

Bologna Process National Report French Community of Belgium

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

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Main achievements since Bergen

1. Since 2005, the implementation of the Bologna Process has continued in the Belgian French Community with several modifications to the legislation applicable to the different types of higher education. For example, the following can be listed:

Decree of 31 March 2004 specifying the remit of higher education, facilitating its inclusion within the European Higher Education Area, and providing fresh funding for universities – modified in 2005 and 2006;

Decree of 16 June 2006 related to cooperation agreements for the organisation of studies between university institutes and laying down various provisions relating to higher education (joint degrees);

Decree of the Government of the French community of 9 June 2006 determining specific funding rules for ongoing education programmes provided by higher education institutes;

Decree of the Government of the French community of 30 June 2006 defining the entry conditions for admission to university studies for holders of academic degrees awarded outside of a university;

Decree of 5 August 1995 regulating the general organisation of higher education in the “Hautes Écoles” (non-university higher education institutes) – modified by a Decree of 30 June 2006 that modernises the operation and funding of the Hautes Écoles;

Decree of 2 June 2006 defining the academic grades awarded by Hautes Écoles that are organised or grant-aided by the French Community, and defining the minimum timetables;

Decree of the Government of the French Community of 30 June 2006 regulating the “passerelles” (bridging programmes) giving access to studies organised in Hautes Écoles;

Decree of 20 December 2001 defining the rules specific to higher artistic education organised in higher art schools (organisation, funding, staffing, status of personnel, students’ rights and

obligations) – modified in particular by a Decree of 2 June 2006 implementing various measures relating to higher artistic education;
Decree of the Government of the French community of 31 August 2006 implementing various measures relating to tertiary artistic education;
Decree of the Government of the French community of 2 June 2006 creating the Upper Council for Student Mobility.

In practice, since the Bergen conference, what we are seeing is the generalisation of the usage of ECTS and the adoption of the diploma supplement in all types of higher education institutes (see questions 16 and 18).

The new degrees have been created (Bachelor, Master ...) and some Bachelor degrees have already been awarded (see question 7).

The higher education institutes have the possibility of concluding cooperation agreements between themselves for the organisation of studies allowing students to be awarded a joint degree (see question 22).

On the topic of mobility, it should be noted that the fund to support student mobility within the European Higher Education Area, created in 2004, will be effective in 2007. In addition, the Upper Council for Student Mobility has been created. It is made up of experts and representatives from the different types of higher education institutes and the student organisations. This Council has the task of informing students and the higher education institutes about all programmes that support student mobility and to manage certain mobility programmes (Erasmus ...).

Also, ongoing education programmes organised by universities or academies are encouraged by specific grants (Decree of the government of the French community of 9 June 2006).

Lastly, it should be noted that a think-tank on the implementation of a national qualification framework has been created (the “EQF Group”, see question 2).

National organisation

2. No major change has occurred concerning the structure of the authorities or other bodies responsible for higher education (see points 2.1 and 8.1 of the Bergen conference report).

The higher education institutes are organised and/or grant-aided by the French community, which is their supervisory authority.

It should also be remembered that an official and permanent structure exists for ongoing discussion within the framework of the Bologna Process (“Bologna Promoters” group), as already mentioned in the Bergen conference report (point 2.3). The composition of this structure and its role are described in question 4 of this report.

Also, a working group created by the Government of the French community and made up of senior education officials is responsible for piloting the implementation of a national qualification framework.

Lastly, as regards the funds allocated to the different higher education institutes (including scientific research), the amounts are in the order of a billion euros.

3. The institutional structure has not changed (see point 2.2 of the Bergen conference report for the different types of higher education institutes).

The Belgian French Community has 9 universities grouped into 3 academies, 29 Hautes Écoles, 4 Higher Institutes of Architecture, and 17 Higher Art Schools.

Student enrolments for the academic year 2005/2006 breakdown as follows between the different types of higher education institutes:

- Universities: 54,416 (1st and 2nd transition cycles, basic, initial and preparatory year)
- Hautes Écoles: 74,320
- Higher Institutes of Architecture: 2,470
- Higher Art Schools: 6,295

Data relating to the number of students enrolled for the year 2006/2007 are not yet available; students are counted on the 1st of February in the calendar year following the beginning of the school year.

On the topic of regulation, it should be remembered that some provisions of the decree of 31 March 2004 (decree “specifying the remit of higher education, facilitating its inclusion within the European Higher Education Area, and providing fresh funding for universities”) apply to all of the higher education institutes (see point 1.1 of the national Bergen conference report).

Partnership

4. The Bologna follow-up group was created in January 2005 by the Minister M-D. Simonet, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This working group is made up of the official representative of the French Community in the Bologna Process follow-up group, a student, two advisers from the Minister’s personal staff, three university Rectors (one per academy), and two representatives from the General Higher Education Council. Moreover, the different councils (Inter-university Council of the French Community, General Higher Education Council, ...) have a supporting role for the higher education institutes that are under their responsibility as far as the different reforms are concerned.

5. For this question, please refer to the answers given in points 8.2 and 8.3 of the national Bergen conference report.

In addition, the applicable legislation is accessible on the following internet site: <http://www.cdadoc.cfwb.be> (see “Gallilex”, which has been produced by the administrative documentation centre of the French Community’s general secretariat, which has the objective of facilitating on line access of the legislation that is in force in the French Community) and also on the website <http://www.enseignement.be/infosup>.

In particular, the following texts can be consulted on this site:

- Law of 28 April 1953 on the organisation of higher education by the State;
- Decree of 12 June 2003 defining and organising the participation of students in university institutions and establishing the participation of students at the community level;
- Decree of 5 August 1995 regulating the general organisation of higher education in the “Hautes Écoles”, modified by a Decree of 30 June 2006 that modernises the operation and funding of the Hautes Écoles (in particular, this decree extends the tasks of the student councils, which are henceforth charged with ensuring continuity of representation, notably by the student’s representatives participation in training, and informing students of their rights, about life in a Haute École, and the educational possibilities offered to them).

Moreover, this new decree also foresees, in the Hautes Écoles grant-aided by the French Community, the participation of a student representative in the committee responsible for examining complaints from students in the event that their inscription has been refused;

- Decree of 20 December 2001 defining the rules specific to higher artistic education organised in Higher Art Schools (organisation, funding, staffing, status of personnel, students' rights and obligations).

6. Amongst measures put in place to ensure better cooperation with the socio-economic world it can be reported that, in certain categories of long-type higher education in Hautes Écoles, work-experience is henceforth foreseen in the students' curriculum and is no longer undertaken during the school holidays (decree of 2 June 2006 defining the academic grades awarded by Hautes Écoles organised or grant-aided by the French community and defining the minimum timetables).

Moreover, some universities have developed interface units and "research and development" units. These are responsible for promoting and facilitating collaboration between the universities concerned and the public or private entities participating in the commercial development of research projects (examples: laboratory visits, publications, contract negotiations, technological guidance,...).

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

7. The implementation of the first and second cycles organised in the different types of higher education according to the "Bologna" structure can be summarised as follows: the first three years of Bachelor studies are currently provided everywhere, some Bachelor degrees have already been awarded.

The specific situation for each type of higher education institute is the following:

Starting from the academic year 2006/2007, university institutes no longer provide undergraduate studies (the former first study cycles). The first Bachelor degrees were awarded in June 2006. Moreover, some Masters are already organised and all will be provided in 2007/2008.

In the Hautes Écoles, in short type higher education, the three study years leading to a Bachelor's degree are provided. The Hautes Écoles no longer provide "graduats". The first Bachelor degrees were awarded in June 2005.

In long type higher education, the first three years of the first cycle are presently provided. The first Bachelor degrees will be awarded in June 2007. The first 60 credits Master degrees will be awarded from June 2008 at the latest and the 120 credits Master grades will be awarded from June 2009 at the latest. It should be noted that "licence" degrees may still be awarded until 2009.

In the Higher Architecture Institutes, for the academic year 2006/2007, the first cycle according to the “new system” is completely in place. The first Bachelor degrees will be awarded in June 2007. Following this, the studies for a Master in architecture will be organised but will coexist with the old architecture studies (“licence”) until 2009/2010. In 2006/2007, the Higher Art Schools provide the first three years of Bachelor studies (short or long type higher education). The first year of Master studies (60 or 120 credits) will be organised for the first time in the academic year 2007/2008 but will still coexist with the old “licence” studies.

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

8. The third cycle (research and doctoral training) is only organised at a university. The third cycle programmes are accessible after obtaining a Master’s degree awarded after two study years (120 ECTS). These include a theoretical training part (optional) with a duration of one year (60 ECTS), rewarded by a research training certificate which gives graduates a high scientific and professional qualification, and another part, related to the preparation of the doctorate thesis dedicated to individual research (at least three years or 180 ECTS) rewarded by the degree of Doctor after defending a thesis. The minimum duration defined by the legislation is therefore three years (180 ECTS) but in practice, it has been noted that the average length of studies is four years.

The studies are organised in doctoral schools (decree of the Government of the French Community of 4 March 2005) belonging to one or more university academies. At the end of 2004, the FNRS, Commission of doctoral schools, was created. One of the tasks of this Commission has been to propose a general organisation for the creation of doctoral schools (disciplinary doctoral schools and thematic doctoral schools).

Doctorate programmes are presented in ECTS credits (180 credits at least).

Doctorates are included in the national qualification framework.

Access to the next cycle

9. The conditions for eligibility to the second and/or third cycles organised depending on circumstances in the different higher education institutes are listed in the legislative provisions that apply to them.

- All of the first study cycles (Hautes Écoles, long type; universities; Higher Architecture Institutes, Higher Art Schools, long type) provide eligibility for the corresponding second study cycle.

- None of the first study cycles provide eligibility for the third study cycles.

- Only those people that have been awarded an in-depth Master’s degree are directly eligible for a third study cycle. Those people that have a Master’s degree with 60 credits or a Bachelor’s degree are not eligible for a third study cycle.

- Those people with a Bachelor's degree (single cycle) awarded after short type higher education in a Haute École or Higher Art School are not directly eligible for second cycle studies but nevertheless can become eligible under certain conditions, via bridging programmes comprising studies of 60 or 75 credits maximum depending on the case.

- The following examples can be given where a student has to follow supplementary courses if s/he wants to enrol in another study cycle but in the same study area:

Transition from a first to a second cycle: example: the student who has successfully completed a first cycle in a university institute can in certain cases enrol for the first year of a second study cycle of long type higher education organised in a Haute École (article 13, Decree of the Government of the French community of 30 June 2006 regulating the bridging programmes giving access to studies organised in the Hautes Écoles);

Transition from a second cycle to a third cycle: example: only the holder of an in-depth Master's degree is directly eligible for a third study cycle. Thus, the holder of a Master's degree with a minimum of 120 credits other than an in-depth Master's or of a supplementary Master's could be obliged to follow one or more complementary study courses (article 55 of the Decree of 31 March 2004).

- Several measures that have the objective of facilitating the student's transition from one study cycle to another can be given.

In particular, this concerns the bridging programmes and the evaluation of the personal or professional knowledge that allows a reduction to the length of the studies or dispensation from some parts of the study programme being followed by the student (see question 20).

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. The French community has created a think-tank charged with steering the implementation of the national qualifications framework.

The group is made up of Ministry officials that are responsible for education and training. The group's report, presented at the end of November 2006, should allow the government to decide upon the course of action to follow and the timetable for the creation and implementation of the framework.

As far as higher education is specifically concerned, article 4 of the Decree of 31 March 2004 specifying the remit of higher education already lays down, in outline form, the competencies to be acquired according to the study cycle completed (specific professional objectives for short type higher education; high qualification professional or artistic purpose for long type higher education outside universities; general and in-depth purpose based on a tight link between scientific research and subjects taught in university education).

Some higher education programmes have already expressed their curricula in learning outcomes (e.g. the nursing sector) and two seminars have already been dedicated to considering the question (7 November 2005 and 17 October 2006).

It is foreseen that a national framework will be developed that conforms to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) framework.

Nevertheless, a specific timetable has not yet been defined for implementation of the framework.

11. No information is available yet on this subject .

The expectation is that most of the students graduated as bachelors in a Higher education institution other than university, short term course (3 years "professional bachelors") will

directly enter the labour market while most students graduated as “academic” bachelor in the long term course will continue to study in the 2d cycle.
The prospects of the professional bachelors on the labour market is generally good.

Quality assurance

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

12. The Decree of 14 November 2002 created the Agency for the evaluation of the quality of higher education organised or grant-aided by the Belgian French Community.

Although the concept of quality was, of course, already present in the French Community before this date, the aforementioned decree allowed this theme to be formally taken into account in the different dimensions of the higher education sector in the French Community.

Likewise, the fact that this decree preceded the publication of the *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* (ESG) has not prevented the adoption of measures in the French Community that already meet certain characteristics currently described in the ESG. Amongst these we can list those relating to the external evaluation procedures, the official status of the Agency, the Agency’s activities ...

Having stated that, in this context and following on the 1st *European Forum for Quality Assurance* (Munich, 23-25 November 2006), co-organised by the EUA, ENQA, ESIB and EURASHE, as well as the first meeting on the evaluation of the quality of higher education in the French Community (Brussels, 18 December 2006), organised by the Agency, consideration is being given to the creation, within the Agency, of a working group in order to better take account of the ESG in the French Community. Some characteristics, which merit particular attention on this occasion, should be those relating to the publication of reports, monitoring procedures, frequency of evaluations, the periodic external evaluation of the Agency’s activities ...

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. The Agency’s tasks aim at, amongst others, on one hand, to promote, through cooperation between all the components of higher education, the implementation of practices allowing an improvement in the quality of higher education at the level of each institute and, on the other hand, to ensure an evaluation of the quality of higher education in the French Community, by highlighting best practices, deficiencies and problems to be resolved, without divulging specific information about individual institutes.

All of the higher education institutes in the French Community are covered by the Agency’s activities: the universities, the Hautes Écoles, the Higher Art Schools, the Social Advancement Schools (for the programmes that legally correspond to those of full-time higher education), and the Higher Institutes of Architecture.

Within this framework, each year the Agency defines, on the basis of a multi-annual plan updated every year, the courses or particular practices to be evaluated.

The evaluation of the quality of higher education in the French Community takes place in two successive phases:

- the internal evaluation includes the production of a confidential internal evaluation report prepared by a commission created within each institute concerned; this report is sent to the Agency’s presidency;

- the external evaluation is the responsibility of a committee of independent experts designated by the Agency; this committee is responsible for producing, on one hand, a confidential report about each institute (this report is only sent to the head of the institute concerned and the Agency's presidency) and, on the other hand, a transversal synthesis report (report sent to the Agency); the production of these different reports is based on the internal evaluation reports and the result of visits made by the committee to each of the different institutes concerned.

The Agency then prepares its final report covering all of the higher education concerned by this evaluation. This report includes the conclusions along with the Agency's suggestions or recommendations. It is sent with the transversal report to the Minister of Higher Education and to the heads of the institutes concerned.

The Agency's final report is published on the Agency's website (www.aeqes.be).

Until now, the Agency's *peer review* procedures, mentioned in the ESG, have not been established.

Level of student participation

14. Amongst the Agency's twenty-five members, three are students' representatives.

Students are not included in the composition of the expert committees responsible for external evaluation.

Like the other members of the Agency, the students' representatives participate in the Agency's decisions relating to the external evaluation phase.

The evaluation programme defined by the president of the committee of experts includes interviews with students.

The internal evaluation commission includes students.

Level of international participation

15. Although there is no international participation in the governance of the Agency, the situation is different at the level of the expert committees in charge of external evaluations. Even though, formally, at least one member of these committees should be a non-Belgian, in practise the Agency tries to favour to the maximum an international composition of these committees (with ideally a non-Belgian president), notably for reasons of independence.

To date, the Agency has not been subjected to an external evaluation.

The Agency is a candidate member of the ENQA.

The Agency is not a member of any other international network.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. The adoption of the diploma supplement has been generalised in all types of higher educational institutions.

In 2007, all students in higher education will receive a diploma supplement.

The diploma supplement is awarded in French and sometimes also in English. It is provided automatically and free of cost, and corresponds to the model defined by the EU/COE/UNESCO.

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. The Lisbon Convention was signed by Belgium on 7 March 2005 and has not been ratified yet but is in the process of being so. Ratification of LRC by Belgium is only possible after ratification of 4 parliaments (Flemish Community, French Community, German speaking Community and federal parliament. Expectation to have the ratification for the whole Belgium before the London Conference.

All of the principles contained in the Convention are applied in the legislation concerning equivalence, namely:

- the applicant's right to an equitable equivalence;
- the granting of recognition if no substantial difference can be proven;
- the justification of substantial differences when recognition is not granted;
- information destined to the public about study programmes and higher education institutes;
- the existence of a Naric-Enic centre (incorporated in the general direction Higher education and scientific research).

For more details, please see the national action plan.

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. The Decree of 31 March 2004 (decree specifying the remit of higher education, facilitating its inclusion within the European Higher Education Area, and providing fresh funding for universities) and the related legislation confirms the usage of ECTS for the different parts of higher education. Nevertheless, the study year remains the benchmark; it corresponds to 60 credits (see article 26 of the decree of 31 March 2004 mentioned above). The notion of credit is defined in article 6, §1 of the decree. It is the "unit corresponding to the time dedicated by the student, within a study programme, to a learning activity in a specific subject area". These credits are awarded to the student after successful evaluation of the knowledge and skills acquired.

In practice, we observe that for the academic year 2006/2007, all university institutes present their study programmes in ECTS credits as well as in the form of time value. For architecture studies, a decree of the Government of the French community of 14 April 2004 foresees that the minimal timetables be expressed in credits.

In the Hautes Écoles, the usage of ECTS is starting to be generalised and the transposition of programmes into ECTS is being finalised. Lastly, in the Higher Art Schools, the notion of credit appears in the different regulatory dispositions but the timetables are still expressed in hours.

19. Please refer to the national action plan.

Lifelong Learning

Recognition of prior learning

20. Amongst the existing measures that allow a student to take advantage of prior studies or other achievements, we mention the system of bridging programmes as well as the recognition of personal and professional achievements.

The “passerelle” (bridging programme) is an academic process authorising a student to continue studies in a different course or other type of studies than those initially undertaken. Therefore, it allows a student undertaking higher education to reorient his or her study path or to extend it to a programme other than that initially chosen. Contrary to other mechanisms to take account of studies or educational achievements, the bridging programme is an automatic process in that it allows a higher education institute, with full rights, to enrol a student in a corresponding course established by the legal texts, once the student has completed the studies which provide eligibility to it. Depending on the case, this enrolment will be conditional on the successful outcome of a preparatory year, on an evaluation procedure, or on the implementation of a particular study programme with the possibility of complementary studies.

This system existed already before 2004 but, in certain cases, has been revised and completed (see notably two decrees of the Government of the French community of 30 June 2006, one defining the entry conditions for admission to university studies for holders of academic degrees awarded outside of a university, and the other defining the bridging programmes giving access to studies organised in the Hautes Écoles).

The bridging system applies equally to those students that have undertaken their studies in the French Community as to those that, having undertaken all or part of their studies abroad, benefit from a total or partial equivalence awarded in the French Community.

Moreover, with a view to admission to studies, students’ knowledge and skills acquired through personal and or professional experience can be taken into account under certain conditions. The procedure to take account of achievements is generalised in the different legal texts (e.g. article 24 of the Decree of 5 August 1995 regulating the general organisation of higher education in the Hautes Écoles modified by a Decree of 30 June 2006 and article 41 quater, paragraph 2 of the Decree of 20 December 2001 defining the rules specific to higher artistic education organised in Higher Art Schools modified by a Decree of 2 June 2006).

Lastly, it should also be noted that the possibility also exists to allow institutes to grant a personalised admission to students on the basis of dispensations when the student has already completed a certain number of study years.

21. In the French community, access for the greatest number of people is ensured by maintaining an education system that is open to every holder of the qualification required for admission to higher education, i.e. the certificate of upper secondary education or an equivalent diploma. There are no specific admission conditions except for a limited number of studies, on the basis of an “admission examination” (civil engineering studies, higher artistic education). Admission examinations are organised by institutes for those people that do not have certificates of upper secondary education and who nevertheless wish to undertake higher education.

The possession of a first cycle degree provides access to the second cycle without an admission examination. In certain cases defined in the legislation, it is possible for someone that does not have a first cycle degree, under certain conditions, to have their personal and professional experience and skills to be taken into account for direct access to the second study cycle.

In certain cases, those people that cannot follow the courses offered by the universities or the Hautes Écoles have the possibility of acquiring a similar higher education or university degree, via the examination boards set up in the French Community (e.g. examination boards in the area of nursing care, or business administration), or directly within the universities.

Moreover, some universities allow students to follow courses according to a staggered timetable when they already have a professional activity. This type of education is still full-time education.

In addition, education for social advancement (often known as “evening classes” by the general public, see also point 10.1 of the Bergen conference report) also offer some programmes to students that lead to the acquisition of diplomas corresponding to those awarded by the Hautes Écoles and this in various areas.

Other programmes that are “non-corresponding” but belong within higher education are also organised

Lastly, the Government of the French community awarded a subvention to the university academies destined to support the development of good supporting practices for adults that are resuming studies and the structuring of activities for the validation of professional achievements in the academies.

Joint degrees

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Higher education institutes can conclude cooperation agreements between themselves for the organisation of studies relevant to the areas for which they are qualified and for the award of the academic degrees which reward them. The partner institutions can be Belgian or foreign but must be recognised by the authorities responsible for higher education.

In the case of an agreement, the student can be awarded either a joint degree or a degree from each partner institution. In the case of award of a joint degree, one of the titles listed in the legislative texts must be given on the degree. In the case of award of a degree by each partner institution, the degree awarded in the French Community refers to the cooperation agreement and mentions the other degree(s) awarded within this framework.

The degrees are written in French but can be accompanied by a translation into another language. Whatever the procedures are for the award of the diplomas, only one diploma supplement is awarded.

The cooperation agreement specifies the nature of the degree(s) obtained.

The applicable dispositions on the topic are the following:

- Article 29, §2 of the Decree of 31 March 2004 mentioned above;
- Decree of 16 June 2006 related to cooperation agreements for the organisation of studies between university institutes and implementing various provisions relating to higher education;
- Article 44 of the Decree of 5 August 1995 mentioned above, modified by a Decree of 30 June 2006;
- Decree of the Government of the French community of 20 July 2005 defining standards for the diplomas and diploma supplements awarded by university institutes and the university education examination boards of the French Community; in particular, this decree defines the standard diploma awarded jointly by several university institutes in the French Community.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23.

Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country.

In the French Community, higher education is closely linked to R&D.

Indeed, it is mainly in the university institutes that fundamental research is undertaken.

The universities host:

- their personnel:
 - academic and scientific personnel within operational staff (financed, as far as research activities are concerned, for up to 25 % of the operational allocation, according to estimates)
 - personnel outside operational staff (financed essentially by the universities' own funds, direct public funds, and European funds),
- and also all the grant holders and representatives of the National Scientific Research Fund (Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS),

As far as applied research is concerned it also undertaken in the same institutes as well as in the Hautes Écoles (which do not carry out fundamental research), on a more modest but ever increasing scale.

It is sponsored by:

- either the regional authorities (the regions also have the economy as one of their responsibilities),
- or the private sector.

The scale of this type of partnership can vary greatly from one institute to another.

What percentage of research is carried out in HEIs?

In 2003, 22.2 % of the R&D undertaken in the French Community of Belgium was in higher education institutes, on the basis of funds coming from the following five sources:

- public authorities (federal, regional, and community authorities combined): 15.2 %
- higher education: 2.7 %
- enterprises: 2.6 %
- foreign: 1.4 %
- non-profit institutions: 0.3 %

Are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors?

In Belgium, and more specifically in the Walloon region, as in the European Union generally, the problem is not really the quality of the scientific research and the value of the researchers but rather the exploitation of the results of the research.

Thus, the Government of the Walloon region, jointly with that of the French Community, has prepared a strategic plan which aims in particular at:

- putting in place excellence programmes aimed at the universities; these programmes are 50% financed by the Walloon Region and should favour the birth of new centres of competitiveness; close interaction is foreseen between these programmes and the network structure that facilitates the transfer of technology; the choice of programmes is made on the basis of their inter-university nature, the scientific reputation of the research team, the potential of economic consequences, the possibility of establishing partnerships with the private sector in the short or medium term, the ability to create spin-off companies, and their potential for obtaining patents.;
- encouraging, in a significant manner, mobility between the academic and industrial worlds by arrangements concerning career structures.

24.

What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers?

At the moment we do not have sufficiently accurate data to determine the percentage of doctoral candidates that undertake a career in research.

As a partial and hypothetical reply, it can be said that currently, each year there are around 600 newly graduated doctors and that there are approximately 8,000 researchers, all categories combined, in our university institutes. If one considers that 40 generations of graduates are covered by these 8,000 researchers and that they are thus distributed at approximately 200 a year on average, then that would indicate that a third of our graduate doctors start a research career in our university institutes.

Are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?
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Within the framework of the strategic plan mentioned in question 23, a certain number of measures have been taken in this direction, of which the most concrete consists of the strengthening of the budget for funds devoted to basic research. This takes the form of credits allocated directly to university institutes (special funds for research, concerted research actions) as well as credits managed by the FNRS and the Funds associated with it; in this case, what is explicitly targeted, is a regular and progressive increase in the number of researchers employed for an unlimited period as well as the number of research fellows (fixed duration contracts), with an extension of the duration of their mandates (which have gone from 3 to 4 years in 2006).

Amongst the other measures foreseen, there are of course all of those which have the objective of developing the attractiveness of a career in research, in particular for women. To

date, in general, these only have a purely programmatic nature and without doubt do not stand out from those that are recommended in all of the European Union Member States. However, specific measures have been successfully undertaken by the federal state as far as taxation is concerned. These measures have led to an increase in the number of researchers, initially and particularly in the university institutes.

The social dimension

25. For the most part please refer to the replies given in point 9.1 of the national Bergen conference report, concerning the different types of financial assistance granted to students. As far as study grants for higher education are concerned, it should be noted that a Decree of the Government of the French community of 29 April 2005 defines the procedure for the submission of requests as well as the conditions for their award. This decree simplifies the procedure and also foresees the possibility for a student that restarts the first year of studies in higher education for the first time to retain the right to a study grant.

26. Students can obtain all the information about the various existing financial assistance from the institutes' social services, from the student councils, or from external services (social guidance is offered in different areas: housing, nurseries, ...). Amongst the measures put in place to favour student successes and in particular the new Bachelors, it should be noted that additional resources amounting to 180,000 euros have been granted to the university academies. The award of this budget will allow the continuation of the exchange of best practices concerning first year student successes and to identify assistance measures that will then be integrated by the academies.

Mobility

27. Amongst the measures put in place to promote student mobility, the following can be quoted:

- the possibility for students to be awarded joint degrees;
- the creation of the fund to support student mobility;
- the implementation of new legislative dispositions concerning bridging programmes;
- the fact that some study programmes include a minimum number of credits that must be earned outside the French Community;
- the simplification of the procedures when students follow one or more educational activities in other higher education institutes;
- the generalisation of the diploma supplement ...

28. Study grants cannot be exported except when the studies that the student envisages following abroad are not offered in the French Community of Belgium. Nevertheless, the French Community participates in a working group related to the portability of grants within the framework of the Bologna Process.

29. No specific measures have been taken to encourage the mobility of teachers.

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

30. In French speaking Belgium, a programme for the attractiveness of higher education has been implemented.

The French Community, apart from a more active participation in the various international shows and exhibitions related to higher education (NAFSA, student fairs, ...), has developed a policy of cooperation with third countries, for example by organising missions for teachers and researchers with the objective of developing partnerships in the areas of teaching and research. In 2005 and 2006 missions were organised e.g. to Chile and China.

Future challenges

31. Amongst the major challenges, the following can be identified:

- the continuation of the work to harmonise the legislation applicable to the different elements of higher education;
- in the research area, to try to increase the interest of young people in the sciences sector and increase the number of researchers;
- establish stronger synergies between education-research –innovation;
- at the European level, to foresee the possibility of a reflection on ‘artificial’ mobility with the objective of regulating the flow of students and notably to constrain artificial mobility towards those countries that have little or no limitation of admission to studies offered in higher education;
- the development of the national qualifications framework.