

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

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Responsible member of the BFUG (one name only): Official position:	Germana Verri Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR)- Directorate General for University - Unit for International Relations
Email address:	germana.verri@miur.it
Contributors to the report:	- MIUR - CRUI - Conference of the Rectors of the Italian Universities - CNVSU - National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System - NARIC/Italy Centre

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

- Law 148/2002 ratifies and gives execution to the Lisbon Convention, also introducing a few substantial changes and innovations into the Italian legislation as well as in procedures for academic recognition.
- Law 170/2003 establishes a fund to support student mobility (also including supplementary funds for Erasmus grants). The same Law provides for the setting up of the National Register of Students and Graduates to facilitate procedures related to credit recognition.
- Ministerial Decree of April 30th 2004, provides the operational rules for the National Register of Students and Graduates and the official model for the diploma supplement (which Universities are required to issue as of 2005).
- Ministerial Decree 270 of 22 October 2004 updates and revises the Ministerial Decree 509/1999 concerning the reform of the Higher Education system.
- Ministerial Decree 17 April 2003 foresees a compulsory external evaluation for the accreditation of virtual campuses ("Open Universities").
- Ministerial Decree 214 of 26 April 2004 regulates the accreditation of foreign Universities based in Italy.
- Ministerial Decree 146 of 28 July 2004 foresees a new model for the allocation of the Ministry funds for Universities, based on QA criteria.

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?)

Ministry for Education, University and Research (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, MIUR)

In 2001 the former Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research (MURST) was merged with the Ministry for Education (MPI) to establish the new Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR). All financial resources, staff and functions of the former MPI and MURST have been transferred to MIUR.

MIUR promotes scientific and technological research as well as the development of both Universities and other Higher Education Institutions endowed with University status. It plans and coordinates developments and changes in the University system. It allocates funds to individual Universities and co-ordinates Italian participation in EU and international programmes relating to higher education and scientific and technological research.

National University Council (Consiglio Universitario Nazionale, CUN)

The National University Council is an elected body, made up of representatives from Italian Universities. It carries out advisory functions on matters such as University development planning, funding issues, approval of University teaching regulations, definition of main subject areas, recruitment of teaching and research staff.

Italian University Rectors' Conference (Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane, CRUI)

The Rectors' Conference is made up of Rectors from both State and non-State Universities with the following aims:

- to investigate and analyse issues regarding the University system
- to represent University needs to Government and Parliament
- to express opinions on development plans for Universities and on the state of University education
- to promote and sustain University initiatives at national and international level through links with similar EU and international associations.

National Council of University Students (Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari, CNSU)

The National Council of University Students has been set up as an advisory body of student representatives from all Italian Universities. The Student Council puts forward proposals to the Minister on the following:

- University reform
- Ministerial Decrees giving general guidelines for the organisation of the different degree courses, and for the promotion of orientation and mobility programmes
- funding issues.

It elects student representatives among its members for the National University Council. It formulates proposals on other University matters and presents a report on student conditions to the Minister.

National Committee for the Assessment of the University System (Comitato Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario, CNVSU)

Its 9 members, appointed by the Ministry, are chosen among qualified experts in University quality assessment. They need not be academics and can be of any nationality. Their main tasks are to:

- fix the general criteria for the assessment of University activity
- promote experimentation, application and dissemination of assessment methods and practices

- revise the information Universities are required to submit annually at the end of a three-year period
- prepare and carry out an annual programme of external assessment in Universities
- prepare an annual report on its activities
- carry out on request of the Ministry any other activity related to Quality Assurance such as further advisory roles, definition of standards, parameters and regulations, etc.

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 are currently 80 Universities in Italy:

55 State Universities

3 Polytechnic Universities

14 non-State Universities (legally recognised)

2 Universities for Foreigners

3 University Institutions specialised in postgraduate studies

3 "Open Universities" (virtual campuses - legally recognised)

All the Institutions listed above are entitled to award qualifications with legal validity ("valore legale") all over Italy. Non-State Institutions are often called "libera/libero" and are legally recognised by the competent national authority. Their degrees, established in compliance with the general criteria laid down by national legislation, have the same validity as the corresponding degrees awarded by State Institutions.

According to the principle of University autonomy, each University may draw up its own statute and regulations by rectoral decree. Each statute states the regulations governing management, teaching and research within the Institution.

There are also non-University Higher Education Institutions in Arts and Music (131 Institutions).

The total number of students enrolled in Universities is 1.803.024 and in Arts and Music Institutions the number is 5.915.

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)

Italy is implementing the principles of the Bologna Process through national Laws and regulations which are valid and compulsory for all Higher Education Institutions.

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.

A national system - on the model of those put in place in other countries (national agencies running Assessment exercises with Guidelines, effective evaluation procedures and peer review) is still not in place for teaching, although a National Committee for the assessment of

the University system (CNVSU) has been in operation since 1999 (former “Observatory for the assessment of the University system”, created in 1993). The Committee has published documents and proposals for a national system of university quality assessment, but this system is still not in place. The CNVSU collects yearly data from Universities, which include some indicators; moreover it analyses the “evaluation reports” provided by Universities’ Assessment Units (Nuclei di Valutazione) and drafts a national report, based on the information provided and on questionnaires submitted by the “Nucleo” of each University to the students. CNVSU also establishes minimal requirements for the setting up of a Degree Course in Universities.

The University Internal Assessment Units were established by law in 1993; since then, their role has been re-defined (1999) and at present their tasks include: drafting an annual report on the basis of the request of information issued by CNVSU, in particular on the internal structures and their activities; collecting and sending data on the basis of indicators provided by the CNVSU; submitting a questionnaire to the students in order to be informed on their opinion concerning the teaching activities; drafting a report on the results of the questionnaires, to be sent to the CNVSU. The Assessment Units also provide their advice on the PhD Courses to be set up (or to be confirmed) in their own University, on the basis of established requirements.

Research assessment is carried out by another Body, CIVR (Committee for Research Assessment) with competencies both for Universities and Research Bodies: the first assessment exercise for Universities started in the summer 2004; specific Guidelines have been published and the research assessment is carried out by panels of experts (national and international) who will evaluate the outputs of research activities for the different areas (peer review).

Since 1995 CRUI (the Conference of Italian University Rectors) has implemented procedures for teaching assessment related to first degree courses. This has been limited to some Universities in the first phase (1995-1999) – when the assessment was carried out on the three-year Degrees in existence at that time (Diplomi universitari)- and since 2001 on the newly established “Laurea” (Bachelor level): the assessment has involved bachelor courses at 70 Universities. At present CRUI is developing an accreditation framework for the teaching activities of Universities for Regional Bodies (in Italy regional accreditation for training and teaching activities is needed - also for Universities – in order to have access to additional funds at local level).

Some Universities autonomously implemented ISO 9000:2000 systems to the whole Institution or to single parts of it.

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.

A system of accreditation for recognition purposes is in operation and is being improved. The system has been implemented by MIUR at the advice of the Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario (CNVSU). CampusOne programmes are certified by the Conference of Italian Rectors (CRUI). Programmes that decided to implement an ISO system are certified by Bodies accredited at SINCERT (Sistema Nazionale per l’Accreditamento degli Organismi di Certificazione e Ispezione).

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)?

Yes, they are.

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

4. The two-cycle degree system

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

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

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

In 2002 Italy ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which has brought about some considerable consequences in the field of academic recognition. First of all the old concept of equivalence/nostrification (equipollenza) has been replaced by that of recognition for specific purposes. According to these (access to the civil service, admission to higher education, pursuing of further studies, etc.), the recognition of foreign qualifications is now based on their global evaluation (levels of comparability) instead of detailed analysis of contents. Moreover, by unilateral decision, Italy applies the Lisbon Convention to foreign higher education qualifications from any countries in the world. Tools for transparency recommended at European level (ECTS, Diploma Supplement) have been adopted by national law. The activities have been undertaken for the drawing up of a national qualifications framework compatible with an overarching European qualifications framework. As to professional recognition, to facilitate the free movement of professionals, all the EC Directives have been transposed into the Italian legislation; moreover, by unilateral decision, since 1999 Italy has also been applying all EC general systems to non-EU professional qualifications held by non-EU citizens.

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 courses aim at training postgraduates for very advanced scientific research or for professional appointments of the highest level; they envisage the use of suitable teaching methodologies such as updated technologies, study periods abroad, training experience in specialised Research Centres. Access is by an Italian 2nd degree or a foreign comparable degree; admission is subject to the passing of competitive exams; official length is min. 3 years; the writing of an original dissertation is necessary for the award of the 3rd degree

called Dottorato di Ricerca (Research Doctorate). Universities set up their own doctoral courses autonomously. Regulation on doctoral courses: Ministerial Decree n. 224/1999 (April 30th, 1999), Law n. 210/1998 (July 2nd, 1998)

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?)

The main funding sources for academic research come from the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR) through several calls for proposals (based on co-financing):

- PRIN (Progetti di Ricerca di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale), the main fund for academic research projects. The aim is to concentrate the State funds on projects of key national interest
- FIRB (Fondo per gli Investimenti per la Ricerca di Base), the fund for basic research (Universities can apply in co-operation with other Bodies)
- FAR (Fondo per le Agevolazioni alla Ricerca), the fund for applied research activities (in collaboration with industries)
- FISR (Fondo Integrativo Speciale per la Ricerca), the fund for research activities in co-operation with Regions and/or other State Bodies (Ministries, public research Bodies, etc.)

Other Ministries give financial support for academic research, such as the Ministry for Industry and Trade (Ministero delle Attività Produttive) or the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry for Industry and Trade manages the FIT (Fondo per l'Innovazione Tecnologica) aimed at supporting technology innovation; Universities may apply as partners of industries. This fund is complementary to the FAR: both are devoted to applied research and technology transfer.

The Ministry of Health gives financial support on research (both basic and applied) in the field of medicine, pharmacology, etc.

Another important source comes from the National Operational Programmes (PON- Programmi Operativi Nazionali), the fund for research and highly qualified training for Southern regions, co-financed by the European Social Fund.

Financial support is given also to scientific and technological districts, which respond to the idea of involving in a limited area (generally a Region or a Province, or a City) where industries are interested and specialized in a specific sector (i.e. nanotechnologies, ICT, etc.), all the local partners interested in the development of that particular field (Universities, public and private Research Bodies, specialized industries, Banks, Bank Foundations, local governing Bodies, etc.).

So far, two scientific districts have been created: "Torino Wireless" (based in Turin, dealing with ICT) and "Veneto Nanotech" (based in Padua, working on nanotechnologies). Other districts are being developed in Naples (polymeric and composite materials), in Emilia Romagna (advanced mechanics) and in Sicily (bioinformatics).

There are also some other ministerial funds for helping academic research activities, especially in a perspective of internationalization, such as training of high qualified researchers, doctoral courses (joint doctoral courses), dissemination of scientific culture, any possible synergy with productive systems, spin-offs, patents, contracts for foreign researchers.

In addition, many Universities allocate their own funds for research (Fondo di Ricerca di

Ateneo); evaluation and allocation criteria and rules depend on each University and can be very different from one to another, making a comparative national overview impossible.

It is extremely difficult to clearly identify the proportion of funds for research in Universities, because the available data are unified and include the different performers in research activities (Universities + other Bodies). Only the PRIN is specifically devoted to Universities.

The private sector finances applied research within specific framework agreements among the Universities and private firms or associations. It is very difficult to quantify the percentage of the private sector funds devoted to Universities.

7. Mobility of students and staff

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

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

Recently many national rules and financial initiatives have been issued to promote the internationalization of the Italian University system, such as those included in the following Acts:

- 1) Decree 21 June 1999 n. 313 – art. 7 (Three-year development plan for the Italian University system 1998-2000);
- 2) Decree 8 May 2001 n. 115 – art. 10 (Three-year development plan for the Italian University system 2001-2003);
- 3) Decree 5 August 2004 n. 262 – art. 23 (Three-year development plan for the Italian University system 2004-2006);
- 4) Decree 9 April 2001 regarding student welfare;
- 5) Law 11 July 2003 n. 170.

In general the aims of these initiatives are:

- Enhancement of quality and of international competitiveness of Italian University system.
- Contribution to the harmonization of European University systems.
- Increase of international mobility of undergraduate and postgraduate students, Phd students and professors.

The financial support provided by these decrees implements effective actions to improve international mobility and enhance inter-University cooperation.

1) One of the main priorities of Decree 313/1999 is the internationalization of the Italian University system, allocating 10 million euro for the year 2000 to co-finance integrated courses with the followings characteristics:

- participation of professors and students of at least one Institution in another country;
- full recognition of study periods and exams successfully taken at the foreign partner Institution;
- achievement by the students, after the completion of the full program, of the national degrees of each participating Institution or of a degree awarded jointly by them.

As for the results of this call, 477 projects have been proposed. Among them, 184 projects have been selected, corresponding to an overall financial commitment of ITL 52 billion of which ITL 20 billion from Minister of Education and 32 billion from the co-financing, guaranteed by the Universities on the basis of their own resources or finance coming from other sources.

2) Based on the success of the first programme (above mentioned Decree 313/1999), the Decree 115/2001 allocates the total amount of 13 million euro for the period 2001-2003 to promote international competitiveness of Italian Universities. Priority is given to all the actions contributing to the harmonization of European University systems, such as credit and certificate recognitions, diploma supplement, etc..

3) The recent Decree 5 August 2004 n. 262 allocates funds for the period 2004-2006 to co-finance:

- integrated courses with the participation of professors and students of at least one Institution in another country;
- initiatives, jointly with Universities of other countries, improving abroad didactic models of Italian Universities;
- initiatives aiming at joint research programmes which envisage mobility of Italian and foreign professors, researchers, Ph.D. students, etc.

4) The Decree 9 April 2001 - regarding student welfare - envisages the following actions:

- Grants for international mobility of Italian students.
- Contributions for non-EU students.

These measures – aimed at increasing opportunities for economically disadvantaged students to take part in international mobility programs and at allowing foreign (non-EU) students to benefit from the same services and provisions available to Italians – concern students enrolled in a University degree/master/phd course and recently graduated trainees (involved in Leonardo da Vinci Program or other similar training programs).

Students already holding a State grant and recently graduated trainees may obtain an additional mobility grant to carry out part of their studies abroad.

The total amount of the grant – including the EU or non-EU grant – amounts to at least 500 euro monthly. Travel expenses are refundable within the limit of 100 Euro for travel in European countries and within the limit of 500 Euro for travel in non-European countries.

Foreign students – regardless of their nationality – benefit from the same services and provisions available to the Italians, such as:

- Direct aids: grants, loans, scholarships, fellowships; partial or total exemption from the payment of enrollment fees; “prestiti d’onore” (loans granted at particularly favourable conditions);
- Indirect aids: meals, housing, cultural and sports activities, etc..

5) The Law 11 July 2003 n. 170 established a new source of financing for international student mobility, the “Fund to support youth and foster student mobility”. In particular, it supports study grants additional to the EU ones. Moreover, the fund finances phd courses that are integrated into national and international University networks.

Furthermore, Act 14 November 2000 n. 338 - Provisions on University student lodgings and residence halls – provides financial support to restore and construct buildings to be used as University non-resident student lodgings. The support is provided for the following bodies:

regional administrations, local autonomous administrations of Trento and Bolzano, Institutions in charge of student welfare, University residence halls, and other non profit associations and bodies supporting student welfare. This action is aimed at increasing bed availability in Italian Universities and University residence halls and at supplying larger complementary services related to learning assistance (libraries, study halls, etc.) and to cultural and recreational activities of University students. It is expected that this Act will also have positive effects on the Italian accommodation capacity for foreign incoming students.

Finally, it is important to underline that, in the last years, not only Universities, but also non-University Institutions - such as Fine Arts Academies, Music Conservatories, National Academies, etc. – are provided with financial support aimed to implement international student mobility by the Ministry for Higher Education.

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)

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

In the framework of the three development plans for the Italian University System (1998-2000, 2001-2003 and 2004-2006), the Ministry launched three calls for applications in interuniversity cooperation that were open to all Italian Universities. In total 38 million Euros have been made available to fund several strategic objectives; one of these objectives is "integrated study programmes with the joint participation of teachers and students in at least one other country, the mutual recognition of the periods of study and qualifications and the awarding of a double degree". Through its financial support to these internationalisation programmes, the Ministry's aim is promoting and supporting the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative and technical 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?

Italian Universities have gained autonomy in different stages. The Law 168/1989 defined the principles of the academic freedom and of the University autonomy concerning internal organization, regulations, accounting and the different teaching activities. The law 537/1993 defined more accurately the administrative, financial and accounting aspects the Universities have to take into account in their own budgets. Both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 define the responsibility of the Universities for the content of the study programmes, within a general framework that establishes specific criteria at national level.

Concerning in particular the new study programmes, the Universities may, in accordance with the procedures laid down by law and their own statutes, regulate their degree course programmes, in their General Academic Regulations of the University, drawn up in compliance, for every degree course, with the provisions of the Decrees above mentioned (509/99 and 270/04).

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

Both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 foresee that every degree course programme establishes the names and educational goals of the degree courses, indicating the classes to which the courses belong and the overall framework of the teaching and learning activities in the curricula. These decisions are made by Universities subject to consultation with representative organizations of the business and professional world.

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)

Both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 state: "the Degree Course Regulations adopted by the competent University structure in compliance with the degree course programme and respecting the liberty of teaching as well as the rights and duties of both teachers and students, shall regulate the organisational aspects of the degree course. The regulations shall be approved in accordance with the procedures laid down by the General Academic Regulations of the University.

The provisions of the Degree Course Regulations concerning consistency between the credits assigned to the educational activities and the specific planned educational goals are approved by a resolution adopted by competent University structures subject to the favourable opinion of bilateral University commissions or other analogous student representative Body."

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

The main legislative source for the regulation of support and services for students and aimed at removing social obstacles for access to higher education is Law no. 390 of 2 December 1991. The State is responsible for the policy, co-ordination and planning of interventions concerning the right of students to University studies. Every three years, a Decree of the Prime Minister indicates the criteria to evaluate students' study results and financial conditions, the selection procedures for services aimed at deserving and less prosperous students as well as the gradual re-qualification of financial resources. The Regions are responsible for implementing interventions such as: general services (canteen, transports, accomodation, etc.); grant; health services; loans; etc. These measures are implemented by a specific Body with management and administration autonomy in every single University. The Law no. 549 of 1995 introduced a regional tax for the right to University studies in order to provide grants and loans. Universities are responsible for the organisation of their own services, including guidance and tutoring. The Universities can totally or partially exempt students from fees according to their study results and income.

The Ministerial Decree of 17 April 2003 defines the criteria for the distance learning courses of "Open Universities" (Virtual campuses). The aim, among others, is to improve and widen access to higher education for disabled people or people living in remote areas.

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?

Both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 state: "Universities may - in accordance with

their General Academic Regulations of the University - after first and second degree courses organise advanced scientific courses as well as higher continuing education courses". The Ministerial Decree of 17 April 2003 defines the criteria for the distance learning courses of "Open Universities" (Virtual campuses). The aim, among others, is to improve and widen the access to higher education for people in employment interested in continuing study while working or at professional retraining/updating, including personalised pathways on modular degree courses.

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

The latest University legislation allows individual Institutions, on the basis of their autonomy, to make provisions for the accreditation of competences acquired through professional experience.

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

Both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 - concerning the reform of the Italian University system - bring about important progress in removing obstacles to recognition of joint degrees in Italy.

The main purpose of the reform consists in finally granting full autonomy of University Institutions, not only with reference to the management and financing but also teaching and restructuring of their respective degree courses.

The reform has taken into account the principles of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declaration aimed at promoting a common European space of higher education through the harmonization of different European educational systems.

First of all, the reform clearly establishes the possibility for Italian Universities to award joint degrees, based on special agreements with other Italian and foreign Universities in order to encourage development of inter-university co-operation. According to a study of the EU Commission (2002) on the status of joint degrees in Europe, the majority of European countries do not have any specific legislation related to development of joint degree programs. Italy is one of the few exceptions.

Furthermore, the reform envisages a series of measures aimed at the harmonization of the Italian University system with European ones, such as:

- a two cycle system (including a first level, i.e. a degree course that lasts three years, and a second level, i.e. a specialist degree course lasting two years);
- use of a University credit system as a way of describing an educational programme including different activities, such as traditional lectures, seminars, practical training, individual study, etc. The average full time workload for one academic year is conventionally fixed at sixty credits. This number comes from the European Credit Transfer System which has been tried out for the purpose of mobility in the Erasmus program;
- introduction of the Diploma Supplement, i.e. the document attached to a higher education diploma aiming at improving international "transparency" and containing the main details of the specific curriculum completed by a student to obtain the degree concerned. The use of this instrument will be compulsory for Italian Universities as of 2005 (Decree 30 April 2004, art. 6).

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

In 2003 a national database on joint and double degrees was set up. An inquiry on existing joint programmes was addressed to all Italian Universities; it resulted in the recording of 310 agreements. With reference to the types of course envisaged by Italian University rules, joint degree programmes (which include the basic degree course of the old system and the first and second degree courses of the new one) account for 42% of the sample. Research doctorates come second with 38%, followed by masters with 18%. With reference to the various subject groups, joint qualifications tend to find greater consensus in social sciences (31% of the sample), engineering and architecture courses (25%).

With reference to the choice of foreign partners, Italian Universities show a marked tendency to favour agreements with Universities in the larger European countries, in particular with France (39%), Spain (19%), Germany (18%) as well as the United Kingdom (18%). American Universities occupy the fifth place with a 9% share.

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

Cooperation between Institutions of different countries involving integrated education and training activities is characterized by shared responsibility of participating Institutions regarding the following aspects :

- design of the curriculum;
- organization of studies;
- type of qualifications awarded.

Design of the curriculum

There are courses which envisage a parallel and contemporary offering of the same teaching and/or learning activity. In this case, mobility does not introduce particular curriculum variables in the study course, which must be completed in the same time in all participating locations.

In other types of courses, each participating Institution contributes different components in order to create a common program. In this case, mobility is an important means of acquiring knowledge and skills at a partner Institution that are not available at the home Institution.

Organization of the studies

Organization of the studies can be highly integrated in cases where students from various Institutions converge in a single location, are subject to the same selection procedures and participate in the same teaching and learning activities with teachers from different Institutions. A lower level of integration occurs in cases where the periods of student mobility are limited in comparison with the overall duration of studies, where the contribution of foreign teachers is marginal with respect to the general programme or where students are selected by each Institution according to different criteria.

Type of qualification awarded

Depending on the different levels of integration and the organization of activities,

there are various types of agreements on the issue of awarding qualifications, such as:

1. Award of the national qualification with commitment for mutual recognition;
2. Award of the national qualification with joint certification;
3. Award of the national qualification with attachment of a European label;
4. Award of a joint qualification;
5. Subsequent acquisition of the second qualification;
6. Award of a double qualification (with a prolonged study period);
7. Award of the double qualification.

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

Some Italian initiatives can be mentioned as important steps towards the realization of the European dimension in higher education :

1. University Cooperation Agreement between Italy and France

In 1992 the Italian and French governments signed a framework agreement on University cooperation. It is historically important since it formally sanctions for the first time the establishment of a double degree. The agreement provides that Universities of the two countries may conclude agreements which envisage integrated study programmes leading to the joint award of an Italian academic qualification (laurea) and a French academic qualification (maîtrise) having the same value.

2. Co-supervision of doctoral theses

A significant kind of bilateral University cooperation is the organization of joint research doctorates by Universities of two different countries which envisage co-supervision of theses. The doctoral student spends time in both countries and defends the thesis in front of a joint commission which includes the two supervisors among its members. This scheme envisages the award of a mutually recognized joint doctorate. The most important example of this type of collaboration is the bilateral Franco-Italian project for co-supervised theses, stemming from the agreement signed in 1998 by the Rectors' Conferences of the two countries concerned.

3. The Franco-Italian University

The Franco-Italian University arose out of the Franco-Italian summit in Florence in 1998. Its administrative headquarters are in Grenoble and Turin. It is an original experience of a virtual University which aims at co-ordinating cooperation between Universities of the two countries and which is based on distance learning (using new technologies). The main purpose is to promote the award of double degrees and joint degrees and to arrange common programmes.

4. The Italo-German University

According to the process of reform started by the Bologna Declaration, in 2002 the Italian and German Rectors' Conferences, DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), The University of Trento, the Culture Ministers' Conference of the German Länders and the Government of Trentino Autonomous Province agreed to establish the Italo-German University. The project seeks to promote the development of new joint programmes at

bachelor/master level, the co-supervision of doctoral theses as well as the creation of post-graduate courses in natural sciences and technical fields.

5. Joint Degrees (see 11.1.1.)

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension

(For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

According to the above mentioned reform, each degree program must cover, apart from basic and specific courses, further courses aimed at improving language skills, as well as skills relating to computer studies, telematics, interpersonal skills and any other skills considered relevant to the labour market. In particular, practical and training activities become a part of students' career, so that they are recognized as University credits.

University can also recognize other skills and experiences of a professional nature, provided they are duly certified in conformity with the relevant current legislation.

Some Italian Universities, especially in the North East of Italy, have recently started using the European instrument, MobiliPass, to certify a period of training completed by a student in another Member State.

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

In 2004 the Ministry of Education started negotiations with China and India to promote mobility of students, academics and researchers from these countries. Among various actions to attract non-EU students mention should be made of a specific website in English (available at: www.study-in-italy.it).

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Joint degrees represent the most innovative tool to improve international academic co-operation in Europe and to respond to labour market needs. Joint (or integrated) study programmes can offer a genuine European dimension and foster the inter-institutional co-operation at all three cycles. They can also promote the attractiveness of the European education area. The Italian legislation allows Universities to award joint academic qualifications: both Ministerial Decrees 509/99 and 270/04 (reform of academic studies) establishes that, further to agreements in this regard, Italian Universities may award degrees also in conjunction with foreign Universities; the rules governing the procedures for awarding the final qualifications are delegated to the internal academic regulations of each University (in accordance with the general framework given by the Ministry) and are to be clarified in the inter-University agreements.

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

Further efforts should be undertaken to achieve two main goals: greater internationalisation of all Higher Education Institutions (non-University sector included) and a significant increase in the percentage of foreign students in Italy.

Moreover, at European level, considering the urgent need to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of European Higher Education worldwide, and the strategic role played by research, the training of researchers and the promotion of a multidisciplinary approach in improving and developing the quality of higher education while generally increasing the competitiveness of European higher education, efforts should be increased in order to:

- improve the role of research doctorates by promoting their internationalisation while guaranteeing quality and meeting labour market needs in the research sector;
- develop the networks of University centres of excellence to improve the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and of the European Research Area in order to recruit the best research talents;
- strengthen the links between teaching, academic research and industry by promoting technology transfer, patenting activities and links with industry in order to improve career guidance and career opportunities for students and researchers.