

Summary of the National Survey ESTONIA

The general legal basis of the system of higher education is laid down by Republic of Estonia Education Act, Universities Act, Institutions of Professional Higher education Act, Private Schools Act, Vocational Educational Institutions Act and the Government of the Republic Regulation of 18 December 2008 No 178 Standard of Higher Education.

Since the academic year 2002/2003, the general structure of the system of higher education has three cycles that comply with the bachelor-master-PhD model of the European higher education area: 1) Bachelor's study and professional higher education study; 2) Master's study 3) Doctoral study. In some fields of study, Bachelor's study and Master's study have been merged together into integrated study¹.

Since academic year 2009/2010 the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is fully implemented as a national credit system. The Estonian acronym for the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is EAP (*Euroopa Ainepunktisüsteemi ainepunkt*). One ECTS credit corresponds to 26 hours of study by a student – amounting to 1,560 hours or 60 ECTS credits for an academic year.

State recognition of diplomas is based until 31.12.2011 on a positive accreditation decision of a study programme and since 2009 a right will be given to the educational institution to conduct studies in the relevant study programme group and to issue corresponding academic degrees and diplomas. In years 2009-2011 both regulations are valid for issuing state recognised diplomas².

The legislative changes were developed based on results of numerous international discussions and projects (Council of Europe, UNESCO, and EUA) and are applied alike to the joint programmes offered solely by the Estonian HEI-s within national level cooperation as well as within cooperation with foreign HEI-s³. A person who has completed the joint study programme shall be awarded with a state recognised joint diploma by multiple institutions.

Despite the legislative changes and possibility of awarding joint degrees, the level of joint degree / programme cooperation in Estonia is still quite low. According to the National Report 2009 there were no Estonian institutions, which awarded joint degrees to the students; they only participated in joint programmes (estimated number of joint programmes was about 20)⁴.

Estonian HEI-s participate in different programmes and projects, which aim is to develop a cooperation between different countries and institutions and to contribute to the internationalisation and Europeanization of the Estonian Higher Education Area, e.g. Erasmus Intensive Programmes and NordPlus for Higher Education, Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and activities supported by structural funds. Since the moment Estonia joined Tempus Programme to 2006 Estonian HEI-s participated in 83 Joint European Projects, including Compact Projects (in 24 projects as coordinating institutions), and 23 Structural and Complementary Measures (in 2 cases as coordinating institutions). And now Estonian

¹ Integrated Bachelor's and Master's study is a study in one single cycle including both basic and specialized studies (medical studies, veterinary medicine studies, pharmacist studies, dentistry studies, architectural studies, civil engineering studies or pedagogical studies for class teachers)

² Estonian System of Higher Education, Directive Nr. 1327 of the Minister of Education and Research, annex 2, 30 December 2009

³ http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2009/National_Report_Estonia_2009.pdf

⁴ http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2009/National_Report_Estonia_2009.pdf

HEI-s are quite active in Tempus Programme. Under the second Call for proposals in 2009 three projects with Estonian HEI-s participating as partners got funding.

Erasmus Intensive Programmes are part of the internationalisation process at the Estonian HEI-s and interest of the HEI-s in applying for IP-s is continuously increasing from the time IP-s became a decentralised action. If in academic year 2007/2008 there were only three applications, for the academic year 2010/2011 already nine applications from six different HEI-s and their branches were submitted.

NordPlus for Higher Education is another programme, where Estonian HEI-s are successful. In 2008 71 applications were submitted, where Estonian HEI-s participated as partners (58 applications) or as coordinating institutions (13 applications). After assessment procedure 41 proposals with Estonian participation got funding, among it one project coordinated by Estonian HEI.

In 2009 there was an increase in participation of Estonian HEI-s in NordPlus Programme. 81 applications were submitted and 68 got funding. At the moment there are two NordPlus HE projects coordinated by Estonian HEI-s.

Throughout the last years the participation of Estonian HEI-s in the Erasmus Mundus programme stayed stable both in Action 1 and Action 3 (former Action 4). Since 2009 there is also a possibility to submit proposals for Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates, which was actively used by Estonian HEI-s. As a result of the selection process one EMJD with Estonian participation got funding.

Participation of Estonian HEI-s in selection process for Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMC) is quite constant with four to six applications per year. During all these years only once an Estonian HEI applied as a coordinator for the Erasmus Mundus Master Course (2007), but the proposal was rejected. Thereof two Estonian universities are active partners in three Erasmus Mundus Master Courses.

Participation rate of Estonian HEI-s in applying as partners for Action 3 (former Action 4) is comparable to their participation in applying for EMMC and EMJD, but the success rate is considerably higher. From sixteen proposals, in which Estonian HEI-s or organizations participated during the last years, six were selected for funding.

As the analysis of the current situation shows, there is still a lot of work to do in order to enforce the development of the Estonian Higher Education Area and in particular the development of joint study programmes. Besides the legislative changes, which came into effect on 1.09.2008 and allowed joint programmes and degrees, there is also special funding available to encourage joint programmes with foreign institutions as well as within the cooperation of Estonian HEI-s. This funding supports students by carrying out their studies in foreign institutions in the event they have been matriculated into the study programme offered jointly by the Estonian and foreign HEI-s. On third cycle level, other types of special measures for facilitating inter-institutional cooperation are available (e.g. funding for doctoral schools)⁵.

⁵ http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2009/National_Report_Estonia_2009.pdf