

cEVU

REPORT WORKING GROUP 4: ACCREDITATION

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0. Introduction

This working group was intended to review the state-of-the-art existing information about accreditation, mainly developed for use in conventional (higher) education, to evaluate its applicability within the environment of a European virtual university as the networked collaboration between existing institutions. Therefore, the working group collected a number of starting documents (see Annex 1).

As the outcome of this review, the working group formulated a few postulates that were discussed and examined during consecutive meetings. These postulates were inspired by the fact that cEVU should respect the traditional autonomy of participating institutions, as well as position itself within the ongoing Bologna implementation process. They were the following:

1. The concept of a cEVU that is used, is that of a consortium of which the partners subscribe a joint agreement or memorandum of understanding. A completely open network of universities would indeed create too many pressures on (amongst others) the accreditation issue. Having a joint agreement or understanding enables the existence of mutual trust, in which accreditation is easier to handle.
2. In the context of cEVU, we should primarily look at the accreditation of courses or modules, instead of the accreditation of degree programmes. The accreditation of institutions should not be considered in this context either. The latter two are typically activities of (mostly national) accreditation bodies that are already in place or will be created in the framework of the Bologna implementation.
3. It is also assumed that degrees are to be granted by an existing university A (where a student S is registered) following a given set of (most of the time national, but sometimes restricted to institutional) rules, which should become “euro - compatible” in the near future.

Building upon these hypotheses, some accreditation scenarios could be identified.

- The standard accreditation scenario would be the validation (i.e. recognition) by university A of one or more modules followed by student S in a cEVU type organisation, as integral part of student S’s degree programme in university A. A bilateral agreement between the university A and cEVU could provide for the legal substrate of the validation. cEVU would then be responsible for the assessment of results, even if it relies on an existing university X to do the teaching and the assessments. In other words, cEVU is considered in this standard accreditation scenario as the “provider” and certainly the quality assuring body of the modules, although it outsources the work for the delivery to university X.
- In another (but more complex) scenario, the cEVU is considered as the collaboration environment that facilitates direct bilateral agreements between the “accepting” university A and the “delivering” university X.
- Other scenarios are either a combination of the standard and more complex scenario or an agreement that does not need the interference (and consequently the existence for accreditation purposes) of a cEVU.

All things well considered, it is safe to conclude that the subject of this working group is more about “validation” or “recognition” than “accreditation” *per se*; especially when using the definition of accreditation as published by CRE¹:

“Accreditation is a formal, published statement regarding the quality of an institution or a programme, following a cyclical evaluation based on agreed standards...”

Restricting the focus of the working group to recognition and validation of modules- implies that the group had to consider the following recognition mechanisms and systems that have been promoted by the European Commission: the ECTS system and its Diploma Supplement, the proposals made by the “Tuning” project, and the validation of professional experience (including non formal learning).

ECTS is primarily a credit transfer system. It uses a quantitative approach to support the recognition of a study effort outside the initial study environment: the definition of the credit as a measure to define the student’s yearly workload and the weight of each study effort in terms of such credits.

Although ECTS provides in its description also some additional data for each study element, it is the Diploma Supplement that really complements this quantitative “description” with a more extensive content description of the study element.

The “Tuning” project, initiated in the spring of 2001, had the objective to go further than the mutual recognition of credits, and developed bases for a move towards a compatible qualification framework². One of the bases for such framework is the definition of subject-related and general (or generic) competences.

The Copenhagen declaration³ is a recent step in the support that is being given by the European Commission and the Council of the European Union for recognition of competences throughout the Union. It clearly recommends, amongst others “Developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels”. One of the more advanced countries with respect to this development is France, where following a law from April 2002 (“Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience” or VAE), all French education institutions are entering in the process of validating professional (as well as personal) experiences for recognition of all or part of a degree or “qualification” requirement.

1. Definition of accreditation and scenarios

During the discussions that were held within the working group, the two theoretical postulates proved to be hard to maintain as such; they had to be refined due to a number of concrete examples of existing cases contradicting their assumptions.

¹ “TOWARDS ACCREDITATION SCHEMES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE?” CRE Project for the SOCRATES programme. Final Project report February 2001.

² “Tuning Educational structures in Europe”, Presentation of the closing conference of the “Tuning Project”, Brussels, 31 May 2002.

³ <http://presse.uvm.dk/nyt/pm/copenhagen.htm?menuid=0515>

1.1 First postulate: the theoretical restriction to accreditation of courses and modules.

The restriction to courses and modules might be obvious for the Bachelor and Master level, it is less applicable to European PhDs. At this level, the recognition of full programmes can be realised relatively easily, given the very limited number of students and the fact that publications and research activities can be taken into account.

To illustrate this point, the example has been studied of the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication, which is a 3-year doctoral programme, co-ordinated by the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. It includes a dissertation and involves a network of 13 EU universities that provide advanced research training in the area of social representations and communication. Student support and evaluation is a collaborative effort of all universities involved, with participation of the (central) Programme Director. The European PhD is based on bilateral agreements between each university and the PhD consortium. The European diploma mentions the composition of the international jury, the mobility “stages” completed by the doctoral candidate in two European countries other than his/her country of residence and the academic credits earned via the training received from the European network of doctoral training. It can be issued as a separate diploma, without a degree in one of the universities of the consortium, but will be mostly awarded in conjunction with a PhD degree of the “home” university (see Annex 2 for details).

The extension of such a model to a Master and certainly a Bachelor level is probably not realistic. The number of involved students would for instance not permit the physical mobility to more than one country for a major part of the programme, that is an intrinsic part of PhD example. The collaborative student support and evaluation would also increase the workload of the instructors to unacceptable levels.

Conclusion:

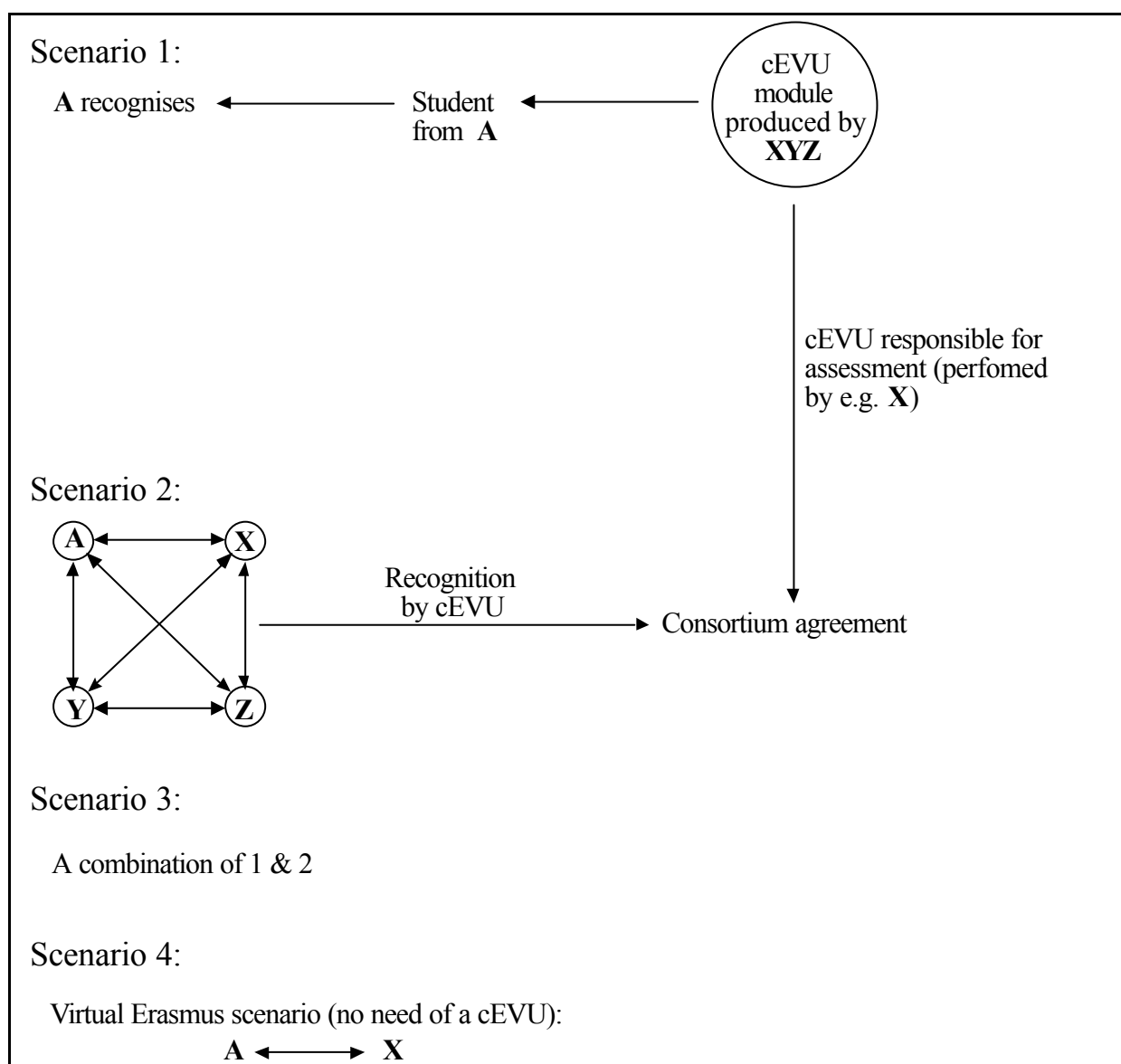
Taking into account the actual situation, where universities are still very much interested in keeping their autonomy (although the Bologna declarations might change this situation drastically), we should envisage the creation of a cEVU in various stages. Whereas at this moment and in short term the focus can only be on courses and modules, the exchange of programmes could be possible in the long term. There is also a clear difference between the upper levels (PhD, continuing education) at one side and the Bachelor and Master level at the other. For these upper levels some programme types can already be proposed. At the bottom level, this is not possible yet and it might remain difficult in the (near) future.

A second consideration that should be discussed is the evolution that is brought about by the Bologna declaration, signed by 29 European countries. This declaration expresses a commitment freely taken by each signatory country to reform its own higher education system or systems in order to create overall convergence at European level. One of the main goals of the Bologna declaration is the adoption of a common framework of comparable degrees. In other words, this declaration will stimulate and simplify the process of harmonisation. This is however not a reform imposed upon national governments or higher education institutions, the European Commission has to respect the subsidiarity principle and can only stimulate instead of impose these kind of processes.

1.2 Second postulate: a given degree, granted by institution A to student S, becomes Euro-compatible.

It seems unlikely that a cEVU could deliver by itself Europe wide accepted degrees. Therefore it was assumed that degrees would have to be granted by an existing university A (where a student S is registered) following in most cases a given set of national rules, which should become “euro - compatible” in the near future. If this postulate is accepted, the question remains whether it would cover all possible cases or whether different scenarios should be considered.

The following scenarios were discussed:



The working group was convinced that a cEVU, which would interfere with the structures of universities would have difficulties in generating agreement. Instead a cEVU should try to offer services and find the most practical way to render these services to universities, to make

scenarios 1, 2, 3 acceptable. Scenario 4 refers to a virtual Erasmus scheme in which bilateral agreements are directly made between two universities.

If the decision is taken to create a cEVU, a consortium agreement might be the only realistic possibility (see also the first postulate above, and note that such agreement is now required for most of the actions within the 6th framework). A solution has to be found for implications of copyrights (when you move courses from one university to another, see also the outcomes of the cEVU working group on intellectual property rights and copyrights), problems of licensing (if a university does not consider a virtual student as one of its own), language problems (see outcomes of the cEVU working group on language management), accessibility, etc.

Theoretically, one could also think of a possible merger between universities into one new entity, a construct that would avoid most of these problems. In practice, this solution seems to be rather unrealistic at this moment⁴ and is certainly not widely accepted.

Some remaining questions with respect to the modalities of a consortium agreement have been considered by the working group, however without taking a position:

- **AUTOMATIC recognition of ECTS credits– as WORKLOAD – not towards contents**

Should universities express a mutual recognition for all courses and modules at once or could universities restrict their recognition to specific courses and modules? Would it be in other words possible that a given university A decides to accept only a subset of the credits of university B (which can eventually even create an asymmetrical situation). Such situation would enable a virtual Erasmus activity within the actual Erasmus agreements between universities and even provide an opening for a consortium in which “strong universities” share and exchange courses with “weaker” universities. The question remains however whether such consortium would be acceptable for the stronger ones?

- **AUTOMATIC recognition of grades**

Can the recognition of grades be something automatic? Is a new agreement (or extension of the original one) needed each time a university offers a new module or course to the pool or can automatic recognition be accepted? Such question is also related to procedures that enable expansion of the consortium with new universities (what is the preference, an open or closed consortium?)

- **AUTOMATIC acceptance of contents**

What would be the procedures for a new university wishing to join the consortium agreement? Would this new university be obliged upon entering the consortium to take over activities that others have done? Would it be necessary to negotiate a bilateral agreement with all partners?

⁴ In several European countries a kind of merger is happening however between higher education institutions (in Belgium even involving universities) to set up “clusters”, “murgers” or “associations”.

2. Approaches with respect to recognition

2.1 ECTS and the diploma supplement: transparency and recognition for academic purposes

2.1.1 Definition of ECTS (*European Credit Transfer System*)

“ECTS is a system for increasing the transparency of educational systems and facilitating the mobility of students across Europe through credit transfer. It is based on the general assumption that the global workload of an academic year of study is equal to 60 credits. The 60 credits are then allocated to course units to describe the proportion of the student workload required to achieve the related LEARNING OUTCOMES. Credit transfer is guaranteed by explicit agreements among the home institution, the host institution and the mobile student.”⁵

2.1.2 Definition of the Diploma Supplement

Credits provide little information on their own. They become more practical and useful when they are linked to ‘levels’ of study that provide this further information on the relative complexity and depth of learning, in other words when they are linked to both ‘learning outcomes’ and levels. The Diploma Supplement was created to provide this information:

“The Diploma Supplement is an annex to the original qualification designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the holder of the qualification. It is based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. It improves the international transparency and the academic/ professional recognition of qualifications.”⁵

ECTS is a crucial element in measuring and comparing studies. The Diploma Supplement is meant for final or intermediate qualifications of a degree. Together with the diploma itself the supplement should provide sufficient information to the reader to make a judgement for both academic and professional purposes. The supplement therefore eases transparency and facilitates recognition. For a practical example in Finland, see Annex 3.

2.1.3 The European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

The purpose of ECTS (and Diploma Supplement) serves the creation of one European Higher Education Area, in which credits can be used throughout Europe. This implies the necessity to have a credit accumulation system on top of the credit transfer system that both have to be accepted Europe-wide. Whereas the *transfer* system is limited to recognition of credits as parts of education (specific subjects and activities) by others than the awarding institution, an *accumulation* system enables recognition of the totality of collected credits, up to full educational programmes. It has the potential to be used for all students (regardless whether they are full time, part time or lifelong learners) and in a pan-European context. Such accumulation system, acting in one European Higher Education Area, implies however the necessity that credits are not only defined in terms of workload but also in contents (hence the importance of a diploma supplement), and that their relative value (the conditions under

⁵ Definition from the Glossary of the TUNING project (www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/)

which a credit is granted may differ from university to university and eventually from country to country) be exchanged for an absolute one.

2.1.4 Equivalence and recognition⁶

When comparing academic qualifications from different countries, one might make a distinction between equivalence and recognition. Equivalence is usually understood to refer to a detailed comparison of the individual course elements which constitute a study programme. Recognition is a more global approach to evaluation, mainly concerned with the whole of a student's education. Usually this is a degree or diploma, but it could also be a period of study which a student has completed (e.g. Erasmus mobility). More than equivalence, recognition looks into the function and overall level of academic study for purposes of admission to further study or work. In these cases, degrees or study periods may be recognised even when the degree programmes are not equivalent. An example of academic recognition would be if a graduate is granted a degree in another country on the basis of his/her studies in his/her home country, or if a student is admitted to further studies in another country without having to sit remedial or additional examinations.

Three main levels of recognition can be considered, as well as the instruments attached to them:

- recognition of qualifications, including prior learning and professional experience, allowing entry or re-entry into higher education;
- recognition of short study periods in relation with student mobility. The instrument attached to it is ECTS;
- recognition of full degrees. The instrument attached to it is the Diploma Supplement

2.1.5 Recognition and the Bologna process

The Bologna process is supporting very strongly efforts to get more transparency in degrees and better recognition of studies, Europe wide. Further actions are going on with the six objectives of the Bologna process:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles
- Establishment of a system of credits
- Promotion of mobility
- Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
- Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

Many of these processes started in Finland and in Europe before the Bologna Declaration, which put together many 'good ideas' and gave them a comprehensive umbrella. The Declaration put into the same agenda questions, which were already familiar to many of us working with international education. The results so far seem to be highly positive, although the Declaration itself was rather a statement than a systematic working programme and has produced a lot of explanations and follow-up activities. Regarding higher education one thing is sure: cooperation and mutual understanding has increased and is increasing all the time.

⁶ see NARIC (<http://www.naric.org.uk/naricnetwork.asp>)

2.2 TUNING

Credits play a major role in the comparability and compatibility of studies and study programmes, and consequently to implement the Bologna Declaration. With its large acceptance and penetration throughout Europe's higher education, ECTS is probably the only European credit system and it should be further developed as both a transfer and an accumulation system. But credits as such are not a sufficient indication for the (level of) learning achievements. Besides credits, learning outcomes or competences are the other crucial elements. It has been the merit of the Tuning project to put competences in evidence and to demonstrate that by defining the right learning outcomes, standards can be set with regard to the required level of discipline-related skills and general academic or transferable skills.

As this competence approach is a more unfamiliar one to many people, a summary of the findings of the Tuning project (entirely taken from documents available at the Tuning Website) is provided for information here.

2.2.1. Aims of the Tuning project

- "Tune" educational structures in Europe, and thereby aid the development of the European Higher Education Area.
- Open up a debate on the nature and importance of subject-specific and general competences, involving all stakeholders, including academics, graduates and employers;
- Identify and exchange information on common subject-based reference points, curricula content, learning outcomes and methods of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Improve European co-operation and collaboration in the development of the quality, effectiveness and transparency of European higher education by examining ECTS credits and other suitable devices to enhance progress.

2.2.2 Focus on learning outcomes / competences

Credits as such are not a sufficient indication for the (level of) learning achievements. The only reliable way to compare pieces of learning and study programmes offered by (higher) education institutions is to look at learning outcomes / competences. These learning outcomes have to be defined in a transparent and clear way in order to allow comparison.

Learning outcomes can be defined as statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a learning programme. The actual time a student needs to spend in order to achieve the learning outcomes depends on many factors and will differ from student to student, in other words different pathways can lead to comparable learning outcomes.

In practice two types of learning outcomes can be distinguished:

The **subject specific competences** (theoretical, practical and/or experimental knowledge and subject related skills). These learning outcomes are discipline/programme related and can only be defined by the teaching staff. Only specialists of the same field will be able to formulate useful learning outcomes, although it is useful to consult other stakeholders in society.

It is the level of subject-related competences where Tuning makes perhaps its greatest contribution, since that subject-related competences are crucial for identification of degrees, for comparability and for the definition of first and second degree cycles.

Generic competences (transferable skills): shared attributes which could be general to any degree, and which are considered important by particular social groups. There are certain attributes like the capacity to learn, the capacity for analysis and synthesis, etc, which are common to all or most of the degrees. Thirty⁷ generic competences were selected from three categories: instrumental, interpersonal and systemic.

The Tuning project has identified points of reference for generic and subject-specific competences of first and second cycle graduates in 7 subject areas: Business Administration, Education Sciences, Geology, History, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. University staff, students and employers have been consulted on the competences they expect from graduates.

2.3 Validation of professional experiences – the French example

ECTS (and its extensions in the Diploma Supplement and Credit accumulation) as well as the Tuning approach are concerned with formal education and training. However, people learn also through informal education learning paths (outside “school”) and accidental learning (reading, surfing on the web, watching documentaries on television, etc.). Professional experience should be situated in this non-formal learning trajectory. What is learnt in this trajectory is often as relevant for the individual as the learning outcomes of formal training.

2.3.1 Principles of the VAE (*“Validation des Acquis de l’Experience”* or validation of “knowledge” acquired through experience

The new law

On the 17th of January 2002, a new law for “Social Modernization” has been voted by the French Parliament : it allows all citizens to apply for the validation of their “experience”, personal or professional, towards the granting of a french “degree”. Subsequent decrees provide additional guidelines for the application of this new law in higher education. As a matter of interest for cEVU, a specific decree from April 16, 2002 also allows for the validation of “studies” in France or abroad.

⁷ These 30 competences were divided into 3 categories:

Instrumental competences [capacity for analysis and synthesis, capacity for organisation and planning, basic general knowledge, grounding in basic knowledge of the profession, oral and written communication in your native language, knowledge of a second language, elementary computing skills, information management skills (ability to retrieve and analyse information from different sources), problem solving , decision-making]

Interpersonal competences [critical and self-critical abilities, teamwork, interpersonal skills, ability to work in an interdisciplinary team, ability to communicate with experts in other fields, appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, ability to work in an international context, ethical commitment]

Systemic competences [capacity for applying knowledge in practice, research skills, capacity to learn, capacity to adapt to new situations, capacity for generating new ideas (creativity), leadership, understanding of cultures and customs of other countries, ability to work autonomously, project design and management, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, concern for quality, will to succeed]

In this framework, “degrees” include all national diplomas as well as professional certifications, which will be included in a national data base (“Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles”). The minimum duration of experience has been set at three years in order to apply for a specific degree in a qualified institution. After validation of the acquired experience by a special jury, a “degree” can be immediately granted or, more likely, after some additional requirements are met, such as the validation of specific courses.

The consequences for Higher Education

All universities and degree granting institutions have to set up the proper organisation in order to process the incoming applications⁸. The main difficulties seem to reside in a profound change in the degree granting process and criteria, which are traditionally based on the acquisition of “knowledge” validated by formal examinations. The introduction of the concept of professional “competence” and “know-how” in the degree-granting criteria requires that from now on, all curricula be explicitly described in these terms. This description would usefully complement the ECTS presentation of each course. It also requires that all university teachers be introduced to this new “posture”, in close relation to the various professional and employment contexts.

2.3.2 Concluding remarks

French law on “Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience” or VAE, provides a scheme for validating such professional (as well as personal) experiences for recognition of all or part of a degree or “qualification” requirement. The basis of such a practice consists in the definition of a “competence referential” for each degree or qualification. Then it is assumed that one can compare the actual experience of an individual with that referential and make recommendations on the way to fill the differential gap (following specific courses, having a complementary experience, etc.). It is really something like a new framework for education (at all levels), and a challenge for all universities and higher education institutions. Here, the concept of “competence” is broad and includes “knowledge”, “know how”, “attitudes”, etc. The definition of a referential can be approached and described from the actual work and/or activities performed by professionals, holding the same degree or diploma.

All necessary tools and referentials are far from being available at present, but the principle of this “recognition” could be of interest to cEVU, even though cEVU is not aimed at granting degrees. The clear indication to cEVU is that all modules and teaching should be described through standards compatible with this approach. In other words, were the Tuning approach wants to define generic and subject-related competences that should be mastered at the end of (elements of) formal education, it is important that these competences (largely still to be identified) are in line with the “competence referentials” as desired outcome of experience (including non formal training and education) and vice versa.

⁸ From a practical implementation viewpoint, a whole new organisation and new degree-granting juries have to be set up. Formal application formats re-presenting all “proofs” of acquired competence have to be designed, and an accompanying process for each candidate has to be operationally implemented. Consequently, all persons involved in these processes within the universities have to acquire new skills and will require proper training. It is thought that the full implementation process will take several years, the number of candidates, the actual consequences in higher education, the economic and social impact of this system still remain to be known. However, some new form of competition between institutions can be anticipated.

3. Recognition and cEVU

Competences should be the normative framework to define curricula and their content (subjects, learning activities, attitudes, etc.); ECTS (and its extensions in the Diploma Supplement and Credit accumulation) should act as the framework for recognition

In relation to recognition, two main activities of a cEVU environment are important⁹:

1. the exchange and sharing of modules and courses, and
2. the joint development of courses and modules by the staff.

3.1 Recognition and the exchange and sharing of courses and modules

There are basically three scenarios related to the first activity:

- A student plans a physical Erasmus stay and needs to take (some) preparatory course(s) before arriving. If these courses are available on the web, then a solution is possible through “virtual Erasmus” activities. Similarly, the student may want to take a course that lasts for a longer period than the stay at the university (e.g. multiple part courses), or that can be considered as a follow-up course. Again, a virtual Erasmus format may provide the solution;
- A student staying abroad needs to take a course at his home university;
- A student wishing to take a (e.g. elective or specialisation) course that is not available in his own university, but could be taken in a cEVU partner university; or preferring to take a typical European subject (e.g. European law, European literature) in another cEVU partner university for its different content approach.

From the recognition point of view, several possible situations can consequently be considered:

1. A virtual Erasmus situation (no physical presence at the “guest” or “foreign” institution) where a course is delivered to a student as if he had been at the institution, including student support and assessments.
2. A situation where the course material (eventually virtual lecture) is taken from a partner university, with local support and local evaluation.
3. A situation of joint delivery of courses in team teaching modes, which can be considered as a mix of the previous two situations: sometimes students will have support and assessment for the “foreign” parts at the “foreign” university, following situation 1, sometimes all support and assessment is local, while “foreign” materials and lectures for some parts of the course are taken from the “foreign” university, following situation 2.

Situation 2 is controlled by the local university. Depending on the university culture and regulations, it will be the local teacher who takes responsibility for the acceptance of the course materials (and lectures), or one or more bodies of the receiving university. Recognition is in other words restricted to evaluation of the validity of the delivered course materials for the content and level that should be provided in the course according to the objectives that were set forward by the receiving university for the subject of the course. From what was said

⁹ Another very important element that should not be overlooked is “operating” these courses, including assessments. However, recognition in the framework of such operation is a matter linked to quality assurance and the accreditation of the institution (or of part of its education). Attention should be paid when considering the “operating” of courses to the fact that a teacher in a conventional university only provides tutoring in connection with the lectures for the subject, which means that support on specific topics will not be provided during the whole year. Solutions for this problem could be found through the cEVU model.

above, an evaluation on the basis of ECTS description may be insufficient, as it is primarily restricted to a more general content description and an anticipated workload. Workload is in practice related to a mix of activities (including student learning support) and the nature of the course materials (size, level, prerequisites); evaluation of fitness for purpose of the course materials will consequently be rather difficult, unless there is sufficient familiarity of the teacher in the receiving university with detailed course characteristics. The Tuning approach of course description in terms of competences is probably more appropriate to evaluate convergence of the delivered course materials (objectives, content and methodology) with the local educational objectives, at least in an initial stage. The fact that student support and evaluation is local will automatically imply that the mentioned familiarity has to be acquired by the teacher/tutor.

Situation 1 will probably have a more frequent use: students are allowed to take (a)course(s) in a partner university as elective course(s), as part of a programme (e.g. specialisation) or in preparation or follow up of physical mobility. Students will have to find these courses in the course directory of the partner university or in joint directory of courses that are accepted for exchange and sharing in the consortium of collaborating universities. Whether recognition takes place as the result of a procedure that is connected to the uptake of the course in the joint directory (and awarded automatically for the applying student afterwards), or as the result of a procedure that is comparable to the one in use for the Erasmus scheme (acceptance – eventually conditioned – of the “receiving” university after examination of the course characteristics) is only a matter of timing. The existing (and in a collaborative network) remaining autonomy of universities will imply the local startup of investigation on level, objectives, contents and evaluation criteria in comparison with similar courses or programme parts in the own curriculum of the receiving university. To smoothen the process of recognition, experience in ECIU and EUNITE networks within and outside the cEVU project learns that this “virtual Erasmus” activity follows the same lines as the physical Erasmus activities: it avoids confusion in recognition granting bodies within the university and speeds up the needed time as debate on the recognition procedures for the virtual parts is not to be repeated. Comments that were given on ECTS, credit accumulation and the Tuning approach are consequently also valid for the situation of virtual Erasmus.

3.2 Recognition and joint development of courses and modules

Joint development of courses and modules by a mixed staff of participating universities should normally lead to “cEVU courses”. Such courses will not be developed by a course team in which all network partners are represented, but by those universities that have the necessary subject expertise and probably also the intention to collaborate on the course as a means to lower development costs (a full course becomes available for a limited effort input of each participating partner) and enhance quality (each course element may be developed by the partner with the most expertise, yet reviewed repeatedly by peers during the development process).

Opposite to a dedicated virtual university, a network concept of collaborating universities would not offer these courses in an institution-like approach (the cEVU acting as a dedicated virtual university), but deliver (“operate”) the courses through its partners, as if these courses were strictly their own or allow their students to follow such course in a virtual mode in one of the providing partner universities of the consortium. Even if the development of such course would be commissioned (see consortium models als outcome of the working group on IPR and copyrights), it is not likely that the cEVU is forced into this role of a dedicated

institution. Hence, from a recognition point of view the acceptance of jointly developed courses and modules will follow the same procedures and decision lines as the ones described above.

3.3 Concluding remark

Virtual Erasmus and the use of teaching and learning materials from partners (or jointly developed) are attractive for universities, their staff and students. Recognition remains (at least temporarily) still an issue that may hinder their implementation, but far more important than recognition are issues of different nature. Universities are not (yet ?) prepared to pay for such activities, virtual students do not bring in money, they only are a cost factor...¹⁰ Another problem could be the workload of teachers and the fact that they are mostly evaluated on research work. In many universities, students are sometimes perceived to be consuming time that should be dedicated to research. However, for more detailed considerations on these issues must be referred to the reports of the working groups on policies, business plan and copyrights.

4. Recommendations

It seems unavoidable that all teaching material and modules pooled in a shared organisation like a cEVU should be described with new forms of qualitative standards and contents.

Coming from two different important needs emerging at the European level (compatibility of European qualifications and recognition of professional experience), similar principles of “competence” representation of teaching objectives and contents are taking shape. They are not completely defined as yet but determine nonetheless clear directions for cEVU. First, these directions have an impact on the way to describe teaching and learning objectives; second, they impact on the evaluation procedure for assessing results, and last they impact on the way modules and degrees are designed and delivered.

The recommendation to cEVU would then be to take into account and apply the “competence” concept **from the start** on all its offerings.

- For the recognition of joint developed courses and modules, a cEVU should thus be able to define all necessary standards and tools to describe and present teaching material, contents and modules, and support the partners for their recognition of the developed materials.
- For the uptake of learning and instruction materials of partner institutions with local support and assessment it would help to decide on the usefulness of the materials in the own curriculum
- For the virtual Erasmus activities (sharing and exchange of courses and specifically modules) it would facilitate the choice of students and the decision on acceptance for the faculties/departments.

¹⁰ A model to solve this problem could be the Finnish solution. In Finland there is an agreement that once you are member of one university, you can take courses from every Finnish university on the condition that your home university accepts those courses and pays a contribution to cover the extra costs of the providing university. A system has been worked out that enables each university to restrict the additional workload by only accepting a limited number of “guest” students and eventually limit the offered subjects (defined in full autonomy by each university) and to collect and redistribute the contributions according the number of sent and received students.

Especially with respect to the virtual Erasmus activities, it remains however important that the procedures for acceptance and recognition are as close as possible to the ones in use for the physical Erasmus mobility. It first avoids additional administration, second provides a framework with which staff in universities have become familiar, and third may therefore shorten the time needed for acceptance.

On a more general approach, if we want to increase “transparency” and “transferability”, the key elements in the description of the studies (in aiming at the recognition of courses and study modules) could be the following:

1. The structure of the degree (referring to the Diploma Supplement, which is given only for a whole degree).
2. The position of the particular module, as a part of a whole degree in terms of its competence building contribution. There should be aims and objectives for the whole degree and also for its parts: what are the acquired competencies after taking each module? Each part/module should give the student a certain achievement towards the degree - and its set of attached competencies. The Tuning methodology is recommended for the purpose.
3. The type of studies (positioned within the degree – e.g. BSc or MSc of Science in Technology – and field of study – e.g. Computer Science). These types could be the following: general scientific studies, professional studies, options for major studies, basic major studies, etc.
4. The content of the courses - through description of contents, prerequisites, aims, etc. They should be available in a (minimum) standard form (see an example of HUT: <http://www.hut.fi/Study/studyprogramme2002/index.html>)
5. The “value” of the courses (ECTS-credits) (see for instance the Example of HUT Credit System, Examinations, and Grading System at <http://www.hut.fi/Study/credits.html>).

The working group recognises the value of having a degree that is awarded by a specific institution. cEVU brand could and should be used to provide this added value. It is suggested to award under certain conditions (to be negotiated within the consortium) double degrees: a degree from the own institution and a “European” degree in the framework of the cEVU collaboration.

Finally, it is suggested to start with the development of European degrees (certainly for Ph.D., but possibly also for the master level and some continuing education degrees) that are recognised by all institutions in the cEVU consortium.

Annex 1: Starting documents

European texts:

- Documents of the Tuning project
(<http://www.relint.deusto.es/TUNINGProject/index.htm>)
- Information on ECTS and ECTS extension from the European Commission
(<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ects.html>) and
(<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ectsfea.html>)
- Information on the diploma supplement from EUA
(<http://www.unige.ch/eua/En/Publications/HE%20texts/diploma%20suppl.pdf>)
- Information on ECTS, especially with respect to continuing education – the French text "ECTS et formation continue universitaire"
(<http://www.swissuni.ch/wg/ECTS-Recommendations.html>)
- Information on the validation of professional knowledge and experience "Validation des acquis professionnels en IUT - Bilan"
(http://www.univ-brest.fr/IUT_BREST/fc/bilan.html)

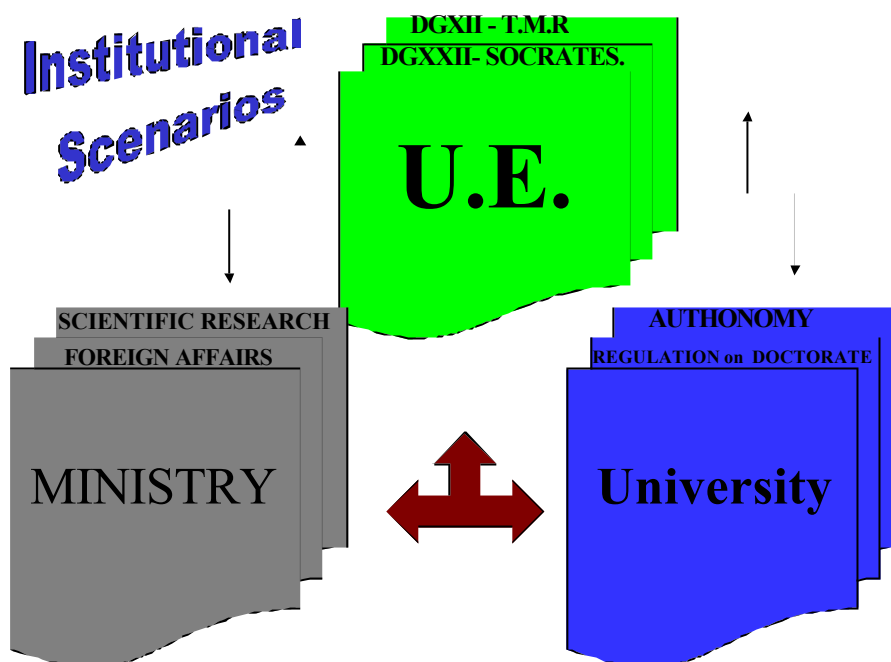
For comparison, also the following texts were taken into consideration:

- The Library Association's "Procedures for the accreditation of courses" (<http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/careers/jai.pdf>)
- The Australian Board of Senior Secondary Studies "Guidelines for the Development and Accreditation of Courses 2002"
(<http://www.decs.act.gov.au/bsss/Guidelines/Guide02.pdf>)

Annex 2: The case of the European PhD on Social Representation and Communication

(Prof. Annamaria de Rosa, Scientific Co-ordinator)

The **European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication** is a well-established, EU-approved training structure, which has been successfully training postgraduates from EU and non-EU countries since 1996. It is 3-year (minimum) doctoral programme, including a dissertation, and involves a network of 13 EU universities that provide advanced research training in the area of social representations and communication. This contribution looks at its accreditation at the European Ph.D. level, based in concrete experience cited as an example of “best practices” in education by the European Commission for Education (Erasmus y. 1993-1995 and Socrates. Y. 1996-2001), in research by the Marie Curie Multi-Partner Training Sites: 2000-2004, by the Italian Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research (under the programme Internationalisation: 2000-2003) and most recently, by the French-Italian University (under the Vinci programme: 2002-3).



Located in 8 countries, the 13 universities currently involved in the Euro Ph. D. network are: the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Paris, Cambridge University, the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of Helsinki, University of Provence, ISCTE Lisbon, University of the Basque Country, Université Paris VIII, University of Valencia, University of Geneva, University of Vienna and the University of Linz.

The accreditation of the curriculum launched by the Euro Ph. D. on SR & C can be discussed on two different levels:

A. Institutional - recognition obtained from:

- the EU (DG- Education and DG-Research)
- Ministries for Higher Education and Scientific Research in various countries
- the co-ordinating and partner Universities of the network (approval of the shared Regulation-Convention, Formal Recognition of the degree, shared commitment for the realisation of approved EU programmes and contracts)
- the larger scientific community (Thematic Network)

B. Didactics and Training

- at the individual level: Euro Ph.D. students receive credits for each didactic activity
- at the network level: quality control and monitoring system

A. Accreditation at the Institutional level

Below is a brief history of acknowledgments the European Ph. D. Programme on Social Representations and Communication has obtained since its birth in 1993, according to the four institutional scenarios:

A.1. By the EU DG- Education

- 1993-1996 Euro Ph.D. programme EU DG XXII - Education and Culture - approved under the Erasmus programme (IPC-93, 94, 95, 96-I-3074/14) co-ordinated by the University of Rome "La Sapienza"

- 1996-2000. Euro Ph.D. EU DG XXII - Education and Culture - CDA approved under the Socrates programme (IC 29415 - IC 1 - 96-97-98 - ERASMUS - EPS1) co-ordinated by the University of Rome "La Sapienza"
- 2000-2001. Euro Ph.D. EU DG XXII - Education and Culture - CDAD approved under the Socrates programme (IC 29415 - IC 1 - 99 - ERASMUS - EPS1) co-ordinated by the University of Rome "La Sapienza", since then, it has been selected as one of the "best practices in Europe".

A.2. By the EU DG-Research

- 1995-2000 The cycle of Euro Ph.D. International Summer Schools approved both by DG XII - Research - TMR (contract no. ERBFMMACT960165) and EU DGXXII (I.P action included in the I.C.-Socrates)
- 1994-1997. TMR Programme. Marie Curie Research Training Grants - for the benefit of Euro Ph.D. fellow Andrew Smith (contract no. ERB400GT963929) and research fellow Miguel Torregrossa appointed for EU research network approved under HCM Programme (contract no. CE CHRX-CT94-0687). The co-ordinator of the Euro Ph.D. was also invited as senior fellow to Surrey University (S.P.E.R.I. - Social Psychology European Institute) under TMR Programme. Marie Curie Research Training Grants (Jan.-March 1996).
- 2000-2004. Euro Ph.D. network EU DG XII - Research - approved as Marie Curie Training Site Multi-partner Organisation (contract no. HPMT-2000-00152)
- 2002-2004. New cycle of the International Summer School on Social Representations and Communication related to the Euro Ph.D. programme - approved by EU DG XII - Research - as High Level Conference (HPCF-2001-00210)

A.3. Ministries for Higher Education and Scientific Research in various countries

The Euro Ph.D. was the first among doctoral projects approved in the first call of "internationalisation" promoted jointly by the Italian Ministry for Universities, Scientific Research and Technology (MURST) and the university.

- Under MURST funding for Large Infrastructures for the University, the Commission for Scientific Research of the University of Rome "La Sapienza" approved the project for the creation of a multimedia laboratory for videoconferences and Open Distance Learning (ODL) activities of the Euro Ph. D. on Social Representations and Communication
- 2000-2003. Euro Ph.D. programme MURST - approved under the action "Internationalisation of the University System" (Art 7 - D.M. 21.06.99) and co-funded by the University of Rome "La Sapienza" for the project "Innovative measures for the development of the european doctorate: European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication" (contract no. 1100268279).
- From 2001 the Euro Ph. D. on SR & C has been selected from among the mobility projects of the French-Italian University, a bi-national university network for joint teaching, research and awarding of diplomas. In 2002 it received financing as a Doctoral School within the scope of the Vinci programme.

A.4. By co-ordinating and partner Universities of the network

A.4.1 Approval of the shared Regulation-Convention

Based on a Regulation approved by the academic senates of the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Italy (10-09-1996), l’ISCITE, Lisbon, Portugal (27-03-1996) and the University of Helsinki, Finland (30-04-1996), and later transformed into a Convention signed by all the partner universities, the programme has been fully operational in all the network universities since 1996. Consequently, it has become a long-term acquisition developed thanks to the contributions of the Socrates programme and the Marie Curie Multipartner Organisation. The co-ordinating university, “La Sapienza”, has pledged, both financially (via co-financing) and via the new university regulation on research doctorates, to guarantee the continuity and stability of this European doctorate, which repeatedly has been approved by the European Commission. During the academic year 2001-2002, this doctorate was for the first time officially made part of the XVII research doctorate cycle of the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and a three-year scholarship was granted to the best of the Italian Euro Ph.D. on SR & C candidates, chosen by the Executive Committee. In the current cycle (2002-03), it obtained two more grants and the Academic Senate officially announced in its meeting of 30-5-2002 to guarantee the continuity of this doctoral education curriculum at the European level and to provide new scholarships each year.

The acquisition of two prestigious facilities has been an important development in the logistical organization of all the activities connected to the Euro Ph.D. on SR & C, including the scientific secretariat, educational activities and the installation of a **Multi-media Lab and Research Centre**. The first, Piazza d’Ara Coeli, 1, is located in the historic centre of Rome. The other, dedicated to residential and intensive seminar activities is located at the historic Castello Colonna in Genazzano, just outside Rome.

A.4.2. Formal Recognition and delivery of the diploma

In its role as co-ordinator, the University of Rome “La Sapienza” (I-Roma01) issues the diploma. The diploma, along with a copy of the doctoral dissertation, is also registered at the other two universities that have formally recognized the doctorate (SF-Helsinki01 and P-LISONA07). The diploma contains the composition of the international jury, the mobility “stages” completed by the doctoral candidate in two European countries other than his/her country of residence and the academic credits earned via the training received from the European network of doctoral training.

The awarding of the first “European doctorate” diplomas, issued under the joint signatures of the rectors of the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Helsinki and Lisbon, is probably the most significant event¹¹. On the scientific level the event was crowned by the books and

¹¹ first doctoral students who presented their theses were:

Year of dissertation defense	Name	Dissertation title (full report)	Title - short version	Country of Origin
2000		<i>Paradosso e Rappresentazioni Sociali</i>	AIDS Social Representations and paradoxical communication. The Daily Mail example The	Italy

publications that were produced from the dissertations of the first doctoral candidates that were awarded the degree.¹²

A.4.3 Shared commitment for the realisation of approved EU programmes and contracts

Following the implementation of the project's multiyear programming in the framework of SOCRATES-CDA 1996-2000 – implementation phase and CDA-D (2000-01), dedicated to the project's development and diffusion, the European doctorate became a fully implemented project that continues to go forward. The universities in the network have pledged to "shared commitment" in the development of activities linked to the European doctorate.

- since 1996. The Euro Ph.D. has been invited to participate in the VirtUE project ("Virtual University in Europe"), co-ordinated by EuroPACE 2000 and funded by EU under the Trans-European Telecommunications Networks- Integrated Services Digital Network (TEN-ISDN) action. Goals include the promotion and the integration of Euro-ISDN based services into open distance learning activities in the pilot Euro Ph.D.
- 2002-2004. The Euro Ph.D. on SR & C was invited to participate in the cEVU Project (collaborative European Virtual University) co-ordinated by EuroPACE and funded under the eLearning initiative of the European Commission - DG for Education and Culture (contract no. 2001-3453/001-001 EDU ELEARN).

2000	Elfriede Penz	<i>Ist Nur Bares Wahres? Soziale Repräsentationen von und Einstellungen zu alten und neueren Zahlungsmitteln, insbesondere der Chipkarte.</i>	Is electronic money still part of the bankers dream?	Austria
2002	Salvatore D'Amore	Il mangiare visto, parlato e disegnato dagli adolescenti. Una ricerca sulle rappresentazioni e pratiche alimentari secondo un approccio multimetodologico	Le manger vu, parl et dessin par les adolescents. Une recherche sur les Représentations et Pratiques alimentaires selon une approche multi-méthodologique.	Italy
2003	Annuikka Vainio	One Morality - or Multiple Moralities? Religious Ideology, Conceptions of Morality and Rule Systems among the Finnish Adolescents Having Evangelical Lutheran, Conservative Laestadian, and Nonreligious Affiliation	One Morality - or Multiple Moralities? Religious Ideology, Conceptions of Morality and Rule Systems among the Finnish Adolescents Having Evangelical Lutheran, Conservative Laestadian, and Nonreligious Affiliation	Finland
2003	Paszkal Kiss	Between East and West: Hungarians Perceiving Other Nations and Europe	Between East and West: Hungarians Perceiving Other Nations and Europe	Hungary

¹² Andrew Smith, (2001). *Le rappresentazioni sociali paradossali.*, Roma, Gangemi Editore.

Roland-Lévy, Christine, Kirchler, Erich, Penz, Elfriede and Colin Gray (Eds.) (2001): "Everyday Representations of the Economy" Wien: WUV

Schlegelmilch, B.B., Penz, E., (2002): Knowledge Management in Marketing. The Marketing Review, 3, 5-19.

D'Amore, S. (2000) Eating and Body Representations and Practices in Adolescence. Preliminary Results, Poster Abstract, European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, vol. 54, supplement 4, p.9

D'Amore, S. e al (2001) Rappresentazioni e pratiche Alimentari in Adolescenza. I risultati preliminari di un'analisi del contenuto delle Interviste semistrutturate con il Programma Alceste, Eating and Weight Disorders, vol 6, n°2, p.15

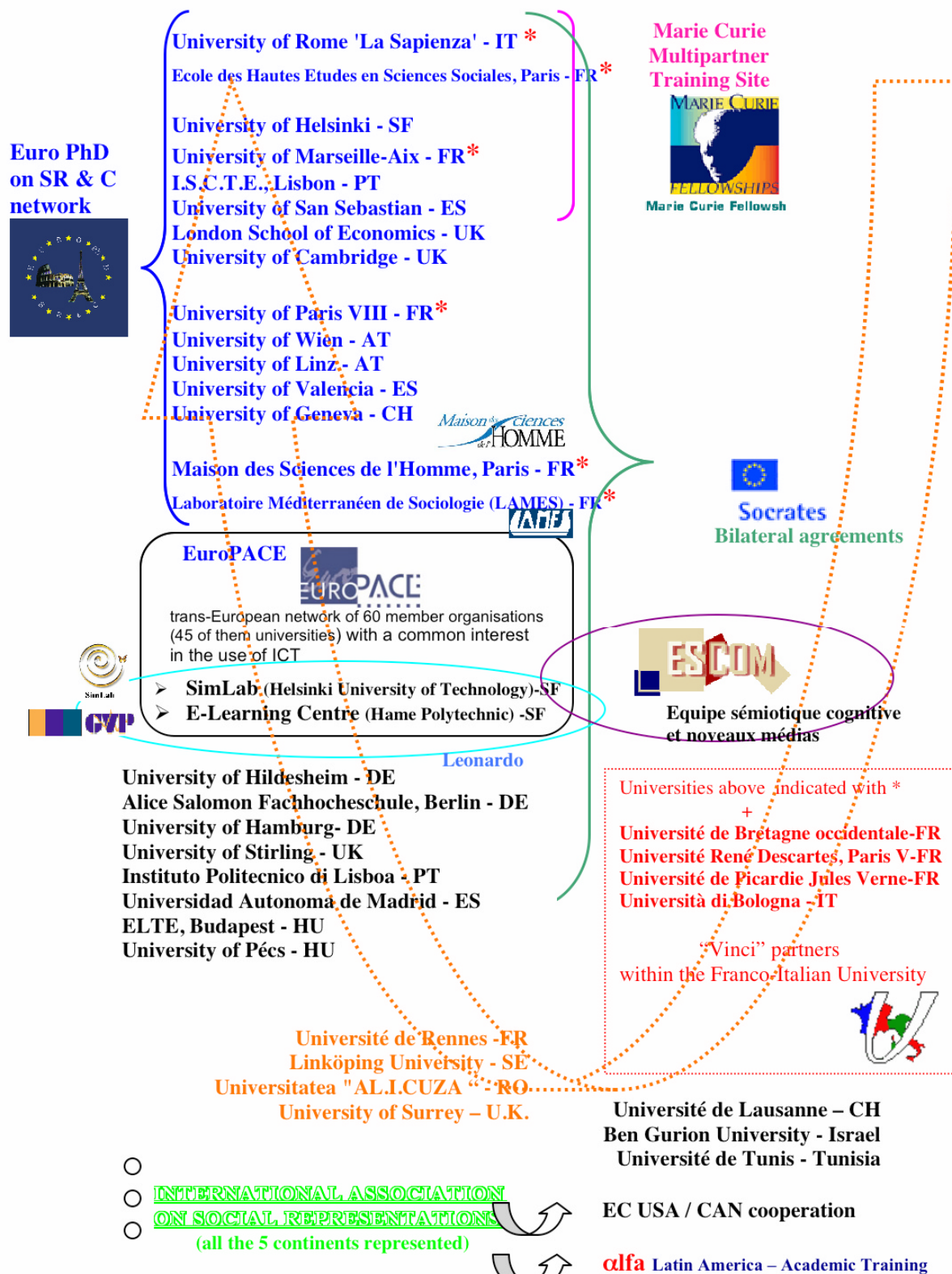
- 2001-2003. Approval of the European Ph.D. on S.R. & C. under the XVII & XVIII cycles of doctorates who receive grants from “La Sapienza”.

A.5 By the larger scientific community (Thematic Network)

Beyond **co-ordination and monitoring the activities** described below, the universities of the network have dedicated themselves to **development policy planning** and to international scientific co-operation for the European doctorate. This is also in relation to the wider scientific community and included the founding of the thematic network So.Re.Com.thematic neTwork (under approval within the Socrates programme DG-Education) and a SoReCOM network of excellence (under approval within the 6th Framework programme DG-Research).

This outreach to the wider scientific community also came as the result of numerous requests from universities outside the network to participate in the activities of the Euro Ph.D. For network management reasons, the Executive Committee decided not to expand the stabile partnership structure of the European Ph.D. (13 partner institutions) that had consolidated during 10 years of collaboration. Instead, they chose to promote a new project for a network of excellence towards a much wider scientific community and that can provide scientific co-operation synergies that are not necessarily at the level of institutions but also at the level of individual or groups of researchers located on different continents. See the representation of the thematic network in the figure on the next page

Social REpresentations and COMmunication THEmatic NETwork SO.RE.COM. THE.NET partners



B. Didactic and Training level

B 1. at the individual level: Euro Ph.D. students receive credits for each didactic activity

In line with the policy recommended by EU DGXXII, the Euro Ph.D. adopts the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as an instrument for creating transparency and confidence in academic performance. Students are awarded up to 60 credits per year (20 for courses and didactic activities and 40 for research quality and related bibliographic knowledge).

The general teaching/learning strategy of the Euro Ph.D. is to examine the following aspects of social representations and communication:

1. historical and theoretical aspects,
2. methodological aspects,
3. fieldwork and applications,
4. current comparative European research projects.

The didactic structure within this overall strategy is highly innovative. As the system of open distance learning (outlined below 1-6) makes clear, Euro Ph.D. students are involved in an interlocking system of **virtual and physical mobility** which allows for considerable **flexibility** in catering to students' research needs while at the same time guaranteeing **individual tutoring** and **interactive learning**:

1. Intensive preliminary stage of bibliographic training at national universities (10 credits per year)

This is provided by individual tutoring by national and foreign tutors and by access to an on-line database on the Euro Ph.D. web-site. Students are also trained by the Scientific Co-ordinator in meta-theoretical analysis of the bibliographic material in their own subject area. The contribution of each student will thus enable mapping out a complete, fully-researched bibliography for social representations and communication.

(<http://www.europhd.psi.uniroma1.it>)

2. Intensive high level didactic stage (International Summer School (10 credits per year)

Students are required to attend the annual European Ph.D. International Summer School on Social Representations and Communication. These EC-financed summer schools take place yearly and were hosted in one of the countries of the university network on a rotational basis until 1995. Since 1999 they have been held regularly at the co-ordinating University.

3. Seminars and advanced courses (5 credits per year)

Students must attend seminars and advanced courses held at the Research centre and Multimedia lab of the European Ph.D. on S.R. & C. at the co-ordinating university in Rome and at the network university sites. These are planned in accordance with a teacher exchange mobility programme and include international guest experts.

4. Multi-media and open distance learning system (5 credits per year)

Students are required to make interactive use of the open distance learning system, not only through asynchronous e-mail, but by actively contributing to the dedicated video-chat, forum discussion, multipoint videoconferences, digital video-courses, available on the web site of the European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication or in CD-ROM or DVD multimedia system.

5. Tutoring and co-tutoring (30 credits per year assigned to research)

The tutoring and co-tutoring system is aimed at monitoring the development of the research programme at both national and foreign training sites over the full period up to the final dissertation. Students are assigned their own research “space” on the web-site in order to update their project and to allow supervision by national and foreign tutors and monitoring by the Programme Director and the Scientific Co-ordinator.

Within this tutoring and co-tutoring triadic didactic system, students are required:

- a) to spend at least 3 months researching in two different European countries. This unique feature of the Euro Ph.D. programme enables students to work alongside their foreign tutors in a new and stimulating research environment. This training is characterised by a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach. Each network university site has special expertise in a particular methodological approach to research in social representations. The student is thus exposed to a variety of complementary methodological approaches;
- b) to maintain regular communication with their national and foreign tutors, according to the circumstances, in a face to face interactive context and/or in a computer mediated communication context, through dedicated video-chat, forum discussion and multipoint videoconferences;
- c) to submit an extended yearly report to be presented in the dedicated training session during the International Summer School - and a critical review of the bibliography on the research undertaken
- d) to write the full report of their dissertation in the language of their first tutor, or if different, in a national language of the country where the doctorate is being pursued, to be evaluated by the national tutor and then to write a short version in English in a format ready to be submitted to international journals, to be evaluated by the European Board of the Final Jury.

The above training is characterised by a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach. As each network university site has special expertise in a particular methodological approach to research in social representations, the student is exposed to a variety of complementary methodological approaches.

Specific benefit of this system to European Ph.D. students:

- **Unique tutoring system**

In the course of their research, students are continually in contact with their tutors. Under the open learning system, tutors have on-line access to students’ work and are thus able to make didactic use of the web-site and monitor students’ progress quickly and directly. The Euro Ph.D. guarantees a maximum of 2-3 students per tutor per year. This ensures individual tutoring at all times and close monitoring of students’ progress.

- **Flexibility of open distance learning**

The system of open distance learning guarantees flexibility in meeting the needs of students. It enables students to organise their research in the way that they wish within the confines of the didactic structure; open distance learning can also be adapted to provide more temporary or more specific training if required by the trainee.

Under the open distance learning system, the Programme Director and Scientific Co-ordinator have access to students’ research. Administratively speaking, this communal access is advantageous because it enables research training to be easily co-ordinated and supervised by the scientific committee.

- **Greater access to expertise**

Euro Ph.D. students are offered a broader range of international expertise for their research than would be possible at a national level. In this respect it is particularly beneficial that students are able to choose the foreign tutors by whom they wish to be supervised. The role as

Programme Director of an eminent academic such as Prof. Serge Moscovici is of particular benefit to both Euro Ph.D. students and senior researchers on the training network.

- **Benefits of a variety of methodological approaches**

Students are exposed not only to a variety of methodological approaches but to an international expert in their preferred methodological approach.

- **Benefits of multidisciplinary approaches**

The multidisciplinary approaches and facilities to which students are exposed in host universities give them access to a far wider range of research disciplines than would be possible nationally.

- **An extra Ph.D.**

The Euro Ph.D. is not a substitute for a national Ph.D., but can be earned in addition to a national Ph.D.

B.2 at the network level: quality control and monitoring system

B.2.1 Quality control of the Euro Ph.D. training

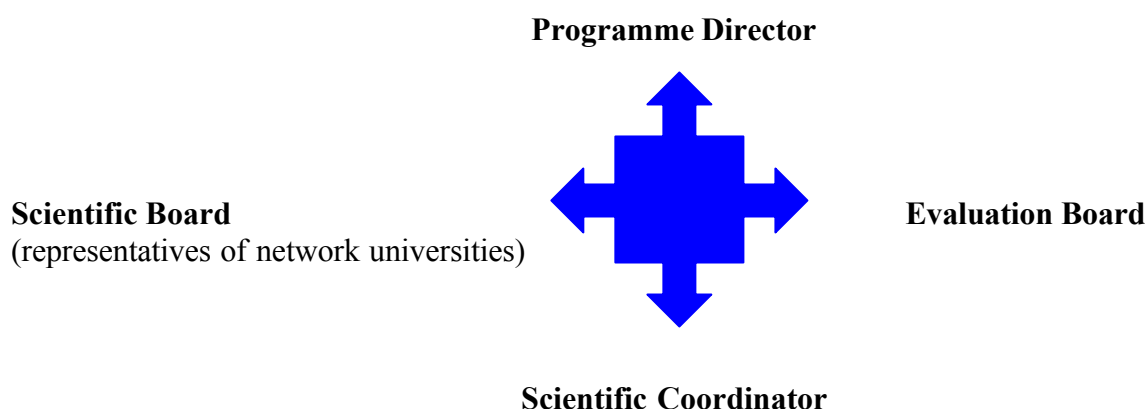
A functional system called “Quality control of the Euro Ph.D. training” was created to monitor activities and completion of proposed objectives. This organization is linked with the internal structure of the European Ph.D. and is composed of a Scientific Board and a Core Executive Committee that meet at different intervals during the year.

General monitoring of the organisation and training of the Euro Ph.D. is carried out by the whole Scientific Board at international yearly meetings, by the Core Executive Committee at quarterly meetings and by the Programme Director and the Scientific Co-ordinator during at least bimonthly meetings. The quality of the scientific programme is monitored by the Programme Director in co-operation with the Scientific Co-ordinator and the Core Executive Committee. The quality of training and working conditions is guaranteed by the Scientific Board and the Core Executive Committee (see above).

B.2.2 Scientific/didactic/administrative structure of the Euro Ph.D. network

The general structure of the Euro Ph.D. network is as follows:

- a *Programme Director*, whose function is to monitor the scientific quality of the Euro Ph.D. programme; the current Programme Director is Prof. Serge Moscovici, founder of the Theory of Social Representations, first President of the European Association for Experimental and Social Psychology (E.A.S.E.P.), founder and Head of the Laboratoire Européen de Psychologie Sociale (LEPS-M.S.H.)
- a *Scientific Co-ordinator*, who is responsible for the scientific and administrative management of the Euro Ph.D.; the current Scientific Co-ordinator is Prof. Annamaria de Rosa of the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. She is also Scientific Co-ordinator for the International Summer Schools dedicated to the Euro Ph.D.
- a *Scientific Board*, made up of the representative partners of network universities; their task is to act as tutors, promote the Euro Ph.D. programme within their own country, contribute to didactic organisation, and co-organise the hosting of intensive stages in their own country when required
- a *Core Executive Committee*, made up of the Programme Director, the Scientific Co-ordinator and representative partners of the universities who officially recognise the Euro Ph.D. qualification (see below)
- an *Evaluation Board*; students’ final Ph.D. dissertations, written in the national language of the country where the doctorate is carried out, are assessed by an Evaluation Board of academics from network universities and an external international expert.

**Scientific organisational structure
of the Euro PhD on S.R. & C. programme**


Assessment tools used in the **Open distance learning system** are of fundamental assistance in continuously monitoring the quality of training.

The quality of the scientific programme is evaluated by the Programme Director in co-operation with the Scientific Co-ordinator and the tutors. This is accomplished using evaluative tools and co-tutoring, including distance co-tutoring that continuously monitors the students' training via the European doctorate's dedicated web site. To provide necessary feedback, the students complete evaluation sheets for scientific events such as the intensive training "stages" held during the International Summer Schools.

After monitoring the work of previous years, among the quality control procedures we decided to impose a more structured "time constraint" on the development of students' research programmes. This offers tutors **evaluation tools for various versions of the students' research projects**:

- a. Initial short version**
- b. Intermediate extended version**
- c. Final short & extended version**

These tools have been installed in the web site for every registered student (<http://www.europhd.psi.uniroma1.it/>). They are considered confidential and, by using a password, are accessible for consultation only by the didactic triad of the 3 tutors (1 national + 2 foreign tutors), the Scientific Co-ordinator, the Programme Director and the student him or herself.

In addition, the **procedural regulations for presentation and evaluation of dissertations before the Final Jury** have been organized, structured and appropriately tested in the course of the first dissertation defences.

B.2.3 Tools for open distance learning

The **Moderated Thematic Forum** on Special Societal Issues addresses, in various European countries, the scientific literature produced by empirical investigations of diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. These will be moderated by research trainees enrolled in the Euro Ph.D. programme, who will stimulate participation by recognized experts both within and outside of the European network. These will include opinion makers from

political institutions and socio-economic entities that have special commitments to the issues at hand.

Multi-lingual digital videos on social representations and communication in different forms (text, images, sound) and structures (records, documents, multi-document webs) produced by a group of European scientists with outstanding international expertise in research training through research. The project's integrated approach initially aims to produce two kinds of multimedia products:

- **Studio Produced Videos**, to be distributed via Internet through streaming video and on digital support (CD-ROM or DVD), designed for deferred-time solutions;
- **Magisterial Lectures** produced in real time for an interactive communicative training setting. These lectures could take place, for example, during the Euro Ph.D. International Summer School or other seminars, and would be enriched by live interactive didactic exchanges with participants physically or virtually present at the event. These would be broadcast via multipoint video conferencing via Internet or via ISDN at university laboratories or at special professional centres equipped for that purpose.

Distance **research tutoring and interactive co-operative research** tools and activities on the web.

The "**video-chats**" aim to improve not only asynchronous communication but also real-time interaction between leading scientists in the network, including the founder of the theory, young researchers enrolled in the programme, other distinguished experts from outside the network and the wider potential audience both in and outside European universities.

There will be three kinds of Video-chats, those:

- 1) based on interviews with scientists and outside experts on papers critical to developing the state-of-the-art; these video-chats will be managed directly by the Scientific Co-ordinator of the programme and distributed via multipoint modalities;
- 2) based on exchanges and discussions between tutors and research trainees on relevant research training activities.† These will be organized into several "rooms", for example, a Euro Ph.D. tutoring room, a Marie Curie training room, International Summer Schools, Biblio room and virtual library, etc.;
- 3) based on discussion with scientists and policy makers on issues relevant to research in this specialized field and to EU policy.

With iVisit it is possible to establish Point-To-Point or Multi-Point connections using the server provided at no cost by iVisit. Rooms were created on the European Ph.D.'s server to set up the Video-Chats, each of which is protected by a specific password.

All participants in the European Ph.D. on S.R. & C. programme (including young researchers and professors), the International Summer Schools, and Marie Curie Fellows are able to access these rooms via passwords. Certain "Rooms" (for example, those designed for tutoring and co-tutoring individual research projects) are confidential and accessible only to those enrolled in the European Ph.D. programme, their personal tutors and the Programme Co-ordinator and Director.

Via a special room, Marie Curie fellows can use video-chats to establish a virtual scientific community that will strengthen their ties both to their tutors and other Marie Curie Fellows and that will enable them to keep these ties vital over time, even after their internship abroad has finished. In order to access these "rooms", other users may make an e-mail request to the

Scientific Co-ordinator of the European Ph.D. who, via the Web master, will see that they are provided with access passwords for the rooms specifically requested.

B.2.4 Critical points and proposals for the future

These recommendations above all concern institutional aspects relative to the policy of developing the European dimension of advanced university training. It has been several years since the implementation of the Socrates programme, that among other interesting innovations, had the value of making more visible the development of the European dimension of advanced university training (CDA & CDA-D). Under the **institutional profile**, it might now be appropriate for the European Commission, at both the DG-Education and DG-Research level, to launch an action to co-ordinate the few initiatives already consolidated and qualified as best practices. This could be in the form of an International Experts Committee composed of an academic representative and a representative of the Ministry of Universities and Scientific Research from each of the member states. Almost universally characterising university development policy in Europe, the process leading toward the autonomy of universities from centralised ministerial policies and the growing interest of many academic disciplines in forms of international cooperation for doctoral level training suggest that the time is again right for institutional reflection on the “European doctorate”, perhaps with joint action by DG-Education and DG-Research. The expediency for promoting an initiative of this type is dictated by the fact that in each of the member states of the European Union there still exist notable differences in the various organizational and training formulas for doctorates, beginning with the student recruitment phase and up to professional opportunities once they have finished their training. In fact, a dual orientation exists. On one side there is training oriented exclusively toward academic research (Italian model), on the other, training “via” research that can have professional value and is recognized in the management and industrial sectors (North American model). Following the university autonomy policy promoted by the various states, a multiplication of university regulations for doctoral training occurred. This began a process of differentiation that is not limited to programming the scientific-curricular content. It is in contrast with the push for European curriculum harmonisation, even on the level of the third cycle, that followed the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations. The “*Annual Report on the Didactic State of Doctoral Programmes and on Evaluation Procedures Adopted by Universities*” is evidence of this. In its attempt to sum up the state of doctorates vis-à-vis the requirements found in the general regulations (MURST - DM. N.224 del 30/04/1999), it highlights the difficulties and problems of a general nature concerning how the doctoral programmes function.

The regulations specify the following requirements:

- a) the presence in the teaching body of an adequate number of professors and researchers in the concerned area of research;
- b) the availability of adequate financial resources and specific operational and scientific structures for the course and for the doctoral candidates’ study and research activities;
- c) providing a co-ordinator responsible for the course, a teaching body and tutors numerically proportional to the doctoral candidates and documented scientific production in the area of research in the fifth, final year;
- d) the possibility of collaboration with public, private, Italian and foreign entities that will permit doctoral candidates to conduct experiments in a working context;
- e) providing training programmes oriented toward high level research activities at universities, public and private entities;

f) implementing evaluation systems concerning the continuance of requirements, the conformity of the course to training objectives, as well as the relationship to professional opportunities at the at the doctoral candidates' training level.

The National Committee for the Evaluation of the Italian University System has put forward the following statement on these problems and the outlook for solving them:

a) The excessive fragmentation of doctoral programmes has led, in many cases, to inadequate faculty and training programmes and a low number of registered students and scholarships.

Unification initiatives should be encouraged that will lead to the establishment of doctoral programmes with adequate resources and capabilities for programming in various sectors.

b) Concerning "consortium" doctorates, that can continue to play a role in avoiding provincialising effects, it would be advisable for didactic activities to be concentrated at one site to which the necessary resources for operating the doctoral programme would be provided.

c) Identifying outside sources of financing should be encouraged, in particularly for those scientific activities that can have practical applications. We must not forget that the interest that external entities have for a doctoral programme can contribute to its recognition on the professional level and therefore, create professional opportunities for research Ph.D.s.

d) Doctoral candidates must be encouraged towards mobility, a necessary condition to insure that doctoral programmes do not become mere extensions of undergraduate courses. This could be done by providing an increase in grants to students coming from other universities.

e) We note the need for periodic evaluation of doctoral candidates' scientific production. This should be accomplished according to the modalities appropriate to area of discipline.

f) The internationalisation of doctoral programmes must be stimulated, both by instituting scholarships reserved for foreign students and by encouraging serious collaboration initiatives with qualified foreign universities.

g) It is not acceptable for research doctorates to be awarded to students who are over 30 years of age. To avoid a late entry into the professional world, under normal circumstances it should be possible to enter the postdoctoral phase or leave the university at around 26-27 years of age.

Although referring to the Italian situation, these problems and the relative outlook for their solution should be evaluated in the light of a wider European perspective. The need to create a European space for research training is becoming increasingly urgent. We must look to curriculum solutions that are born of a careful analysis of institutional and training needs conducted in an authentically European perspective, not one that boils down to the sum of country-by-country analyses and disconnected solutions.

Annex 3: The Finnish Case

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees (Diploma Supplement)

According to the university and polytechnic legislation, the Finnish higher education institutions are obliged to provide their students on request with an annex to diploma which is meant for international use. The Finnish Ministry of Education has recommended that the universities and the polytechnics use explicitly the Diploma Supplement as this annex to diplomas. The Diploma Supplement is written in English. The current promotion campaign aims at wider and more professional use of the DS through e.g. supporting the institutions in

drawing up their own DS. This proposal has been adopted in most higher education institutions.

Today a Diploma Supplement describing the degree taken by an individual student is issued on request to the students taking a Master's degree, although the process may differ from university to university. Polytechnic institutions likewise issue their own annex. Usually all the information needed for the supplement is retrieved from the student and study record database maintained in every institution. The Diploma Supplement enhances the transparency of the national higher education system and facilitates the evaluation of a foreign degree. It furthermore simplifies the comparison of different degrees and degree levels.

Establishment of a more transparent credit system - ECTS

The European Credit Transfer System, introduced by the Commission more than 10 years ago is a common basis for recognising students' study periods abroad. Education ministers in more than 30 countries have resolved, under the Bologna Process, to create a 'European higher education area' by 2010 in which degrees would be more readily comparable.

A system of credits has existed in Finland since 1980, when it was introduced using the Scandinavian, mostly Swedish example. According to the Finnish system of credits, one study credit corresponds approximately to 40 hours of student work (incl. contact hours and independent work). In addition to the Finnish credit system the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS is used in all higher education institutions, although it is not obligatory.

ECTS transcripts have been produced since 1998 for greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes. Thus transcripts issued to students serve both transferability and accumulation functions. Together with appropriate quality assurance systems such "transparency" will facilitate student exchange and Finnish students' access to the European universities and labour market. Together with appropriate funding ECTS has been the key instrument in student mobility.

In fact the national credit system can be easily converted to follow the ECTS. In Finland the only problem so far has been the distortions in the evaluation of workload. Student performances are quite extensive in some fields of study (especially in the humanities) compared to the credits acquired. Therefore we cannot simply automatically convert the old Finnish credits into the new European system but we have to evaluate carefully the workload, too, to avoid the old distortions in the new system.

Steps towards European Higher Education Area - Finnish Ministry of Education

About 2 years ago, the representative of the Finnish Ministry of Education wrote a Bologna follow-up statement saying that "the Declaration in itself has not given rise to any legislative changes, but has contributed significantly to the national higher education debate". The Ministry of Education has been active in Finland in developing the new degree structure. In January 2002 a large and representative committee was appointed for a period of 10 months to develop the degree system to respond to the needs of the labour market and international development of the degree system and to secure that Finnish higher education institutions were competitive compared to other countries. The mandate of the committee was

- to propose a reform of the university degree structure to comprise two cycles and measures needed to implement the two-tier degree structure in all the study fields. The aim was a structure in which all the students would first take a three-year bachelor-level degree and after that a master-level degree if they so wish.
- to determine the objectives for the bachelor- and master-level degrees and outline the development of specific master's programmes. Further, the aim was to assess the needs for amending the statutes governing different study fields and the impact of the reformed degrees on scientific postgraduate education.
- to make a proposal for ways to increase the comparability of the Finnish credit system with the ECTS system.
- further to draft the required amendments to legislation.

The committee proposes that the two-tier degree structure be adopted in all study fields as from 1 August 2005 and that the present credit system be replaced by an ECTS-based system (pay attention to the new way of opening the acronym ECTS: the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). In this, one year of studies would comprise 1600 student work hours and give 60 credits. The committee emphasises that the reform should not lead to an increase in degree requirements and that the new syllabi should be based on field-specific core content analyses. New syllabi should make students personal study plans possible and leave room for optional studies.

According to the committee's proposal, the extent of the bachelor's degree would be 180 credits, which would mean three years of study. The extent proposed for the master's degree would be 120 credits, that is, two years of study. The committee proposes that in admissions, the students would gain the right to study both cycles by one application process.

The committee also proposes that universities arrange degree programmes taught in foreign languages.