

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

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1. Main achievements since Berlin***1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms***

► The start of the academic year 2004/2005 in higher education establishments was also a time for change, following the adoption of the **decree of March 31st, 2004** “defining higher education in the French Community, favouring its integration into the European space for higher education, and refinancing its universities”.

The main areas covered by this decree are the following:

- the decree defines the different constituents of higher education, namely universities, “Hautes Écoles” (non-university tertiary education institutes), art colleges and higher institutes of architecture as well as education referred to as “social advancement” (adult education) for studies deemed to be full-time higher education.
- the decree clarifies the objectives, missions and aims of higher education:
 - some technical terms, such as degrees, are redefined or simplified. The term “license” will disappear completely; henceforth, the term “Master” is used for all the 2nd cycles at university or in long-type higher education;
 - the procedures for partnerships between universities and other establishments are now regulated;
 - the decree confirms the use of ECTS; the study year, corresponding to 60 credits, remains the reference point.

This decree, part of which applies to all higher education establishments and part only to universities, is complemented by other statutory provisions appropriate to each type of higher education.

These decrees are the following:

- decree of March 31st, 2004 modifying the organization of architectural education with the aim of integrating it into the European space for higher education;
- decree of March 31st, 2004 modifying the organization of higher artistic education with the aim of integrating it into the European space for higher education;
- decree of March 31st, 2004 modifying the decree of February 27th, 2003 establishing the academic degrees awarded by Hautes Écoles managed or subsidized by the French

Community and fixing the minimal timetables, and the decree of September 9th, 1996 concerning the financing of Hautes Écoles managed or subsidized by the French Community.

► The supplement to the diploma, already awarded at the level of university education before Berlin, is generalized and broadened to other types of higher education.

► Moreover, in January 2004, the French Community officially launched the agency responsible for the evaluation of the quality of higher education. This agency was created by a decree in November, 2002.

2. National organisation

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

At the end of the 1980s (in 1989), the responsibility for education in Belgium was delegated to the language communities and is now essentially under the authority of the three Communities in the country (the French Community, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community).

The French Community has a **Government** composed of a number of **Ministers** among which one has the responsibility for higher education and scientific research (including university education, short- and long-type non-university higher education, architecture, higher level artistic education, the employment status of higher education teaching staff, grants and study loans).

The Minister for higher education and scientific research works in conjunction with the **Ministry of the French Community** (“Administration”). In this Ministry, the “Administration Générale de l’Enseignement et de la Recherche scientifique” [General Administration for Education and Scientific research] and more specifically the “Direction Générale de l’Enseignement non obligatoire et de la Recherche scientifique” [Directorate General for Non-compulsory Education and Scientific research] manages affairs related to higher education and research.

Certain tasks related to auditing the financing of universities and Hautes Écoles and monitoring the reliability of student registrations are entrusted to a body of **Government “Commissioners”**.

The Government Commissioners for Universities:

- check that the University’s Board of Directors and other bodies authorized by Board delegation, the law or a decree, make no decision which is against the law, decrees, orders and regulations taken by virtue of these laws or decrees, or which could compromise the finances of the institution,
- attend all meetings within the scope of their responsibilities,
- make all necessary observations within the scope of their responsibilities to the Board of Directors,
- appeal against any decision made by the university institution which is against the laws,

- decrees, orders and regulations,
- are responsible for controlling the implementation of students' participation as well as controlling the means employed,
- countersign all purchases for goods or services exceeding €16,000,
- forward the budget and the accounts of the university, with their comments, to the Minister,
- are responsible for controlling the statistical data concerning students eligible for grants.

The government commissioners for the Hautes Écoles (currently numbering four), verify that the authorities or delegated governing bodies of the Haute Écoles make decisions corresponding to the laws, decrees, orders and the regulations taken by virtue of these laws or decrees.

They are responsible for:

- 1) controlling the compliance to the decisions, including the agreements taken by the organizing authorities or governing bodies of the Haute École, and their conformity to the laws, decrees, orders and regulations taken by virtue of these laws or decrees,
- 2) controlling the regularity of studies (auditing the number of students regularly registered at the Haute École, verifying the number of students eligible for grants and the number of units of educational load,
- 3) controlling the compliance of decisions and their follow-up in relation to the use made by the Haute École of its annual allocation
- 4) controlling the compliance of decisions taken by the Haute École's social councils and the full use of subsidies.

Moreover, other **Councils, Commissions**, and consultative bodies exist, notably:

- The **NARIC/ENIC Centre**, an information centre on the academic recognition of diplomas awarded abroad, is part of the "Direction Générale de l'enseignement non obligatoire et de la recherche scientifique" [Directorate General for Non-compulsory Education and Scientific research] and is a member of the correspondent networks set up respectively by the European Union and the Council of Europe, in partnership with Unesco

- The "**Conseil interuniversitaire de la Communauté française de Belgique**" [**Interuniversity council of the French Community of Belgium**] (CIUF) is an advisory body that groups all nine university institutions of the French Community. Created by a decree of April 3rd, 1980, the CIUF was reorganized as a public interest body by a decree of January 9th, 2003, and performs the following tasks:

- give advice on any topic related to university education;
- organize the dialogue between the university institutions as well with students and other higher education institutions;
- promote interuniversity and interfaculty collaboration;
- ensure the representation of the French Community's university educational institutions within different national or international bodies.

- The **Council of Rectors of the French-speaking Universities of Belgium (CREF)** groups the rectors of the French Community's university institutions. This council publishes statistics relative to the universities' student population.

- The **General Council for Hautes Écoles** is in charge of giving opinions, either on its own initiative, or following a request from the Government or an Haute École, on any question relative to the higher education given in the Hautes Écoles. It also has the task of promoting collaboration between education networks, notably regarding transitions, programme planning, and ongoing training.

- The **Community Educational Commission** (Commission communautaire pédagogique) has the task of giving opinions to the Government on the compliance of the educational, social and cultural project of every Haute École with the provisions of the decree of August 5th, 1995 fixing the general organization of higher education in the Haute Écoles. It is also responsible for providing mediation in cases of conflicts of interest between the constituents of an Haute École.

- The **Superior Council for higher artistic education** is responsible for giving, either on its own initiative, or at the request of the Government or an institute of higher artistic education, opinions on any question relative to higher artistic education. It is also in charge of verifying the application of the decree of May 17th, 1999 concerning higher artistic education and, if need be, drawing up any proposals for its modification. The superior council also has the task of promoting collaboration between education networks notably regarding transitions, programme planning, and ongoing training.

- The **Superior Council for architectural education**. This council is responsible for giving, either on its own initiative, or at the request of the Government or an institute of higher architectural education, opinions on any question relative to architectural education. It also has the task of promoting collaboration between education networks notably regarding transitions, programme planning, and ongoing training.

- The **Agency for the evaluation of the quality of higher education** organized or subsidized by the French Community was created by a decree of November 14th, 2002. (see question 3).

- The **Consultative Committee between the various consultative bodies for higher education** is made up of members from the CIUF, from the General Council for Hautes Écoles (CGHE), the president of the Superior Council for higher artistic education, and the president of the Superior Council of Education for Social Advancement. The Consultative committee meets at least once a year, at the invitation of the CIUF's president, the CGHE's president or at the request of the Government, to organize the dialogue between the various consultative bodies on any subject relative to higher education (decree of January 9th, 2003 concerning consultative bodies in the area of scientific and university policies and concerning the dialogue between the various consultative bodies for higher education).

- The **General Commissariat for International Relations (CGRI)** is a public interest body which is in charge of promoting university cooperation, granting specialization scholarships for students abroad, and managing sending teachers abroad. It participates in actions in the French-speaking world in the sector of higher education and interuniversity cooperation. It also manages bilateral agreements between the French Community and foreign countries.

- The **National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)** has the aim of developing basic scientific research within the framework of initiatives presented by researchers. It encourages the production and development of knowledge by supporting researchers individually and by

financing research programs pursued within laboratories and services situated mainly in the French Community's universities.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

The various higher education institutes (Universities, Hautes Écoles, Higher institutes of architecture, Art colleges) belong to one of the following **3 systems** according to the nature of their competent authority (the competent authority being the authority which assumes the responsibility of the education provided in the establishment concerned):

- The French Community system (the competent authority being the French Community);
- The official subsidized system (the competent authority being a municipality, an association of municipalities, a province or any other legal entity under public law);
- The subsidized, confessional or non-confessional independent system (the competent authority being an individual or a legal entity under private law).

Therefore, in the French Community there are establishments which are directly organized and financed by the French Community and others which are only financed by the Community.

However, this financing implies the obligation to respect a certain number of statutory provisions.

Among the higher educational establishments, we distinguish:

- **Universities.** There are nine, listed in article 10 of the decree of March 31st, 2004 defining higher education in the French Community, favouring its integration into the European space for higher education, and refinancing its universities. Among these universities, three are directly organized by the French Community. Six others are subsidized by the French Community and belong to either the confessional or non-confessional independent systems.

These universities can form associations to create a university academy. Each university can only belong to a single academy.

There are currently three academies: University academy of Louvain, University academy of Wallonia-Brussels, University academy of Wallonia-Europe]).

Concerning the distribution of the student population (academic year 2003/2004, situation on December 1st, 2003), for a total of 63,619 students, 16,843 students were registered at three universities in the French Community's system (Liège University, Mons-Hainaut University, Gembloux Faculty of Agronomic Sciences)], 46,776 students were registered at six universities in the independent system (Catholic University of Louvain, Free University of Brussels, University Faculties of Notre-Dame de la Paix in Namur, Mons Polytechnic Faculty, Mons Catholic University Faculties, Saint-Louis University Faculties).

- **The Hautes Écoles**

Created in enactment of article 3 of the decree of August 5th, 1995 defining the general

organization of higher education in the Hautes Écoles. There are 29, listed in an ordinance of the Government of the French Community of July 9th, 1996.

- 6 Hautes Écoles are directly managed by the French Community
- 10 Hautes Écoles depend on the official system
- 1 Haute École depends on the independent non-confessional system
- 12 other Hautes Écoles depend on the independent confessional system

Concerning the distribution of the student population (academic year 2003/2004), for a total of 68,774 students, 30,469 students were registered in Hautes Écoles in the independent confessional system, 3,239 in Hautes Écoles in the independent non-confessional system, 20,932 in Hautes Écoles in the official system and 14,134 in Hautes Écoles of the French Community.

- **The Higher institutes of architecture.** There are 4 and are covered by the law of February 18th, 1977 relative to the organization of education in architecture:

- 1 institute is managed by the French Community
- 1 is part of the official system
- 2 are part of the independent confessional system

Concerning the distribution of the student population (academic year 2003/2004, situation on February 1st, 2004), for a total of 2,213 students, 1,007 are registered at the Intermunicipal Higher Institute of Architecture, 309 at the La Cambre Higher Institute of Architecture of the French Community, and 897 in 2 other institutes.

- **Art colleges:** there are 17;
 - 6 Art colleges are directly managed by the French Community
 - 5 Art colleges are part of the official system
 - 6 Art colleges are part of the independent system.

Concerning the distribution of the student population (academic year 2003/2004), for a total of 9,330 students, 6,120 students were registered at Art colleges in the independent system, 1,115 in Art colleges in the official system and 2,095 in the French Community's Art colleges.

2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country

(National Bologna group, thematic working groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)

Until now, no official, permanent think-tank had been set up within the framework of the Bologna process.

Under the previous legislature, the French Community's representative in the Bologna process worked in direct relation with the cabinet of Minister F. Dupuis who undertook consultations with the different partners in the academic and student world.

The Universities, Hautes Écoles and other types of higher education, via their respective Councils, have undertaken considerations and prepared points of view that have been regularly provided to Minister Dupuis.

A Bologna follow-up group was set up in January, 2005 by Minister M-D. Simonet. This group, composed of: the French Community's official representative to the Bologna Process

follow-up group; a student; two councillors from the Minister's cabinet, three university rectors, one per academy and two representatives from the CGHE, is responsible for preparing, among other things, the French Community's participation in the Bergen Conference.

3. Quality assurance

The following questions have been included in the template at the request of the Working Group on Stocktaking.

3.1. National quality assurance systems should include a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please specify the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Until January, 2004, there was no official procedure to evaluate the quality of higher education in the French Community. However, for a number of years already, Universities had set up procedures for internal quality evaluation and had created, in partnership, an external evaluation mechanism, assured by outside experts, according to a common procedure. Other higher educational establishments did not participate in this mechanism.

Created by the decree of November 14th, 2002, and operational since January, 2004, **the Agency for the Evaluation (assessment) of the Quality of Higher education** has the principal tasks of independently planning the evaluation procedures for the quality of higher education in the French Community – irrespective of the institutions concerned – and organizing the follow-up of planned evaluations.

The Agency does not have personnel of its own to ensure its operation, which is ensured by a Council composed of 25 voting members and a secretary.

The secretary is appointed by the Government of the French Community. The secretary has no voting rights within the Agency. The secretary provides the secretariat for the Agency's meetings as well as those of the experts' Committees during visits to institutions.

The Agency is chaired by the Director General for Non-compulsory Education and Scientific Research.

Other members of the Agency are appointed by the Government, following proposals made by the representative councils of the various types of higher education in the French Community (universities, Hautes Écoles, art colleges, higher institutes of architecture and schools for social advancement), trade unions and student organizations, as well as representatives of the professional, social, and cultural sectors.

The Agency's members are obliged to respect the secrecy of documents and information with a confidential or personal nature which they receive, as well as the secrecy of their deliberations. They perform their tasks independently.

The Agency identifies the courses that must be evaluated. It informs the institutions concerned, which appoint an internal evaluation committee chaired by a coordinator. The commission independently drafts an internal self-evaluation report. This report is confidential. It is only sent to the secretariat and the experts charged with the course's external evaluation.

The Agency chooses the experts to perform the external evaluation and prefers to use foreign experts with the aim of guaranteeing their independence towards the institutions evaluated.

The Committee of experts drafts a confidential report per institution visited, which is only sent to the institution's management and the Agency's President. At the end of an evaluation exercise, the Committee drafts a transversal report which is sent to the managements of all the institutions concerned and to the Agency's members. The latter comment on the report,

which is then sent to the Minister responsible for higher education so that it can be forwarded to the Government.

3.2. National quality assurance systems should include a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.

Describe the system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, if any.

Strictly speaking, there is no system of accreditation of the institutions of higher education in the French Community.

However, an “ex ante” accreditation system can be mentioned, to the extent that only those higher educational establishments which satisfy the criteria defined by the regulations can be recognized and subsidized by the French Community.

The recognized establishments are identified in the regulation and can only organize studies in the disciplines for which they received an authorization according to the regulation.

Universities can temporarily lose their authorization to organize certain complementary Master’s programs (specialization programs only open to bearers of a first master) if the number of registered students is insufficient.

Only recognized establishments can award recognized diplomas, which have academic as well as legal effects (notably, access to regulated professions.).

Higher educational establishments, by virtue of their autonomy, are free to seek accreditation by trade or sector-based organizations but this has no legal incidence (for example, on financing).

There is no accreditation procedure for wholly private establishments.

3.3. National quality assurance systems should include international participation, co-operation and networking.

Are international peers included in the governing board(s) of the quality assurance agency(ies)?

The Decree establishing the Agency requires that at least one of the experts appointed to perform the external evaluation of a programme be of foreign nationality. For reasons of independence of the experts with regard to the institutions concerned, the Agency agreed to appoint a foreigner as the President of the Committee of Experts and to invite this President to choose a maximum of foreign experts from the list provided to him, barring representatives from the profession.

Moreover, the Agency has submitted its candidature for the ENQA network and intends to establish a closer cooperation, notably with France and Switzerland, to share lists of experts and exchange good practices in evaluation.

In addition to their participation in the Agency’s evaluation activities, several universities participate in evaluation programs developed within the framework of EUA.

Please add any general comments, reflections and/or explanations to the material on quality assurance in the stocktaking report.

4. The two-cycle degree system

The two-cycle degree system is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

All types of higher education are generally structured in 2 cycles: the first cycle resulting in

the award of a bachelor's degree and the second cycle leading to a master's degree. The application of this system in the French Community of Belgium began in September 2004: the new programs will be set up gradually so that the new structure is totally functional for the year 2007-2008.

- Universities

During the first years, university education proposes basic training in the discipline chosen as well as a broad, general scientific training.

Afterward, it elaborates the method of scientific research and proposes specialized content. This is how senior managers and high-level researchers are educated.

University studies are organized in three cycles. Studies in the first and second cycles correspond to basic studies.

The studies in the first cycle (1st cycle of transition) lead to the academic degree of **bachelor**. Their duration is three years at least (180 credits). They provide basic training which is generally indispensable to enter the second cycle.

The studies in the second cycle (2nd professionalizing cycle) lead to the academic degree of **master** after one year (60 credits), or two years (120 credits) at least, to doctor (four years at least (240 credits)), to veterinarian doctor (three years at least (180 credits)). These studies include "specialized" education and, as a general rule, the presentation of a thesis at the end of the studies. The second cycle of master's studies of 120 credits or more include at least a choice of 30 specific credits which give this training one of the following objectives:

1° *The teaching objective* which includes specific pedagogic education in application of the decree of February 8th, 2001 defining the initial training for qualified teachers for higher secondary education or the decree of May 17th, 1999 concerning artistic higher education. It is only organized for the academic degrees corresponding to the qualifications required for this profession.

2° *The in-depth study objective* preparing for scientific research; it includes, at the same time, in-depth study in a particular discipline and general training in the research profession. This option is only organized for the areas of university study identified in article 31 of the aforesaid decree of March 31st, 2004.

3° *The specialization objective* in a particular discipline of the domain with which the programme is connected, which aims at particular professional or artistic skills.

Universities organize one or several objectives, possibly several different specialized objectives.

At the end of an initial training of at least 300 credits sanctioned by the academic degree of master, studies in the second cycle are proposed in certain streams and lead, at the end of a year of studies (60 credits), at least to the academic degree of complementary master (CM). This training aims at acquiring a specialized professional qualification corresponding to at least one of the following objectives:

1° to authorize the exercise of certain occupations, respecting the corresponding legal provisions in the health sector.

2° to satisfy the needs for specific training designed within the framework of development cooperation programs.

3° to give access to titles and particular degrees required by law or to particular competences recognized by research and education teams, which present a character of originality, uniqueness, and specificity in the French Community.

The studies in the third cycle include doctoral training (60 credits) which lead to obtaining a certificate of training in research, and the work relative to the preparation of a doctoral thesis (corresponding inclusively to at least 180 credits), which leads to the academic degree of doctor after defending the thesis. This training is accessed after an initial training of at least 300 credits sanctioned by an academic degree of master. Among these, 60 doctorate credits can be acquired during the aforesaid doctoral training.

- **The Hautes Écoles**

The education provided is of either long-type or short-type.

Long-type higher education is of a university level. The diplomas awarded have, as a general rule, the effects of a university degree. This education is organized in two cycles. It develops specialised scientific and technological training. The first cycle, called the transition cycle, includes 180 credits which can be acquired in three years of studies at least and leads to the academic degree of **bachelor**. The second cycle, called the professionalisation cycle includes 60 or 120 credits which can be acquired in at least one or two years of studies respectively, and lead to the academic degree of **master**.

The second cycle of master's studies in 120 credits includes at least a choice of 30 specific credits giving this training one of the following objectives:

1° *The teaching objective* which includes specific pedagogic education in application of the decree of February 8th, 2001 defining the initial training of teachers qualified for higher secondary education or the decree of May 17th, 1999 concerning higher artistic education. It is only organized for the academic degrees corresponding to the qualifications required for this profession.

2° *The specialization objective* in a particular discipline of the domain with which the programme is connected, which aims at particular professional or artistic skills.

The Hautes Écoles organize one or several objectives, possibly several different specialized objectives.

Short-type programmes are organized in a single professionalizing cycle sanctioned by the academic rank of **bachelor**. They include 180 to 240 credits which can be respectively acquired in at least three or exceptionally four years of studies (midwife section). This training is, at the same time, practical and theoretical.

At the end of this single cycle, specialization studies are proposed in certain fields and lead to the diploma of specialization (DS) after one year.

- The Higher institutes of architecture.

The teaching of architecture, at the university level, is organized in two cycles of respectively at least 3 years of studies (180 credits) and at least 2 years of studies (120 credits) and is given in the Higher institutes of architecture.

The 1st cycle of studies leads to the academic degree of **bachelor** in architecture.

The 2nd cycle of studies leads to the academic degree of **master** in architecture.

- Art colleges.

The education which is provided is

- either of the short-type (3 years), leading to the degree of **bachelor**;

- or of the long-type, of university level (3+1 years or 3+2 years). The studies in the 1st cycle lead to the academic degree of **bachelor**. The studies in the 2nd cycle lead to the academic degree of **master**.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

Recognition of degrees and periods of study is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The provisions relative to the recognition of diplomas in the French Community include, in a general way, most of the principles contained in the Lisbon Convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications: transparency of the procedure, the applicant's right of information, the right of appeal, respect of maximum deadlines in the processing of files, justification of decisions.

Belgium is getting ready to sign the aforementioned Convention, in principle before the Bergen Ministerial Conference.

The regulation relative to the recognition of diplomas in the French Community gives higher educational establishments the authority to decide on the recognition of studies made abroad with the objective of continuing studies (partial recognition, recognition of study periods), whereas the Minister for higher education decides on the full recognition of diplomas, mostly for professional purposes.

6. Doctoral studies and research

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

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

Studies in the third cycle are exclusively organized in collaboration with the university academies. They include doctoral training and the work relative to the preparation of a doctoral thesis.

Doctoral training is supervised by teams associated in a recognized doctoral school (structure for research and education, organized by one or collectively by several academies, responsible for organizing doctoral training in one or several study domains) belonging to one or more university academies. They are linked to specific competences of the research

teams and provide to the graduates a high scientific and professional qualification. This training for 60 credits is sanctioned by a certificate of training in research.

The academic degree of **doctor** is conferred after the defence of a thesis demonstrating the recipient's capacities of creativity, of undertaking scientific researches and distributing its results. The doctorate examination consists of:

- 1° the drafting of an original essay in the discipline in the form of either a thesis of individual character, or an essay by the candidate highlighting the interest of a coherent set of publications and results for which the candidate is an author or co-author;
- 2° the public presentation of this work highlighting its qualities, its originality, as well as the candidate's abilities for scientific popularization.

The work relative to the preparation of a doctoral thesis corresponds inclusively to at least 180 credits acquired after an initial training of at least 300 credits sanctioned by the academic degree of master. Among these, 60 doctorate credits can be acquired during doctoral training.

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

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

By definition, **university education** is based on a close link between scientific research and the subjects taught. The university institutions have the specific task of performing fundamental and applied scientific research (article 4, paragraph 2 of the decree of March 31st, 2004 defining higher education in the French Community, favouring its integration with the European space for higher education, and refinancing the universities).

Moreover, a student who continues studies in the second master's cycle in 120 credits or more can choose at least 30 specific credits giving the training an **in-depth objective** preparing for scientific research. This objective includes in-depth education in a particular discipline and general training in the research profession. This option is only organized for university studies (article 16, paragraph 4 of the decree of March 31st, 2004 defining higher education in the French Community, favouring its integration with the European space for higher education, and refinancing the universities).

The **Hautes Écoles** also perform **applied research**. In their activity report, a chapter is dedicated to this research. It includes the list of the actions undertaken, the domains and the targeted recipients as well as the national and international scientific collaboration, notably participation in the Federal, Walloon, Brussels or French Community research programs, and the cooperation with other Hautes Écoles or university institutions (article 5 of the French Community Government's decree of March 31st, 1999 defining the rules for preparing the annual activity reports for Hautes Écoles organized or subsidized by the French Community).

In the French Community, research is essentially undertaken within universities (we do not consider here research and development undertaken by companies). The university education is based on a close link between scientific research and the subjects taught, and one of its objectives is initiation into research.

The Hautes Écoles undertake applied research to a lesser extent, and the same is true for

approved research centres in the Walloon and Brussels Regions

There are two types of financing for research, according to whether its nature is fundamental or applied.

As far as public financing is concerned, fundamental research is essentially financed by four sources:

- joint research actions, aimed at creating or reinforcing centres of excellence;
- special funds for research, aimed at developing the expansion of the country's scientific potential;
- The National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) and various associated funds, which provide subsidies to finance researchers or teams working in university laboratories;
- University attraction poles, financed by the federal government, which group together research teams coming from both language communities.

As regards public financing, applied research is essentially financed by four sources:

- the Walloon Region, which finances large thematic projects;
- The French Community, which finances FRIA scholarships for the preparation of a doctorate in applied sciences;
- The federal government, which proposes large thematic programs;
- The European Union, by way of the large European programs;

On the other hand, as regards applied research, private companies sign contracts with higher educational establishments, in particular universities.

7. Mobility of students and staff

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

The French Community, which had a proportion of more than 18.7% of foreign students in 2000, appears to be one of the most attractive areas of the OECD (the most attractive though is France with 34%). The proportion of Belgians studying abroad is around the OECD average, from this it follows that Belgium has a net intake of students which amounted to 3.1% in 2000.

The number of students concerned by mobility within the framework of Erasmus is constant but in 2000-2001, there were still only 1.8 % participating (leading to an estimate of about 8% of students participating in Erasmus once during their higher education). For the participating students the scholarship awarded (including a contribution from the French Community and the agency's own funds) was €822 on average. Some higher education institutions (university or non-university) augment the scholarships awarded by Erasmus. The participation rate of students from the French Community is higher than the European average, with the inevitable consequence of lower amounts for the scholarships that are awarded to them.

The decree of March 31st, 2004 foresees incentives to mobility, whether it is at the level of the students or at the level of the staff.

At the level of the students, it foresees that within the framework of agreements concluded

with other Belgian or foreign higher educational establishments, certain courses and work can be organized by these other establishments; the exams which relate to them will be taken in these same establishments, according to the rules which are in place there. They can also foresee the exchange of members of staff.

The decree also foresees that higher education establishments can conclude collaboration agreements with Belgian or foreign partners notably for the organization of studies which relate to their skill areas and the granting of academic degrees that sanction them.

The establishments can collectively award the diploma certifying the academic degree.

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

At present, there are agreements for the exchange of students between higher education establishments, outside Europe or within Europe (Socrates/Erasmus program).

The funds intended to permit mobility within the framework of the Erasmus programs are managed by the Erasmus agency. Every year a subsidy is included in the French Community's budget to contribute to this fund. The French Community has dedicated important efforts for the promotion of mobility: in 1999, this subsidy amounted to 9.2 million Belgian francs and rose to €280,000 in 2004.

A particular effort was made to encourage language learning for students before their departure abroad.

From 2007, students can benefit from a grant from the mobility fund (decree of May 19th, 2004 establishing a fund to assist student mobility within the European space for higher education). It will reserve half of its budget for students that benefit from study grants.

The outward mobility assistance follows the "Erasmus" plans. Belgium's central position as well as our foreign language ability positively influences mobility. On the negative side, studies on the Erasmus mobility show social discrimination in mobility

The "Bologna" decree of March 31st, 2004 introduced, in a compulsory manner, the ECTS system which allows the facilitation of the recognition of periods of studies made abroad and mutually for foreigners studying in Belgium.

It also foresees that the mobility of students is an element of their training as citizens of the world. Therefore, the curricula can make mobility an obligation of the program on condition that the necessary financial means are provided to the student.

As specific measures to attract foreign students, the obligation to award a "Diploma Supplement" to the student in addition to the generalization of the ECTS can be quoted.

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

The mobility of teachers does not raise a major problem in the French Community but it is done in extremely varied forms. The Erasmus program, given the low level of the grants awarded, is not really attractive for the teachers.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic

teachers and staff from as well as to your country

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

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

Higher education establishments enjoy a wide autonomy in their management.

This autonomy is shown in making **many decisions** (daily management of the establishment, defining internal rules, hiring of staff, granting of exemptions to students, defining certain access conditions).

However, this autonomy is exercised in respect of the legislation which is applicable to them. The list of diplomas as well as the authorization to award them is fixed by decree. A higher education establishment cannot decide to create a new program by itself. This creation requires a modification of the law.

The establishments also enjoy pedagogic freedom (freedom to arrange timetables, elaboration of certain programs, choice of educational methods ...).

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

The participation of the staff of higher education establishments (teachers, researchers, administrative personnel) is active in the majority of the places of decision of the institutions of higher education. The modalities vary according to the institutions and bodies.

The participation of students, foreseen by decree, is encouraged by various means, notably by making available the documents necessary for the exercise of their mandate and the provision of the infrastructure and financial means necessary for their operation.

There are also **organizations that represent students** at the community level (Union of French-speaking students, Union of French Community students) which are subsidized on certain conditions and can participate in the dialogue with the Government.

These recognized organizations are consulted on any project for a decree or regulatory order concerning higher education, grants, and study loans.

They are also the only ones that are authorized to appoint the student representatives that sit on the various councils and commissions that exist in the Community.

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?

(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

Students can be represented within their establishment by a **Council of students** which notably has the following tasks:

- to represent all the students in the establishment;
- to defend and promote the interests of students, notably on all questions relating to education, pedagogy and the management of the establishment;
- to arouse the students' active participation with a view to permitting them to fulfil their role of active, responsible and critical citizens within society and within their establishment;
- to ensure the flow of information between the establishment's authorities and the students.

Moreover, the **participation of students within the management bodies** of the establishment where they are enrolled (e.g.: Board of Directors, Social Council, Educational Council, Council of Educational Management, Option Councils) is guaranteed in various statutory provisions.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

In the French Community, the access of the largest number is ensured by the preservation of an education system that is open to every holder of a certificate required to access higher education (certificate of higher secondary education or equivalent diploma).

There are specific admission conditions for only a limited number of studies, on the basis of an entrance examination. Possession of a first cycle diploma allows access to the second cycle without an entrance examination.

To guarantee fair access to higher education, the tuition fees for higher education (all study cycles included) are extremely modest for all students and reduced to a minimum for students with limited resources.

In certain circumstances, students can also receive financial support from the educational establishment's social services.

A French Community Government regulation of May 5th, 2004 fixes henceforth the conditions and the modalities for obtaining intermediate tuition fees in universities and allows students who would have been eligible for the allocation of a study grant to be considered as having limited resources.

The French Community of Belgium also foresees, for students coming from less favoured environments, different types of financial assistance: study grants (or scholarships) and study loans.

- **the study grant or scholarship** is a grant (not refundable as a rule) granted by the French Community to students with limited financial resources. The award depends on educational conditions, financial conditions, conditions linked to age, and conditions linked to nationality.

- **the study loan** is financial assistance, refundable with interest, granted to the student's parents by the French Community. The granting of this depends on educational conditions, financial conditions, conditions linked to age, conditions linked to nationality, and conditions linked to the composition of the family.

However, at the moment, scholarships can be "exported" by the student to undertake studies abroad only if the studies to be undertaken abroad are not offered in the French Community.

Finally, the aforesaid decree of March 31st, 2004 ("Bologna" decree) foresees:

- the maintenance of a wide offer of proximity education by means of 9 universities and 29 Hautes Écoles;
- a set of measures to foster success, in particular for first generation students. Indeed, all studies show that students from socially disadvantaged environments succeed less well than their homologues from the well-off classes. Equality of opportunity can only be achieved by assistance starting from the arrival in higher education. It

concerns the supply of educational tools, the availability of support training, increased supervision, the possibility of exemption interrogations and the production of social statistics. It is also possible to benefit from a staggering of the studies on the basis of an individualized program and from an optional remedial process.

- A fund for outgoing mobility was created by decree and will reserve half of its budget for students that receive study grants

10. Developments in lifelong learning

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

The decree of 31 March 2004 foresees that higher education has notably the objective of developing long-lasting specialized skills, ensuring that students have the aptitude to maintain its relevance, autonomously or in the context of lifelong learning.

Higher education implements methods and appropriate means, according to the disciplines, in order to attain this objective.

In this way, the higher educational establishments can organize ongoing training for higher education graduates or holders of similar diplomas.

Ongoing training programmes aim to update or enhance the competences of higher education graduates throughout their life.

These programmes can be for one or more of the following purposes:

1° to update the graduate's knowledge, notably according to the student's particular professional profile;

2° to enhance or specialize their knowledge and skills in one or other particular discipline, in the same domain of studies as their initial diploma or in a different domain. Notably, training for professional reintegration belongs to this category;

3° to complete and base their training, with a direct link to their current or future professional activity.

Success in these programmes is not sanctioned by an academic degree. Credits may be granted to students for education successfully completed, if the programmes respect the same criteria of organization, contents and quality as studies leading to academic degrees (article 20 of the decree of March 31st, 2004 defining higher education in the French community, favouring its integration into the European space for higher education, and refinancing the universities).

Various higher education programmes are organized for adults who exercise a professional activity, for example the courses organized by the Institute of Training in Education Science for adults (**FOPA** at the UCL), by the Open Faculty of Economic and Social Policy (**FOPES** at the UCL) or by the establishments for social advancement.

Those programmes are organized for a public of adults who exercise a professional activity whatever their path of initial training was. This option results in the admission policy (taking into account the student's experience and plan), in the organization of the programme (staggered schedule, decentralization) as well as the educational mechanism and the contents

of the programme (connection between theoretical knowledge and practice in the field).

Finally, social advancement education (often referred to as “evening classes” by the general public) proposes a very wide range of programmes following schedules that are generally compatible with a professional activity.

Social advancement education offers students the possibility of acquiring a study diploma which they did not obtain in their initial training.

This education also comes into play in the framework of ongoing personal and professional training.

Social advancement education is characterized by:

- an approach according to abilities,
- the modularity of the training system,
- a method of enhancing the value of experience, including that gained in professional or private experiences.

It is about a real “lifelong” education:

- in ongoing training,
- in advanced training,
- as a supplement to initial training,
- in the search for personal development,

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

Establishments organise **admittance exams** for persons who are not holders of a higher secondary education qualification and who nevertheless wish to begin higher education.

In certain cases, defined in the regulation, it is possible for a person who does not possess a first cycle diploma to make good, under certain conditions, the knowledge and skills acquired in their **professional or personal experience to directly access the second cycle (master)**.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1 Describe any legal obstacles identified by your country and any progress made in removing legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes

The decree of March 31st, 2004 allows the higher education establishments to conclude cooperation agreements with Belgian or foreign higher education partners, for the organization of studies which they are authorized to organize and the award of diplomas sanctioning these studies. Henceforth, the decree allows the participation, in complete legality, in the organization of common diplomas (joint degree) and leaves higher education establishments the freedom to organize these common diplomas.

11.1.1. Describe the extent of integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees

11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised? (joint admissions, mobility of students, joint exams, etc.)

It is not possible to list the various universities initiatives in the organization of common study diplomas which already existed before their legalization by the decree of March 31st, 2004.

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

Irrelevant

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

The European dimension is being systematically introduced into most of the course programmes today.

Moreover, certain programmes refer specifically to the European dimension, notably certain programs organized in Faculties of Law, Economics or Social sciences.

Language Training schools established in most of the universities also participate in the creation of a European dimension.

Finally, some universities have created an “Institute of European studies” where studies of European law, policy or economics (rights of the European institutions, authority of the institutions, etc.) are organized at the level of the second specialized cycle.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA

- a. introduction of the “Bologna” two cycle structure type (bachelor / master);
- b. possibility of teaching partially in other languages than French (decree of March 31st, 2004);
- c. introduction of the possibility of a joint diploma;
- d. creation of Academies, association of universities allowing a greater visibility of our university landscape.
- e. introduction of the ECTS in all programmes (decree of March 31st, 2004);
- f. introduction of the “ Diploma Supplement” (decree of March 31st, 2004);
- g. active participation in the new European Programme “Erasmus Mundus”.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

The Bologna Declaration dates from 1999; less than five years later, the French Community enacted several decrees which fundamentally modify the organization of higher education. To achieve this, it was necessary to convince all the players: universities and Hautes Écoles, teachers and students, political representatives and government. These decrees form the base of a new system, put in place a new governance via the association of universities, revise the financing methods, and foresee a quality control system.

The first ‘new’ programs began in September, 2004. The chosen strategy is to spread out the

complete passage to the new system over five years. During this period, the old and new regimes will coexist. During this period, we shall constantly evaluate the implementation of the reforms and shall publish any necessary regulations.

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

The main challenges are the following:

- to maintain and develop our international presence, both in Europe and in the rest of the world, in a difficult financial context.

We shall pursue a major reflection on how to progress further in the spirit of Bologna. In particular, we shall examine the following points:

- how best to use the ECTS credits in a spirit of accumulation?
- how to facilitate the progressive orientation of the student without endangering the rigour of studies?

- up to what point can we use foreign languages in education, in order to ensure our international attractiveness and prepare the mobility between the first two cycles?

- what is the best way of operating the quality agency and preparing for accreditation?
- how to continue to democratize access to university in the context of Bologna?

- Make the mass university with no limitation of access, the preparation for a profession, a humanist spirit and excellence coexist
- In the spirit of Bologna, linked to the knowledge society, give a priority to lifelong learning and the renewal of skills.