Center for
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Policy Studies

Issues in higher education policy

An update on higher education policy issues in 2004 in 11 Western countries

CHEPS – International Higher Education Monitor

Eric Beerkens
Frans Kaiser
Petra Boezerooij
Jeroen Huisman
Ben Jongbloed
Marc Kaulisch
Anneke Luijten-Lub
Peter Maassen
Carlo Salerno
Henno Theisens
Hans Vossensteyn

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1 Introduction

Higher education systems increasingly are open to influences from outside the system. Describing higher education systems in a highly dynamic context therefore requires a regular updating of the information presented. The annual CHEPS International Higher Education Monitor[1] (IHEM) update report provides insights into the latest developments in the higher education infrastructure, higher education finance, governance and quality assurance in the countries that the IHEM covers. In the first and main part of the report, the issues most pertinent in public debates and policies are identified and discussed. Information is collected from written and electronic sources as well as through consultation of national experts. The second part of the report is a comparative analysis. In this part, the issues are identified that are common in a number of national systems or even in most systems. Although no additional country information is presented in this section, the comparative analysis also builds on insights obtained from relevant CHEPS' research projects. The cross-national presentation of issues in some cases thus can cast a different light on the national issues.

[1] The CHEPS 'International Higher Education Monitor' is an ongoing research project aimed at the monitoring of higher education systems and higher education policies in ten (Western) European countries and Australia. A major part of the project is commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The 'CHEPS higher education monitor' consists of in-depth country reports, (describing national systems and policies), thematic reports (providing in-depth comparative analyses of major issues in higher education research), trendreports (identifying changes in quantitative aspects) and a database with quantitative and qualitative information on the higher education systems. For further information see http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/higher_education_monitor/

2 Austria

2.1 Educational infrastructure

Student numbers increased in 2003 from 217,000 to 227,000 (+4.5%, BM:BWK, 2004a). The largest (relative) increase is in the *Fachhochschulen* sector (+18.3%). First-year enrolments increased as well (+8.4%), particularly at art and music universities (+11.1%) and at *Fachhochschulen* (+10.4%).

The *Fachhochschulen* sector therefore is still expanding; at present there are 136 programmes offered. The government has set out a policy for this sector to cope with the enduring growth, aiming at 33,000 students to be enrolled in 2010 (BM:BWK, 2004c). An evaluation of the sector in 2003 (IHS, 2003) forms the basis for the future policies, focusing on qualitative growth. It is envisaged to develop a spearhead in technology and natural sciences; to expand the opportunities for applied research and development (which was set in motion in 1998 through government funds for cooperation with industry); to increase internationalisation; to increase interregional attractiveness; to increase participation rates of women (at present 38%); to expand (further) professional education for employees; and to increase the permeability of the educational structure. The policies seem to fit the *Fachhochschul-Konferenz's* claim for qualitative growth, but the FHK also argues for increasing budgets and deregulation (FHK, 2003).

In 2004 the Act on the Donau-Universität Krems was put in line with the University Act 2002. The organisation was set up a decade before as the university for continuing professional education. In winter 2004, 3,000 students from more than forty countries were enrolled in about 100 study programmes.

2.1.1 Internationalisation and Bologna

The act regulating university studies has been adjusted to the intentions of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The 2004 update on the implementation of the Bologna Declaration (BMBWK, 2004b) reports on the state of the art. About 25% of the university studies are transformed into *Bakkalaureat* and *Magister* programmes. The percentage was about 12% a year earlier. *Fachhochschulen* were allowed only in 2003/04 to structure their programmes along the Bologna Declaration. Therefore in that year a limited number of programmes (six) have been organized according to the *Bakkalaureat* structure, in 2004/2005 there will be 36 *Bakkalaureats* and four *Magister* programmes at the *Fachhochschulen*.
At about half of the universities and at most of the *Fachhochschulen*, the Diploma Supplement is issued for all students as of the winter semester 2004. All higher education institutions apply the ECTS. In February 2005, the adjustments to the PhD programme structure will be discussed.

2.2 Research and development

In line with the developments in 2003, the structure of the research infrastructure was changed in 2004 (BM:BWK, 2004d). A new regulation came into force in July 2004 (*Forschungsförderungs-Strukturreformgesetz*). The government thought it necessary to adjust the existing infrastructure in light of Austria's aim to be among the most innovative, competitive and productive regions in Europe and to contribute to the supranational Barcelona and Lisbon objectives. Essential elements of the change were: the introduction of the *Österreichischen Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft mbH* (a merger of existing research support organisations); the reform of the *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung* (FWF); and the independent status of the *Rat für Forschung und Technologieentwicklung* (RFT). Furthermore, it is the intention to spatially bring together most relevant organisations in the area of research and development policies (*Haus der Forschung*). Austria is on track regarding the Barcelona objective of reaching the 3% GDP expenditure on R&D in 2010, in 2004 this percentage was 2.27% (website BM:BWK, 2004).

2.3 Finance

The national budget for the higher education institutions in 2004 is 2,425 billion Euro, an increase compared to the 2003 budget (BM:BWK, 2004b). The budget consists of a lump sum allocation and specific additional allocations for research infrastructure and for centres of excellence (*Schwerpunktsetzung*). Despite the increase, the *Österreichische Rektorenkonferenz* (ÖRK) (Dürrstein, 2004) argued that the budgets are not sufficient to carry through the necessary investments for research and education and the support for the universities' infrastructure.

2.4 Quality assurance

The organisation of quality assurance is still in discussion, particularly the link to the Bologna Declaration. Beginning 2004, the Austria Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) was set up. It is an initiative of the Ministry, the ÖRK, the FHK, the *Verein der Privatuniversitäten* (PU) and the *HochschülerInnenschaft* (ÖH). It supports higher education institutions in the development of quality assurance procedures (at the level of the programme, the institution or thematic: e.g. labour market analyses) and works – in the context of the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA) – on e.g. the development of international standards.
The Accreditation Board for Private Universities (*Akkreditierungsrat*, 2004) reports that it has continued to accredit private programmes and institutions. Until now, eight private higher education institutions are accredited, including a theological university, a few business schools and two medical schools/universities. About 1,300 students are enrolled (Hackl, 2004).

3 Australia

3.1 Educational Infrastructure

3.1.1 The implementation of the Nelson reforms

The events in 2004 were dominated by the discussion and implementation of new legislation – the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (the HESA) and the Higher Education Support (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act 2003. This reform package constitutes an integrated policy framework and a ten-year vision for Australian higher education, with additional funding for the sector. The reforms are aimed at establishing a partially deregulated system of higher education, in which individual universities are encouraged to differentiate themselves by means of their course offerings, research portfolio and fee structure. Emphasis is placed on learning and teaching, and the government will continue its policy of implementing a framework for research in which all Commonwealth funding is either competitive or performance-based. New arrangements for student financing will encourage lifelong learning, and ensure equity of access to higher education. Greater access for disadvantaged groups will be supported, and the market for private higher education will be opened up, while still enhancing quality control.

In 2004 a start was made with the implementation of these reforms. In the remainder of this section we will summarise the various steps that were taken. Before going into the various topics we also state that the Australian universities through the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) have also presented their vision for higher education in 2020 in Achieving the vision for Australia's universities: Making Backing Australia's Future and Backing Australia's Ability work (see: www.avcc.edu.au). The AVCC calls for scaling down on regulation, reporting requirements and request increased funding levels – tying funding rates, student learning entitlements, and scholarships to the increase in prices – and raising research grants.

3.1.2 Private providers

From 2005, eligible private higher education providers will be able to access FEE-HELP on behalf of their students.2 That is: students enrolled in institutions that are approved as a higher education provider are entitled to assistance with the payment of their tuition fees. Some Commonwealth-supported places in areas of national priority (teacher education, nurse education and the education of Indigenous students) will also be allocated competitively to eligible private higher education institutions from 2005.

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[2] The FEE HELP programme (Higher Education Loan Programme) allows students to defer the payment of their tuition fees (their HECS contribution). The HELP programme also covers students who pay full fees.

To be eligible for this assistance, private providers (unless they are already listed in the Act) will need to make an application to the Minister and be approved as higher education providers. The main criteria are: accreditation (on the AQF Register of Recognised Education Institutions & Authorised Accreditation Authorities in Australia); financial viability requirements; and quality auditing requirements (including periodic audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency). In 2004, 27 private providers had been approved (showing a large variety, ranging from denominational colleges, arts schools, a psychology college, to business schools and technological colleges).

3.2 Finance

3.2.1 Extra funded student places

An announcement was made about the extra student places that are to be funded by the Commonwealth government over the period 2005-2008. 9,100 new Commonwealth-supported places will become available in 2005. In 2008 an extra 24,883 will have been made available. Universities will have to bid for these places with their state governments and the commonwealth department (DEST), taking into account state-specific criteria.

In the reform it is announced that package additional support is to be provided for areas identified as National Priorities. This initiative will allow for responses to current and emerging national needs, such as shortages in particular areas of the labour market. Teaching and nursing have been identified as initial key areas of National Priority. Public HE providers will in particular be invited to submit bids to educate priority field students.

3.2.2 Fees

Universities will be able to determine their own student contribution level for each course they offer within a range set by the Australian Government. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission will oversee how universities respond to the new competitive environment. This new environment may also see increased collaboration between universities and rationalisation of courses. The ACCC will monitor potential anti-competitive behaviour such as price-fixing, market-sharing, boycotts and it will watch consumer protection. With respect to the latter, the provision of information to students is important. A requirement to this end was announced by the minister but so far institutions experienced some delays in complying with this. However, in the near future a Public (Internet) Portal will lead students to data on the HE institutions' selection data (minimum entrance cut-offs) and costs for all courses (fee schedules). A government portal was launched in October (www.goingtouni.gov.au). 3

Guidelines have been released that state that the following students must not be charged fees:

[3] Going to Uni provides also information on the changes to Commonwealth loan schemes, new funding arrangements for Commonwealth-supported students and full fee-paying students, Student Learning Entitlements, and the changes to course costs as a result of the partial deregulation of the higher education market from 2005.

- postgraduate general nursing award course
- postgraduate award course providing initial teacher training, or
- postgraduate award course the completion of which would allow provisional registration as a medical practitioner.

However, contrary to the situation in the past, when the HE institution has met its target student load and no further HECS-liable places are available, institutions may offer fee-paying places in these courses. For medical practitioner postgraduate award courses these fee paying places are limited to 10% of the total number of domestic places in the course.

Commonwealth Scholarships

The Commonwealth Learning Scholarships Programme was introduced in 2004. There are two scholarships:

- The Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships (CECS) – will provide eligible students with $2000 per year for a maximum of four years to meet their general education costs.
- The Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS) – will provide eligible students who are required to move from rural and regional Australia to undertake higher education with $4000 per year for up to four years to assist these students with their accommodation expenses.

In particular, these scholarships will assist rural and regional, low socio-economic status and Indigenous students to meet the costs associated with higher education. They will be allocated to eligible students based on merit and will be non-repayable (i.e. they are gifts). Over the next five years, the A$327 million that the Government will provide will help almost 40,000 students.

The CECS and CAS have been distributed to eligible higher education providers taking into account factors such as an institution's share of full-time HECS-liable students and proportions of students from low-income, indigenous and rural backgrounds. The Commonwealth has provided guidelines to the higher education providers for the allocation of these scholarships but the providers determine their own selection and offer processes.

Some 26,000 full-time students from low socio-economic backgrounds and 2,500 full-time Indigenous students commence higher education studies each year. Many of these students face particular challenges in meeting their education costs. CECS provide full-time undergraduate students from low socio-economic and/or indigenous backgrounds with a scholarship of A$2,000 per year for up to four years, indexed annually. In 2004, 2,500 CECS will be offered (representing A$ 5 million). By 2008, over 5,100 new CECS will be awarded each year and over 22,500 students will have received a CECS. The Commonwealth will provide approximately A$128 million over the next five years to the CECS programme.

Around 10,000 students from rural and isolated areas, many of whom are from low socio-economic and/or indigenous backgrounds, move away from home each year to commence

higher education. For many of these students and/or their parents, the cost of accommodation represents a significant burden. CAS will help alleviate this burden. The scholarships will provide full-time undergraduate students from rural and regional areas with A$4,000 per year (indexed annually) for up to four years, to assist them with accommodation expenses where they have to move to undertake higher education in the course and at the higher education provider of their choice. In 2004, 3,000 scholarships will be offered (amounting to A$ 12 million). By 2008, over 3,570 new scholarships will be awarded each year and over 17,000 students will have received a CAS. The Commonwealth will provide over $199 million over the next five years to the CAS programme. In determining whether an applicant has come from a rural or regional area, higher education providers are guided by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Areas classification. Applicants from localities other than those belonging to the Major Cities of Australia classification will meet that particular requirement.

3.2.3 Higher education equity programme

A review of HE participation by various socio-economic classes (equity groups) was carried out to analyse whether funding was targeted appropriately to increase disadvantaged students' participation in higher education. A research report was produced in 2003 by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) to analyse past equity performance and to consider improved definitions of equity target groups (Analysis of Equity Groups in Higher Education 1991-2002: http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/programmes/heep.htm). A Higher Education Equity Programme (HEEP) paper, informed by the CSHE report, was released by the government, outlining possible funding and targeting approaches. A further review by the Department was set in motion – in the form of a consultation process with the HE sector and other interested parties. This led to the formulation of Equity Support funding which will be allocated to higher education providers using a formula based on the number of low SES students with extra weighting given to low SES students from rural and isolated areas (as indicated by their postal codes).

On a related issue, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) was announced last year as part of reform package. The new Advisory Council, funded with A$272,000 per year from the Australian Government, will consist of 16 members with expertise in and understanding of the higher education sector. The Council will provide policy advice to improve outcomes in higher education for Indigenous students and staff relating to their participation, progression and retention both in study and employment.

3.2.4 Learning and teaching

A National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education) was established to stress the attention to be given to the quality of T&L. On the same note, a Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is to be made available. The reform package (to be more precise, the Backing Australia's Future white paper that preceded it) includes a total of A$251 million from 2006 to 2008 to reward excellence in learning and teaching in higher education. The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will commence in 2006 with funding of A$54 million, increasing to A$83

million in 2007 and A$113 million in 2008. An issues paper produced by the government on how to develop the fund outlines the two stage process for allocation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. It discusses Australian and overseas experience in rewarding excellence in learning and teaching in higher education, suggests some principles against which allocative models could be assessed and identifies a range of possible models. An Advisory Group of academic and other experts was set up to guide development of the Fund. The final criteria for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund are to be announced later.

3.2.5 Student Learning Entitlements (SLE)

From 1 January 2005, all Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens, and holders of permanent visas will receive a SLE, providing them with access to a Commonwealth supported place for the equivalent of seven years of full time study. Additional SLEs will also be provided to eligible students enrolling in an undergraduate course that is longer than six years, an honours course, a graduate entry bachelor degree, or a postgraduate course. This extra entitlement is to ensure that eligible persons have enough SLE to undertake a course of study as a Commonwealth supported student. The amount of additional SLE that a student receives depends on the program they are enrolled in and whether they have used additional SLE in the past.

Eligible students will accrue lifelong SLE that enables them to return to study as a Commonwealth supported student in order to retrain or broaden their skills. The SLE Guidelines specify courses and circumstances in which additional SLE and lifelong SLE will be granted.

3.3 Research infrastructure

In line with the government's strategy to increase Australia's R&D potential (a policy goal that was expressed in the government's Backing Australia's Abilities white paper) the so-called Knowledge and Innovation (K&I) Reforms were implemented from 2000 on. The reforms led to major changes in the block funding for university research. A comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the Knowledge and Innovation reforms was undertaken in 2003 by an External Reference Group (ERG) chaired by Professor Chris Fell. The evaluation reviewed the operation and impact of the current block grant research programmes: the Research Training Scheme (RTS), the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS), and the Research Infrastructure Block Grants Scheme (RIBG)[4]. The K&I principles of excellence, autonomy, linkage and collaboration, contestability and accountability were largely supported by the stakeholders. It was found that the approach adopted under K&I of making all research block funding provided to universities subject to performance formulae has had a positive impact.

[4] The ERG consultation report (Evaluation of Knowledge and Innovation Reforms Consultation Report, available at: http: //www.dest.gov.au/highered/ki_reforms/default.htm).

Universities and university bodies broadly oppose any move of current research funds away from performance-based block funding for the universities towards the research councils

There was substantial comment on the need to assess universities on the quality of their research outputs and the desirability of using such assessments as a tool for funds allocation. There was discussion about whether Australia should adopt some variant of the United Kingdom's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The majority of respondents in the HE field would oppose any quality mechanism that does not avoid the problems of the RAE. While the majority of respondents see significant problems with the RAE, the External Reference Group considers that there would be value in exploring whether it is possible to design an approach to quality assessment that avoids the RAE's drawbacks. There was broad support for the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) overall, including the equal weighting of all research income in the formulae that drive IGS allocations to universities. This was seen as expressing the need to contribute to the various linkages between universities and the national innovation system. There was general support for retaining a count for publications in the formulae for RTS and IGS. However, a number of respondents put forward the following criticism:

- the tendency of the publications count to promote quantity at the expense of quality.
- publications counts adds limited value as a device for allocating funds, since institutions' publication numbers are highly correlated with other elements in the performance-based block funding formulae (especially research income)
- publication counts are subject to criticism in terms of the publications it does or does not include.

The development of a National Research Infrastructure Strategy was reviewed by a special taskforce that produced a report (The Final Report of the National Research Infrastructure Taskforce; available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/ri_taskforce/default.htm). The National Research Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by Dr Mike Sargent, has considered what might constitute the important elements of an Australian research infrastructure strategy. World-competitive research increasingly depends on access to sophisticated and expensive equipment. In many cases, the cost of what is needed far exceeds the resources of individual institutions. The taskforce recommends a framework for university and publicly funded research agencies' investments in large-scale research infrastructure that seeks to enhance institutional collaboration and to maximise value from government investments in infrastructure.

The Research Collaboration Review, chaired by Mr Donald McGauchi (see: http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/research/index.htm) examined the scope for closer collaboration between universities and the Major Publicly Funded Research Agencies (the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation). The review assessed the potential for greater synergies between research providers, possible models for closer collaboration, scope to promote a greater focus on commercialisation of research through collaboration, and possible alternative funding models to achieve more effective use of resources and to promote

excellence across the national research effort. The report, Review of Closer Collaboration Between Universities and Major Publicly Funded Research Agencies is available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/collaboration/default.htm.

The Business / Industry / Higher Education Collaboration Council (BIHECC) will examine and advise the Minister on ways to foster higher education collaboration with business, industry, employers, communities, vocational education and training providers and between universities. Apart from research and development, this council is focussing on ways to achieve greater collaboration between the sectors on teaching and learning to prepare graduates for the labour market. The membership of the Council draws on high-level representation from business, industry and employer groups and universities and it will include at least one representative from a regional area.

3.4 Government-institution relationships

A new accountability framework is to be implemented to oversee relationships between the federal government and the HE institutions. Prior to 2004, the annual Educational Profiles process – descriptions of a university's activities provided by the university in a form approved by the Australian Government Minister – was the main mechanism for ensuring accountability, quality and fairness. From 2004 Profiles will be replaced by a new accountability framework based on a more strategic bilateral engagement with each higher education provider and underpinned by the 'Institution Assessment Framework' (IAF). About 20 institutions will be visited per year on a regular schedule. These visits include discussions of strategic directions, shifts within student load, and plans for new places.

The Institution Assessment Framework (IAF) is founded on the responsibilities of the Commonwealth to ensure that the institutions it funds are sustainable and deliver the outputs for which they are funded, that their outcomes are of a high quality and that they comply with their legal obligations. The IAF produces an across-the-board assessment of institutional achievements based on quantitative and qualitative data from universities and external sources. The Commonwealth's assessment of an institution will form the basis of strategic bilateral discussions between the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and an individual institution. The data for the assessment are in large part drawn from information that is publicly available, or already produced by universities, or already collected routinely from universities.

The Framework has four principal elements:

- Organisational sustainability (strategic focus, risk management, financial viability)
- Achievements in higher education provision (teaching/learning, research and research training, equity and indigenous access)
- Quality outcomes (systems and processes, teaching/learning, research, AUQA audit)
- Compliance (financial acquittal, national governance protocols, workplace reform, programme guidelines and legislation)

Detailed bilateral discussions between DEST and individual institutions will occur only biennially unless there is a specific need for additional meetings (for example, if concerns arise from the assessment).

4 Denmark

After the 2003 EU Presidency of Denmark, a lot of effort has been put in developing new policy initiatives. The main initiatives will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Educational infrastructure

4.1.1 Higher education and the labour market

At the moment there are two think tanks working. They will give suggestions for improvement of the relation between the labour market and university education in the social sciences and the humanities. At the same time some groups work on improving university education for upper secondary education teacher training. So all in all, there is a focus on improving the relation between the labour market and university education by creating sharper profiles in the educational programs leading to different types of jobs.

4.1.2 General IT- and e-strategies

In recent years, Denmark developed a very comprehensive IT strategy for Danish society which boosted Denmark to one of the top-leading societies in terms of access to computers and networks (see update report 2002-2003). As a further step, Denmark now gives priority to the implementation of the Action Plan *eEurope* 2005, which aims at stimulating secure services, applications and content based on a widely available broadband infrastructure. Though this basically is a EU-initiative (within the Lisbon process, Denmark takes the tasks seriously), it aims to exploit as many new services as possible. Denmark now aims at providing an investment friendly legal framework in which the private sector can develop the broadband infrastructure, services and building infrastructures to accomplish a wide use of technological applications.

4.1.3 Internationalisation

One of the key features in Denmark's education policy is an increasing attention for internationalisation. As such, the Ministry of Education submitted a policy paper to Parliament (UVM/MSTI, 2004a). The publication contains a proposal for a coherent strategy in this respect. The most important initiatives proposed are that:

- the international dimension of the content of education and training programs must be enhanced,
- the mobility of pupils, students and teachers must be enhanced,
- the use of IT as an internationalisation tool must be enhanced,
- the opportunities for institutions to both cooperate and compete must be increased,
- Denmark's involvement in international cooperation forums, including international comparisons of education systems, must be enhanced, and
- internationalisation initiatives must be followed up and assessed.

In September 2004, the Education Minister also proposed a law that will allow higher education institutions to charge user fees from foreign (non-EU) students. As a result, Danish higher education institution will be able to offer study programs on a commercial basis and compete for the brightest students, like many of their foreign counterparts do (UVM, 2004a).

4.1.4 Guidance reform

Over the years, the guidance of pupils has evolved into a rather complex structure with more than 26 types of guidance services being offered. In 2004 (as per 1 August 2004), most of these guidance services have been integrated in two types of guidance centres, one for transitions from compulsory school to youth education and one for the transition from youth education to higher education. This guidance reform aims to increase the guidance quality.
Also an internet-based guidance portal has been opened on 1 August 2004, including information on all education and training possibilities, vocations/ professions, labour market conditions, and learning opportunities abroad. This last part is emphasised by the Euroguidance centre as part of the Euroguidance Network providing all kinds of information and facilities for international co-operation and mobility.

4.1.5 Culture of innovation and entrepreneurship

The Minister of Education and the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation introduced a general strategy for developing and strengthening a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in the educational system (UVM/MSTI, 2004b). The strategy takes into account the needs of different education programmes. It spans from the primary and upper secondary schools' focus on developing personal qualities such as creativity, inventiveness and independent problem-solving skills, to the need for higher education courses in both practical skills (e.g. how to prepare business plans and accounts) and general subjects such as management, organization and marketing. The strategy should function as a general framework for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and make it easier to coordinate the various educational programmes on offer.

4.2 Research infrastructure

The Danish government has suggested to establish a massive EU research fund. It is being argued that research co-ordination should take a central role in the EU. One of the means to accomplish that task is to create a true internal market for European researchers with added competition for funding, particularly to select and stimulate excellent researchers (MSTI, 2004a).
During the last five years a reform of the public research sector has been discussed among politicians and researchers. After the general election in 2001 the new government announced a reform of the research infrastructure. The various papers that since then have been published on this issue contain three broad messages (MSTI, 2002):

- The Danish universities will have new forms of management and incentive structures;
- Danish sector research will be reorganised and concentrated on specifically prioritised areas;

- The Danish system of research councils will be reformed, with all public foundation grants for research being distributed in open competition on the basis of known, recognised and uniform principles.

These ideas have now been given further shape through the following developments.

4.2.1 The government research institute reform

With its government research reform, the Government strengthens basic research and ensures better interaction between universities and government research institutes regarding research, education and innovation. The reform includes a new Act on Government Research Institutes and an examination and a concrete evaluation of each Danish government research institute with a view to reorganisation. Thus, the Government focuses on providing government research with the proper proportions and the correct limitations in relation to the other public knowledge institutions. The main elements of the reform are that institutions are to be made independent of the relevant ministry with regard to management and their research is to be evaluated continuously and independently based on uniform and recognised principles. With regard to financing, the fundamental principles are that public research funds - in addition to institutions' basic grants - should be distributed in open competition and that government research should be well founded and should not distort competition.

4.2.2 Reform of the research council system

In October 2002, the Government parties reached a political agreement on the reform of the research council system. With the agreed reform the appropriations system is simplified and strengthened. The new system will consist of two research councils (instead of six): One funding research based on bottom-up ideas from the research community and one funding research based on top-down, political priorities. A common characteristic of the two councils is the principle of promoting diversity and quality in Danish research through open competition based on independent quality evaluation.
Both councils have an advisory function (also on budgetary matters) and both councils are headed by a board of directors. The boards of directors are comprised of recognised researchers. The board of the council founding political initiated research programmes also has research expertise from the receiving end with competencies in both public and private research, education and innovation. Beside the two boards of directors, the new system will consist of a number of research specific councils and a limited number of cross-disciplinary programme committees to perform the ongoing operations - such as evaluating applicants.

The Danish National Research Foundation will remain an independent foundation with its own board of directors. The Foundation's main task will still be to finance major research activities based on researchers' own ideas, and to contribute to the development of "Centres of Excellence" in connection with major programmes.

The purpose of the new Coordinating Body is to coordinate the efforts of the two new research councils mentioned above, the Danish National Research Foundation and the Council for Technology and Innovation. The universities and government research institutes

also have representatives on the committee, which additionally is to provide counselling on funding for researcher training. Thus, the Coordinating Body takes over a number of tasks previously performed by the Board of the Danish Research Councils and the Danish Research Training Council, which are both discontinued.

4.2.3 Innovation incubators

MSTI (2004b) presented a policy document on innovation incubators, which are university supported off-springs that try to commercialise new ideas and inventions. As such, it has become explicit policy to promote the commercialisation of new innovative ideas, inventions and research. Incubators are being established to help scientists and others to overcome potential barriers for the commercialisation of their work.

4.3 Finance

In 2004, the funding system was enriched with a so-called bachelor bonus. The bonus is rewarded to the universities, every time a student completes his/her bachelor programme.
To improve the effectiveness of this bonus, the tariffs are planned to be almost twice as big in 2005, compared with the level in 2004.
There are no changes in the student financing system, except for slight changes in the amounts of grants and loans students are entitled to.

4.4 Governance

The new university act passed the Danish Parliament in May 2003. The reform includes managerial changes, of which the largest is on the election system. The reforms according to the new University Act are now being implemented. The major changes as to last-years update report can be described as the following:

- The bill from 2003 implies that the universities now are self-governing institutions. To achieve this, the executive management structure was reformed into a board with a majority of external members. The chairman of the board has to be an external member. However, not all universities have their boards put in place yet, Thus, it is still to early to say anything about the effect of this part of the bill.
- With regard to the universities development contracts, the ministry and the Rector's Conference have agreed that all universities have to be in the same mode from January 1st 2006. In the meantime the universities are negotiating with the ministry about short-time contracts - typically for the remainder of 2004 and 2005. These contracts are meant to be the forerunners for the real second generations development contracts from 2006 and beyond. Politicians, the ministry and the universities have high hopes for this new way of monitoring and developing the universities at the same time.

4.5 Quality assurance

In the 2003 reform of the universities the importance of quality assurance is emphasized. Here it is underlined that all universities need to have an internal quality assurance system in force. This is also emphasized in the guidelines for the coming development contracts for the universities. Together with the Danish Evaluation Institute several Danish universities have

recently started a process of audit. This is a first step and vital to have a quality assurance system in place.

The 2003 bill details that heads of faculty and in particular heads of institutes are responsible for systematic follow-up on evaluations of education and teaching. The study boards and the study programme directors are to be drawn into the work involved in the evaluations and contribute to the systematic follow-up on the evaluations by the leaders (rector, heads of faculty and heads of department).

EVA(the Danish Evaluation Institute) published a report on their experiences with criteria based evaluations (EVA, 2004). The major conclusions are that using explicit criteria provides more openness and transparency of the evaluation mechanism, which can regarded as a quality characteristic of the evaluation process itself. Criteria bring more focus into the evaluations, but also require more stringent priority setting in order to limit the number of criteria used. Criteria form a good ground for co-operation between the stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. Criteria can cover qualitative, quantitative and statutory issues. Reporting becomes more easy and compact when using clear criteria.

5 Finland

5.1 Educational infrastructure

5.1.1 A new law for polytechnics is being prepared.

This new law for polytechnics will be offered to parliament in the course of 2005. Among the main issues to be included are first the R&D role of the polytechnics. The relationship between polys' R&D activities and the universities' basic research role has to be clarified. In this it is clear that the polys are expected to play a role in the relationship with small/medium sized businesses, in regional development, and in applied research, while the universities continue to have a monopoly in basic research. Second, the role of the polytechnics in offering postgraduate (= second cycle or master level) degrees has to be clarified. Already there has been a clear decision by the Ministry and the Parliament confirming that the polytechnics should play a role in the second cycle. However, what kind of programmes to be offered formally has long been controversial and has been hotly debated.

Recently an international evaluation report on the postgraduate experiment that was started in 2002 has been published. In this report it is amongst other things recommended to allow the polytechnics to award the Master degree to the graduates from their second cycle programmes. Given the positive welcome by all major stakeholders to the report and its main conclusions and recommendations it is expected that the Ministry will use the report heavily in its preparation of the new Polytechnic legislation.

5.1.2 Implementation of the Bologna agreement.

Finland is working on the implementation of the Bologna agreement, which will be realized in 2005. The new degree structure will be implemented, and the ECTS system will be introduced. To increase the completion rate and decrease the number of dropouts, as well as to increase national and international mobility, the Finnish government wishes to introduce in 2005 a true two-cycle system, with a self-standing three-year Bachelor degree structure, and a two-year Master degree structure. By introducing a true two-cycle system it is expected that the value of the Finnish university first degree on the labour market will increase. Some professional degrees, i.e. veterinary science, medicine and dentistry will continue as six-year degrees. This change will be based on a new University degree Decree that will also regulate the transition from polytechnic bachelor degree holders to university master programmes.

As indicated, this new degree structure implies for the universities a formal distinction between bachelor and master level. At the moment these two are still integrated, i.e. everyone that has been awarded a bachelor degree is expected to continue automatically in the same institution/faculty with a master course. This new degree structure will be introduced as part

of a larger higher education reform in 2005. The two-cycle structure will be introduced both as an answer to the Bologna process, to strengthen the position of Finnish universities in the 'European Higher Education Area' as well as to answer to national needs. The consequences for the polys are mentioned above: no change at bachelor level, new postgraduate programmes at postgraduate level. Access to the latter is open to anyone with a bachelor degree and at least three years of work experience after getting this degree.

The ECTS system will be introduced, but there are some controversies about the shift from the current Finnish credit system to ECTS in the university sector. As indicated one specific characteristic of the Finnish system is the high level of autonomy of especially the universities in academic matters. This leads to some extent to a lack of clarity with respect to the formal length of degree programmes. Formally it is stipulated nowhere that 40 Finnish credits equal one year of university studies, nor is there a formal 'conversion rate' for translating Finnish credits into ECTS credits. In practice this, for example, has led to a situation in which the universities themselves decide on which conditions, i.e. on the basis of how much extra study hours, they will accept polytechnic bachelor degree holders in their master programmes. In addition, this has also caused some variation between universities when it comes to the current translation of Finnish credit points into ECTS points: some institutions indicate in their diploma supplement that 1 Finnish credit point equals 1.5 ECTS credit points, while others indicate that 1 Finnish credit point equals two ECTS credit points. While there are indications, amongst other things, coming from the Ministry of Education, that in the new national credit system based on ECTS to be introduced in 2005, 1 current Finnish credit will equal 1.5 ECTS credits, no formal decision in this has been made yet.

Currently *maisteri* degree programmes are identified with a number of study years, and equal a certain number of Finnish credit points. The 160 (Finnish) credits *maisteri* programmes are regarded to be a 5-year qualification, while the 180 credits *maisteri* programmes in technology are seen as equalling 5.5 years of study. In practice, however, the 'ideal' *maisteri* curriculum has been constructed in such a way that a student can obtain 40 credits in a year which means that a 160 credits *maisteri* degree programme can be finished in four years, and a 180 credits one in 4.5 years, and many students actually manage to do so. On the other hand, the average study time for the 160 credits *maisteri* degree is more that six years and for the 180 credits degree in the field of technology close to seven years. The ECTS system is currently used by Finnish stakeholders in international student mobility schemes. This has revealed the challenges of the current credit system in international competition, in the sense that outside Finland the 160 credits Master-level degree courses in universities are usually seen as equivalent to a 240 ECTS credits course, implying that they are regarded as 4-year programmes, instead of as 5-year programmes.

Finally, as indicated in section 5.1.1, a new university decree is being prepared, which will reduce somewhat the large autonomy of the universities in areas such as the transition of polytechnic bachelor degree holders to university master degree programmes. At the moment the universities are completely autonomous in deciding what extra demands they will make on these poly degree holders before they can start a master course. The new decree will limit the maximum amount of extra work that can be demanded to 60 ECTS credits of course work.

5.1.3 Higher education landscape

For the Finnish government and the Parliament the binary structure is a core characteristic of the Finnish HE landscape. This implies that at least in the near future the Ministry of Education will try to do everything possible to keep the binary divide as clear as possible. In this it has amongst other things established a committee for analysing the current (second half 2004) landscape and making recommendations to the Ministry on how to maintain, if not strengthen the binary divide. As far as I know the report of the committee has not been published (yet).
The main issues the committee is asked to discuss are:

- the nature of the binary structure
- the relatively large number of universities in the country
- the regional dimension, i.e. the distribution of polytechnics and universities over the regions, possibilities/needs for mergers in some regions, etc.
- the programmes offered, i.e. how to handle cases of vocational drift (especially in the form of professional university masters courses), and academic drift.

Overall one can state that the polytechnics were originally established, amongst other things, to influence the behaviour of the universities. The universities, not used to competition, reacted initially defensively and were openly doubting the need for polytechnics in Finland. In the first ten years of the polytechnics the sector was steered in detail by the Ministry, implying limited autonomy for the institutions. At the same time the autonomy of the universities was enlarged.

Gradually the universities have changed their attitude. They have observed the success of the polytechnics, do not attack their existence per se anymore, and have rather aggressively (in the eyes of the polytechnics at least) entered the arena reserved for the polytechnics, especially in the form of professional Master courses and regional R&D projects. The major complaint from the polytechnics now is that they cannot defend themselves (in other words compete with the universities), as a consequence of their low autonomy. The Ministry of Education sees as its main challenge creating a more balanced governance situation with respect to the two sectors. This is complicated, not only because of the ‘aggression’ of the universities who do not want to be told anymore what they can and cannot do, but also because of the role of the EU. The European development funds for Finland have been earmarked (in consultation with regional authorities), amongst other things, for improving the link between universities and the labour market. This implies in practice that most of the professional university Master courses are funded by Brussels and not by Helsinki.

5.2 Higher education funding

The government is preparing new funding mechanisms for both the university and the polytechnic sector. Proposals will be ready in the first half of 2005. The university sector needs a new funding system because the current one is too much based on the traditional allocation of public funds to the institutions. It contains too few incentives and possibilities for stimulating mutual competition between the institutions. The polytechnic sector needs a new funding system because the current one is based on input performance, i.e. aimed at and

realized enrolment figures. The new system has to become, like the university's system, output/performance oriented.

5.3 Governance

5.3.1 Ministerial steering of higher education

In a publication called Management and Steering of Higher Education in Finland (2004) the Ministry of Education reflects upon various aspects of the current governmental steering mode with respect to higher education. The basis for the governmental steering of higher education is formed by the performance agreements between the Ministry of Education and the individual universities and polytechnics, as well as the performance monitoring systems, especially the KOTA and AMKOTA databases. There are no intentions to change this basis. A detailed description of how the performance agreements in the two sectors are reached can be found in the mentioned Ministerial publication.

While the basis will remain the same (performance driven steering) there will be some adaptations of the steering approach. This consists in the first place of new legislation concerning the university degree structure, needed in order to enable to implement the Bologna agreement, especially the new two-cycle degree structure, at 1 August 2005. In the second place the Ministry wants to adapt the funding systems for the universities and the polytechnics. Especially the latter will be overhauled.
Finally, at the moment the universities have large autonomy in many areas, while polytechnics are steered by the Ministry in much more detail. Now that the polytechnic sector is more established and has grown out of its early childhood deceases, the Ministry is considering how to create a more balanced steering approach towards the two parts of the binary sector. What is clear and accepted is that the dual (or binary) system is and will remain the starting-point for the steering. The main stakeholders agree that the Ministry has an important role to play in maintaining the dual system. But how can this be done if one sector can be steered in detail and the other hardly at all? This challenge will be the topic of a number of studies and commission set up by the Ministry at end of 2004/beginning of 2005.

6 Flanders

In summer 2004 a new government came into office. As is usual for a new government, the members of government announced their plans for their coming term. The two plans most relevant for higher education and research are the one on Economy, Entrepreneurs, Science, innovation and Foreign trade and the one on Education and Training. These plans build on the work of the preceding government. The content of the policy plans is discussed below, complemented with other developments in the area of higher education and research in Flanders.

6.1 Educational infrastructure

6.1.1 Bologna follow up

The Flemish government has agreed in April 2004 to adjust the diplomas awarded by higher education institutions to the new higher education structure of bachelor and master programmes. The new diplomas will hold information on the duration of study (in terms of study credits) and the decision on accreditation of the programme. Furthermore, students will automatically receive a diploma supplement, based on the model of the European Committee, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Students can also ask for an English version of the supplement. The supplement should be given to the students as a free service. Furthermore, in the Government agreement it is stated that Flanders wants to continue to play a leading role in the Bologna follow up. Emphasis is put on access and quality. In the policy plan it is stated that the procedure of recognition and equivalence of foreign degrees should be quickened. If possible, automatic recognition of degrees should be pursued. This will be made possible by bi- and multilateral agreements concerning the further development of the Dublin descriptors and a European framework for qualification.

6.1.2 Flexibiliseringsdecreet

The *Flexibiliseringsdecreet*, which was announced in 2003, was approved by the Flemish Parliament in March 2004. This act confirms ECTS as the national credit system. (ECTS has been obliged by law for universities since the decreet of 1991 and for hogescholen since the decreet of 1994. Both decreet took effect one year later.) The act of 2004 will first take effect in the academic year 2005-2006. However, in anticipation of this new act, the Flemish Government has decided that starting in the academic year 2004-2005 students will pass their exams when obtaining 10 out of 20 points. Before, this was 12 out of 20. This rule ensures similar treatment of students studying during this phase of transition of programmes in higher education.

6.2 Research infrastructure

6.2.1 Research in the Government agreement and policy plan

First of all, the Flemish government plans to actively attract foreign research for exchange of knowledge. Flemish researchers will also be encouraged to conduct research at foreign institutions for temporary periods. It is stated that the universities need resources to attract top researchers and to keep them in their institutions. They also need resources to allow postdocs to build an interesting career. Having good research facilities and research infrastructure will help to attract top researchers. Furthermore, the system of rewarding scholarships to researchers will be evaluated and the number of scholarships will be increased. As the two cycle *hogescholenopleidingen* have a mission in '*academising*' their education, they should have access to academic research. The focus is on project based academic research, which is more applied by nature. The *hogescholen* can participate in academic research through the associations with universities. This way the resources for academic research are not dispersed amongst many groups. Finally, in implementing the innovation pact, which should lead to extra efforts in research and developments of companies, research institutions and the Flemish government, the extra Education and Research funds will be distributed evenly between 'new ground research', strategic basic research and technological innovation.

6.3 Finance

6.3.1 Student support

The new act on student support was approved by parliament in April 2004. The act tunes the actual study costs with the student support. It should also ease the application for student support. The amount of student support received by a student depends on several factors:

- The living situation of the students (with his/her parents or on his/her own)
- The marital status
- The income of the student

The minimum amount of student support to be received is € 198,31, while the maximum amount of student support is € 3069 for students living on their own and € 1842,- for student living with their parents. The Education Council (VLOR) is pleased with the improvements made in the student support system, but also feels that the adjustments in income barriers for student support and the increase in student support are too little. The council furthermore feels that the system is still quite complicated and thinks a thorough revision of the system is necessary in the future.

6.3.2 Finance in the Government Agreement and Policy plan

In the government agreement a new funding system for higher education for 2007 is announced. This new system has to take into account the possibilities opened up in higher education through the *flexibiliseringsdecreet* (see paragraph on *flexibiliseringsdecreet*). The new funding system should be simple and transparent, securing an adequate funding base for

the institutions. The new system should also challenge the institutions, perhaps in the form of output or incentive base funding. The new system also has to allow for the 'academisation' of the two-cycle education. On short notice the *hogescholen* will receive some one time extra funds.

6.4 Governance

6.4.1 Aanvullingsdecreet

In March 2004 the Flemish Parliament approved the *Aanvullingsdecreet*, which was announced last year. The act has four separate parts: the legal position of students, student participation, the Flemish negotiation committee for higher education and the integration of certain department of higher education for social promotion in the *hogescholen*. The part on the legal position of students lays down the minimum student rights, e.g. the participation of students in the social discourse of the higher education institutions. The higher education institutions themselves should make the necessary arrangements at their institutions laying down the basic student rights, based on the fundamental principles of proper governance. This part of the act also arranges a new protection for students on decisions concerning exams. Previously, students disputing outcomes of exams had to take this up with the *Raad van State*, which meant a lengthy procedure. The new arrangement should shorten the procedure, as the dispute should first be dealt with internally, and only then followed by an appeal to the *Raad van State*, if necessary. In the part on the student participation the minimum arrangements, such as the obligation to inform students and the obligation to set up a student council at each higher education institutions, are laid down. It is left to the higher education institutions to give the actual completion to student participation.

With the initiative to form one Flemish committee for negotiations for higher education the Minister wants to streamline the negotiations on the legal position of staff members in higher education institutions. Before, many separate committees used to take part in these negotiations. In the new committee there will be delegates from government (through the Ministry of Education), personnel (through unions) and the boards of institutions (through VLIR and VLHORA). Finally, the part on the integration of certain departments into the *hogescholen* arranges just that. With this integration, the education for social promotion can be qualified as further education, to which only students with a degree from higher education can enter.

7 France

7.1 Education infrastructure

At the start of the academic year 2004, 70 universities had reorganised (part of) their programs following the Bologna structure, also known as the LMD structure. Although the introduction of the LMD structure aimed at opening up the European higher education area, it has also some positive 'side- effects'. In the three universities that started with a full LMD program in 2002, the drop out rate in the first two years has decreased significantly (Le Monde, 3-12-2004).

To keep the national higher education system consistent and transparent, monitoring committees for the Licence, the Master and the Licence profesionelle were established in May 2003. (source: Ministère jeunesse, education et recherché, La rentrée universitaire 2003, dossier de presse, 22/10/03)
These committees have made several recommendations in 2004 regarding registration of degrees, diploma supplements and partnerships between higher education institutions. (see also http://www.sup.adc.education.fr/lmdsuivi/)

7.1.1 ICT

The new Minister Fillon started a project to provide each student with a notebook computer for a euro a day (for three years). The Ministry provides €1.7 mln and universities are invited to realise WiFi areas to let the students use the potential of the computers. Around 95% of all universities participate in this scheme and 215000 computers were sold within two months.

There is also some concern on the 'mediocre' performance of the French higher education system in international rankings and comparisons (like the Shanghai ranking and the scores in OECD stats like Education at a Glance). In these discussions, the binary of dual structure of universities and Grandes Écoles is often (partly) blamed for this. According to Orivel, the low position on the ranking can be explained by the fact that universities and *Grandes Écoles* cover only part of the indicators used (prestigious teachers, excellent research). Furthermore, the lack of multidisciplinarity and the small size of *Grandes Écoles*, together with the poor funding of universities contribute to a mediocre ranking of the French system.

7.2 Research policy

The big turmoil in the French research community, which started in January 2004, lasted all winter and spring of 2004. The researchers demanded that the funds frozen in 2002 were freed, that a significant increase of posts for young researchers would be realised and that a platform for discussions on the future of research in France would be launched. After heated debates, the minister gave in on these demands. (Communiqué de presse, 27-2-2004 (http://www.recherche.gouv.fr/discours/2004/emploiscientifiqueimp.hym)
This however did not stop the crisis (in March nearly 1400 researchers in management positions resigned from these positions). The new minister ended the crisis in April by

promising a large number of additional posts for researchers, technicians (550) as well as 700 posts for professors and assistant professors in 2005.He also promised to put a planning law regarding research on the political agenda in the Autumn of 2004. (http://www.amue.fr/Outils/Imprime.asp?TypeDoc=Actu&Id=745)
Parallel to the elaboration of the planning law (which was postponed to 2005) the universities October came with a proposal to develop '*Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement*'. These Pôles have to group organisations that can co-operate and co-ordinate their activities regarding teaching, education, and research. This proposal has not yet been implemented in any form. (http://www.cpu.fr/Outils/Imprime.asp?TypeDoc=Actu&Id=837)

7.3 Finance

Due to the fact that most of the higher education institutions have started to implement a LMD structure in (part of) their programmes, new tuitions fees were announced. Since increasing the flexibility of the system was part of the reason to introduce LMD, the fees have been standardized for each programme: €150 for licence, €190 for master and €290 for doctorat. This standardization ends the situation in which fees where higher for professional programmes. This new scheme does not apply for *Grandes Écoles* and para-medical schools (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, Communiqué de presse, 2-7-04)

After a report and some newspaper articles on the poor state the real estate of the French universities is, the new minister (Fillon) made €60 million available. (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, Communiqué de presse, 5-7-04)

The 2005 budget shows an increase of the public funds allocated to higher education and research. The research budget is to be raised by €1 billion and the higher education budget will be increased with €9.4 billion (+3%). The three main 'projects' in this increase are the reinforcement of university research, the improvement of institutional resources/ facilities, and the increase of the state contributions to the planning contracts state-region (within the realm of the plan U3M).

8 Germany

After a series of years with major policy reforms on federal level the year 2004 was calm in terms of actual changes. Instead, higher education policy in Germany witnessed a year with political debates around the distribution of policy competencies between federal and *Länder* governments. The conflict seems to be driven by party-politics; mainly the conservative *Länder*-governments in the South against the red-green federal government. This general conflict is shown in the debates about federal governments' attempt to introduce a programme for “elite”-universities and the general distribution of policy competencies in the *Föderalismuskommission* (a commission which should have developed a new balance between general policy competencies between federal government and *Länder* governments). The provisory cancellation of membership in the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (KMK; the Standing Conference of the Education Ministers of the *Länder*) by the Land Lower-Saxony fits also in this category of conflict. Besides these conflicts the federal government and Länder governments established a comprehensive *Bildungsberichterstattung* (reports on education) which task is to report on developments in all educational fields.

8.1 Educational infrastructure

8.1.1 Bachelor Master

The introduction of Bachelor and Master study programmes progresses steadily. For summer semester 2005 1450 BA-programmes and 1313 MA-programmes are offered at German higher education institutions. These come up to around 27 % of all offered programmes in Germany. In winter semester 2003/2004, around 5.3 per cent of students enrolled for either Bachelors or Masters degrees.
In October 2004 the KMK decided to convey the *Akkreditierungsrat* (Accreditation Council) into a foundation of public law. The Land Northrhine-Westphalia announced that it plans to forbid students to enrol in Diploma- and Magister-programmes from semester 2007/2008 on.

8.1.2 Access to study and study retention

The role of the universities in the selection of students is strengthened. In study programmes where admission is limited the universities are allowed to select up to 60 % on their own. 20 % of the study places have to be filled with those with the best Abitur marks. The other 20 % has to be given to those waiting for a study place for a longer period already.

8.1.3 Staff

All reforms about staff structure and salaries (5th amendment of *Hochschulrahmengesetz, Professorenbesoldungsreformgesetz*) are under implementation. The Constitutional court decided on the *Verfassungsmäßigkeit* (accordance of a law with the constitutional law) of the 5th amendment of the higher education framework act. The constitutional court has declared that this amendment is too detailed in regulating staff structure and thereby breaches

constitutional rights of the *Länder*. The introduction of the junior professor was not questioned. The federal government changed the law according to constitutional courts' objection. From 1st of January 2005 the new professorial categories will be introduced. The implementation of the junior professors continues and bases now on a solid statutory ground. Some *Länder* (e.g. *Northrhine-Westpahlia*) aim to introduce a tenure-track like system which would allow junior professors to continue as full professor at the same universities.
Discussions about a new collective labour agreement for academic staff have received further concretion after the *Wissenschaftsrat* (council of science) published its recommendations.

8.2 Finance

In January 2005 the *constitutional court denied the Verfassungsmäßigkeit of the 6th amendment of the Hochschulrahmengesetz*. The 6th amendment guaranted basic study without tuition fees and bind the *Länder* to establish *verfasste Studierendenschaften* (formally-established local student unions) which are not established in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. It is expected that the first *Länder* start with the introduction of tuition fees in winter semester 2006/2007.
The introduction of long-term study fees in Northrhine-Westphalia and Hessen has meant either a strong decrease of student numbers or a palpable move from students to other *Länder*.
In 2004 the first *Länder* governed by social-democrats started with the implementation of *Studienkonten* which allow students to study for a certain period without paying tuition fees.

8.3 Governance

In 2004, *Länder* governments have launched proposals for new higher education laws (e.g. Baden-Württemberg and Northrhine-Westphalia). These proposals mainly aim to strengthen the autonomy of the universities.

9 The Netherlands[5]

9.1 A new Higher Education and Research Plan (HOOP 2004)

In the latest Higher Education and Research Plan (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2004), new ideas and policies have been launched. A first important issue is the rethinking of governmental steering of higher education. In more concrete terms, this concerns the funding of higher education (new models for funding), the modernisation of governance (performance contracts with higher education institutions) and the reconsideration of the steering concept (a new act on higher education). The latter issue may have considerable impact on present-day elements of the higher education system, for the new act is – according to the present State Secretary for Higher Education – not to be considered as piecemeal adjustment of the present-day legislation. A second important issue is that governmental policy aims to achieve both excellence of and maximum participation in higher education, "if necessary with non-orthodox measures" (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2004). Furthermore of particular relevance is the explicit attention to the strengthening of the relationship between higher education (universities and *hogescholen*) and business and industry.

9.2 Educational infrastructure

9.2.1 Widening participation

Compared internationally, the proportion of those in the workforce with a higher education degree is slightly below the OECD mean of 26%[6]. In 2003, the total student population was 522,090, of which 64% were in *hogescholen* (with over 334,000 students enrolled, 77% of them full-time) and 36% in universities (with 187,000 students enrolled, 92% of them full-time). To increase the overall participation rate, the Ministry aims to widen the participation of non-traditional groups such as people rejoining the workforce, ethnic minorities, older students, and those who do not opt for a full-time degree course but instead take a course in the context of lifelong learning. Flexible pathways in learning have been created to respond to individual demands, and it is expected that these demands will increase explosively. Examples are more customized education, assessment procedures (for example, admission to a shortened program based on work experience), e-learning, and cooperative education that combines education and work. The latter form has expanded considerably in Dutch higher

[5] The following resources have been used for presenting the update of the Netherlands: Huisman., J., (2005), Shifting boundaries in higher education: Dutch *hogescholen* on the move, in: Amaral, A. et al (eds.) *Non-university higher education, a comparative perspective*, Porto and Weert, E. de (2005 forthcoming), The Netherlands, in: J.J.F. Forest and Ph.G. Altbach (eds), *International Handbook of Higher Education*. Dordrecht etc: Kluwer.

[6] Percentage 25-34 year olds with tertiary education, data 2001; bron: OECD, 2002

education, particularly in the HBOs. Cooperative education is less common in universities, although it is a recognized form.

9.2.2 Internationalisation

There is a concern that the Netherlands is losing its competitive edge in Europe, and that higher education is not adequately responding to the needs of the knowledge-based economy. For example, enrolments in science and engineering subjects are considered too low compared to other countries and, increasingly, foreign students are necessary to fill the gap. Given the ambitions of most European governments to become the most dynamic and competitive economy in the world by the year 2010, both the previous and present Dutch governments have stipulated that the Netherlands should be at the forefront in Europe, and that higher education should play a crucial role in realizing these ambitions (see e.g. Koers op kwaliteit, Internationaliseringsbrief hoger onderwijs, 2004). In the policy paper "Koers op kwaliteit, Internationaliseringsbrief hoger onderwijs, 2004" it is stated that there is virtually no topic that is not affected by the issue of the growing Europeanization and internationalization of higher education. At the very least, these issues will influence the current re-structuring of the educational and research system; doctoral education; funding; academic staff; accountability; quality and accreditation; and the relationship between higher education and the economy.

9.2.3 Excellence

As students become more internationally mobile, and as international competition consequently increases, Dutch higher education must make an effort to attract the best students and to keep them. Excellence would counter a possible brain drain of Dutch students going abroad and would bring about a brain gain from other countries. In order to achieve this diversity, entrance selection is a condition sine qua non. Furthermore, institutions should have more freedom to determine the tuition fees for their courses, enabling them to differentiate the fee for first-class courses as well as for 'top-master's' degree programs. A characteristic of these 'top-masters' should be the quality of the program and the availability of the best academic staff that participate in research groups which have an internationally recognized presence in their field. An important development in this respect has been the emergence of research schools. These schools aim to structure university research and to provide more focused research training. The argument is made that aspiring researchers need further education and training of a sort that can only be provided in an environment of high quality research. Research schools are an important vehicle for concentrating research in centers of excellence that foster an international research climate with a high mobility of researchers. A strengthening of the research infrastructure and a proliferation of programmatic research frameworks would enhance both an environment for high quality research and the capacity to compete for research funds.

9.3 Finance

From the above it is clear that individuals will need to take a greater share of financial responsibility for their education. The question remains how to maintain a publicly funded

system that remains generally accessible, not only for the traditional cohorts, but for a larger group of people as well. The current government has launched various experiments in some areas to explore the possible effects.

9.3.1 New funding mechanism

Since the early 1990s, the funding mechanism has included performance indicators in the budget allocation for teaching and research. Regarding teaching, performance is measured in terms of the number of degrees awarded. According to the current 'performance-based funding model' (the BaMA-model) which has been operational since 2002, 50% of the core teaching funds is distributed on the basis of the number of degrees granted, 13% on the basis of new entrants, and the remaining 37% as a fixed amount for each university. The rationale for a fixed amount for each university is to guarantee a minimum level of teaching independent of the number of students. The amounts differ across universities and are mainly determined historically.

In the policy paper "Meer flexibiliteit, meer keuzevrijheid, meer kwaliteit: Financiering in het hoger onderwijs" (More flexibility, more freedom of choice, more quality: funding in higher education; 2004a), the performance indicator relating to teaching is under discussion. Under the new proposed system the parameters for allocating funds to universities will be changed. The funding based on the number of degrees will be less important and will be combined with the introduction of learning entitlements (in Dutch: leerrechten). Each student will receive a certain amount of learning entitlements, which they can use freely to study at any university they want. Each student will receive 8 or 10 learning entitlements, each worth half a year of study. Based on the number of students with their specific learning entitlements, universities will get funded.

9.3.2 Tuition fees and student support

In the last few years, the question of differential tuition fees has been a major issue in Dutch higher education. Although some changes have been introduced, e.g. higher education institutions are allowed to charge different tuition fees for students who are (no longer) eligible for student support as well as for students over 30 years and students from non-EU countries, the Ministry has been reluctant to use student related financial incentives to steer enrolment. Instead, the Ministry wants to introduce the "tuition-fee-loan" (in Dutch *collegegeldkrediet*) in addition to the current student support arrangements.

The current student support system is based on a basic grant for all full-time students, a means-tested supplementary grant (in practice for about 30% of the students), and a loans system to be taken up on a voluntary basis against an interest rate which is lower than the standard commercial rate. This student support system is under review. The basic idea of this revision is that since higher education brings individual students considerable future returns of investment, students should invest in the costs of their education. To overcome budget constraints students currently face, the Ministry wants to introduce the "tuition-fee-loan": in addition to their current student support arrangements, every student can take an (extra) individual loan for the maximum amount of all future to be paid tuition fees.

9.4 Research infrastructure

With respect to the funding of research it is now being explored how research performances can be measured and what the pro's and con's of various methods are. In the future a potential link to funding can be made, but not before a satisfactory performance measurement mechanism is found. Another way to increase science dynamics is to shift a substantial part of the research budget from the basic allocation to the budget of the research council. This has been an important consideration of subsequent governments. The council would then be able to redistribute the research budget to the most excellent locations in the university system. The performance-based component in research funding would also focus more on specific research areas and those research programs which from a socio-economic perspective are felt desirable. To date, however, universities have resisted this move, but there is increasing pressure on universities to show the outcomes of their research efforts in terms of socio-economic relevance and commercialization of research results.

9.5 Partnerships

9.5.1 Relationship universities- hogescholen

The relationship between universities and *hogescholen* has been the subject of continuous debate. Although there are overlaps between them and, in principle, courses are of the same duration, the government maintains a basic distinction between the two as a guarantee of institutional differentiation. "Equal but different" is the term which has gained the widest currency. The main difference is the status of research—for universities, this is a main task, but for *hogescholen* it is only permitted where it is applied research or research in the context of professional development. Despite the binary policy, both sectors are incorporated in a single Higher Education Research Act of 1992, encompassing a range of regulations that apply identically to both sectors. There is a tendency to seek more homogeneity in organizational and administrative matters on both sides of the binary line.

First, there is a growing collaboration in the form of networks and joint ventures among various universities and between universities and *hogescholen*. For example, the three technical universities have agreed to form a federation aiming at strengthening education and research in the technical fields. A joint graduate school will be established and there will be significant collaboration and tuning between the educational programs at the three universities. The overall purpose is to increase the number of students in technical fields by making programs more attractive in both the bachelor's and master's courses, as well as encouraging more focused and prioritised research with the overall ambition of providing additional impetus to the Dutch knowledge economy. Another illustration of the growing collaboration during the 1990s has been the mushrooming of partnerships between universities and *hogescholen*. These partnerships are considered beneficial for either side of the binary line. Collaboration is not limited to joint facilities (such as buildings, library, services), but also includes better student counselling and advice, the development of credit

transfer systems across the binary line and the like. Mergers are not the objective, nor the integration of study programs.

9.5.2 Relationship higher education institutions and industry/society

Several national agencies and committees in which members of industry have a prominent role have advocated strong linkages between higher education institutions with firms and branches of trade. In a similar vein, the Advisory Council on Science and Technology Policy and the Education Council (AWT/Onderwijsraad, 2001) and the Social-Economic Council (SER, 2003) have advocated a strengthening of knowledge circulation by creating more systematic partnerships between higher education institutions and their external constituencies. Examples of concrete policies include: collaboration on research and educational projects; more working visits and exchange of personnel on either side; more flexible forms of learning (such as co-operative education); competence-based learning and the establishment of the Innovation Platform (see for more information, update report 2003 and Boezerooy, 2004).

Other developments regard the growing impact of contract research for external constituencies and the Europeanization of the research agenda. The establishment of 'strategic alliances' between universities and industry in the field of research areas has expanded. The participation in large research programs—such as the European Framework Programs—has expanded as well. Several of these programs require that externally awarded research budgets are matched with an equal amount from the university's own budget. This matching requirement claims an increasingly larger part of the university's research budget. Apart from the debate on the perverse effects which contract funding for external constituencies may have, the matching requirement entails that university research is liable to be pushed aside. National advisory councils have taken up the issue as they see the matching requirement as undermining long-term, fundamental and risk-bearing research.

9.6 Quality

In 2004, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) was established to ensure and promote the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and the Flemish part of Belgium. The NVAO has developed a framework existing of six subjects on the basis of which assessment takes place: the objectives of the program; the design and implementation of the program; the program's use of personnel; institutional facilities; internal quality assurance mechanisms; and program results. In order to be accredited, all aspects must be assessed as 'satisfactory'. It should be stressed that the NVAO does not replace the existing quality assurance system. Rather, the accreditation process should be connected as much as possible with the prevailing quality assurance system (Dittrich et al., 2004). The internal self-evaluation report as such is not part of the accreditation process, as it is argued that in this way there is a better guarantee that the faculty will give a fair self-analysis leading to an internal discussion among all faculty members, which in turn will enhance the chances for improvement. In other words, the improvement function of quality assurance will be maintained in the new emerging system. The ranking of programs or institutions is not the purpose. The accreditation system is dichotomous. On the basis of an independent assessment process it is determined whether a program meets basic quality standards or not. The NVAO

applies a rather broad framework which allows for differentiation of educational programs in terms of distinctive profiles or special quality features. This makes it more difficult to draw up rankings and this is not what the NVAO pursues.

10 Portugal

10.1 Educational infrastructure

10.1.1 Bologna

The 3+2 degree structure is not yet implemented in Portuguese higher education. However, it is expected that the new government, after the spring elections of 2005 will implement the 3+2 structure for most programs (except medicine, veterinary sciences, law and architecture). A law establishing the regulatory principles of instruments for the creation of the European Area of Higher Education, including the ECTS system and the Diploma Supplement was approved by the Council of Ministers and is on the constitutional process of promulgation.

10.1.2 Sub degree programs

It is also expected that a decision will be made regarding sub-degree programs. These short (two-years) post secondary programs are now provided on a limited scale by secondary schools and some higher education institutions. They are not higher education diplomas. There has been some discussion whether these programs should be part of the higher education offering (and become higher education diplomas offered by higher education institutions) or whether they should stay post-secondary diplomas. Polytechnics are very much interested in the first option, since they would be the preferred providers of these programs.

10.1.3 Access

In 2003 a law was accepted that denies access to numerus clausus programs for those secondary school-leavers that have a mark below 10. In that law it was stipulated however that this threshold was not to be implemented until the academic year 2005/06. Many polytechnics fear that they will lose many new entrants, since a substantial part of their current clientele does not meet that criterion.

10.2 Research

In 2004 the problems regarding the accountability for the EU research support were finally solved. These EU funds have been a major part of the Portuguese R&D resources. These problems regarding accountability have seriously hampered the research activities in universities.

10.3 Funding

In the new funding formula, new criteria have been introduced in addition to the main criterion: student numbers. A controversial criterion was the quality criterion, which was related to the number of research centers at a university (and an assessment of their results). The fact that the number of centers was counted (and not the number of researchers) had some possible perverted affects (favouring the large and old universities).

In addition, the minister decided that only 80% of the amount a university would get applying the formula would be actually paid. The rest of the funds universities could find in raising the tuition fees. For that purpose, higher education institutions were allowed to raise their tuition fees.

11 Sweden

11.1 Educational infrastructure

11.1.1 Upper Secondary Education[7]

On 28 April 2004 a bill called "knowledge and quality – eleven steps for improving upper secondary education" was introduced. This bill proposed 11 reforms to upper secondary education system in Sweden. Among other things, these proposals include:
Producing grades for entries subjects rather than course modules – "At the end of each module, a subject grade will be awarded that replaces earlier grades in that subject and gives an overall assessment of how far the pupil has progressed in the subject."
Introduction of upper secondary school certificate – A document to show that the holder has completed and satisfied the requirements for upper secondary education. Students will need to obtain pass grades in at least 90% of their course credits.
Individual programs – In order to get more students to complete upper secondary education, pupils taking individual programs will be entitles to full-time education beginning 1 July, 2006. In the next budget, the government will discuss compensation to local governments for incurred expenses.
Unrestricted application – In order to increase freedom of choice, students will now be allowed to apply for programs in other municipalities, even if the program is offered in their home municipality. Individuals will only be accepted if open places still exist after the students in a given municipality have first been accommodated.
History – History will become a new core subject, worth 50 credit points. This brings the number of credits for core subjects up to 800.
Introduction of apprenticeship training program for vocational education
Increased quality for vocational education – Students who choose vocational education programs will now receive at least 15 weeks of on the job training.

11.1.2 Access to higher education[8]

In March 2003, the government decided that a special commissioner should review and propose amendments to the regulations governing entrance to undergraduate education. The starting-points for the review should be to increase the direct transition of students from upper secondary school to higher education, to stimulate student performance in upper secondary school, reduce the incentive for retaking grades later on and broaden recruitment to higher education. The commissioner's main proposals include:

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[7] Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Sweden. Factsheet: Eleven steps for improving upper secondary education.
[8] Source: Eurydice. Eurybase: Sweden. Available [on-line] at:
http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=SW&language=EN

Basic eligibility to be supplemented by requirements for a minimum Pass grade in the core subjects of Swedish and English and in project work.
A system of 14 different subject area accreditations to be introduced. Each of these accreditations should comprise two parts: subjects essential for accreditation and additional merit subjects. The essential subjects make up the compulsory entrance requirements, whilst the merit subjects are not entrance requirements, but may give the applicant extra "credits" in the form of merit points. The purpose of linking essential subjects and merit subjects is to provide upper secondary school students with a clear incentive to read languages, mathematics or some other relevant specialist or broad subject.
There should be three general higher education entrance selection criteria: grades, aptitude tests and a third determined by the individual university/university college. Normally, at least 30 per cent of the places on a particular program should be allocated on the basis of grades, at least 30 per cent on the basis of aptitude tests and at least 10 per cent on the basis of the third individually determined criterion. It should also be possible, however, to make exceptions to this specified distribution if there are special circumstances, e.g. that the program in question is of a continuing or supplementary nature.
Universities and university colleges should be given the responsibility for more situationally and educationally adapted admissions as part of a locally determined selection criterion. The universities/university colleges should consider and appraise knowledge other than that documented in upper secondary school grades.
Working life experience should henceforth be awarded significant value in connection with higher education admissions. However, the commissioner proposes that the general and thereby somewhat stereotyped method currently used to appraise working life experience should be replaced by an assessment of its relevance and quality.

The recommendations are proposed to be introduced in 2007.

11.1.3 Postgraduate training[9]

In 2001 sixteen national research institutes were set up by the Swedish Government. The National Agency for Education conducted a follow up study how to promote collaboration and improvement in postgraduate education. One of the most gratifying effects of collaboration is that doctoral students at various higher education institutions get to know one another. This bodes well for current and future cooperation.

Recruitment

Six research institutes have opted to start the recruitment process by announcing project grants that senior researchers (future supervisors) can apply for and only then, in the subsequent state, recruiting doctoral students. The other ten research institutes approach prospective doctoral students directly instead.

[9] Source: National Agency for Higher Education. Report 2004:18 – Follow up of 16 National Research Institutes: Collaboration, Recruitment, Supervision, Education. Available [on-line] at: http://wwweng.hsv.se/en/CollectionServlet?view=0&page_id=562&expand_tree=43

In many cases, the research institutes have implemented joint, and often national, announcements of places for doctoral students. The numbers of applicants for project grants and doctoral-student places alike have, in general, been well in excess of the funds and places available, and there is therefore heavy pressure on places. Most of the research institutes have, to a greater or lesser extent, taken the distribution of doctoral students' places among the higher education institution into consideration in some way. One method used is to guarantee a minimum number of places per higher education institution. The majority of the research institutes have a policy of appointing people to doctoral studentships from the very start. Consequently, a high proportion (74%) of the doctoral students at the research institutes are employed in that capacity from their first term of study.

Supervision

More than half the research institutes have drawn up a policy requiring at least one secondary supervisor to be assigned to every doctoral student. At almost all the other research institutes, a secondary supervisor is also very common, and many of the institutes are in favour of this kind of arrangement. Otherwise, extended supervision may consist in various forms of get-togethers for doctoral students and a large group of supervisors, for example in conjunction with seminars, workshops or residential courses. The directors have reported few changes of supervisor. In general, their interview replies give the impression that the research institutes, through their respective directors and others, have served as an extra support for the doctoral student concerned when a change of supervisor has nonetheless taken place.

Courses

All the research institutes arrange and provide courses. More than half also prescribe that some of these courses are compulsory for their doctoral students. Since the doctoral students at the national research institutes come from several higher education institutions, providing courses on a residential basis is fairly common. This may, for example, mean that the students attend an intensive course for a week, but ongoing residential courses are also offered. Sometimes a kind of intermediate form, in which doctoral students and teachers repeatedly get together for a few intensive days, has taken shape. The courses have been held at both host and partner higher education institutions, higher education institutions outside the research institute, course centres or the like. Occasionally, courses have also been held outside Sweden.

All the research institutes state that doctoral students from their regular educational activities have been allowed to attend the courses. However, the interviews indicate that availability may sometimes be limited owing to a shortage of places, lack of information for external doctoral students or the expense of attending for such students when courses are residential, whether they are held in Sweden or abroad. The research institutes' own seminars have developed to varying degrees, from not existing at all to being held continuously. Since the doctoral students are often so geographically dispersed, arranging joint seminars may be difficult. Solutions tried to date are dividing them into small seminar groups, holding video conferences (with the doctoral students taking part at their respective higher education institutions) and joint residential seminars.

Many supervisors state that the research institutes have meant a chance to develop new courses. One example of innovative thinking mentioned is that courses have been developed at different levels: advanced courses build on those of a more basic nature. Other quality-enhancing factors that have emerged are the use of specialist skills from various higher education institutions and departments, larger and more cohesive groups of doctoral students, a broader range of courses, development of more courses with a multidisciplinary focus, course collaboration with the business sector, and courses that recur more regularly.

Degree targets and throughput

The target is that altogether, by year-end 2007 at the latest, the research institutes should have awarded at least 392 doctorates. This time limit may be extended by not more than a year if the doctoral students concerned hold positions at higher education institution departments. First, 385 doctoral students were registered at the outset of their studies up to and including spring term 2003, and the research institutes have also continued to admit doctoral students since then. Secondly, there are various factors indicating that throughput will be high: dropout has been very rare; most doctoral students are in a secure financial situation; their activity level is high or very high; many of them have secondary supervisors; and a fairly small number have needed to change their supervisor. In addition, every research institute provides its own courses, designed to meet the needs of that particular institute's doctoral students.

11.1.4 The Agency's future studies of the research institutes

The present study is part of the National Agency for Higher Education's successive follow-ups of the 16 research institutes. The Agency also plans to survey the institutes from the viewpoints of the partner higher education institutions and the doctoral students. A final follow-up and evaluation will be implemented in 2007.

11.1.5 The Nordic countries and the Bologna Process

The following is referred to as the "Reykjavik Declaration" which was signed in June 2004.[10] It describes the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications between Nordic countries. With the Nordic Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education the Nordic Ministers of Education and Research will ensure,

- That qualification in the field of higher education of the Nordic countries shall be given full mutual recognition,
- That the Nordic countries shall achieve better Nordic agreement concerning testing of recognition of work-related experience as well as education and training other than higher education,
- That the Nordic countries shall achieve better Nordic agreement in evaluating qualifications obtained in both Nordic and other countries by means of continuing exchange of information and experience, ministries, the authorities appointed as national

[10] Source: Nordic Declaration on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education. Available [on-line] at: http://odin.dep.no/filarkiv/220110/10.5_b_bilaga_-_Nordic_Decl_on_the_Recognition_of_Qualifications_Conc_Higher_Educ_leo.pdf.

information centres on academic recognition and mobility (the ENIC offices, see Article X.3 of the Convention) as well as institutions of higher education.
- That the appropriate authorities shall provide information and guidance concerning issues affecting the recognition of Nordic higher education from one Nordic country to another.
- That on a continuous basis, the national ENIC offices shall identify problems in implementing and applying the Nordic Declaration as well as the Lisbon Declaration, and that they shall report to the Nordic Council of Ministers every second year. The first report shall be made at the end of 2005. The Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers shall be responsible for producing such a report.

Together the Nordic Ministers of Education and Research shall monitor the application of this Nordic declaration and adopt any measures required by developments.

In April 2002, a working group was appointed at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science to undertake a Degree Review.11 It was called for mainly in response to the Bologna Process and national developments during the past ten years. The review has primarily concerned the degree structure – and more specifically, the level and status of the *magisterexamen* (master degree) – formulation of the scope and objectives of different degrees and the translation of degree names. Another task was to address the issue of adapting the Swedish credit point and grading scale systems to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). During this process there have been a number of consultations with relevant stakeholders. The points of departure for the Degree Review have been to:
- promote national and international mobility for students, during and after completing their studies,
- increase the clarity and transparency of the Swedish structure for higher education,
- strengthen confidence in the quality of Swedish higher education,
- increase possibilities for lifelong learning, and
- safeguard freedom and flexibility for both students and higher education institutions.

An interim report was presented in March 2003 and the final report (*Högre utbildning i utveckling – Bolognaprocessen i svensk belysning*, Ds 2004:2) in February 2004. This is being circulated for comments to all the relevant stakeholders until 9 June 2004. The Government will subsequently take a stand on the proposals put forward by the review group. If accepted by the Government and the Parliament, the proposals would primarily entail changes in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and the Degree Ordinance (an appendix to the Higher Education Ordinance). The review group estimates that new legislation and regulations ensuing from the proposals could come into effect on 1 July 2007.

[11] Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Sweden. Factsheet: Eleven steps for improving upper secondary education. http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/04/71/35a9acf7.pdf. See also Eurydice country report: Sweden.

11.2 Research Infrastructure

11.2.1 Policy developments[12]

This discussion paper outlines several strategies for ensuring that Sweden remains as one the most productive economies in Europe and the world. In addition to highlighting some of the programs and changes listed above it also highlights several key concerns in the coming years and outlines a number of changes to the higher education system worth pursuing, such as:

- Continuing large-scale, comprehensive and long-term investments in education at all levels.
- The initiation to begin in 2005 where more pre-school teachers and child caregivers will be employed in pre-schools to reduce the size of children's groups.
- Promote mathematics and interest in science and technology studies
- Encourage international student mobility
- Continue to invest in research and research education. This includes increasing the number of research degrees awarded.
- The development of industrial research institutes as a supplement to the higher education sector.

[12] Source: Swedish Ministry of Education and Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. Innovative Sweden: A strategy for growth through renewal. Available [on-line] at: http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/03/25/51/29e722a9.pdf

12 United Kingdom

The changes in higher education in 2004, especially in England, were driven mostly by the Higher Education Whitepaper ("The Future of Higher Education") of 2003. This whitepaper led to a new Higher Education Act that was given royal assent on July 1st 2004. Among the most important developments captured in the Higher Education Act are first, to implement variable tuition fees. The act allows the institutions to set their own fees with a maximum that is laid down in regulations (not as in the previous act in the act itself). And second, the creation of the office of fair access (OFFA) to see to it that higher tuition fees do not negatively affect access to higher education for lower social economic groups. The Act also contains provisions relating to three matters not covered by the White Paper: like the establishment of a new research council replacing the existing Arts and Humanities Research Board.

12.1 Educational Infrastructure

12.1.1 Office of Fair Access

This office was created under the Higher Education Act 2004 with the central role to the drive to widen participation. Any institution that intends to charge tuition fees above the standard level (above £1200 and up to £3000) will need an Access Agreement approved by the Director of OFFA. An access agreement will cover a period of up to five years. It could be a short document setting out the fee limits an institution intends to set, the measures it intends to take to safeguard and maintain fair access, and the milestones it will set itself around fair access. These Access Agreements will set out:

- Institutions' fees for courses up to the maximum allowed of £3,000.
- Institutions' plans for bursaries and other financial support for students;
- Any plans for outreach work to encourage more potential students from under-represented groups to consider higher education;
- Plans to provide information to prospective students on available funding; and
- Institutions' own milestones, set by themselves, which will help them and OFFA monitor whether their efforts to improve access are succeeding.

Each access agreement will be considered against the requirements set out in our guidance to institutions and with particular regard to whether the plans for bursaries and/or outreach are satisfactory, an appropriate amount of investment has been committed to access measures and that milestones are suitably challenging and realistic. The Director of OFFA can also impose sanctions on any institution that breaches its own Access Agreement. In the event of a serious breach OFFA may refuse to renew an institution's Access Agreement or impose a direct financial penalty. An institution's failure to meet milestones is not in itself grounds for any kind of sanction. It is however expected that institutions will themselves want to review their progress against their own milestones when an Access Agreement comes up for renewal (DfES, 2004). OFFA will have no remit over the admissions arrangements of universities. Admissions are and will remain a matter for the universities themselves as set out in the HE

Act 2004. There is no maximum or minimum proportion of additional fee income that universities are expected to divert towards financial support. Some universities have already made public that they plan to spend up to 30 per cent of their additional income on bursaries. The contribution will vary from institution to institution, but as an illustration, if the average across the sector were 20 per cent, then an additional £200 million could be invested into widening participation (OFFA, 2004).

12.2 Research Infrastructure

The Higher Education Act of 2004 envisions the creation of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in April 2005. The Act provides for the new research council to be created from the existing Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRC).

This decision to create n AHRC is widely seen as showing the importance of the humanities and social science disciplines now being recognized on a wider scale. The AHRB was created in 1998 following the 1997 Dearing Report on UK higher education, which recommended that a research council for the arts and humanities be established. The Higher Education Act will now make this a reality. Reflecting the state of devolution in the UK, before the research council can take of on a UK-wide scale it needs the approval of the Scottish Parliament. In preparation for the creation of the AHRC, the AHRB has been fully included in the Research Councils' bid to the 2004 Spending Review.

12.3 Finance

12.3.1 Variable tuition fees

As mentioned above one of the most important developments in terms of higher education finances is the introduction of variable tuition fees per 2006. To support students who can not afford the new tuition fees. The Government will provide grants of up to £2700 for the lowest income students from households earning £15,201 or less. OFFA will ensure that any institution charging tuition fees of £3000 provides bursaries of at least £300 to these students. This means that a low income student going to a university which charges £3000 will get at least £3000 in non-repayable support. Some universities have already announced their intention to offer bursaries of up to £4000 per year. This means that some low-income students will receive almost £7000 in non-repayable support each year. Moreover, no full-time undergraduate student will have to pay fees up-front. Instead, both new and existing students will be able to defer payment of their tuition fees until after they leave higher education. They will be able, if they wish, to take out a ‘fee loan’ from the Student Loan Company which they will repay once they have left university and are earning over £15,000 a year. The maximum fee loan available would be £3,000 a year for new students and around £1,200 for existing students.

There were some last minute debates in parliament surrounding the implementation of these variable tuition fees. One of the issues on which Parliament agreed was to waive top-up fees for next year's gap year students following fears that there would be a rush to get to university before the price triples. This decision followed lobbying from the National Union of Students

who argued that students, who wish to delay the start of their course for a year, should not be penalised by being charged top-up fees and that more and more students are using that extra year to earn money to try and fund their studies. Following discussions in the House of Lords, the government is also due to vote on a Lords inserted amendment to limit fees to the first three years of any course - in a bid to help medical and law students who study up to seven years.

The bill has been heavily mauled by critics in the Commons. Labour's majority was slashed to just five on its second reading at the start of the year. The Office of Fair which was inserted at the last minute in a bid to appease Labour MPs who were worried about the impact of top-up fees on attempts to encourage more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to university, was thoroughly amended by the Lords, who sought to ensure it had no right to dictate a university's admissions policies. The Lords did not question the key components of the bill: to introduce top-up fees of up to £3,000 and a limited grant for the poorest students.

12.3.2 HEFCE strategy document:

HEFCE has developed (in 2003 but the revised version came out in April 2004) a strategic plan within the broad national policy framework established by the White Paper 'The future of higher education'. It sets out our plans to carry forward the key policy aims in that document requiring action by the Council. It responds to the challenges that will shape the higher education system over the coming decade.
The strategic plan focuses on the following issues:

- Widening participation and fair access
- Enhancing excellence in learning and teaching
- Enhancing excellence in research
- Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society
- Building on institutions' strengths
- Developing leadership, governance and management
- Excellence in delivery

Though the plan contains many objectives and possible means to reach those objectives, the single most important development is towards a further concentration of research funding. Sir Howard Newby the chief executive of HEFCE coined the interesting phrase: the "squeezed middle" reflecting the fact that the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise will create further concentration of research funding at the highest scoring subjects in the exercise. The Times Higher Education supplement of 10 December 2004 reported that hundreds of academic jobs are being culled across Britain as smaller and middle-ranking universities restructure subject provision to compete for research cash and that new statistics from the Association of University Teachers show redundancies running at more than 660 this year.

12.4 Governance

In a discussion paper published in May 2004, the Department for Education and Skills voiced its intention to create renewable degree awarding powers. Until now all institutions awarding

their own UK degrees do so by virtue either of a Royal Charter, an Act of Parliament or under the provisions of section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. There is no power to grant degree-awarding powers on a future conditional basis (i.e. subject to continuing to meet specified conditions). Making these degree-awarding powers conditional is seen as an important way in which the Government could protect the reputation and quality of UK degrees. The discussion paper states that: “In a global marketplace for higher education, where there is increasing competition for international students, the reputation of UK degrees is one of our key competitive advantages. Recent research reports2 on international higher education demonstrate the potential growth in this area and the importance of safeguarding our well-earned reputation for high standards.”

At this moment an organisation with UK degree awarding powers can offer these degrees in many countries overseas and the scope for poor performance or dilution of standards by one organisation could damage the status of all UK degrees. In light of these risks, the department proposes that degree-awarding powers should in future be granted for fixed terms, renewable subject to satisfactory external audit. (DfES, 2004a)

13 Conclusions

Higher education is a dynamic field. It is, however, also a field where changes don't take place overnight. This update covers a period of 1.5 years, a period in which some earlier policy initiatives have been implemented and new ones have emerged. It is therefore not surprising to observe that many of the policy issues on the agenda in the previous Update Report (April, 2003) still are a topic of debate today.

In the final part of this update report, we will discuss the broad issues apparent in contemporary European (and Australian) higher education. However, instead of summing up the issues described in the country chapters, we will discuss five themes that are in one way or another apparent in all or many countries in this study. These themes overlap with the topics that have been discussed in the country chapters (educational and research infrastructure, finance, governance and quality). The following themes will be discussed below:

- The Bologna process and changing degree structures
- The changing organisation of research
- Financial accountability and responsibility
- Interactive governance

13.1 The Bologna process and changing degree structures

In June 1999, 29 European ministers in charge of higher education met in Bologna to lay the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010 and promoting the European system of higher education world-wide. In the Bologna Declaration, the ministers affirmed their intention to:

- adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- adopt a system with two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate)
- establish a system of credits (such as ECTS)
- promote mobility by overcoming obstacles
- promote European co-operation in quality assurance
- promote European dimensions in higher education

Several instruments were developed to achieve those objectives, like the expansion of the ECTS system and the use of diploma supplements. However, the instrument that has had the most impact on national higher education systems is the adoption of a 'common degree structure'. Since the Berlin follow up meeting in 2003 this common degree structure is described as a three-cycle structure. The most common form of this is the 3+2+3 structure, although in a number of countries the lay-out is different (in the Netherlands it is 3or4+1or2 +4, in the UK it is 3+1+3 and in Germany there are differences between *Länder* regarding the structure). Although the Bologna Declaration does not *impose* the structure, there is a clear felt push towards implementation of the three-cycle structure (in whatever form) and the declaration has triggered massive reforms of degree structures in many European countries.

Two of the countries described in this report are an exception to this trend, i.e. Australia and Denmark. In the case of Australia this does not come as a surprise, since Australia did not

sign the Bologna Declaration and can hardly be seen as part of the European higher education space. In Denmark, a three-cycle degree structure already did exist prior to Bologna. Although Bologna has led to a revitalisation of the bachelor programs, the Danish structure as such has not been changed, nor debated.

If we look at the introduction of the Bachelor-Master model in the other countries discussed, we observe many different speeds. In the Netherlands, the new degree structures have been fully implemented in 2004. In other countries, changes are implemented in a more gradual way. In Austria about 25% of the university studies are transformed into *Bakkalaureat* and *Magister* programmes. The percentage was about 12% a year earlier. The introduction of Bachelor and Master study programmes in Germany progresses in similar vein. For the summer semester 2005 1450 BA-programmes and 1313 MA-programmes are offered at German higher education institutions. These come up to around 25 % of all programmes offered in Germany. At the start of the French academic year 2004, 70 universities had reorganised (part of) their programs according to the three-cycle structure. Finland is working on the implementation of the Bologna agreement which will be realized in 2005. The Flemish government has agreed in April 2004 to adjust the diplomas awarded by higher education institutions to the new structure of bachelor and master programmes. In countries in which the new degree structure has not been implemented yet, the introduction of the Ba-Ma model seems to trigger a wider debate on degree structures (e.g. Sweden and Portugal). The UK already operated in a Bachelor-Master structure before the Bologna Declaration, but debates have popped up whether the existing degree structure fits the Bologna 'requirements' and how the new foundation degrees fit in.
An important issue for countries with a binary system, is the relationship between the Bachelors and Masters from a University and the degrees from *Fachhochschulen*, *Hogescholen*, etc. In Portugal, there is discussion about the value of the Polytechnic programmes (higher education degrees or post secondary diplomas). In Flanders, *Hogescholen* need to 'academise' their education, whilst in Finland the exact equivalence of the *Maisteri* is a topic of debate.

As mentioned before, there are two other instruments developed to achieve the Bologna goals, i.e. the Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS. Most countries (not including Portugal and the UK) now have implemented the diploma supplements, although there is some diversity in how they have been implemented. The situation regarding the ECTS is slightly different. In some countries (e.g. Netherlands, Flanders, and Austria) this has been fully implemented. In Finland it will be implemented in 2005, and the Swedish expect to introduce ECTS in 2007.

13.2 Changing research infrastructures

In the previous section the Bologna-process was described as an international/European process that has a major impact on the higher education infrastructure. Parallel to the Bologna process, the EU in 2000 in Lisbon started a process intended to make the EU by 2010, "..the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". To achieve this goal, ambitious objectives and targets were formulated for a number of policy areas, including education and research. To close the 'knowledge gap' between the USA and Europe, a target was set for research expenditure: 3% of GDP by 2010. This process has inspired national

governments to review their research infrastructure. Many of the countries in this update report have announced reforms in their research infrastructure. Two themes emerge when analysing these reform(proposal)s: (i) concentration and co-ordination of research activities, and (ii) expanding the relationships with the 'outside' world. The rationale for the first theme is to focus and prioritise research activities in order to achieve excellence in the most efficient way. The concentration theme can be found in the changing role of research councils. Denmark is witnessing a reform of the Research Council System where a mixed approach of bottom-up and top-down initiatives is facilitated. All public foundation grants for research will be distributed in open competition. Austria introduced the *Forschungsförderungs-Strukturreformgesetz*. The government deemed it necessary to adjust the existing infrastructure in light of Austria's aim to be among the most innovative, competitive and productive regions in Europe and to contribute to the supranational Barcelona and Lisbon objectives. Both countries are concentrating their research support in order for funding to be distributed more efficiently. The UK on the other hand has planned to set up a new research council (Arts and Humanities Research Council) in April 2005. In Australia, it was observed that universities and university bodies broadly oppose any move of current research funds away from performance-based block funding for the universities towards the research councils.

In France, another type of concentration is discussed: a physical concentration of research activities in '*Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement*'. The Australian policy to stimulate the co-operation between research institutes and universities is the third guise of the concentration theme.

The second theme, expanding the relations with the outside world, appeared in Sweden and Netherlands where the increased co-operation with industry was on the agenda, as well as in Finland where the creation of linkages with the region was a focal point.

The internationalisation of research, which was an issue in various countries (e.g. Flanders, the Netherlands) can be seen as another form of this second theme. To compete with other European countries and with the United States, universities try to attract foreign researchers, post-docs and Ph.D students in order to maintain or improve the innovative capacity of the national economy.

13.3 Shifting financial arrangements

Within the realm of the theme finance there are two issues. The shift towards more individual responsibility for the students is the first one. This individual responsibility comes in two forms. The first is the increased financial burden for students. There is a number of countries in which there are no tuition fees and where they are not on the agenda. This is the case in the Scandinavian countries. In some countries there is a move towards tuition fees, combined with the expansion of student support and loans systems. In Germany, the issue of tuition fees is still high on the agenda. In the new *Hochschulrahmengesetz*, tuition fees for study programmes of public higher education institutions (with the exception of *Langzeitstudierende* and further education, including further education Master programmes) have been prohibited. The constitutional court in January 2005 decided that this prohibition of tuition fees is not constitutional.

In the Netherlands, the question of differential tuition fees has been a major issue for years. Although some changes have been introduced, the Ministry has been reluctant to use financial

incentives for students to steer enrolment. Instead, it wants to introduce the "tuition-fee-loan" (in Dutch *collegegeldkrediet*) in addition to the current student support arrangements.
In Australia and the UK, students have to pay relatively high tuition fees, but policies are developed to safeguard access for underprivileged groups. In the UK the major issue was the establishment of the "Office of Fair Access", which was explicitly created to deal with the negative consequences of high tuition fees. In Australia the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships Programme was introduced. These scholarships will assist rural and regional, low socio-economic status and indigenous students to meet the costs associated with higher education. They will be allocated to eligible students based on merit.
The second form in which the shift towards more responsibility for students comes is the introduction of learning entitlements. Learning entitlements can be seen as a way to enhance the influence that students have on the supply and quality of higher education programs. The downside (for the students) is that once the entitlements are used, (s)he has to pay (more) for further education. In Australia student learning entitlements were introduced in 2004. In two German *Länder* (Nordrhein Westfalen and Rheinland Pfalz) *Studienkonten* were introduced (a rather limited form of learning entitlements) and in the Netherlands *leerrechten* were introduced in the discussions regarding a reform of the funding arrangements of higher education institutions.
The shift of responsibilities and financial burdens towards the students, as can be seen in a number of countries, is accompanied by an increased awareness of the negative effects this may have on equity and social cohesion. National governments are in different stages of developing instruments that may counterbalance these effects.

In addition to the shifting responsibilities of government/higher education institution vis-à-vis the student, there also (and still) is a trend to more responsibility and accountability for institutions regarding the efficient use of resources.
Several measures were introduced to stimulate universities and other higher education institutions to become more 'productive'. Denmark introduced a so-called bachelor bonus. The bonus is awarded every time a student completes his/her bachelor programme. It is a reward to universities who pay attention to whether their students are actually finishing their bachelor programme. The Finnish government is preparing new funding mechanisms for both the university and the polytechnic sector. The first proposals for these reforms will be ready in the first half of 2005. A new funding system for universities is introduced because the current system is too much based on the traditional allocation of public funds. There is a lack of incentives and opportunities for stimulating mutual competition between the institutions. In the polytechnic sector a change will take place from input funding to the output-based system used by the university sector. Flanders is planning a new funding system for 2007, that should be simple and transparent, securing an adequate funding base for the institutions. It also should challenge the institutions, perhaps in the form of output or incentive base funding.

13.4 Interactive governance

The last few years the co-ordination of the higher education system has been changed in many countries and universities still are adapting to the new situation. In Germany, governance issues are especially apparent in the division of authority over higher education between the federal level and the Lander. The past year this especially concerned topics related to staff

and the introduction of tuition fees. In Flanders, new legislation (*Aanvullingsdecreet*) has shifted authority further towards the institutional level (e.g. for dispute resolution).

Although governments retain a firm grip on their higher education sectors by a wide range of accountability measures, universities do gain more freedom. The shift of autonomy towards the institutional level provides more leeway for universities to set their strategic directions. The last few years new accountability schemes were introduced in which the state (and in some cases the region) makes agreements with individual institutions regarding their performance. The Danish and French contracts, the German *Zielvereinbarungen*, and the Finnish and Swedish 'Management by objectives' are examples of such schemes. In Australia new accountability frameworks were introduced in 2004, and in the Netherlands there was a proposal to introduce *prestatie-afspraken* (performance based agreements) between the Ministry and individual institutions.

In terms of organisational governance one can detect a push towards a 'new openness' of universities vis-à-vis their surroundings. In many countries universities are stimulated to open up more to industry, be it global transnational industries or regional industries. In some countries, especially Finland, the role of higher education institutions in regional development is a major topic. However, governments do not have a full say in new developments anymore. International commitment partly sets the agenda (e.g. Bologna, Lisbon). But also universities themselves benchmark with universities from other countries, not just the ones in their own countries.

The increasing autonomy, together with the push towards openness of universities and other higher education institutions have made the governance of 'the university' very complex. Different parts of the university have spread out their links over different sectors and different territories. Also, they become more and more part of a multi-layered system where agenda setting and decision-making takes place on various levels (and across various sectors) simultaneously. The (importance of) the Bologna process and the Lisbon process illustrate this. And increasingly it is becoming clear that whilst the opening up of the university may be a strategic objective embraced by institutional leaders, this does not equate with easy and straightforward implementation. In this respect, academia still is a powerful force to be reckoned with.

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