

Part III:

Learning structures and higher education systems in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland

THEMATIC OVERVIEWS

In the first project report on Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education, prepared for the Bologna Conference in 1999 ("Trends 1"), Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein presented an outline of some of the main trends in the higher education systems of the EU/EEA countries. In particular they looked at institutional structures, credit and recognition systems, quality assurance, the organisation of the academic year and similar matters.

A main purpose of the present "Trends II" report is to provide the same analysis and overview for those countries that have signed the Bologna declaration but, due to time constraints, had not been included in "Trends I". This concerns mainly countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In addition this group includes Malta and Switzerland.

Finally, six states that have expressed interest in the process towards the creation of a European higher education area have been included in the survey: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The following part of "Trends II" should be read as a direct complement to Jette Kirstein's survey of EU/EEA countries in "Trends I". We have used her questionnaire and prepared similar country reports for the above mentioned additional 18 countries. For reasons of consistency and comparability we also used her definitions and explanations and we are very grateful to her for her permission to do so.

Unlike the group of countries analysed in "Trends I", the 18 countries that form the object of "Trends II" represent a fairly heterogeneous group:

There are Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland whose higher education systems have long-standing links to some EU member states' systems such as Greece, the UK, Germany or France.

Then there are the countries of Central and Eastern Europe who freed themselves of their Communist regimes a decade ago, introduced new higher education laws and more or less fundamentally reformed their higher education systems.

Lastly, there are the countries in Ex-Yugoslavia plus Albania, who have not signed the Bologna Declaration but have started to restructure their higher education systems, and to whom the convergence process in higher education means new challenges and opportunities. After the democratic changes in Serbia in October 2000, also the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was included in the survey.

As Jette Kirstein pointed out concerning the first study, a comprehensive survey of this kind, dealing with very different aspects and diversified developments in a large number of countries can only offer a glimpse of what is emerging in European higher education. Any comparison of higher education systems and identification of common trends can only be considered a fairly simplifying generalisation. Further information therefore has to be obtained from more extensive and detailed publications such as those of the European Commission, EURYDICE, the Council of Europe, the ENIC/NARIC network, the Association of European Universities (CRE) or the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences.

National frameworks for higher education institutions and qualifications

Diversification of institutions

As Jette Kirstein pointed out in "Trends I", two different types of higher education systems prevail world-wide, in spite of the existing diversification:

- ◆ a so-called *unitary* or comprehensive system where most higher education is catered for by universities or university-like institutions, offering both general academic degrees and more professionally-oriented programmes of various lengths and levels;
- ◆ a so-called *binary* or dual system with a *traditional university sector* based more or less on the Humboldt university concept and a separate and distinct *non-university higher education sector*.

In all European countries the need for diversified offers in higher education to serve the different needs of students and employers has been recognised and taken into account.

In the *unitary system* the diversification is taken care of by a single type of institution, normally the university. The study programmes are therefore often much more varied in level, character and academic and theoretical orientation than in traditional universities in a binary system. Many programmes are professionally oriented. Among the countries surveyed in this study unitary systems exist today in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, FYROM, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In FYROM, however, the new Higher Education Law of November 2000 calls for the creation of professional schools, thereby changing the system into a binary one.

The binary systems in some of the other countries are still in the development phase, with the new laws on higher education adopted in the 1990s providing for the possibility to set up non-university and private institutions. As for Malta, higher education is just changing from a unitary to a binary system.

In binary systems developed in Western Europe there is a traditional difference between universities offering the theory- and research-based programmes and the non-university institutions taking care of high-level professional programmes. In Central and Eastern Europe the Soviet division of labour between universities and very specialised higher education schools (in charge of teaching) and academies (in charge of research) prevailed up to 1990. Many countries have by now re-integrated more research into the universities and are re-defining the tasks of the academies and their relationship to the universities. The definition of universities as places where teaching and research should take place in a large variety of disciplines and doctoral degrees are awarded is very much alike in all the countries. Academies, on the other hand, are either defined as a sort of smaller universities with a more narrow range of disciplines, or as research institutions that may run post-graduate programmes (in particular doctoral programmes) in co-operation with universities.

Finally, as in Western Europe, there is a tendency to up-grade existing vocational and professional institutions and to integrate them fully into the higher education sector. The reasons for these developments are the same as those listed by Jette Kirstein for the EU/EEC countries:

- ◆ to offer more professionally-oriented and economically relevant types of education in order to meet a labour market demand for such candidates;
- ◆ to cater for a growing number of higher education applicants without substantially increasing governmental expenditure for higher education;
- ◆ to cater for non-traditional groups of students in a more innovative manner;
- ◆ to offer primarily teaching-oriented programmes with some use of applied research;
- ◆ to upgrade existing vocationally oriented post-secondary education.

Also another diagnosis of Jette Kirstein with regard to Western Europe is equally applicable to the countries studied in this report, namely that those who "have or are developing a distinct binary system want to keep it, but with a clear intention to build on the specific qualities and characteristics of each sector as well as to establish more flexibility, interlinkages and co-operation between the sectors."

This is in particular true of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia. E.g. in the Czech Republic the Ministry of Education is currently elaborating a strategy for the restructuring of the non-university institutions, as they are seen as being too numerous (around 170) and too small (in 1998/99 only 13 institutions had more than 400 students). The plan foresees that they will be merged, where possible, and will be expected to offer very diversified programmes ranging from one to three years in accordance with labour market needs.

In November 2000 Latvia passed an amendment to the Law on Higher Education that introduces a system of professional Bachelor degrees enjoying full equivalence with academic degrees. Estonia is planning to strengthen its non-university sector by combining the two existing types of non-academic institutions into one.

In Switzerland, as in Germany, *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) offer an alternative to traditional university education by putting the emphasis on application-oriented teaching and research.

Tables 1 and 2 below describe in more detail the present higher education structures in the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries as well as Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, together with indications about some major developments.

Degree structures

The Trends I report showed that the traditional differentiation between the "continental European" degree structure with rather long, academically integrated university studies (one-tier) and the "Anglo-American" degree structure with shorter first degrees and many post-graduate possibilities often based on a more modular system (two-tier) was getting blurred.¹ As Jette Kirstein pointed out, there is a push in the university sector, mostly coming from the political side, to establish shorter university programmes - i.e. a first degree on the Bachelor level.

The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the Trends II study. With the exception of Switzerland and Hungary all countries offer a two-tier system, with a first-cycle degree before the Master's degree. It should be noted, however, that some of the two-tier systems still contain one-tier Master programmes in specific fields, e.g. in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia and that some institutions in Switzerland and Hungary have started to offer Bachelor and Master degrees.

In a number of countries the Bologna Declaration clearly seems to have influenced the introduction of a two-tier system, if only by the acceleration of processes that had already started, as in the Czech Republic, where the introduction of two tiers had been decided as early as 1990.

In Switzerland the introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees is currently under discussion.

In Estonia there is a move to standardise the duration of Bachelor programmes to three years and of Master programmes to two.

Croatia is discussing a reform of its diversified degree system in the light of the Bologna declaration.

In Poland, where the existing system still combines one-tier and two-tier programmes, the draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two-tier model.

In Slovakia a new higher education law is being prepared, taking into account the Bologna principles. It provides for an institutional diversification into universities (offering all three levels of degrees in a large variety of subjects), specialised higher education institutions on university level, but with a more limited range of disciplines, and professional higher education institutions offering Bachelor programmes relevant to the labour market. Slovakia is planning to introduce the 3-2-3 model as the standard structure. Moreover, the new act takes into account all the other points of the Bologna Declaration, such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement etc.

¹ *ibid.*, p.34

Bosnia-Herzegovina is facing the particular difficulty that 11 different laws regulate higher education and that the adoption of a system of easily readable degrees is therefore rather complicated.

Also with regard to the non-university sector, the development towards an ever wider diversification of qualifications is the same in the countries surveyed in Trends II as in those of the EU/EEA: "Many new undergraduate programmes are being established to meet new labour market needs in specific professional fields, and at the same time a great variety of post-graduate courses are being developed either as part of ordinary programmes or as programmes aimed at recurrent education activities."²

As in Western Europe, non-university institutions do not offer doctoral degrees in their own right but in some countries the possibility exists for non-university graduates to enter a doctoral programme in a university. Thus in Slovenia three-year professional higher education programmes have been introduced that give direct access to doctoral programmes. Also in Bulgaria the Bachelor gives access to doctoral studies of four years' duration (as opposed to three years after a Master). In the majority of countries, however, a Master degree is the precondition for admission to doctoral programmes.

Table 2 illustrates, tentatively, the degree framework and major qualifications of the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries, plus Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, according to length and types of institutions/institutional affiliations (university/non-university). It should be noted that neither the length of qualifications nor the type of institution/institutional affiliation say much about the level of the qualification, its contents and the learning outcomes. Degree titles also vary considerably and often they do not by themselves give an explicit indication of the type and character of a specific qualification. Thus they have to be seen in the national framework of qualifications to be understood. Qualifications should therefore not be compared according to years of study but according to learning outcomes, predefined standards of learning and acquired competencies.

Access and admission requirements

By and large *access* to higher education (*access* meaning general eligibility for higher education programmes) is in all countries subject to the completion of twelve to thirteen years of prior schooling. In a few countries there are slight differences in the required length of secondary education programmes giving access to university and to non-university programmes, respectively.³ Thus in Switzerland universities require a *Matura* (maturity certificate), while *Fachhochschulen* demand a *Professional Matura* which is normally acquired during an apprenticeship. The same principle applies in Slovenia. Furthermore, there are major differences in the actual requirements for being admitted to a particular programme and obtaining a study place. Only in Switzerland and Malta applicants with final secondary school qualifications have free access to most university programmes. In the other countries admission is usually on a competitive basis and depends on a special combination of the secondary school leaving examination subjects and on other requirements concerning e.g. the level of the subjects studied in secondary school and the grades obtained, as in Latvia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. The

² *ibid.*, p.34

³ *ibid.*, p.35

dominant model is a combination of the secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination, set by the higher education institutions or the faculty, respectively. This procedure can be found in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro, Poland and Serbia. In Romania admission tests are still required but there is a tendency to abolish them and rely exclusively on the results of the secondary school leaving certificate. Slovakia has a diversified approach, in that either the school leaving certificate or entrance examinations or a combination of both are required. National examinations as in Estonia are the exception.

The information gathered for this study does not allow a more differentiated statement on the selectivity of the different types of higher education institutions

Several countries refer explicitly to the Lisbon convention of 1997 on the recognition of higher education qualifications that they have ratified. It states that parties to the convention shall mutually recognise qualifications giving general access to higher education in the home country unless substantial differences can be shown between the general access requirements in the countries in question.

See table 3 for more information on admission systems for higher education.

International credit transfer systems

Table 4 shows the situation with regard to national or international credit systems. Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland work with ECTS and ECTS-compatible systems, respectively, and the situation in those countries resembles that of most EU/EEA countries where ECTS has been more or less firmly established as an instrument for international credit transfer. On the other hand, none of the Central and Eastern European states has as yet introduced ECTS nationwide and only a few use a national credit system. Most countries, however, are planning the introduction of ECTS or a national credit system and, for the time being, allow their higher education institutions to experiment with ECTS and other systems. Estonia and Latvia use national credit systems similar to those of Nordic countries. Latvia is working on proposals to reduce the split between the academic and the professional sector by introducing full transferability of credits between the two types of programmes. In Romania higher education institutions are free to experiment with an ECTS-compatible system but there is awareness that the participation in Socrates/Erasmus will require a stricter application of ECTS-principles. Hungary has made the introduction of a national, ECTS-compatible credit system compulsory from September 2002.

Organisation of the academic year

Table 5 shows that the surveyed countries all have divided their academic year into two semesters, but that the dates for the beginning and end of the semesters vary considerably, from the beginning of September to mid-October and from the end of May to mid-July. Thus in Romania, in the spirit of university autonomy, a new regulation has been introduced in 1999, allowing individual higher education institutions to begin their winter semester any time in September or October, although in practice most start

on 1st October. Just as in the EU/EEA countries, student mobility is not made easier by this very heterogeneous picture.

Tuition fee systems and support for study abroad

The majority of the "Trends II" countries charge tuition fees in some form. Many Central/Eastern European countries have a partial fee system, in which the state finances a number of study places that are normally allocated on a performance basis (secondary school results, entrance examinations). Higher education institutions may, however, admit additional students on a fee-paying basis. This system is presently applied in Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro and Romania. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia national students do not pay fees for regular full-time courses within the standard duration of studies. In almost all states foreign students have to pay fees. The participation in European mobility programmes will require adjustments in a number of countries in this regard, and some of them, like Bulgaria, have stated explicitly that they are already undertaking the necessary preparations.

Latvia is discussing the introduction of a "participation fee" to be paid by all students to cover the gap between the state funding available and the real costs of the programmes, combined with the prior introduction of a loan system.

National support for study periods or full degree courses taken abroad is unknown or very limited in many CEE countries. In some (Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) the state provides a limited number of scholarships, often within the framework of bilateral agreements with foreign governments/institutions. Some countries also referred to the support coming from EU-programmes. Cyprus and Malta provide full support for study abroad as their national higher education systems do not offer the whole range of academic disciplines.

Similarly, a Swiss student entitled to a cantonal grant may use it for study abroad if the chosen programme is not offered in Switzerland. Also Montenegro applies such a regulation.

COUNTRY PROFILES

Albania

Higher Education was reformed by the "Law for Higher Education in the Republic of Albania" of February 1999 that for the first time allows for the creation of private institutions. The Council of Ministers will pass more detailed regulations regarding private higher education in the near future. The situation in higher education in Albania is characterised, as in the states of former Yugoslavia, by a traditionally very strong autonomy of faculties vis-à-vis the university rector.

Higher education follows a unitary two-tier model. There are two kinds of university-type higher education institutions: 8 universities and 2 academies.

In some disciplines like nursing a professional diploma is offered after 2 to 3.5 years, but the regular first degree at universities and academies, the university diploma, which is equivalent to a Bachelor, takes 4 to 6 years.

There are graduate courses (specializations) of up to one year, or equivalent to the Master after 1 to 2 years. An advanced post-graduate degree, comparable to the French DEA, is a prerequisite for admission to doctoral studies.

Doctoral degrees take between 2 and 5 years.

In addition to the universities and academies there is a nursing school that awards a professional diploma after 2 to 3.5 years.

There are plans to strengthen the non-university sector in the future. Some of the short diploma programmes offered at various universities will then be taught at the newly established institutions.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The situation regarding higher education is complicated by the fact that it is governed by 11 different laws (10 cantonal laws in the Federation, one in the Serb Republic).

Higher education is organized in a unitary two-tier system with universities as the only higher education institutions. Within the universities there are faculties, colleges and pedagogical academies. The faculties enjoy a very strong degree of autonomy within the universities.

The following degrees are offered:

1. Two types of first degrees:

VI grade: awarded after 2 to 3 years of college-level education. This degree is given to lawyers, teachers, engineers, medical technicians, computer experts, etc.

VII grade: awarded after 4 to 6 years by faculties and academies. This degree corresponds to the Bachelor and bears the titles B.Sc. Engineering, B.Sc. Sociology, B.A. Journalism, Attorney at Law, Medical doctor, etc.

2. Second degrees (only after successful completion of first degree):

Specialisation studies of one year

Master degrees of 2 to 3 years.

3. Doctoral degrees: A doctoral degree may be obtained after successful completion of a Master programme.

Bulgaria

Higher education is governed by the Higher Education Act of 1995 that guarantees the autonomy of higher education institutions. Amendments, adopted in July 1999 and July 2000, regard the degree system and related matters.

Bulgarian higher education is largely organized in a binary two-tier system but there are still some one-tier degrees. At the university level there are universities and specialised higher education schools (i.e. academies and institutes), the latter offering training and research only in specific fields such as science, arts, sports and defence, but conferring the same degrees as the universities. In addition there are colleges with shorter, professionally oriented courses. They result from a re-shaping of the former semi-higher education institutions. In most cases they are incorporated into the structure of universities but there are also some independent colleges.

The university sector:

Universities and specialised higher education schools offer a Bachelor degree after 4 years and a Master degree after one additional year. In addition to these two-tier degrees, there are still some fields, e.g. in architecture, where only a 5-years Master degree can be obtained.

Doctoral degrees require at least 3 years of study and research after the Master and 4 years after the Bachelor. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other academic institutions may also confer the doctoral degree. Finally, there is the degree of Doctor of Sciences, corresponding to a *doctor habilitatus*.

The non-university sector:

Colleges offer after 3 years the degree of “specialist”.

Croatia

The 1996 Higher education act provides the legal basis for higher education in Croatia, stressing the principle of academic autonomy. The proposal for a new Higher Education Law, which was to be adopted by the end of 2000, includes proposals for greater faculty autonomy in terms of finances and management and for the introduction of tuition fees and mechanisms for quality assurance. Several changes to the draft have been proposed and the adoption of the law has been postponed.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system: there are 4 universities and 7 polytechnics offering academic and professional studies, respectively, on a “superior” tertiary level. Their programmes are divided into an undergraduate and a graduate level.

In addition there are schools of higher education, either as independent institutions (there are 8 of them) or integrated into universities, offering 2 - 4 year professional programmes.

The university sector:

After 4 years the University Diploma (e.g. for engineers) can be obtained, after 5 years the Diploma in Medicine and after 6 to 7 years a Master of Science/Arts degree.

Both the University Diploma and the Master give access to doctoral studies that last 3 years (after the Diploma) or one year (after the M.Sc./M.A.), leading to a Doctor of Science.

The non-university sector:

The professional studies at polytechnics are organised as undergraduate studies (2 to 4 years), postgraduate professional studies (at least one year) and postgraduate artistic studies (at least one year).

Cyprus

A state law of 1989 governs the University of Cyprus.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system. Only the University of Cyprus offers university-level degrees, whereas various public and private higher education institutions offer vocational degrees.

The university sector:

The first university degree is the *Ptychio* after 4 years (corresponding to the Bachelor), followed by the Master after at least 18 months of study. The Master is the prerequisite for admission to a doctoral programme.

The non-university sector:

The non-university higher education institutions offer vocational degrees, called Diplomas of Higher Education, after 1 to 4 years: after one year a certificate is awarded, after 2 years a diploma, after 3 years a higher diploma and after 4 years a Bachelor.

These schools also offer some postgraduate diplomas at the level of a Master degree.

Czech Republic

Two laws reformed higher education: the Higher Education Act of 1990 and the new act of 1998.

The new system is unitary and offers new two-tier programmes as well as the traditional one-tier programmes with Master-level degrees lasting 4 to 6 years. The new law directs its focus rather on a study programme – which has to be duly accredited - than on the institution providing the programme. The law aims at the broad diversification of institutions and programmes. Since 1990 there are degrees at Bachelor, Master and doctoral level. Tertiary education comprises state-run and private universities, non-university higher education institutions and higher professional education offered by tertiary, but non-higher education schools.

University-type institutions provide Master and doctoral programmes as well as Bachelor programmes. A Bachelor programme takes 3 to 4 years. There are still one-

tier Master degrees that take between 4 and 6 years. If the Master programme follows a Bachelor, it takes 2 to 3 years.

The standard duration for doctoral studies, which require a Master degree as prerequisite, is 3 years.

The non-university higher education institutions – which despite their name operate on university level - have only begun their operations and concentrate on Bachelor programmes of 3 to 4 years, but they also may offer Master programmes.

Bachelor programmes are not yet well known to students and employers; only 17.5 % of all students are enrolled in Bachelor programmes, compared to 75 % in Master programmes and 7,5 % in doctoral programmes.

There are also *tertiary education institutions called “higher professional schools”* which award the diploma of specialist, after 2 to 3.5 years of study. These institutions do not belong to the higher education system in the Czech Republic.

Estonia

Higher education is regulated by the Law on universities (1995), the Law on private schools (1998), the Law on applied higher education institutions (1998), the Law on vocational education institutions (1998), the Law on the University of Tartu (1995) and the Law on the organisation of research and developmental activities (1997). In addition there is the Standard of higher education of 2000, the fundamental legal act for the accreditation of study programmes.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system and consists of universities and applied higher education institutions.

The university sector:

1. Diplomas in vocational higher education, comparable to those offered at the applied higher education institutions, after 3 to 4 years, often using modules and parts of the Bachelor programmes.
2. Bachelor programmes with a focus on general education of 3 to 4 years (teacher training: 5 years).
3. Master programmes to deepen specialised and theoretical knowledge and improve research proficiency. Admission requirement is the Bachelor. Duration: 1 to 2 years, together with the Bachelor not less than 5 years.
4. Other degrees: Medical doctor after 6 years, degrees in veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture, etc. after 5 years.
5. Doctorate: the nominal length is 4 years and a Master degree is the prerequisite. There are research doctorates and professional doctorates.

Universities are currently changing their programmes to 3-year Bachelor and 2-year Master programmes. The doctorate will be changed from 4 years to 3 - 4 years.

The non-university sector:

Non-academic professional diplomas are awarded after 3 to 4 years and include an important part of practical training (e.g. nursing, midwifery, social work, etc.). At present there are two different types of non-academic professional degrees, but it is planned to combine them into one. Whether the non-university institutions will also offer Bachelor programmes has not yet been decided.

Hungary

A new higher education law was adopted in 1993, authorising the setting-up of private colleges and universities, including church-run institutions. Private institutions enrol some 10 percent of all students.

Higher education is organised in a binary system with basically one-tier degrees. In the wake of the Bologna Declaration, many institutions have started to introduce a two-tier system of degrees, especially in programmes for foreign students.

Today there are 17 state universities and 13 state colleges as well as 26 church-run institutions and 6 foundation colleges. The number of state institutions has been reduced from previously 55 to the present 30 institutions. Some of the colleges are, as college faculties, part of the universities.

The university sector:

Universities follow a one-tier system leading to a Master level degree (or *egyetemi oklevél*) after 5 years (medicine: 6 years) and offer doctoral degrees of 3 years.

The non-university sector:

Colleges offer Bachelor degrees (or *főiskolai oklevél*) after 3 to 4 years, with the possibility to obtain a Master at a university after another 2 to 3 years. Colleges have an assignment not only to teach, but also to carry out research and development activities.

Both universities and colleges may organise short-cycle post-secondary courses of two years called Accredited higher vocational training courses, leading to a certificate.

Latvia

Higher education is regulated by three laws, with the Law on higher educational institutions of 1995 being the most important one, followed by the Law on education of 1998 and the Law on professional education of 1999. An amendment to the 1995 law, adopted in November 2000, takes into account the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Latvia organised higher education in a binary two-tier system, with universities and other higher education institutions on the one hand and professional higher education institutions on the other.

The university sector:

The universities offer all academic degrees up to the doctorate level in a variety of fields. The “other higher education institutions” also offer university level degrees but concentrate more on Bachelor and Master and less on doctoral programmes than the universities. They offer programmes only in a limited number of fields. Both the universities and the other higher education institutions may also offer professional qualifications.

A Bachelor degree can be obtained after 3 to 4 years. Alternatively the level V professional higher education qualification can be obtained after 4 years. Both degrees make a graduate eligible for a Master programme.

A Master takes another 1 – 2 years. In medicine and dentistry there are one-tier degrees of respectively 6 and 5 years that give access to doctoral studies.

A doctoral degree takes 3 to 4 years (with the Master as a prerequisite). The doctoral degree has been transformed into a one-tier degree, the *habilitets doktors* (doctor habilitatus) not being awarded any more since 1 January 2000.

The non-university sector:

Professional higher education institutions offer various professional qualifications, with a compulsory component of applied research. A new type of professional degrees is just being introduced, the 2-3 year college programmes (“level IV qualifications”).

The second type of professional degree (“level V qualifications”) can be obtained either in a 4-5 year programme leading to a degree equivalent to a Bachelor (eligibility for a Master programme), in a supplementary programme (1-2 years) for holders of a Bachelor (but without eligibility for doctoral programmes) or in applied professional 4-year programmes, without eligibility for Master studies.

The amendment to the Law on Higher Education of November 2000 introduces a symmetric structure of academic and professional Bachelor and Master degrees. The introduction of the new degrees that will eventually replace the existing professional diplomas will start in 2001.

Latvia is considering increasing the mobility between the academic and the professional sector of higher education by introducing full compatibility and recognition of those academic and professional degrees that require the same number of ECTS credits.

Lithuania

The Law on research and higher education of 1991 and the Law on higher education of March 2000 form the basis for higher education.

It is organised in a binary two-tier system: according to the new law of March 2000 some colleges were established in Lithuania in autumn 2000, which provide non-university type education.

Up to now there are 19 state (10 universities, 5 academies and 4 colleges) and 7 non-state (4 university-type and 3 colleges) higher education institutions in Lithuania.

The university sector:

The universities offer Bachelor, Master and doctoral degrees (including the *doctor habilitatus*) and also professional studies on two levels.

Academies are of the same academic status as universities, but offer a more limited range of programmes.

Bachelor degrees (or equivalent professional qualifications) take 4 years.

Master degrees require another 1.5 to 2 years.

The doctoral degree is not considered a higher education qualification but a research degree. It should not take more than 3 years (for holders of a Master degree) or 4 years (after the completion of specialised professional studies or continuous studies in some study fields, such as law or medicine), out of which 1 to 2 years are spent in doctoral courses as a requirement for the admission to the doctoral research project.

Doctoral students may also be trained at research institutions, in cooperation with universities.

Colleges:

The colleges offer a professional qualification after 3 years (or 4 years for extramural studies).

Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)

Higher education was, until 2000, regulated by the Specialised Education Act of 1985 that was, however, not in compliance with the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, adopted in 1991. A new higher education law has therefore been drafted with the support of the Legislative Reform Project for higher education of the Council of Europe and adopted in November 2000. The new law provides for a new legal status for higher education institutions, affirming their autonomy, offering the possibility to establish both state and private institution and introducing new recognition procedures in accordance with European standards etc.

Higher education is organised in a two-tier system that has been unitary until now, with the two state universities as only providers of higher education. The new law calls for the setting-up of vocational higher education schools.

The equivalent to the Bachelor, the Diploma for completed level VII (1) of professional education is awarded after 4 to 6 years.

After one more year the level VII (2) is attained, finishing with the degree of Specialist studies. The Master programme, also leading to level VII (2), takes 2 years after the Bachelor.

A Master degree is the regular prerequisite for admission to a doctoral project. The doctoral degree corresponds to level VIII of professional training.

The faculties that enjoy a very high degree of autonomy offer postgraduate programmes of 4 to 6 years, plus doctoral studies. Their level is the same as that of universities, but they offer fewer programmes, often with specialisations.

A vocational sub-degree is offered after 2 years, the certificate for level VI (1), but this will be replaced by new vocational degrees delivered by the new vocational higher education institutions.

Malta

Higher education used to be offered by one state institution only, the University of Malta. It offers all degrees, from university diploma and Bachelor to Master and Doctor. Presently, however, the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology is being set up by merging various colleges for shorter, vocational education. Maltese higher education is therefore becoming a binary two-tier system.

The University:

Undergraduate courses lead to a Diploma after 1 to 2 years, a Bachelor after 3 years and to a Bachelor Honours after 3 to 4 years.

After another 1 to 1.5 years a Master can be obtained. A M.Phil. takes another 15 months to 2 years, a Ph.D. 3 to 5 years.

The programmes and degrees at the new college are still under development.

Poland

The Act on Higher Education of 1990 and the Act on Higher Vocational Education of 1997 provide the legal basis for the higher education system.

It is a binary system, partly one-tier and partly two-tier. The two types of higher education institutions are the universities and academies (e.g. the academies of economy, of agriculture, of pedagogy etc.) on the one hand and the schools of higher vocational education on the other. Currently a single Law on Higher Education is under preparation that will, however, maintain the institutional diversification into universities, academies and schools of vocational higher education. It will also formally introduce the 3-stage higher education system of Bachelor, Master and doctoral studies. The 5-year programmes will be maintained in some fields.

The university sector:

There are courses leading to a first degree with a professional orientation, the *Licencjat*, after 3 to 3.5 years and the *Inzynier* after 3.5 to 4 years.

The *Licencjat* degree gives access to Master programme of 2 to 2.5 years.

There are, however, also one-tier Master programmes for certain professions: 5 years or more for law, psychology, pharmacy, etc. and 6 years for medicine.

Doctoral studies last 4 years. They still have a separate status and are not regarded as the third level of the higher education system. The new law will change this.

The draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two-tier model with *Licencjat/Inzynier* studies as first degree, followed by Master and doctoral degrees. It limits the possibility for evening and extramural studies by stipulating that studies in medicine and dentistry can only be carried out in full-time intramural classes.

The non-university sector:

Schools of higher vocational education offer exclusively vocational studies leading to the titles of professional *Licencjat* and *Inzynier*. The introduction of professional Bachelor degrees is planned.

Romania

Higher education is governed by the Education Law of 1995, amended and republished in 1999.

It is organised in a unitary two-tier system: there are university colleges that are part of the universities, and universities (plus university-level institutions like academies). Although the system is therefore formally a unitary one, the colleges offer different degrees and courses.

The universities (and academies) offer courses leading to a *Diploma de licenta* or a *Diploma de absolvire* (Bachelor-level degree) that take

- 4 years in the sciences, humanities, law, sports, etc.,
- 4 to 5 years in economics, theatre, cinematography,
- 5 years in arts, agronomy, pharmacy etc. and
- 6 years in architecture, medicine and veterinary medicine.

Starting with the academic year 2000-2001, for engineers and architects the final diploma of *Licenta* was replaced with *Diploma de inginer* and *Diploma de arhitect*.

Holders of a first degree may continue at the postgraduate level in a Specialist programme (one year or more) or a Master programme (1 to 2 years)

The doctorate, comparable to a Ph.D., takes 3 to 5 years.

The university colleges offer courses of 3 to 4 years in such fields as technology, sports, agriculture, economics, etc., leading to a University College Diploma. Graduates from a university college programme can apply directly for admission to the third year of university programmes (in related fields).

Slovak Republic

The Higher Education Act of 1990 laid down fundamental academic rights and freedoms and also introduced the Bachelor degree, thereby opening the system from the traditional one-tier towards a two-tier system. The amendment of 1996 provided for the possibility to establish private higher education institutions. In the academic year 1999/2000 only one such institution existed.

Slovak higher education today is therefore a unitary two-tier system, as all institutions are of the university type and offer the three degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor. However, one-tier Master programmes are still the most popular programmes with students for the time being. In 2000 a new concept for the further development of higher education was adopted which provides for the creation of a non-university sector in Slovakia that will concentrate on Bachelor programmes. Also a consistent application of the Bachelor-Master-Doctor model (with the exception of medicine) in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration is foreseen.

The Bachelor takes normally 3 years, with the exception of some 4-year programmes in engineering, architecture, fine arts and design. There are professional Bachelor degrees, relevant to the labour market, and academic ones qualifying for a Master course of 1.5 to 2 years duration.

Master and "Engineer" studies take 4 to 6 years in the traditional one-tier system that still exists in parallel to the new two-tier system. On average the total duration of study required for the Master/"Engineer" degree is 5 years, but there are also degrees after 4 years (teacher training, dramatic art) and 6 years (architecture, fine arts, design).

Furthermore, there is a 6-year degree in Medicine and Veterinary Medicine called MUDr or MVDr. This "Doktor" degree is, however, part of the second cycle. Holders of a Master degree may take the *Examina rigorosa* (including the defence of a thesis) and are then awarded the following degrees: doctor farmácie (PharmDr.), doctor filozofie (PhDr.), doctor práv (JuDr.), etc.

The actual doctoral studies, leading to a Master, last around 3 years. There is the possibility of Habilitation.

Slovenia

Higher Education legislation was reformed in two steps: by the Higher Education Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Amendment Act of 1999. The 1993 law provided for the setting-up of non-state higher education institutions and the introduction of new 3-year professional higher education programmes. In 1999 it became possible to enrol for a doctoral programme immediately after graduation (first university degree), without first obtaining a Master degree.

Post-secondary vocational education is offered by vocational colleges and is not considered to be part of the higher education sector.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system. The two universities plus the art academies and independent faculties (private institutions) offer both academically oriented studies and professionally oriented studies. In addition there are professional colleges that offer only professionally oriented programmes.

The university sector:

Academically oriented programmes at the undergraduate level last 4 to 6 years (plus an additional year for the preparation of a dissertation), finishing with a Diploma.

Professionally oriented programmes take 3 to 4 years (plus one additional year) and lead to a Diploma.

At the postgraduate level there are the following degrees:

1. Specialisation (1 to 2 years), ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either a first university degree or, in some cases, a professionally-oriented first degree as access condition;
2. Master (2 years), also ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either the first university degree or a professionally-oriented first degree;
3. The doctoral degree requires either the first university degree or a Master degree and takes 4 or 2 years, respectively.

The non-university sector:

Professional colleges offer study programmes that lead to a Diploma after 3 to 4 years. It is intended to turn these degrees into professional Bachelors.

Switzerland

Higher education is structured in a binary one-tier system. There are 10 cantonal universities and 2 federal technical universities, both types research-oriented and awarding all academic degrees including doctorates. The other type of higher education institution are the 7 *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences), based on federal law and currently under reorganisation, with an emphasis on teaching and applied research.

Universities:

There is only one main type of university degree: the *Diplom/Diplôme* (more in engineering and the sciences) or *Lizenziat/Licence* (more in the humanities) after 4 to 5 years, giving access to doctoral studies (normally 2 to 4 years, but without time limit). In addition, the French-speaking universities issue a number of postgraduate diplomas, like the *diplôme d'études supérieures*.

Fachhochschulen:

The Universities of Applied Sciences (FH) award the *Diplom/Diplôme FH* after 3 (in some cases 4) years.

There are as yet not many Bachelor/Master degrees, but some universities have started to translate their traditional diplomas as "Masters", and some FH translate their diplomas as "Bachelors". There is a discussion among Swiss higher education institutions on the possible introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees: the universities of St. Gallen and Lucerne and the Swiss Italian university have started to adopt the new system.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Serbia

The University Act of June 1998 had abolished any kind of university autonomy. After the democratic changes that took place in October 2000 and the elections in December 2000 the new government is now drafting a new provisional University Act. Amongst other objectives it will mandate the revision of all appointments and expulsions that occurred under the act of 1998. Afterwards a law for a thorough reform of higher education will be prepared that should comply as much as possible with the new trends in European higher education.

Serbian higher education is structured in a unitary two-tier system and is offered at universities and research institutes. Universities are the only institutions to offer a first

degree (Diploma or Bachelor) after 4 years in social sciences and humanities, 5 years in engineering and sciences and 6 years in medicine.

Postgraduate studies can be carried out either at universities or at accredited research institutes and lead to a M.Sc. after 2 years or to a Master after 3 years.

Access to doctoral studies can be granted straight from the Bachelor level or after obtaining a Master.

Montenegro

The University Law of 1992 regulates higher education. It defines the university as consisting of higher professional schools, faculties, art academies and scientific institutes. The law allows for the creation of private higher education institutions but at present there is only the public University of Montenegro.

Higher education is a unitary two-tier system.

At the sub-degree level the higher professional schools deliver degrees after 2 years.

A Bachelor degree is awarded at the faculties after 4 to 5 years, depending on the subject. In medicine and related fields the Bachelor requires 6 years of study.

Postgraduate studies (Master) take 2 years. Research for a doctoral degree must not exceed a period of 5 years.

Kosovo

The situation in Kosovo is characterised by the Interim Statute that was introduced within the UNMIK system in October 2000. At present the executive power in higher education matters lies with the International Administrator who is also co-head of the Department of Education (or Ministry). The Interim Statute aims at restoring autonomous governance at the University of Prishtina.

The higher education is unitary. Until now the university comprised 14 faculties offering Master and doctoral degrees, and 7 higher schools offering 2-year degrees.

In 2001 the system will be re-organised along a 3 – 5 – 8 model, introducing Bachelor and Master degrees in all disciplines with the exception of medicine.

OVERVIEW TABLES