries implementation of the national qualifications framework either has not started or has been started but is still in its initial stages. Nevertheless, the results indicate that implementation may sometimes be more advanced at institutional level than at national policy level: in some cases HEIs have gone ahead and started developments (e.g. writing learning outcomes) while awaiting formal decisions establishing the framework. Such initiative is seen as positive; however it is important

⁸ [link to Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group report](#)

to ensure that all developments within the country are consistent with a coherent national qualifications framework.

As regards the self-certification which was compulsory to score “green” in the indicator 3, there are six countries/ educational systems that have completed the self-certification procedure and all of them have published their final self-certification report. Nine more countries claim to have started the self-certification, although in some cases this is taking place at a very early stage of implementing the NQF at institutional level, so therefore the process is likely to take some time to complete.

Conclusions

The deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for HE by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Although there has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks (cf. report of the QF coordination group) and there is progress since 2007, there are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of qualifications frameworks will take some time. The Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group states in its report that developing and describing learning outcomes is one of the greatest challenges that the EHEA will face over the next few years. This is also clear from looking at the implementation deadlines the countries have set for NQF implementation: a number of countries indicate that while they have made good progress in setting up and implementing their NQFs for HE, they do not expect to complete implementation by 2010 but are aiming to do it by 2012, 2013 or 2015.

It seems that there is not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 Stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries continued to pursue these action lines separately. As the 2007 stocktaking report noted however, national frameworks of qualifications will bring together a number of strands of the Bologna Process, all of which are based on a learning outcomes approach: quality assurance; credit transfer and accumulation systems; recognition of prior learning; lifelong learning; flexible learning paths and the social dimension.

The QF group report points out that the existence of two overarching frameworks may have caused delays in implementing the NQF in some countries.⁹ However in the London Communiqué the Ministers expressed confidence that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA would also be compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

⁹ [link to Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group report](#)

Recommendations

- Countries should not wait until their whole national qualifications framework is developed in accordance with EQF, but they should continue to develop their higher education framework and link it with other levels of qualifications at a later stage.
- While any implementation of the framework at HEI level should be within the context of national policy to guarantee the credibility of qualifications, institutions should be encouraged and supported to work towards describing their programmes in learning outcomes (in the form of knowledge, skills and competences).

Employability of graduates

The Bologna working group on employability (Employability WG) has defined employability as:

...the ability to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market.

Point 7 in the National Report template dealt with the employability of graduates, particularly at the first cycle level, as well as the involvement of employers in curriculum development, quality assurance and in the governance of HEIs.

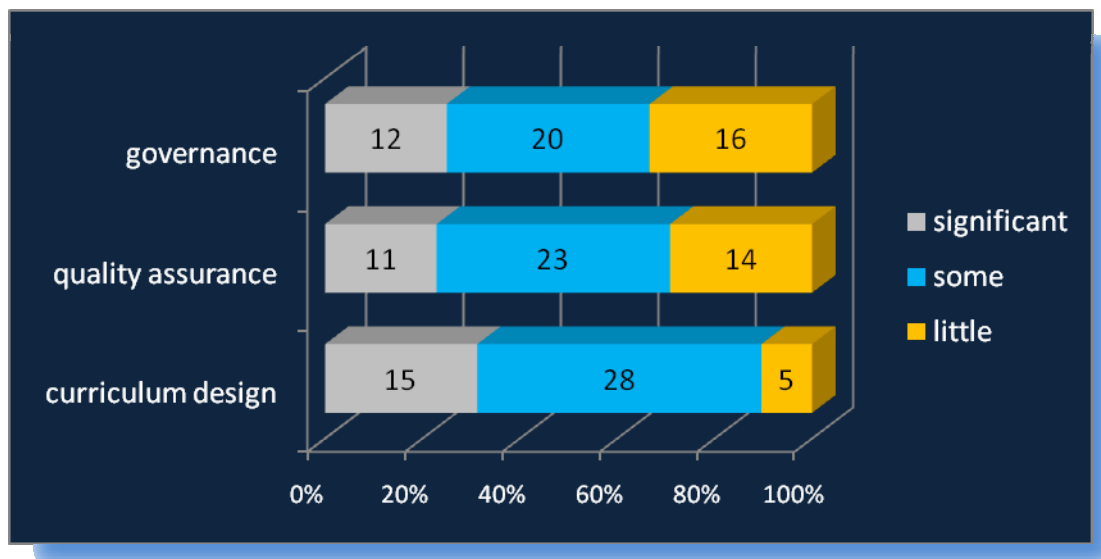
As in 2007, the answers from the countries did not provide sufficient information on the statistics for graduate employment to make EHEA-wide comparisons. While question 7a) of the National Report template explicitly asked countries to include the most recent statistical data on the employment status of graduates of all cycles, most countries at best provided overall unemployment data. There were a few exceptions where countries provided all the necessary graduate employment statistics. At the same time, some countries explained that they were unable to provide data on the graduates because the Bologna three-cycle degree system was introduced too recently and there were no graduates from it yet. However, from the answers to the rest of the questions on employability it was possible to make some qualitative analysis.

Involvement of employers

The answers to point 7b) in the National Reports demonstrated that employability of graduates is seen by higher education institutions and governments as one of the most important focal points for higher education. A number of countries have held discussions and consultations with all higher education stakeholders over the period since the London ministerial conference in 2007 and some have adopted legislation obliging HEIs to involve employers and other stakeholders in curriculum development, quality assurance and/ or governance of HEIs.

Figure 9 shows the number of countries that characterised the involvement of employers as "significant", "some", "little" or "none". According to Figure 9 the involvement of employers is greatest in curriculum design – and indeed a number of countries reported that employers have been involved in programme committees, and in discussions of the curriculum before its approval or otherwise. Employers are less involved in quality assurance and governance of HEIs. Overall, there is room for improvement as "some" involvement, which is the dominant answer, is not a guarantee of the relevance of all degrees to the needs of labour market.

Figure 9. Involvement of employers in curriculum design, quality assurance and governance of HEIs (number of countries giving each answer)



The Employability WG has noted that employers and HEIs still have to learn how to work with each other in order to improve the employability of graduates. While some employers' dissatisfaction with the preparedness of graduates to work in their profession has been long known, the Employability WG has also indicated that some universities query whether employability should be a part of their mission and purpose – a phenomenon that may put at risk universities' own competitiveness, especially in the current the global economic situation. It should be underlined that employability of graduates is one of the core purposes of higher education, as stated in the London Communiqué: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base, and stimulating research and innovation¹⁰.

Bachelor graduates in employment and further studies

As in the 2007 stocktaking, the quality of responses to this question was very varied and a great number of countries could not provide statistical data on first- and second-cycle graduates separately. In some cases this was because there have not as yet been any graduates of the Bologna three-cycle system. In addition, information from some countries was limited to the proportion of higher education graduates in the overall national unemployment figure. As in 2007, a great number of countries in their 2009 national reports were still optimistic regarding the employment prospects of higher education graduates, regardless of whether they graduate from the Bologna system or from "old" programmes. This is seen as being closely linked to the overall situation in

¹⁰ cf. London communiqué, http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/London_Communique18May2007.pdf

the economy and the labour market, and it was repeatedly mentioned by countries that fluctuations in the economy probably have a much greater impact on graduate employment than the efforts of HEIs to improve employability.

To complement the findings of the 2009 stocktaking, the Data Collection Working Group found that the increased share of the population having completed tertiary education in recent decades, coupled with the emerging changes in economic conditions, means that new graduates are now entering a more competitive labour market than ever before. Young graduates who have completed their studies within the last two years are significantly more affected by unemployment than their more experienced peers.

With specific regard to the employment of graduates with first cycle qualifications, the observation is the same as in 2007: where the data were available, most “professional-type” bachelor graduates were in employment and only a small proportion of them chose further studies, while the reverse situation was observed for holders of “academic” bachelor degrees. Some countries reported that since 2007 the proportion of academic bachelor graduates in employment has grown, but this might be explained more by the overall economic and labour market situation in recent years than simply by better acceptance of first cycle graduates in the labour market.

Since the introduction of the Bologna three-cycle system, the employability of graduates with bachelor degrees has been a particularly strong issue in some countries, as was also confirmed by the findings of the Employability WG. However, the fact that bachelor graduates successfully enter the labour market in countries where the bachelor-master system has been in place already for a longer time suggests that the issue of employability of bachelor graduates might be mainly a transitional problem caused both by the perceptions of employers and by some countries rushing to introduce the reforms without sufficient effort to make bachelor degrees more relevant to the labour market.

It is also important to note that several countries more or less explicitly stated that they aim to encourage a high number of “academic” bachelors to continue in master studies and they therefore do not specifically promote the entry of first-cycle graduates to the labour market. Likewise, in countries that have binary systems, most professional bachelor graduates progress directly to the labour market. Some of these may choose to undertake master studies following a period of work experience, as noted in the earlier comments on Indicator 2, *Access to the next cycle*.

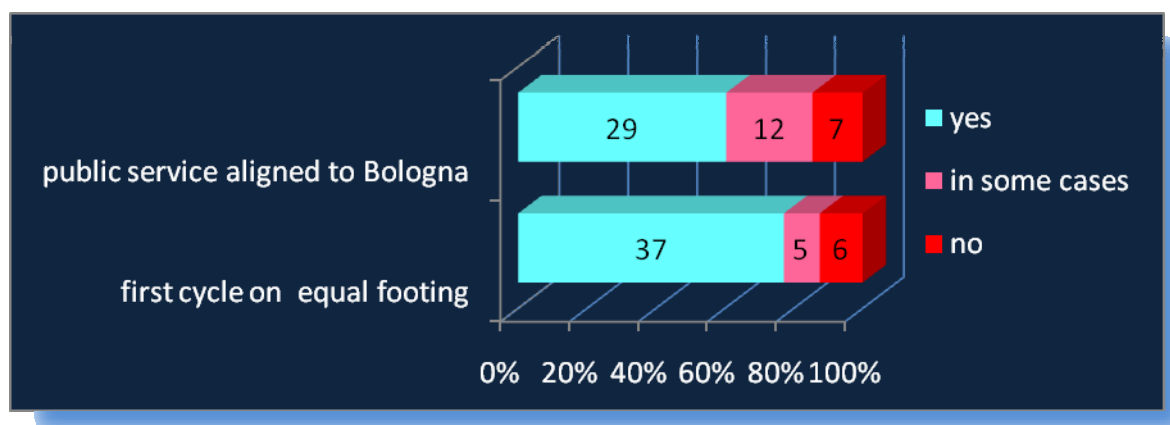
In the 2009 national reports, the most frequently mentioned measures to improve employability of graduates included involvement of employers in various ways: in curriculum design and development, in quality assurance and governance and in the preparation of professional standards and profiles. There was also an emphasis on including key competences in curricula, expansion of practical courses and internships/placements, and full implementation of national qualifications frameworks. The Employability WG suggested actions that could be taken by governments, HEIs and employers to improve the employability of graduates, for example by raising awareness of the Bologna Process and the value of bachelor degrees; establishing

national qualifications frameworks, and promoting greater dialogue between higher education institutions and employers.

Bachelor degrees and public service

Questions 7c) and 7d) in the National Report template were designed to clarify whether first-cycle graduates are able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing with other graduates, and whether recruitment procedures and career structures in the public service have been aligned to take account of the Bologna changes respectively.

Figure 10. Measures taken to ensure that first cycle graduates are able to pursue careers in the public service (number of countries giving each answer)



The results are shown in Fig. 10. It should be noted that some countries may not have fully understood this question, especially the concept of “equal footing”. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution. The vast majority of countries stated that first-cycle graduates are indeed able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing with other graduates. Some countries however mentioned that the job descriptions of some higher public service professions corresponded to higher Bologna cycles and might thus not be open to first-cycle graduates.

A number of countries stated in their national reports that they have made changes to align their legislation or recruitment procedures for the public service with the Bologna reforms. As shown in Fig. 10, in around two-thirds of the countries holders of first-cycle degrees are not discriminated against when seeking jobs in the public service.

Conclusions

- While countries say that employability is important, they have not gathered sufficient data to support this assertion. With the growing number of bachelor graduates, as well as the rapidly changing economic environment and its impact on labour markets, there is an urgent need for countries to set up systems to track the employability of graduates in the future.
- The acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market can depend as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Altogether, the employability issues indicated in the national reports seem to be in accordance with the findings of the Employability WG which has also identified the main challenges to improving the employability of graduates.

Implementation of the third cycle

Normal length of full-time doctoral studies

Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing, the number of structured doctoral programmes is growing and more universities have established doctoral schools. Few countries provided statistical data on the proportion of doctoral students in the overall student body. Most countries indicated three years as the nominal length of doctoral studies, but some also suggested that the real time needed to acquire a doctoral degree may be longer, and often requires four years of full-time study. In two countries there still exist “old” doctoral programmes of two years’ duration but these are gradually being phased out. In a large number of countries, structured doctoral programmes include taught courses, which vary in duration from half a year (30 ECTS credits) to 1.5 years. Some countries state that organising doctoral studies is within the autonomous control of HEIs, and thus HEIs themselves decide whether to include taught courses or not. Such courses could include advanced studies in the chosen field of research, foreign languages, teaching methodology, and sometimes entrepreneurship. From the national reports it appears that there are more taught courses in those HEIs that have doctoral schools.

Access to doctoral studies

The majority of countries mentioned that in principle all second-cycle graduates are eligible for access to doctoral studies. However, where two types of HE programmes exist, the graduates from applied or professional second-cycle programmes may have to meet additional requirements, in most cases additional courses. There are also some countries where in principle a first-cycle graduate can be admitted to doctoral studies.

Supervisory and assessment procedures

Most countries have supervisory activities for doctoral students, which in many cases are determined by the higher education institutions themselves. The most common assessment procedure is periodic attestation or reporting, which may take place once a year, twice a year or once every two years. Some countries indicate that doctoral candidates have to sit exams.

Third cycle qualifications in qualifications frameworks

In comparison to 2007, more countries stated in 2009 that they have already included, or propose to include, doctoral studies in their NQFs. More countries also mentioned that they linked doctoral studies with learning outcomes, usually in taught courses.

Interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills

Some countries reported that they included interdisciplinary training and development of transferable skills in doctoral studies, mainly where doctoral schools have been established; others stated that it is not compulsory in doctoral studies.

Use of ECTS in doctoral programmes

The number of countries that use ECTS in doctoral studies has grown since 2007. Some countries use credit points across all doctoral studies, some use them for taught courses only, and others do not use them in any doctoral studies programmes.

Status of doctoral candidates

The country answers about the status of doctoral candidates varied and there appears to be no single type of approach across the EHEA. There are countries in which doctoral candidates are considered students, and there are countries where doctoral candidates are considered early stage researchers. In some countries both apply – some doctoral candidates who receive scholarships are considered students and others receive remuneration for their research work and are considered researchers. In addition, in 2009 there are more countries where a doctoral candidate has dual status - as both a student and an early stage researcher - than there were in 2007.

Funding

The funding mechanisms for doctoral students vary quite a bit, but the most common sources of funding seem to be scholarships, grants for specific projects or programmes, and funding through national budgets. In many countries, doctoral students are also employed as research assistants or junior lecturers. Other examples include block grant funding of institutions to support research infrastructure; national and international scholarships; scholarships from private foundations; special funding programmes for female doctoral students as part of an equal opportunities programme; employment of doctoral students as early stage researchers in full fellowship programmes; postgraduate study grants; national student loans; junior research programmes; exemption from tuition fees; fixed monthly state scholarships, and private funding.

Tracking systems

The majority of countries state that they have a tracking system in place to follow the further career of doctoral graduates. There is, however, quite a substantial minority of countries where there are no such tracking systems. Some of these countries report that they plan to establish tracking systems, while others do not. The form of the tracking systems varies. Some countries have systems where an annual or biannual report is published, while others refer to several types of surveys carried out much less frequently. For some countries it seems to be the responsibility of the HEIs themselves through to follow up their alumni, while in other countries this is carried out by state offices such as higher education authorities or directorates, employment offices, national statistics offices or national secretariats for research and development. In some countries the two approaches are combined.

Links between higher education and research

Most countries focus on the important role that higher education institutions play in relation to research. A majority of countries state that the greatest share of all publicly funded research is conducted in higher education institutions, and for quite a few countries this holds true for all research, regardless of the source of funding. A large number of countries refer to research as one of the legally-stated core areas for HEIs, focusing on the fact that many higher education institutions are both teaching and research institutions. The principle of integrating research with teaching is also mentioned quite frequently, and in many countries quite a large proportion of people who are involved in research and development (R&D) work within the HE sector.

Even though most countries say that a large proportion of national research is carried out within the higher education sector, research institutes and the business and enterprise sector also account for a substantial part of the research undertaken. Co-operation between the various actors carrying out research is seen as a challenge, but is described by most countries as improving. Several countries have taken steps to improve this co-operation. Examples include the merging of HEIs and national research institutes; the setting up of common organisations or partnerships between HEIs, research institutes, academies of science and the business sector; the signing of framework agreements or partnership contracts; research pooling which encourages greater collaboration between networks and researchers; additional funding arrangements designed to make research in HEIs less dependent on the core funding of HEIs; improving the situation of young researchers; the co-ordination of all issues relating to research by one single Ministry; performance-related contracts for research activities between the Ministry and the HEIs; the concentration of research efforts in HEIs with a specific focus on a few areas of research only.

Several countries refer to national strategies, agendas and action plans for Science, Technology, Innovation and Research, but most of these seem to focus on research as such, and not particularly on the relationship between higher education and research.

Measures to improve co-operation, including financial figures

The percentage of GDP that countries say is spent on research is mostly ranges from 0.2% to nearly 3%, with most countries giving a figure of around 1%. Several countries indicate that they intend to increase this percentage by 2010, while several other countries report a significant increase in the funding of research over the last few years. When it comes to sources of funding, i.e. whether the majority of funding stems from public or private funds, the Bologna countries are more or less split down the middle. In several of the countries the difference is not substantial, i.e. the percentage from public and private funds is more or less the same. There are, however, a few notable exceptions, with countries where there is either almost NO private funding of research, and *vice versa* countries where private funds account for 99% of the funding for research.

2.2 Stocktaking on implementation of quality assurance

To carry out stocktaking in 2009 on implementation of the various aspects of quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), some changes were made to the previous stocktaking methodology. In 2007 there were four indicators on quality assurance, of which three were devoted to external quality assurance, participation of students and international participation. The fourth 2007 indicator was targeted at the overall implementation of ESG: this proved less effective than the other indicators as most countries scored “green” or “light green” without necessarily fulfilling the requirements for the lower scores. In effect, for two-thirds of countries the 2007 indicator only showed that they had started work on aligning their quality assurance system with the European Standards and Guidelines, without giving a clear picture of how far they had actually progressed with this work.

For the above reasons, and also to carry out stocktaking on Part 1 of the ESG which concerns the internal quality assurance within the HEIs, it was decided that the 2009 stocktaking would include:

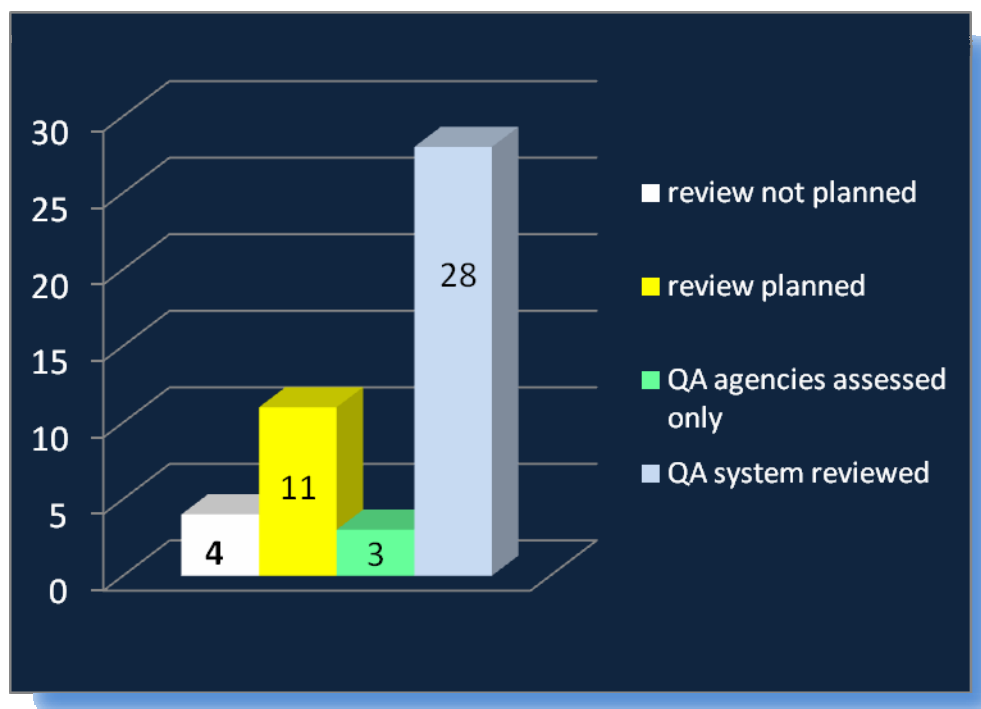
- qualitative analysis on various aspects of internal quality assurance
- indicators similar to three of those used in 2007, i.e. the indicators on:
 - external quality assurance
 - student participation in quality assurance
 - international participation in quality assurance.

Evaluating national QA systems against European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Slightly more than half of the countries have reviewed their quality assurance system against the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (Fig. 11). Three countries have only reviewed their QA agencies’ compliance with ESG but have not included the review of the internal quality assurance in that review.

Another eleven countries answered that they were planning to carry out a review and indicated a date (usually the year, i.e. 2009, 2010) in which that would be done. Four countries have not assessed their QA systems against ESG and either have no plans to review their QA system or have not indicated any date when such a review will take place.

Figure 11. Reviewing QA system against ESG
(number of countries giving each answer)



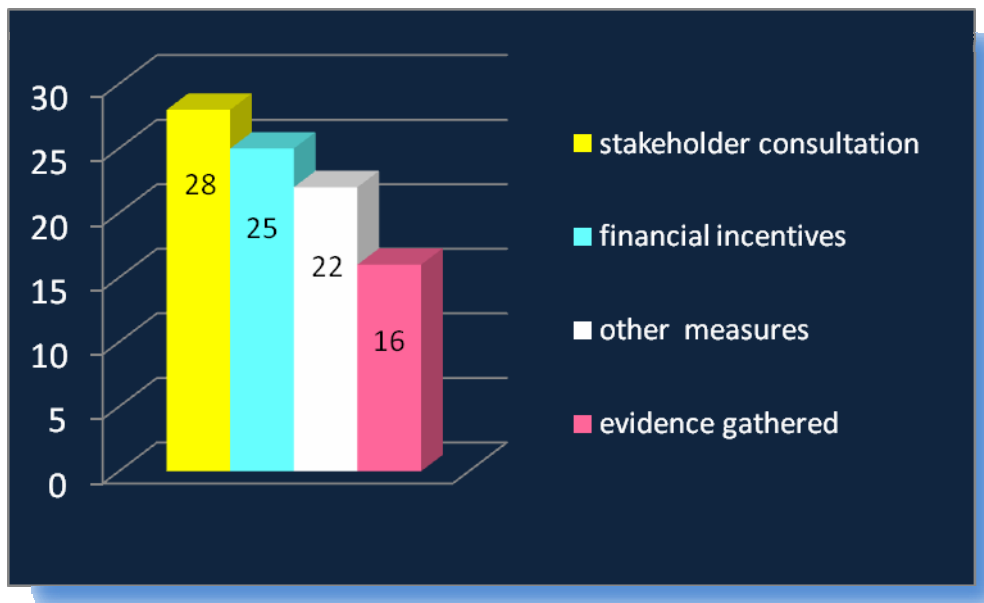
It is evident from the comments countries made that some of them have actually answered only about the external QA system and the functioning of their QA agency with regard to European Standards and Guidelines, while only nine countries explicitly mention ESG with regard to internal quality assurance inside HEIs.

Qualitative analysis of internal quality assurance inside HEIs

It should be noted that the answers of some countries suggest that they think internal quality assurance within higher education institutions means only preparing self-assessment reports, without any reference to learning outcomes-based and improvement-oriented internal quality assurance systems. In addition, some HEIs have established a *management system* and they claim that it is a *quality assurance system*. However some of these systems focus on measuring the performance of staff and/or units rather than on implementing ESG. This suggests there is a need to increase the focus on internal quality assurance within the EHEA.

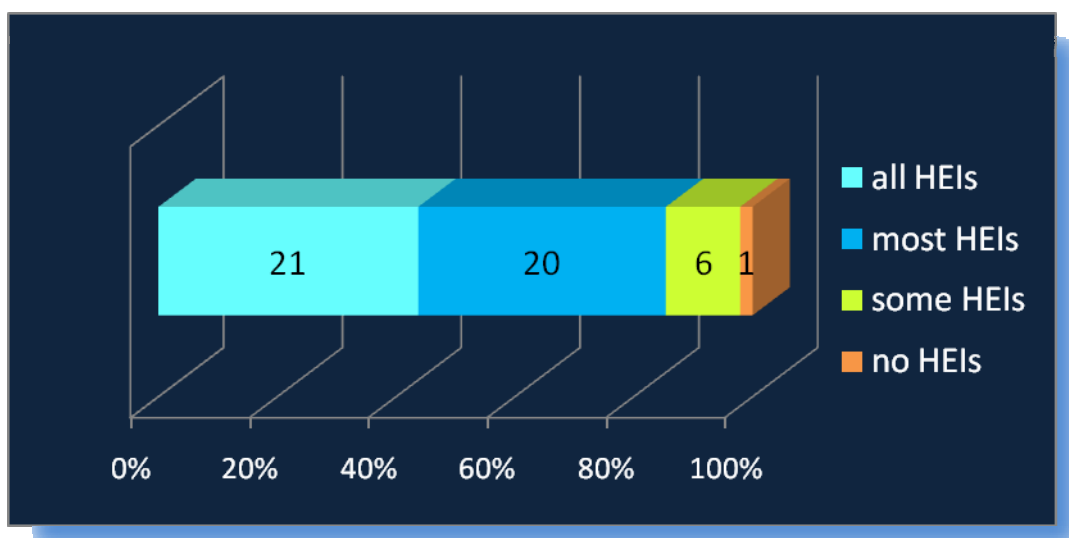
In order to align their QA systems with the ESG, more than half of countries have carried out consultations with stakeholders (Fig. 12) and after those consultations most of them have introduced financial incentives and/or other measures to improve internal quality assurance processes in HEIs. However, not all countries have gathered evidence on the results of these measures.

Figure 12. Measures to improve internal quality assurance processes (number of countries applying each measure)



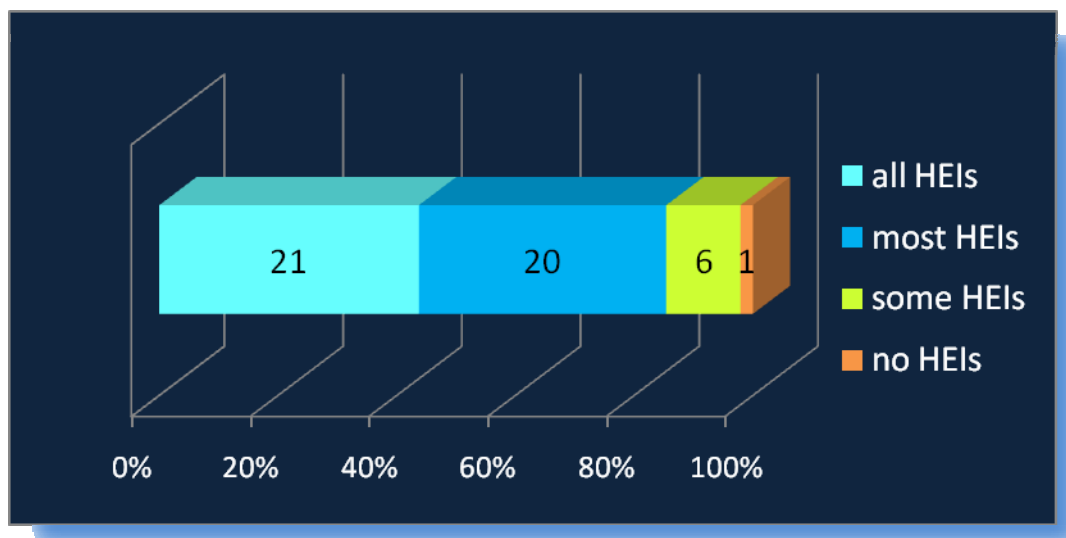
In many countries the main type of incentives is additional funding for either creating or strengthening internal quality units at the HEIs, while others carry out mapping of internal quality procedures already existing in the HEIs or auditing internal quality systems. The financial incentives in some countries are rather substantial (over €30 million in one case). A number of newer EU member states have chosen to fund these incentives from EU structural funds, while some countries of Eastern or South Eastern Europe apply for funding from the EU Tempus programme or seek loans from the World Bank. Under “other measures”, countries often mention that the requirement for HEIs to create internal QA systems in accordance with ESG has been embedded into national laws, regulations or codes of practice.

Figure 13. HEIs preparing and publishing quality strategy (number of countries giving each answer)



The majority of countries answered that all or most HEIs have published strategies for continuous enhancement of quality. Some countries noted that HEIs are not obliged to publish their QA strategies and some others described the quality strategy as a part of the overall strategy of a HEI.

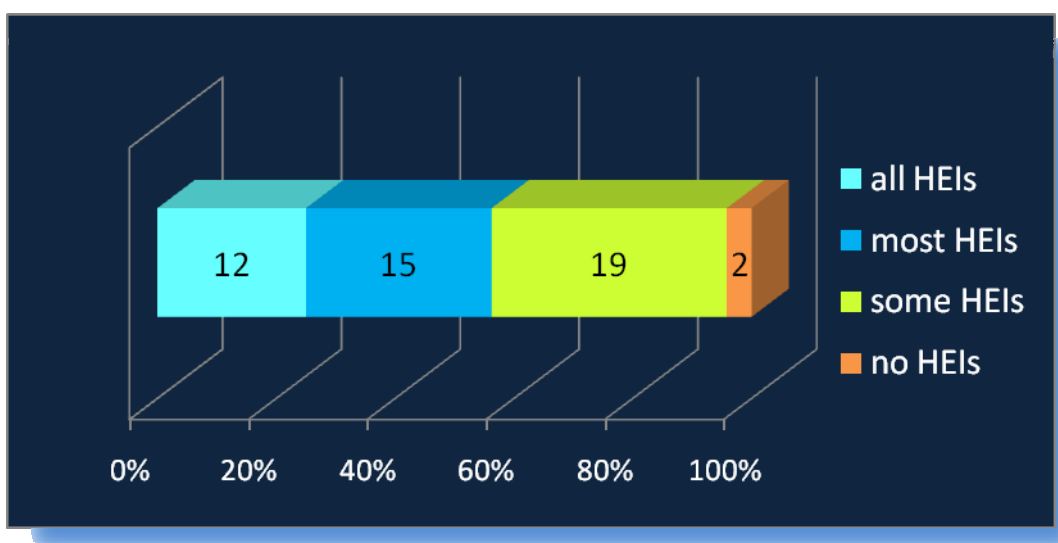
Figure 14. Procedures for internal approval of programmes and awards in HEIs (number of countries giving each answer)



Twenty-one countries (i.e. less than half) answered that all HEIs have arrangements in place for the internal approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards. A further twenty countries state that most HEIs do. The internal approval of programmes and awards may have various forms. The periodic monitoring may be organised through regular working programme committees including teaching staff and students, and in some countries also including representatives of employers. In some countries assessment is mainly done on the basis of student questionnaires, feedback from alumni or both. In a number of countries internal quality assurance is somewhat modelled on the external QA: programmes prepare their self-assessment reports and after that there is a review by peers. In other cases the programme is submitted to a HEI's internal validation board, curriculum board or senate for approval. In some countries the internal assessment and approval are carried out immediately before the next external accreditation. Several countries use EFQM screening for self-assessment of programmes. In some countries the basic procedures of internal assessment and approval are laid down by legislation.

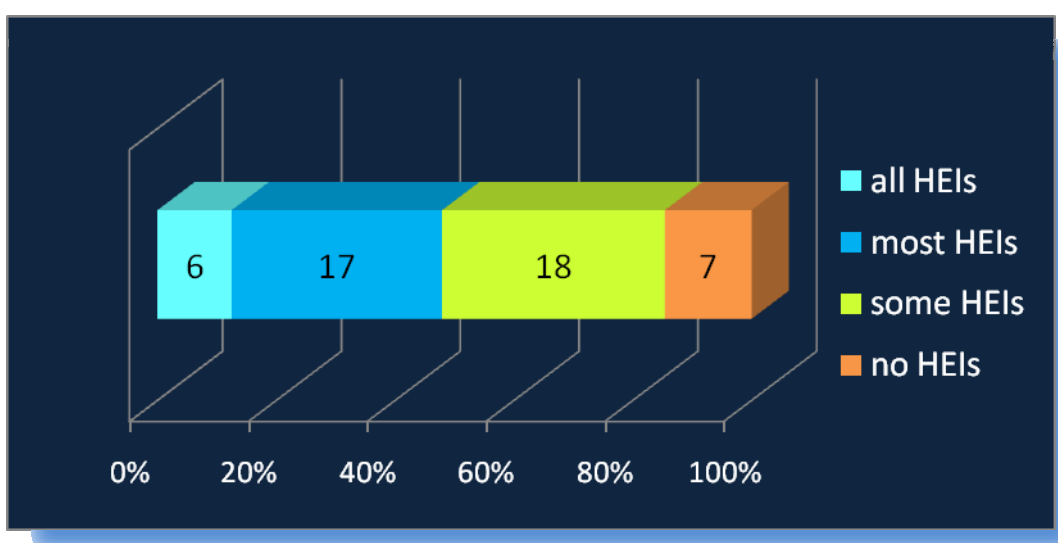
According to the national reports, in a quarter of the countries all HEIs have described their programmes in terms of learning outcomes (Fig. 15), while slightly more than a further quarter of the countries said that most HEIs have done it. However, this result seems too optimistic compared to the results of the survey carried out by the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group, which showed that the implementation of learning outcomes is still the greatest challenge for the implementation of qualifications frameworks.

Figure 15. Describing programmes in learning outcomes (number of countries giving each answer)



Countries themselves underline in their National Reports that it is important to assist HEI staff in understanding and formulating learning outcomes and suggest a number of measures for it. Answers from some countries provide clear evidence of the above. Even more, some say that learning outcomes have been made an obligatory component of the programme description but also state that those learning outcomes “are not related to Dublin descriptors” or “not in the understanding of Tuning”. Some countries indicate that there is already a culture of learning outcomes at the applied higher education sector, but it will take time for universities to make this culture change; others underline the strong traditions of content-centred curricula and again they say that change will take time.

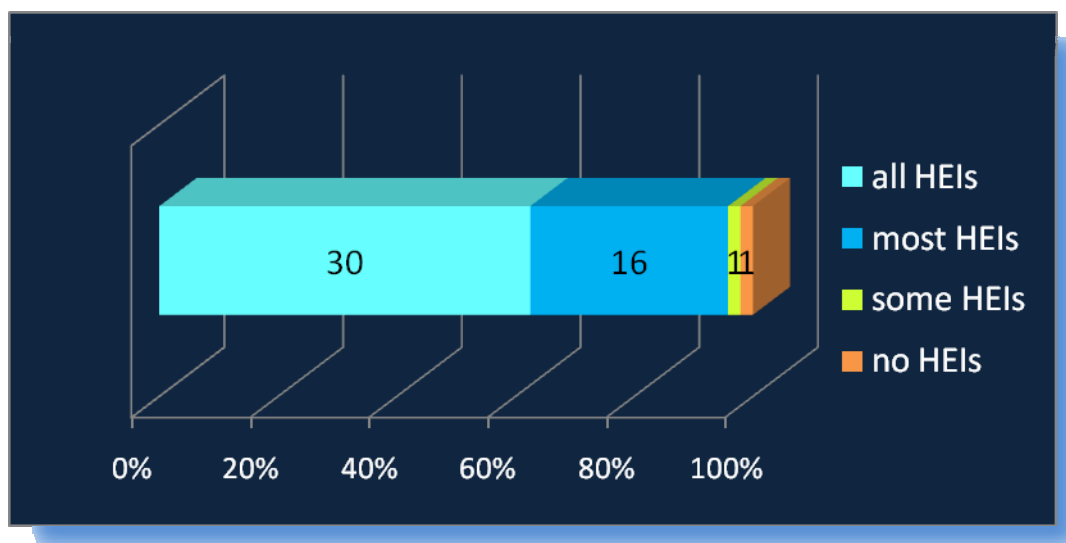
Figure 16. Designing student assessments to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (number of countries giving each answer)



Introduction of student assessment procedures designed to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes is slower than the formulation of the learning outcomes themselves – more than half the countries answered that it is done in just some or no HEIs (Fig. 16). Quite a few countries provide examples of measures that will be taken to introduce student assessments which will allow them to measure how well the stipulated learning outcomes have been achieved. Some countries are on their way to including the learning outcomes and student assessment issues into external quality reviews of the programmes.

However, a number of answers demonstrate that the very issue of student assessment based on learning outcomes continues to be unclear. Thus, in some answers *student assessment to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes* is understood as summative assessment; in others it is identified with the existence of national grading scales with published criteria for each grade – which are not specific to a particular course, programme and even study field. In a couple of cases the whole issue was understood as teaching being assessed by students at the end of the course.

Figure 17. Publishing up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered (number of countries giving each answer)



Nearly all countries have answered that either all or most HEIs publish up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered.

Conclusions

- o The national reports demonstrate that HEIs in most countries are actively working to establish coherent internal QA systems and aligning them with the external assessment procedures. A number of countries state that they do not prescribe particular mechanisms for internal quality assurance in HEIs but rather require that HEIs create them as they see fit, on condition that the internal QA of each HEI is coherent, effective and fits its purposes. Some countries use ISO,

Total Quality Management or EFQM methodologies for internal quality assurance in HEIs.

- While the implementation of internal quality assurance systems at HEIs is progressing and countries are coming closer to fulfilling Part I of the ESG, it is nevertheless clear that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take some more time to implement.
- The optimistic view of how far HEIs have progressed in describing programmes using learning outcomes may be partly due to confusion between “learning outcomes” as statements of what the learner *will know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a programme of learning (or individual subject/ course)* and the overall aims or expected “outcomes” of programmes, which, of course, have always been defined for courses of study in higher education. It is also important to point out that simply describing learning outcomes is the “easy” part. One of the concerns of the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group is that HEIs will indeed learn how to provide a technically correct formal description of learning outcomes without actually implementing them in practice.
- There is a clear indication from the 2009 stocktaking results that fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010.

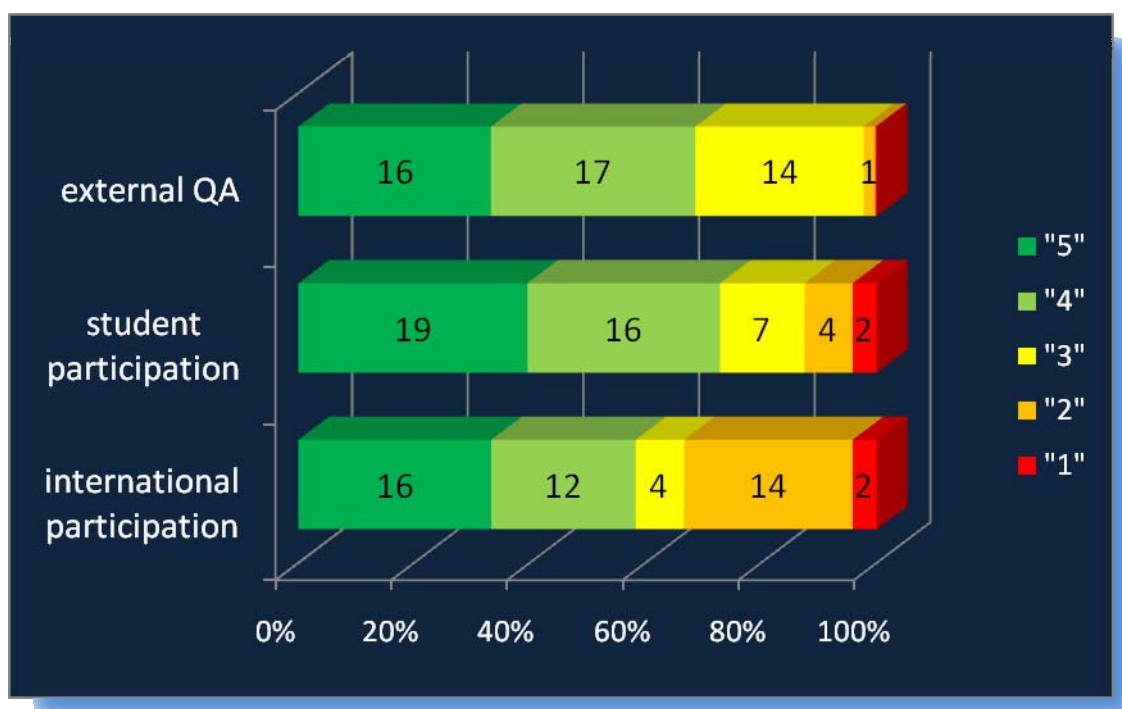
QUALITY ASSURANCE

Scorecard indicators 4-6

Table 2. Number of countries in each colour category for indicators 4-6

Quality assurance	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
4. Stage of development of external QA system	16	17	14	1	0
5. Level of student participation	19	16	7	4	2
6. Level of international participation	16	12	4	14	2

Figure 18. Quality assurance: number and percentage of countries in each category for indicators 4-6

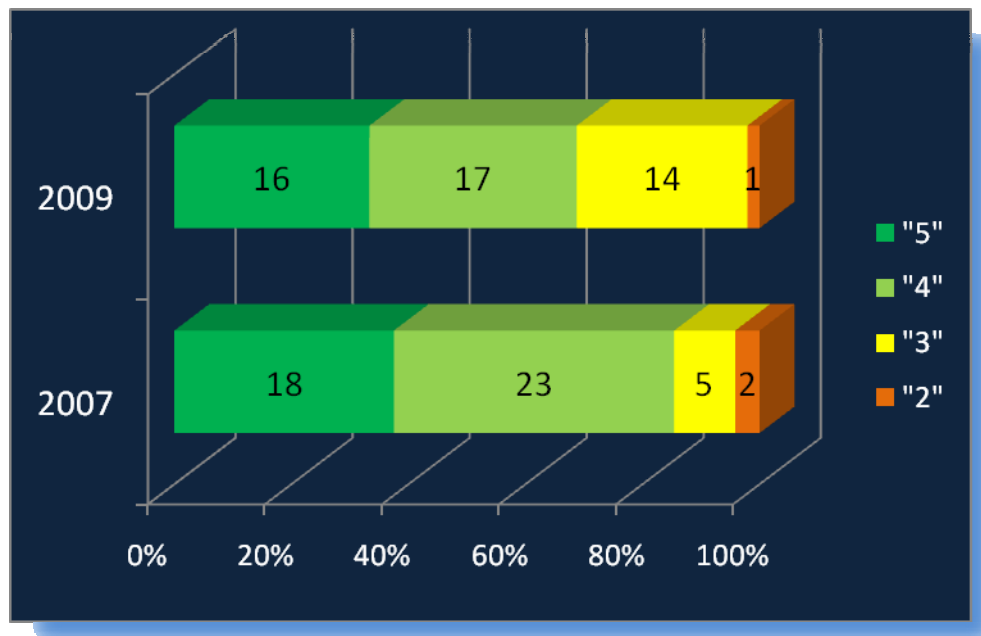


Indicator 4: Stage of development of external quality assurance system

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 4.	16	17	14	1	0
Green (5)	<p>A fully functioning external quality assurance (QA) system is in operation at national level and applies to all higher education (HE).</p> <p>Evaluation of programmes or institutions includes four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report - external review - publication of results - follow-up procedures. <p>In addition, peer review of the national QA agency(ies) has been completed according to the <i>Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA</i></p>				
Light green (4)	<p>A fully functioning external quality assurance system is in operation at national level and applies to all HE. Evaluation of programmes or institutions includes four elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report - external review - publication of results - follow-up procedures <p>AND a date has been set for peer review of the national QA agency(ies) according to the <i>Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA</i></p>				
Yellow (3)	<p>A quality assurance system is in operation at national level, but it does not apply to all HE. The quality assurance system includes at least two of the four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report, - external review, - publication of results, - follow-up procedures <p>No date has yet been set for a peer review of the national QA agency (ies).</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>Legislation or regulations on quality assurance of programmes or institutions, including at least the four elements above, have been prepared but are not implemented yet</p> <p>OR implementation of legislation or regulations has begun on a very limited scale</p>				
Red (1)	<p>There are no regulations or legislation on evaluation of programmes or institutions that include at least the four elements above.</p> <p>OR legislation or regulations are in the process of preparation</p>				

Figure 19. Indicator 4: Stage of development of external QA system
Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

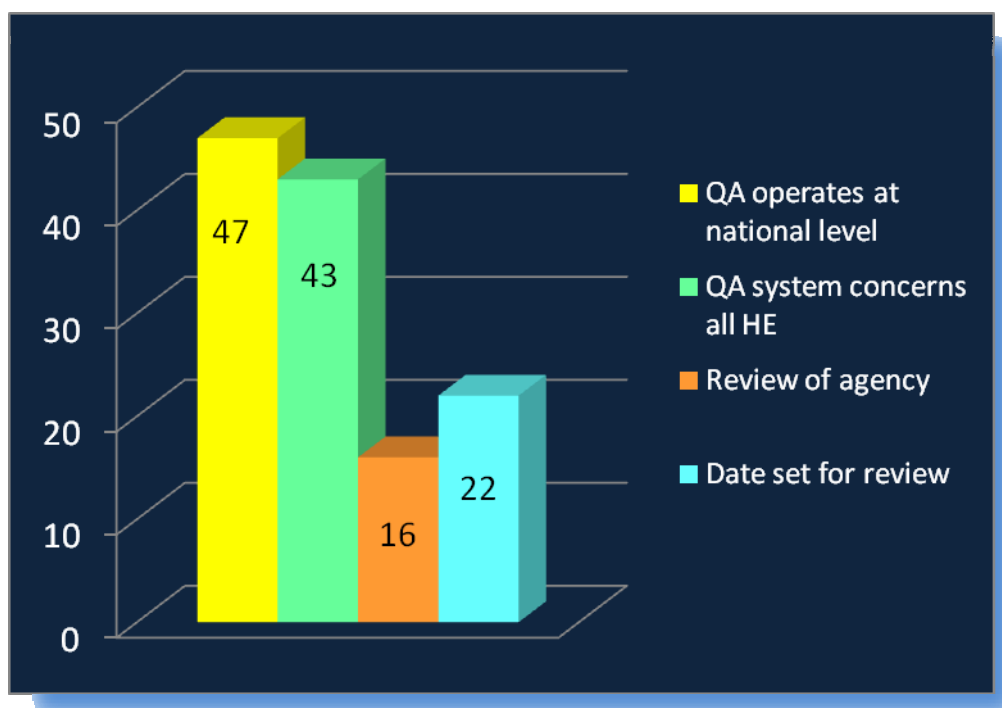
The requirement to have carried out the assessment of the QA agency or at least fix the date for such assessment shifted some countries from the "green zone" to "yellow" compared to 2007.



This indicator was intended to measure progress towards implementation of an external quality assurance system in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* (ESG). The criteria were more demanding in 2009 than in 2007, with a "green" score requiring that the peer review of national QA agencies has already been completed and "light green" meaning that at least the date of the review has been set. As a result, in 2009 there are considerably fewer countries in the top two "green" and "light green" categories than there were in 2007. A more detailed analysis of the answers is given in Fig. 20.

Nearly all countries have an external QA system operating at national level. In the vast majority of countries, the QA system covers all higher education; however in five countries it either does not cover pre-Bologna degrees or it operates in universities OR professional HEIs only.

**Figure 20. Details on implementation of external QA system
(number of countries giving each answer)**



One third of the countries have already carried out an external review of their QA agencies and another 22 countries say they have set a date for the review. In cases where the countries just refer to a year when the review will take place, it is likely that the review process has not actually started yet.

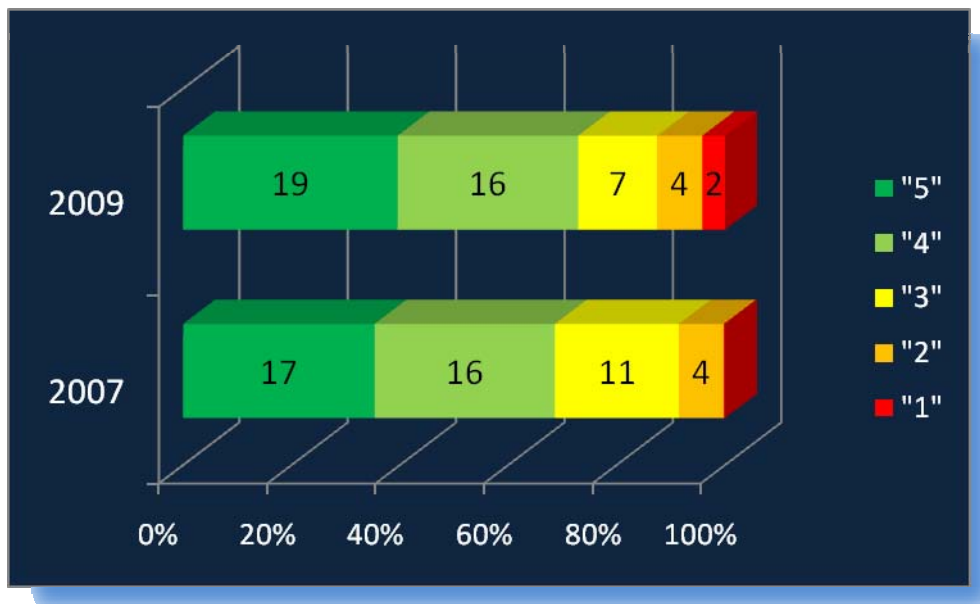
Indicator 5: Level of student participation in quality assurance

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 5.	19	16	7	4	2
Green (5)	In all quality assurance reviews, students participate at five levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the governance of national bodies for QA - in external review of HEIs and/or programmes: either in expert teams, as observers in expert teams or at the decision making stage, - in consultation during external reviews - in internal QA processes - in preparation of self-assessment reports 				
Light green (4)	Students participate at four of the five levels mentioned above				
Yellow (3)	Students participate at three of the five levels mentioned above				
Orange (2)	Students participate at two of the five levels mentioned above				
Red (1)	Students cannot participate or participate at only one level mentioned above				

This indicator was more demanding in 2009 compared to 2007: one more level of student participation was added, and countries also had to have student participation in at least two of five levels to get out of the “red” category. Despite that, the results for the indicator look better in 2009 than in 2007. However, while it is clear that there has been progress on student involvement in quality assurance, there is still some room for improvement.

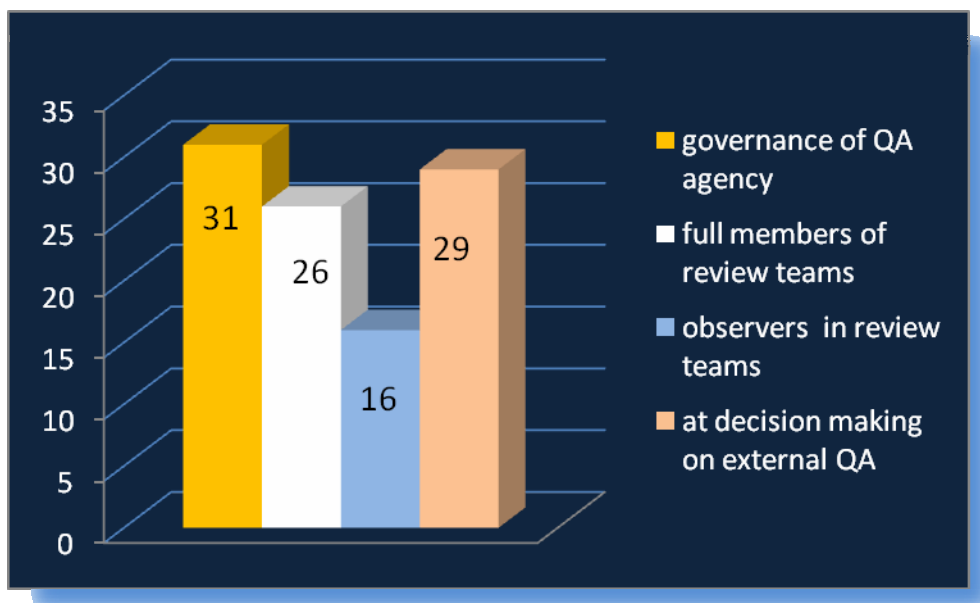
Figure 21. Indicator 5: Level of student participation in quality assurance.
Number of countries in each colour category in 2007 and 2009

The overall student participation in QA has progressed since 2007, however the analysis of answers to additional questions showed some gaps in student involvement.



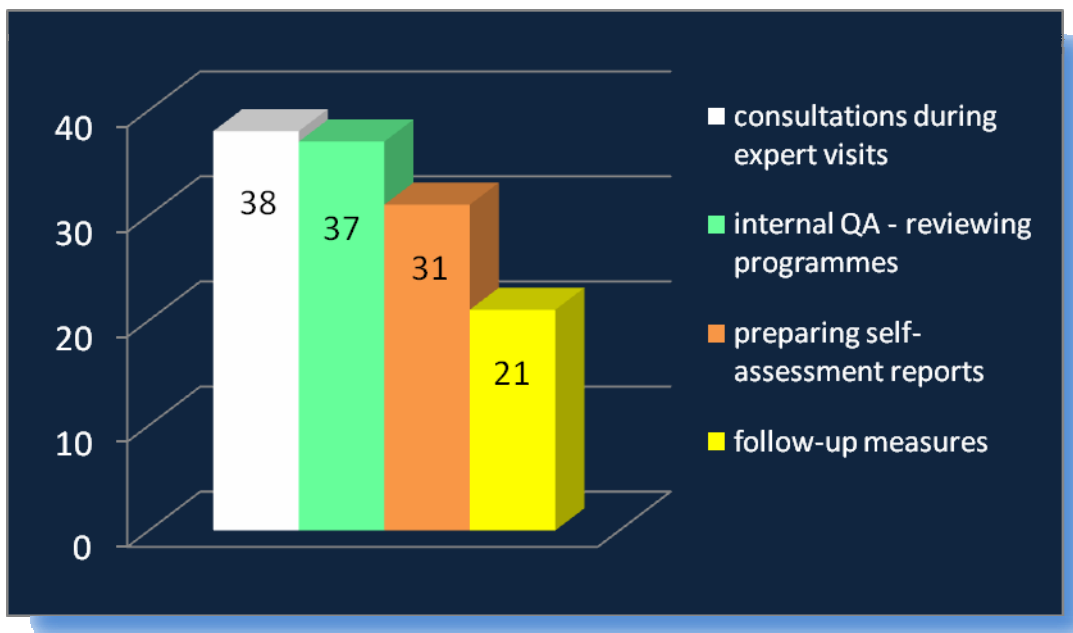
Figures 22 and 23 show the detail of student participation at the possible participation levels. Just under two-thirds of the countries involve students in governance of their QA agencies.

Figure 22. Student participation in QA as reviewers.
(number of countries giving each answer)



The highest level of student participation is in the external review teams; however in about one-third of cases, students are observers rather than full members of the teams. Also, while student participation in expert seems rather high, in twelve countries where students participate in the expert teams they are not involved in the decision-making afterwards. In around three quarters of the countries students participate in consultations during expert visits and in periodic review of programmes as part of internal QA, but there are far fewer countries where they participate in writing the self-assessment report. Many countries need to improve student participation in follow-up measures and decision-making on QA.

**Figure 23. Student participation in QA within their HEIs
(number of countries giving each answer)**

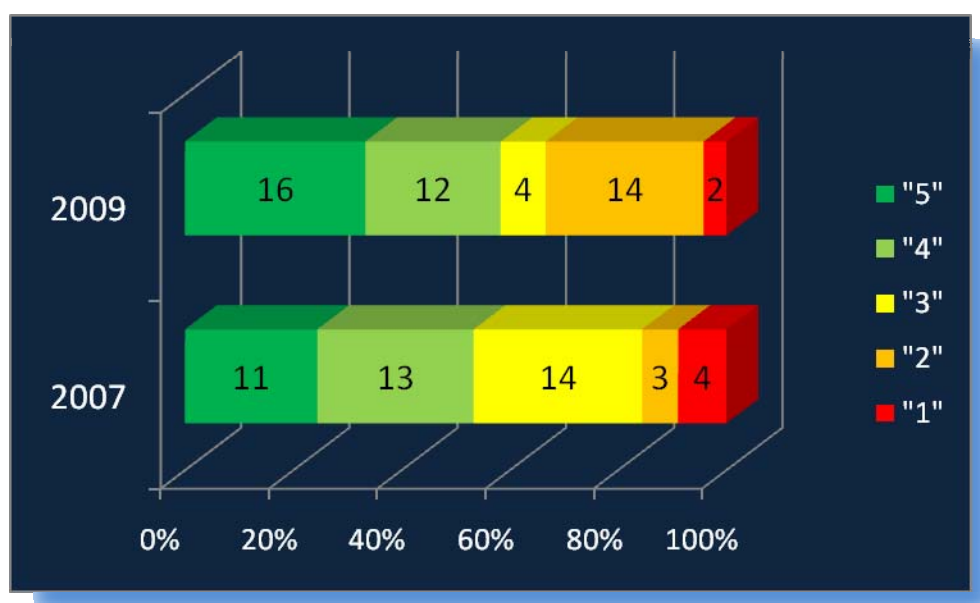


Indicator 6: Level of international participation in quality assurance

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 6.	16	12	4	14	2
Green (5)	In all cases, there is international participation at four levels: 1) within teams for external review of HEIs and/or programmes, as members or observers 2) national quality assurance agency membership of ENQA or other international quality assurance network/s 3) in the governance of national bodies for QA 4) in the external evaluation of national QA agencies				
Light green (4)	International participation takes place at above levels: 1); 2) AND either 3) or 4)				
Yellow (3)	International participation takes place at levels 1) AND 2) listed above				
Orange (2)	International participation takes place either at level 1) OR 2) listed above				
Red (1)	There is no international involvement OR structures and arrangements for international participation are not yet clear				

Figure 24. Indicator 6: Level of international participation in QA. Number of countries in each colour category in 2007 and 2009

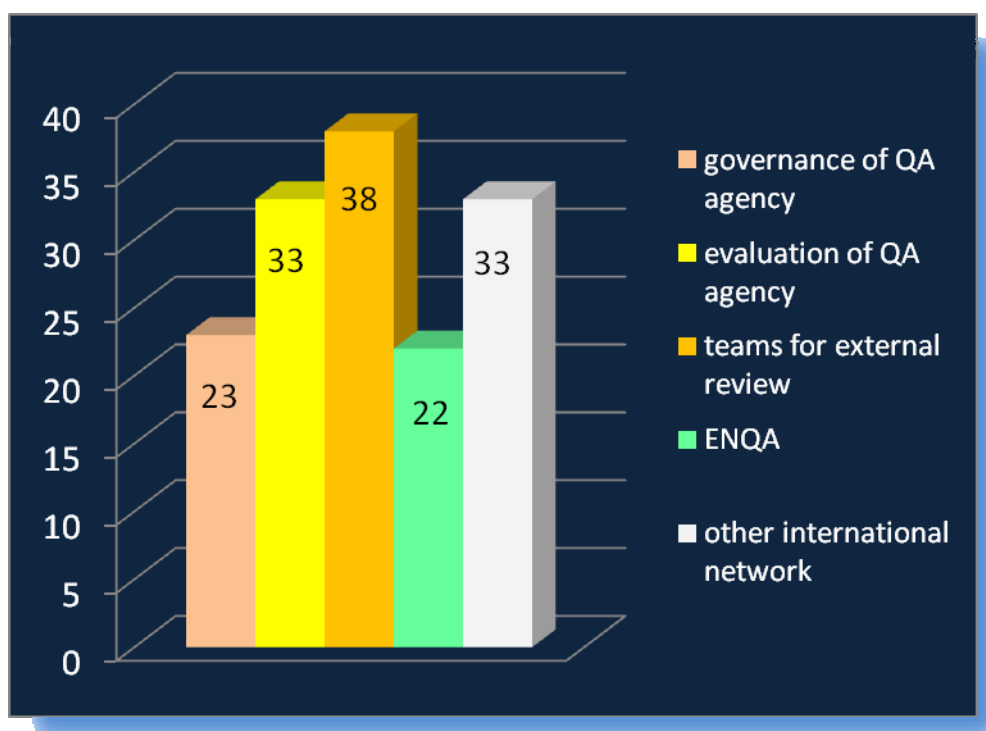
With the requirement that international participation in review teams AND membership of an international QA network are needed to score at least "yellow", the number of countries in the "orange" category has increased substantially since 2007.



While the criteria for “green” on this indicator were the same as in 2007, the requirements for “orange”, “yellow” and “light green” were more demanding. The fact that more countries scored “green” in 2009 is evidence that there has been some progress in international involvement in QA, especially in the critical areas of participation in external review teams and membership of ENQA or other international QA networks, as shown in Fig. 25 below. However, some countries which failed to fulfil the more demanding requirements for “yellow” have moved to the “orange” zone.

Generally the results show that more international involvement in quality assurance is needed. The level of international participation is highest in the expert teams for reviews – around three-quarters of the countries involve foreign experts regularly; however in another five countries it happens only in some cases. While only less than half the countries have international participation in the governance of QA agencies, several countries said that they invite international participants to governance meetings of the QA agencies, but it is legally impossible to have them as members of the governing boards.

Figure 25. International participation in QA.
(number of countries giving each answer)



Full membership of ENQA is a very important indication that a national QA agency complies with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Quality assurance agencies from only 22 countries are full members of ENQA; in more than half the countries QA agencies are not full members of ENQA, although the QA agencies in some of these countries have associate membership of ENQA and are striving to fulfil the criteria to become full members. Membership of an international quality assurance network other than ENQA also fulfils the criterion for “green”. Several countries had indicated membership of countries or their HEIs in the ENIC/NARIC

network, EUA, EURASHE Coimbra and Utrecht networks but these were not considered as “international quality assurance networks”.

The work on compiling the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was just started in 2008 and the register as yet includes only a small number of agencies, therefore it was not considered appropriate to use the listing of the QA agency in EQAR as a criterion for this indicator in 2009 (see note on EQAR below).

Conclusion

Given that full membership of ENQA requires compliance with ESG, this suggests that the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance and the work of QA agencies are not yet fully implemented in the countries that are not full members. In the future it is likely that inclusion of the national quality assurance agency or agencies in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) will be the main indicator of the credibility of a QA agency. However, it is not yet possible to apply this as an indicator because the register does not yet include a large enough number of agencies.

Note on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

EQAR was founded on 4 March 2008 by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

The EQAR Register Committee is made up of independent experts in quality assurance who review and take decisions on all applications received. The Committee has prepared Procedures for Applications based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). Following the publication of the Procedures, a first call was issued to quality assurance agencies in August 2008 inviting them to apply for inclusion on the register.

The Procedures describe the process and the conditions that quality agencies need to fulfil if they wish to be listed on the register, including the conduct of the external review of the agency, and the compliance of their activities with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

As of March 2009, three quality assurance agencies are listed on the register and further applications are pending.

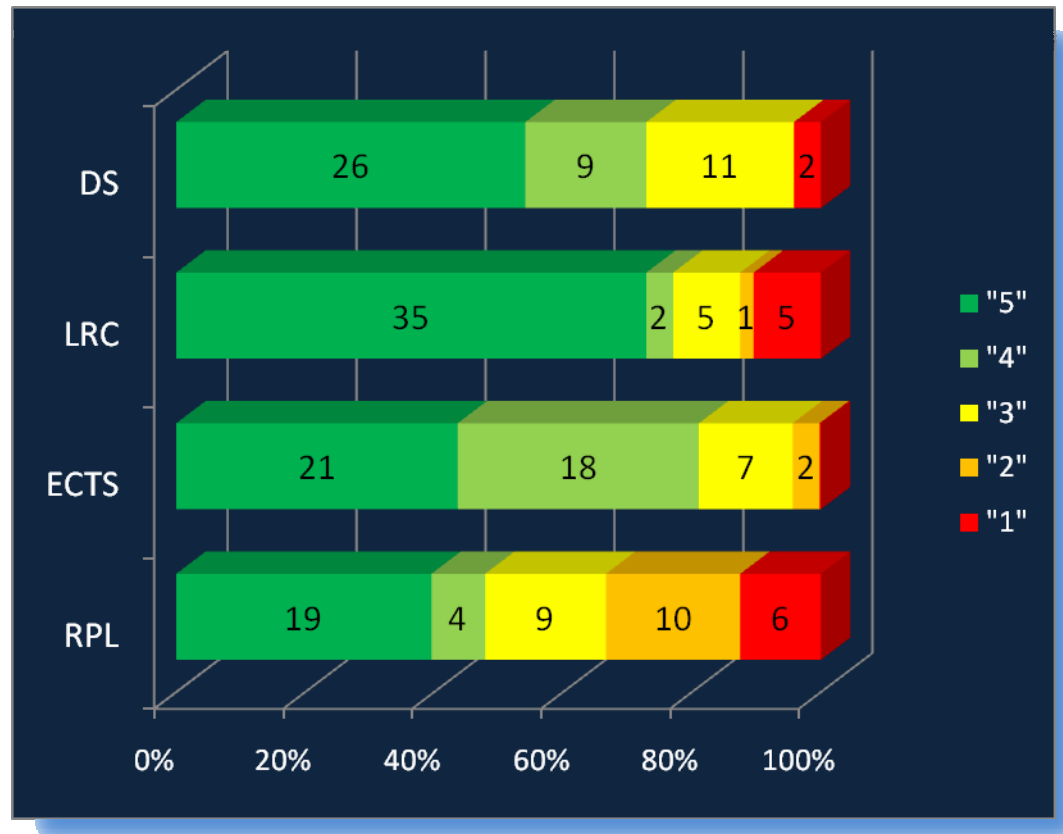
3.3 Stocktaking on Recognition and mobility

Scorecard indicators 7-10

Table 2. Number of countries in each colour

Recognition of degrees and study periods	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement (DS)	26	9	11	0	2
8. Implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)	35	2	5	1	5
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	21	18	7	2	0
10. Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	19	4	9	10	6

Figure 26. Recognition of degrees and study periods: number and percentage of countries in each category for indicators 7-10

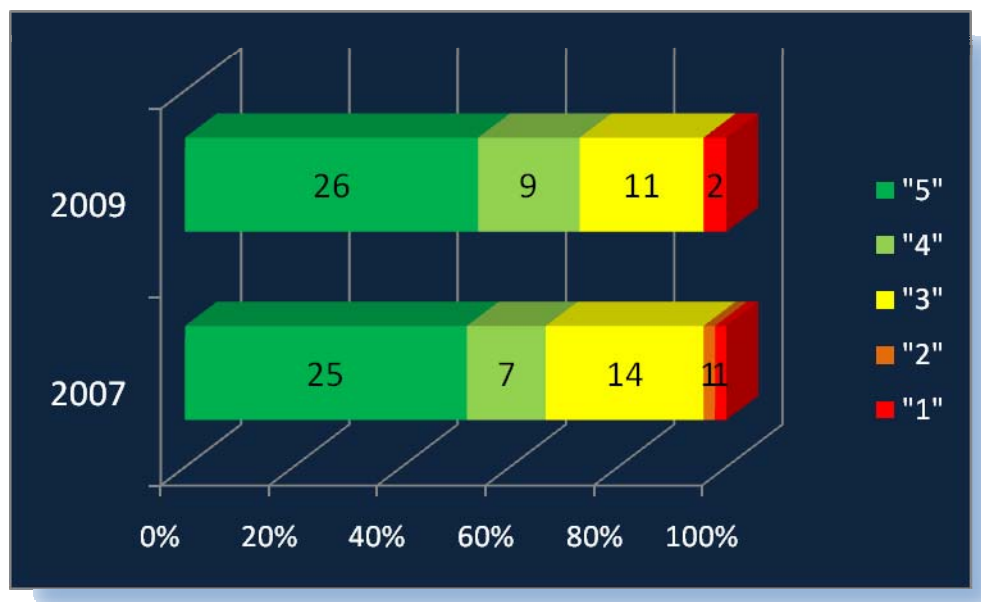


Indicator 7: Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 7.	26	9	11	0	2
Green (5)	Every graduate receives a Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - automatically - free of charge 				
Light green (4)	Every graduate who requests it receives a Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free of charge 				
Yellow (3)	A DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language is issued to some graduates OR in some programmes free of charge				
Orange (2)	A DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language is issued to some graduates OR in some programmes for a fee				
Red (1)	Systematic issuing of DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language has not yet started				

Figure 27 Indicator 7: Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement.
Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

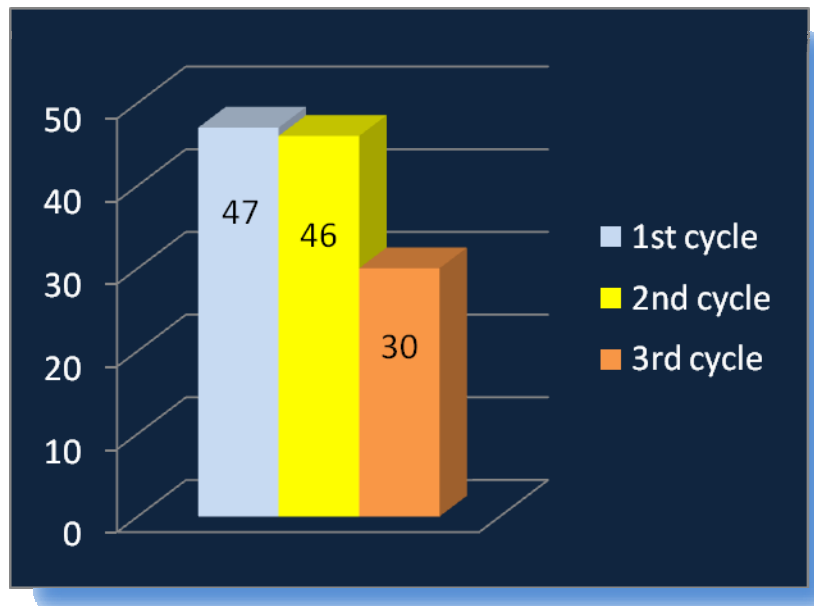
The overall proportion in the "green" zone is a little greater than in 2007. The change to more detailed questions on the issuing of Diploma Supplements showed that about one third of the countries made no progress compared to 2007. Countries in the yellow zone mainly fail to issue Diploma Supplement to ALL graduates, or to issue it automatically.



In just over half of the countries the Diploma Supplement (DS) is implemented fully, i.e. a DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format is issued to all graduates, automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language. In a number of countries where it is not yet issued automatically, the Diploma Supplement is issued to all students who request it. The criteria for this indicator were substantively the same in 2009 as they were in 2007, so some progress on the 2007 results would have been expected as countries rolled out implementation more widely. However this has not happened and it would be worth examining the reasons in more detail. The stocktaking analysis therefore took a closer look at several issues and first of all asked countries about the issuing of Diploma Supplement to various groups of graduates (Fig. 28).

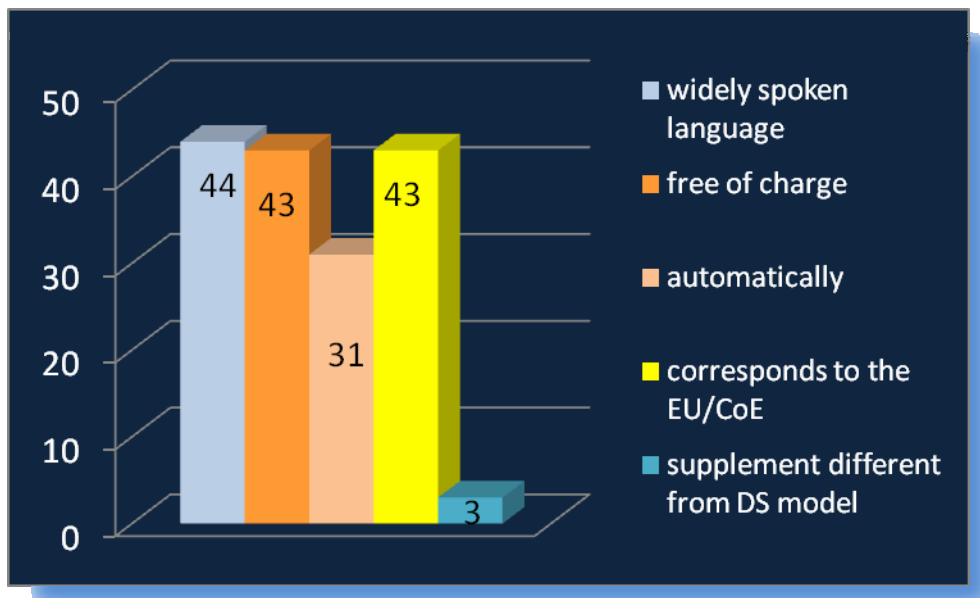
While almost all countries issue diploma supplements to first and second cycle graduates, less than two thirds of the countries issue the DS to graduates of the third cycle (it was agreed that in the 2009 stocktaking, issuing the DS to third cycle graduates would not be included in the criteria for this indicator). Answers also indicated two groups of graduates to whom countries often do not issue DS: seven countries do not issue DS to graduates of their remaining "old type" programmes and four countries do not issue it to graduates of short programmes within the first study cycle. Approximately a quarter of countries do not issue DS to some graduates, including those countries still awarding "old type" qualifications and those that have short study programmes in the first cycle.

**Figure 28. Issuing Diploma Supplement to various types of students
(number of countries issuing DS to students of each cycle)**



Failing to issue Diploma Supplements to those two groups of students partly explains why the indicator does not show too much progress compared to 2007 – in 2007 many countries answered that they issued DS to “all” graduates, meaning graduates of the two Bologna cycles only.

**Figure 29. How the Diploma Supplement is issued
(number of countries giving each answer)**



The vast majority of countries issue the DS in a widely spoken language which is most often English although a small number of countries also mention French, German, Italian, Spanish or Russian. In some countries, while the DS in English is issued free, a DS in another widely spoken language is available for a fee. It is however surprising

that over one-third of the countries still do not issue the DS automatically. Even more surprisingly, a couple of countries issue the DS automatically in the native language, but students have to request the English version. Three countries state that they issue a supplement that does not correspond to the EU/Council of Europe/UNESCO model.

Use of the Diploma Supplement for recognition of qualifications

Question 13.1 of the national template asked countries for information on the use of the DS for recognition of qualifications. Most countries reported that the DS could be 'a very useful tool' when admitting holders of foreign qualifications to the second and third cycles, but, at the same time, many also stated that it does not appear to be widely used. In a few countries HEIs follow general criteria, or even rules, established at a national level with regard to admission of students with foreign qualifications, and they mention that the DS has been officially indicated as a reference document.

It seems that in many countries the bodies responsible for admission – whether in HEIs or at a national level - still require further documentation besides the original diploma and the DS (for example the official detailed programme; the transcript of records; information on the marking system; a document from the competent authorities, or more detailed information on content of courses taken). The fact that many international applicants are still not equipped with a Diploma Supplement makes it more difficult for HEIs in many countries to consider the DS as the main reference tool which the recognition body uses to assess a higher education qualification for the purpose of access to further studies. Since the practice of requesting additional documents besides the DS to prove the validity of the qualifications in the awarding country still seems to be common, it is clear that in some countries the level of familiarity and understanding of the Diploma Supplement must still develop both within HEIs and in the labour market. At present, more familiar documents such as transcripts, statement of validity from ENIC/NARIC or from national or diplomatic authorities are still requested even when a Diploma Supplement can be presented.

Countries were also asked to describe the situation in respect of the languages accepted or the need for an official translation of the DS in the national language. The responses suggest that there is a great variety of approaches to the concept of 'widely spoken language'. While English is accepted in most cases, for other languages there may be a need for an official translation into the national language. Although only a few countries reported that an official translation in the national language is always needed, this is difficult to assess at the country level as it can vary depending on HEIs or on employers.

Almost all countries reported that they have taken initiatives at national and institutional levels to enhance the use of the Diploma Supplement as a tool for use in communicating with the labour market. In EU countries the *Europass* framework has enabled the promotion of the Diploma Supplement along with other reference documents that promote the transparency of qualifications. In many countries, further actions on achieving greater transparency are planned in connection with the implementation of the NQF.

Conclusions

- It is clear from the stocktaking results that the Diploma Supplement - which is an important transparency instrument - is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO format to all graduates by 2005, automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language, in 2009 the Diploma Supplement has been implemented fully in just over half the countries.
- The Diploma Supplement is not always issued to all students, so that graduates of the "old system" or short programmes may not receive it.
- There is a discrepancy between the information provided by the countries in their National Reports and the real life situation as reported by students. Many students have no knowledge of the existence of the Diploma Supplement while studying and therefore, since the Diploma Supplement is issued on request in more than one-third of countries, students might not know that they should request one when they graduate.
- A further problem to be considered is the timing of application for further studies: application deadlines for the second and third cycles can be before completion of the applicants' degree, so at the time of application the Diploma Supplement may not yet be available. Thus, the decisions on admission and verification of study achievements often have to be made on the basis of other documents such as transcripts.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the promotional campaign about the Diploma Supplement as a transparency tool aimed at HEIs, students and employers.
- Encourage HEIs to link the production of Diploma Supplements to ECTS and qualifications frameworks, so as to properly reflect learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement
- Promote the revised guidelines to those issuing Diploma Supplements available on the web¹¹
- Encourage all countries to use the standard Diploma Supplement format
- Publicise the Diploma Supplement within the context of the *Europass* framework of transparency instruments.

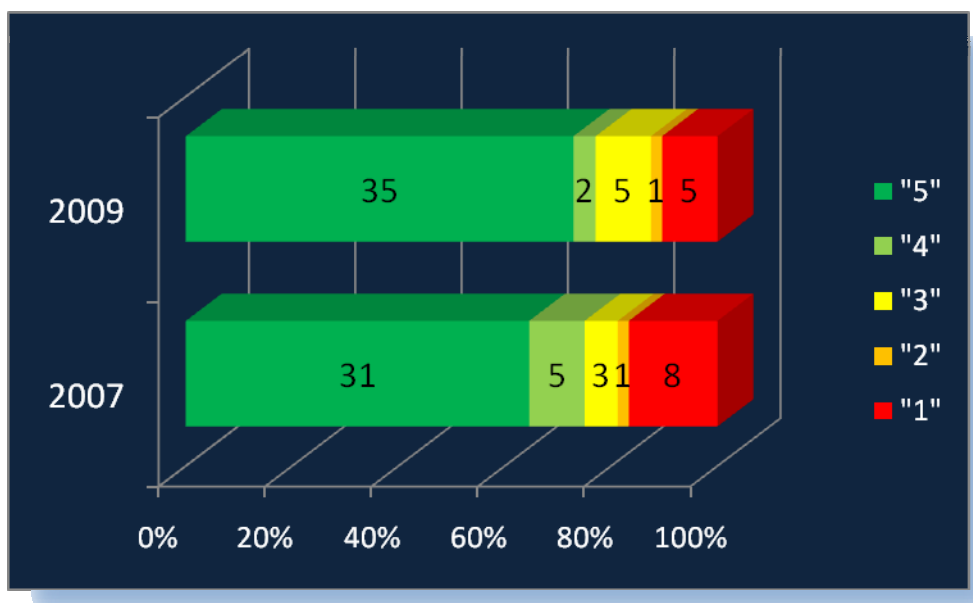
¹¹ http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/the_diploma_supplement.pdf

Indicator 8: National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 8.	35	2	5	1	5
Green (5)	<p>The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention. The later Supplementary Documents have been adopted in appropriate legislation and applied in practice, so that the five main principles are fulfilled and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - applicants have a right to fair assessment, - there is recognition if no substantial differences can be proven, - in cases of negative decisions the competent recognition authority demonstrates the existence of (a) substantial difference(s), - the country ensures that information is provided on its institutions and their programmes, - an ENIC has been established 				
Light green (4)	<p>The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with the Convention but further amendments of legislation are needed to apply the principles of the Supplementary Documents⁹ in practice.</p>				
Yellow (3)	<p>The Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with three or four of the five abovementioned principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>The Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with one or two of the five abovementioned principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.</p>				
Red (1)	<p>The Convention has been ratified but appropriate legislation has not been reviewed against the legal framework of the Lisbon Convention or the Supplementary Documents⁹ OR the Convention has not been ratified</p>				

Figure 30. Indicator 8: Stage of implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Number of countries in each colour category in 2009 and in 2007

This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation (or rather, national legislation not being in conflict) with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It is even "greener" than in 2007 but the indicator alone does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the HEIs. Complementary analysis of the National Action Plans on Recognition submitted before the London conference shows that there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition within the EHEA.



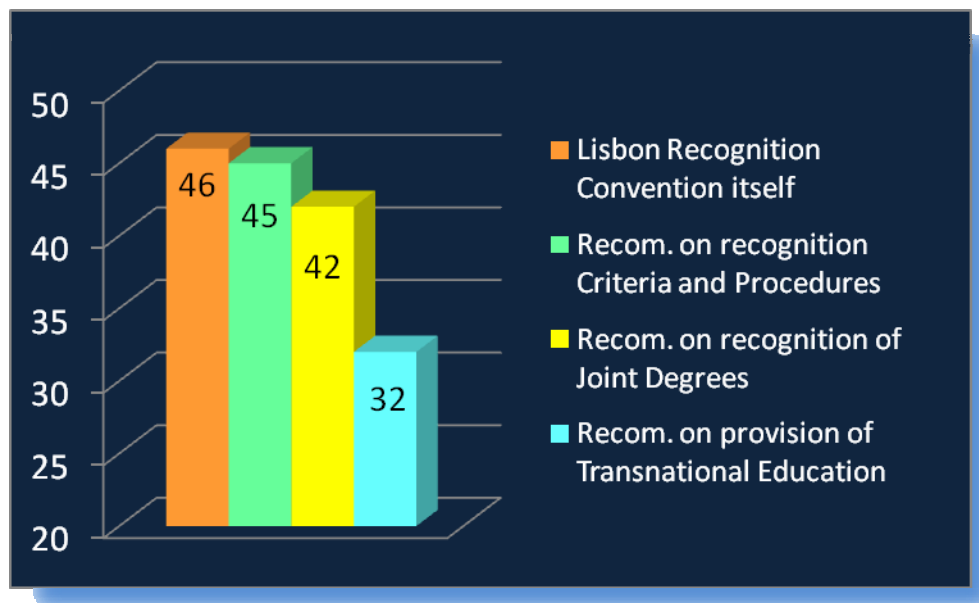
Recognition and transparency of qualifications are an important part of the Bologna process. This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; it does not measure the actual practices inside the HEIs. The results should therefore be interpreted cautiously. To have a realistic picture, more detailed qualitative analysis was carried out on the basis of the National reports and some of the main conclusions of the report "Improving recognition in the European Higher Education Area: an analysis of national action plans"¹² are included below.

A significant number of countries state that their legislation is already in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, even if it has not been amended after joining the Lisbon Recognition Convention. In reality, while there may be no explicit contradiction between national legislation and the *letter* of the legal framework of the Convention, a question arises as to whether there is any contradiction with the *spirit* of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts

¹² "Improving recognition in the European Higher Education Area: an analysis of national action plans", Report of Council of Europe, EU and UNESCO Joint Working group on national action plans for recognition, submitted to BFUG in October, 2008
http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Recognition/exp_text/Rauhvargers_Analysis_NAP_recognition.pdf

Over the 2007-2009 period three countries: first Germany and later Andorra and the Netherlands, ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Five educational systems are still in “red” as Belgium, Greece, Italy and Spain have still not ratified the convention. These countries are at various stages towards ratification – both the Flemish and the French communities of Belgium as well as Italy have made several changes in their national legislation but are still encountering legislative obstacles to ratification; Spain signed the Convention in the beginning of 2009 but Greece has so far not signed.

Figure 31. Compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its supplementary legal texts



Asked whether the appropriate national legislation complies with the Lisbon Recognition Convention¹³, all but two countries answered that it does. As regards the supplementary legal texts to the Convention, while all but three countries claim that their legislation complies with the Recommendation on the Recognition Criteria and Procedures¹⁴, in six countries legislation does not comply with the Recommendation on the recognition of Joint Degrees¹⁵. In one-third of the countries, legislation does not comply with the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education¹⁶. The answers also show that at least six countries still do not have a fully operational ENIC centre.

¹³ ETS N0 165 Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=165&CL=ENG>

¹⁴ Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures_EN.asp

¹⁵ Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, <http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/recommendation-joint-degrees-2004.en.pdf>

¹⁶ UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp

Conclusions

As regards the practical implementation of the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention - namely applicants' right to fair assessment; recognition if no substantial differences can be proven; demonstration of substantial differences where recognition is not granted; provision of information about the country's HE programmes and institutions - all or almost all countries answer positively. However, the analysis of the National Action Plans for Recognition (NAPs), which countries submitted before the London Ministerial conference, shows that the interpretation of these principles, as well as recognition procedures and even the terminology used in different countries, differ enormously.

The NAPs demonstrated that there are still legal problems in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts in the countries that have not amended their legislation and adopted the relevant principles. In some countries there are difficulties in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts due to the interpretation of the autonomy of higher education institutions. The HEIs need to understand that the LRC is not a threat to their autonomy, but rather it enables them to use their autonomy well to facilitate recognition of foreign qualifications and thus support both mobility and their own internationalisation.

The NAPs clearly demonstrate that the terminology used in different countries with regard to recognition is too diverse and unclear. The same terms have different meanings in different countries and in other cases different terms are used in different countries to signify the same concepts. This creates confusion and certainly does not improve mutual understanding.

The Bologna seminar on *Quality Assurance in Transnational Education – From Words to Action*¹⁷ recommended that Transnational Education (TNE) should be subject to the same principles of public good and public responsibility that constitute the basis for all higher education; in other words the same standards and guidelines for quality assurance apply to TNE as to any other programmes. It was suggested that there is a need to carry out a study of the TNE provision being offered within the EHEA to increase understanding of the different kinds of provision involved, how quality is assured and how TNE relates to national education systems.

Recommendations

To ensure more coherent recognition across the EHEA – it is necessary to

- find an appropriate solution to the 'triangle' of the Lisbon Recognition Convention legal framework as international legislation, national laws and regulations concerning recognition, and the issue of institutional autonomy in all countries;

¹⁷ Held in London on 1-2 Dec, 2008

- make the recognition process a part of both internal quality assurance of higher education institutions and external quality assurance
- conduct an international discussion about the variety of national recognition practices (including the stages therein) and terminology
- continue the discussion and reach consensus on the understanding of “substantial differences”
- follow up by “tuning” national approaches to recognition, recognition practices and terminology
- increase cooperation between HEIs and ENIC/NARIC centres, encouraging HEIs to draw more fully on the expertise of the ENIC/NARIC centres in improving their recognition criteria and procedures and ensuring implementation of the principles of LRC
- follow the principles of LRC and implement the UNESCO/Council of Europe *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* in the cross-border activities of HEIs.

Indicator 9: Stage of implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 9.	21	18	7	2	0
Green (5)	ECTS credits are allocated to all components of all HE programmes ¹⁸ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes ¹⁹				
Light green (4)	ECTS credits are allocated to all components of more than 75% of HE programmes ¹⁴ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes OR Credits are allocated to all components of all HE programmes using a fully ECTS compatible credit system enabling credit transfer and accumulation ²⁰ AND Credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes ¹⁵				
Yellow (3)	ECTS credits are allocated in 50-75% of all HE programmes, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes OR ECTS credits are allocated to all components of more than 75% of HE programmes ¹⁰ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, but, ECTS credits are not yet linked with learning outcomes ¹⁵				
Orange (2)	ECTS credits are allocated in at least 49% of HE programmes OR a national credit system is used which is not fully compatible with ECTS				
Red (1)	ECTS credits are allocated in less than 49% of HE programmes ¹⁴ OR ECTS is used in all programmes but only for credit transfer				

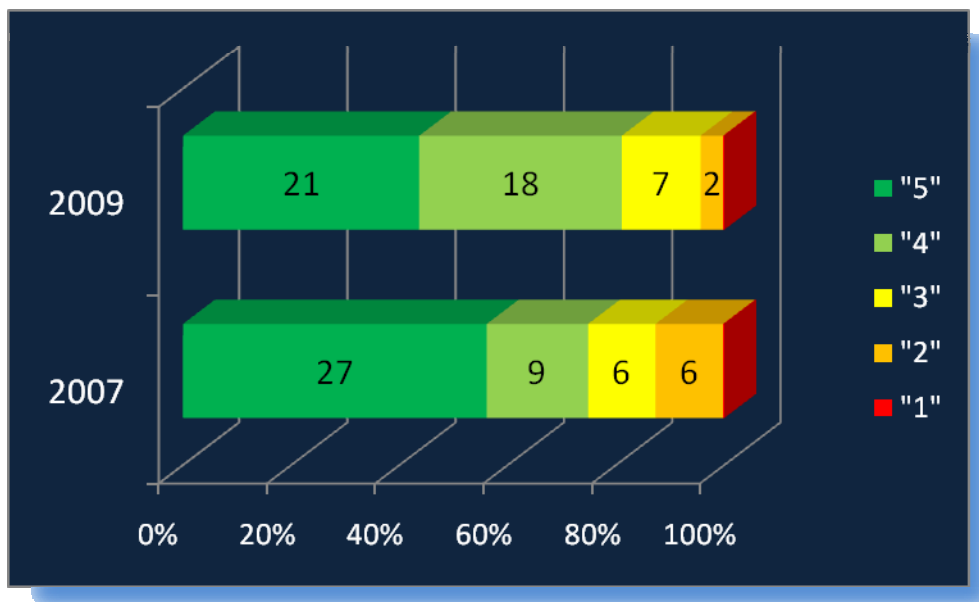
¹⁸ Excluding doctoral programmes

¹⁹ i.e. learning outcomes are formulated for all programme components and credits are allocated only when the stipulated learning outcomes are actually acquired

²⁰ A "translation" between the national system and ECTS must be provided in the national report.

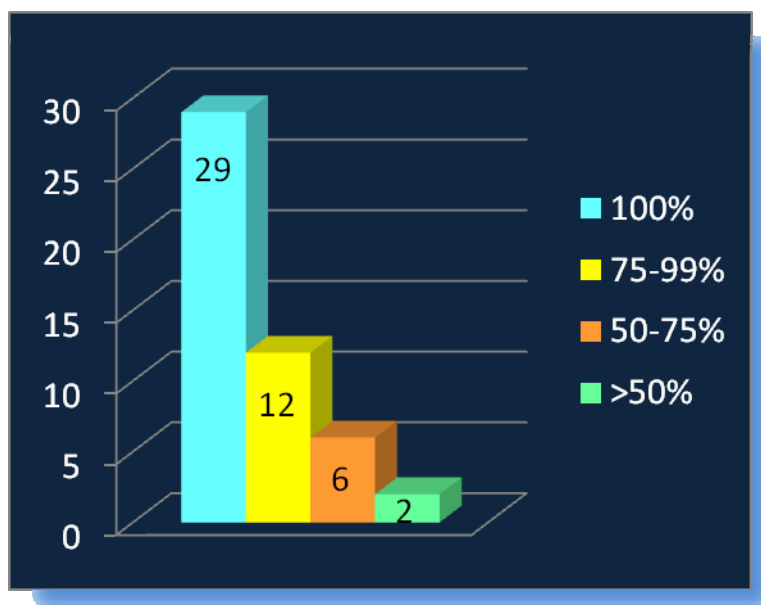
Figure 32. Indicator 9: Stage of implementation of ECTS. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

To score "green" or "light green" in 2009, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores of some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that ECTS was used for both accumulation and transfer



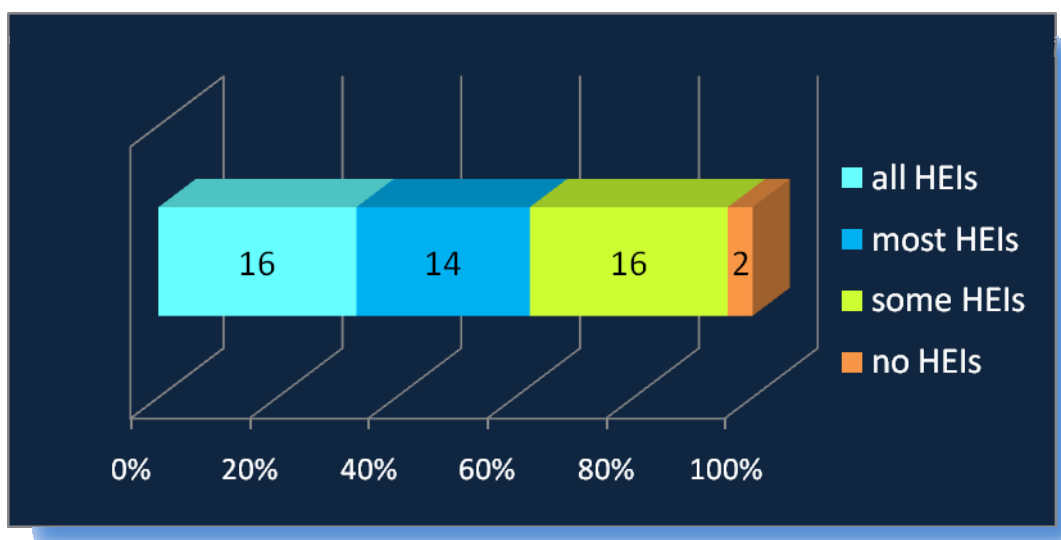
Following the finding of the 2007 report that very few countries linked credits with learning outcomes, the criteria for this indicator were modified in 2009. To score "green" or "light green", it is now required to demonstrate links between ECTS credits and learning outcomes. As a consequence of this change in the criteria, there has been a drop in the number of countries in the "green" category, as shown in Fig 32.

Figure 33. Percentage of HE programmes where ECTS is implemented.
(number of countries giving each answer)



Twenty-nine countries have implemented a credit system that is used for both transfer and accumulation in all HE programmes; only two countries reported that they implement the credit system in under half of their HE programmes. (This count also includes the ten countries that use compatible credit systems other than ECTS.)

Figure 34. Linking credits with learning outcomes.
(number of countries giving each answer)



One-third of the countries stated that all HEIs have linked credits with learning outcomes; another quarter said that most HEIs have done so. However, in nearly half the countries only some HEIs are piloting linking credits with learning outcomes and in a small number of countries it has not been started. Given that the whole issue of learning outcomes is still quite unclear in many countries (cf. comments in the section

on *internal quality assurance* above), the progress on linking credits with learning outcomes may be overestimated. In particular, the previous understanding that credits are allocated when the student is assessed as having fulfilled all the requirements of the course may still be confused with achieving the learning outcomes.

In some countries there has been a long-term problem with the measurement of student workload, and a few countries have held discussions and collected information to improve the measuring of workload. In addition, some countries saw the “floating” value of 1 ECTS credit – 25-30 hours of student work - as a problem and they determined a fixed value.

Countries have introduced a range of support measures to improve implementation of ECTS: seminars, assistance by Bologna experts, international projects, and national financial incentives. All but four countries apply such measures to promote better understanding of learning outcomes; three-quarters say they are taking action to improve measuring and checking of student workload (which seems mainly to be done as part of regular programme reviews), and the majority of countries carry out support measures for their teaching staff.

Conclusions

Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. The delay is partly because of the slow progress that has been made in implementing a learning outcomes approach in higher education. This has been discussed earlier in the report. Another problem in implementing ECTS concerns measuring credits in terms of student workload.

Stocktaking on lifelong learning

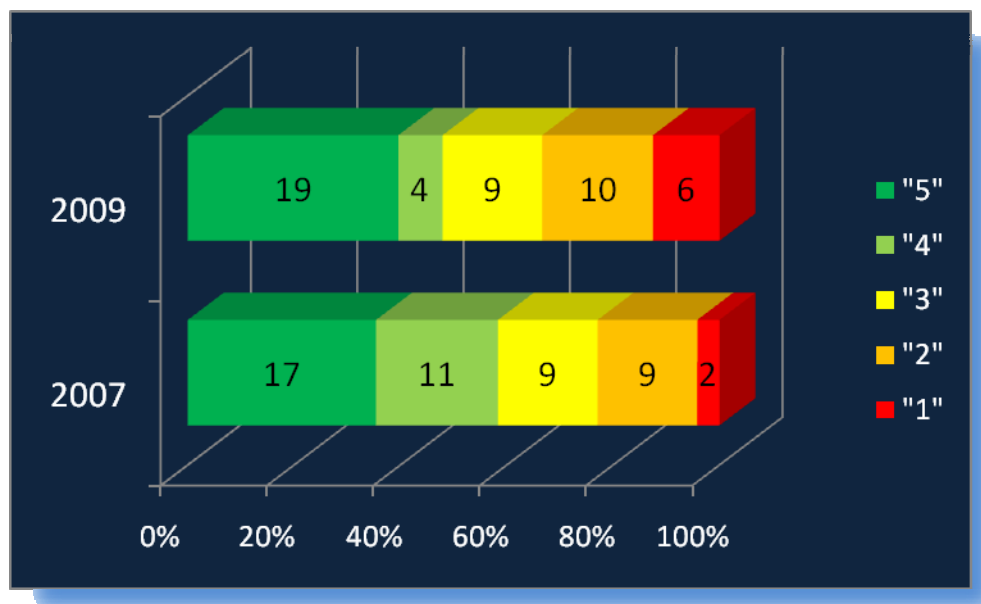
Indicator 10: Recognition of prior learning

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 10	19	4	9	10	6
Green (5)	There are nationally established procedures, guidelines or policy for assessment and recognition of prior learning as a basis for 1) access to higher education programmes, and 2) allocation of credits towards a qualification and/or exemption from some programme requirements, AND these procedures are demonstrably applied in practice				
Light green (4)	There are nationally established procedures, guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning but they are demonstrably used in practice for only one of the abovementioned purposes				
Yellow (3)	<p>Procedures, national guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning have been agreed or adopted and are awaiting implementation</p> <p>OR</p> <p>There are no specific procedures/national guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning, but procedures for recognition of prior learning are demonstrably in operation at some higher education institutions or study programmes</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>Implementation of recognition of prior learning is in a pilot phase at some higher education institutions</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Work at drawing up procedures/national guidelines or policy for recognition of prior learning has started</p>				
Red (1)	No procedures for recognition of prior learning are in place EITHER at the national OR at the institutional/programme level.				

This indicator was introduced in 2007, when the stocktaking report found that procedures for the recognition of prior learning were at an early stage of development in the majority of countries. The picture has not substantially changed for the better by 2009.

Figure 35. Indicator 10: Recognition of prior learning. Number of countries in each score category in 2009 and 2007

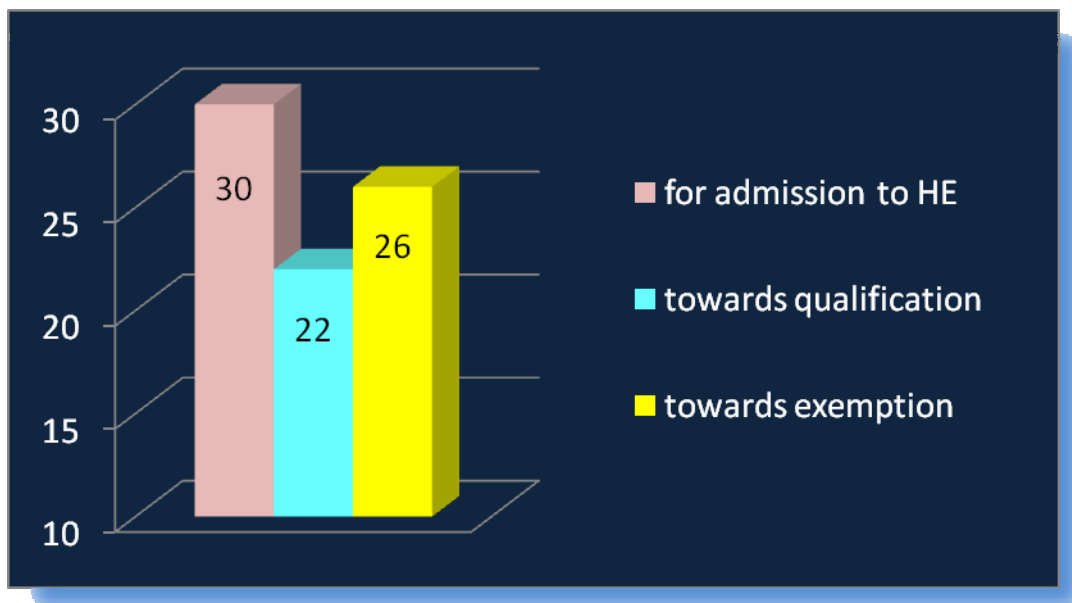
While a relatively small number of countries have well-established systems for recognition of prior learning, the answers from many other countries suggest that there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007.



Measures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), including non formal and informal learning, are at different stages of development across the EHEA. In a few countries an enabling legislative framework has been in place for a number of years and the application of RPL is widespread. In others, developments are either still at an early stage or have not yet started. The answers from many countries suggest there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. Some countries apply a restricted definition of “prior learning”, which means that only school qualifications or qualifications from other institutions are recognised. Further developments are planned in many countries in the context of lifelong learning policies, national qualifications frameworks, ECTS, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and the European credit framework for vocational education and training (ECVET).

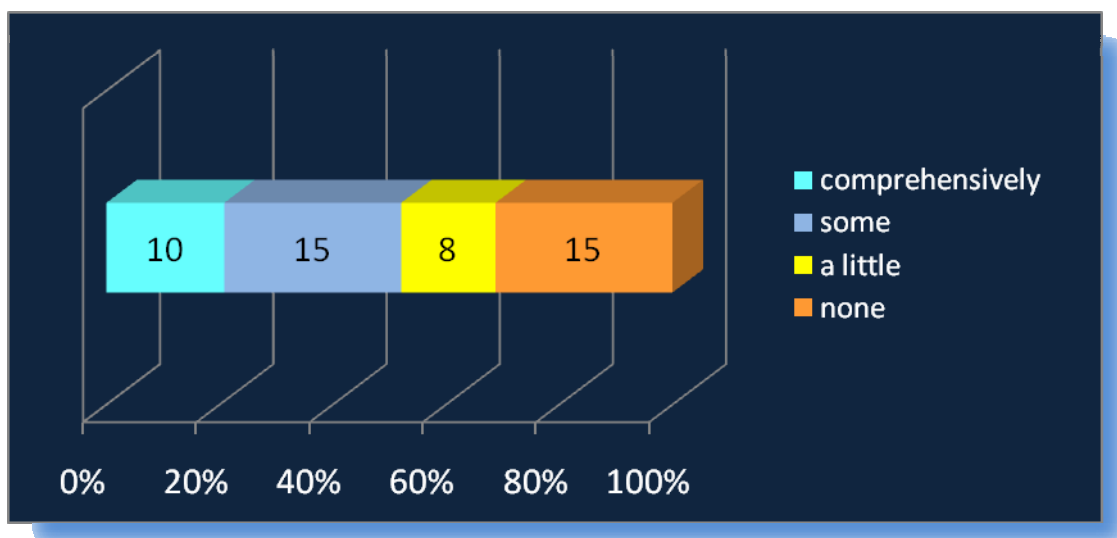
As shown in Fig.36, almost two-thirds of the countries said that they have established procedures for recognition of prior learning as a basis for admission to higher education, but fewer countries have established rules at national level for allocating credits on the basis of prior learning – in 25 countries there are procedures for allocating credits towards exemption from some programme requirements, but only 22 countries have national procedures for allocating credits towards a qualification on the basis of RPL. Some countries set upper limits for the number of credits that can be allocated for exemption or towards a qualification.

Figure 36. Nationally established procedures to assess prior learning (number of countries having each type of procedure)



In many countries, institutional autonomy is respected, so the practice of applying RPL is largely left to the discretion of HEIs and is dependent on individuals asking to have their prior learning or work experience taken into account. This can be supported by efforts at a national level to enhance the openness and transparency of procedures for RPL; and include an appeals procedure. Examples of the actions taken by countries include: development of national guidelines for RPL; staff development packs, and in one country, the introduction of a quality code for RPL.

Figure 37. Extent of application of RPL procedures in practice (number of countries giving each answer)



As shown on Fig. 37, although the number of countries formally having RPL procedures seems large, the extent to which these procedures are used in practice is moderate:

ten countries comprehensively use the procedures, and fifteen other countries have answered that there is “some” implementation. Some countries declared that while they have procedures in place, there is little or no use of the procedures; interestingly, the opposite is also true – some countries that report having no official procedures for RPL state that the usage of RPL is “comprehensive”.

Conclusions

- There are still difficulties for countries in understanding the concept of RPL: some of them consider that RPL means assessment of any kind of previous education for admission to the next level, for example assessing first cycle qualifications from another HEI for access to the second cycle. Very few countries actually mentioned non-formal or informal learning in their reports.
- In some countries RPL seems to be included in national policy but it does not seem to be applied in practice; in other countries it happens in practice without any national procedures or guidelines being in place.
- Even where RPL systems exist, individuals are often insufficiently aware that it is possible to have their previous learning assessed and recognised.
- Some countries are using RPL to encourage more adults into higher education, thus improving the social dimension of higher education, promoting the inclusion of previously under-represented groups and improving the skill levels of the workforce.
- In some countries, the practice of RPL appears to be better developed in the non-university HE sector, although there are formal partnerships and linkages for RPL between universities and other types of HEI in some parts of the EHEA. In a few cases, additional measures are being taken to increase RPL for specific groups, such as teachers and nurses.

The Coordinating Group on Lifelong Learning noted that a number of activities have taken place to promote better understanding of lifelong learning in higher education since 2007, and the group found that considerable progress has been made towards increasing the understanding of lifelong learning in a higher education context. The group’s conclusion that much remains to be done before lifelong learning becomes fully integrated within all higher education systems across the EHEA is in accordance with the findings of the 2009 stocktaking that significant effort is required to enhance the development and application of RPL.

Recommendations

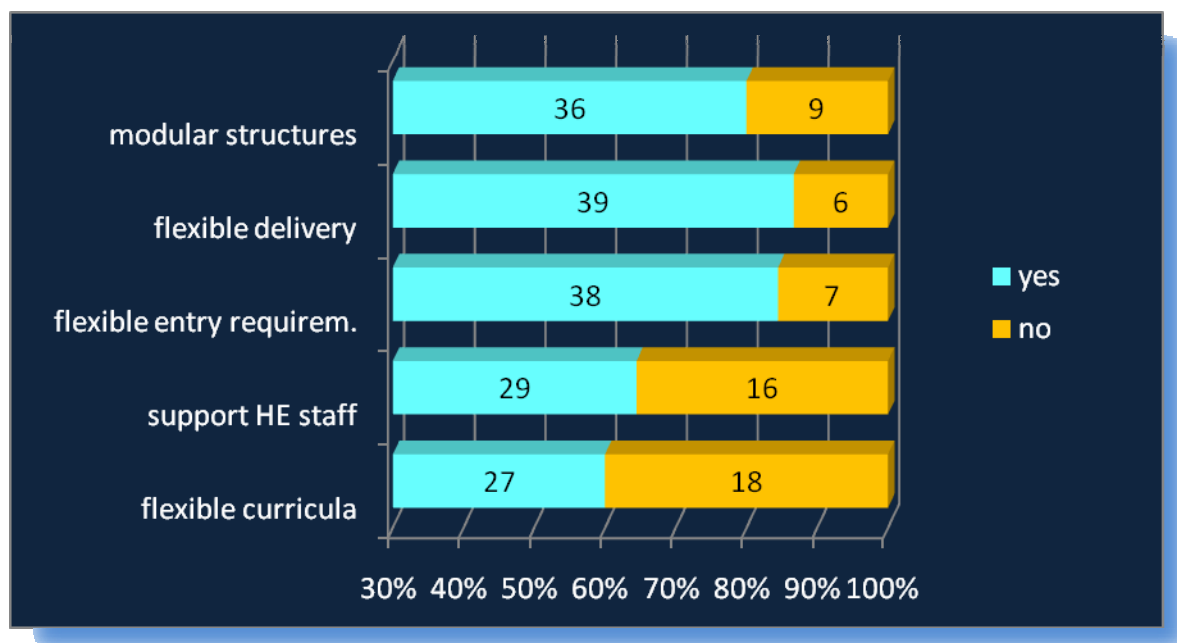
Action is needed to ensure that RPL practice becomes more coherent at the institutional level, even where there are no national procedures in place. Where national procedures are already in place, action should be taken to increase the practical application of RPL at institutional level. Action is also needed at national level to publicise opportunities for RPL among learners.

Flexible learning paths

Flexible learning paths are at a range of stages of development across the EHEA. Overall, considerable progress has been made to modularise curricula and thereby increase flexibility for learners: 75% of the countries answered that they are establishing modular structures. A number of countries have Open Universities and part-time, distance, e-learning and blended learning approaches can be found across the EHEA. Thus far, the emphasis has been on increasing the flexibility of entry points into higher education for under-represented groups. There is recognition that, while progress is being made, there is scope for further development.

As autonomous institutions, HEIs generally have discretion over their entry requirements. More than three-quarters of the countries offer flexible entry arrangements for targeted groups and flexible delivery to meet the needs of various groups of learners. Special measures are sometimes targeted at students with disabilities, older students, refugees or veterans.

Figure 38. Support for more flexible delivery



When it comes to promotion of flexible curricula and supporting staff in establishing flexible learning paths, there is support in more than half of the countries. Financial incentives to increase flexible learning paths are in place in a number of countries for both students and HEIs. The focus of these incentives for HEIs is largely on RPL and enhancing the scope for flexible admissions procedures. For students, the incentives are frequently reduced tuition fees or enhanced support packages. Credit for partially completed qualifications does not yet appear to be common, although credit accumulation practices are in place in some countries. Few countries have supported staff development on flexible learning or made an explicit link to their national qualifications frameworks. Very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

The report of the Data Collection working group shows that around one-third of the 18- to 20-year-old age group in the Bologna area is expected to enter higher education. For people over 25 however, the entry rate is below 2% in almost all countries. Consequently there is a need for higher education institutions to play a more active role in providing lifelong learning opportunities, by widening access to students from all backgrounds and by recognising prior learning and work experience as a valid route of entry.

The report found that in spite of some improvements in recent years, social background still has a strong impact on entry to, and successful completion of, higher education. Young people whose parents have completed tertiary education have almost four times the chance of completing higher education themselves than have young people whose parents have at most lower secondary education.

Socio-economic background is also an important factor in student mobility: those from highly educated family backgrounds are three times more likely to have experienced a study-related stay abroad than those from families with a low educational background.

Conclusion

Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks. Very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

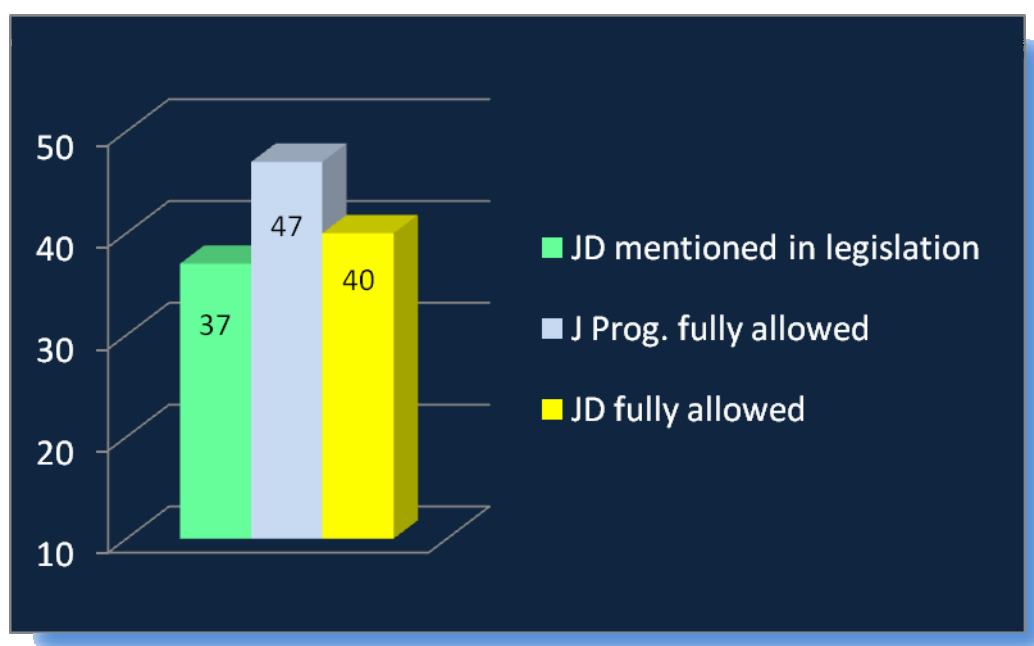
Recommendation

In times of financial and economic difficulties, countries need to pay more attention to developing flexible learning paths which will open up opportunities for people who are newly unemployed to enhance their skills and employability.

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

In the 2009 stocktaking it was decided not to use a scorecard indicator for the establishment and recognition of joint degrees. There was an indicator on joint degrees in 2007, and so many countries stated that there were no legal problems in establishing joint degrees that all of them appeared in the “green zone” being scored either “green” or “light green”. Instead, for the 2009 stocktaking countries were asked to provide both qualitative and quantitative data regarding establishment and recognition of joint degrees.

**Figure 39. Legislative position of joint degrees
(number of countries giving each answer)**



National reports showed that three quarters of countries have introduced joint degrees into their legislation and more have prepared drafts for new legislation which includes clauses allowing joint degrees. Establishing joint programmes is now possible in all but one country and in about four-fifths of the countries the establishment of joint degrees is fully allowed. Several countries have prepared draft legislation explicitly allowing joint degrees and are awaiting its adoption.

Looking at the estimated total numbers of joint programmes, there could already be around 2500 joint programmes running in the EHEA. In a quarter of the countries, more than 50% of all HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. However, in almost half the countries less than 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degrees. Also, in one-fifth of the countries there are no joint degrees at all, while in two countries joint programmes do not even exist yet.

Figure 40. Estimate of the percentage of HEIs involved in joint programmes and joint degrees
(number of countries giving each percentage interval)

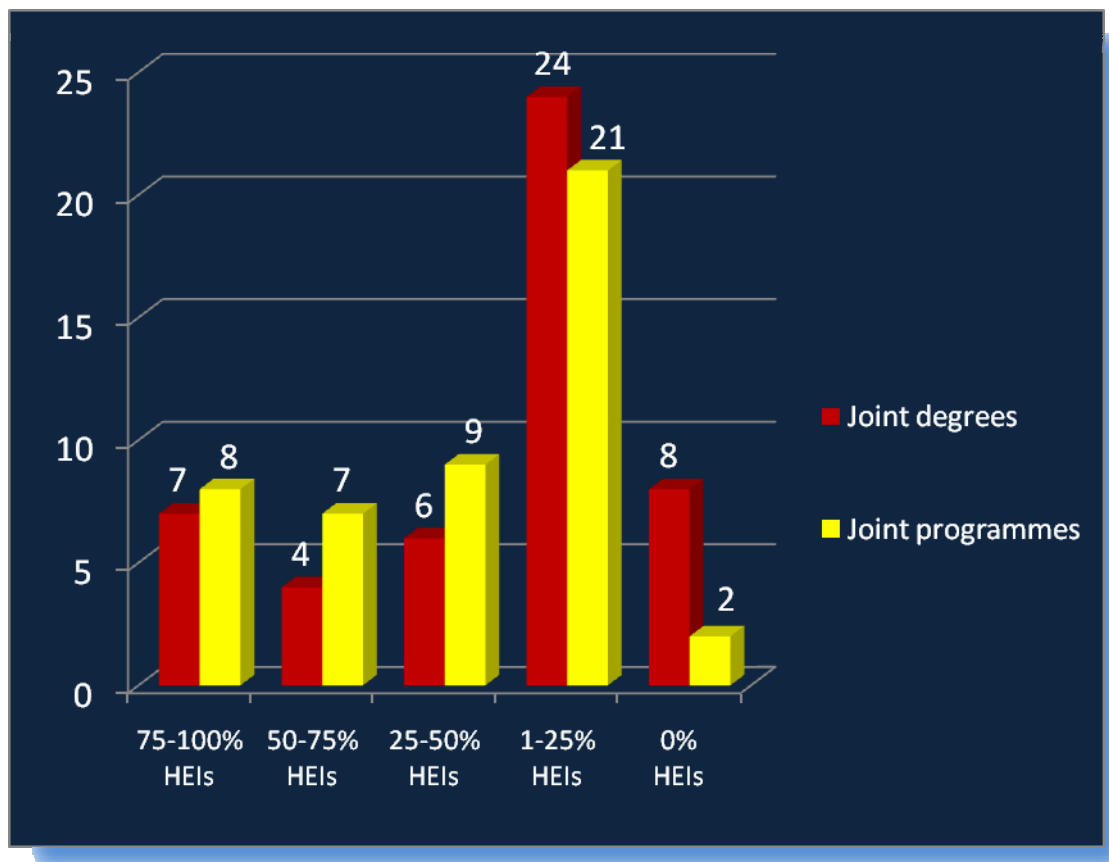
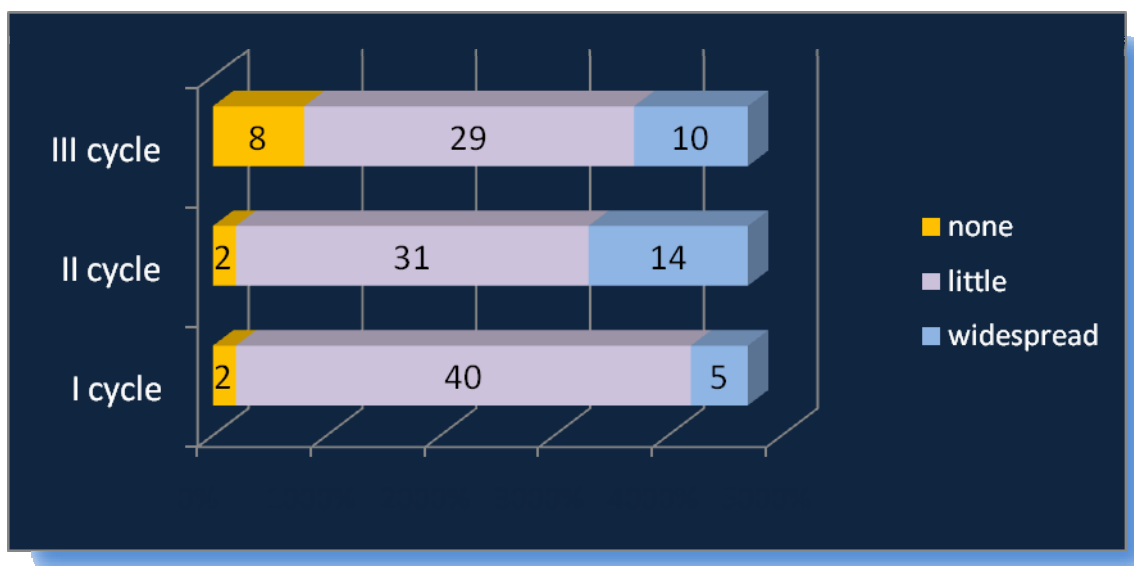


Figure 41. Level of JD cooperation in the three cycles²¹
(number of countries giving each answer)



²¹ The total numbers do not reach 48 because one country did not answer this question.

Countries were asked to characterize the level of joint degree cooperation in each of Bologna cycles as “none”, “little” or “widespread”. Generally, the main answer is “little” for all cycles. Joint degrees are somewhat more widespread in the second cycle than in the first cycle. However, it is the third cycle where there is the greatest number of countries with no joint degrees at all.

Conclusions

The answers of some countries reveal that there is still confusion between joint degrees on the one hand and overall student mobility or providing “foreign” HE programmes through franchise on the other.

Main study areas for joint degrees: It is evident that joint degrees are being established in all areas of study. However, engineering and natural sciences are clearly the most popular, followed closely by economics, business administration, social sciences, information technologies and health sciences. European studies, teacher training and environmental studies are also mentioned frequently.

Actions to stimulate joint degrees: The most frequently mentioned actions are legal measures that have made joint degree cooperation possible. Support of joint programmes by additional funding comes next, followed by establishing quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes, codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees, often as part of country’s internationalisation plan of higher education. As an example of financial support, Denmark has allocated 4.400.000 EUR for marketing and development of double and joint degrees in 2008-2009. At the same time several countries report that they have no such measures at all.

Apart from the frequently mentioned support from Erasmus Mundus and other cooperation programmes (CEEPUS, NORDPLUS and others) that support students studying in joint programmes, in a number of countries there is specific support allocated for such students. Some countries have support for foreign students studying on joint programmes, but several countries state that such students receive the regular student support.

Student and staff mobility²²

Mobility is one of the core goals of the Bologna process. The importance of removing obstacles to student and staff mobility has been underlined in a great number of political documents related to the Bologna process. In the 2009 national reports, countries did not provide sufficient statistical data on which to base analysis of the numbers or percentages of mobile students. It can only be noted that the spectrum is very wide – the numbers can range from a modest couple of hundred mobile students per year to many thousands. Outward mobility of students is the most supported kind

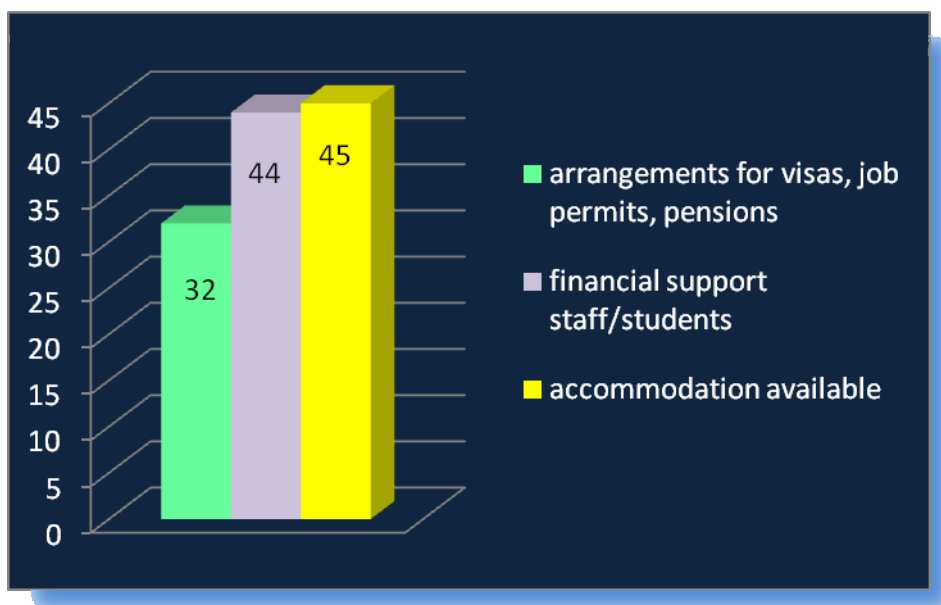
²² Please also see a more detailed report on mobility prepared by the Mobility coordination group, url ...

of mobility and there are various ways in which it is supported. First of all, most of the countries involved in the EU Lifelong Learning programme supplement Erasmus grants from national or HEIs' financial resources. One country specifically states that it allocates the greatest part of this funding to ensure that students from low-income backgrounds can participate in mobility. Some countries link the size of support with the level of studies, allocating the highest grants to doctoral students and the next highest to students on master programmes. A number of countries allocate national funding to give grants to students not only for short mobility periods but also to undertake their whole study programme abroad, covering tuition fees and providing the same type of support as for studies in the home country. Some other countries pay the travel expenses of students going to study abroad. Several countries claimed to have sufficient funding for student mobility, yet they underlined that campaigning and the provision of targeted information are necessary to convince more students to take a study period abroad.

Several countries support student mobility by planning a "mobility window" or "free space" in the curriculum which can then be used for a period abroad or as a period for foreign students coming in to study. In some countries the mobility figures are used as indicators of external quality assurance/accreditation. This is a good way of stimulating mobility and is therefore worth following. Some other countries see improving recognition of study periods as one of the preconditions for increasing outgoing mobility.

When asked to identify the main obstacles to mobility, countries often mentioned lacking or limited funding, visa and work permit issues, failure to recognise courses studied abroad and the difficulties related to studying in a foreign language.

Figure 42. Actions to remove obstacles to student and staff mobility (number of countries giving each answer)



Ministers in the London Communiqué explicitly stated their commitment to making efforts within their governments to solve the visa and work permit issues and so far

two-thirds of the countries report that they have managed to ease visa and work permit arrangements for mobile students and staff (Fig.42). In response to the question regarding the availability of accommodation for incoming students, nearly all countries answered that accommodation is available in one way or another.

To increase incoming mobility, a number of countries stimulate the development of programmes taught in a foreign language (mainly English), providing English and/or host country's language support, and organising information campaigns or fairs in the target countries. Another measure to stimulate incoming mobility is providing scholarships to incoming students or providing foreign students with free accommodation. To increase the outgoing mobility of staff, several countries are planning to credit their teaching abroad towards their teaching duties at home.

Conclusions

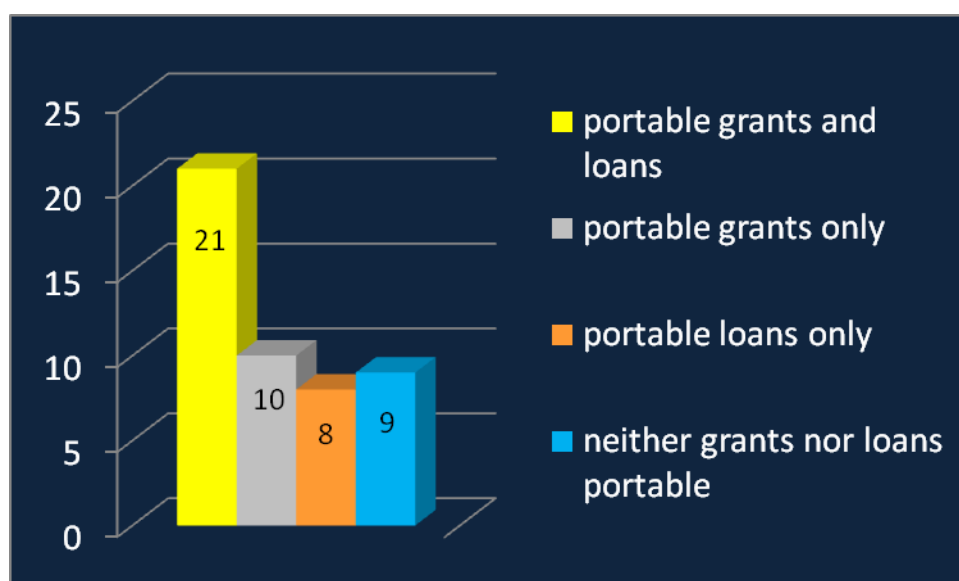
Many obstacles to large-scale mobility still exist and therefore a lot of work remains to be done to make mobility the rule in the European Higher Education Area. Making mobility work requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving ministries, higher education institutions, employers, staff and students. There is also a need for better data about the real numbers of students and staff taking up mobility opportunities.

Recommendations

The stocktaking working group notes the recommendations of the Mobility Coordination Group to increase and diversify the supports for mobility at all levels (institutional, national, regional and European) and to collect data on student and staff mobility.

Portability of grants and loans

**Figure 43. Portability of student support
(number of countries giving each answer)**



Country answers regarding availability of portable grants and loans are summarised in Fig. 43.

All-in-all, close to 80% of countries have some kind of portable support for mobile students: in more than 40% of countries there are both portable grants *and* portable loans, while around 30% of countries offer *either* portable grants *or* portable loans. Yet in about 20% of the countries students “normal” support may not be portable for mobile students. However, in some of these countries there may be a very limited number of scholarships awarded to the brightest candidates for targeted studies abroad.

Conclusions

Portability of grants and loans is necessary to support student mobility, however some such obstacles appear to exist at national level. Further conclusions and recommendations on this topic are included in the report of the Student Support Network²³.

²³ [Link to the report of Student Support network](#)

3.4 The European Higher Education Area in a global context²⁴

In the London Communiqué, Ministers noted that the Bologna reforms had begun to create considerable interest in many parts of the world and to stimulate discussion between European and international partners on higher education issues. They adopted the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" and agreed that they would continue to work towards improving information; promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition of qualifications. They noted that this work should be informed by the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

The Ministers asked for a progress report on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009, with particular attention to two priorities: improving the information available about the EHEA, and improving recognition. They called on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

In the template for the 2009 national reports, countries were asked to describe any measures that they were taking to implement the "European Higher Education in a Global Setting" strategy. They were also asked to indicate what they have done to improve information on the EHEA outside Europe; to promote European higher education, enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness; to strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education; to intensify policy dialogue with partners from other world regions, and to improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions. In relation to the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*, countries were asked to describe any measures they have taken to implement the guidelines and to state whether the guidelines applied to cross-border provision of their education programmes and/or to incoming higher education provision.

The answers to these questions show that all the countries involved in the Bologna Process take this aspect very seriously and most have already taken active steps to implement the "European Higher Education in a Global Setting" strategy. While some countries have a long-standing tradition of co-operation with higher education institutions outside Europe, many more have now made international co-operation in higher education a national policy priority, and some have set up either dedicated agencies or a special section within the relevant ministry to promote and improve global links. The list of countries with which the countries have made contacts is very extensive, with those mentioned ranging over all continents. The nature of the linkages

²⁴ Please also see a separate report of Bologna working group of European Higher Education in a Global Setting

varies considerably, from information-sharing activities such as the promotional fairs organised by the EU Commission, to official government missions, study visits, transnational conferences, capacity building and bilateral/multilateral agreements. Some countries in the EHEA have focused on specific regions when developing their transnational higher education activities, choosing to link for example with countries with which they have a shared language, culture or tradition.

A number of countries mentioned in their reports that the implementation of the Bologna reforms has made the EHEA more attractive as a higher education destination and provider: instruments such as the diploma supplement, the ECTS and national frameworks of qualifications have improved the transparency of higher education systems and standards in the EHEA, making them easier to explain to other countries. The ENIC network was seen as particularly useful in improving recognition between EHEA and other countries. National reports also mentioned a number of programmes that have actively promoted transnational links, including Erasmus Mundus, Fulbright, Tempus and Soros. Some countries have built up an extensive range of bilateral programmes and others have formed networks such as ASEA Uninet, EurAsia Pacific Uninet, Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Euro Mediterranean Permanent University Forum.

Although countries were not asked to quantify their achievements for this aspect of the Bologna process, some national reports gave statistics which indicated the level of activity: for example during 2008 in Germany, a total of 19,327 international cooperation efforts were under way at 274 German higher education institutions, involving a total of 4,026 higher education institutions in 141 foreign countries. In the UK, the Prime Minister's Initiative has a target of increasing the number of international (non-EU) students in colleges and universities by 100,000 between 2006 and 2011.

Many Ministries also support HEIs in developing transnational cooperation, through measures such as joint degree programmes; facilitating student and staff mobility to and from countries outside the EHEA; scholarship programmes for students from countries outside the EHEA; exchange programmes or "distinguished professor programmes" for academic staff; supporting the use of ECTS packages as a tool of promoting HE institutions in Europe; promoting the issue of the Diploma Supplement in English or another foreign language (automatic and free of charge). In some countries, the higher education system accepts students from countries outside the EHEA on the same basis as home country or other EU students. Likewise, similar rules apply to the recognition of qualifications, where higher education institutions in many countries are required to apply the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles even where a qualification comes from a country that is not party to the Convention.

In relation to improving information on European higher education, enhancing its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness, many countries report that they provide general information about the Bologna process and about the higher education system within the EHEA through their own higher education web sites, publications and media campaigns. However as far as promotion is concerned, most of them focus on promoting their own national systems of higher education as part of the EHEA, rather

than directly promoting the EHEA itself. Marketing and promotional activities at national level aimed at attracting students include participation in international fairs; publication and dissemination of information materials about study opportunities, using various communications media. HEIs also play an important role in developing their long-term contacts into international partnerships for institutional cooperation. They often build on the work of international organisations in higher education, inter-university networks and diplomatic missions. Some HEIs hold international workshops, exchange stays and summer schools and they cooperate with not-for-profit organisations, for example to offer scholarships for people from conflict zones or from countries that have suffered a natural disaster.

Many countries report that as part of implementing the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*, they apply the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention to all qualifications. It also appears to be fairly common practice that national quality assurance or accreditation procedures in higher education are applied to transnational or cross-border provision, both incoming and outgoing. Where this happens, it helps to ensure that all programmes use the same quality criteria and therefore promotes international acceptability. It was noted however that in some cases transnational education providers operate illegally without seeking licences or accreditation from official national sources, claiming to offer distance education with the support of institutions in their home countries.

Conclusions

It is clear that the Bologna Process has enhanced the cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. However, while considerable progress has been made in the fields of information and promotion, most countries seem to promote their own higher education systems internationally and very few promote the EHEA.

Recommendations

The working group on the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting has advanced a number of specific recommendations which should be followed up in future stocktaking exercises.

3.4 Future challenges

The main challenges listed by the countries in their national reports can be presented in the following groups

Qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning

Establishing and self-certification of the national qualifications frameworks; paradigm shift towards student-centred learning; linking programmes and credits with learning outcomes

Lifelong learning in higher education - establishing flexible learning paths

Social dimension and particularly widening access and participation in higher education; ensuring possibilities to study for those who may lose their jobs as the result of recession

Funding and governance of higher education

Funding issues – assuring sufficient funding, establishing mechanisms for more efficient use of funds

Autonomy and good governance of higher education institutions

Mobility, internationalisation and employability

Mobility of students, staff and researchers; internationalisation of higher education institutions; making it possible to establish joint degrees

Relevance of qualifications to the labour market needs; improving cooperation with employers/ businesses; employability of bachelor degree graduates in particular

Quality assurance and recognition

Quality assurance and quality reputation of the country; establishing internal quality assurance systems

Recognition of qualifications; recognition of prior learning, proper use of ECTS and Diploma Supplement

Other challenges

Innovation and technology transfer; balance between teaching and research