

Recognition Problems in the Nordic Countries:
Nordic ENIC/NARIC's reported problems.

Nordic Recognition and Information Centres Network (NORRIC)

October 2004

Part 1

The recognition framework

Introduction

Practices concerning the recognition of qualifications have developed considerably over the past decades. Whereas an assessment of foreign qualifications often entailed a detailed comparison of curricula and lists of material studied ("equivalence"), the emphasis has now shifted to a broader comparison of the qualifications earned ("acceptance").

The last decade a tendency towards formal international regulations of recognition principles and methods has in addition become more and more apparent.

Academic recognition of foreign higher education is affected by both HEI and by E/N offices in the Nordic countries. Requests for professional recognition are decided upon both by E/N offices and by field-specific authorities (authorizing bodies) in each country. The division of labour between these bodies may differ in each country, but the Nordic E/N-offices are the main actors in decision-making about recognition in the region.

In 2003 Enic/Narics reported a total of 10500 cases of recognition of foreign HE-qualifications.

The framework for recognition in Europe builds on a handful of cornerstones that will be briefly touched upon in this section.

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region¹

The convention is ratified by all Nordic countries. It is an important international agreement on recognition of foreign higher education.

Its main points are:

- holders of qualifications issued in one of the Parties to the Convention are entitled to a fair assessment of their qualifications
- a qualification issued in one of the Parties to the Convention should be recognized unless the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country

¹ in the following called Lisbon convention

- the Parties ensure that information on assessment of HE-institutions and programmes and on recognition matters is available

A government appointed committee monitors the implementation of the convention in each country. Nationally the convention points to the ENIC- network/offices to monitor, promote and facilitate the implementation of the convention.

The Reykjavik declaration

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of recognizing and accepting each other's qualifications from higher education. The Sigtuna agreement from 1975 has been the basis for the good relations that have existed for the past decades. This agreement has now been replaced by the "Reykjavik Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications from Higher Education" signed by all Nordic ministers of education/research in June 2004. This new declaration states the principles for a further strengthening of the Nordic. The declaration gives the Enic/Naric-offices the responsibility for the follow-up of the decided principles. Recognition problems are to be analysed and reported every second year to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The EC Directives

The recognition of qualifications for professional purposes is based on legal instruments concerning the recognition of diplomas, applicable solely to the regulated professions. They are adopted at a European community level.

The principle of the European Union system for the recognition of qualifications is that the professional competence earned by an EU/EEA national in another EU/EEA country is recognized by all member states. (In addition to EU/EEA countries, Switzerland has been included in this system since May 2002.)

The general system for recognition is based on two EC Council Directives: Directive 89/48/EEC on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration, and Directive 92/51/EEC on a general system for the recognition of professional education and training, which supplements Directive 89/48/EEC. In addition to the Directives on a general system for recognition, there are special Directives governing the professions of physician, nurse, midwife, dentist, veterinary surgeon, pharmacist and architect.

A code of conduct has been drawn up under the auspices of the EU with guidelines for how the competent authorities of the member states should administer the rules.

Bologna Declaration and the reform of systems

In addition to the Lisbon convention and the EC-directives, the Bologna process has affected the recognition process in the region. This process started in 1999 in Bologna, where the

European ministers of education signed a declaration towards a European higher education area. The aim of the Bologna declaration is to increase the mobility of students, teachers and the labour force alike, and to improve both the quality and competitiveness of European education. The declaration includes action lines as a recommendation for the countries that have signed it.

In the field of the recognition of qualifications, the most important action lines are as follows:

- adopting a system essentially based on two cycles (Bachelor–Master),
- adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees (using tools such as the Diploma Supplement and ECTS system of credits),
- promoting European cooperation in quality assurance.

All Nordic countries have started to adopt the two-cycle system in line with the action lines of the Bologna declaration. In Norway, Iceland and Denmark, the system is already fully operational. These countries have also adopted the use of the ECTS credits. Finland introduced the two-cycle system in most fields from the mid-1990's but the new two-cycle system will cover all fields from August 2005. In connection with this reform, a new national credit system based on the ECTS will be introduced. Sweden implemented part of the Bologna-principles in 2003 and is developing reform-plans to further strengthen the process. Full implementation is scheduled to take place in 2007.

From 2003 (the Berlin follow-up meeting) the Lisbon Convention is an integral part of the Bologna process.

The Enic-Naric network

The Nordic offices are part of a larger network with central position in the recognition framework.

The NARIC network includes all EU/EEA countries. The European Commission coordinates its work. The ENIC network includes the above stated countries as well as nearly all other European countries and the United States, Canada, Australia, Turkey and Israel. The ENIC network is coordinated by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The two networks show a high degree of integration.

Within the networks there is a high degree of sharing. The NARIC and ENIC networks exchange information and experience on the education systems and higher education qualifications in other countries as well as on the good practices of recognition. The international working groups and projects functioning under ENIC/NARIC deal with topical questions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

One of the ENIC/NARIC working parties has put forward Recommendations on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, which was adopted in 2001 by the Lisbon Convention Intergovernmental Committee. The aim is to make procedures and principles of recognition to be as similar as possible irrespective of the country in which the qualification is recognised.

The newly published “Joint Charter of Activities and services” (June 2004) represents the latest initiative of the network.

Part 2

The Nordic Recognition Area

Offices with differing responsibilities

All the Nordic offices are governmental bodies, but differ in their administrative/ organizational model.² All the offices have a national responsibility for giving information about the national educational system to other countries and collecting information on foreign educational systems (for national purposes). All offices, apart from Denmark, currently have the national responsibility for implementation of Diploma Supplement. Only Iceland has so far the national responsibility for the implementation and supervision of the ECTS system.

Three out of five offices (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) have been appointed national contact points for the EU-directives. Furthermore the Danish office is responsible for coordinating the activities of the competent authorities and ensuring that the general directives are implemented uniformly in the professional fields involved.

The total amount of recognition cases (10 500) reported from the Nordic E/N offices cover applications for both academic and professional recognition.

Recognition for different purposes and of different types.

The difference between academic and professional recognition lies in the fact that the first is for further study purposes and the second is for entering the labour market. Sometimes the applicant requires a assessment valid for both purposes. All Nordic E/N offices are involved in both types of recognition except the Icelandic office which is not at all involved in professional recognition.

Academic recognition is done both by E/N-offices and by HEI's in all Nordic countries. However, there are national differences regarding the character of the decisions. A decision can be legally binding and must be followed by the HEIs or it can be a advisory statement which may or may not be followed by the HEIs.

Academic recognition leading to legally binding decisions is carried out by the E/N-offices in Denmark and Norway even in different ways. Denmark makes decisions about general admission requirements to HE including all end degrees. The latter counts for Norway as well. In addition is making legally binding decisions about credit transfer into HE. These decisions always include exact amount of credits. For the other countries the institutions are auto-

² See report by Marketta Saarinen (see Appendix 1) for more information about the different models of organization of the E/N offices.

mous. They may or may not follow the advisory statements given by the E/Ns but they are reported normally to do so.

There are two types of professional recognition:

- De facto professional recognition which concerns recognition of qualifications for professional activities which are not regulated
- De jure professional recognition, which concerns qualifications for regulated professions.

Permission to practice a regulated profession (de jure recognition) is given by the national authority that controls access to the profession in question. Denmark, Finland and Sweden act as competent authority in the field of teacher recognition. In addition, Finland also serves as competent authority for professions within the public sector. The Danish office is responsible for coordinating the activities of the national competent authorities and is the generally contact point where all applications are sent to. According to Danish legislation the Danish E/N office shall be involved in cases where a competent authority does not fully recognise a foreign diploma. The E/N office's decision is binding for the competent authority.

De facto recognition for the non-regulated professions may be done by E/N-offices. Normally those decisions can only have advisory character but to some extent the Norwegian and the Danish offices issue binding decisions for instance according to level of salary, admission to unemployment funds.

Part 3

Comparing educational systems and recognition work in the Nordic countries: characteristic similarities and differences

Differences between the Nordic E/N-offices tasks and working methods

The Nordic offices share core activities, but there are differences related to responsibilities and methods.

The offices share the following tasks relevant for recognition:

- a) Assisting the HEI's in matters related to academic recognition, either by binding decisions or by giving advice
- b) Being responsible for both giving information about their own national education system to other countries and for giving information to their own national students, institutions, employers, trade union etc. about education systems in other countries.
- c) The appointment by respective Ministers as the office responsible for assuring the quality of recognition in their respective countries according to principles laid down in the Lisbon convention.

But there are differences between the offices in respect to types of decisions, purpose of decisions, area and content of the decisions, and also whether the office will issue, or not issue, advice and/or legally binding statements in the different types of recognition.

Especially the Norwegian office has problems when collecting information from Nordic offices, as it is involved not only in giving advice to HEI's in academic recognition, but also in making legally binding decisions (to individual applicants). The Norwegian office therefore requires "absolute answers" about, for instance credits from the other offices.

In professional recognition ("de jure") it could be assumed that there are possibilities to use the Nordic network, as 3 out of 5 offices are involved, but again they are involved in evaluating different professions, if we do not include teachers. For the shared task of teacher recognition, different working methods/models are at hand. In this work there is definitely a potential for cooperation.

Differences between the Nordic systems of higher education

As shown in the report by Peter Maasen (see appendix 2) the history of the Higher Education Institutions in the Nordic countries do not show the same pattern. The main challenge for the E/N offices in connection with recognition of HE-qualifications, when we have a mix of systems, lies in transfer of credits between the systems and admission to further studies, when moving from one system to another.

As a consequence the systems show differences in their definitions of postsecondary non-higher tertiary education, in the structure and length of study and in the use of credits.

Finland represents a clearly binary system where the academic and vocationally oriented higher education is and will be developed as separate sectors.

Iceland and Sweden represent unitary systems, offering both general academic degrees and more professionally oriented programmes of various lengths within the same institutions.

Norway and Denmark represent a mix of the two systems.

The most evident example of recognition problems that emanate from differences in length of study is the varying length of second cycle programs in the Nordic countries.

Transfer of credits is essential in recognition of higher education. Nationally they differ in many aspects.

Nordic national definitions of credits:

Finland:	40 credits normally equals to one full study year (1 credit corresponds approximatley to 40 hours of student work).
Denmark:	60 ECTS corresponds to 1-year of full-time study
Sweden	40 credit points normally equals to one full study year (1 credit point equivalent to one week of full time studies, usually 40 hours/week)
Norway	60 ECTS corresponds to 1-year of full-time study
Iceland	30 Einingar corresponds to 1-year of full-time study and to 60 ECTS credits.

Part 4

Problems in recognition of Nordic Higher Education Degrees

In this section problems and difficulties of recognition in Nordic Higher Education will be summarised. The problems are reported by the offices themselves and discussed thoroughly in the project group. The general public aren't aware of differences when comparing HE's in the Nordic region given the many historical and socio-economic similarities between countries. The problems in this chapter are mostly focused on academic recognition but regardless of the mode of recognition the differences and problems are (almost) the same.

Office-reported problems of recognition

a) Iceland:

There are not many recognition problems that we are aware of where students have had problems getting their qualifications from the other Nordic countries recognized in Iceland. The problems that may arise are caused by differences in the educational systems, i.e. when education is not on the same level in Iceland as in the other Nordic country, or when the length of the degree programmes is not the same.

Different length of study programmes may cause problems. If for example someone who has finished the Cand Mag degree in Norway after a four years studies comes to Iceland for graduate studies its very likely that he doesn't get extra credit for the extra year compared with the Icelandic three years BA/BS degree.

There might be some problems with professional bachelors degrees, or degrees from non-university higher education institutions, from the other Nordic countries regarding access to graduate programmes. For example, qualifications from institutions that formerly were at postsecondary level, but have been upgraded to higher education level may cause problems. When an Icelandic institution has been upgraded to a higher education institution, the older professional non higher education qualification is treated in the same way as the (newer) professional higher education qualification when it comes to professional recognition but not regarding academic recognition. The fact that this may be done differently in other countries may cause problems as the Icelandic NARIC office generally recommends that qualifications should be treated in the same way regarding access to graduate studies at universities as they are in their homeland. We may end up with a situation where this recommendation would lead to a different result for foreign qualifications compared to comparable Icelandic qualifications.

b) Norway

Norway has problems with recognition of master degrees from Finland. This is caused by the fact that Finland states that it is a 5-year qualification but it only normally corresponds to (minimum) 160 studieveckor (national credits). We therefore assess this in Norway as a 4-year qualification when it comes to credits and the candidates are not being recognized as having a qualification on par with the Norwegian (3+2) 5-year

master degree. But it is still unclear to us what the true nature of the Finnish master degree is. (See: report by Prof. Peter Maassen,).

Norway also has problems with Swedish second cycle (master) degrees which is clearly (3+1) a 4-year degree. To be recognized as being on par with the Norwegian master degree (just like the Finnish degree), more credits are needed on master level.

We sometimes have problems assessing the marking system from Sweden in connection with admission to competitive higher studies in Norway with a Swedish qualification.

Norway does not recognize the Danish master degrees (one year program in the adult education system) as being on par with the Norwegian master degree. This degree lacks both in-depth study and credits compared to the Norwegian master degree. The terminology of the Danish second degrees can also be confusing as the regular second cycle degree is not named master, but Kandidatdegree (this degree is recognized as being on par with the Norwegian master degree).

We generally have problems with old Nordic degrees. E.g. the old Finnish “Sjuksjølterkor” (an old postsecondary qualification not generally giving credits in Finland) is accepted for authorisation as a nurse, but giving no transfer credits into higher education in Norway. We also have problems with older Danish qualifications from “Erhvervsakademier” as it difficult to assess them in regular HE-credits also in Denmark.

c) Denmark

The main problems for the Danish E/N-office in recognition of Nordic degrees are linked to:

- Length of study i.e. degree structure
- The content of programmes (i.e. more or less specialized and level of flexibility in combining and summarizing separate modules into a final degree) as well as quality and profile of the programme (academic/professional oriented)
- New and old degrees and interim arrangements according to revisions and reforms of national education programmes
- The name/title where the same term may indicate quite different level of degree
- The labour market destination

Sweden:

KY Kvalificerad Yrkesutbildning with varying length (1-3 years) has caused some recognition problems, but they are in general assessed as at the VET (eud) level.

For högskola 2-year programmes content and destination (labour market or further education) it is not always clearly documented and there are not so many Swedish programmes/”titles” as in Denmark at this level.

The current Swedish kandidatexamen is without problems assessed as at the level of the Danish Bachelor, but the title “kandidat” is linked to a second degree in Denmark.

For Magisterexamen it's not a quite clear answer to applicants when the E/N-office assess' it at the level of “about 4 years of HE”. Applicants may use this type of response to get a job and have a salary as a bachelor/cand. phil. or to enter further education. Problems occur both for foreigners and for Danish students going to Sweden to finalise an education after having completed a Danish Bachelor Degree or for taking an education programme in a field of study, which does not exist at university level in Denmark (e.g. in art). The title “magister” is linked to a 5-year/second degree in Denmark so some education institutions and employers do recognize it as at the level of a Danish magistereksamen (no data available about the extent) e.g. for admission to PhD programmes or salary as a Danish kandidat/magister. The 1-year Master programme is comparable to the level of a Danish 1-year Master programme.

The possibility in Sweden of adding/summarizing several separate courses/modules into one final diploma (many papers from different institutions) may cause recognition problems. Sometimes the number of Swedish study point exceeds the minimum requirement for the diploma, but the E/N-office only assess final diplomas, not single subject/modules.

For Licentiatexamen it may be misleading as it normally is being done to compare it to a Danish Candidatus Degree as it is part of a full Swedish Doktor programme. In some cases it is however assessed as at the level “of at least a candidatus degree” or as “a candidatus and about 1 year of a PhD programme”. Up to 1993 Denmark also had a licentiat degree.

For Doktorexamen there are normally no problems as it both in length and academic qualification corresponds to a Danish PhD. However, in Denmark we also have a “doctor” title awarded by universities after normally very long research/work experience, but it doesn't make part of the Danish education system.

Norway:

Høyskolekandidateksamen doesn't cause many recognition problems besides some cases from private institutions. Comparing Høyskoleeksamen with a professional bachelor or an academic bachelor may give problems when the diploma is issued on the basis of different courses/from different kind of institutions and the length of study may exceed the 3-3½ years. The Danish E/N-office looks at the final diploma and leaves out or only make a remark about the additional study points. In Danish the term “højskole” normally refer to a folk high school, i.e. non-formal education.

The former Candidatus Magestrerii may give some recognition problems when the diploma is given on the background of different courses/from different kind of institutions and the length of study may exceed the 3-3½ years. Sometimes the qualification doesn't correspond to a Danish programme. Applicants don't understand the nature

and profile of the Danish professional bachelor degree. As for Sweden the cand.mag. title don't correspond the Danish cand. mag. title (5 years).

PhD degrees don't course many recognition problems except some confusion remains about the PhD degree and "the old Dr." (long, not part of the education system as such).

Finland:

The former Magisterexamen is not quite comparable to a Danish candidatus so it is normally assessed as about 4 years of HE (Bachelor + about 1 year of a candidatus). I.e. causing the same problems as with assessment of the Swedish Magisterexamen.

For the Kandidatexamen the different length/study point are not always clear compared to a Danish bachelor.

Some terminology problems e.g. the term "diplomingeniör" is used for a Finnish Magister degree, in Denmark it is a professional bachelor degree.

The forthcoming polytechnic postgraduate degree – may become difficult to assess as a Candidatus or as a Danish 1-year Master programme.

Iceland:

A postsecondary certificate may in some cases seem like corresponding about ½ year of a Danish AK/erhvervsakademiuddannelse, but in general it is assessed as secondary education.

Diploma (postgraduate) may give recognition problems when taken as adult courses part time.

d) Finland:

The Finnish E/N-office makes binding decisions on the professional recognition of foreign qualifications. As a rule, there are not any specific problems in the professional recognition of higher education degrees from other Nordic countries. There are, however, two types of degrees that occasionally cause problems, i.e. degrees from non-recognized higher education institutions, as well as qualifications of less than three years' duration. These types of degrees cannot be recognized according to the Finnish legislation on recognition.

In matters related to academic recognition of qualifications, the Finnish E/N-office issues advisory statements to higher education institutions on their request. Finnish higher education institutions have not reported the office on problems related to academic recognition of qualifications from other Nordic countries.

e) Sweden:

Problems in recognition of Nordic degrees in Sweden can be referred mainly to two factors:

- difference in length of programmes and depth of studies leading to the award of a degree
- difference in the structure of higher education (undergraduate – postgraduate).

Iceland:

There are hardly any problems comparing an Icelandic higher education qualification with a Swedish higher education qualification.

Finland:

There are no problems in recognition of Finnish university degrees. Recognition of degrees awarded by the Polytechnics is not really a problem. The outcome may however vary depending on whether a major subject can be found or not (for comparison with a Swedish *kandidatexamen*).

There is a problem concerned mentioning the length of the programme that is made in the Swedish assessments. Sweden considers 1 Finnish studievecka as comparable to 1 Swedish högskolepoäng. According to this Sweden states that studies leading to a Finnish *kandidatexamen* (120 sv.) are 3 years and studies leading to a Finnish *Magisterexamen* (160 sv) are 4 years. This sometimes causes protests from the applicant saying that the programme leading to the award of a Finnish *Magisterexamen* is 5 years.

Norway:

There have been no problems in comparing the new bachelor degrees, professionally oriented, with corresponding Swedish professional degrees.

The 4 year cand.mag. degree has been compared with a Swedish *kandidatexamen* or *magisterexamen* depending on the depth of the major subject. The cand.philol. (6 years), not being part of the Ph.D. studies, has been compared with a Swedish *magisterexamen med ämnesdjup* and not with a *licentiatexamen* (being part of postgraduate training in Sweden). Here the differences in length and structure of higher education become evident.

Denmark:

A Danish bachelor degree is in most cases compared with a Swedish *kandidatexamen* or with a Swedish professional degree.

A cand.merc (5 years) or a cand.scient. has been compared with a Swedish *magisterexamen med ämnesdjup*. A cand.theol. (5 years) has been compared with a Swedish professional degree, *teologie kandidatexamen* (140/160 points). The differences in length are evident.

Recognition of Danish, shorter higher education qualifications, *Erhvervsakademiuddannelser*, is often difficult. Information concerning these programmes and how these qualifications are recognised by Danish universities has been difficult to find.

Considering differences in Recognition in the Nordic countries

There are differences in higher education systems in one or several components of the systems between the Nordic countries. But where do recognition problems arise?

Some differences seem to be shared by all the Nordic countries:

- Older degrees are generally difficult to assess when it comes to the transfer of credits into new degrees
- Postsecondary education is difficult to assess when it comes to the transfer of credits into new degrees
- Non-completed studies are difficult to assess when it comes to transfer of credits. The recognition and therefore accumulation of credits is not possible in all of our countries.

It seems to be common knowledge that problems arise when the length and/or depth of the programme differ between countries. This is especially noticeable on the second degree/master degree level. The second degrees of Finland and Sweden are not recognized as being on par with the Danish and Norwegian second degree because of system differences. This may lead to difficulties concerning admission to doctoral studies. Assessments in connection with admission to doctoral studies are done “case by case”.

All these aspects: Length of programmes, binary/unitary system, difference in qualifications and to some extent differences in contents of the programmes are components that must be evaluated in order to develop and deepen the debate on recognition in the Nordic countries. The question however is not to state these differences and to describe them. The question is how they should be treated. Are the differences *considerable* or can they be regarded as *minor differences*, possible to cope with and accept? And under what conditions could we advance the considerable differences towards minor ones and recognition towards acceptance?

Conclusions

- a) This report concludes that although there are national differences when it comes to the Enic/Naric-tasks, this does not create large recognition problems. Neither does the way the work is organised in the offices. Core activities are shared and support is a natural mode of work.

The reform movement in Higher Education in Europe influences the Nordic region towards higher degrees of transparency. Recognition work is gaining from these processes: degrees, qualifications and other aspects of European (and Nordic) Higher Education is evolving towards more readable and understandable forms.

At the same time we see that recognition problems are not completely vanishing from the scene. There will still be a demand for knowledge, competence and skill in the process of evaluation and recognition of foreign higher education, as well as solid knowledge of Nordic systems of Higher Education. It is even possible to conclude that the need for precise and valid information will grow.

- b) There are of course aspects of recognition still left to analyze. This report views the situation from the recognition offices point of view. We have very limited knowledge about individual (client) concern and how recognition of higher education affects the national and regional labour markets. The report from P. Maassen is discussing the problem of attracting the best both Nordic and international students to the region and it is an open question if the system differences and differences in recognition practices in the region are prohibiting mobility for applicants to the labour market and to higher studies. Information on Nordic systems for higher education is not updated and available to meet growing demands. Similar imperfections also exist in the system of recognition in our region. Transparent principles, valid information and swift management especially in admission to higher education and recognition will in any case be of great importance and an advantage in the competition for the employees and students in the future.

If the Nordic region has the ambition to appear as an interesting Higher education Area to the outside world, and if enhancing the attractiveness of the region is the aim and goal for change, there is certainly a space for improvement in educational systems and practice as well as in modes and methods for recognition.

Proposed actions

1) What the E/N offices can do themselves:

- a) Distribute knowledge and information to each other's offices about the "differences" (both between systems and in office activities) and to all relevant authorities, by creating a Nordic web site with info on recognition in the Nordic region.
- b) Create a more homogenous process of recognition procedures that are even more detailed (common methodology) by arranging workshops on methodology for our offices.
- c) Try to create a common understanding of the content of "substantial differences" mentioned in the Lisbon convention
- d) to further investigate into how we in our respective countries recognize not only each others Nordic qualifications, but also to take a closer look at how we recognize other foreign qualifications – and if we are reaching the same conclusions in respect to access to labour market, further studies and amount of HE- credits given to individual applicants.

i.e. intensify cooperation, knowledge/experience-sharing and trust

2) 2) What support may policymakers add to the process

- a) Support the improvement of knowledge and insight in European recognition matters
- b) b) Support the further implementation of Lisbon Convention and the E/N-charter
- c) Recognition problems should be considered whenever national educational systems are reformed.

i.e. communicate the needs of the recognition services more distinctly to ministries, politicians and to the institutions.

3) Strategic contacts

Establish/develop/deepen relations with relevant stake-holders and offices nationally and internationally, for instance NUAS for the purpose of reaching out to the HEI's in our region, with ENQA for the purpose sharing information on quality and accreditation issues and with HEI's nationally.

i.e. expanding the scope of recognition by putting it in a broader socio-organisational context.

appendix 1

Bedömning av kompetens i olika nordiska länder

Marketta Saarinen, Finlands Enic/Naric-kontor

Erkännande av examina eller bedömning av yrkeskompetens är inte ett entydigt begrepp. Motiven för att begära ett erkännande, sättet att påvisa kompetens och vilken instans som bedömer och erkänner en persons kompetens varierar enligt individ och land.

I det följande kommer jag i huvudsak att beskriva förfarandet för bedömning av yrkeskompetens i olika nordiska länder, samtidigt som jag i grova drag redogör för bedömningen av examina som avlagts utomlands av en person som önskar fortsätta sina studier i ett nordiskt land.

I de nordiska länderna kan kompetens påvisas genom ett diplom från en högskola, ett utbildningsbevis, yrkesbevis eller motsvarande, genom validering eller med en provanställning. Instansen som erkänner utländska kvalifikationer är oftast en myndighet eller en arbetsgivare.

Akademiskt erkännande av examina

Först kort om principerna för rätt till fortsatta studier:

Allmän praxis i de nordiska länderna är att det egentliga beslutet om att anta studerande och om tillgodoräknande av tidigare studier görs i den läroanstalt eller högskola vid vilken personen i fråga ansöker om studierätt.

Bestämmelserna om högskolebehörighet och ansökan om studierätt varierar i olika nordiska länder. Alla länder förutsätter treåriga gymnasiestudier efter den grundläggande utbildningen. I Finland och i Sverige ger den yrkesutbildningen på gymnasial nivå allmän högskolebehörighet och i övriga länder finns olika möjligheter till komplettering för att uppnå denna behörighet.

x) termen grundläggande är riskfylld att använda i tla om det svenska systemet bättre med gymnasial eller sekundär nivå

Olika nordiska länder har delvis olika praxis då det gäller att värdera den utomlands fullgjorda grundutbildningens tillräcklighet. I Sverige görs värderingarna av högskolan själv eller av Verket för Högskoleservice (VHS) på uppdrag av högskolan, I Danmark och Norge görs värderingarna av vissa myndigheter. Invandrare skall påvisa studier som motsvarar inträdeskraven. I Finland har ansökningsbehörigheten på allmän nivå fastställts i lagstiftningen så att i princip alla med högskolebehörighet i utgångslandet är ansökningsbehöriga. Detta innebär att de kan delta i högskolornas urvalsprocess och inträdesförhör.

Universiteten beslutar på motsvarande sätt om möjligheten för personer med lägre högskoleexamen att fortsätta med högre examen och för personer med högre examen att fortsätta med doktorsstudier. De nationella NARIC-kontoren (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) värderar på begäran av universitet och högskolor de sökandes studier som avlagts utomlands.

Bedömning av yrkeskompetens

Vissa yrken är reglerade i lag eller förordning. Det innebär att det för utövande av yrket krävs någon form av auktorisering, legitimation eller motsvarande, utfärdad av en ansvarig myndighet. Oftast är auktoriseringen eller legitimationen förknippad med krav på en viss utbildning. Hur många och vilka yrken som är reglerade varierar i olika länder. I de nordiska länderna är förhållandevis få yrken reglerade i lag eller förordning. Island är ett undantag. Där finns ett relativt stort antal reglerade yrken, särskilt inom industri och hantverk.

Inom oreglerade yrken är det oftast arbetsgivaren som erkänner kompetens i och med anställningsförfarandet. Om ett yrke inte är reglerat, behöver en utländsk arbetssökande inte få sina kvalifikationer formellt erkända av en myndighet utan den enskilde arbetsgivaren får bedöma kompetensen hos den sökande. Situationen är likartad i hela Norden. Arbetsgivaren bedömer om personen ifråga har den kompetens som efterfrågas. Bedömningen sker vanligen med intervjuer och dokument som visar den sökandes utbildning och arbetslivserfarenhet.

Trots att det inom oreglerade yrken går att få arbete utan erkännande av examina, kan en person som fått sin utbildning utomlands i praktiken ha problem att få arbete. Ett hinder för anställningen kan vara att arbetsgivaren inte känner till den arbetssökandes utländska utbildning. För att underlätta inträdet i arbetslivet erbjuder de flesta länder möjlighet att få sina kvalifikationer värderade hos en myndighet. Det gäller emellertid att komma ihåg att en värdering inte som sådan garanterar ett arbete eller att en person med examen som avlagts utomlands får samma lön som en arbetstagare med en inhemsk examen på motsvarande nivå.

I några länder har nationella branschorganisationer och centrala kollektivavtalsparter inom ett antal yrken infört någon form av certifiering. Inom vissa branscher finns därtill krav på olika typer av certifiering med anledning av försäkringsförhållanden eller som kvalitetssäkring. Dessa typer av certifiering regleras inte i lag, men en arbetstagares möjlighet att ta emot vissa arbetsuppgifter kan påverkas.

I många fall finns lönereglerande kollektivavtal mellan parterna. De kan vara kopplade till krav på vissa utbildningsbevis, yrkesbevis och viss yrkeserfarenhet. Begreppet yrkesbevis är komplicerat. Ett yrkesbevis kan dels vara ett dokument

som utfärdats av en myndighet och som visar behörighet för ett reglerat yrke, dels kan det vara namnet på det dokument som utfärdas av branschorganisationer. Dokumenten har olika namn och en särskild betydelse i olika länder och invandrare kan knappast ha ett sådant dokument.

Det egna landets examensstruktur som jämförelsegrund

Examina som avlagts utomlands jämförs med ett lands egna examina. I Norden varierar examina till innehåll och omfattning, varför en jämförelse också i viss mån ger olika resultat. I de nordiska ländernas utbildning på högskolenivå finns skillnader både beträffande längd och karaktär. Till exempel i Sverige ges all högre utbildning inom en enhetlig högskolestruktur bestående av universitet och högskolor. Yrkeshögskolor utanför universitetsväsendet saknas.

Gymnasial yrkesutbildning är numera oftast minst treårig, ibland fyraårig. Lärlingsutbildningen har knutits till eller i några fall integrerats i ungdomsutbildningen. Specialiseringen kommer sent i utbildningen.

De danska, isländska och norska ungdomarna kan avsluta sin yrkesutbildning med *gesäll-, svende-*, respektive *fagprov*. Godkända prov leder till *gesäll-, svende-*, respektive *fagbrev*. För ett mer begränsat antal yrken finns denna möjlighet i Sverige och då krävs i allmänhet praktisk yrkeserfarenhet efter avslutad utbildning. I Finland använder man inte gesällbrev.

I Finland har erkännandet av tidigare kunskaper organiserats så, att man kan påvisa sin kompetens genom fristående examina. Vid behov ordnas utbildning som förbereder för examen. I yrkesproven utförs autentiska arbetsuppgifter, och språkfärdighet i finska eller svenska krävs endast enligt vad uppgiften kräver. Yrkesprovet skall ordnas så att en invandrars eventuella språkliga brister i finska eller svenska inte som sådana påverkar provresultatet.

Det viktiga ur invandrarsynvinkel är huruvida det finns sätt att ge personer med yrkesutbildning som skaffats utomlands ett dokument som kunde ge dem de förmåner som tillkommer en yrkesskicklig arbetstagare. Som ovan framgått finns det många slags behövliga bevis.

Europeiska unionen ger regelbundet direktiv som gäller vissa nya yrken. Ofta fyller en person med intyg över examen som avlagts utomlands inte dessa krav utan tilläggsutbildning eller tilläggsexamen.

Nedan beskrivs i korthet förfarandet vid bedömning av kompetens i olika nordiska länder:

/-----/

Sverige

Erkännande inom reglerade och oreglerade yrken

Sverige har av tradition relativt få reglerade yrken. De reglerade yrkena återfinns främst inom hälso- och sjukvårdsområdet, inom sjöfart och flyg samt läraryrket. Reglerade yrken bedöms av den behöriga myndigheten. För de flesta av dessa yrken krävs högskoleutbildning i Sverige, men det finns även reglerade yrken som flygtekniker, trafiklärare och skorstensfejarmästare där utbildningen är på lägre nivå. Beslut om erkännande fattas av ansvarig myndighet, dvs. Luftfartsverket, Vägverket respektive Räddningsverket i de ovan nämnda fallen.

Inom vissa branscher finns yrkesbevis eller andra typer av certifikat. Certifikaten beviljas av en branschorganisation eller ett partssammansatt yrkesråd. För att ett yrkesbevis skall utfärdas krävs oftast en viss yrkesutbildning och/eller viss yrkeserfarenhet. Beviset påvisar kompetens men är inget generellt villkor för anställning. Inom vissa branscher finns avtal som reglerar hur yrkesbevisen påverkar lönesättningen.

I avsaknad av formella krav på alla yrkesutövare finns det i stället inom många områden branschorganisationer med gemensamma regler för hur arbeten skall utföras och hur reklamationer skall behandlas. Detta för att garantera kunden kvalitet.

För anställning som yrkesutövare eller etablering som företagare inom oreglerade yrken krävs inget formellt godkännande av tidigare utbildning. Det är arbetsgivaren som bedömer den sökandes kompetens vid anställningen.

För att underlätta denna process har försöksverksamhet med validering pågått inom vissa yrkesområden de senaste åren. Regeringen stödjer fortsatt utveckling av metoder för validering. Regeringen har inrättat en Valideringsdelegation som till och med år 2007 skall arbeta med att utveckla möjligheter till validering, bl.a. genom att främja regionalt samarbete, legitimitet och nationell likvärdighet samt bedriva och stödja utvecklingsarbete.

Gymnasial utbildning

Personer med kunskaper som svarar mot målen i gällande kursplaner i gymnasieskolan kan få dessa verifierade och betygsatta genom prövning. Man kontaktar närmaste gymnasieskola eller vuxenutbildning och anmäler vilken kurs man vill ha betyg i varvid skolan ordnar ett eller flera provtillfällen. Rektor har även rätt att bedöma om utländska utbildningsdokument kan anses motsvara innehållet och målen i svenska gymnasiekurser och kan då ge betyget Godkänd utan att eleven genomgår prövning. För övriga utbildningar finns ingen bedömande eller godkännande myndighet.

Högskoleutbildning

Den som har en utländsk högskole- eller gymnasieutbildning och vill studera i Sverige ansöker direkt om en studieplats vid universitet eller högskola. Verket för högskoleservice (VHS), som arbetar på uppdrag av högskolan, gör förhandsbedömningar av utländska utbildningar på gymnasie- och universitetsnivå för behörighet till svensk högskoleutbildning. Bedömningarna ger information om grundläggande och särskild behörighet.

Den som har en avslutad utländsk högskoleutbildning, kan få den bedömd av Högskoleverket. Man kan få ett utlåtande som man kan använda när man söker arbete. Utlåtandet anger kortfattat vilken svensk examen den utländska examen motsvarar. Endast erkända högskoleutbildningar som avslutas med examen bedöms. Jämförelsen uttrycks i termer av svensk examen, men detta innebär inte att en svensk examen utfärdas. Arbetsgivare som har svårt att bedöma utländsk utbildning kan få hjälp med bedömningen.

Högskoleverket bedömer inte utbildningar som leder till yrken som är reglerade i Sverige, med undantag av lärarutbildningen där Högskoleverket är den behöriga myndigheten.

Second/Masters Degree Structures in the Nordic Countries

Peter Maassen, *Hedda*/PFI, University of Oslo

Therese Marie Uppstrøm, *Hedda*/PFI, University of Oslo

1.0 Introduction

In this report the main findings of a study into the developments of second degree programmes in Nordic higher education are presented. Of special interest to NOKUT, who assigned the project to the Faculty of Education, University of Oslo, was to get more insight into the differences between 'second degrees/master degrees' structures in Nordic higher education. It is expected that the three most important differences are identified, with, if possible, a description of the consequences of these differences.

Given the transition period higher education in Europe is in at the moment also in the Nordic countries the degree structures in higher education are undergoing far-reaching reforms. Because of that a straightforward focus in the study on the main current differences would produce results that are outdated already in a very short period. Therefore we have chosen to first present the second degree structures of the five Nordic higher education systems, including some background information and the main developments/changes in the system, before presenting some of the main current differences. We have ended the report with a discussion of some of the consequences of the differences.

The report starts with presenting some background information on the main recent developments with respect to the Europeanization of higher education. Taking this as a frame of reference next five short country cases are presented in which some background information on the national systems is given, as well as a short analysis of the major changes in the national systems and the nature of the second degree structures. Based on this information we will give an overview of some of the main differences and discuss their consequences.

2.0 Background

Governmental steering of higher education in Europe has undergone remarkable changes over the last 10 to 15 years. To begin with the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) marked in many respects the end of the ambitions of the European Commission to develop a European-level higher education policy. In the Treaty (Article 149, 150) it is indicated that education (incl. higher education) is a national responsibility. This implies that the European Commission can only undertake actions with respect to higher education that are subsidiary to the national activities and policies of the individual Member States of the EU. At that time the diversity of higher education in Europe was seen as a great good and the EC was allowed to stimulate cross-boundary cooperation, not harmonization.

The current situation in European higher education clearly reflects a different political agenda, i.e. one of creating an open European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This is the consequence of agreements between national governments, within and outside the EU structures. The names of the cities where the agreements were reached, Bologna and Lisbon, have been identified with the ambitious intentions as regards the Europeanisation of higher education. 'Bologna' (and the subsequent meetings in Prague and Berlin, as well as the coming meeting in Bergen) stands for the voluntary agreement between European nation states to take away the structural barriers for

the creation of an open European higher education area. 'Lisbon' represents the EU's strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion with far-reaching effects in many areas, including higher education. In addition, also the recent enlargement of the EU affects in many ways the policy discussions about cross-border cooperation in higher education in Europe.

It goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the EU enlargement, the Bologna and Lisbon agreements and the resulting implementation agendas in detail. However, the effects of especially the agreements are clearly visible. To put it simply Bologna has led to a harmonization of national higher education structures and Lisbon is beginning to have a harmonizing effect on national policies.

The year 2010 features prominently in the Bologna as well as in the Lisbon Process. The first aims at having established by 2010 an open European Area of Higher Education (EHEA), the second aims at turning Europe into the most competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010. As indicated both processes have a harmonizing effect on higher education in Europe, incl. the Nordic region. For example, the introduction of a Bachelor/Masters degree structure in all 40 countries that have signed the Bologna Declaration, implies a harmonization that in principle makes it easier for students to move freely through all involved higher education systems. This is also the case in the Nordic countries, where traditionally the graduate degree structures in higher education have been rather varied.

The Nordic countries are in an interesting position as a region since they include three EU members and two EFTA members. In addition, a core element in their higher education cooperation structures (the *Nordplus* programme) was introduced in the 1980s and it forms the only major programme in Europe besides ERASMUS/Socrates that stimulates and finances the cross-boundary mobility of students and staff. Despite the support programme for student mobility, and despite the joint history and cooperation philosophy, the internal inter-country student (and staff) mobility in the Nordic region is relatively low. The question to ask in this is whether there are structural reasons for that, or other, i.e. more cultural reasons.

Assuming for a moment that structural differences/issues play a role, it makes sense to analyze the development at the Masters Degree level in the Nordic countries as part of the Lisbon and especially Bologna processes.

3.0 Denmark

3.1 Background

Danish higher education is structured as a binary system consisting of a university and college sector. The university sector includes 12 universities, 5 of which are multi-faculty universities. The other 7 are specialized institutions in various fields, such as engineering, education, pharmacy or business studies. The last two universities were established as such in 1999 (IT University of Copenhagen) and 2000 (The Danish University of Education). In addition to these 12 universities, there are a number of specialist university-level institutions in architecture, art, music, etc. All university study programmes are research-based, and degrees are awarded at undergraduate and postgraduate level including doctoral degrees.

The college sector consists of two types of institutions, i.e. 53 short and 36 medium-cycle institutions. Increasingly, colleges are merging into larger and more diverse units. The institutions that have specialized in short cycle higher education are merging to Business Colleges (in Danish: *Erhvervsakademier*) and institutions that have specialized in medium cycle education have formed a number of Centres for Higher Education (Danish acronym:

CVU). The medium-cycle programmes are offered 23 CVU's and 13 individual institutions that at 1 January 2004 were not part of a CVU. Currently a discussion is going on whether CVU's should be allowed to call themselves 'University College'.

All colleges are organised under the Ministry of Education, whilst the universities are organised under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The latter Ministry was established in 2001 as an extension of the Ministry of Information, Technology and Research. One aim of this development was to establish closer ties in research and innovation between universities and research institutions and the business and industry sector and the society at large.

In Denmark research is only conducted at universities, not at the colleges. It is therefore mandatory for the CVU's in all their research-affiliated programmes to cooperate with the university sector.

The Danish universities are funded on the basis of the so-called taximeter model. This model has received a lot of attention outside Denmark. Its basis is that each university receives a fixed amount of funding for each student who earns the amount of credit points that represent one year of study. Recently the Danish government has decided that the universities will not receive 'taximeter' funding anymore for non-EU students, with the exception of those students coming from countries with which Denmark has a special agreement, e.g. the non-EU Nordic countries. For all other non-EU students the universities are expected to charge tuition fees.

3.2 *Main changes*

In 1993 an agreement was reached between the main stakeholders on a new university degree structure. As a consequence of this agreement the bachelor degree was introduced in the universities as a part of a 3+2+3 structure. This structure was made statutory in July 2003 when a new university law came into power in Denmark. As is indicated on the formal Danish Bologna website, one of the consequences of this development is that "The previous indication of the size of education units, i.e. "student man-years" has been replaced by an indication of credits according to the ECTS System. As of 1 September 2001 it is obligatory to indicate the size of [university] education units in ECTS credits"⁴. This implies that 1 September 2001 it became mandatory to indicate the size of an educational unit in ECTS credits; 60 ECTS credit points equal 12 months of full-time studies. Remarkable is that in practice most universities have experience with using the ECTS system from way before 1 September 2001.

Through the new University Law the reform of the university degree structure is more or less complete. What is remaining is the further development of more flexible study and exam forms.

In a recent study published by Eurydice it was indicated that Denmark together with Norway and Italy is one of three countries where at the beginning of 2004 the implementation of the Bologna goals had gone farthest, in the sense that Denmark has replaced its traditional degree structure with the Bachelor/Masters degree structure, it has introduced the ECTS credit point system, and it has introduced the use of the diploma supplement⁵.

3.3 *Second degree structure*

The second degree offered in Danish higher education is called a *kandidat* degree. *Kandidat* programmes are research based and may thus only be offered by institutions involved in research, i.e. the universities. The *kandidat* degree is in general a two year, 120 ECTS degree, awarded on top of a three year, 180 ECTS, bachelor degree. It is a graduate programme that is equivalent to a

⁴ See: http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/Implementatation_of_the_Bologna_Goals_in_Denmark.pdf; page 3.

⁵ See: www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE/en/FrameSet.htm

Masters Course. The average study period to complete a *kandidat* degree, i.e. the full 300 ECTS credits study, is seven years.

Kandidat degrees are offered within all main areas, e.g. law, engineering, economics, pharmacy, medicine, theology, etc. In the humanities and natural sciences a *kandidat* degree often consists of two subjects, one major and one minor.

With the introduction of the ECTS credit system, the *kandidat*/Master degree represents 120 ECTS credits. Access is allowed on the basis of a Bachelor degree (180 ECTS credits).

In addition to the second degree programmes offered in the universities there are a number of further education programmes that have to be mentioned here. These programmes are part of the Danish further adult education structure (*Videregående voksenuddannelse*). This further adult education structure consists of three levels that are compatible with three levels in the regular education system, i.e. first the VVU (*Videregående voksenuddannelse*), at the same level as the short-cycle higher education programmes; second the so-called diploma programmes (*diplomuddannelse*), at the same level as the medium-cycle higher education programmes (bachelor degree level); and third the master degree programmes, at the same level as the university *kandidatuddannelse* programmes. The one-year diploma programmes are in principle offered by CVU's. Access is open to students with a short-cycle higher education diploma or a regular VVU diploma, as well as to students who in other ways fulfil the access requirements⁶. In addition all students are required to have at least two years work experience after having finished the education programme that gave access to the diploma programmes. The master programmes are also, in general, one-year programmes (in exceptional cases the programme can last up till 1.5 year). They can only be offered by the universities. Access is open to students who have a traditional or a new medium-cycle diploma/degree, a regular bachelor degree or a further education diploma. Also here an additional condition is that students need to have at least two years work experience after having finished the educational programme that gave access to the master programme.

4.0 Finland

4.1 Background

Also the higher education system in Finland is organised as a binary system consisting of 20 universities, ten of which are multi disciplinary, and 29 polytechnics (in Finnish: *ammattikorkealoulu*, abbreviated as AMK institutions).

The two sectors have a different ownership structure. While all universities are public institutions owned by the state, the polytechnics are either public institutions owned by one or more municipalities, or private institutions owned by a foundation. Also the funding systems are different. While in the university funding system the output of the institutions, i.e. the number of graduates, is the main basis for the government allocation, in the polytechnic sector funding comes partly from the municipalities, partly from the Ministry of Education. The latter is linked to agreed-upon number of student places for each polytechnic.

The Finnish higher education system has the highest participation rate in Europe, i.e. more than 60%. Other relevant elements in the Finnish higher education policy are the importance of the regional dimension, including the regional R&D structures, and the large policy attention for adult education.

⁶ See: us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse_dk/vejlederpejce.pdf; pages 17/18.

4.2 *Main changes*

To increase the completion rate and decrease the number of dropouts, as well as to increase national and international mobility, the Finnish government wishes to introduce in 2005 a true two-cycle system, with a self-standing three-year Bachelor degree structure, and a two-year Master degree structure. By introducing a true two-cycle system it is expected that the value of the Finnish university first degree on the labour market will increase. Some professional degrees, such as veterinary science, medicine and dentistry will continue as six-year degrees. This change will be based on a new University degree Decree that will also regulate the transition from polytechnic bachelor degree holders to university master programmes.

This new degree structure will be introduced as part of a larger higher education reform in 2005. At the same time, a new national credit point system will be introduced based on the ECTS system. The two-tier structure will be introduced both as an answer to the Bologna process, to strengthen the position of Finnish universities in the 'European Higher Education Area' as well as to answer to national needs. A corresponding reform of the polytechnic degrees is likely to follow the same schedule. The latter reform refers in the first place to the second degree structure.

4.3 *Second degree structure*

At the first degree-level the universities offer three year *kandidaatti*/kandidat degrees, and at the second degree level five year *maisteri*/magister degrees, i.e. two years on top of the *kandidaattii* degree. This degree structure was introduced in the 1990s. The *kandidaattii* degree exam is, however, not yet compulsory for students who would like to take a *maisteri* degree. The students can continue straight on to the *maisteri* level without going through a second application procedure. Currently the *kandidaattii* degree has a low status on the labour market.

The polytechnic sector offers first degree programmes of three and a half to four years (140-180 Finnish credits, equivalent to 210-270 ECTS credits). A new professional second degree is currently under development. The Ministry and the other main stakeholders agreed upon a pilot period in which a number of polytechnics could experiment with a second degree programme in three relatively narrow fields, business administration, social work and health care, and engineering and traffic communications. The pilot started in 2002 and is currently subject of an external evaluation (see point 3.2). On the basis of this evaluation decisions will be made with respect to the name of the second degree title, the number of fields/areas in which the polytechnics can offer a second degree programme, the funding of the second degree programme. These polytechnic second degrees are aimed at students who have at least three years of work experience after earning their first degree. Between 40-60 Finnish credits are awarded.

In the Finnish credit system one credit stands for 40 hours of studies, implying that 1600 hours of study (generally regarded as a full year of study) equals 40 credits. The *maisteri* degree is equal to 160 credits in most areas, and 180 credits in technology/engineering, medicine and law.

One specific characteristic of the Finnish system is the high level of autonomy of especially the universities in academic matters. This leads to some extent to a lack of clarity with respect to the formal length of degree programmes. Formally it is stipulated nowhere that 40 Finnish credits equal one year of university studies, nor is there a formal 'conversion rate' for translating Finnish credits into ECTS credits. In practice this, for example, has led to a situation in which the universities themselves decide on which conditions, i.e. on the basis of how much extra study hours, they will accept polytechnic bachelor degree holders in their master programmes. In addition, this has also caused some variation between universities when it comes to the current

translation of Finnish credit points into ECTS points: some institutions indicate in their diploma supplement that 1 Finnish credit point equals 1.5 ECTS credit points, while others indicate that 1 Finnish credit point equals two ECTS credit points. While there are indications, amongst other things, coming from the Ministry of Education, that in the new national credit system based on ECTS to be introduced in 2005, 1 current Finnish credit will equal 1.5 ECTS credits, no formal decision in this has been made yet.

Currently *maisteri* degree programmes are identified with a number of study years, and equal a certain number of Finnish credit points. The 160 (Finnish) credits *maisteri* programmes are regarded to be a 5-year qualification, while the 180 credits *maisteri* programmes in technology are seen as equaling 5.5 years of study. In practice, however, the 'ideal' *maisteri* curriculum has been constructed in such a way that a student can obtain 40 credits in a year which means that a 160 credits *maisteri* degree programme can be finished in four years, and a 180 credits one in 4.5 years, and many students actually manage to do so. On the other hand, the average study time for the 160 credits *maisteri* degree is more than six years and for the 180 credits degree in the field of technology close to seven years.

The ECTS system is currently used by Finnish stakeholders in international student mobility schemes. This has revealed the challenges of the current credit system in international competition, in the sense that outside Finland the 160 credits Master-level degree courses in universities are usually seen as equivalent to a 240 ECTS credits course, implying that they are regarded as 4-year programmes, instead of as 5-year programmes.

As indicated, Finland is in a transition period. The Bologna goals will only be fully implemented in 2005. A number of issues concerning the new second degree structure depend on the outcomes of current policy debates, evaluations, committee work, and law proposals. As part of the transition the universities are in a process of adapting the structure of their degree programmes, and the expected outcome is that there will be more uniformity and transparency with respect to the length of Finnish university second degree programmes from 2005 on.

5.0 Iceland

5.1 Background

The Icelandic higher education is a unique system in a small country. It has one dominant university, the University of Iceland (more than 7,000 students in a country with less than 300,000 inhabitants), that is still in development towards a full research university. However, given its size Iceland does not want to offer a full range of second and third degree programme in the country. Also in the future a considerable part of the Icelandic postgraduate students is expected to study abroad.

5.2 Main changes

Icelandic higher education has developed rather rapidly over the last 10 to 15 years. First more graduate level degree programmes have been developed in Icelandic institutions implying that more Icelandic students study in their own country. The percentage of Icelandic students studying abroad has dropped from more than 35% in the 1980s to less than 25% now. Second the college sector has been reformed, amongst other things, through mergers. Third, a number of private, tuition fee charging institutions has been established leading to forms of competition that the country has never experienced before.

5.3 *Second degree structure*

Separate second degree programmes (*Meistaraprof*/Master) have already been introduced at the University of Iceland in 1923. While because of that there is a feeling that Iceland already had a 'Bologna-like' degree structure in its universities, still a number of adaptations is necessary because of the unique nature of the Icelandic higher education system.

The degree system in Iceland is generally based on a two-cycle system. Access to the second cycle, the master level, requires a successful completion of the first cycle. There is, however, not one unitary system in place. In most fields the University of Iceland offers 90-120 ECTS credits Master programmes, building on a 180-240 ECTS credits Bachelor degree. Only in medicine, pharmacy, midwifery, psychology, and dentistry long integrated Master programmes (*Candidatus/Kandidatsprof*) of 300-360 ECTS credits are offered. In law and theology both separate Master programmes and long *Candidatus* programmes are offered, but this is replaced in Law by a 3+2 structure. Also at the other universities second degree courses are offered. The Iceland University of Education, for example, offers professional second degree programmes in Education leading to a Diploma in Education (30-60 ECTS credits) or an M.Ed. degree (120 ECTS credits).

The ECTS system is still not compulsory in Iceland, but exists parallel to the national system for student exchange purposes. 30 Icelandic credits correspond to one year of full time studies. Therefore, as a general rule 30 Icelandic credits correspond to 60 ECTS. A second cycle, or master degree normally corresponds to 120 ECTS on top of a first cycle, bachelor degree.

Iceland is the smallest of the Nordic countries with only just over 11 000 students. The national system does not have the capacity to offer master degrees within all fields and disciplines, and the government faces a challenge in evaluating within which fields they should have national master degrees, and within which fields students should go abroad to gain their degree. About 24% of Icelandic students study abroad, many of them at the second degree level.

6.0 Norway

6.1 *Background*

The Norwegian higher education system is a binary system, consisting on the one hand of four multi-faculty universities, six specialised university institutions and two national institutes of the arts, and on the other of 26 state university colleges⁷. Second degree programmes are offered in all institutions in the university sector and in a number of the state university colleges. Norway is currently implementing a comprehensive higher education reform, called the Quality Reform. In this Reform internationalisation of higher education plays an important role. Consequently, also the traditional degree structure has been altered and replaced by a Bachelor/Master degree structure.

Another relevant aspect of the Norwegian higher education system is that a number of the state university colleges aim at becoming a university. Finally, Norway has one of the largest private higher institutions in the EU/EFTA area (BI) that offers various graduate programmes, including Master degree programmes.

⁷ The official English translations of the Norwegian terms for the various institutions can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education and Research (odin.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/education/higher/014081-990081/dok-bn.html)

6.2 *Main Changes*

The Norwegian binary system is on the move since a number of state university colleges aims at becoming a university implying that they will offer graduate programmes in a number of areas.

In a recent study published by Eurydice it was indicated that Norway together with Denmark and Italy is the country where at the beginning of 2004 the implementation of the Bologna goals had gone farthest, in the sense that Norway has replaced its traditional degree structure with the Bachelor/Masters degree structure, it has introduced the ECTS credit point system, and it has introduced the use of the diploma supplement.

(www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE/en/FrameSet.htm)

Finally, in the framework of the Quality Reform a national quality agency, NOKUT, was established.

6.3 *Second degree structure*

Previously the Norwegian first degree was awarded on the basis of a four-year programme, *candidata/candidatus magisterii*, and the second degree programme was a 1.5 – 2 year programme leading up to a cand.philol. (humanities), cand.scient. (natural sciences), cand.polit. (social sciences), or cand.san. (paramedical/health education) degree. The average time it took to complete a graduate degree exceeded 8.5 years, resulting in on average rather old graduates and high costs for society. This, together with international developments was one of the main arguments behind the reform of the degree structure.

With the reform from 2001 the former credit system where 20 Norwegian credits equalled one year of full-time studies was replaced by the ECTS system. Under the current system the average Master degree equals 1.5-2 years of full time studies and stands for 90 or 120 ECTS credits. Some (professional) one year Master programmes are allowed, but the preferred system is the 3+2+3 system. Most institutions implemented this structure in the academic year 2002/2003. All were required to do so as of the academic year 2003/ 2004. Some disciplines are exempt from this structure, such as medicine, theology, psychology and veterinary science. A Ph.D programme builds on a master degree and has a duration of three years. There are individual application procedures between each of the three levels.

A master degree should either be professional or discipline based. The programme should include an individual piece of research leading to a Master thesis, of at least 30 ECTS, not exceeding 60 ECTS.

The government encourages the development of English language Master degree programmes as part of the further internationalisation of higher education in Norway. This is intended to increase the number of international Master students studying in Norway and the international qualifications of Norwegian students in Norway.

7.0 Sweden

7.1 *Background*

The Swedish higher education system consists of 13 public universities and 23 public university colleges, as well as 10 independent course providers who are entitled to award higher education degrees or diplomas.

The Swedish higher education degree system is rather unique in the Nordic context in the sense that it currently differs most from the other Nordic systems. It was introduced in 1993 and is

divided into general degree and professional degrees.

Sweden operates with a credit system where 40 points equals 1 year of full time studies; that is 60 ECTS. One credit is defined as one week of full time studies. The ECTS system is used in relation to foreign students, but is other than that not in frequent use in the system. The Government has stated that a wider use is desirable.

7.2 *Main changes*

The Swedish Ministry of Education has set up a so-called project group for reviewing the university degree structure. One of the main motivations behind the review is that the Swedish *Magisterexamen* is often considered to be an undergraduate degree abroad. In many countries the degree is considered to be a first instead of a second degree.

The group has proposed the following: the current system with two different *magisterexams* will be replaced by one degree: the Master exam. In addition the ECTS system will be introduced thereby replacing the current credit point system: one current credit will be equal to 1.5 ECTS credits. The group wants to keep the current one year master degree and introduce a second two-year master degree. The first because of its responsiveness to national labour market needs, the latter because of the need to be more internationally compatible. In the new system only bachelor degree holders have access to a Master study, which is different in comparison to the current system where a student can continue to a *magister* level without the *kandidatexamen*. The new degree system is to be introduced 1 July 2007.

7.3 *Second degree structure*

The current degree system in Sweden was implemented as part of a higher education reform in 1993. Currently Swedish higher education can award 4 general degrees and more than 50 professional degrees. The latter are organised according on the basis of a somewhat different structure and are varying in duration. Of the general degrees, the *magisterexamen* consists of at least 4 years of fulltime study, equalling 240 ECTS credit points. There are two alternatives with respect to this degree, one that builds on a three year *kandidatexamen* (bachelor degree), and one that is an individual four year degree. *Magisterexamen med ämnesdjup* (master degree with ‘depth’) is a four year degree equal to 160 Swedish credit points of which 80 in a major subject. Students are required to have completed an independent thesis of at least 20 credit points or two theses of at least 10 credit points each. *Magisterexamen med ämnesbredd* (master degree with ‘breadth’) builds on a higher education degree of at least 120 (Swedish) credit points. This is a slightly younger degree, introduced in 2001. It is a one year degree awarding 40 credit points and requires an independent thesis of at least 10 credit points. The degree was developed to accommodate those who had left the higher education sector with a three year higher education degree and who would like to continue their studies after a few years in the labour market. It was also developed to accommodate international students, or students with a degree from abroad.

The two postgraduate degrees awarded by Swedish universities are *Doktorsexamina* and *Licentiatexamen*. The higher education institution offering a postgraduate programme decides who is to be admitted. In order to be admitted an applying student must have at least 120 credit points from undergraduate programmes. In addition, he/she must fulfil the specific admission requirements laid down by the faculty board, the capacity to complete the programme successfully and have guaranteed financial support for the entire period of study. The difference between a university and a university college in this is that in general only universities

are entitled to award postgraduate degrees. However, university colleges entitled to conduct research in a particular discipline (*vetenskapsområde*) have the right to offer postgraduate programmes within their disciplinary area.

8.0 Differences

The above descriptions of the national higher education systems in the Nordic countries reveal some of the differences with respect to the second degree structures. However, given that all Nordic higher education systems are in a transition period as a consequence of especially international developments one has to be careful in drawing any conclusions with respect to what are the *main* differences. Denmark and Norway have already come a long way in implementing the Bologna goals and introducing new degree structures; Finland and Sweden are still discussing some of the details of the new degree structures to be implemented in 2005 and 2007 respectively; and Iceland has a unique higher education system, being a small country, with about 25% of its students studying abroad and one institution dominating the system. This implies that hardly any firm lasting conclusions can be drawn with respect to the differences between Nordic second degree structures, other than that these structures will become more similar in the coming years.

Taking this situation as a frame of reference, the following differences can be identified that apply to the situation at the moment.

1. Integration versus separation

This issue has to do with the way in which the second degree programmes are related to other parts of the higher education degree structure, especially the first degree structure. The options are:

- a) The first and second degree structures are integrated, implying that in practice students enrol in a first degree programme and do not have to take an entrance examination or fulfil other formal requirements for entering the second degree programme, but can continue more or less automatically. This is currently the case in the Master programmes in the Finnish universities, in some of the magister programmes in Swedish institutions, and in the Icelandic Master programmes (*Candidatus/Kandidatsprof*) in medicine, pharmacy, midwifery, psychology, theology and dentistry.
- b) The first and second degree structures are separated, implying that in practice students have to take an entrance examination or fulfil other requirements before they can enter the second degree programme. This is the case in the regular Master programmes in the Danish universities, the second degree programmes in the Finnish polytechnics, the Norwegian Master programmes, the Icelandic Master programmes (with the exception of the integrated *Candidatus/Kandidatsprof* programmes mentioned above), and some of the Swedish *magister* programmes.

2. Selection

This issue is closely related to the previous one. It concerns the formal requirements to enter second degree programmes. While many second degree programmes have a limited number of places and have to select students on the basis of capacity and other requirements, the issue here is whether in addition to these entrance conditions, second degree programmes formally have to

make a distinction in selecting students between university and non-university bachelor degree holders.

- a) In Finland the university Master programmes in practice only accept students with a university first/bachelor degree directly. With respect to students with a bachelor degree or equivalent from a non-university institution the university Master degree programmes all pose additional demands. At the moment the universities are totally autonomous in deciding upon the additional demands. A new university degree decree is in preparation implying that in the future the universities to a large extent keep their autonomy in this, but are expected to demand at most 1 year of extra study (equaling 60 ECTS credit points) to non-university bachelor degree holders. In the Finnish polytechnics the major requirements for students entering the second degree programmes is to have at least three years of work experience after the first degree.
Also in Iceland it is up to the universities themselves to decide upon the extra demands to pose on bachelor degree holders from another Icelandic institution.
- b) In Denmark in general a distinction is made between 'professional' and university bachelor degree holders when it comes to the entrance of regular university *kandidat* programmes. Students holding a professional bachelor degree will in general enter a one-year diploma programme. Professional bachelor degree holders may enter a regular two-year university *kandidat* programme after an entrance examination.
- c) In the other Nordic countries no distinction is made between bachelor degrees from universities and from non-university institutions. Both give in principal access to second degree programmes without additional demands.

3. Bologna system versus national system

This issue relates to the extent to which the Bologna aims have been implemented in the Nordic countries. In this three groups can be identified:

- a) Denmark and Norway have in practice implemented three main aims of the Bologna Agreement, i.e. in these two countries a Bachelor/Master degree structure (3+2) has been introduced replacing the traditional degree structure; both have formally introduced in 2001 the ECTS credit points system; and in both countries the Diploma supplement has been introduced.
- b) Iceland has introduced long ago in certain fields a Bachelor/Master degree structure. Therefore the impression existed in Iceland that it had already fulfilled some of the main Bologna requirements. However, in some fields a long, integrated Master programme continue to exist, while in some fields this integrated programme is offered parallel to a 3+2 structure. In addition, the ECTS system is used next to the Icelandic credit point system.
- c) Finland and Sweden are still in the process of deciding about the details concerning the implementation of the Bologna agreement. Finland aims at having a new degree structure, and the use of the ECTS system introduced in the course of 2005, while Sweden aims at 2007. 'Controversial' issues are, e.g., in Finland the nature and name of the polytechnic second degree, and in Sweden, the length and nature of the new second degrees: one and/or two years, national and/or internationally oriented.

4. Academic/general versus professional orientation of second degrees.

This issue concerns the extent to which in addition to a research oriented, academic second degree structure, a country also allows, if not stimulates, the offering of professionally, i.e. work-oriented Master/second degrees.

- a) In Denmark graduate degree programmes, including all two-year *kandidat* degree programmes, have to be research based. In addition, as part of the adult education system, a one-year, work-oriented Master programme is offered at the universities. Students need to have at least two years of work experience after having finished the education that gives access to these Master degree programmes. This one-year programme does not give access to doctoral degree programmes. At the moment only the universities offer second degree programmes at the Master level.
- b) In Finland the polytechnics have started to offer on an experimental basis second degree programmes that are work-oriented. Students need to have at least three years of work experience after their first degree, and the teaching programmes are organised around specific work-related projects. These programmes last 1 to 1.5 years (60 – 90 ECTS credits), and are organised in cooperation with working life. The first evaluations show that the students are on average over 35 and have extensive work experience. This implies that these programmes can to some extent be regarded as lifelong learning programmes leading to a second degree.
- c) In Sweden the higher education institutions offer general (= academic) and professional degrees. Compared to the Finnish polytechnic degree programmes the professional degree programmes in Sweden provide entrance to a profession, and not lifelong learning. The same goes for the Danish one-year Master degrees.
- d) In Norway and Iceland the emphasis is on the academic second degree, but these two countries also have professional second degrees, e.g. professional one year Masters Degree programmes at some the state university colleges in Norway, and an M.Ed. programme at the University of Education in Iceland.

5. The role of non-university system

This issue is closely related to the previous one. The question is whether non-university institutions are allowed to offer second degree programmes.

- a) In Denmark only the universities are allowed to offer second degrees. Any research-affiliated education offered by the colleges has to be offered in cooperation with a university.
- b) In Norway also the state university colleges are allowed to offer Master degrees.
- c) In Sweden both universities and university colleges can offer *magister* programmes.
- d) In Finland the second degree offered at the polytechnics is still in an experimental phase. Despite the fact that the first students have graduated, it is not clear yet what the formal name of their title is going to be. While the polytechnics promote the use of the name Master degree, the universities and some other stakeholders in Finnish higher education are against awarding this title to the polytechnic second degree.
- e) Given the nature of the Icelandic higher education system it is not possible to make a straightforward distinction between university and non-university institutions. To give an indication of the scale of the second degree structure in Icelandic higher education, in 2002 227 Master degrees were awarded, by far the most of them by the University of Iceland.

6. International dimension

This issue concerns the extent to which the national higher education policies address the nature of the international dimension in the higher education second degree programmes explicitly.

- a) In Norway the Ministry of Education and Research stimulates and promotes the development of English language Master programmes, and the offering of English language modules. This is part of the ongoing Quality Reform of Norwegian higher education in which internationalisation is formally regarded as one of the main instruments for strengthening the quality of Norwegian higher education. Also in Denmark the government stimulates the use of English as the language of instruction leading to a growing number of English one-year Master programmes and two year *kandidat* programmes. In Denmark this development is not part of a major reform and seem to be somewhat more economically driven than in Norway (see also point d below).
- b) In Finland the Ministry of Education introduced a goal of 30% of all regular Finnish degree students earning part of their credits abroad.
- c) In Iceland international mobility will always remain an important part of the national higher education policy. The country is too small to offer second (and third) degree programmes in all fields. This implies that especially second (and third) degree Icelandic students study abroad.
- d) In Denmark the decision of the involved Ministry to stop regular funding of the universities for non-EU students coming from countries with which Denmark has no special relationship has led in practice to the introduction of tuition fees for these students. What the effects of this decision are on the enrolment patterns of foreign students that have to pay tuition fees in Denmark in second degree courses is not clear yet.

9.0 Consequences, conclusions, recommendations

We want to finish this report by discussing a few consequences of the developments in the second degree structures in Nordic higher education and the differences between them. Included in this discussion we will also present some conclusions and recommendations. We will start with some general consequences after which we will discuss some of the more specific consequences of the differences discussed in section 8.

9.1 *General consequences.*

- Because of the Bologna process second degree structures become more similar throughout Europe. This will take away a number of structural barriers with respect to student mobility. As a consequence, student mobility will not only become easier within the Nordic region, but also between Nordic countries and the rest of Europe. Whether this will lead to an increase in intra-Nordic student mobility as well as student mobility between Nordic countries and other European countries remains to be seen.
- As a result of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration European higher education degree structures are becoming more similar. This can be expected to lead to a greater European-wide competition for especially ‘the best and the brightest’ among the regular second degree students. One of the developments already visible is that commercial organisations are trying to enter the ‘European Master Degree market’ by

acting as brokers for students who want to do their second degree studies in another European country. What the effects of this are going to be on the position of the Nordic second degrees in Europe is not clear yet. However, the Nordic governments and higher education institutions should be aware of the possibility that the Nordic second degree programmes might lose the competition with other European Master programmes for the most talented Nordic (and non-Nordic) students if no specific measures are taken.

- There will be a growing pressure on the national higher education systems in Europe to adapt to the “Bologna goals”. The consequence might be that national governments have to ‘give up’ specific national structures, not only for meeting international expectations, but also because of internal pressures. For national higher education institutions it is very important to be part of European teaching and research networks. The more ‘national’ a specific degree structure is, the more difficult it will be to find European partners. Since European funding forms already a very important factor in influencing research practices and cooperation structures, and is becoming an important factor in affecting teaching practices too (e.g. the Erasmus Mundus programme), national institutions will want to be acceptable and recognized in a European context. Any national barrier to this recognition will most likely become an issue in the national higher education policy arena. In this sense one can raise the question whether, for example, the Swedish 4 year Master degree can survive? Another question is what the realistic alternatives are to ‘Master Degree’ as the name for the title for the Finnish polytechnic second degree? In addition, once the Finnish polytechnics can award a Master degree, will the currently rather uniquely Finnish nature and structure of the second degree programmes survive, or will it be ‘harmonized’ in order to fit a developing, rather homogeneous European second degree structure?
- Finally, because of the Europeanization of higher education, quality assurance/assessment and accreditation mechanisms will become increasingly important at all relevant levels, i.e. from the European to the intra-institutional level. With growing student mobility the need for information on the quality of higher education throughout Europe will also increase. Major challenge in this is to produce transparent information on the quality of higher education from a number of perspectives, i.e. the national policy and funding needs, the needs of students who want to choose a high-quality programme, the of institutions and their faculties/departments who are looking for cooperation partners, the needs of employers who want to know what higher education programmes stand for, etc.

9.2 *Consequences of differences discussed in section 8:*

1. Integration versus separation & selection

One of the consequences of access demands at the level of second degree programmes is that students who are not meeting the demands at specific institutions might look for study possibilities elsewhere, either within their own country, or elsewhere. For example, some Finnish first degree polytechnic graduates who have to earn extra credit points on top of their bachelor degree before they are accepted in Finnish university Master programmes have started to enrol in foreign, e.g. Swedish, university Master programmes that do not pose additional demands. In addition, some Finnish first degree polytechnic

graduates who have to have at least three year work experience before being accepted by polytechnic second degree programmes prefer to enrol directly after graduation in a Finnish university Master programme even though this means that they have to study longer than the students who start with a university bachelor degree.

2. Bologna system versus national system

As discussed above, the consequence of emphasizing the Bologna agenda in national reforms might be a marginalisation or even abolishment of specific national structures. On the other hand, the consequence of emphasizing national demands and agendas is that some national programmes or institutions might be marginalized in European cooperation structures. The Finnish polytechnics are, for example, afraid that they will not be able to find European cooperation partners if they cannot offer Master degrees.

3. International dimension (including language)

The growing internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries has potentially important effects on the nature and quality of the national higher education structures. A potential outcome of the current Europeanization at the second degree level (amongst other things, stimulated by the Erasmus Mundus programme) is that a European top level of high quality, English language Master programmes will be developed attracting the most talented students and staff, top funding, and the interest of stakeholders, such as employers. These programmes will have 'branches' in all European countries, with the implication that the national language programmes run the danger of becoming 'second rate' programmes for the students who did not manage to get a place in the international, English language programmes.

Finally, with respect to the intentions to increase the attractiveness of Nordic second degree programmes for international students it is of importance that the information on the Nordic higher education systems that is made available electronically on Internet by national authorities and agencies is as updated as possible. Unfortunately, currently in a number of the Nordic countries the official information on the national higher education system available in English on Internet is outdated and includes therefore information that is not correct anymore. If information on Internet is supposed to play a role in attracting foreign students it can be recommended to align the updating of the English language websites with the national language websites.

Main sources

General:

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/en/aktuell/index.htm

www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE/en/FrameSet.htm

Denmark:

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Denmark_2.pdf

www.bologna.dk

www.videnskabsministeriet.dk/cgi-bin/theme-list.cgi?theme_id=138230&_lang=UK

eng.uvm.dk/factsheets/dvu.htm?menuid=2520

Finland:

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Finland.pdf

www.csc.fi/kota/facts.html

www.minedu.fi/minedu/education/polytechnic.html

www.minedu.fi/minedu/education/university_edu.html

Iceland:

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Iceland.pdf

www.iceland.is

eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/education-in-iceland

www.hi.is/page/HE_in_Iceland

Norway:

odin.dep.no/ufd/norsk/aktuelt/pressem/045071-990279/dok-bn.html

odin.dep.no/ufd/norsk/utdanning/hogreutdanning/bn.html

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Norway1.pdf

Sweden:

www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sweden.pdf

www.regeringen.se/sb/d/1454/a/15633

www.hsv.se