

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

Country:	"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Date:	January 7, 2005
Responsible member of the BFUG (one name only): Official position:	Nadezda Uzelac coordinator of the Macedonian Bologna Group, Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education and Science, Skopje.
Email address:	nimana@yahoo.com
Contributors to the report:	Dr. Aziz Pollozhani, Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia; Gorgi Martinovski Ph.D Rector of the University "St.Cyril and Methody", Skopje; Aspasija Hadzisce, National Tempus Office, Ministry of Education and Science; Elena Dumova-Jovanoska, Phd, Vice Dean, "Ss Cyril and Methody" University, Civil Engineerig Faculty - Skopje; Zamir Dika, Ph.D, South-East European University, Tetovo; Ljutvi Istrefi, Ph.D, State University, Tetovo; Kristi M. Bombol, Ph.D Associate Professor, Department of Traffic and Transport Engineering, University "St. Kliment Ohridski, Bitola; Emilija Stavridis, Secretary of the Accreditation Agency, Ministry of Education and Science.

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

The Republic of Macedonia became a member of the Bologna Process in 2003, having started with the changes in the higher education system much earlier in 2000 when the Ministry of Education and Science passed the new Law on Higher Education. The Law requires universities to start introducing the ECTS and designing study and subject programs according to the principles of the Bologna Process. First update of the legal framework was introduced with the Law for Changes and Amendments to the Law on HE that entered into

force on August 2003. With these legal updates, the Republic of Macedonia recognises HE as public good and public responsibility. The Government takes over the public responsibility for the framework of HE including the institutional framework, the degree structure and the framework for quality assurance. This year the Ministry of Education and Science is going to prepare and pass new updates of the Law on HE. Priority areas for legal intervention are: the degree structure, enhancement of the university-faculty relations promoting an integrated university of which faculties are constituent parts. Legislative improvements will also be introduced in the field of establishment and recognition of joint degrees, enhancement of life-long learning, including the recognition of prior learning, increased student involvement and establishment of a legal basis for national loans and grants. Updating of the laws, bylaws and other legal instruments in the field of HE and in areas linked to its development, especially the financial legislation, legislation on labour and social security and movement of citizens will be also necessary. Accomplishing compatibility of study programs at institutional, national and international level is also priority in the higher education sector considering its direct link with educational and employment mobility. With regard to the question of restructuring curricula, HE institutions will continue to restructure existing and develop new study programs compatible with similar ones in the developed countries. Most of the faculties in Macedonia have decided to implement CTS in 2005 according to the ECTS as a standard. The financial implications hinder the preparation of the Diploma Supplement, but interventions will be undertaken in order this task to be successfully completed. Macedonia pays special attention to development of the European dimension in HE. Numerous modules, courses and curricula with European content have already been developed and implemented under the EC Tempus Programme, the Council of Europe, as well as some EU Member States through bilateral projects. However the main stress in the entire implementation of the Bologna Process needs to be put on quality.

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?)

Within the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for higher education (planning; organization; financing; development of the network of institutions; development of academic and administrative staff; verification of professions and profiles; accreditation; diploma recognition (ENIC Centre); other global issues.

Within the Parliament, a Committee for Education and Science deals with legal issues of education and science.

The Higher Education Development and Financing Council (HEDFC) was established by the Government in October 2003. The Council is responsible for development and implementation of measures and criteria for financing of HE (institutions, investments in HE, student grants and loans etc.). It prepares programmes for development of HE to be submitted to the Government for adoption.

The National Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education and the National Accreditation Board are the main bodies responsible for quality assurance in higher education. The Ministry of Education and Science administers the distribution of the state budget for higher education jointly with the Ministry of Finance.

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 Sts. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, the St. Clement of Ohrid University in Bitola and the State Tetovo University (founded in 2004); the private University of South-East Europe in Tetovo and the Private Faculty on Social Sciences (FON), Skopje. The total number of students in the academic year 2003/4 at UKIM (Skopje) is over 37000 and at UKLO (Bitola) over 15000. At the SEEU is 3867. Enrollment of students at the University of Tetovo for academic year 2004/2005 is 1550;

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)

At the beginning of 2003 the Minister of Education and Science established the Bologna Follow-up Group with representatives of the academic and administrative staff of the four universities, representatives of the student organisations of the four universities and of the Ministry of Education and Science. The Follow-up group prepared a Review of the Current Status of Implementation of the Bologna Process in Macedonia, a document that was part of the preparatory activities for the Berlin Conference of the European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education. After officially joining the Bologna Process on 19 September 2003, the Bologna Follow-up Group has intensified the national activities. Expert team with involvement of foreign expert was established for updating the HE legal framework. Expert teams were also established for different objectives of the Bologna Process: the framework for quality assurance, the degree structure, the recognition of credentials, and information on the HE framework. Some additional expert teams will be established in the next months. The Macedonian National Information Centre functions as a unit in the Ministry of Education and Science and distributes information and data on the higher education sector to the stakeholders.

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.

Licensing/accreditation are performed by the Board for Higher Education Accreditation that is an independent body. The constitutive session of the Board is convened by the Minister in charge of higher education. The members of the Board are independent in their work, and they adopt decisions within their jurisdiction on the basis of expertise and competency. Within its rights and duties, the Board: determines whether, by the project on the establishing of a higher education institution and the relevant documentation submitted, requirements have been met regarding the higher education activity performing; decides on the accreditation of a scientific institution wishing to perform postgraduate and doctoral studies; determines whether the higher education institution fulfils the conditions for organizing new study programs and determines the capacity for studying at the higher education institutions;

licences study programs; keeps records on higher education institutions it has decided to have licensed and for the other licenses; and performs other tasks provided for by the Law.

The Board notifies the Minister in charge of higher education on licensing activities done and on other matters as well as when it considers necessary.

The Board establishes expert commissions to which it specifies the competencies in the accreditation.

In particular, the work, the manner of decision-making, the accreditation and evaluation methodologies and procedures and other matters are regulated by the Rules of Procedure.

Funds needed for the operation of the Board are provided from the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia with a special budget item.

The manner in which the expert, administrative and financial activities are performed is regulated by an Agreement between the Board and the Ministry responsible for higher education.

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.

Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions is performed by means of evaluation methods such as self evaluation (directed towards monitoring and analysis of the HEI, study programs, study and subject courses of under and post graduate studies, teaching and assistant staff, teaching and learning activities, students, facilities and material resources, logistics, external co-operation, scientific and research activity and financing). After conducting of self-evaluation the Evaluation Commission writes a report. The self-evaluation report is submitted to the Evaluation Agency that shall initiate the external evaluation procedure. The expert Commission (if possible inclusion of foreign expert) creates an opinion regarding the quality of HEI and the study programs, respecting the self-evaluation report and the discussions realized directly by the commission members. The External evaluation report is submitted to the evaluated HEI, and after its comments and opinions on the report, the same is adopted by the Evaluation Agency. After its adoption, the report is submitted to the Board of Accreditation, the Government and the Parliament.

Both accreditation and evaluation bodies are members of the network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education since its establishment 2001.

The most important task in the near future will be preparing of joint framework of standards for accreditation of HEI of course not withstanding the national features and specificity.

Within its rights and duties, the Board: determines whether, by the project on the establishing of a higher education institution and the relevant documentation submitted, requirements have been met regarding the higher education activity performing; decides on the accreditation of a scientific institution wishing to perform postgraduate and doctoral studies; determines whether the higher education institution fulfils the conditions for organizing new study programs and determines the capacity for studying at the higher education institutions; licenses study programs; keeps records on higher education institutions it has decided to have licensed and for the other licenses; and performs other tasks provided for by the Law.

The Board notifies the Minister in charge of higher education matters on licensing activities done and on other matters as well as when it considers necessary.

The Board establishes expert commissions to which it specifies the competencies in the accreditation. In particular, the work, the manner of decision-making, the accreditation and evaluation methodologies and procedures and other matters are regulated by the Rules of Procedure. The manner in which the expert, administrative and financial works are

performed is regulated by an Agreement between the Board and the Ministry in charge of higher education matters.

Funds needed for the operation of the Board are provided from the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia with a special budget item.

Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions is performed by means of evaluation methods such as self evaluation (directed towards monitoring and analysis of the HEI, study programs, study and subject courses of under and post graduate studies, teaching and assistant staff, teaching and learning activities, students, facilities and material resources, logistics, external co-operation, scientific and research activity and financing). After conducting of self-evaluation the Evaluation Commission writes a report. The self-evaluation report is submitted to the Evaluation Agency that shall initiate the external evaluation procedure.

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

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

The expert Commission (if possible inclusion of foreign expert) create an opinion regarding the quality of HEI and the study programs, respecting the self evaluation report and the discussions realized directly by the commission members. The External evaluation report is submitted to the HEI evaluated, and after its comments and opinions on the report, the same is adopted by the Evaluation Agency. After its adoption, the report is submitted to the Board of Accreditation, the Government and the National Assembly.

Both accreditation and evaluation bodies are members of the network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education since its establishment 2001.

The most important task in the near future will be preparing of joint framework of standards for accreditation of HEI, naturally, not with standing the national features and specificity.

Upon invitation, EUA carried out the institutional evaluation of the universities in Skopje, Bitola and SEEU. Peer reviewers from Austria, Germany, Bulgaria etc. were involved in the external evaluation in 2003/04.

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

The Bologna Declaration refers to the European Universities as partners in the process, underlining their autonomy. However, autonomy implies accountability which means that HEI have the responsibility for the content and methods, relevance and quality of their teaching process. Increasing autonomy means greater independence from state intervention, but accompanied by an influence from other partners in the society and especially by external quality assurance procedures whose primary function would be improvement of quality. The most important role for quality assurance in Europe is creating transparency, exchange of good practice and building common criteria in order to meet mutual recognition of national quality assurance procedures, as a part of common European structures.

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.

In Macedonia even before joining the Bologna Process, HE was organised in two cycles:

undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

What has to be harmonised with Bologna action lines is the duration of the cycles. The essential problem that came up with this solution is which degree should be awarded for 3 and which for 4 year programs, having in mind different competences and learning outcomes. European Qualifications Framework will be a base for finding of solution to this problem.

The attempt to implement the Bologna Process principles that relate to the change of the structure of the HE institutions, primarily the duration of the undergraduate and postgraduate studies, caused huge debates and reactions in the university circles.

With the new interventions undertaken by HE institutions in their structure, it became clear that the model of three-year undergraduate studies, i.e. the model 3+2+3, is difficult to be accepted. The existing lack of coordination in the transformation of the study programmes brought about cases, when the student can complete the same degree at different faculties through studies of different duration, i.e. both three and four years.

Certain number of faculties tend to respect the recommendations of the Bologna Process for establishment of two-year Master's Studies, regardless of the duration of the undergraduate studies (3, 4 or 5 years), and Doctoral Studies of a three-year duration. Others have tried to decrease the duration of the Master's studies to one or one and a half years (60 or 90 credits), with three-year study programmes at Doctorate level. As a result, one can find different structures of studies in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. practicing of following models: 3+2+3; 4+1+3; 4+1.5+3; 5 +2+3; 4+2+3.

The Bologna Declaration provided an impetus for development of the college/polytechnic sector. International conference on this topic was organised in 2004. Taking into consideration the dimensions of the country and the limited possibilities for national support to developing a binary system, diversification of the unitary system was recommended. Majority of the faculties in technical sciences and technologies developed three-year professional degrees at bachelor level (the first students were enrolled in the academic year 2004/05). Polytechnic college was established at the State University in Tetovo in 2004.

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.

In general, the Bologna signatory states should in the first place have to ratify the most important legal tool for recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and they should maintain a good functioning of the ENIC Network. The Bologna process will greatly facilitate academic recognition procedure but HEI should be encouraged to develop better institutional recognition procedures and to intensify communication with all the parties concerned. Academic mobility is not migration from one country to another and in academic mobility have no political connotations. So, the issue should be viewed as such. Further, the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS are the two basic tools that will lead to progress in the field of recognition procedure and practice. It is expected that the Bologna reforms will build confidence in which recognition decisions will be taken on a basis of trust, fair treatment and good information. As a result, most of decisions should be taken automatically as is the case with some of the professional qualifications covered by EU directives. Thus, important part of international cooperation is participation in multilateral activities for the mutual recognition of diplomas. It is to enhance that international recognition of the results of national QAS is important and in that sense the constant exchange of experiences, concepts and ideas is needed. In this way the trust necessary for mutual recognition can be built.

Consequently, this will create the basis for a European reference framework which allows diversity while at the same time ensuring the equivalence of the various systems. For all mentioned it is necessary to establish a good network between the international systems.

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)

Doctoral degree can be obtained according to two procedures:

1. Doctoral studies (minimum duration of two years) and defence of a thesis. Candidates apply to calls for doctoral studies announced by faculties/research institutes. The defence of the thesis has to be completed within three years after the completion of the doctoral studies.
2. In case of absence of doctoral studies in certain scientific field, the candidate applies with a proposal for a thesis which has to be approved by the scientific council of the HE institution. He must defend the thesis in five years after the approval of the proposal by the scientific council. Upon request of the candidate, the scientific council nominates a mentor. Candidates must have a MSc degree, or specialisation in medical sciences and defended master thesis.

Majority of doctoral studies are based on mentorship.

Necessity for organisation of doctoral studies has been recognised by the HEIs.

Example of good practice: Under the Stability Pact, supported by DAAD, regional doctoral studies in civil engineering at the University in Skopje started in 2004. Consortium: 4 universities from Germany, 1 from Japan, 9 universities from 5 SEE countries. Three year studies cover 6 courses/30 lectures each, mentor from a SEE university and a co-mentor from the EU. Coordinated interdisciplinary approach to research and learning was accepted. To obtain the doctoral degree (Ph.D.) the selected PhD candidates have to

1. Participate successfully in a certain number of block lectures;
2. Participate actively in seminars and to report on the progress of their work,
3. Spend a certain time at the institution of the EU advisor,
4. Prepare a dissertation at their home institutions under the guidance of advisors, in general one from SEE region and one from EU.

The PhD candidates should: hold a M.Sc. degree, be in general younger than 35 years and have good knowledge of English.

A detailed study program will be worked out by the "Lecture Committee".

To guarantee the high quality and short duration of the PhD formation the following quality control steps are foreseen: examination on the subject of each course, intensive consultations with the advisors, and presentation of the progress of research at the two seminars. Studies should be planned and organized so as to increase the share of young Ms's and PhD's so that the postgraduate education received will allow for swift entry into research work, all together through substantial international cooperation.

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?)

According to the Constitution, the state has an obligation to encourage and support the technological development of the country. The governmental body in charge of R&D policy in the Republic of Macedonia is the Ministry of Education and Science with responsibility to organise, finance, develop and promote the research, technological development, technical

culture, informatics and information systems as well as the international cooperation related to these issues.

The research activities are performed and organised by a network of institutions comprising of: 4 universities, several research institutes active in various fields and R&D units in industry. An important R&D organisation is the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Within the governmental sector, the other ministries covering different aspects of R&D are: the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Water Supply, and the ministries of Economy, Health, and Ecology.

In 2002, the gross HE expenditure on R&D - ratio of the GDP was 0.11. Out of 100% gross expenditure for R&D, 40.9% goes to research conducted in the HE sector.

Support from the National Budget: national and international research projects, publishing, grants for postgraduate and doctoral studies in the country and abroad, R&D meetings, participation of academics to international meetings, study visits abroad, programmes of the public research institutes, equipment, R&D literature etc.

Technology transfer centres of national character were established at 5 faculties and one regional for SEE.

The HE sector is involved in the EU Framework Programmes (FP5 and FP6), COST and Information Society Development projects.

R&D cooperation other than EU programmes: bilateral agreements with 15 countries from SEE, TACIS, EU Member States, as well as Japan, China, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel.

Multilateral cooperation in framework of: IAEA, NATO-Science for Peace and Security through Science, UNESCO and UNDP.

The Ministry of Education and Science is in a final phase of assigning new regulations regarding financing the scientific research, and also, is finalising a draft proposal for a new Law on Science and Development. The Law will bring the national legislation closer to the European regulations. Reorganisation of research activities will take place, enabling support of higher number of research projects of applied character. This will encourage university-enterprise cooperation and contribute to establishment of new R&D centres in the companies.

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)

1. The transparency aspects of mobility are covered in the answers to the questions on degrees, qualifications, recognition, QA in this report.

2. Social aspects and aspects linked to student mobility:

- The national scheme for grants and loans covers only home students. Support to external mobility is not covered with the scheme.
- Special policy was developed to stimulate mobility of Macedonians from the neighbouring countries to study in the country.
- Grants and loans for other students from abroad have not been foreseen.
- Grants are portable only for postgraduate studies under the condition that such ones are not organised in the country.
- A limited number of study programmes are offered in English or other languages. Positive examples in this context are: the SEE University in Tetovo (use of Albanian, Macedonian and English language); postgraduate studies in Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology, as well as postgraduate studies run jointly by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Legal Sciences with the Pittsburgh University-USA.

There are some obstacles to student mobility, such as:

- Visa issues;
- Financial obstacles (student loans and grants are very low to cover costs of studying even at the home institution are not portable and students have limited access to European mobility programs);
- Difficulties with the recognition at the home/host HE institution;
- Language barriers;
- Residence issues;
- Limited capacities of the university administration to support foreign students.

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

The country involvement in programmes that support mobility (e.g. Tempus, CEEPUS, Stability Pact actions) is the main driver of student mobility. Tempus covers mobility of representatives of students associations with the individual mobility scheme, as well as mobility at undergraduate and postgraduate level in Joint European Projects. Good practice example: The postgraduate studies in the field of Earthquake Engineering, involving students from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia and from Serbia and Montenegro.

The Republic of Macedonia will continue the discussions with the EU Member States, candidate countries and others, for removing the formal obstacles to mobility (e.g. the visa regime) etc.

State grants are provided for postgraduate and doctoral studies abroad under the condition that the national higher education institutions do not provide such kind of studies.

In 2004 the Council for Development and Financing of Higher Education established a commission with the task to review the current system of grants and loans and to prepare a proposal for its updating including the Bologna request for removing obstacles to mobility. Investments will be made to improve student accommodation capacities, living conditions and the extra curricular life.

Agreements for mutual recognition of diplomas have been signed with: Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria and UNMIK.

The SEEU is an institution with combined use of three languages (Albanian, Macedonian and English), thus opening possibilities for regional student and academic mobility.

Preparatory activities for joining CEEPUS were completed in 2004. Entering the network is foreseen for March 2005.

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)

Country involvement in international cooperation has been the main driver of teachers and staff mobility from/to the country (Tempus, the Framework program, COST, bilateral cooperation). Since 1996, Tempus has supported around 350 individual mobilities to/from EU Member states and candidates countries and numerous academic and administrative staff mobilities in Joint European Projects and Structural and Complementary Measures. The Stability Pact supports academic mobility in SEE. Bilateral agreements with 15 EU and non-EU countries have been signed.

Obstacles to teachers and staff mobility: differences in living costs, visa and residence permissions, languages.

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 Republic of Macedonia is enhancing its involvement in EU education and R&D programmes, bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The possibilities for mobility under Erasmus Mundus are limited. It is likely that, in the long term, traditional student and staff mobility will be eclipsed by study program mobility, as more transnational programs are offered. It is becoming cheaper relatively to move courses rather than students or 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?

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia regulates the autonomy of universities and HEI. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for HE (planning; organization; financing; development of the network of institutions and academic and administrative staff; verification of professions and profiles; accreditation; diploma recognition; other general issues).

University autonomy enables the universities in Macedonia to develop and to modernize the educational process, to ensure the quality of academic staff, of students and enhance the national, regional and institutional collaboration.

This position allows the universities in Macedonia to take measures to ensure the quality of academic staff, students, educational process and the freedom in the development of study programmes. The high degree of autonomy enables the universities to make changes in the internal structure, in agreement with responsible bodies, being at the same time protected from external influence, suggestions or imposed decisions.

Autonomy also stands for responsibility. Universities are accountable for their activities to responsible bodies, and have to confirm their effectiveness, quality and discipline in utilising the privileges that the status of autonomy awards to them.

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

The promotion of the European dimension in HE means an overall views on democracy in education so, stakeholders, teachers, researches, students and staff involvement in the process of decision making is necessary. Thus, the representatives of equal partners in the process are organized in working groups and expert teams for different objectives of the Bologna Process. Therefore, their work will be further elaborated and the results will be presented to the HEI and the MoES. In such a way the associated partners are in the same time the decision-making partners that can make a contribution to the Process.

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 representatives take part in the work of Faculty Academic Councils, University Governing Bodies (Management, Senate, Commissions). There is still need for strengthening of student participation and real (not just by number or formal presence) influence in decision-making processes.

The opportunity for the student to create his/her own profile within the vocation he/she had chosen through modularised study programmes, has been increasing lately, because a large

number of the HE institutions have developed study programmes which facilitate access to a larger number of profiles through compulsory, elective and optional subjects/modules. This opportunity varies from case to case, primarily due to the financial potentials of the institution, available teaching staff and infrastructure.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

The availability of access to the higher education is described in the Law on HE, article 6. The first paragraph stresses the equality of access to higher education, where all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, under equal conditions, have the right to be educated at the HE institutions in the Republic of Macedonia.

The conditions for equal access are derived by the Universities.

1. Due to the fact that some ethnic groups were under-represented in the state universities, from the academic year 1995/1996 the Ministry of Education and Science passed the resolution to increase the registration quota for these students. The quota is complying with the percentage of relevant ethnic group in respect of the total population of Macedonia. Since the Law on Higher Education from year 2000 allows the use of other language than Macedonian in the institutions of Higher education and the new updates on the Law on Higher education on 2003 allow the right of use of the languages other than Macedonian in the state universities, the equality of access is becoming reality.

Changes in the Law made possible the establishment of two universities (one private and one state university) with teaching in Albanian language. These measures improved the access of ethnic groups in the HE institutions.

There are still possibilities for improvement of equal access for all ethnic groups in some disciplines, as medical studies, engineering and some other fields.

The most important improvement of access to higher education for students from the Albanian community was achieved by establishing the State University in Tetovo (2004).

2. Part of the National budget is dedicated for scholarships and loans in higher education. On a yearly basis, the Ministry of Education and Science publishes an open call for undergraduate students at the state funded higher education institutions. An average of 150 grants for postgraduate and doctoral studies is awarded to unemployed candidates from the National budget.

3. The scarce budget for higher education has affected the right of students with special needs for equal access to this level of education. Positive examples of building facilities for access to the institutions are present at the SEE University and partly at the universities in Skopje and Bitola. A Tempus project supported development of a contemporary curriculum united with social work for people with special needs (hearing problems, eyesight etc.).

4. There has been a long tradition of equal access of males and females to higher education. In future, special attention will be paid to improvement of participation of female students from ethnic groups.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

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

The Declaration "Lifelong learning, adult education and employment possibilities", adopted by the SEE Ministers responsible for education (2003) foresees that, by the end of 2005, the

Ministry will nominate responsible for LLL; legal framework for LLL will be established; possibilities for adult learning will be widened and at least two expert meetings will be organised to monitor the achievements and exchange of experiences.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science established a working group with the task to prepare a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning. The Ministry works on preparation of the draft law on LLL. Taking into consideration the nature of LLL, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy and others will be involved in the preparation of the law. The law will cover formal, as well as non-formal and in-formal education. Continuity with lower level education, including VET will be introduced. The draft law will be submitted to the Parliament in 2005.

According to the Law on HE, HE institutions may establish different forms of continuous education. Short term courses for refreshment of knowledge of employed, as well as unemployed people for raising their employability can be organised.

The longest tradition of continuous education in HE is in teacher training, including vocational education teachers. Besides teachers, representatives of the social partners (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Education and Culture, as well as employers) are involved in continuous education.

Continuous education structures at HE institutions for different stakeholders have been established since 2002: 5 national and one regional technology transfer centre, institution building centers relevant for European integration (e.g. "European Integration Training Center", Center for EU Industrial Property Law, Center for Assessment of Pressure Equipment).

E-learning has been recognised as a mean to encourage LLL and efforts for developing infrastructure and running LLL courses are on-going in the HE sector.

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

Currently, there are no procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths. They will be subject to the coming updating of the national legislation.

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

Establishing of joint degrees is one of the most powerful tools on the way towards mutual understanding of different educational systems and improving recognition. Macedonian legislation does not specifically prevent joint degrees from being established, but absences of concrete legal provisions constitute an impediment to the establishment and recognition of such qualifications. The legal basis for establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes will be established with the updated Law on Higher Education in 2005.

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

Having accepted the concept of joint degrees, the academic community is making the first steps towards development and establishment of such courses. Macedonian

HEI should in a large extent to cooperate with foreign partners in curriculum development and establishing joint programs and joint degrees. The first experience in the postgraduate studies in software engineering leading to the joint degrees between the University in Skopje and the University of Novi Sad (Serbia&Montenegro) commenced in 2004 with a Tempus project. The coming entering of the country in the CEEPUS network will open additional possibilities for establishment of joint or double degree study programmes. However, Macedonian HEI should in a large extent to cooperate with foreign partners in curriculum development and establishing programs and joint degrees.

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

The project for establishment of a joint M.Sc. study programme in software engineering foresees joint development of the curriculum, educational materials and establishment of an ICT environment for e-learning (the first two years of project). Joint admission of students will take place in the third year of the project. The educational process will be run by academics from both partner institutions. Students will be mobile during the studies. Joint exams have been foreseen. In mean time, both countries will establish a legal basis for joint degrees.

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

The country recognises transnational cooperation as a vehicle for developing the European dimension in higher education. Adjustment of the national legislation, as well as Bologna Process promotion actions are supported by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation etc.

The most substantial support is provided by the European Commission Tempus programme, which supports projects for tuning the national system to the Bologna Process requirements (68 Joint European Projects, out of which 44 curriculum development, 15 university management, 7 institution building and 2 networking projects; 5 Structural and Complementary Measures and 10 Compact Measures).

Relevant cooperation is on-going with the Center for Modern Languages established by the Council of Europe in Graz-Austria. Retraining of teachers who teach modern European languages in primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions contributes to raising the quality of education in the country.

Quality Assurance procedures were supported by: the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme, Austria and DAAD.

Under the auspices of the Stability Pact, regional higher education cooperation between SEE countries has been supported. Relevant contribution was in the field of civil engineering and environment.

In 2004, The Netherlands widened the Balkan network of summer/winter schools to the Republic of Macedonia.

The Ss. Cyril and Methodius University-Skopje is one of the initiators of the establishment of a university network in the region. Members of this network are the universities in Skopje (MK), Kraguevac (S&M), Maribor (SLO) and Tuzla (B&H).

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

Macedonia pays special attention to development of the European dimensions in HE. Support

to development of modules, courses and curricula with European content, orientation and organization are provided by: the European Commission (e.g. 44 Tempus Curriculum Development Joint European Projects), the Council of Europe, as well as some EU Member States through bilateral projects. Examples of the Tempus support to the development of the European dimension and to strengthening the capacities of the HE sector to play the key role in the stabilization and association process:

- New curriculum in Italian studies as a model for restructuring the studies at other departments of the Faculty of Philology; department for translation and interpreting was established at the same Faculty; two regional projects (ALB, BIH and MK) for developing curricula in EU institutions, law, history, human rights and economics; curriculum in Euro dimension in accounting at undergraduate level and certification programme for continuous education; postgraduate studies in European Integration targeted to civil servants; the first interdisciplinary studies in public administration; postgraduate studies in international management based on e-learning;
 - Restructuring curricula of regulated professions: national projects for medical studies, pharmacist's education including certification and veterinary medicine and a regional project for architectural education in ALB, BIH, MK and SCG;
 - Joint degree curriculum in software engineering - University of Skopje (MK) and University of Novi Sad (SCG);
 - Continuous education training courses are presented in the lifelong learning section.
- Curriculum development requires a well functioning co-operation between HEI and the world of work so, the international cooperation and the international division of labour in HE have become unavoidable.

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 Ministry of Education and Science developed intensive activities for establishing legal bases for bilateral cooperation in the field of education, research and development with Turkey, Japan, Egypt, Israel, India and China. Agreements for cooperation with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will be signed in 2005.

The country supports the quality and visibility of widely recognised centers of excellence providing: postgraduate and doctoral studies in seismology-regional studies organised; short retraining courses at the Balkan Centre for haemoglobinopathies etc.

Tuning the national degree structure to the Bologna concept will raise the attractiveness of the HE system.

First attempt was made in framework of Erasmus Mundus for promotion of cultural diversity and specificities combined with multimedia e-learning possibilities.

Universities in the Republic of Macedonia have committed themselves to the application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). In addition to the introduction of the ECTS, all universities are obliged to prepare an information pack which explains all the conditions for studying and the opportunities offered to the student.

According to the Berlin Communiqué, each student who graduates after 2005 will automatically receive a Diploma Supplement free of charge, which should be issued in one of the languages used on a wider scale in Europe.

Finally, there is no doubt that the attractiveness of the national HE system will be raised with the implementation of the Bologna Process requirements (e.g. ECTS, DS, QF, QA, recognition etc.)

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Higher education has a crucial role to play in national economic development and in the reconstruction of civil society. This is all the more obvious given current efforts to comply with the Bologna Process and implementation of the Lisbon Convention.

Notable in higher education is government's and institutions' active commitment to the Bologna Framework and their engagement with the evolving higher education and research areas. This is an important strategy, one of the centerpieces of the overall reform strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science to modernize the whole education system. The targets include strengthening the role of university level policy making and institutional management, improving access for all ethnic groups, quality assurance and implementation of structural reforms including the degree system and credit transfer.

The main stress in the entire implementation of the Bologna process will be put on QUALITY, which means:

- Universities/HEI to bring their strategies in line with the national strategy.
- The Law on Higher Education to be revised in the spirit of the Bologna Process.
- The criteria for accreditation and financing of higher education to correspond to the objectives that is to be achieved.
- The Ministry and the universities urgently to organize training of the management structures at the universities in the implementation of the recommendations of the Bologna Process.
- The universities to strengthen the information campaign on the European Area of Higher Education (in the university and outside).
- The Ministry and the universities to work together on the development of mechanisms and instruments for national and international collaboration.
- NGOs, international organizations and agencies (in collaboration with the Ministry and the universities) to play a more important role in supporting these processes.

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

In the coming period, in line with its mandate, the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with the universities in the country will try to create conditions for unimpeded implementation of the principles and recommendations emanating from the Bologna Process through achievement of following objectives:

- Aligning the legal regulations with the principles and recommendations of the Bologna Process;
- Aligning the regulations and standards for higher education;
- Building an efficient system of scholarships which will facilitate enhanced mobility of students and teachers;
- Promoting the European cooperation in ensuring quality, through development of comparable criteria and methodology;
- Strengthening the system of external evaluation of the quality in higher education;
- Establishing a database and publishing of information materials for the efficient follow-up to the Bologna Process;
- Developing an efficient system of financing in higher education.