

**REPORTS FROM
NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

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Date:	221204
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1. Towards Bologna

1.1. Give a brief description of policy developments and legislative reforms in higher education in your country

In the last few years, the European process has become a tangible reality for the European Countries and its citizens. The Republic of Armenia by joining the Council of Europe has stated its commitment to the European Processes and its willingness to undergo all the necessary reforms to become a full-fledged member state. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia being aware of the crucial role of education and cooperation for strengthening peaceful and stable democratic societies has embarked on the all-encompassing reform process of education and more specifically the reforms of higher education.

Clearly understanding that the Europe of Knowledge is acknowledged as an influential factor for human, social and thus economic development of the societies and being governed by the determination to meet all the requirements of Lisbon Convention and Bologna Process and to join the European Higher Education Area, the Law on Higher and Post Graduate Professional Education of the Republic of Armenia has envisioned a central role for the universities, which by assuming the responsibility for quality assurance, respecting the academic freedoms and institutional autonomy with fully developed self-governance, student participation in the governance of higher education, public responsibility for higher education, assuring the inseparability of teaching and research, affirming the European humanist tradition and supporting a closer cooperation with their counterparts in Europe will come to the doorsteps of belonging to a common social and cultural European space.

Education system of Armenia has 1600 years history and traditionally has been highly rated. The foundations of contemporary education were laid down during the existence of the first Armenian Republic (1918-1920) and subsequently developed during the 70 years of Soviet era. Due to one of the first soviet decrees, in 1920 the school was separated from church and became secular. The whole system of education became state-owned.

After gaining independence in 1991, the Education system, as well as the whole Armenian society overcomes constructive rapid changes. Article 5 of Constitution of the Republic of Armenia adopted in 1995 claims that all citizens of Armenia have the right to education; secondary education in public schools is free; and every citizen has the right to get free

vocational or higher education in state educational institutions on competitive basis.

Over the past decade, the higher educational system in Armenia has been fundamentally transformed. On one hand, the system had to resist to the unprecedented upheavals of transition, particularly, over the first years: the multifold cuts of state financing due to the economic crisis, the poverty of the population and stratification, dramatic drop in the labor market demand and, at the same time, it had to adequately respond to the demands of the new social and economic system within a very short period.

The legal conditions for implementing the principles of the Bologna Process have been established by Law on Education (1999), Law on State program for educational development for the period of 2001-2005(adopted by the National Assembly in 2001), Strategy of Higher Education (approved by Government in 2002), Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (recently adopted by the National Assembly in December 14, 2004).

Law on Education permits to introduce the two-tier degree structure, the framework that is introduced in 3 State Higher Education Institutions.

Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education is a significant point for the reform of the higher education. At this point, it is valuable to refer to the Bologna Process, one that Armenia must join in the future, if it wants to ensure the competitiveness of its higher education system and to fulfil the requirements of the Law on State Program for Education Development that commends the integration of education system with the international education systems.

Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education is currently passed 3rd (last) hearings in the National Assembly and adopted in December 14.

The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education introduces the new ideas aimed at constructing a modern model of quality assurance, such as the definition of quality as such, the quality provision, quality improvement, self-evaluation, the definition of accreditation and the definition of credit system. It has made advancements in defining the institutional autonomy and academic freedoms. In the transitional provisions in stipulations the requirement of transition from the placement of state demand to the system of scholarships and student loans, in the years of 2006-2007, and the three-tire degree structure in higher end postgraduate education with qualification degrees of the bachelor, master and researcher/doctorate will enter in force, in the years of 2005-2006, ECTS will be operational in all Higher Education Institutions of Armenia in the years of 2007/08.

2. National organisation

2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies (For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

State Higher Educational Institutions in Armenia are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and some of them as the State Medical University and Armenian Agricultural Academy are connected also to the system of the Ministry of Health and the

Ministry of Agriculture accordingly. Thus, all universities are run by the central government. The Higher Education System in Soviet Armenia was highly centralized and strictly controlled by the central government. The general tendency is to confine the state to the general supervisory functions. At present, the right to main decision making within the academic community is mostly reserved to the institutions of higher learning. They are autonomous in determining the main spheres of activity, adopt budgets and supervise execution thereof, introduce new majors and upgrade the existing ones, adopt curricula and teaching methods. Rectors and deans are now elected by the academic community of each institution rather than being appointed by the Ministry as was the practice under the soviet period.

In Armenia Higher Education system has not acquired sufficient experience in regulation under market-driven economy and this is equally true for the state and the entities providing Higher Education services. The Government issues a state order for enrollment by specialties and by institutions as well as appropriate funding. The Higher Education Institutions can establish quotes for tuition free and tuition paying enrollment of students based on the total quotas for academic admissions allocated by the Government, providing unpaid education for at least 10% of admission figure for each major. The Government approves the state educational standards and their formation mechanisms; the fields of study and the list of specialties to be taught; the state order for Higher Education Institutions. The Ministry defines state educational standards, issues licenses; forms the list of the specialties provided; develops the state order for colleges and universities; approves the admission rules for the state and private accredited Higher Education Institutions and supervises their implementation; conducts state accreditation for the institutions and their programs with no regard to the organizational-juridical and ownership form of the institution.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other higher education institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector)

Armenian higher education system is binary, i.e. there is no division of Higher Education Institutions between academic and professional institutions.

Nowadays, there are 18 state Higher Education Institutions (excluding regional campuses of some universities) providing higher and postgraduate education to more than 57,000 students from which 1,900 in master and 1,300 in postgraduate (aspirantura) programs. With about 6,300 tenured teaching staff, the average student/teaching staff ratio in the state owned Higher Education Institutions is about 8-9.

Over the last decade the number of Non State Higher Education Institutions has increased substantially and reached 72, with approximately 18,000 full-time students only in the diploma specialist program. The number of tenured teaching staff approximates to 1,800 and the student/teaching staff ratio is about 9-10.

Non State Higher Education Institutions are totally depend on tuition fees (90% of revenues) while state Higher Education Institutions have more diversified sources of funding: the state budget (almost 30%), tuition fees (50%), and other sources (20%) such as renting premises and Research and Development.

The number of state higher educational institutions has increased for 14,2% compared to the level of 1991. Despite the economic and social crises that followed the independence, numerous private schools have been established; the number of state schools has also grown. However, this growth of the number of schools should not be considered a positive phenomenon, taking into account the efficiency of education in a small student body and small departments.

According to the Law on Education and Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education the types of Higher Education programs and institutions conducting them are as follows.

For the higher professional education the following types of institutions are operational:

- 1) University - provides higher, postgraduate and supplementary education in multidisciplinary fields of natural sciences and humanities, technology, culture, as well as provides opportunities for scientific research and research studies.
- 2) Institute - conducts specialized and postgraduate academic programs and scientific research in a number of scientific, economic and cultural disciplines.
- 3) Academy - an educational institution activities of which is aimed at the development of education, science, technology and culture in a specialised field of study; it conducts programs preparing and re-training highly qualified specialists in a special field, as well as postgraduate academic programs.
- 4) Conservatory prepares specialists in the field of music, provides qualification development and postgraduate academic programs.

The following degrees of higher professional academic qualifications are established: Bachelor (4 years), and Master (1-2 years).

Postgraduate professional education is conducted in postgraduate divisions (aspirantura, ordinatura) of Higher Education Institutions as well as in Scientific-Research Institutions of the Academy of Science of Armenia if allowed by the state authorized body (Ministry of Education and Science). The following qualifications degrees of postgraduate professional education are established: Researcher and Clinical Ordinator (2 years).

Also, two scientific degrees Candidate of Science (equivalent of PhD) and Doctor of Science are established.

The formal weekly workload (contact hours) that students are expected to carry out depends on a program type and differs considerably from institution to institution within the country, but the practices are as follows: for bachelor and diploma specialist: 28-32 hours per week (sometimes up to 36), for master's program students: 16-18 hours and for postgraduate (doctoral) students: 4-8 hours.

In terms of study modes presently there are only two types of students in Higher Education sector: full-time and correspondence (combining job with education). The latter have considerably small workload (approximately 50% from that of full-time students) in terms of contact hours.

2.3. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?

The general principles of legislation in Higher Education sector are determined in the framework of Law on Education adopted in April 1999 and in the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education. The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education determines the system of Higher Education, the principles for acquisition of academic and professional qualifications, qualification and professional degrees, the scope of the autonomy of Higher Education Institutions and governance of their activities by the state. The Law also defines the rights and responsibilities of the teaching staff, research workers and students, the legal grounds for the establishment, reorganization and liquidation of Higher Education Institutions, the basic requirements for Higher Education establishments and study programs, the principles of evaluation and registration of study programs as well as principles of Higher Education Institutions financing.

The university status as an organizational entity is regulated by the Law on State Non-Profit

Entities adopted in October 2001. The procedure of establishment, reorganization and abolishment of Higher Education Institutions as well as their administration and financing principles is regulated by this law and other regulations and statutes of Higher Education establishments. By this law the statute (charter) of a Higher Education Institutions is a legal act regulating its activities. The statutes of state and non state Higher Education Institutions and their amendments must be approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. An other main documents regulating the sphere of Higher Education in Armenia are: the Rules of Licensing and Certification of Higher Education Institutions, the General Rules of Awarding Scientific Degrees and Academic Titles and Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities. General requirements to the content of Higher Education are established by the Higher Education Standards, validated with a decree of the Government. The Higher Education Institutions also regulates delivering the teaching licenses and accrediting the curricula of Higher Education Institutions. Establishment of branches of foreign educational institutions and their activities are regulated by the Law on Education and inter-governmental agreements.

3. Quality assurance

If the answer to any of the questions 3.1. to 3.3. is no, what are your plans in the respective direction?

3.1. Does your country have a national quality assurance system? What are the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved?

Increasing and improving quality of education is one of the most important goals of both the State and society, as prosperity of the country depends by many reasons on the fulfilment and implementation of more quality education, especially for such country as Armenia, which is in transition period to open society and market economy.

According to Law on Education, Articles 41, 42, 43, and Article 44, "Issuing Licenses to the Educational Institution," "State Accreditation", a "State governing authorized body of Education" conducts Licensing and Accreditation.

The "Licensing and Accreditation Service" was established on June 7, 2000. The Licensing and Accreditation Service is a structural unit of the Ministry of Education and Science and all licensing and accreditation decisions are made by the Minister.

The licensing of educational institutions, as well as the organization of accreditation of professions and the provision of the conclusion/recommendations are carried out by the Licensing and Accreditation Service based on the Government Decree /No. 344, 23 June, 2000/.

3.2. Does your national quality assurance system include evaluation of programmes or institutions, external review, international participation, participation of students, the publication of results? (If yes, please describe)

Licensing and Accreditation

Licensing process. The licensing of educational institution has started after the independence of Armenia, since 1991. The "Licensing and Accreditation Service" was established on June 7, 2000. Once the Licensing and Accreditation Service was established, it supposed to resolve some significant issues. All institutions, offering education, in Armenia would require a

license. The system provides equal opportunities for state and private institutions. It is normal that shortly after the approval of State Order on licensing it was established educational institutions rushed to apply, since many of the institutions were about to function with expired licenses. Before the period of the licenses was as long as 4, 5, 3, or 10 years. The regulations for licensing and accreditation in a format of a guide were distributed to all educational institutions and based on that they presented the application form comprised of numerous documents.

The application form of any given institution is being registered upon the decision of the head of the service, which allows the representative of that institution to conduct the assessment and research activities based on the rules and regulations.

After the application is submitted, the results of the assessment are being compared with the actual situation of the institution and if there are inconsistencies found, then the application is being returned for further corrections by the institution itself. Then, after the corrections are made, the application is being examined for the second time and based on that the service provides the concluding notes, which is used by the minister to either approve or reject the granting of license. If the license is refused then the application is being examined again. After the Minister's order is out the license is being filled out and presented to him for the signature, which later is being passed to the institutions after it pays the duties. If the legal entity trespasses any conditions of the license, and then the service reserves the right to warn it.

The Ministry of Education and Science upon the presentation of the Service has recognised invalid the licenses of numerous higher education institutions and colleges in the cases when the institutions itself has applied to the service with the request to cancel it.

3.3.. Does your national quality assurance system include accreditation, certification or comparable procedures? (If yes, please describe)

Accreditation process. The goals of accreditation process have been introduced in a following structure:

- To provide equal approaches to state and non-state Higher Educational Institutions and relations between them
- To improve the quality of education and the state standards of education
- To provide public assurance of academic quality, both domestically and internationally
- To provide accountability to government and to the general public
- o provide degree of consumer protection.

Conditions of the state accrediting are the following:

- Ensuring academic quality in compliance with the state academic standards;
- Positive attestation results of at least 60% of the graduates in individual specialities, for two continuous years;
- At least 75% of state accredited specialities in the educational institution.
- In case of opening new specialities, the educational institution preserves the status of state accreditation.

The state accrediting procedure is preceded by self-evaluation of the educational institution's activity. According to the data received from subdivisions of the educational institution, the administration of the educational institution prepares a self-evaluation report and submits a note to the Service on its readiness for partial or full state accreditation of its specialities.

Within two weeks, the Service considers the report. In case of positive conclusion, the Service

committee investigates the all aspects of the educational institution activity by means of meetings, consultations, lectures and observations. Finally, the Service provides a note to the Minister with the recommendations for accreditation.

In case of negative conclusion, the report is returned together with attached justifications. Upon removal of shortcomings, the educational institution may reapply to the Service not earlier than after a month.

In the Republic of Armenia, the accreditation related to the vocational education and higher education is reserved by the Law on Education. According to the article 42, point 1 the accreditation is conducted by institutions and by provided professions. According to the point 2 of the same article upon the presentation of the regulations, state standards, criteria and periods by the state administrative authorized body of education /which is the Ministry of education and science/ the government gives its approval.

For the purpose of accreditation and for conducting studies a database of specialists from Armenian National Academy's Institutes, Armenian educational reforms center, Ministry of finance and economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Justice and the Department of State and legal Affairs from the President's Staff was created, the self evaluation form for the vocational educational institutions was developed and presented to the Minister for the approval, the working rules of an independent professional service were developed and approved by the minister, the expert reference form was defined, 6 legal entities were allowed to conduct the audit of educational institutions, the regulation on the final attestation of the graduating students of VET and higher educational institutions undergoing accreditation was developed and presented to the Minister for the approval, it was organized to develop and approve the unified list of the questions for the final attestation.

The expert groups based on self-evaluation were working in the higher educational institutions about one month, after that, they presented the service with a reference paper. Since May of the year of 2001 the preliminary activities of the accreditation of higher educational institutions or professions started.

4. The two-cycle degree system

4.1. Has your country introduced a national degree system for higher education based on two main cycles (equivalent to a BA/MA structure)?

(If yes, please describe - for instance, are two-cycle degrees optional or obligatory for the institutions? - If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?)

Degree system for higher education based on two main cycles

Although the two-cycle degree system in Armenian was assigned by the Law on Education as early as in 1997, till recently only 4 Higher Education Institutions have introduced two-tire degree structure (bachelor-master): State Engineering University of Armenia (1992), Armenian Agricultural Academy (1999) and Yerevan State University (2000), and American University of Armenia (which is solely a master's program university established jointly by the Armenian government and the US founders). Other Higher Education Institutions till recently were retaining the one-cycle degree structure of Higher Education formed as far back as the Soviet times, awarding only diplomised specialist qualification (5-year study program). This concerned both the state and non state Higher Education Institutions.

4.2. Are different orientations of degrees embedded in the system e.g. through a legal division between academic and professional degrees, or through a binary system of institutions?

Quantitative proportion of students enrolled in different degree programs at state Higher Education Institutions almost has not changed during the last decade - 94% of student population is enrolled in diplomised specialist or bachelor's programs (first cycle) while only 6% of students studies in master's and doctoral programs. The situation is almost the same in regard to graduates - 88% of graduates completed first cycle degrees and 12% - master's or doctoral programs. It is worthwhile to point out that non state Higher Education Institutions offer only diplomised specialist 5 year programs.

However, starting from 2004/05 academic years by the special decree of Ministry of Education and Science all Armenian Higher Education Institutions compulsory shifted to a new, two-tier degree structure with Bachelor (at least 4 years) and Master (minimum 1 year) academic degrees. This mandatory transfer is also envisaged by the new Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education. Almost 15,000 students were admitted to the state Higher Education Institutions' Bachelor programs this year. Therefore a major curricular reform is now under way driven by these changes.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

5.1. If your country has not ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, when do you plan to do so?

On 26th Day of March of the Year 2000, the Republic of Armenia signed the Council of Europe and UNESCO joint Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the Europe Region being driven by a numerous reasons and a determination to build a higher education system that could meritoriously become one of the leading countries of higher learning in the region. Besides, clearly understanding the nature of educational right, which is one of the basic human rights, the higher education is accessible to everyone and there is provided equal opportunity to pursue education free of charge in higher education institutions of the country. Recently Lisbon convention is ratified by National Assembly (December 14, 2004).

Lisbon Convention creates a legal ground for mutual recognition of qualifications for the whole European region. On the other hand, the sample Diploma Supplement developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO creates a mechanism for the recognition and evaluation of individual qualification in foreign countries.

5.2. Does every student graduating in your country receive the Diploma Supplement?

- *automatically and free of charge?*
- *in a widely spoken European language?*

If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?

The Law on Higher and Postgraduate professional education does not prohibit Higher Education Institutions to issue additional diplomas supplements (besides the compulsory supplement of the recognized state form). This allows a number of Armenian Higher Education Institutions to present their graduates with their own additional document close in contents to Diploma Supplement. Currently, the Ministry of Education and Science considers

the possibility of introducing in perspective Diploma Supplement in all Armenian Higher Education Institutions.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

Postgraduate (doctoral) students are directly involved in performing research within Higher Education Institutions, hence they are important participants of the research activities in all Armenian state universities. Successful completion of the Diplomised Specialist or Master's (second cycle) program is a necessary prerequisite for the access to the third (Doctoral) cycle.

While the "training aspect" or "training component" of the research doctorate, which is emphasized in the structured programs, is getting an increasing acceptance in Europe, the lack of suitable training (high degree of specialization, no job-qualifying skills) for a contemporary job market is one of the main deficiencies of the doctoral studies in Armenia. Reinforcement of the training component of doctoral programs is getting of special importance from the standpoint of both the Berlin developments of the Bologna Process as well as changing needs of the labor market. Such training should be oriented to develop not only research and analytical skills in the certain subject area, but also strong capabilities, information and intellectual property right management, and interpersonal communication.

The efficiency of doctoral programs (ratio of the number of doctorates defended their PhD theses to the number of doctoral students admitted) is quite low both in Higher Education and Research institutions, averaging to 25% for the last 7 years. On the other hand, despite of relatively stable admission level, the number of doctorates who have defended their doctoral theses in time has increased 3.6 times during that period.

Another problem of postgraduate/doctoral education in Armenia is very low accessibility and explicitly bounded enrolment. According to the quotas assigned by the government less than 4% of state Higher Education Institutions' graduates can enter to the doctoral programs.

6.2. What are the links between higher education and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

Research and Development in Higher Education accounts for 14% of the overall state expenditures on Research and Development and Science in the country during the last decade, which comprises less than 0.025% of the GDP. The Research and development within State Higher Education Institutions is funded only through project-based financing scheme, i.e. there is no institutional funding for Higher Education Institutions. There is also minor funding for research of postgraduate students (PhD program), but not for maintaining the respective research infrastructure.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country *(For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)*

In 2004 some 4000 students from abroad have been studying in various state higher education institutions. The main exporters of Armenian higher education are Georgia, Russia, Syria, India and Iran, where the Armenian Diaspora is significant in its numbers and that part of it are the students of Armenian origin. The unevenness of distribution of the numbers also speaks about the nature of cooperation with foreign countries that is the bilateral format of recognition of qualifications and diplomas, stipulated by the law.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

A systematic exchange of lecturers began in connection with the Tempus assistance programme of the EU in the framework of mobility schemes.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

The aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

According to the Law on Education the State Higher Education Institutions in Armenia are autonomous, non for profit legal entities that possess, utilize and manage the property allocated to them according to their mission and policies developed by the founder (the government). The private Higher Education Institutions can have any organizational-legal form provided by the law. The most important parts of the autonomy of Higher Education Institutions are self-governance and corporate leadership. Higher Education Institutions according to its mission can provide any commercial, research and development services and tuition-based education according to the regulations stated by the government. It has a budget, and a bank account. Higher Education Institutions is autonomous in determining main spheres of its activities, adopts budget and supervises implementation thereof, introduces new programs and upgrades the existing ones, adopts curricula and teaching methods. Higher Education Institutions is free also in organizing education, choosing teaching and learning modes etc.

Higher Education Institutions independently defines its budget and the usage of funds received from other non-state sources, including the size and amount of salaries and remunerations to be paid to the faculty and staff. The public funds received from the state budget as a lump sum constitute only a part of Higher Education Institutions' overall budget and they, within very broad limits, are free to distribute these funds internally at their own

discretion, as long as the funds are used for the purposes for which they are provided. The Higher Education Institutions are also free in forming their internal organizational structure. The governing bodies of Higher Education Institutions, mechanisms of formation thereof and their authorities are stated in the charter of the institution. The governing bodies of Higher Education Institutions institution are the Council of Institution, Academic Council and the Rector. The Council of Institution is a corporate governing body and responsible for the overall management and organization of Higher Education Institutions. Composition and membership of Council of Institution is formed according to the regulations assigned by the government. The Academic Council deals mainly with academic and scientific issues of the institution. Executive management of Higher Education Institutions is implemented by the Rector, who is elected by the Council of Institution in an open competition process.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

At the national level, student participation in the governance of higher education is ensured by the two legislative acts: Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia and Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education.

- The state policy in higher and post-graduate education is based on the principles defined in the Republic of Armenia Constitution, in the Law on Education, as well as on international legal norms including facilitating the free international movement and mobility of students (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, Article 4).
- At the national level, the law emphasizes the importance to ensure equal opportunities for students and employees of higher educational institutions (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, Article 2).
- The students as well as professors/lecturers and researchers of the universities enjoy academic freedom. They have the right to participate in all the discussions related to the performance of the University and in all the activities of the elective bodies. The students are free to obtain knowledge and to conduct research based on their inclinations. They can participate in the functions for education quality assurance and to evaluate the effectiveness of the performance of the professors/lecturers (Law on Education, Article 28).
- The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education also emphasizes that students are entitled to academic freedom, at their own discretion to choose a vocation, type of higher educational institution and form of teaching based on their preferred interests and needs, to be transferred to another higher educational institution (including the ones in foreign countries), to conduct research, cease or continue higher and post-graduate education at any academic level, to fully participate in works of the elective administration body of the institution as prescribed by its Charter (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, Article 5).

Students constitute at least 25% of the elective management bodies of the higher education institutions (Law on Education, Article 28). The election for the positions for the higher educational institutions management bodies is done through the representative elective body of student self-governance at the respective level of the higher education institution - Student Council. The Charter of the Student Council is confirmed on the basis of the example charter, which is affirmed by the government authoritative body (Law on Education, Article 28). Student participation in the university governing bodies is regulated by the RA legislation as well as by the Charter of the university. At the Department level - in the Broadened Department Council, student representation is also 25%. In higher education institutions, students may come together in student councils and student research associations. The charter of the educational institution defines the rules for their activities (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, Article 15). Students have the right to participate in the election of the Deans of the Department of the state higher education institution. Student of the state higher education institutions also have the right to participate in the Heads of the Chair election. Candidate for the respective position is required to submit the results of the student survey on his/her teaching activity, which has been received according to the established procedure (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education). At the advancing and appointment to the faculty position, evaluation of the teaching activities by the students is also considered to be one of the criteria.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

The policy of Armenian Government in providing more equitable access to Higher Education is to implement it through better-targeted public policies, financing, credit system and new provisions.

The first strategy is to create social prerequisites for equitable access to Higher Education by state support to vulnerable social groups through:

1) Establishing a State Student Aid Program. The specific measures are as follows:

- Establish state standards for student need determination (by consolidating the cost of education and financial status of the student),
- Introduce grants-in-aid/subsidies to be awarded according to the need and merit based combined criteria,
- Introduce state guaranteed (subsidized and unsubsidised) student loan programs on the merit-based basis,
- Provision of state subsidized work-study opportunities/programs to Higher Education Institutions.

2) Establish Institutional Aid Programs at Higher Education Institutions. The specific measures are:

- Establish financial aid offices at Higher Educational Institutions to administer all kinds of aid, consult the students, and to diversify aid sources,
- Offer student teaching and research assistantship programs and on-campus part-time work,
- Offer university fellowships, tuition reduction or waivers to outstanding students from vulnerable social groups.

The second strategy is to diversify learning modes and educational paths to enhance access to Higher Education by:

- 1) Eliminating disparities in Higher Education transition arrangements among students leaving secondary, vocational schools and colleges. Measures are:
- Enhance and equalize quality of education in all Armenian secondary level educational institutions,
 - Establish an Knowledge Assessment and Testing Centre to replace the centralized state admission exams scheme (Recently Knowledge Assessment and Testing Centre was established),
 - Revision of Higher Education transition arrangements to minimize impact of the family capital on the admission results and maximize influence of the personal talent and efforts made by the student.
- 2) Introducing part-time study, lifelong learning modes and “sandwich” programs in Higher Education Institutions to broaden possibilities for diversified and flexible Higher Education delivery systems.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

The need for lifelong education has been a pending problem for many years in Armenia. The Article 26 on Supplementary Education of the Law on Education, which is the same as the lifelong learning, states:

1. Supplementary academic programs shall be implemented with the end of meeting the requirements of individuals and the society. The major objective of supplementary education at each level of professional education is the continuous development of persons’ professional qualification.
2. Supplementary education shall be conducted in general, professional and supplementary educational institutions, as well as through individual pedagogic activity, procedures of which shall be defined by the Government of Armenia.

Higher Education Institutions may provide lifelong learning programmes within the framework of their educational activity, either free of charge, or in return for payment. Lifelong learning may be either vocationally oriented or follow personal interests. The detailed conditions to which it is subject are stipulated in internal regulations of a respective higher education institution, which must be provided in advance to all prospective participants.

For the development of lifelong education, there is a need for further improvement of the field of legislation especially through the development of sub-legislative acts and normative documents and which is more important the development and implementation of mechanisms providing for the enforcement of legislation. For the purpose of accomplishing the abovementioned in the field of lifelong education the activity of elaboration and approval of normative acts on supplementary education was stipulated in the Law on State Program for the Development of Education for the period from 2001 to 2005.

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

Transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

Higher Education Institutions of Armenia are actively participating in European programs, such as TEMPUS, objective of which is to promote education quality and support institutional development.

11.2. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

In Prague, ministers agreed that special attention should be paid to so called "joint degrees study programmes", i.e. study programmes prepared in co-operation of an international higher education network and leading to a recognised joint degree. This type of study programmes was developed in French University in Armenia. Common study programmes is created with French partners. The programmes are recognised in both participating countries. Consequently joint degrees should be fully recognised by Armenia and France.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe any actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of European higher education

Important step towards the integration of Higher Education System of Armenia into European Higher Education Area was the foundation of two Higher Education Institutions: European Regional Academy of Information Technologies named after Robert Schuman and French University in Armenia. The overall mission of the mentioned Higher Education Institutions is to introduce European Higher Education standards, study programs, courses and teaching methods in Armenia.

To promote attractiveness of European higher education despite the language teaching, special courses developed in Higher education institutions of Armenia, introducing the European dimension. In the Yerevan State University of Foreign Languages European studies are thought.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

Since gaining independence Armenia have made significant steps towards full integration of European structures, most notably with their accession to the Council of Europe. Reform of Education systems has been an important part of this process, to the benefit and credit of Armenia as well as individuals. Education continues to play an important role for sustainable development, since all societies, in particular those in transition, like in Armenia require the participation of informed and well-educated members or citizens in order to build stable democracies based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Ministers responsible for Higher Education of South Caucasus stress the wish to join

Bologna Process in “Statement of the Ministers of Education of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, signed in Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg, 17-18 May 2004. They particularly states:

“ ... Recognizing the importance of the reform of educational system, in particular underlining the necessity to continue the current processes of reform in its national context, the Ministers further emphasise the following priorities:

Drafting and adoption of new legislation for higher education in line with European norms and standards; Reform of the higher education sector in light of the requirements of the Bologna process; Continue to support exchange of information and experience between the three Countries in the above-mentioned fields in order to facilitate their countries’ integration into common European educational space.”

The accession to the European Higher Education Area will significantly promote the improvement of higher education in Armenia and the recognition of Armenian higher education qualifications in Europe.

Taking into account the need to implement the basic principles of Bologna process, the following main strategic goals and issues are defined in Strategy of Higher Education, approved by Government of Armenia in 2002:

- To achieve the recognition of Armenia’s higher education degrees and qualifications and their comparability with relevant European higher educational institutions qualifications and diplomas.
- To establish National Information Center on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC).
- To bring into agreement Armenian higher education diploma supplements with the degrees developed in Europe.
- Introduce European credit transfer system (ECTS) in higher educational institutions.
- To create favourable conditions and package of legislative amendments for unhindered movement of Armenian students from University to University and for international mobility.
- To join European cooperation programs in the sphere of higher education Quality Assurance and develop cooperation with the European Network for Quality Assurance
- To bring the current accreditation criteria and mechanisms into compliance with the European standards established under the European accreditation platform.
- To develop bilateral and multilateral programs between Armenian and European higher educational institutions, common models, courses, and to create joint programs and award joint qualification degrees of higher education qualification.
- To implement curricula refreshment, in order to converge curricula and study plans with the European standards.

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

- General management problems of state higher educational institutions.
- Financial management problems in state higher educational institutions.
- Regulatory problems under market economy conditions
- Higher Education Institution’s science and technology system development.
- Application of most efficient and targeted ways of state assistance

- Intra-system diversity and flexibility, linkage with the labor market;

The relative and absolute demand for the higher education in the future will be determined by a range of basic factors, such as:

- Demographic trends
- Labor market demand
- Living standards and inequality
- Current educational level and traditions
- Quality and flexibility of the higher educational institutions
- Quality and engagement of the general education
- State expenditure policy in the sphere of higher education

Armenia has taken a direction towards reformed education institutions that are the vivid transmitters, preservers and developers of education tradition of historic Armenia, hoping for a gradual solutions of the challenges on our way to become a rightful part of European Higher Education Area.