



Towards Bologna

**The Hungarian Universitas Program –
Higher Education Reform Project**



Ministry of
Education

Preface

Hungary signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, which enables Hungarian higher education to take part in shaping the European Higher Education Area. The fundamentals of our higher education reform are defined by the objectives set in Bologna and the following ministerial meetings, and are embodied in the Hungarian Universitas Programme. A great number of these objectives have already been achieved (introduction of a credit transfer and accumulation system, the diploma supplement, etc.). The complete shift to a multi-cycle course structure is rendered possible by the new Act on Higher Education adopted at the end of 2005 as well as related governmental decrees. This publication gives a short description of the Hungarian Universitas Programme, a summary of the new Act on Higher Education, a description of the multi-cycle degree system and an overview of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Hungary.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bálint Magyar', written in a cursive style.

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I. Key objectives of the Hungarian Universitas Programme

The key objectives of the Hungarian Universitas Programme are as follows:

- to modernize the course structure in higher education to better suit students needs and respond also to labour market demands,
- to make the management of education and research activities more efficient,
- to ensure financial independence for institutions,
- to make the use of private funding attractive and facilitate co-operation with the different sectors also in research,
- to strengthen the autonomy of higher education institutions, their rights to self-governing, property, independent financial management and business activities, and
- to create the conditions required therefore.

II. Major changes justifying the need for the new Act

Hungary needs an open and competitive higher education that responds to changes and the needs of the economy quickly and flexibly in the area of education and training, research and financial management. With regard to budgetary support for higher education, this requires transparency that in turn creates stability as well as predictability and the promotion of considerations rewarding performance. In terms of financial management, it means the promotion of clients' intentions, market sensitivity, strengthening the guarantees of owner's liability, the conditions of regulation and operation promoting a result-oriented approach.

The operating and management practice of institutions is in conflict with the tasks deriving from their size and social and economic expectations. The ever-expanding local and international responsibilities and competences require the precise definition of responsibilities and the transformation of the organisation and management of higher education institutions. In 2000 the system was completely transformed in accordance with the unanimous decision of Parliament, but this was not followed by the rationalisation of the internal organisations of the institutions.

III. Co-ordination and professional dialogue in the reform process

All steps of the reform process were extensively discussed by the relevant bodies also within the framework of the National Bologna Board. As a result of a continuous dialogue and cooperation with higher education institutions and fora, the Higher Education and Academic Council, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, the Trade Union of Employees in Higher Education, the Executive Committee and General Assembly of the National Conference of Students' Unions, the National Association of PhD Students, the Conference of Hungarian Rectors and the Conference of College Directors supported the new Higher Education Act by majority votes.

IV. Key elements of the new Act on Higher Education

- 1. The new Act regulates higher education irrespective of sectors.** It grants broad rights to establish higher education institutions, but at the same time it also sets out the rights and obligations that all higher educations must comply with, irrespective of the identity of their maintaining authority.
- 2. The basic principle of the Act is a clear definition of decision-making levels.** As institutions are no longer maintained only by the State, it was necessary to separate the roles of the State depending whether they are exercised as part of public authority functions or by entities acting as maintaining authorities. The autonomy of higher education institutions has grown relative to the provisions in force. Higher education institutions have full decision-making rights within the scope of their deeds of foundation in terms of their operation, the scope of their education and academic research activities and the issuing of internal regulations. The Act grants considerable financial independence to all higher education institutions.
- 3. In addition to regulating the powers of the Senate at state-owned higher education institutions,** the Act also orders the creation of an Economic Council as a new entity that

takes the initiative for strategic decisions and controls measures for efficient financial management and operation while the institutions have total freedom in forming their organisations and bodies according to their possibilities with regard to research and development services. The Economic Council plays a role in financial and development activities. The composition of the body ensures institutional majority, and the Act determines the rights of the Economic Council and the Senate in the interest of autonomy.

4. The Act permits institutions to differ in their financial management from the provisions of the regulation governing public finances, applicable to budgetary organisations since institutions have the freedom to:

- transfer appropriations;
- retain and accumulate residual amounts;
- keep their own income in a separate account;
- pursue business activities without the obligation to pay any taxes and duties;
- use proceeds from the sale of properties for development purposes;
- sell their own properties;
- have the right to found businesses, economic enterprises and foundations;
- set up risk funds;
- launch investment projects provided that they commit to repaying any loans taken out for that purpose;
- take out loans subject to certain conditions and
- subscribe government securities.

5. Financing

- The elements of three-channel normative support comprise education and training, academic and maintenance support. Institutions maintained by the State or other entities can equally benefit from state support based on normative criteria, by way of participating in tenders or under agreements.
- The Act has determined the financial conditions of introducing multi-cycle education so as to preserve the real value of institutional support throughout the process of creating the new education and training structure (even in app. 2010), thus the education and training support is calculated based on the average wage determined by the Central Statistical Office at any time.

- The Ministry of Education may grant special support for launching and maintaining small, high quality study programmes that are part of the national heritage and to higher education institutions with outstanding education, research and development activities under an agreement.

6. Transformation of the education and training structure:

- In order to respond to the challenges of the ever-increasing number of students entering higher education, education and training must provide broader foundations to ensure that general knowledge, skills, and professional competences as well as the professional experience required for employment can all be obtained, in line with the changing requirements of the labour market and life-long learning. Specialisation, further studies beyond a bachelor's degree and obtaining higher degrees are possible through master's degree programmes, while scientific and elite education are available through PhD programmes.
- Periods of study, formerly four years in college and four or five years at university, will be shorter. The total duration of studies spent in undivided programmes, bachelor's and master's programmes usually does not exceed five years.
- Institutions of both types can launch bachelor's degree programmes as well as master's degree programmes, subject to obtaining the relevant permits.

7. Employment

- The Act retains the differentiation between college and university associate professors and professors even after switching to a multi-cycle education and training structure. University professors will still be appointed by the President of the Republic of Hungary, while the Prime Minister will continue to appoint college professors in line with traditions.
- The Act regulates indefinite tenures in all lecturing jobs in harmony with European practice. The requirements specified for qualifications forming the basis of the applicant's rating, the education and training tasks also determined in terms of time intervals and the regulation of multiple employment at legislative level ensure quality and create a basis for performance evaluation.

8. Investment programmes - PPP

- The most significant infrastructure quality development programme in the history of Hungarian higher education will take place between 2005 and 2008, with the investment amounting to some HUF 175 billion, i.e. to an annual average of HUF 44 billion under a PPP programme.
- The purpose of the development projects is to create the conditions for considerably increasing the competitiveness of higher education institutions serving as a basis for creating a knowledge-based society; in other words, to ensure that the currently poor infrastructure of higher education institutions, accommodation and benefits for the increasing number of students reach European standards, improving rapidly and significantly.

9. Support for students

- The availability of student loans for studies abroad, the new scholarship for study periods to be completed abroad, the increased budget for normative support for dormitory and accommodation grants, improving services for students, creating the operational conditions for study and career guidance and for an advisory system, the support for the education of gifted students in the form of student circles, special colleges etc. and the possibility of state-financing granted for twelve terms fundamentally change students' living and working conditions. The new act also extends a lot of the previous provisions concerning students' rights.

10. Internationalization

- The Act makes adequate provisions to facilitate co-operation between different higher education institutions also between Hungary and other countries and removes barriers from joint programmes and joint degrees. Every student graduating as from 2005 receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. The introduction of ECTS has been provided for in legislation since November 2000 (pilots started before 2000 in several universities).

V. The introduction of a multi-cycle course structure

a) From the first steps to complete changeover

Courses leading to a bachelor's degree started in 4 initial pilot training programmes in 2004 followed by 33 initial programmes in 2005. From 2006 the current structure of Hungarian higher education offering university and college-level education will gradually be replaced by the new multi-cycle course structure (in arts this date is 2007). Both colleges and universities may launch bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes in the new training system, provided that they fulfil the necessary requirements.

Higher education institutions will further on welcome applications for short-term professional university trainings that offer special professional qualifications.

b) Bachelor's degree (BSc/BA) and Master's degree (MSc/MA)

The first cycle within the new system comprises 6 to 8 semesters (180-240 credits). At the end of this cycle, which offers a bachelor's degree, one can obtain professional skills that can prove useful in the labour market after graduation. At the same time, the qualification equips graduates with adequate academic foundation (and entitles them) to continue their studies in the master's cycle immediately or later - after a few years' employment - to obtain a master's degree. As part of the bachelor's programmes, which have several practical components, an uninterrupted, one-semester professional practice must be organized.

Master courses last for 2 to 4 semesters (60-120 credits), except for teacher training, which in the future will last 5 semesters (150 credits) and may lead either to the labour market or a PhD training. The admission requirements of the master courses (e.g. from which bachelor programmes and with what conditions students are to be admitted) will be specified by the institutions of higher education.

The total period of the bachelor and the master training cannot be less than 10 semesters and must not exceed 12 semesters.

PhD courses consist of 6 semesters (180 credits). Students may be admitted to PhD trainings only after having accomplished a master's course.

As opposed to the 413 programmes formerly available, 133 new bachelor programmes will be launched in the first cycle. Intensive efforts are currently being made to design the new

master programmes. There will be a lot more programmes offered - one of the greatest advantages of the multi-cycle system is that at master level students may continue their studies in tracks different from the programme they completed at the bachelor level.

c) New form, new content

The structural reform presented above brought about changes in the course content as well. The system consisting of three consecutive training cycles allows a lower admittance while making transfer between programmes a lot easier. Responding to the challenges of educating a growing number of students, bachelor courses are less specialised and more broadly founded. The training better adapts to the changing needs of the labour market and better meets the purposes of lifelong learning. The acquisition of general knowledge, skills, abilities as well as of professional competences and professional practice necessary for employment are available in the new system. Professional specialisation (as well as the acquisition of a new level of qualification) are possible in the master courses, while students may obtain a research qualification in the PhD training, having completed the master programme.

d) Special Features

Students may continue to participate in a unified (undivided) training in seventeen programmes (medical studies, veterinary studies, pharmaceutical studies, dentistry, law, architecture and eleven arts programmes). These programmes are finished by obtaining a the master's degree. Through the introduction of the multi-cycle system teachers training will also be renewed, and a teacher's qualification will be obtained at the master level. A bachelor's degree can only be obtained in pedagogical training for pre-school nursery education, and in teacher training preparing for the first phase of school education i.e. the 1st to 4th grades and 1st to 6th grades, furthermore in the training of teachers educating children with learning difficulties, and finally in the training of technical instructors.

e) Founding and launching new programmes within the new system

The system of the bachelor's and the planned master's programmes of the new structure has been developed by professional organisations, and laid down in a government decree. A new bachelor programme may be established upon recommendation of the

professional committee set up by the Hungarian Rector's Conference, subsequent to a supervision regarding the complete programme structure, and the previous request for opinion of professional organisations, employers as well as the sectoral ministries concerned. A new master's programme may be established upon the initiative of the institution or institutions of higher education.

The qualification requirements of bachelor and master programmes are published in a decree by the minister of education.

Bachelor's and master's programmes may be launched in institutions of higher education only on the basis of a previous supporting opinion of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education (HAC). During the procedure HAC examines whether the programme submitted by the institution of higher education is in accordance with the qualification requirements of the bachelor or master programme and whether the institution meets the staff and material criteria for launching a bachelor or a master programme.

f) Legal Changes

In Hungary, with the changeover to the multi-cycle system

1. The Act on Higher Education regulates the training structure;
2. A government decree defines the new structure of training programmes in the multi-cycle system, the designation of the programmes, credit ranges attached to the programmes as well as the procedure of launching a new programme;
3. A ministerial decree specifies the qualification requirements of the distinct training programmes, the competences, skills, fields of study and their scope of credit related to graduation levels and qualifications.

Based on the above system institutions are free to develop their new curricula, i.e. they decide for themselves what courses they use and what educational and, assessment methods they apply to transfer the knowledge, competences and skills to students as defined in the programme framework.

An overview of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Hungary

The main steps of the reform process

Date	Term in English	Term in the national language
3 August 1993	Act No. LXXX of 1993 on Higher Education	1993. évi LXXX. Törvény A felsőoktatásról
29 November 2000	Governmental decree 200/2000 on the implementation of the credit system and on the central registration of institutional credit systems (it regulates the implementation of ECTS)	200/2000. Kormányrendelet A felsőoktatási tanulmányi pontrendszer (kreditrendszer) bevezetéséről és az intézményi kreditrendszerek egységes nyilvántartásáról
24 December 2001	Act No. XCIX of 2001 Ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	2001. évi XCIX. Törvény A felsőoktatási képesítéseknek az európai régióban történő elismeréséről szóló, 1997. április 11-én Lisszabonban aláírt Egyezmény kihirdetéséről
3 June 2003	Act XXXVIII of 2003 regulating the implementation of the Diploma Supplement	2003. évi XXXVIII. Törvény A felsőoktatásról szóló 1993. évi LXXX. Törvény módosításáról
28 December 2004	Governmental decree 381/2004 (28. XII.) on admission rules of the two-cycle system (regulating the new degree structure)	381/2004. (XII.28.) Kormányrendelet A többciklusú felsőoktatási képzési szerkezet bevezetésének egyes szabályairól
1 January 2005	Act CXXXV of 2004 on the Budget of Republic of Hungary (regulating certain aspects of the new degree structure)	2004. évi CXXXV. Törvény a Magyar Köztársaság 2005. évi költségvetéséről
22 December 2005	Governmental decree 289/2005 (22. XII.) on two-cycle degree and rule of accreditation.	289/2005. (XII. 22.) Korm. rendelet a felsőoktatási alap- és mesterképzésről, valamint a szakindítás eljárási rendjéről
29 November 2005	Act No. CXXXIX on Higher Education*	2005. évi CXXXIX. tv. A Felsőoktatásról

*The Act on Higher Education will be available soon: www.om.hu/english

Campus Hungary

Foreign students have been studying in a number of higher educational institutions for decades (mainly in the fields of medicine, veterinary studies and technology). With the co-operation of nearly 40 higher education institutions, the “Campus Hungary” Association was established in 2004 with a view to making Hungarian higher education working within the European Union popular abroad, to recruit foreign students, to develop an appropriate course offer for that and to support such activities with international marketing.

In addition to training programmes delivered in Hungarian, the number of programmes where the language of instruction is a foreign language is increasing in higher education institutions (For more information on programmes in foreign languages see: www.campushungary.hu)

