

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

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

The main important developments within the University of Malta (the only state University in Malta) include the implementation of the ECTS system across undergraduate courses except in the case of Medicine and Dentistry, issuing the Diploma Supplement to its graduates which is to start in the near future, and the strengthening of the Internal Quality assurance system with initiatives by the quality assurance committee at the University. Three legal notices have been passed to amend the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications ACT (ActNo.XVIII of 2002). These included an amendment to: the Mutual recognition of Professional Education and Training regulations; the Mutual Recognition of Professional Activities; and the Malta Qualifications Recognition information and the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Board Regulations.

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?)***

Higher education in Malta involves mainly the University of Malta. The University of Malta falls under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment and its funding forms part of the education budget. It is regulated by the Education Act (1988) that determines its structure and the way that the University is run. The University has a good degree of autonomy, particularly in the structure of the courses that it runs. However, it is still answerable to the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment

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?)

There is one main state University in Malta, the 'University of Malta' and as stated it is regulated by the Education Act (1988). Practically nearly all students attending higher education attend the University of Malta.

There also do exist a number of representatives of foreign Universities that offer degree

courses, these mainly in Business and Administration. They are not, however, regulated by the Education Act, and any degrees they issue may or may not be recognised in Malta. The Education Act (1988) stipulates that they have to apply to the Minister of Education for a permit to open branches in Malta but they are not regulated in the same way as the University of Malta. They also do not receive any funding from the Education budget. There are no Maltese privately run Universities.

The vocational Education track in Malta falls under the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) which consists of a number of institutes. It is answerable to the Ministry of Education but not regulated by the Education Act (1988) since it has only been established since 2001. However, they do not as yet offer higher education degrees although they may do so in the future.

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)

Dr. Joseph Mifsud who is also a member of the BFUG group has been instrumental in promoting the process across the University. The Assistant registrar at the University of Malta has overseen the process of the implementation of the ECTS system throughout the University and Faculties have been requested to harmonise their courses. This has been completed for all courses with the exception of Medicine and Dentistry. The Quality assurance committee for the University is also working at consolidating its internal quality assurance systems and in seeking ways for possible external quality assurance in the future.

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.

There is no Independent National Quality Assurance body in Malta. The University of Malta, however, has a system of internal quality assurance with a University Quality Assurance committee that promotes and supports practices of quality assurance across the Faculties.

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.

N/A

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)?

N/A

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

Since Malta is a very small country with one main University, it is difficult to have academics who are not employed within the University of Malta, and so there is a lack of manpower outside those employed within the University of Malta for the establishment of a National Quality Assurance System.

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.

Most of the undergraduate courses across Faculties within the University of Malta now follow harmonised regulations. The only exceptions are the cases of Medicine and Dentistry. The University will also start issuing students with the Diploma supplement as from next year.

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.

With the ECTS system now in place within the University of Malta, it has been possible to recognise ECTS credits obtained by foreign students, mainly within the ERASMUS programme, attending University courses in Malta and by the University of Malta for Maltese students following credits in foreign universities. It is planned for graduates from the University of Malta to receive that diploma supplement as from next year.

There is also the Malta NARIC within the Ministry of Education which works: to ensure and facilitate appropriate application of the EU Directives regarding comparability of higher education professional and vocational qualifications; to collect and disseminate information related to professional and vocational qualifications in the European Union; to provide information and advice in consultation with the Malta Equivalence Information Centre, the University of Malta and the Malta Professional and Vocational Qualifications Awards Council on the comparability of international and Maltese qualifications.

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 University of Malta already had a system of 3/4 year undergraduate leading to Masters (1 year) and then followed by a doctorate (mainly 4 years). Only persons qualified with a Masters degree can apply for an MPhil/PhD degree. Candidates submit a proposal which is first evaluated by a committee set up by the Faculty Board. If approved this then moves on to the PhD committee and then to Senate. Candidates are first admitted to an MPhil and then, on proving their work's worth through their period of study, they apply to raise their studies from MPhil to PhD level. Most doctorate degrees are research based involving independent study and many students are on part-time basis.

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?)

There are very limited funds allocated to research in Malta. Academic staff at the University of Malta conduct research mainly in fulfilment of their job description which requires that one third of their time be spent on research. If public funds are allocated to the University of Malta, these usually result as individual agreements between Ministries and the University.

7. Mobility of students and staff

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

The main influence promoting student mobility in Malta is the ERASMUS programme. The number of undergraduate students at the University of Malta who spend part of their studies at another University has grown substantially these past few years, particularly since the University now has the structures to recognise studies carried out abroad. There are also other non-EU programmes that promote student mobility outside European countries. Student Exchange Programmes include countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Japan.

The mobility and exchange of academic staff at the University of Malta is either through the ERASMUS programme or due to bilateral agreements with other Universities. The University of Malta has as many as about 200 agreements. In addition, the International Office at the University of Malta seeks opportunities for the exchange of academic staff through bilateral agreements with other Universities. Universities with which cooperation agreements exist include countries such as Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, U.K. and USA. A number of members of staff have also increased their mobility through greater participation in EU funded programmes that allow them to meet and work with colleagues across Europe.

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

In order to promote mobility of students from Malta to other countries, in addition to promoting use of the Erasmus programme, one finds local banks that offer good rates for money loans. In the case of incoming students, they are requested to have a basic proficiency in English and support courses in the language are provided. Intensive courses in Maltese are also offered. Government has now passed legislation that would provide for the issue of a visa to those non EU foreign students who want to stay in Malta to study. This visa would allow to students not only to stay in the country but also to do some part-time work and have a small income. This would make studying in Malta attractive to students.

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)*

Most of the mobility of teachers and staff is of short term. The University usually allows absence from work in order to go abroad provided that teachers and staff make the necessary

arrangements to ensure that they still fulfill their responsibilities at University. In the case of teachers, lecturers are allowed to apply for a one year sabbatical every six years of service which may allow them to travel abroad and spend time working and collaborating at some other University.

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

Apart from the promotion of participation in EU projects, local banks offer special services University staff. The government also offers types of scholarships to academics through collaboration agreements with particular countries.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

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

The University of Malta is regulated by the Education Act of 1988. The Act states the way that the University is organised in terms of structures. These structures ensure that courses offered by the University of Malta are governed by regulations that are approved by University Senate. It enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the content included in the courses that it offers, again subject to approval by Senate. In the case of financing, this is determined by the government and is totally depended on the public funds allocated to it.

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

The structure of the University is such that it is run by a number of committees of different levels. These include mainly Council, Senate, and Faculty Boards, in addition to other committees. All these structures include representatives of the different partners involved in the process of running the University. One finds that there will be representatives of government, administrative and academic staff as well as students. Decisions are taken by the different representatives together within the various committees, thus ensuring active participation at all levels.

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)

There are always student representatives in all University committees such as the Board of Studies, the Faculty Board, Senate and Council. The participation of these students within the various structures allow them to participate and influence the decision making process. In addition, there are a number of student bodies at University level, mainly the 'Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU) who regularly express their opinions in public and draw up reports on issues concerning changes and developments within University.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

Malta has always been in favour of equality of access to further studies. This is reflected mainly in the provision of a stipend which the government gives to students to help them

with the financial burden that studying at tertiary level brings with it. There is a basic amount that is given to all students, with more support being given to those students from family background with low economic income. In addition, the University of Malta also has a day care centre on campus which offers childcare facilities (even if limited) to those students with very young children, thus providing the support structure necessary for young parents, mainly women to continue with their studies.

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?

Opportunities for lifelong learning is offered by a number of institutions in Malta. One finds that the University of Malta within General Education and the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) within vocational education offer evening courses in a range of areas that allow the possibility for lifelong learning. In addition, the Education Division, the central Education system in Malta has a department that is responsible for offering courses to adults in a wide range of academic, vocational and recreational areas. The employment and Training Corporation also offers courses that aim to increase employability of adults. In addition, one also finds a number of private institutions that offer courses, these mainly within the area of computing. In addition, the government has set up the Foundation for Educational Services that has improving literacy levels and promoting lifelong learning as its main goals.

One finds that most of these institutions, all state funded, are involved in applying for European Social Funds that enable them to offer more types and levels of training to adults.

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

Malta has its own structure of national examinations at school leaving and post secondary level, particularly within the general academic track. In the case of vocational education, students are prepared for English examination board. The present system, unfortunately does not allow much the recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths. However, the University of Malta has a maturity clause which allows students older than the age of 23 to apply to follow degree courses even though they may not have the necessary entry requirements.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

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

The government of Malta has already taken action through the legal notices passed during 2004 which allow for the recognition of degrees. The Malta NARIC within the Ministry of Education is responsible for this and legal notice 197 of 2004 allows for the setting up of the Malta Qualifications Recognition information and the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Board Regulations. The University of Malta has not yet embarked on joint degrees and till now has not provided structures which would allow such degrees to be issued. However, the University is not against such degrees and plans to have such degrees in the future.

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

These types of degrees do not yet form part of studies offered by the University of Malta. The University of Malta, however, is not against such approach and would probably be involved in such types of courses in the future.

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

N/A

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

The University of Malta ensures transnational co-operation through being a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Utrecht Network, the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE), NAFSA, the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) as well as the Santander Network and the Compostela Group. In addition, its academic staff have international experience through participation in international conferences, publishing in international journals, sharing their work and collaborating with foreign academics in research project. It also participates actively in EU funded programmes where transnational cooperation is promoted.

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

The University of Malta has started to include European aspects into its curriculum in different ways and at different levels. It houses the European Documentation and Research Centre which offers a Masters in European Studies. However, European themes are being introduced, either as part of credits or as whole credits within the different courses that the University offers.

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

The University of Malta has always strived to attract foreign students. In view of entry into the EU, it has focused upon the market outside the EU member states. If one looks at the non EU foreign students in the 2004/5 academic year, one finds that there are 594 registered students (from a total population of 8725 students). The biggest group come from the republic of China at 269, followed by Bulgaria with 74. The main type of courses that students follow are English courses. The legislation passed by government that allows visa entry to students and the possibility to work part-time also contribute to making the University of Malta attractive as a place where to study to non EU students.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

National strategies are being taken at governmental level as well as at University level. The government has passed legislation that allows for the recognition of degrees and intends to follow othe EU members states in creating the necessary structures for the creation of a

European Research Area. On the other hand, the University of Malta, who is the key player, has taken up the Bologna process seriously and has worked on changing its administrative structure to allow harmonised degrees to be issued and for students to carry parts of their studies at Universities other than itself.

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

The main challenges within the Bologna process is for Malta to have a University that is a key player within the European Higher Education in order to be able to attract funds for carrying out research through project funds and from non EU foreign students. Malta is also to face the challenge of having more than one institution (that is other than the University of Malta) that offers higher education and issues Undergraduate, postgraduate and doctorate degrees.