

**BOLOGNA PROCESS
 TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007**

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

Country	AUSTRIA
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BFUG member (one name only) Position	BACHER Gottfried
Email address	Gottfried.bacher@bmbwk.gv.at
Contributors to the report	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Rectors' Conference, Austrian Exchange Service, Council of the Universities of Applied Sciences, (<i>Fachhochschulrat FHR</i>), Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (<i>Fachhochschulkonferenz, FHK</i>) Major abbreviations used: HEI - higher education institutions UAS - Universities of Applied Sciences (<i>Fachhochschulen</i>) TTC – Teacher Training Colleges (<i>Pädagogische Akademien</i>) TTU – Teacher Training Universities (<i>Pädagogische Hochschulen</i>), will be operative as of October 2007 NQF .- National Qualification Framework

Main achievements since Bergen

<p>1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national process to establish a NQF was started in 2006 - amendments of University Act 2002: the reform of doctoral programmes towards PhD programmes lasting at least 3 years; the decision to name academic degrees in English (bachelor, master, PhD), also for UAS; - Teacher training colleges will convert to bachelor programmes as of Oct. 2007, when the new <i>Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Pädagogischen Hochschulen und ihre Studien</i> (Act on reforming teacher training colleges, in short “Teacher Education Act”) will turn them into teacher training universities. It will convert the training of teachers for primary and lower secondary education from non-degree to bachelor programmes.

National organisation

2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries: certain post-secondary institutions are overseen by the ministries responsible for the subject areas, e.g. agriculture, social welfare, health, etc.
- how funds are allocated to HEIs: For universities, funds are allocated for 3 years on the basis of performance agreements, part of the funds are formula-based. UAS are financed by the government on the basis of student numbers, and in addition receive funds from the legal persons who maintain them. TTC are directly funded by the Ministry.
- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing: Universities are fully autonomous in academic matters (curricula) and organization (within the framework proscribed by the University Act 2002), *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences – UAS) are maintained by independent legal persons and are subject to accreditation by the UAS Council.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.

- The post-secondary sector is divided into universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities, and non-university post-secondary institutions

- 22 public higher education institutions (same as in 2005). These include the 3 medical universities and the University of Continuing Education Krems, which is governed by a separate legal regulation.

- 10 private HEIs (one less than in 2005)

- 18 Universities of applied sciences/UAS (same as 2005)

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- 27 Teacher Training Colleges

- A new institution, mainly for research and PHD programmes was established in 2006 by the Federal Law on the **Institute of Science and Technology** – Austria (ISTA).

- the number/percentage of students (below doctoral level) admitted in academic session 2005-2006 to each type of institution:

public universities: 33.804 / 77.4%

universities of applied sciences: 8.364 / 19.1%

private universities: 1.532 / 3.5%

total: 43.682 / 100.0%

teacher training colleges: 1,924 (no ba/ma structure until Oct. 2006)

- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations: The universities, the universities of applied sciences, and the teacher training colleges are covered by different legal regulations.

Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

A national Bologna follow-up group consisting of representatives of the responsible ministries and authorities, as well as representatives of the higher education sector (e.g. Rectors' Conference, Association of UAS, UAS-Council, Conference of the Teacher Training Colleges, the Austrian Students' Union, the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance, Ministerial representatives....) was established in 1999. The national follow-up group is - among other things - responsible for the preparation of the Austrian contribution to the European follow-up process and for the elaboration of the Austrian position for the Bologna Ministers' conferences, and ensures the flow of information within Austria. All Austrian universities and UAS have nominated a Bologna Coordinator who is responsible for promoting the implementation of the Bologna objectives in is/her institution.

A national Bologna website -- <http://www.bologna.at> -- was set up in 2001 to provide information on the developments in Austria and to disseminate information on the developments and events at the European level.

Besides there are thematic working groups active on all levels to consider the stake holders' needs and experience in implementing the individual Bologna objectives (e.g. working group on joint degree programmes, committee for international affairs of the UAS, international forum and teaching forum of the Rector's Conference,..).

The Bologna Follow-up Group includes the Bologna Promotors and invites experts to cover specific topics during its regular meetings.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Please include:

- precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies: **The Universities Act 2002** provides for student codetermination, particularly in respect of study programmes, teaching, quality assurance, and the use of university fees. weblink: Universities Act 2002: http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/fremdsprachig/en/univ/un_index.xml; and UAS Studies Act: www.fhr.ac.at/index_en.htm

- the role of students in the governance of HEIs: At universities, students must be represented in the Senate. At least 25% of the persons making up the collegial body dealing with study-related matters must be students.

At UAS, the Evaluation Regulation of the UAS Council determines the following: (1) Student representatives are to be involved in the process of self-evaluation in an adequate manner. (2) The course-providing

body shall submit the self-evaluation report together with a student representatives' statement to the UAS Council by 28 February of the same year in which the external evaluation takes place.

- **the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs:** Each university must establish an equal opportunities working group responsible for avoiding gender discrimination by university bodies and for advising and supporting the university members and governing bodies on issues relating to equal opportunities and the advancement of women. Works councils represent the interests of university academic and general/administrative staff in accordance with the Austrian Labour Relations Act.

At TTC student and staff are represented on programme committees.

6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.

In the UAS sector cooperation with the world of business and social partners is provided on a legal basis. UAS study programmes are profession-oriented. The curricula are designed in close cooperation with experts from industry or the public sector following several analyses of the needs of the job market (section 12 paragraph 2 number 9 and paragraph 3, UAS Studies Act). Consequently the implementation of the Bologna principles has always been borne by the institutions and the world of work. There is a strong involvement of external experts both in teaching and in research. Furthermore, representatives of the world of work are involved in the external and internal quality assessment

At UAS, the involvement of professionals in the **external quality assurance** system of the Austrian UAS sector takes place at five main levels:

- in the context of the design of new programmes the development team must include at least two experts with a professional background (legal basis)
- in the context of carrying out a programme teaching staff from business and industry play an important role (legal requirement)
- in the context of the evaluation of programmes or institutions – as a condition for the re-accreditation – a review-team must include at least one member with management experience gained in a business or non-profit organisation (institutional evaluation), and/or one member with relevant practical experience (programme-related evaluation)
- in the context of the decision-making body the UAS Council must include at least eight members with professional backgrounds
- in the context of applied research and development which the institutions are legally obliged to carry out, the UAS Council requires e.g. that an application for accreditation provides also information about existing collaboration with R&D and scientific institutions at home and abroad as well as with enterprises (small- and medium-sized enterprises in particular)
- Similarly, **universities** invite experts from the world of business and

industry to teach and lecture in various degree and non-degree programmes, and they ask for the input of business and social partners when it comes to designing curricula.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.

Type of HEI	Winter term 2005		Winter term 2006	
	1 st cycle progr.	2 nd cycle progr.	1 st cycle progr.	2 nd cycle progr.
public universities	191	248	211	278
UAS - Programmes	65	13	115	33
private universities	49	49	49	47

Please include:

- the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07:

(Eurydice)

Winter term 2005 (winter-term-2006 data will be available by the end of January 2007)

Type of HEI	Number of degree programme students below doctoral level*	Percentage of students enrolled in the two cycle degree system	
		first cycle	second cycle
Public universities	167,897	24,1	2,6
UAS - Programmes	25.727	24,0	1,7
Private universities	3.120	50,3	33,5
Total	196,744	24,5	2,7

As of fall 2006, 42% of all **university study programmes**, and 77% of all **UAS study programmes**, follow the BA/MA study structure. The relevant student numbers will not be available before the end of January 2007. **Therefore the student numbers given in the table above date from the winter term 2005.** TTCs will not convert to bachelor programmes until Oct. 2007, when the new Teacher Education Act, which will turn them into teacher training universities, (TTU) will become effective. It will convert the training of teachers for primary and lower secondary education from non-degree to bachelor programmes. A total of 14,138 persons is currently enrolled at TTCs

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

* The fields of Medicine and teacher training for upper secondary education are – for the time being -- excluded from conversion and, thus, not included in this table

8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

An amendment of the Universities Act in 2006 created the legal basis for introducing doctoral studies fully in line with the Bergen Communiqué. The minimum required study period for **doctoral studies** was changed to **3 years, without usage of credit points**. **Admission** to doctoral studies, which is also granted to graduates of universities of applied sciences, requires a Master degree. After completion of at least 3 years of doctoral studies, the **title of Doctor or PhD** may be awarded.

Universities within their autonomy need to assume responsibility for ensuring that the doctoral studies they offer include appropriate training in **transferable skills** as well as **supervisory and assessment procedures**. **Dissertation agreements** may be concluded between doctoral candidates, supervisors and universities. These agreements may, for instance, allow for annual **evaluations on a candidate's progress** in addition to admission procedures. Interdisciplinary, inter-university and international aspects shall be taken into account in the composition of the supervisory teams. These recommendations are based on a national position paper, which also stresses that the purpose of doctoral studies is the advancement of a candidate's aptitude to **conduct original research** on the basis of the qualifications that she or he acquired during Master-level studies. **Specific learning outcomes** shall be defined for individual disciplines and study programmes. Curricula of doctoral programmes shall be **more structured** in the future. In some disciplines, this may also lead to more **coursework**.

Admission to the former doctoral studies with a workload of at least 120 ECTS will end in 2009/2010. These studies must be completed by 2017.

Please include:

- the percentage of 3rd cycle students following structured doctoral programmes: The over-all number of students enrolled in doctoral studies at Austrian universities, winter term 2005/06, was about 17,000 students (46% women). The number of students following structured doctoral programmes was 45 (19 women), a percentage of less than 1%. The number of students in structured doctoral programmes is expected to increase in the next few years: in the winter term 2006/07, e.g. 5 new structured programmes are starting at the University of Vienna, and a lot of other Austrian universities are developing structured doctoral programmes at the moment.
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies: **the legal requirement for the duration of old doctoral study programmes is 4 semesters. Doctoral studies are in many cases carried out parallel to holding a job and thus take longer on the average.**
- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only: doctoral study programmes include taught courses as well as independent research. Generally, they tend to emphasize the thesis, although course work is more relevant in the natural and technical sciences. The future orientation of doctoral programmes is

characterized by a more structured and multidisciplinary approach as well as providing transferable skills as described above.

- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies: supervision is to be secured by a contract, and regular progress reports should be made.
- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes: they will be included, work on the Austrian NQF has just started.
- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills integrated in doctoral studies: yes, see above
- are credit points used in measuring workload in doctoral studies? the use of credits was discontinued, in line with the results of the discussions after the Salzburg seminar on doctoral programmes in February 2005 (link: http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf).

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access² to the next cycle

9. Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle: 100%
- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle:
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles:
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle: 100%
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle: none
- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle: none
- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area: Students who complete master programmes at universities of applied sciences in less than 4 semesters have to take bridging courses to be admitted to third cycle programmes.
- any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles: there are no obstacles.

² Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA³.

The Austrian government has decided to adopt a **National Qualifications Framework** and to connect it with the EQF. The discussion process on the topic has started; studies were initiated and are partly finished (e.g. an analysis of the EQF in the context of tertiary education based on a comparison of selected countries. The developing and consultation process including all stakeholders will start in 2007 and will be supported by a research group representing higher, vocational and adult education as well as several interest groups.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

Apart from information activities e.g. together with social partners to acquaint the labor market and potential employers as well as staff of guidance and career service points with the new degree structure there are no specific measures taken by the government at the moment. Curricula are developed autonomously by the universities. The provision of scientific pre-vocational education and qualification for science-based professions is the task of the universities by law. So far there is no statistical data available on university practice in this respect.

The provider of a UAS programme must carry out a survey on the need for and the acceptance of the planned degree-programme and must present it to the UAS Council for accreditation.

Please include where possible:

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after graduating in 2005/06: (n.a.)
- the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third cycles in 2005/06: 74% of first cycle graduates (4,159 graduates between academic years 2001/02 and 2005/06) at public universities pursued master studies right after their bachelor studies; another 14% were admitted to second-cycle studies within 3 years after their first graduation.
- the extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007: It is too early to make any predictions, as only a small number of students has graduated yet in the new system.

³ A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA⁴

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

The European Standards and Guidelines have been the subject of information activities in the whole HE sector and provide guidance in the development of evaluation and accreditation procedures.

In accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), legal regulations for Higher Education (Public and Private Universities, UAS) emphasize the responsibility of HEI for quality assurance and require them to develop institutional quality management processes. AQA, the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance, has developed an external procedure for guidance and future certification of institutional Quality Management processes for public universities. The accreditation standards for private universities include the requirements that are set out in the ESG for internal quality assurance within the private universities.

The ESG are progressively seen as a reference for external evaluation and the accreditation of study programmes and institutions.

The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance will undergo a review process with respect to the ESG that will be co-ordinated by ENQA in 2007. The UAS Council (*FHR*) and the Accreditation Council for private Universities (*AR*) will undergo national reviews. These reviews are expected to provide feedback about the progress of implementing the ESG in Austria.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

The following action has been taken to develop a unified national approach to **quality assurance** in higher education:

⁴ <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (*Österreichische Qualitätssicherungsagentur* -AQA) was founded in late 2003 and became effective in the spring of 2004. The Agency is a joint initiative of the Austrian Rectors' Conference, the Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the Association of Private Universities, the Austrian Students' Union, and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. AQA is an autonomous service agency set up to assist all higher education institutions: the universities, the universities of applied sciences and the TTUs in creating their respective quality management systems. The Agency's responsibilities include the development of standards and procedures for quality assurance in higher education, the coordination of evaluation procedures for study programmes and institutions, counselling and supporting higher education institutions in the development and implementation of internal quality assurance processes, as well as the certification of quality management processes. In accordance with international standards for quality assurance and evaluation agencies, AQA publishes a summary of the results of evaluations with the agreement of the higher education institutions concerned. The scientific steering group of AQA includes a majority of foreign experts.

The independent UAS Council is the accrediting body of the UAS Sector. Its duties are regulated by the UAS Studies Act and comprise accreditation, advice to the ministry, and the promotion of the quality of teaching and learning, innovation and further education, as well as the monitoring of the UAS sector. A summary based on the evaluation report is published on the website of the UAS Council with the agreement of the institution concerned. The findings – and especially the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the follow-up – contribute to the re-accreditation decisions of the UAS Council. According to the 2004 Evaluation Decree of the UAS Council, at least one member of a review team in universities of applied sciences must come from a similar higher education institution abroad.

The independent *Akkreditierungsrat* (Austrian Accreditation Council, AAC) is the accrediting body for the private university sector. In addition, it monitors the private university sector and the maintenance of the required quality standards. The findings of site visits by external experts are used for accreditation and re-accreditation decisions by the Accreditation Council, the majority of whose members are international experts. Due to current legal restrictions the expert reports cannot be published in their entirety.

The Universities Act 2002 (Art. 14) lays down the obligation on the part of universities to establish an **internal quality** management system. Several elements are specifically mentioned: continuous internal evaluation, evaluation of the activities and performance of university teachers and external evaluation initiated by the university council, the rector or the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. Performance

agreements (*Leistungsvereinbarungen*) are a key concept in establishing a university's profile and services and provide a basis for the funding of public universities (which account for appr. 90% of students in higher education). University responsibilities and the achievement of stated goals are taken into consideration in the negotiation process. Quality assurance measures are considered in the performance agreements and are conducted in accordance with international standards and generally accepted procedures. In the performance agreements, quality assurance measures such as institutional evaluations, accreditations, certifications and also quality audits are included. However, accreditation is not obligatory for universities.

The UAS Studies Act of 1993 founding the universities of applied sciences (accounting for around 8% of students in higher education) contains regulations for their internal quality assurance procedures (e.g. regular evaluation of courses through student surveys). It also prescribes an obligation for accreditation and re-accreditation of study programmes (after a maximum period of five years) by the UAS Council. The 2004 Evaluation Decree specifies the procedures for the external evaluation of study programmes and institutions with a view to their re-accreditation. The decision to re-accredit is generally taken on the basis of external evaluations, which is co-ordinated by an independent quality assurance agency. The external evaluation process follows three main stages: (1) self-evaluation and a report, (2) a site visit by an expert team of at least three members, and (3) an evaluation report and follow-up.

The 1999 University Accreditation Act regulates the accreditation procedures for private universities (accounting for around 2% of students in higher education) and establishes the responsibilities and decision-making powers of the Austrian Accreditation Council. Under the regulations of the Act, private universities have to submit an annual development report, as well as documentation and the results of evaluation procedures in the areas of teaching and research carried out by the university. Accreditation, which lasts for five years, is based on a site visit by an expert panel. The AAC decision must be approved by the responsible federal minister.

The evaluation procedures which are applied in a similar manner by all the accreditation and evaluation bodies are based on three general stages: self-evaluation/documentation, external evaluation, including peer review and a follow-up.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

The Austrian Student Union (ÖH), representing mainly students of the public universities is a member organisation of AQA, and represented on its

management board and in its general assembly.

The Universities Act 2002 makes student evaluations obligatory at public universities.

Student involvement in the UAS sector is determined in the Evaluation Regulation of the UAS Council in that student representatives are to be involved in the process of self-evaluation in an adequate manner and in that the course providing body has to include the students statement to the self-evaluation report provided for the UAS Council.

The Austrian Accreditation Council involves students as interview partners. As a rule the Austrian Accreditation Council contacts representatives of student unions at private universities if they are already established. The AAC invites student representatives of private universities to a round table discussion as a communication tool to bring forward their concerns. Furthermore a questionnaire is given to students to gain information for the external review of the AAC.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEEN) and is candidate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), having applied for full membership. The UAS-Council and the Austrian Accreditation Council are full members of ENQA and INQAAHE, as well as the founding members of the D-A-CH Network (a regional network of accreditation agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland). They are also members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) and of the CEEN. The UAS Council is a member of the Joint Quality Initiative. Members of the Austrian Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies serve frequently as experts in accreditation/evaluation procedures of other European QA-agencies.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country.

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement: based on the University Act 2002 **all** graduates have received the Diploma Supplement in a widely spoken European language, free of charge, and automatically since 2003. The EU/CoE/UNESCO format has been slightly adapted to allow for some Austria-specific terms to be found in the Universities Act 2002. Also the UAS and TTCs issue DS according to the commonly agreed principles.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents⁵ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Please include:

- whether your country has ratified the convention (including depositing ratification instrument at either CoE or UNESCO): **The Lisbon Convention became effective in Austria on April 1, 1999.**
- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents: **Yes**
- which of the following principles are applied in practice:
 - applicants' right to fair assessment: laid down in Universities Act 2002, art. 64; and in UAS Act, art. 4:
http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/fremdsprachig/en/univ/un_index.xml
 - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven: laid down in Universities Act 2002, art. 64, 78, 90); and in UAS Act, art. 4 and 5)
 - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted: laid down in Universities Act 2002, art. 64; and in UAS, art. 4 and 5
 - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions:
http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/uw/hs_links.xml
- whether you have a fully operational ENIC: **Yes**
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents: **Austria signed the Convention in 1997 and ratified it on February 3, 1999. It became effective on April 1, 1999.**

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

⁵ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007: It can be safely said that all Austrian universities are implementing the ECTS for all bachelor and master programmes. The missing finishing touches are due to the fact that not all of them are applying the student-work-load-centred approach strictly enough yet. The same is true for the UAS. There are some fields of studies at some universities who are still discussing how to implement the 2-tier study system and, consequently, the ECTS. At TTCs, the ECTS is used voluntarily for the time being, and will be obligatory as of Oct. 1, 2007, when they convert to TTUs.
- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007: All BA and MA programmes must use and are using credits in accordance with ECTS.
- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits: there are no other credit systems in use in Austria.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications⁶? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

The Austrian NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) is the official contact point for all kinds of questions concerning trans-frontier recognition in the field of higher education.

The activities of ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA focus on the following activities:

- Documentation of higher education in Austria and abroad (library and database on foreign higher education institutions and systems of study)
- Contacts: Representation of Austria in relevant committees of EU, Council of Europe, and UNESCO; permanent bilateral exchange of information with partner centres in other countries
- Special Project: Studies and conferences in relevant areas
- Service: Comparative recommendations, assessment of foreign higher education qualifications, advisory activities, coordination of the implementation of relevant agreements
- PR: Information events, information brochures, internet service

⁶ ENIC/NARIC has produced guidelines for National Action Plans for Recognition.

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

The University Act 2002 provides for an alternative admission procedure to be handled by the universities themselves. This also holds for non-degree university programmes, if they are quantitatively and qualitatively comparable to international master programmes. The UAS Study Act foresees alternative admission criteria for UAS study programmes, especially in the form of relevant professional qualifications. The number of students who enter UAS on the basis of a completed apprenticeship and relevant professional qualifications has decreased. This might be due to the fact that more persons without a secondary school leaving diploma (which constitutes the traditional university admission requirement) are now entering universities on the basis of a special university entrance exam, which is also based on relevant professional qualifications.

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

To foster integration of ICT in teaching and learning at universities the ministry set up an invitation for tender in 2005. Universities and Universities of applied science are invited to develop their typical blended learning-strategy and implement it. By 2006 nearly half of universities use ICT to serve students and teachers. Also TTCs apply ICT in teaching and learning.

A national consultation process aimed at drafting a national LLL strategy was launched by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 2006. It involves all national stakeholders, including the whole education system, adult learning associations as well as employers' and employees' representatives.

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint study programmes: There are various programmes running at different stages of implementation. As yet no statistical data are available.
- whether joint⁷ degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation. The Universities Act 2002 includes provisions for Joint Degree Programmes as does the relevant piece of legislation for the UAS.
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles: yes
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries: n.a.
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes. A “Joint Diploma Recommendation” by ENIC NARIC Austria: (http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/naric/serviceinternat/empfehl_anerken.xml)

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

Austria is fully committed to achieve the Lisbon goal of an expenditure of 3 % the GDP for R&D by 2010. Investment in R&D has grown dynamically over the past few years in Austria with the government providing special funding (e.g. 600 Mio € from 2004 – 2006) and additional funds being made available through the establishment of the National foundation for Research, Technology and Development (approx. € 125 Mio per year). For 2006, *Statistik Austria* estimates that some €6.24 billion will be invested in R&D, corresponding to a research rate of 2.43%. Compared to 1995, spending on R&D could thus be increased by 131%, which means a yearly growth rate of 7.9 %. If the trend continues, Austria will be able to achieve the set target of 3 %.

In setting up the *Rat für Forschung und Technologieentwicklung* (Council for Research and Technology Development; RFT) in 2000, the Federal Government created a body to advise it on all issues of research, technology and innovation.

⁷ a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

The overall framework conditions have been substantially improved by major structural reforms such as the re-organization of the Austrian Science Fund, the founding of *Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft* (Austrian Research Promotion Agency; FFG) and the creation of the National foundation for Research, Technology and Development. The founding of *Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft* (Austrian Research Promotion Agency; FFG) in 2004, served the purpose of combining research and advisory services operating in the field of national and international application-oriented research and technology promotion schemes. It combines all the major promotion schemes of the non-thematically specified bottom-up type, structural research promotion (through, i.e., competence centres) and thematically oriented research programmes.

Besides, the policy approach is changing in Austria as well: the envisaged role of coordinating and harmonising research and technology agendas between public and private players is increasingly moving away from targeted “control” to an impulse-giving, activating and anchoring one, which supports the autonomous coordination of players involved and monitors/supervises the political cycle. In implementing the University Act of 2002 (*UG 2002*), Austrian universities are faced with a fundamental change that has also far-reaching consequences for the structure and dynamism of the science and innovation system as universities are the main actors in scientific research in Austria and carry out the majority of scientific research.

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

There is no data available yet. Therefore Austria intends to participate in the OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO project on “Careers of Doctorate Holders”. The project will monitor the professional careers of doctorate holders and will provide statistical data which are not available in Austria at the moment.

- see also chapter 8 – “doctoral programmes”, and chapter 2 – “legislative reforms”
- “Researchers’ Mobility Portal Austria” – www.researchinaustria.info, which is part of the pan-European Researchers’ Mobility Portal (<http://europa.eu.int/eracareers>). The Ministry has established this Portal in order to provide doctoral candidates and young researchers with information on legal, social, cultural, and administrative matters concerning Austria (and other countries) as well as on financial support schemes and job openings.
- In addition a network called “Mobility Centres Austria” provides (young) researchers with the above-mentioned information in a more detailed and personalized manner. This Austrian network is part of the

- European ERA-MORE network.
- Doctoral Schools will be funded by the Austrian Science Fund (*FWF*) in order to develop well-structured and high-quality doctoral training programmes. The focus will be on interdisciplinarity, transferable skills, and on providing an appropriate research environment and international experience.
- The Austrian Science Fund provides funds for researchers to carry out projects which they themselves propose. The funds are allocated to the best projects on the basis of a peer review by international experts.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

- Support measures for **needy students** have been improved since the academic year 2001/02:

The number of study grants has been increased by 18% (2005/06: 48,461).

The number of students who receive a reimbursement of their tuition fees has been increased by 27% (2005/06: 41,756).

The number of students who receive an extra grant for studying abroad has been increased by 61% (2005/06: 2,000).

- Support measures for needy students for **studying abroad**:

Students receiving national grants who spend a study period abroad keep their national support for up to two years and can receive an **extra grant** to cover their additional expenses abroad. These students also receive a reimbursement of their tuition fees.

Further support measures include partial coverage of travel costs, scholarships for language courses and child support if the study abroad period comes towards the end of a student's study programme or during a traineeship abroad.

In addition, there is a special support programme for Austrian students who study at non-Austrian universities close to the Austrian border and non-Austrian open universities in the private sector where students may receive special financial aid.

For a detailed description of the Austrian support measures please consult the Internet page of the Study Grant Authority ("*Studienbeihilfenbehörde*") www.stipendium.at

- Towards the end of upper secondary schools students receive career- and study-related counselling, so they can take intelligent and informed decisions on which field of study to enter in order to take up a specific career. Information fairs covering study programmes and professional careers are held all over Austria once a year.

- There are various indirect federal aid schemes, which involve the following measures: family allowance, health and accident insurance, tax benefits, subsidies for student residences and restaurants, etc.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

Grant Upon Completion of Studies

The “grant upon completion of studies” is designed to offer students who have been gainfully employed during their studies the opportunity to complete them without stress at their jobs, especially during the period of time needed for the completion of one’s final diploma papers. This supportive measure is granted for a maximum of eighteen months.

Eligibility criteria include part-time employment of at least 36 months in the previous four years, including officially recognised periods of child care. The diploma paper must be in progress and there must be only a few exams left. Gainful employment must be given up for the period of time during which the grant is paid out. The age limit is 41.

The grant amounts to either 550 €, 725 € or 1000 € depending on the number of working hours of a student’s recent gainful employment. Fully employed individuals receive higher grants, others the respective percentage, such as half-time, three-quarters etc. An additional payment of 218 € will be granted if there are children to be cared for. If the study programme is not completed within six months after receiving the last payment, the entire grant is to be paid back.

The European Social Fund finances 46 % of this supportive measure. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, in cooperation with the Austrian Union of Students, grants **child care subsidies** to students about to complete their study programme, or students performing an internship in Austria or abroad.

The supportive measure is granted for a maximum of six months and amounts to up to 150 € per child. It is co-financed by the European Social Fund with the objective of increasing the percentage of gainfully employed students and/or post-graduates with children.

Most higher education institutions run career counselling centers to provide students with a perspective of their career potential and possibilities.

Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Apart from a variety of financial aid measures for needy students (see also chapter 25: "social dimension") an extensive range of scholarship programmes is available for students and graduates alike on a competitive basis (e.g. Austro-Hungarian Exchange Programme, Austro-Czech Exchange Programme, Austro-Slovak Exchange Programme, Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies – CEEPUS, Fulbright grants), which cater to **incoming as well as outgoing students**. Examples for **outgoing mobility** programs are grants for postgraduate programmes in non-German speaking countries, national top-ups for ERASMUS-grants. For their study periods spent abroad in transnational, EU, government or university mobility programmes, outgoing students do not pay tuition fees at their Austrian home university. There is a legal guarantee of academic recognition of study abroad periods, agreed upon by the student and her/his university in advance, by way of a so-called "*Vorausbescheid*". Portability of national grants for study programmes abroad is possible for up to 2 years

Examples of **incoming mobility** are "*Österreich*" grants for work on an Austria-related subject, "Ernst Mach" grants for applicants from selected countries, "Franz Werfel" grants for young university teachers of German language and Austrian literature....).

The Austrian Exchange Service offers special University Preparatory Courses (*Vorstudienlehrgänge*) which do not only consist of language preparation but also provide various measures for cultural integration. There are constant efforts at improving the legal regulations for foreigners studying in Austria. Also, incoming students attending an Austrian university within a transnational, EU, government or university mobility programme, do not pay tuition fees.

For detailed information on all mobility promotion schemes please see: www.grants.at

Also individual provinces of Austria offer various scholarship programmes for outgoing and some for incoming students.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

According to the Student Support Act (*Studienförderungsgesetz 1992*), students have a continuous title to study grants during studies abroad for a duration of up to 4 semesters.

Students entitled to receive study grants, who are carrying out an accredited

study programme abroad, are entitled to an additional support of their studies abroad under special conditions and for a maximum of 20 months.

The national study grants are paid during the entire duration of the stay abroad.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

It is one of the requirements in the performance agreements (concluded between the ministry and the individual universities) that measures shall be taken to increase the mobility – not only of students – but also of staff and researchers.

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

The ÖAD/Austrian Exchange Service offers a platform for the promotion of Austria as an attractive location for study and research. Its activities focus on the participation in major education fairs (EAIE, NAFSA, APAIE in Asia, etc.), and the preparation of information materials (brochures, folders, homepage, etc.). Major publications include a journal called “*Kooperationen*” with every issue covering a special topic, and “IAM”, an electronic newsletter focussing on academic mobility themes.

ÖAD also services Austria’s main data base on mobility and research grants www.grants.at (see chapter 27)

At the initiative of the ÖAD a working group aimed at enhancing the representation of Austrian Higher Education abroad has been established. Its members are representatives of the institutions of higher education and of ministries.

ERASMUS MUNDUS, Action 4:

ÖAD cooperates as an associate member in a consortium of members of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) for a “Global Promotion Project” of European Higher Education.

TEMPUS: The ÖAD is the coordinator and contractor of the project “Furtherance of Bologna Promotion in Croatia” This project

- supports the establishment and the work of the Bologna Follow-Up group in Croatia
- promotes the Bologna goals, especially the three-cycle system and the connection of Higher Education with research and development and takes measures to raise the awareness of social, cultural and economic aspects of the Bologna reform.

Future challenges

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

- **Implementation of a national Quality Assurance System fully compatible with the agreed European Standards and Guidelines:** Such a system is necessary to ensure comparability between the national HE systems, transparency and a fair competition between the European HE institutions.
- **Implementation of the National Qualification Framework:** It seems to be necessary that within the implementation process every single aspect of the NQF has to fulfil the higher target of the NQF, which is to make study programmes more transparent, to provide full information on study and career paths, and to guarantee mobility within a given sector of education as well as among them. A precarious balance will have to be struck between a too general or too detailed definition of descriptors.
- **Mobility:** In contribution to the Bologna process the mobility of the students and teaching staff develops quite well. Mobility of the teachers, and, especially, administrative staff in HE-institutions could be enhanced further.
- **Finetuning of ECTS:** moving from a sometimes rather superficial implementation to a well-devised and accurate one (e.g. correct allocation of credits relating to the work load, European grading scale, etc.)
- **TTCs:** The conversion of non-degree post-secondary institutions to HEIs offering bachelor degrees will be a major challenge as of the fall semester 2007.