

bologna process

NATIONAL REPORT 2004 – 2005

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1. Main achievements since Berlin

1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms

As informed in Norway's report for 2003, most of the elements of the Bologna Process up to the Berlin Communiqué have been implemented through the Quality Reform.

In March 2001 a White Paper containing the principles of the Quality Reform was presented to the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting. Following the parliamentary debate and decisions in June 2001, the necessary legislative changes (in the Act on Universities and University Colleges and the Act on Private Higher Education) were introduced as from 1 July 2002. The Quality Reform was implemented at all higher education institutions in Norway from the autumn of 2003. Central to the reform is a new degree structure with the degrees Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. following the 3+2+3 model, the establishment of a quality assurance agency, the compulsory use of the Diploma Supplement, the introduction of credits based on the ECTS model, closer counselling of students, change from a system oriented towards final exams to a system oriented towards teaching and learning, increased institutional autonomy, new forms of assessment and increased internationalisation. Thus the necessary legal changes have been made and the formal implementation of the elements of the Quality Reform has to a large extent been completed.

Since the ministerial meeting in Berlin, a new Bill has been presented to the Storting. In June 2004, the Ministry of Education and Research presented a proposal for a new act relating to higher education. The Bill outlines a common framework for both state and private higher education institutions regarding:

- their authority to establish and close down study programmes,
- quality assurance of institutions
- the rights and obligations of the students.
- the continuance of today's organisation of the state institutions with scientific, organisational and academic autonomy
- a new model for the internal administration structure, including the strengthening of the position of the Rector as head, academic as well as administrative, of the institution

The Ministry also proposes that the new act will have provisions to introduce joint degrees

and to regulate the authority to develop a national qualifications framework.

The parliamentary decisions on the necessary legislative changes are expected in spring 2005.

As a follow-up to the section in the Berlin Communiqué on the establishment of national qualifications frameworks in all the Bologna member states, and as a result of Norway's participation in the follow-up process on the Copenhagen Declaration on raising the status of vocational education and training (VET), Norway is at the moment in the process of developing a qualifications framework. In general, Norway supports the idea of establishing a framework system oriented towards learning outcomes, supported by arrangements for quality and transparency at different levels in a lifelong learning perspective. A working group has been established in the Ministry in order to take into further consideration challenges on the national level related to establishing such a system.

2. National organisation

2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies

(For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is the Ministry responsible for higher education and research in Norway, consequently also the Bologna Process. Certain special institutions, while partly under the Act on Universities and University Colleges, report to other ministries, e.g. the National Police Academy which reports to the Ministry of Justice and the Police, and the military colleges which report to the Ministry of Defence.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, which also includes the Norwegian ENIC/NARIC unit, was established 1st January 2003; cf. Section 3 on Quality assurance. The Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education (SIU) is a Norwegian agency that promotes international co-operation in education and research. Norway Opening Universities (NOU) is a national political initiative for the Ministry in the field of lifelong and flexible ICT-supported learning in higher education, as well as for change and innovation in Norwegian higher education.

The national rectors' conference in Norway, The Norwegian Council for Higher Education (Universitets- og høyskolerådet), is a co-operative body for Norwegian state-owned universities, specialised university institutions and university colleges. In addition, The Network for Private Higher Education Institutions (Nettverk for private høyskoler), represents the private higher education institutions in Norway. There are two national student unions in Norway, The National Union of Students in Norway (Norsk Studentunion) and The Norwegian Association of Students (Studentenes Landsforbund - StL). The academic and administrative staff in higher education is represented by different associations which are invited to give their opinion on and contribute to the various processes concerning higher education and research both to the Ministry and to the Storting.

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 Norwegian higher education sector consists of six universities, six specialised university institutions, 25 university colleges, 2 national academies of the arts, and 29 private higher

education institutions (several of the private institutions are small.).

The four categories of higher education institutions are recognised by their degree of freedom to establish new study programmes:

1. Universities have the right to establish new programmes at all levels and within any field.
2. Specialised university institutions have the right to establish new programmes at all levels, both the bachelor, the master and the doctoral level, within their field of specialisation.
3. Accredited colleges have the right to establish new bachelor programmes in all fields.
4. Unaccredited private higher education institutions have to apply for accreditation for all new study programmes. However, accredited study programmes at these private colleges range from units of half a year at the bachelor level to programmes at the doctoral level.

No formal binary system exists in Norway. Further information on the accrediting process is given in chapter 3.1.

State higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees, but several private higher education institutions charge tuition fees. If state funded, private higher education institutions cannot, however, make a profit.

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)

A national Bologna group has been established by the Ministry, consisting of representatives of all the major stakeholders: The rectors' conferences both for private and state institutions, the two national student unions, NOKUT, SIU, Forskerforbundet (Norwegian Association of Research Workers) and Utdanningsgruppenes Hovedorganisasjon (The Confederation of Higher Education Unions). The aim of the Ministry in establishing the Bologna group was to establish a forum where important developments and documents in the Bologna Process could be discussed with the stakeholders, as well as a forum for the exchange of information both to and from the Ministry in relation to the Bologna Process. The group meets approx. once a month and is a valuable tool for the Ministry in relation to the developments in the Bologna Process both at the national and the international level.

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.

The primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the higher education institutions themselves. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT is an independent government body, established with the aim of monitoring and developing the quality of higher education in Norway through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of quality assurance systems, institutions and study programmes. This division of responsibilities is defined in the Act on Universities and University Colleges, and is also

continued in the new Bill presented to the Storting. NOKUT has the following responsibilities:

- To assess the quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions based on the requirements laid down in the Ministry of Education's Regulation governing NOKUT and the supplementary criteria stipulated by NOKUT itself. NOKUT shall through quality audits carried out in regular cycles, evaluate and pass judgement on all the accredited institutions' internal quality assurance systems. In addition to acting as a control mechanism, the audits are supposed to be conducted in a manner beneficiary to quality development.
- To accredit private institutions
- To accredit state institutions applying for a change of status.
- To accredit new study programmes at institutions which do not have the right to establish new study programmes. These decisions cannot be modified by any other authority.
- To review accreditations already given. Any institution can have accreditations revoked or suspended, for the entire institution as such, or for individual programmes, following a negative assessment in this type of evaluation. The evaluations are conducted by experts appointed by NOKUT.
- To carry out other types of evaluations with the purpose of investigating, assessing and developing the quality of higher education in Norway. The Ministry may instruct NOKUT to undertake such evaluations.
- To recognise foreign education/diplomas (includes the Norwegian ENIC/NARIC unit, the Lisbon Recognition Convention information unit.)

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.

The meaning of accreditation in the Norwegian system is: A professional assessment as to whether a higher education institution and the programme provided by the institution fulfil a given set of standards. Accreditation is not limited to a specified period of time, but will be considered valid until explicitly revoked, following an assessment with the objective to revise accreditations already given. The accreditation system is a combination of institutional and programme accreditation. Standards concerning institutional accreditation are laid down in regulations set by the Ministry. Further criteria for institutional accreditation, as well as standards and criteria for programme accreditation have been developed by NOKUT.

All the state institutions were at the time of the establishment of NOKUT considered accredited. NOKUT will, however, have cyclical evaluations of all the institutions every six years in order to establish whether their quality assurance systems are satisfactory (audits). Private institutions were not considered accredited institutions as such at the time of the establishment of NOKUT due to the former system of accreditation of programmes for private institutions. Thus, private institutions have to apply for institutional accreditation in one of the three other categories in order to obtain the same rights as state institutions in that category. A system where the higher education institutions can apply for accreditation for another category has been established. If successful, the institution will be granted increased autonomy in establishing new study programmes.

In addition to the other standards laid down in the Ministry's and NOKUT's regulations, one of the preconditions for accreditation is that the institution possesses a satisfactory system for

quality assurance. All state institutions are required to have a system of quality assurance by 1 January 2004. The institutions are required to document their work on quality assurance and quality development, as well as to document that their quality assurance systems will uncover instances where quality is at risk. The systems should include routines for student evaluation, institutional self-evaluation and the follow-up of these evaluations, documentation of the institution's development of the learning environment, as well as routines ensuring the continuous development of the work of the institutions in relation to quality.

As for programme accreditation, as described in 2.2, the right of higher education institutions to establish new study programmes varies according to the category the institution belongs to. Should an institution wish to establish study programmes going beyond its right to establish new programmes, the institution has to apply to NOKUT for accreditation. There are standards and criteria for all three main levels of degrees: Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. – and for short cycle higher education (2-year) degrees.

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)?

At present, one of NOKUT's board members is a Pro Rector from Denmark. Norway strives at appointing an international member as part of the Board of NOKUT. At least one of the experts in the evaluation panels should come from another country, for language reasons usually one of the Nordic countries. NOKUT is highly active in the international arena of quality assurance, being a member and an active partner of the European Association of Quality Assurance (ENQA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). In addition NOKUT has entered into bilateral agreements with the Spanish quality assurance agency ANECA and the South African agency the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

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.

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.

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)

The Norwegian system offers two parallel paths to a doctoral degree:

(a) Organised doctoral programmes leading to the degree of Ph.D. The organised doctoral studies require a master's degree or equivalent. The studies are based on a three-year norm, during which the student must develop a substantial body of original research that extends the frontier of knowledge. All students in organised programmes must be employed in fellowship positions. The norm at universities and university colleges is four year positions that require one year equivalent of teaching alongside the doctoral studies and thesis work. Organised programmes accounted for 88 percent of doctorates in 2003.

(b) Research leading to the degree of Dr. Phil. The degree is awarded on the basis of a relatively long record of research and publication. These so-called individual degrees accounted for 12 percent of doctorates in 2003.

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?)

Higher education institutions have a tripartite mandate. They shall provide higher education on the basis of the foremost scientific research, artistic development and empirical knowledge. They shall engage in research and academic or artistic development, and thirdly, they shall disseminate knowledge and research results to society at large. The higher education sector thus plays a central role in the Norwegian research system.

Nine out of ten researchers obtaining a Ph.D. are trained in this sector. The sector maintains the knowledge base for research in Norway and collaborates extensively with researchers from other sectors (e.g. research institutes, industry). Research in the higher education sector is mainly directed towards basic research, although higher education institutions also have a clear mandate to do applied research in collaboration with industry, and university colleges have a mandate in regional development. Most of R&D in the humanities and social sciences is carried out in this sector. The majority of academic staff in higher education institutions is obliged to do both research and teaching, but the balance between the two tasks vary between institutions and also between individual staff members at the same institution.

Fifty-six percent of public investment in R&D was allocated to the higher education sector in 2001. Thirty-five percent was allocated to public or private research institutes, which do applied research mostly. Nine percent was allocated to industry. There are two main sources for R&D funding in the higher education sector: General university funds and funding from external sources. General funds account for about 80 percent of R&D funding in this sector. The Research Council of Norway is the most important external source for R&D funding.

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)*

All Norwegian students have a statutory right to financial assistance through the State Educational Loan Fund – they get financial assistance regardless of their parents' income.

They may receive NOK 80 000, approx. €9800 a year in financial assistance, of which 40 percent can be given as educational grant, but the grant is dependent upon completion of exams. The students are entitled to bring this amount abroad on all study programmes; both exchange programmes, as “free movers” and full degree programmes on both undergraduate and graduate level. In addition, students may get travel support and tuition support for studies abroad.

Exchange programmes like Erasmus, Leonardo and the Nordic Nordplus are crucial tools for promoting and influencing student mobility both for incoming and outgoing students. The aim is to get more students to take a period of study abroad as an integrated part of her/his Norwegian degree in order to obtain a balance with the proportionately higher number of Norwegian students taking a full degree abroad. For incoming students the Norwegian government has established fellowship programmes for developing countries. Many of the incoming students are on these schemes.

One example is the Quota Programme for students from developing countries and countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. 1100 students can get financial support through this programme for the period it takes to obtain a degree in Norway. (As a main rule, the maximum period is four years.) The financial assistance (loan) these students have received will be cancelled after they return to their home country and take up residence there.

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) as mentioned under 2.1, plays an important role in Norway in promoting international co-operation in education and research.

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

The Norwegian government has decided that as a general rule, each student enrolled at a higher education institution is entitled to a period of study abroad as an integrated part of her/his Norwegian degree programme. The Norwegian higher education institutions are responsible for arranging these stays abroad. The student finance system as described in 7.1, and especially the portability of student loans and grants, is an important factor for the mobility of Norwegian students.

Student mobility is one of the criteria for the national financing of higher education institutions through the new financial system. The new funding formula for higher education institutions incorporates measures designed to promote internationalisation in Norwegian higher education. The institutions receive NOK 5200 (approx. €640) per incoming and outgoing exchange student. The aim is increased, as well as more balanced, mobility and exchange.

In 2001, the “quarantine clause” of the Immigration regulations was abolished. There used to be a quarantine of five years after graduation before foreigners graduating from Norwegian higher education institutions could demand a permit to stay and work in Norway.

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)

Academic staff is entitled to research terms based on specific criteria. The research term is quite often spent abroad. The Erasmus programme has also had a certain impact on staff

mobility, though not on a large scale. Academic staff participating in shorter courses at one of the Norwegian study centres abroad, in Kiel, York and Caen, are entitled to financial assistance from the State Educational Loan Fund for their stay.

For Norwegian staff going abroad, language is sometimes considered an obstacle, especially in relation to non-English speaking countries. In order to encourage stays in non-English speaking countries, the institutions award grants for language courses. Differences in salaries, regulations regarding pension rights etc., might be factors limiting mobility of staff both to and from Norway. The language barrier could be considered as a challenge for the recruitment of foreign staff into Norway. As of today, academic positions are not systematically advertised internationally.

Except for a basis deduction of 15 percent for foreigners, no particular tax advantage is granted to foreigners. An exception is made for teachers and research staff from the U.S. and France, who are exempted from tax in Norway for duration of up to two years. Norwegian teachers and research staff going to the U.S. are also exempted from tax

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

The institutions report to a national database on academic staff exchanges. The higher education institutions are encouraged to integrate staff exchanges in all bilateral agreements or other projects of co-operation.

As of January 1st 2002, the “specialist clause” of the Immigration regulations, which includes workforce with a higher degree, was made less restrictive. For a person to be granted a permit as a specialist it is a requirement that the special expertise is deemed absolutely necessary for employers, and that the post cannot be filled by domestic labour or labour from the EEA area. Family members of specialists may come to Norway pursuant to the provisions for family reunification. Whether the lifting of restrictions has had the effect desired is not completely clear.

The Research Council of Norway has established a Mobility Centre, with the purpose of co-operating with all the higher education institutions that want to be a part of a Norwegian network for research mobility. The Centre is part of the European Network of Mobility Centres (ERA-MORE). The members of the network are committed to either provide the answers directly, based on their own experience and knowledge of the area, or to direct the researcher to the appropriate source of information. The centres will help researchers with a wide range of issues, ranging from visas and work permits, to day-care, schooling and language courses. A Norwegian web-site related to this is under construction, a web-site which will mirror the EU’s Researchers’ Mobility Portal. In 2005 Norway will participate in the information campaign *The 2005” Researchers in Europe” Initiative*.

The Ministry of Education and Research has initiated a Centres of Excellence (CoE) scheme with the intention to bring more researchers and research groups up to a high international standard. The centres will be devoted to long-term, basic research. Research is inherently international, and one significant aspect of the CoE’s activities is their extensive collaboration beyond the boundaries of Norway. Several of the centres have international experts among their staff.

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?

Increased institutional autonomy has been granted to the higher education institutions.

Study programmes: Cf. 2.2 and 3.2.

Financing: The Quality Reform gives the higher education institutions increased autonomy in the management and organisation of their activities. Cf. 2.2 and 2.3. The institutions' performance, both in teaching and research, will be closely monitored by the central authorities. The outcome of the assessment will be an element in the new funding formula and will thus influence the resource allocation to educational institutions. Under the new system resources are as a general rule distributed in the following way: *a)* a "basic component", which amounts to approximately 60 per cent of the total allocation; *b)* an "education component" covering approximately 25 per cent of the total allocation and based on the number of completed student credits, the number of graduates and the number of international exchange students; and *c)* a "research component" covering the remaining 15 per cent of total allocation, which is partly a result-based allocation. There are variations with regard to the different institutions.

Internal organisation: The Act on Universities and University Colleges states that the institutions may not be instructed regarding the academic content of their teaching or the content of research or artistic or scientific development work, cf. 1.1.

A set organisational and administrative structure is prescribed for the institutions to which the act applies. Under this law, the universities and university colleges are governed by a board. The board is the highest governing body of the institution. It is responsible for maintaining a high standard of academic activity, and for ensuring that the institution is run efficiently and in accordance with the applicable laws, regulations and provisions, and within the limits and targets laid down by the national authorities. The board also draws up the strategy for the institution's educational research and other academic activities. The Board consists of the Rector, the Vice Rector and two other members elected from among the academic staff, one member elected from among the technical and administrative staff, two members elected from among the students and four external members. The external members are appointed by the Ministry, but the institutions are invited to bring in their propositions. In the new Bill presented to the Storting in 2004 a different composition of the board has been proposed. When it comes to the internal organisation of the institutions in matters such as the number of faculties, departments etc, as well as how these are governed, complete autonomy has been given to the institutions.

Staffing: The criteria and procedures for appointment to academic posts are laid down partly in the Act on Universities and University Colleges and partly in general regulations on the national and institutional level, supplemented by general employment law and basic collective agreements in the state sector.

The Act on Universities and University Colleges describes the main features of the procedure whereby academic staff is appointed. Appointments to academic posts are made on the basis of expert assessments in relation to the description of the post given in the advertisement and

the post specification. Foreign members are usually included in the panels. The assessment of qualifications is objective for any academic position. This assessment is formalized, transparent and thorough. The candidates' qualifications are evaluated by several independent bodies in the course of the appointment process.

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

Cf. 8.3 on student participation and 8.1 on the representation of the academic staff and the technical and administrative staff in the boards of the institutions.

The permanent Board members and their deputies are elected for four years. Elections are held separately for the two groups of permanently and temporarily appointed academic staff and the technical/administrative staff. Student members of the board and their deputies are elected for one year.

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)

Student participation in the governance of higher education has been strengthened over the last few years. According to the Bill presented to the Storting in 2004, student representatives should constitute at least 20% of the total amount of representatives in all executive bodies of both state and private institutions. The students at an institution may establish a student body to safeguard the interests of students and present their views to the board and council of the institution. Students at individual faculties or departments may similarly establish student bodies there. Student bodies shall be heard in all questions concerning students at the level in question.

Since 2003 the higher education institutions are obliged to have a special committee (learning environment committee) supervising the physical and mental working environment of the students. The students and the institution each have 50 % of the representatives of this committee

At the national level, students are organised in national student unions, which are normally represented in national boards, committees and panels in higher education. The student unions are always consulted by the Ministry in matters of relevance for students.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

The normal requirement for access to higher education is the completion of a 3-year study programme in academic subjects at the upper secondary level, or in some of the technical and vocational subjects.

From 2001 onwards, the universities and the university colleges have the right to admit students without sufficient formal entrance qualifications on the basis of age (25 years or more), and a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning. The institution decides if the applicant is qualified for the study programme concerned. **(Cf. 10.2.)**

Admission to higher education is based on a point system of assessments from upper

secondary school, examinations in other disciplines at universities and university colleges, and additional points for age and completed military service. For certain groups, assessment for admission is now possible by other means than the points system. Disabled applicants may be assessed for admission outside the point system, but the same qualifications, as mentioned above, are required.

The Act on Universities and University Colleges emphasizes the improvement of the student's learning environment and mentions in particular disabled students' prospect of completing their studies.

To promote equality of access to higher education, the student welfare organisations offer housing, canteens, day care centres, medical care etc. These services are to a large extent financed with state support.

The State Educational Loan Fund was established in 1947 in order to improve the social recruitment to higher education. All students enrolled in a study programme at a higher education institution are entitled to financial support, cf. 7.1. ..

In parallel to the Quality Reform, an improved system of student financial support was introduced, as described in 7.1. State higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees, but loans are available to cover all, or part, of the tuition fee at private higher education institutions.

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?

Norway Opening Universities (NOU) is a national political initiative in the field of lifelong and flexible ICT-supported learning in higher education.

NOUs main tasks are:

- to stimulate the development of lifelong and flexible learning in Norwegian higher education
- to generate and share knowledge
- to be a policy advisor for the Ministry in this field.

NOU supports Norwegian institutions of higher education by funding projects for developing ICT supported flexible learning and distance education courses through a annual application process. NOU also supports projects in specific areas where the Ministry wants to take special initiatives. Of a total budget of 19 mill. NOK, approx. €2.3 mill, approximately €1.5 mill is devoted to the funding of projects. The funding on a national basis through project funding acts as an incentive for the institutions when it comes to their own funding of these activities. Additional funding of the project from the institutions themselves is a prerequisite for the national funding.

The Competence Reform of 1999 was designed as a tripartite collaboration with a strong commitment from the social partners, the authorities and the large variety of providers of adult education. Its overriding objective was to meet the needs for new and updated competence, felt both in society, at workplaces, and by individuals. It is an educational reform as well as a working-life reform, and is aimed at all adults, both inside and outside working life. All levels in the educational system, including higher education, have taken part in the reform, and higher education institutions have participated in various projects

through The Competence Development Program. One condition for obtaining a grant through this programme is that the project reflects needs in the working life.

VOX (the Norwegian Institute for Adult Learning) is engaged in a three-year research project on the subject of **adult part-time students** in higher education, focusing among other things on problems related to ICT, flexible educational models, and competence in working life.

The Quality Reform in higher education and the modulisation of the higher education programmes makes it easier to facilitate continuing education. Several of the higher education institutions have developed strategies for flexible learning.

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

Rights assuring educational opportunities:

- Adults with a right to complete education at secondary level can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed. This assessment can give access to secondary schools or can, in some cases, allow the applicant to shorten the study period.
- Applicants aged 23 or older, who have at least five years of relevant work experience and who possess competences in six key subjects, can get general access to studies at tertiary level (“general study competences”)
- Adults aged 25 or older can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to allow them to study a specific subject (opposed to “general study competences”). In some cases, the applicants should be allowed to condense their study period. This assessment is done by the institution in which the applicant wants to enrol.

In 2001 and 2002 between seven and eight per cent of all applicants to higher education were enrolled through the procedure for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Evaluation indicates that these students manage just as well as students admitted in the regular way, and that, due to work experience, they also contribute positively to the learning environments at the institutions.

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

No definite legal obstacles in relation to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees/joint study programmes have been identified in Norway. The Ministry has, however, in the aforementioned Bill presented to the Storting, proposed that the Ministry may lay down in regulations principles for establishing and recognising joint degrees. This will be done in order to promote and facilitate, not hinder the development of joint degrees.

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

As of September 2004, 10 Norwegian higher education institutions were involved in 19 integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees.

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

Norwegian higher education institutions have great autonomy in managing and organising their study programmes, and the Ministry does not have an overview of how these programmes have been organised.

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

Co-operation between Norwegian higher education institutions and other European higher education institutions is strongly encouraged. The Ministry urges the Norwegian higher education institutions to participate in European and other international education and research programmes such as the EU-programmes, and Norwegian institutions are to an increasing extent participating in various networks of co-operation between institutions in various European countries. Special initiatives include The Co-operation Programme with South East Europe - Research and Higher Education and The Norwegian Co-operation Programme with Russia

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

Norwegian higher education institutions are encouraged to develop study programmes in English. In addition, participation in European networks, co-operation with other European higher education institutions as well as the development of joint study programmes with other European higher education institutions is promoted.

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

Increased participation in international education and research programmes, as well as participation in joint degree programmes is being encouraged.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Cf. 1.1 and 2.3.

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

The main challenge ahead for Norway related to the goals of the Bologna Process is not the structural implementation of the elements of the Bologna Process, something which has, to a large extent been done through the Quality Reform, but rather the institutions' and the students' use of the opportunities the structural changes create with regard to mobility. Even though higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to co-operate with other European higher education institutions, to participate in networks and to encourage mobility both amongst students and staff, the institutions should to a greater extent make use of the possibilities in the EU programmes and encourage and facilitate mobility among students and staff.

The development of a national framework for qualifications and the description of study programmes by means of learning outcomes is also one of the main challenges ahead for

Norway.

Even though the structural implementation of the elements of the Bologna Process to a large extent has been done, the actual implementation of the elements at the institutional level remains a challenge. The changes that need to take place at the institutional level in order to make the Bologna reforms a factual reality at the Norwegian institutions cannot be made by structural and legal changes alone. We have to allow for a certain amount of time for the institutions in order not only to complete the factual implementation of all the elements, but also in order for the institutions and the academic staff to familiarise themselves with the new elements and their consequences.