

BOLOGNA PROCESS NATIONAL REPORT 2005-2007

Liechtenstein

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

Country	Liechtenstein
Date	November 2006
BFUG member (one name only) Position	Helmut Konrad Head of Department for Higher Education
Email address	Helmut.Konrad@sa.llv.li
Contributors to the report	

Main achievements since Bergen

1. *Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.*

Peer reviews were conducted at all three institutions of higher education in Liechtenstein in 2003, 2004 and 2006 as quality assurance measure. All peers were international especially Swiss university professors with extensive international experience in this area.

In November 2006, the government commissioned a task force with the partial revision of the Higher Education Act. The objective is a clearer regulation of executive master courses of study, the master of advanced studies and other tertiary courses of study. In addition, it is planned to include legal provisions for the promotion of joint as well as double or multiple degrees. Although there are currently no legal barriers, no supporting provisions are available yet for this area.

National organisation

2. *Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.*

There are no changes in this field since Bergen. The government acts as supervisory body of the institutions of higher education. It is supported by the local education authority, particularly the officials responsible for the higher education sector.

Higher education institutions are obligated to submit an annual report to the government. The report must be made available to the public.

A government contribution is paid to higher education institutions if the legal provisions

expressly provide for the grant of a government contribution to a certain higher education institution or based on a performance agreement, provided the government contribution is backed by a financial decision. The conclusion of a performance agreement is subject to the public interest in the performance to be rendered by the respective higher education institution.

Parliament is responsible for the assignment of the budget to the University of Liechtenstein as foundation under public law. The annual government contribution consists of a specified standard appropriation, which has been determined for the years 2005 through 2009. In addition, the government pays an annual contribution to the research promotion fund of the university. Private higher education institutions do not receive government contributions. Upon request, the government may support specific projects within the scope of the Financial Administration Act.

Within the scope of the Higher Education Act, higher education institutions are entitled to self-governance. However, as mentioned, they are subject to governmental supervision.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.

In Liechtenstein, the scope of higher education is limited, with only three recognised higher education institutions: the University of Liechtenstein as foundation under public law as well as the two private higher education institutions, namely the "University for Human Sciences" and the "International Academy for Philosophy".

While the University of Liechtenstein offers bachelor and master courses of study in architecture and economics, the focus of the two private institutions is on doctoral courses of study in the area of scientific medicine and philosophy.

An estimated 630 students are registered in bachelor and master courses of study (excluding continuing education) at the University of Liechtenstein for the 2006 / 2007 academic year. 14 doctoral students are registered at the University for Human Sciences for the 2006 / 2007 academic year, while 13 doctoral students are registered at the International Academy for Philosophy. In addition, these two universities also offer a variety of options for continuing education.

All three higher education institutions are subject to the framework legislation dated 25 November 2004 governing the Higher Education Act. The scope of the act dated 25 November 2004 governing the University of Liechtenstein is limited to the concerns of the University of Liechtenstein as an institution under public law.

Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

The national education authority, in particular its department of higher education, is in charge of implementing the Bologna Process. The chairman is a member of the Bologna Group and therefore well be informed of all current developments.

He also played a crucial role in the preparation of the laws governing higher education institutions and is a member of the supervisory boards and other decision making bodies of

all higher education institutions of Liechtenstein. The close collaboration and exchange between the national education authority and the management of higher education institutions guarantees that the key aspects of the Bologna Process are implemented in the strategic orientation of the individual higher education institutions.

The two national Bologna promoters at university level are in close collaboration with the Liechtenstein member of the Bologna follow-up group and are jointly establishing concepts to strengthen the Bologna Process within Liechtenstein's higher education area. They offer information and consultation services to other institutions and stakeholders of the Bologna Process in Liechtenstein.

To support the implementation of the Bologna Process and the national structures, both the education authority and individual higher education institutions also rely on the expertise and experience of experts from other European countries, particularly the German-speaking parts.

At national level, the inclusion of student representatives into the Bologna Process was partially realised in particular in connection with the introduction of new bachelor and master curricula as well as the introduction of the ECTS system. The systematic inclusion of students into the implementation of the complete Bologna Process is still pending. The information and inclusion of social partners and lobby groups of the Liechtenstein economy is still pending, but at the planning stage.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

The laws governing higher education and the University of Liechtenstein regulate the inclusion of students and staff into the management of institutions of higher education.

The Higher Education Act of Liechtenstein specifies the student bodies and the "Mittelbau" (academic university staff members that are not professors) as individual partial bodies who are in charge of some key responsibilities. Moreover, the legally prescribed university council in charge of handling key issues associated with inter-university affairs ensures the collaboration between students and various staff categories. Among other things, the selection of candidates for the appointment of professors is subject to the collaboration between students and various staff category representatives by law.

In its role as approving and regulatory body, the government attaches particular importance to this aspect.

6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.

Representatives of the economy and social partners are members of the highest bodies of higher education institutions. They are recruited from economic associations. For example, by law the university council as highest strategic body of the University of Liechtenstein consists of one government representative and six additional members from the research, commerce and public administration sectors. The close cooperation with the economic sector and the social partners is part of the strategy of higher education institutions and must be evidenced in their annual report.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

7. *Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.*

The bachelor / master system is fully implemented. 100 % of students at the University of Liechtenstein are part of the two-stream system. As per the Higher Education Act, academic courses of study are only available within the scope of the Bologna structure.

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

8. *Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.*

Doctoral students at the two private higher education institutions pursue structured doctoral programmes. Doctoral courses of study have a minimum duration of two years (with the requirement of 120 ECTS) and are integrated into the national qualification framework. In addition to writing the thesis under the mentorship of a lecturer of the faculty with at least a post-doctoral research qualification, the study contents include various courses in the form of block seminars (lectures, structured discussions, regular seminars for doctoral students).

The doctoral programs expressly take into consideration the idea of interdisciplinarity and the development of transferable skills (within the scope of courses and research assignments).

The doctoral courses of study are subject to the same supervisory and assessment procedures as other courses of study. They include external evaluations such as peer reviews and accreditation as well as the proof of being capable to conduct independent scientific research, the evaluation of the thesis by at least two expert opinions (one of them external) and the publication of the thesis. An additional quality assurance element consists of a public colloquium lasting at least 60 minutes.

Access to the next cycle

9. *Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.*

By law, access to the master course of study requires the successful completion of a relevant bachelor course of study or other equivalent university degree. The defined admission requirements are intended to ensure the technical aptitude of the students.

Depending on the respective field of study, the ratio of students who decide to pursue a master course of study is between 30 – 70 %, whereby particularly in the field of architecture a larger ratio of students pursues continuing education due to corresponding specific guidelines governing this profession.

By law, admission to doctoral studies requires the completion of a relevant master course of study or equivalent other university degree. Therefore, a completed bachelor course of

study does not entitle the bearer to access doctoral studies.

Generally, there are no barriers between the individual levels. If deficiencies are determined as a result of the equality evaluation of "other equivalent" university courses (see above), additional requirements within the meaning of bridging modules will be offered to facilitate admission.

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

The Office of Education in cooperation with the higher education institutions is mandated to elaborate a NQF for higher education. A working group is established. Liechtenstein intends that the national qualification framework is fully in line with the Framework for Qualifications of EHEA. Due to the fact that the national education system is very closely linked to the Swiss one – in general and regarding the tertiary sector - Liechtenstein is developing the NQF in close cooperation with Switzerland. The final draft is to be presented to the responsible body for approval in 2008.

National outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications are currently being prepared and have already been implemented for the continuing education sector.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

The curricula of the bachelor courses of study offered at Liechtenstein's higher education institutions are focused heavily on practical applications, ensuring a very close relationship between "higher education institutions and companies". This relationship is evidenced in mandatory internships required for graduating, the importance attached to the applicability of conveyed knowledge, the commitment of lecturers and experts from the practice and the focus of seminar and bachelor theses on practical topics. In addition, Liechtenstein's higher education institutions offer a range of part-time courses of study, allowing many students to be exposed to the professional world while studying. Moreover, Liechtenstein's higher education institutions support their young graduates to a limited degree in their search for internships both locally and abroad to facilitate the transition to regular employment.

Based on feedback and experience, the ratio of bachelor graduates finding work immediately after graduating is estimated to be more than 80 %.

Quality assurance

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

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

Key elements of the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA have been implemented for some time in the higher education sector of Liechtenstein. As internal QA, they include

the evaluation of students and lecturers, the creation of adequate surroundings for studying with the provision of corresponding teaching aids, infrastructure and information systems.

Concerning the external QA the institutions of higher education are required to submit an annual report to the government. Among other things, part of the reporting is to demonstrate that quality management measures are in place. Moreover, the law stipulates an external evaluation in intervals of at least every six years. Peer reviews were carried out at each of the three institutions of higher education during the past two years, whereas for the third institution such a review is scheduled to take place sometime in 2005. The next step will see the institutions of higher education have their courses of study accredited by international agencies. The University of Applied Sciences in Liechtenstein has already initiated this process for the study of architecture.

The development of a special action plan for co-ordinating the national quality assurance system with European standards and guidelines is currently not being planned. Key contents in the area of accreditation / quality assurance were implemented by law in 2004. In terms of the further development of the QA, the clarity of the higher education sector allows the individual co-ordination with higher education institutions. The QA is based on standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

The law on higher education stipulates an external evaluation in intervals of at least every six years. In the last three years peer reviews were carried out at all three institutions of higher education. All peers were Swiss university professors with extensive international experience in this area. Peer reviews include the internal and external evaluation and the summarised publication of the results.

Due to its small size, Liechtenstein won't have quality assurance agencies of its own and therefore relies on international collaboration in the future, too. The country does not have the necessary resources to carry out external evaluations, peer reviews or accreditation processes at the institutions of higher education on its own. Collaboration particularly with Switzerland and Austria, but also with Germany is therefore essential.

When selecting the quality assurance agencies, Liechtenstein will see to it that they comply with the established European standards.

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

In their annual reports submitted to the government, the higher education institutions are required to report about the quality management among other things. A vital aspect of quality management is the inclusion of students in the evaluation of the courses offered, the lecturers, the infrastructure and the available counselling services, etc. Pursuant to section 30 of the Higher Education Act of Liechtenstein, students are obligated to participate in the quality assurance procedures.

In the past, students were surveyed about the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution within the scope of external evaluations, and were consequently in-

involved in the evaluation process. In the future, the degree of student involvement will be determined in collaboration with the competent quality assurance agency.

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

Due to its small size, Liechtenstein has no quality assurance agency and therefore relies on international collaboration as mentioned above. The country does not have the necessary resources to carry out external evaluations, peer reviews or accreditation processes at the institutions of higher education on its own. Consequently, Liechtenstein consistently relies on the support of institutions and experts from the neighbouring countries, especially from Switzerland, Austria and Germany as it was the case for the peer reviews in 2003, 2004 and 2006.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country.

In Liechtenstein 100 percent of students receive a Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement has been legally implemented for all programmes at each higher education institution in January 2005. It is automatically delivered free of charge to all students, in German and English and correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Liechtenstein ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention on April 1st, 2000.

The existing laws and regulations proved to be flexible enough to deal with the Lisbon Recognition requirements and its subsidiary texts. The universities have adapted their admission regulations in order to guarantee fair assessment. The Bologna Directives of the Higher Education institutions are in conformity with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

All competent authorities have implemented the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study. The time required to process application for recognition is one to three months depending on the responsible body, recognition is assured if no substantial differences can be proven, where recognition is not granted substantial differences are demonstrated, information about Liechtenstein's HE programmes and institutions are provided. Liechtenstein has a fully operational ENIC/NARIC agency.

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

The ECTS within the three levels is regulated by law and has been fully implemented at all

higher education institutions of Liechtenstein. The ratio of bachelor, master and doctoral courses of study using this system is 100 %. There is no intention of using any other credit awarding system.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

Due to the small size of the country, we are constantly in touch with the competent offices. One of the short-term goals is the improvement of on-line information (by the spring of 2007).

Lifelong Learning

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

The entire school system is based on permeability which allows the transfer from one level to another at any stage. This is not only valid for the mandatory schooling but also for the upper cycle of secondary (Sekundarstufe II) as well as tertiary education. However, transfers are always based on certain requirements which have to be met.

Both the ECTS system as well as the diploma supplement lead to easier recognition of previously earned credits. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is more advanced in the area of academic continuing education (e. g. executive master courses of study, master of advanced studies) compared to basic academic education (bachelor and consecutive master).

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Admission conditions are regulated by law for every course of study (see item 9), whereby a certain degree of leeway is always provided based on the reference to an equivalent other university study course. If deficiencies are determined as a result of the equality evaluation associated with a "sur-dossier admission", additional requirements within the meaning of bridging modules may be offered to facilitate admission.

Generally, the courses of study are offered in modules, allowing students – within the legal provisions - to decide for themselves within which time they wish to complete the study. A large number of part-time courses of study are also offered.

Joint degrees

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

In Liechtenstein there are no specific legal provisions concerning the recognition of joint degrees. There are no legal obstacles, but in the same way there are no legal provisions favouring the recognition of joint degrees. At the beginning of next year the Higher Education Act will be revised. In this context legal provisions favouring the recognition of joint degrees, double or multiple degrees will likely be proved.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, research with respect to gaining new knowledge and technical problem-solving are among the main responsibilities of higher education institutions. Within the scope of annual reporting, the higher education institutions are required to provide proof of their research activities and knowledge and technology transfer, among other things. With respect to the University of Liechtenstein as an institution under public law, research and development as well as technology and knowledge transfer are part of the performance agreement.

The objective of the University of Applied Sciences is to increase the budget provided for research to 20% over the course of the coming years. The university maintains close ties to industry and Civil Service. Several joint projects are currently worked on. Although the University of Applied Sciences is conducting contract research, it is committed to study topics in the field of initial research which might trigger innovations. The establishment of a research promotion fund, the creation of a research and development staff position and the focus on a proven track record of research activities of appointed candidates are evidence that research is given more and more importance.

For its doctoral programme, the University of Human Sciences maintains a link to its network of local and international research laboratories, hospitals and institutions, which meets high scientific expectations. The research ratio in doctoral courses of study generally amounts to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the expenses.

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

Currently, only two types of doctorates are offered in Liechtenstein, one in scientific medicine (University for Human Sciences) and one in philosophy (International Academy for Philosophy). An expected $\frac{2}{3}$ of graduates from the University of Human Sciences will continue in the field of research, while the ratio of philosophy graduates will certainly be smaller.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

The Act on Higher Education stipulates equality with respect to the access to higher education. The generous scholarship law ensures that all social levels have access to education and further training.

In addition to the regular school leaving certificate ("Matura"), the vocational school leaving certificate ("Berufsmatura") is now also being offered, both of which provide access to higher education. Overall, the number of youth obtaining a school leaving certificate has increased during the past years. Moreover, permeability between the various education paths is a key priority.

Particularly in the area of academic continuing education, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning promotes access to higher education.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

Liechtenstein boasts a very generous scholarship system. The scholarship office connected to the education authority informs and advises students about national education funds in the Principality of Liechtenstein.

At the University of Liechtenstein, the "Information centre for equal opportunities" provides advice to all students enrolled at higher education institutions with respect to questions involving equal opportunities. For example, students can contact the centre about problems associated with the course of study, if they are pregnant, for questions about a scientific carrier, scholarships, if they face disputes at work or in case of sexual harassment.

The small size of Liechtenstein's higher education institutions has the advantage that all paths are short and direct contacts, advice, etc. is easily available.

Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

For students at Liechtenstein's higher education institutions, obstacles in terms of mobility are very minor. Therefore, a very high ratio of students is involved in mobility measures compared to other countries. This is largely due to the fact that

- Liechtenstein's government provides contributions to EU mobility scholarships (Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci) in addition to general scholarships;
- the higher education institutions can rely on an extensive cooperation network and are able to offer a sufficient number of study places to their students;
- the international offices of Liechtenstein's higher education institutions are sufficiently staffed to handle mobility flows;
- the courses of study promote the completion of stays abroad or make them mandatory;

- we constantly strive to fully recognise any credits earned abroad with respect to the credits required in Liechtenstein's higher education institutions.

With respect to inward mobility, the relatively limited offer of English modules might represent a minor obstacle in terms of mobility. Moreover, it is very difficult to find accommodation in Liechtenstein, meaning that studying in Liechtenstein is difficult if accommodation is not arranged by the higher education institution.

On a positive note we would like to mention that some courses of study (particularly in the area of master courses of study) are now mainly offered in English at Liechtenstein's higher education institutions. Moreover, German courses are offered for foreign students and the option of attending a four week preparatory summer academy providing specific preparation for studying in Liechtenstein is available as well.

The "International Office" of the higher education institutions provides advice to students who wish to complete part of their course of study at a higher education institution abroad. The "International Office" is also responsible for informing students about the entry, stay, insurance and scholarships, etc.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

Portable loans and grants are available in Liechtenstein.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

The collaboration with other higher education institutions at home and abroad as well as internationality and mobility are a legal obligation of Liechtenstein's higher education institutions. In section 3, this area is identified as one of the main responsibilities; it is part of the performance agreement and must be included in the annual report. Liechtenstein's participation in the Erasmus programme also promotes the mobility of staff at higher education institutions (professors and lecturers). In addition, the higher education institutions entertain an extensive cooperation network with foreign higher education institutions. When concluding new cooperation arrangements, we always pay attention to ensuring that activities in various areas can be defined. Because the mobility of lecturers at higher education institutions usually represents a key basis for intensifying the collaboration between the institutions and for creating a culture of trust, lecturer mobility is always in the foreground during cooperation negotiations. Successful mobility measures for lecturers often represent the basis that allow Liechtenstein's higher education institutions to negotiate activities in the areas of intensified programmes and student mobility with its partner universities.

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

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

The consistent implementation of the Bologna Process has significantly contributed to the increased attractiveness of Liechtenstein's higher education institutions. Particularly the University of Liechtenstein has enjoyed an immense growth in development as a result.

The internationalisation of the higher education institutions associated with this process is another positive outcome of this trend.

Liechtenstein's participation in the European education programmes Sokrates and Leonardo da Vinci has also contributed to this internationalisation, especially the mobility of students and lecturers within the scope of these programmes and the inclusion into various international networks associated with the participation.

Future challenges

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

The government recently approved the partial revision of the Higher Education Act. The main reason is the examination of a regulation regarding courses of study in the area of continuing education (e. g. executive master, master of advanced studies, issues involving the bearing of titles). In addition, regulations regarding joint, double or multiple degrees will also be examined.

Another challenge is the creation of a national qualification framework and the development of national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications. The development of further reaching measures in terms of the recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning, is another important task for the future.