



## FOCI

Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education

### D2.2 – Analytical report on the procedural, organisational and legal aspects of awarding the European degree label

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<b>Keywords:</b>	<i>European degree, joint degree, regulatory framework, legal pathways, legal obstacles</i>

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# FOCI

## **Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education**

### **T2.4 – Legal, procedural and administrative pathways for awarding the European degree label**

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**ITEM**  
Cross-border



**Maastricht University**

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## List of abbreviations

EA	European Approach on Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Education Area
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EDL	European Degree Label
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EGL	Expert Group Legal
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
FOCI	The Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
UAntwerp	University of Antwerp, Belgium
UNIRI	University of Rijeka, Croatia
UNISTRA	University of Strasbourg, France
AUTH	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
KTU	Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
UM	Maastricht University, the Netherlands
UvA	University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
TUL	Lodz University of Technology, Poland

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## 1. Introduction

In Europe, the journey<sup>1</sup> towards enhanced cooperation in higher education dates back 25 years to the Sorbonne<sup>2</sup> and Bologna<sup>3</sup> Declarations. These pivotal agreements laid the foundation for the Bologna process, intergovernmental cooperation involving 49 countries and the European Commission, culminating in the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).<sup>4</sup> The Bologna process introduced a three-cycle structure of bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees, and following the Lisbon Recognition Convention<sup>5</sup>, a mutual recognition of higher education systems. This framework also established a common European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and a single framework for quality assurance. Overall, the objective of the Bologna process and EHEA is to bring comparability and compatibility to higher education systems across Europe, as well as to promote student and staff mobility, making higher education more inclusive, interconnected, and innovative in Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these intergovernmental efforts, it is worthwhile to note that the European Union (EU) only has limited competence in education policy, meaning there are differences in how higher education is regulated across the EU Member States.<sup>7</sup> There is also a varying degree of the participating states how far the Bologna process has been implemented.<sup>8</sup> According to the Bologna Process Implementation Report of 2018, only about 5% of higher education institutions across the EHEA award joint degrees. The Implementation Report of 2020 notes that this can be explained by legal and administrative obstacles that hinder the awarding of joint degrees, arising from the differences between higher education systems.<sup>9</sup>

With the aim of breaking down these obstacles in the joint delivery of higher education programmes, and as one of the milestones for achieving the European Education Area by 2025<sup>10</sup>, the European

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<sup>1</sup> Actions were already taken earlier in the EU, by means of resolutions, conclusions and the introduction of legal basis for cooperation on education in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.

<sup>2</sup> The Sorbonne Declaration of 25 May 1998. Accessed via: <https://ehea.info/page-sorbonne-declaration-1998>.

<sup>3</sup> The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999. Accessed via: <https://ehea.info/page-ministerial-conference-bologna-1999>.

<sup>4</sup> Garben, S. (2011). EU higher education law: the Bologna process and harmonization by stealth (Ser. European monographs, 76). Kluwer Law International.

<sup>5</sup> Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165).

<sup>6</sup> 'Rome Ministerial Communiqué adopted by Ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on 19 November 2020, accessed via: [https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf). See also the website of European Commission on European Education Area and Bologna process: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process>.

<sup>7</sup> Articles 165-167 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

<sup>8</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020. The European Higher Education Area in 20: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of The Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, COM/2020/625 final.

Commission (EC) launched the European degree label (EDL) as one of its flagship initiatives.<sup>11</sup> The EDL initiative is aimed at supporting cooperative transnational higher education provision and removing potential barriers, strengthening collaboration in delivering joint programmes, and generally improving the quality of higher education in Europe. In this context, the European Commission launched in 2022 an initiative to pilot the concept of a European degree label, as a first step in the exploration of how joint European criteria could be used to recognise that certain international joint programmes between different universities deliver a distinct quality and European dimension for its students. Another objective of the EDL pilots is to examine and facilitate a possible joint European Degree as a qualification, not only as a label.<sup>12</sup> Through the Erasmus+ programme, the European Commission funded six policy experimentation projects, among them FOCI.

The Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education (FOCI) project is part of a wider policy experimentation initiative with the goal of exploring possibilities and needs for implementation of the European degree label, criteria for awarding this label, and compatibility with regulatory frameworks. The FOCI project is a joint endeavour of eight universities representing three different European Universities Alliances: YUFE, ECIU, and EPICUR which have synergistic and congruent approaches to the European degree label concept. Such transnational cooperations follow the aim of sustaining the European Union's values and promoting mobility.

As one of the key deliverables of the FOCI project (T2.4 – Legal, procedural, and administrative pathways for awarding the European degree label), the aim of this report is to identify legal, administrative, and procedural pathways for issuing a joint European degree label, by identifying possibilities and obstacles arising from current national and institutional regulations within the FOCI Consortium. The research objective of this report is two-fold. First, this report will take a more comprehensive approach by evaluating the legal feasibility of the mandatory EDL criteria pursuant to the national regulatory frameworks and addresses the challenges that may arise in the creation of joint programmes. Secondly, this report explores three potential outcomes in which format the European degree label could be issued pursuant to the current regulatory framework: as a **separate certificate issued to a student**, a (quality) label in the **joint diploma supplement** presenting the jointness and European value of a programme or, as envisaged long-term by the European Commission<sup>13</sup>, as a fully recognized qualification as a **joint European degree**. Next to the findings based on the regulatory framework, reflections will also be made on the FOCI stakeholder analysis<sup>14</sup>, on the desirability and additional value of such outcomes.

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<sup>11</sup> See also the European Strategy for Universities (18 January 2022), where the European Commission promotes the transnational cooperation and developing a European dimension in higher education sector, and Council Conclusions and Recommendation (5 April 2022) where the Commission encourages the higher education institutions to engage in transnational cooperation to provide joint programmes and award joint degrees, and the facilitation of a joint European degree label.

<sup>12</sup> See Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, inviting the European Commission to examine the necessary steps: “[...] towards a possible joint degree based on a common set of co-created European criteria.”

<sup>13</sup> Proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, COM(2022) 17 final.

<sup>14</sup> FOCI Deliverable 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology.



## 1.1 Research methodology

The research methodology<sup>15</sup> encompassed a three-stage process. In the start of the project, Expert Group Legal (EGL) was established to bring together (legal) experts from each participating university in the FOCI project, national ministries, and stakeholder representatives. The Expert Group was coordinated by a Coordinating Team, i.e., the authors of this report at ITEM (Maastricht University).

In the first stage of the research, the university representatives of the Expert Group Legal were consulted. The representatives were requested to gather relevant regulations and information on their national or institutional system of higher education. These materials were machine-translated and no (certified) English translations were available.<sup>16</sup> The universities were also invited to participate in a survey, which encompassed questions about the provided regulations, their previous experiences in establishing international cooperation in higher education, and potential legal, administrative, or procedural obstacles encountered in this process.

Advancing to the second stage, direct legal analysis was carried out into the relevant national (member state level) and institutional (university) regulations. **In this respect, it should be noted that the analysis relied on the accuracy of materials, translation, and information provided by the partner universities.** The analysis centered on the European degree label criteria, the obstacles in the creation of the joint programmes, and the possible format in which the European degree label could be granted pursuant to national and institutional regulations. This included conducting a country-specific descriptive overview of the relevant regulations (included in Annex I). By a comparative analytical approach, the study extended from the national- and institutional-specific analysis to the establishment of an indicator table, where the indicators were grounded based on the European Degree Label criteria (a common set of co-created European criteria proposed by the European Commission). The indicators were chosen to be limited to the mandatory criteria, seeing that the optional criteria were less of a legal nature. The stakeholder needs analysis also suggested the mandatory criteria to be considered most relevant by the stakeholders.<sup>17</sup>

This method of completing the indicator table enabled a comprehensive and comparative evaluation of the compatibility of the national and institutional regulations with the European degree label framework. Essentially, this also allowed to explore in which format the European degree label could be issued and what challenges remain in the creation of joint programmes and joint degrees on the European level.

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<sup>15</sup> This research methodology, namely carrying out a direct legal analysis to the regulatory frameworks of each country and creating a comparative analysis by means of indicator table, has been inspired by an earlier ITEM report written in the context of LINK EDU-RES Project, a Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project funded by the European Commission: Schneider, H., Kortese, L., Sivonen, S., & Tans, R. (2021). *Analysing National and Institutional Doctoral Regulations: The Road to Successful Cross-border Cooperation on Joint Doctoral Programme*. ITEM.

<sup>16</sup> This was the case for Croatia (University of Rijeka), Lithuania (Kaunas University of Technology), Greece (University of Thessaloniki), Poland (Lodz University of Technology). In principle, the authors could make use of the original text pursuant to their language knowledge, i.e., English, Dutch (Flemish) and French.

<sup>17</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 36.

During the third and final stage of the research, a collaborative dialogue was established to discuss the preliminary draft with the Expert Group Legal and the FOCI Steering Committee. Furthermore, the findings and outcomes of the EDL as presented in this report were discussed with stakeholders during a FOCI policy workshop organised in Kaunas.<sup>18</sup> The feedback from this workshop allowed for refining the report and the final conclusions and recommendations on the legal pathways of issuing the European degree label.

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<sup>18</sup> The FOCI policy workshop was organised on 26-27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Kaunas.

## 2. Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis, presented in this section of the report, was carried between the universities and countries participating in the FOCI Consortium, namely to Belgium including University of Antwerp (UAntwerp), Croatia including University of Rijeka (UNIRI), France including University of Strasbourg (UNISTRA), Greece including Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Lithuania including Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), the Netherlands including Maastricht University (UM) and University of Amsterdam (UvA), and Poland including Lodz University of Technology (TUL). The comparative analysis generally refers to the findings per the indication of country and institution, e.g., ‘Croatia (UNIRI)’. It is essential to note that this does not imply a distinction or exclusion based on whether the provision was established at the institutional or national level. The comparative analysis is based on the complete country- and institution-specific analyses that are included in Annex I, which explicitly outline the legal source.

The comparative analysis was conducted using an indicator table, with a focus on various aspects related to the European Degree label. These aspects included the level of regulation & terminology, the mandatory EDL criteria for joint programmes, and the potential outcomes concerning how the EDL is issued. For each aspect, first, the indicator table is presented

Figure 1 – Matrix legend

	Indicator fulfilled
	Indicator fulfilled with some reservations
	Indicator not fulfilled/no indication in regulations

following an elaboration of the results obtained from the comparative exercise. Figure 1 serves as an illustration of the matrix legend employed to determine whether a specific indicator has been met. In this legend, the **purple colour** indicates that the indicator has been fulfilled, signifying that the aspect was clearly addressed in the analysed regulations. When an indicator is highlighted in **yellow**, it suggests that the indicator has been partially met, but there are certain reservations to consider. For instance, this may include situations where current legal amendments are pending (with the indicator being considered fulfilled if the law is enacted) or cases where specific exceptions apply. Finally, when the indicator is not fulfilled or there is no indication in the regulations, the indicator is left blank. In this respect, it is important to note that a blank indicator does not necessarily mean that the indicator is not met or no provision is made in practice for a certain indicator, it merely indicates that no provisions were found in the regulations that were analysed in this report.

## 2.1 Terminology & Regulatory models

### Terminology

The aim of the EDL initiative as phrased by the European Commission is “to encourage, where appropriate, and make it easier for higher education institutions engaged in transnational cooperation, to provide *joint programmes* and award *joint degrees*”.<sup>19</sup>

Since the terminology can be applied and understood differently, this report suggests establishing and aligning consistent and uniform terminology not only to evaluate the national and institutional regulations but also in policy discussions surrounding the European Degree Label. This was also reflected in the FOCI stakeholder needs analysis. Respondents mentioned that there are varying definitions and terminology applied among the Member States, in how “European label”, “European degree” and “joint programme or degree” can be understood in different contexts, recommending the creation of standardized definitions applied uniformly.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, when analysing the national and institutional regulations in the context of this report, varying definitions of joint programme and/or degrees could be found. Regulations in Belgium (UAntwerp) state that a programme organised jointly by universities leads to awarding of a joint *diploma*. Similarly in Poland (TUL), joint degree programmes lead to a graduate with a joint degree being awarded a joint diploma. On the other hand, in Greece (AUTh), Lithuania (KTU), and the Netherlands (UM, UvA) joint programme may lead to awarding of a joint *degree*. Interestingly, in Croatia (UNIRI) the applicable regulations do not directly make use of the term joint degrees, joint programmes, or joint diplomas, but rather a reference is made to *joint studies*. A variation in the definitions can also be found in the European frameworks. The European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes defines a *joint programme* as an integrated curriculum offered jointly by different HEIs leading to joint, double, or multiple degrees. *Joint degrees* are defined as the result of the joint programme, i.e., a single document awarded.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the EU Regulation 1288/2013 on Erasmus+ programmes defines *joint degrees* as an integrated study programme, resulting in a single degree certificate.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, generally, a joint programme can be generally understood as an integrated study programme created by two or more higher education institutions (HEIs). A joint programme can result in the awarding of a joint degree and a joint diploma, but this does not necessarily need to be the case. The

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<sup>19</sup> Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, 5 April 2022.

<sup>20</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes October 2014 approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015, p. 1: “Joint programme is understood as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from EHEA countries and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree.” Joint degree is defined as “A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme”.

<sup>22</sup> Article 2(15) Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport: 'Joint degrees' means an integrated study programme offered by at least two higher education institutions resulting in a single degree certificate issued and signed by all the participating institutions jointly and recognised officially in the countries where the participating institutions are located.

joint programme may also lead to the awarding of a double or multiple degree and national certificates. It is worthwhile to note that there are also hybrid forms of joint degrees<sup>23</sup> and other forms of joint educational units that do not necessarily lead to a degree. This is also why the FOCI Consortium has decided to apply a unique approach to the concept of the European Degree Label: not only to pilot joint programmes leading to joint degrees but also other units of learning that are developed jointly, such as micro-credentials.

It is also the recommendation of this report to establish and apply consistent terminology when speaking about the issuance of a European degree (label). Nevertheless, accomplishing this task poses challenges. As previously delineated, the legislation assigns distinct definitions to these terms, and further complicating matters, there exist variations in language; certain terms may not be readily translatable across various European languages. For these reasons, it is difficult to find consensus on the terminology and definitions. Therefore, the terminology presented in Figure 2 will only apply to the purpose of this report.

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, ‘joint degree tracks’ where the students are awarded different degrees based on their study track, or ‘combination’ degrees where some HEIs in the consortium issue a joint degree and others a single (national) degree. See examples in European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Implementing joint degrees in the Erasmus Mundus action of the Erasmus+ programme*, Publications Office, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/896549>, pp. 25-26.

Figure 2 – Terminology as applied in this report

**Joint programme:** An integrated study programme collaboratively developed and offered by two or more higher education institutions (HEIs). This joint programme may, although it is not limited to, result in the issuance of a joint, double, or multiple degree, or another formal and recognized form of award.

**Joint educational units:** Other innovative units or models of learning collaboratively developed and offered by two or more higher education institutions (HEIs), for instance micro-credentials, which do not lead to a formal degree or qualification.

**Joint degree:** A recognized joint award and qualification issued to a student who has successfully completed a joint programme. This joint degree is granted by higher education institutions with degree-awarding authority as prescribed by their respective national legal frameworks.

**Joint diploma:** A single document recognized and issued to the student jointly by the higher education institutions as evidence of a successfully completed joint degree.

**European Degree Label:** A (quality) label that is issued to a joint (higher education) programme or joint educational unit, which has proven compliance with the European Degree label criteria.

**European Degree:** A joint European award issued to the student for successfully completing a joint programme, leading to a qualification recognised across the EU.

### Regulatory models

To begin the comparative analysis, the initial focus rested on the identification of regulatory levels within each country and institution. This led to the identification of five distinct levels of regulation: national, regional, and institutional, where institutional regulations can further be subdivided into faculty-level and programme-level regulations. Identifying the different levels of regulatory frameworks is particularly important in increasing the transparency of regulatory models and may also explain the complexities in organising joint programmes in international cooperation across universities. Moreover, it allows for the pinpointing of the origins of potential obstacles, thereby facilitating the pursuit of amendments or changes at the appropriate regulatory level, should the need arise. The stakeholder analysis also revealed concerns about the compliance of EDL framework with current regulations on joint programmes in each Member State and university – stakeholders stated that implementing the European Degree Label on joint degrees may necessitate changes on both national and institutional levels.<sup>24</sup> Table 1 summarises these findings with the Matrix legend as presented in Figure 1.

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<sup>24</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 30.

Table 1 – Regulatory models

Table 1: Legislation on higher education per Member State and university					
Level of regulation	National	Regional	Institutional	Faculty	Programme
Netherlands (UM, UvA)					
Belgium (UAntwerp)					
France (UNISTRA)					
Croatia (UNIRI)					
Lithuania (KTU)					
Poland (TUL)					
Greece (AUTH)			(Institutional level under reform) <sup>25</sup>		

All universities regulate higher education on the national level, except for Belgium (UAntwerp) where regulation is found on the regional level (Flemish Community), as the competences of education are divided among the three Communities in Belgium. Furthermore, regulation was found from the institutional (university) level of each university. In Belgium (UAntwerp) and Croatia (UNIRI), faculties provided further regulation. In the Netherlands (UM, UvA) and Poland (TUL) regulation was even further specified for each programme. Since analysing each programme or even faculty-level regulation would not be feasible for this research, the focus of the analysis was placed on national and institutional regulations.

As a final remark, it is worth noting that the various regulatory models and scattered regulations may complicate the creation of joint programmes. As encountered while compiling this report, there were instances where it was challenging to locate the regulations or relevant information, and English translations were hardly available. Moreover, regulations within an institution can be scattered across different faculties and programmes, making it challenging to identify the right contact person within the institution. This complexity can pose obstacles when institutions are considering the compatibility of their regulations with the envisaged structure of joint (degree) programmes.

<sup>25</sup> The institutional regulations of AUTH are currently under reform. Therefore, the legal analysis solely focused on the available regulations at the national level.

## 2.2 Mandatory European degree label criteria

This section evaluates the legal and administrative feasibility of implementing the mandatory European degree label criteria to existing or new joint programmes pursuant to the current national and institutional framework. The comparative analysis will adopt a comprehensive perspective, with the objective of identifying potential legal or administrative obstacles that could potentially hinder the establishment of joint programmes in alignment with the EDL criteria. The findings are summarised in Table 2 (see below).

The EDL criteria encompass in short:

Mandatory EDL criteria	Optional EDL criteria
<b>Jointly designed programme by at least two HEIs from two Member States</b>	Additional formats of transnational learning activities
<b>Joint programme leads to a joint degree</b>	Enhancement of EU languages through classes
<b>Co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations</b>	Support future labour market needs
<b>Joint programme described in ECTS</b>	International professional internships
<b>Joint Diploma Supplement issued</b>	Career development plan
<b>Quality assurance in accordance with ESG, accreditation by EQAR-registered agency</b>	Actions to environmental sustainability, minimising environmental footprint
<b>Joint policies for the joint programme</b>	Development of high-level digital skills
<b>Transnational campus – access to services</b>	Promotion of democratic values and social needs
<b>Joint programme includes one period of physical mobility (30 ECTS)</b>	Joint promotion and awareness-raising activities by cooperating HEIs
<b>At least two different EU languages</b>	
<b>Embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components in the joint programme</b>	
<b>Monitoring graduate outcomes</b>	
<b>Inclusive admission and commitment to the European Charter, Code of Conduct, and MSCA Green Charter</b>	



Table 2 – Mandatory EDL criteria pursuant to national and institutional regulations

<b>Table 3: Mandatory EDL criteria pursuant to national and institutional regulation</b>							
<b>EDL Criteria</b>	<b>Netherlands (UM, UvA)</b>	<b>Belgium (UAntwerp)</b>	<b>Croatia (UNIRI)</b>	<b>Lithuania (KTU)</b>	<b>Poland (TUL)</b>	<b>Greece (AUTH)</b>	<b>France (UNISTRA)</b>
<b>Source</b>	National level: Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research and delegated acts Institutional (UvA & UM): Registration Decision, Promotion Regulation, and code of conduct on language Programme: Education and Examination Regulations per programme	Regional level: Codex on Higher Education	National level: Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity  Institutional: Statute of UNIRI, Regulation on postgraduate university courses	National level: Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania  Ministerial Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies  Institutional: Academic Regulations of Kaunas University of Technology, Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies	National level: Law on higher education and science  Institutional level: Resolutions of the Senate of the Lodz University of Technology  Program level: guidelines from the IFE Program Council (only for fields of study implemented within the International Education Center (CWM))	National level: New Horizons in Higher Education  Enhancing the quality, functionality, and connection of HEIs with society and other provisions	National level: French national code of education A few exceptions apply: -the financial arrangement of the institutions could be decided by the board of directors, And the Commission on Training and University Life (CFVU) that decides on the quality of the programs and the methods of evaluating students
<b>Jointly designed programme by at least two HEIs from two Member States</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (especially in the context of Erasmus Mundus)
<b>Joint programme includes one</b>	Physical mobility possible but not mandatory by law.	Mobility of at least 20 ECTS is mandatory.	Students have the right to mobility.	Physical mobility of the student is a mandatory element	A student may take advantage of short-term mobility abroad for	Physical mobility possible but not mandatory by law.	French education code encourages the period of mobility at

<p><b>period of physical mobility (30 ECTS).</b></p> <p><b>For doctoral programmes, the joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution.</b></p>	<p>For government funding of the joint programme, 25% of the teaching should take place in the Netherlands.</p>	<p>For doctoral programmes, mobility to partner institutions is mandatory for at least 6 months.</p>	<p>For doctoral programmes, physical mobility for at least 3 months.</p>	<p>of a joint programme. International doctoral mobility is encouraged (at least 3 months); at least one subject must be studied at a foreign institution.</p>	<p>studies or internship, lasting from 5 to 30 days (under short term mobility scheme of Erasmus + program) and obligatorily combined with the virtual component, before or after the mobility period. In the case of doctoral mobility - the virtual component is optional. For short-term mobility for studies, the student must obtain min. 3 ECTS for the achieved learning outcomes (this requirement does not apply to internships).</p>		<p>the foreign educational institution, details of the mobility are subject to an agreement between the home and host institutions.</p>
<p><b>At least two EU languages</b></p>	<p>Yes, in principle Dutch but a foreign language (English) is possible if justified. This will be stricter if the new bill enters into force.</p>	<p>Yes, in principle Dutch but a foreign language of instruction is possible.</p>	<p>Yes, Croatian and/or another official EU language</p>	<p>Yes, teaching in other languages than Lithuanian is possible when organising joint study programs with foreign universities. English is usually used as the main language for joint programmes</p>	<p>Yes, Polish and/or another foreign language</p>	<p>Undergraduate (bachelors) and postgraduate (masters) programmes in Greek or other language</p>	<p>Yes, the French national code stipulates that even though the language of instruction and exam is French, upon an agreement with another HEI, an exception could be made. However, at some points receiving the diploma has been subject to mastery of French.</p>

FOCI T2.4 – Legal, procedural and administrative pathways for awarding the European degree label.

<b>Use of ECTS</b>	ECTS = 28 hours of study  Bachelor: 180 ECTS Master: 60 ECTS (120 ECTS is possible for science and appointed programmes, there are more deviations such as for medicine 240 ECTS)	ECTS = 25-30 hours of prescribed teaching, learning, and evaluation activities  Bachelor: 180 ECTS Master: at least 60 ECTS Doctoral programme: Consist of the training programme of at least 20 ECTS	ECTS = 30 hours of study  Bachelor: 180 ECTS (3 years) or 240 ECTS (at least in case of four year programme) Master: at least 120 ECTS (two years) or at least 60 ECTS (one year)	ECTS = 25-30 hours per national law, KTU institutional regulations specify 26.67 hours of work  ECTS per study level are elaborated on the Order of the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.	Bachelor's: 180-240 ECTS Master's: 120 ECTS	ECTS = 25-30 hours  Bachelor's: 240, 300 or 360 ECTS Master's: 60, 90, 120 or more ECTS  Doctoral programmes: May consist of doctoral courses of at least 30 ECTS	ECTS = 25 hours is recommended. However, the norm is rather 20 to 30 hrs face to face.  Bachelor's: 180 ECTS Master's: 120 ECTS Doctoral: except for a few instances, the French universities do not utilize ECTS during the doctoral program.
<b>Quality assurance in accordance with ESG, accreditation by EQAR-registered agency</b>	Yes possible (optional).  Next to quality assurance, a macro-efficiency test.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but obstacles noted in relation to quality assurance and accreditation for joint programmes.	Yes, however some obstacles noted if implemented as mandatory criteria.
<b>Joint policies for the joint programme</b>	Yes, outlined in a mandatory consortium agreement.  Minimum enrolment requirements.	Yes, must be elaborated in the consortium agreement.  Legalisation of documents.	Yes, these policies should be elaborated in the consortium agreement	Yes, these are also mandatory elements to be elaborated in the consortium agreement	Yes, the rules of cooperation shall be specified in a written agreement	Yes, according to the special protocol	Yes, the rules of cooperation shall be specified in a written agreement

FOCI T2.4 – Legal, procedural and administrative pathways for awarding the European degree label.

<b>Co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations</b>	Yes. UvA: 5-7 next to promotors. At least one from the university and one foreign. UM: 4-6 members, of which at least one from each cooperating university and two from other universities	Yes, dissertation is evaluated by a committee composed of professors from the partner universities	Yes, doctoral dissertation evaluated by a committee of at least three experts of whom at least one is from outside the university.  This requirement is mandatory for the title of European Doctor of Science.	Yes, committee may consist of scientific researchers from foreign institutions.	Yes, reviewers (minimum 3) can consist of members appointed from foreign institutions	Yes, evaluation committee may consist of members from foreign institutions	Yes, but it is a long procedure, subject to signing an agreement between the two establishments
<b>Joint degree can be awarded</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only for bachelor and masters-level programmes	Yes, graduate of a joint degree program may receive a joint diploma that meets the requirements set forth in the Polish regulations. However, TUL noted that they have moved away from a common diploma signed by all partner universities because it is a logistical problem	Yes, mostly on the doctoral level. Obstacles noted in awarding joint degrees on bachelor and master-level	Yes, and other forms of diplomas have been predicted in the law should the law of the partner university not allow a joint degree
<b>A Joint Diploma Supplement issued</b>	Yes (not specified if joint)	Yes	Yes (not specified if joint)	Yes (not specified if joint)	Yes (not specified if joint)	Yes (not specified if joint)	Yes
<b>Other mandatory EDL criteria</b>	Equal opportunities in admission.	Equal treatment provisions for students,	Yes, equal opportunities in admission.	Yes, equal opportunities and inclusivity; libraries	Yes, innovative learning approaches by conducting the classes	Yes, Higher Education Institution has as its mission	Yes, France's higher education also follows the UN sustainable

FOCI T2.4 – Legal, procedural and administrative pathways for awarding the European degree label.

	<p>In case of joint programmes legal provisions on access to institution, joint input. Legal options for language classes.</p>	<p>accessibility and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, access to facilities (also in situations of international mobility)</p>	<p>All full-time EU students have right to university library sources and other learning sources, student grants, subsidized food and accommodation. UNIRI also provides various leisure activities, psychological and career counselling.</p>	<p>and materials must be equipped also with relevant materials in foreign languages.</p>	<p>using distance learning methods.</p>	<p>applying modern teaching methods with emphasis on interdisciplinarity and innovative research at the highest level of quality according to internationally recognised criteria, including distance learning.</p>	<p>development goals and is aiming to have the transition toward a sustainable society. Furthermore, it ensures the adequacy of training courses with the needs of the job market to help students find lasting employment.</p>
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### **Jointly designed programme by at least two HEIs from two Member States<sup>26</sup>**

The first mandatory EDL criteria refer to a jointly designed programme created by at least two higher education institutions from two Member States. This section, therefore, analyses whether, pursuant to the current national and institutional regulations, it is possible to create a joint programme in an interinstitutional cooperative structure with foreign institutions of other Member States. Based on terminology as defined in Section 2.1, this section will make a comparative analysis of the regulatory framework for the creation and design of a joint programme, i.e., an integrated study programme created by two or more higher education institutions. Therefore, this section does not reflect on the possible outcomes of such a joint programme (e.g., a joint degree/diploma). This is separately evaluated under the evaluation of criteria '*Joint degree can be awarded.*'

Pursuant to the regulatory frameworks of the universities analysed in this report, higher education institutions may provide joint programmes with two or more foreign institutions from other Member States. In Poland (TUL), Belgium (UAntwerp), Croatia (UNIRI), France (UNISTRA) Lithuania (KTU), and Netherlands (UM, UvA) it is required that the organisation and design of such joint programme are formalised in a mandatory cooperation agreement between the institutions involved. The mandatory conditions on consortium agreement as specified by the regulatory framework are further described under the evaluation of criteria '*Joint degree can be awarded.*'

Some regulatory frameworks specifically refer to the institutional autonomy of the university to decide whether they engage in international cooperation with foreign higher education institutions. This is the case in Croatia (UNIRI), where it is the University Senate that decides on and coordinates international strategic cooperation. Similarly, in Lithuania (KTU), the higher education institutions may, based on the principle of self-governance, determine the forms of cooperation with natural and legal persons abroad and offer joint university study programme with foreign higher education institutions. In Greece (AUn), the universities have a specified mission of developing partnerships and alliances with higher education institutions abroad. Next to creating joint programmes and engaging in international cooperation in the context of the European Education and Research Area, it can be noted that the regulations provide specific attention to international cooperation in the context of European University Alliances. This is also apparent from the regulations in Croatia (UNIRI) and Lithuania (KTU). In France, on the subject of international mobility and cooperation, the French educational code highlights the mission of higher education by affirming that one of the aims that higher education follows is international cooperation. Universities can also enter into agreements and international partnerships with foreign or international institutions.

The national and institutional regulations place in some instances mandatory preconditions on the creation of joint programmes. The regional legislation applicable in the Flemish Community of Belgium specifies that it is a required element of a joint programme that the student acquires at least 20 credits at the institution(s) other than the one they were initially enrolled. In Lithuania (KTU), implementing a joint programme must ensure the integrity of the content and learning outcomes delivered by the partner institutions. The physical mobility of the student in the joint programme is mandatory.

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<sup>26</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Higher education institutions involved': The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered by at least 2 higher education institutions from at least 2 different EU Member States.

In some institutions, there are additional requirements when it comes to establishing joint programmes across different levels of studies. Interestingly, the focus of these requirements predominantly centers on joint programmes at the doctoral level. In Belgium (UAntwerp), it is outlined that joint doctoral programmes must receive accreditation from both institutions. Furthermore, the organization, execution, and completion of such programmes must be governed by a formal agreement between the participating higher education institutions. Poland also places specific emphasis on joint doctoral programmes, mandating the creation of a consortium agreement. This agreement must delineate in detail the responsibilities and tasks associated with the operation of the doctoral schools and outline how these programmes are financed. In Belgium (UAntwerp), the joint doctoral programme must involve a minimum of six month's mobility to the partner university in the context of doctoral dissertation work. Additionally, it is required that the evaluation of the doctoral thesis and its public defence is evaluated by a jury composed of professors from the collaborating institutions. In the Netherlands (UM), institutional regulations outline the essential elements of a joint doctoral programme, including supervision and the composition of the assessment committee (see also criteria on "Co-evaluation of Doctoral dissertation"). UM's institutional regulations also emphasize the importance of substantial input from the participating institutions during the collaborative programme's design.

### **The joint programme includes a period of physical mobility<sup>27</sup>**

One of the mandatory criteria of the European degree label pertains to mandatory physical mobility. For bachelor and master-level programmes, the joint programme must include at least one period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS. In the case of doctoral-level programmes, it is stipulated that the joint programme must incorporate a minimum of 6 months of physical mobility at another institution. This section assesses whether these physical mobility requirements are already incorporated into national and institutional regulations.

In Belgium, joint programmes at the bachelor and master levels require a minimum mobility of 20 ECTS as a mandatory component. In Lithuania (KTU), according to national regulations, physical mobility of the student is mandatory (of at least 15 credits). Croatia's regulations (UNIRI) stipulate that students have the right to mobility. In Greece (AUPh) and France (UNISTRA), mobility is possible for a study period agreed upon by the universities organizing the joint programme. In the Netherlands, physical mobility (for all programme levels) is not legally mandatory but is considered a potential element that can be included in the consortium agreement. Yet, for study programmes that receive government funding, at least 25% of the teaching should take place in the Netherlands. Interestingly, regulations in Poland (TUL) do not only make a reference to physical mobility but also virtual components completed at other universities. These regulations indicate that students may participate in short-term mobility abroad for studies or internships, lasting from 5 to 30 days, which must include a virtual component, either before or after the physical mobility period. In France

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<sup>27</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements': EQF 6, 7: The joint programme includes at least 1 period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS. EQF 8: The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (including secondment).

(UNISTRA), periods of study abroad are subject of an agreement signed by the home establishment, the host establishment, and the student.

When it comes to physical mobility within doctoral programmes in Belgium, particularly in the context of joint programmes that result in a joint or double diploma from the University of Antwerp (UAntwerp), it is a requirement for doctoral candidates to spend a minimum of six months at partner institutions. In Croatia (UNIRI), doctoral programmes require a minimum of 3 months (equivalent to 20 ECTS) of physical mobility or other type of international cooperation or networking per institutional regulations. In Lithuania, it is recommended for each doctoral student to complete at least a three-month traineeship at a foreign research or study institution abroad, with the requirement that at least one subject must be studied at a foreign institution. In Poland (TUL), the virtual component of mobility in doctoral programmes is optional, unlike for bachelor and master programmes.

For all levels of programmes (bachelor, master, and doctoral) it can be concluded that the regulatory framework of each country analysed in this report already reflects the EDL criteria regarding physical mobility. Additionally, in some regulatory frameworks, there is a mention of the mobility of teachers, as seen in the case of Croatia (UNIRI) and Lithuania (KTU) as well as virtual mobility. These aspects could also be considered when refining the EDL criteria.

### **At least two EU languages<sup>28</sup>**

The mandatory EDL criteria stipulate that joint programmes have a multilingual element, i.e., they include education at least in two EU languages. This section looks at the requirements for the language of instruction in higher education.

In Belgium (UAntwerp), higher education, or specifically joint programmes in international cooperation, can be conducted in two official languages of the EU. In principle, the language of instruction is Dutch, however, other languages of instruction may be used in exceptional situations, for instance when programme is part of a European Universities Initiative, or when the training programme is specifically designed for foreign students. In the case of a joint programme organised with a foreign institution, the deviation from the language requirement must be requested from the Flemish government.

In Croatia (UNIRI), higher education programmes can be conducted in either Croatian or another official EU language, similar to the practice in Poland (TUL) where programmes are available in Polish or another EU language. In Lithuania (KTU), especially for the organization of joint programmes with foreign universities, English language is used as the main language. The choice of languages must be explicitly stated in the consortium agreement. In Greece (AUnTh), it is noted that bachelor or masters

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<sup>28</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Multilingualism': During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages, language classes excluded. Exposure to EU official languages can take place in active and/or passive use of language(s), at any level in teaching and/or learning activities, examinations, research activities, professional or civic engagement activities and during mobility periods, including by going on mobility to a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life.



programmes can be provided either in Greek or in another language. However, vast majority of the studies are in Greek.

In the Netherlands (UM, UvA), the language of instruction is in principle Dutch. Foreign language, such as English, is often possible provided it is justified. The UM stipulates that the speaking language is Dutch and English, given the international character of the university. The code of conduct furthermore stipulates that faculty boards are responsible for bilingual language proficiency. The UvA stipulates Dutch as speaking language for education and exams. The use of other languages is allowed if it is necessary and enshrined in the education and exam regulation of a programme. However, there are current developments that may result in the stricter application of these rules if the new bill ‘Internationalisation in balance (*Wet internationalisering in balans*)’, comes into force.

The bill aims to amend the national legislation on higher education (WHW) and to have more steering options on the inflow of international students at Dutch higher education institutes. The bill has measures regarding language, *numerus fixus*, and direction. A prominent aspect is the proposal that mandates at least two third of a track or programme in Associate Degree- and Bachelor education should be taught in the Dutch language. The other one-third can be a foreign language, not being specified. However, an exceptional clause is foreseen, allowing deviations from the ‘two-third rule’. An exception should be granted by the Minister of Education and Science, that is based on a so-called efficiency assessment. Under current provisions, it is stated that this principle does not apply to joint programmes with foreign institutions. An exception to the ‘two-third rule’ would therefore be expected to be granted. Nevertheless, in all circumstances, the bill stipulates that the promotion of Dutch language skills should be included in the curriculum of the programme and laid down in the teaching and examination regulations. Higher education institutions are thus left with great freedom on how language promotion will take place. Nonetheless, the regulations must state how the number of hours is spent to promote Dutch language proficiency, which should be at least 140 hours in total for a bachelor’s degree and 56 hours for associate degrees and master’s programme. The parliamentary process of the bill still has to be started, leaving both the definitive content and the timing of the bill still uncertain.

Similarly, in France, there is a notable emphasis on promoting the French language, encouraging educational institutions to provide foreign students education in French. Indeed, mastery of the French language together with two other languages is part of the fundamental objectives of education in France. The language of instruction, exams, and classes are in French except for the instances where the associated or invited faculty members are foreigners or the instances where there is an agreement with a higher education institution abroad under which lessons are provided in another language than French. In addition, the French education code stipulates that foreign students who benefit from foreign language training will follow an instruction of the French language when they do not have sufficient knowledge of this language.

It can be concluded in relevance to the countries analysed in this report, that generally it is permitted to offer higher education programmes in two or more EU languages. However, such as the example of

the Netherlands, there are some developments moving towards promoting the use of the local language, which is already a practice observed in France. The student organizations participating in the FOCI stakeholder analysis also noted that the strict national language requirements may be an obstacle when creating international joint programmes.<sup>29</sup> Instead of such language requirements enshrined in the EDL-criteria, some stakeholders have brought forward to consider other ways to expose students to other languages and whether applying more of a multicultural perspective rather than multilingual would be more appropriate.<sup>30</sup>

### **Use of ECTS<sup>31</sup>**

Introduced by the Bologna process, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) serves as a tool within EHEA enhancing transparency in educational programmes, facilitating credit transfer during mobility, and aiding in the accumulation of credits within degree programmes by quantifying learning outcomes and workload. The official ECTS Guide<sup>32</sup> states that generally 60 ECTS is allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent, one credit corresponding to 25-30 hours of work. However, there are differences in how ECTS are implemented on programme length and workload across national and institutional legislations.

When examining how the ECTS credit system is implemented across the universities analysed in this report, it is notable that all of them have incorporated the ECTS system into their national legislation. In general, most universities allocate 180 ECTS for bachelor's degrees (with the exception of Greece (ATh), where bachelor's programmes can extend to 240, 300 or 360 ECTS, and Poland (TUL) where bachelor level studies range from 180-240 ECTS) and 60 ECTS for master's programmes. However, there are exceptions, such as in France (UNISTRA) where the master's programme consists of 120 ECTS, and in Greece, where the number of ECTS depends exclusively on the duration of the programme (60, 90, 120 or more ECTS). A deviation can also be observed in the regulations of Croatia (UNIRI) and certain programmes in the Netherlands (UM, UvA). Furthermore, deviations from the standard ECTS allocation occur for specific programmes, particularly those related to regulated professions like medicine, which might entail up to 240 ECTS, as seen in the Netherlands (UM, UvA). In Lithuania, national regulations specify ECTS requirements separately for study levels. Bachelor's level programme typically ranges from 180 to 240 ECTS, while master's programme can be 60, 90, or 120 ECTS. Croatia (UNIRI) mandates that doctoral studies must span at least three years and encompass 180 ECTS.

There are variations in the workload associated with ECTS credits among different countries. In Belgium (UAntwerp), France (UNISTRA) and Greece (ATh), the workload aligns with the ECTS standard (approximately 25-30 hours of work), while institutional regulations at Lithuania (KTU)

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<sup>29</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Discussions at FOCI Kaunas policy workshop – November 2023.

<sup>31</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Transparency of the learning outcomes': The joint programme is described in ECTS.

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, ECTS users' guide 2015, Publications Office of the European Union, 2015, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/87192>.

specifies a very precise 26.67 hours of work per credit. In the Netherlands, each credit represents 28 hours of study<sup>33</sup> and in Croatia, the estimated average student work per one credit is 30 hours. As a result, while the ECTS system is integrated into national legislation, there are (slight) disparities in the workload associated with each credit. HEIs should take these variations into account when developing joint programmes.

Additional challenges may arise when establishing joint programmes in international cooperation, especially if national and institutional regulations stipulate different minimum ECTS requirements for various elements or study components of the programmes. For instance, as mentioned under the criteria ‘Jointly designed programme by at least two HEIs from two Member States’, Belgium (UAntwerp) mandates that students must obtain a minimum of 20 ECTS from institutions other than their initial enrolment. Typically, for a master's programme, it is also a requirement that the thesis constitutes at least 1/5 of the total credit load of the study programme, with a minimum of 15 ECTS and a maximum of 30 ECTS.

These specific ECTS requirements are particularly prevalent in doctoral-level programmes. In Belgium (UAntwerp), a doctoral programme must encompass a training component of at least 20 ECTS. In Greece (AUTH), doctoral programmes may include an independent programme of doctoral courses, totaling at least 30 ECTS. In Croatia (UNIRI), doctoral studies consist of scientific research (a doctoral dissertation, comprising at least 90 ECTS), mandatory and elective subjects (at least 30 ECTS), and mobility at another domestic or foreign university or scientific institution for a minimum of three months (20 ECTS). In Lithuania (KTU), institutional regulations specify that doctoral students must follow studies of either 30 or 40 ECTS. Interestingly, in France (UNISTRA), using ECTS is not a common practice at the doctoral level.

When developing a joint programme, it is crucial for universities to assess whether the programme design aligns with these mandatory programme elements described in ECTS. Typically, these requirements are established at the institutional level, which may facilitate adjustments or exceptions for joint programmes when necessary. However, the survey conducted in the Expert Group Legal also noted that the discrepancies in the ECTS and mandatory study components of programmes may complicate the creation of international joint programmes.

### **Quality assurance in accordance with EA, accreditation by EQAR-registered agency<sup>34</sup>**

The European Approach to the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA) in the EHEA offers higher education institutions the opportunity to streamline their joint programme accreditation procedures, eliminating the need for multiple separate procedures. This is to overcome obstacles generally known in the creation of joint programmes in international cooperation, i.e., having to undergo multiple (re-)accreditation procedures. There are large differences in how quality assurance is organised for higher

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<sup>33</sup> According to the regulations, a full study year equals 60 study points, that is equal to 1.680 hours of study.

<sup>34</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under ‘Quality assurance arrangements’: Internal and external QA is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The programme, the study field or the institutions are accredited/evaluated by an EQAR-registered agency. If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved, the transnational programme should be accredited/evaluated preferably using the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA).

education among the Member States (externally or internally at an institutional or programme level). For Member States to adopt this unified European approach to quality assurance, they must incorporate the option into their national legislation, allowing higher education institutions to undergo evaluation by a quality assurance agency from another country. The stakeholders participating in the FOCI stakeholders need analysis indicating that some countries have not incorporated the European approach in their legislation, which may pose an obstacle. Both ministries and quality assurance agencies agreed that Member States that have not done so should consider implementing the EA.<sup>35</sup>

The option to conduct quality assurance in accordance with EA via the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)-registered agency has been implemented in the national legislation of all the countries analysed in this report. The Flemish (regional) law in Belgium notes that this instrument is specifically used for joint study programmes. In Croatia, pursuant to recent legal amendments, a joint study can be accredited by the national accreditation agency (Agency for Science and Higher Education, ASHE) or another international accreditation agency in the EU that is registered in the EQAR. Similarly in Lithuania (KTU), Netherlands (UM, UvA), France (UNISTRA) and Poland (TUL), next to the option of carrying out the quality assurance via an agency included in the EQAR, the joint programme can also be accredited via a national authority (Lithuania: Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, SKVC; Netherlands: Accreditation organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, NVAO; France: High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres); Poland: Polish Accreditation Committee, PKA). If the joint programme receives government funding, it is an additional requirement in the Netherlands that a macro-efficiency test will be carried out and approved by *Commissie Doelmatigheid Hoger Onderwijs* (CDHO). The CDHO mainly assesses whether the board has sufficiently proven that the labour market needs the programme and there is room for the programme in the existing educational offer. This may prove also an (administrative) obstacle in creating joint programmes.

However, although the EA is possible pursuant to national legislation, it does not mean that the single accreditation process is always used for joint programmes. Furthermore, there is a varying degree of how far the national legislation permits the recognition of foreign agencies simply based on registration in the EQAR. In the Netherlands and Greece, the agency is recognised based on its own national framework and requirements. In the Netherlands, the NVAO determines the eligibility of a foreign agency according to their Terms of Reference. In Greece, the eligibility of the foreign agency must be first approved by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education.<sup>36</sup> In France, quality agencies, such as Hcéres, undertake a self-assessment process every 5 years, followed by an external evaluation. This European recognition attests to the compliance of Hcéres' practices with the ESG. However, stakeholders from France noted that the EQAR/EA criterion should apply to evaluation only, as accreditation in France is the exclusive responsibility of the state. If the criteria would be mandatory, it may contravene with French regulations and would oblige institutions to pay for an additional

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<sup>35</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> See also the website of EQAR, 'Mapping system openness to Cross Border Quality Assurance': <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/cross-border-qa/mapping-system-openness-to-cbqa/>

evaluation for a degree course, when this degree is already evaluated and is sufficient for accreditation in France.

Additionally, AUTH has identified two key challenges in relation to the quality assurance of joint programmes. Firstly, there are obstacles arising from Greek legislation, which does not clearly distinguish between joint and double degrees, especially concerning the organization of courses and the management of quality assurance. For instance, Greek regulations may require the quality assurance description of courses to align with Greek standards rather than those of the partner university. Secondly, the requirements for accrediting new master's programs before they commence can also pose a hurdle to the successful establishment of joint or double degrees. These accreditation requirements may introduce delays and complexities that affect the timely launch of these programmes.

### **Joint policies for the joint programme<sup>37</sup>**

This criteria on 'Joint policies' entails that the higher education institutions involved have joint policies for admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment, and recognition procedures for the joint study programme. Consequently, this section briefly assesses the policies on admission assessment, and recognition, and whether significant distinctions are observed across systems. It is worth noting that these aspects of admission, supervision, and assessment are typically regulated on a programme-specific basis. Comparative remarks here are only made from a broader perspective. Additionally, matters related to assessment of doctoral dissertations are examined separately under the 'Co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations' criteria.

Aspects related to joint policies for joint programmes are typically addressed within the consortium agreement. In Croatia (UNIRI), there is a specific requirement that the agreement must clarify enrolment conditions, examination, and evaluation methods for students. Likewise, in Lithuania (KTU), the consortium agreement is obligated to encompass student admission conditions, study procedures, principles of assessment, and the crediting of student achievements. Additionally, Lithuania's regulations emphasise the need to maintain the integrity of content and learning outcomes delivered by partner institutions within joint programmes. In the Netherlands, national law specifies that details regarding enrolment for joint programmes can be mutually agreed upon in the consortium agreement. In the case of a joint programme with foreign institutions, a board of a Dutch university can still request from the students that they are enrolled at their university for the whole period.

Regarding admission procedures, in Belgium, Lithuania, Croatia, and Poland, national legislation generally permits the admission of students who hold relevant educational diplomas (typically secondary or higher education diplomas, depending on the programme level being applied for). Specific admission criteria are typically determined at the institutional level, or in some cases, at the

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<sup>37</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Joint policies for the joint programme': The higher education institutions involved have joint policies for admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures for the joint study programme.

programme level, as seen in the Netherlands. These criteria may include entrance examinations, especially for specialised programmes like medicine. In Belgium (UAntwerp), for international cooperation programmes that lead to multiple or joint degrees, the institution's board has the authority to assess the suitability and competence of applicants based on their submitted, legalized documents. UAntwerp has identified this process as a potential administrative challenge for students seeking admission to (joint) programmes. In terms of admission, it is not always the variation in admission criteria that leads to obstacles, but also the administrative complexities associated with recognising prior education. The concept of mutual recognition, as per the Lisbon Convention, implies that students with a higher education degree should be able to progress to the next level of higher education in countries that have adopted the Convention unless substantial differences exist in learning outcomes.<sup>38</sup> However, within the universities examined in this report, there are certain limitations regarding the extent to which recognition of prior education or documents is applied.

Regarding language requirements for admission, in Belgium, the institutional board has the authority to impose language prerequisites, such as proficiency in Dutch or the language of instruction. For programmes taught in English, a minimum B2-level proficiency is required. In Lithuania (KTU), it is explicitly stated that when a degree programme is delivered in English, students must demonstrate a minimum B2-level proficiency in the language. For foreign nationals seeking admission to the French higher educational institutions, demonstration of understanding of the French language adapted to the planned training is required.<sup>39</sup>

At the bachelor's level, Croatia (UNIRI) concludes bachelor's programmes either through a final exam or by defending a bachelor thesis. In Lithuania (KTU), students complete a bachelor's programme by final thesis (project) and/or final exams (per national regulations) or 'bachelor's final degree project' (per institutional regulations). Similarly, programme-specific regulations in the Netherlands specify that bachelor's programmes end with a bachelor's thesis. For master's programmes, Belgium (UAntwerp) specifies a master's thesis that must account for at least 1/5 of total credits (15-30 credits). Croatia (UNIRI) involves preparing and defending a master's thesis or passing a final exam, Lithuania (KTU) completes master's programmes with a final project and/or examinations, and in the Netherlands, a master's thesis concludes the programme, governed by specific programme regulations.

The variations in policies related to higher education programmes, such as admission and assessment criteria, can lead to obstacles. However, these differences are often addressed through agreements among the participating universities when designing the joint programme and policies. However, identifying obstacles can be challenging because these policies are frequently determined at the programme level, and even within a single institution, variations may exist among different disciplines or faculties. Consequently, it becomes crucial to enhance the transparency of such

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<sup>38</sup> Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165).

<sup>39</sup> Légifrance, 'Code de l'Éducation Partie Législative Première Partie : Dispositions Générales et Communes Livre Ier : Principes Généraux de l'Éducation Titre Ier : Le Droit à l'Éducation Chapitre Ier : Dispositions Générales . ArticleD612-12' 2007.

regulations to streamline and facilitate the process of designing joint programmes that adhere to both national and institutional guidelines. Furthermore, it is essential to address the administrative obstacles on recognising prior education and documents during admission. Additionally, during the EGL-consultation it was brought forward that on admission, is relevant to consider whether and how countries have implemented ‘*numerus clausus*’ i.e., requirements on limited number of students admitted to a programme or institution. Here, arising differences between the countries on such requirements may also be a cause for an obstacle.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of obstacles arising on ‘recognition’, that may also encompass the recognition of (professional) qualifications, and not only recognition of prior learning or diplomas. This is especially important when developing joint programmes in disciplines such as medicine and law, i.e., regulated professions, where a more in-depth examination of how recognition of qualifications and access to the labor market can be effectively achieved may be required. During the identification of existing joint programmes across the FOCI consortium for the selection of joint programmes to be piloted, it also became evident that joint programmes on regulated professions are rather limited in numbers. The pilot process predominantly consist of joint programmes from non-regulated professions, such as social sciences and humanities. Interestingly, when searching for best practices in recognition of qualifications, the authors found that within the field of Engineering, the ‘EUR ING Certificate’ provided by Engineers Europe overcomes the obstacles on recognition by providing a competency certificate for professional engineers, aiming to facilitate the mobility of practicing engineers within and beyond the geographical scope represented by the organizations’ member countries, establishing a framework for mutual recognition of qualifications. Existing initiatives and certification systems of this nature should also be brought into the discussion within the context of policy deliberations regarding the European degree (label).

### **Co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations<sup>40</sup>**

Specifically for higher education programme organised on the doctoral level, the EDL includes a mandatory criterion on doctoral dissertations, namely that they are co-evaluated by supervisors or committees with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries. As noted under the evaluation of the criterium ‘Jointly designed programme’, the universities apply specific regulations on joint programmes created at the doctoral level.

The criteria for co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations are already reflected in the current national and institutional framework. In Belgium (UAntwerp), it is specifically required that when doctoral programmes are created in cooperation with other foreign universities, the dissertation must be evaluated by a public defence before a jury composed of professors from the involved institutions. In Croatia (UNIRI), the doctoral dissertation is publicly defended and evaluated before a committee, consisting of at least three members who are recognised experts in the field from which the dissertation topic is submitted, and at least one of whom is from a university or scientific institution

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<sup>40</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under ‘Transnational joint degree delivery’: EQF 8 - Dissertations are co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries.

outside the University. In France (UNISTRA), the head of the establishment appoints a thesis jury of four to eight members, of which least half of French or foreign personalities, outside the research unit where the doctorate was prepared.

In Greece (AUPh), doctoral dissertations are evaluated by a seven-member examination committee. For the award of the doctoral degree, an agreement and positive evaluation of a doctoral dissertation by at least five members is required. The committee may consist of members from foreign institutions. At Lithuania (KTU), doctoral dissertations are evaluated by a Doctoral Committee which is composed of nine high-level research scientists, working either at the University or a foreign research and study institution. In Poland (TUL), the review committee consists of minimum three persons, who may be appointed from foreign higher education or research institutions.

In the Netherlands, regulations on doctoral programme are found on the institutional level, including separate chapters on joint programme organised in international cooperation. At UM, the assessment commission of the doctoral dissertation and defence consist of four-six members, of which at least one member of each cooperating institution and two other members. At UvA, the assessment commission consists of five to seven members, of which at least one is from a foreign institution.

Although this EDL-criteria can be met in the current legislative framework of these countries, it is essential to highlight that the criterium has given rise to certain uncertainties, particularly regarding whether 'co-evaluation' exclusively pertains to co-supervision during doctoral research, or if it extends to the co-evaluation of the dissertation and/or defence. Additionally, variations exist in national and institutional regulations, determining whether a supervisor may or must participate in the evaluation (committee). Other challenges may arise in connection with whether regulations strictly dictate the location for the public defense. Such stipulations can potentially give rise to conflicts, if both regulations of the participating HEIs require such defence to take place at their university.<sup>41</sup>

### **The joint degree can be awarded<sup>42</sup>**

The EDL criteria for awarding a joint degree relate to the outcome of the joint programme. As a result, this section assesses the countries where it is feasible to grant a joint degree and the conditions under which it can be achieved. In general, the regulatory framework in Belgium (UAntwerp), Croatia (UNIRI), France (UNISTRA), Greece (AUPh), Lithuania (KTU), Netherlands (UM, UvA), and Poland (TUL) permits the implementation of joint programmes leading to the award of joint degrees. However, it is important to note that there are specific conditions, limitations, and obstacles that will be elaborated upon below.

Pursuant to the regulatory framework in Belgium (UAntwerp) joint programme leading to a joint diploma awarded by two or more (foreign) universities is possible across all levels of higher

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<sup>41</sup> See also Schneider, H., Kortese, L., Sivonen, S., & Tans, R. (2021). *Analysing National and Institutional Doctoral Regulations: The Road to Successful Cross-border Cooperation on Joint Doctoral Programmes*. ITEM.

<sup>42</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Transnational joint degree delivery': The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree.



education, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programmes. Alternatively, the joint programme may lead to double or multiple degrees. Separate regulations are applicable specifically on joint doctoral degrees. In cases where a doctorate programme results in a double or joint diploma, it is compulsory for the student to spend a minimum of 6 months at the partner university.

In Croatia, there are currently substantial legal amendments have been implemented in 2022, with a particular focus on enhancing international cooperation and the mobility of the Croatian higher education system in Europe, aligning with the objectives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This resulted in the revision of other (lower level) national regulation in 2023, as well as revision of internal university regulation. According to the amendments to the Regulation on diploma content, the option to issue a joint diploma and diploma supplement is available upon completion of a joint programme. Furthermore, the regulations also explicitly address joint doctoral programmes, allowing for collaboration with domestic or foreign universities as long as the programme is accredited by both institutions.

In France, an international partnership is organized by an agreement concluded between one or more foreign higher education institutions. Depending on the national legislation of the partner establishments, different types of diplomas such as joint degrees, and bi-or multilingual diplomas could be awarded. On this account, French universities can only issue diplomas in this partnership if they have already been authorized by the State. The French educational code also mandates the contracting foreign parties to have the capacity to deliver, at the same level and in the same field of training, a diploma that is recognized by the competent authorities of their country. In that case, the institution must communicate the (multi-year) agreement to the minister of higher education, his supervisory authorities, and the minister of foreign affairs, but their lengths cannot exceed 5 years.

In Greece, specifically at AUTH, most joint programmes are organised on the doctoral level. The education law in Greece permits the award of a single degree or joint degrees for joint Postgraduate Programmes organized in collaboration with foreign institutions. Accordingly, the special cooperation protocol between Greek universities and foreign institutions determines whether, upon the successful completion of the joint Postgraduate programmes, a single degree by the collaborating institutions (joint degree) or the acquisition of distinct degrees (double or multiple degrees) by each collaborating institution should be awarded. Upon interview with the university authorities, it has been conferred that the University of Thessaloniki has little experience in organising joint or double degrees. This is due mostly to the difficulties imposed by the legislative framework which discouraged departments and faculty from attempting to organize such joint ventures. It is expected that recent legal amendments facilitate the organization of double degrees, but some hurdles are to be expected, particularly from the fact that the Greek legislation cannot understand the distinction between joint and double degrees regarding the organization of courses and the management of quality assurance (see also criteria 'Quality assurance in accordance with EA, accreditation by EQAR-registered agency').

In Lithuania (KTU), joint programmes may be offered with foreign education institutions, of which completion leads to a (joint) qualification(s) and a joint degree. It is important to note, however, that

while joint programmes in partnership with higher education institutions are possible across all levels of higher education, only bachelor's and master's joint programmes may result in the issuance of a joint diploma and degree. Therefore, when it comes to doctoral-level joint programmes, Lithuanian regulations only allow for the attainment of a double or multiple degree or diploma.

In the Netherlands, educational institutions may collaborate with one or more Dutch or foreign institutions to offer joint programme or tracks. Depending on the agreements in place, successful completion of these programmes can entitle the student to either a joint degree or two or more separate degrees. In cases where joint programmes involve foreign institutions, a Dutch university's board may still require that students maintain enrolment at their university for the entire duration of the programme. The University of Maastricht (UM), for example, stipulates that the institution responsible for enrolment also handles the arrangements for enrolment at Dutch universities. Furthermore, there are specific regulations governing joint doctoral programmes in the Netherlands, which outline the conditions and procedures for establishing such programmes that lead to the award of a joint degree. In Poland (TUL), it is possible to organise joint degrees with foreign higher education institutions leading to awarding of a joint diploma. However, the Polish law on higher education and science permits only specific categories of universities to do so. Separate regulations are applied to joint doctoral programmes leading to joint degrees.

The national and institutional regulations in Belgium (UAntwerp), Croatia (UNIRI), France (UNISTRA), Greece (AUnTh), Lithuania (KTU), Netherlands (UM, UvA) and Poland (TUL) furthermore outline that for joint programmes leading to joint degrees, it is compulsory that such cooperative framework is formalised in a consortium agreement. Figure 3 summarises the mandatory elements to be included in this agreement as specified in the regulations.

*Figure 3 – Mandatory elements of consortium agreement for creation of joint programme leading to award of a joint degree*

- Organisation of joint programme (educational activities per institution)
- Collection of fees and financial organisation
- Conditions on minimum enrolment and participation at home and/or foreign institution
- Student admission and selection policies
- Tuition fees, financial management and scholarships
- Dispute resolution, amendment and termination of the agreement, responsibilities of the partners
- Professional or academic title (degree) obtained upon completion of studies
- Mobility of students and teachers
- Examination and evaluation methods of students
- Languages of the programme
- Method of issuing a final document of joint study: Preparation and template of joint diploma and diploma supplement
- Organisation of a joint doctoral programme (e.g., dissertation, public defence, assessment, procedures for disagreement among parties)

Moreover, the regulatory framework provides specific requirements regarding the format and content of (joint) diplomas. In Belgium (UAntwerp), the diploma must clearly state the awarded degree and specialization corresponding to the programme's level and workload. It is signed by the

heads of the institution(s) and bears the seal and logo of the institution. In the case of a joint (or multiple) degree, institutions may supplement the diploma with additional information, beyond what is stipulated in their national legislation. These diplomas and accompanying supplements are provided free of charge and are issued in Dutch and English. In France (UNISTRA), diplomas in international partnership are awarded by the heads of establishment on the recommendation of the juries. The diploma is drawn up in French, and translated, if necessary, into a foreign language(s). The joint diploma awarded is automatically recognized in France. It must also be recognized in the partner country(ies) according to the terms of the agreement signed between the establishments. In Croatia (UNIRI), if the diploma is issued upon completion of a joint study, it must include the full names, signatures, and seals of all higher education institutions involved in the joint study's execution. Furthermore, these diplomas may also be issued in languages other than Croatian. In Lithuania (KTU), joint diplomas leading to joint qualifications must incorporate the seals of the higher education institutions on bachelor's or master's diplomas. These joint diplomas and supplements are signed by the rectors of the universities, and the university's stamp is included. Any additional information about the study not covered in the Regulations, such as details about completed joint study programmes, may also be included in the documents. In the Netherlands (UM, UvA), the diploma should contain the names of the institutions and the programme, a list of courses, grades, and information regarding accreditation. For joint diplomas resulting from joint programmes, the names of the other participating institutions should also be included in the diploma. In Poland, In the case of joint diplomas, the home university usually issues its diploma with the logos of the partner universities. A representative from TUL noted that they have moved away from a common diploma signed by all partner universities because it is a logistical problem.

#### **A joint diploma supplement is issued<sup>43</sup>**

Next to the joint diploma (as outlined above), the student is issued a diploma supplement. However, not all regulations specifically mention if the student is issued a joint diploma supplement, or separate diploma supplements by each of the participating universities. Generally, the diploma supplement follows the European format pursuant to the Bologna process.

In Belgium (UAntwerp), the regulations stipulate that alongside the diploma, a diploma supplement must be provided, adhering to the European format. This supplement must detail the nature of the study programme, its duration, and the credits earned. It is supplied free of charge by the awarding institution in Dutch. Additionally, the diploma supplement can be provided free of charge in English, or another language used as the instruction language for the programme. In the case of joint doctoral programmes, the diploma supplement accompanying the joint diploma must explicitly state that the research was conducted at all universities involved.

In Croatia (UNIRI), a diploma supplement is issued alongside the diploma, provided in both Croatian and English at no cost, or in another language used during the studies. The diploma supplement includes a specific list of information that offers a more comprehensive view of the completed study and the participating higher education institutions. In the context of joint studies (joint programmes),

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<sup>43</sup> This refers to the EDL criteria under 'Transparency of the learning outcomes': A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to the student at the end of the joint study programme.

any additional information that is essential for understanding the qualification may also be included in the diploma supplement.

In France (UNISTRA), a diploma supplement is drawn up in French, and translated, if necessary, into a foreign language(s). Interestingly, the regulatory framework in France provides also other options for supplementary document. In all cases and more particularly when a joint diploma could not be issued, a document without legal value can accompany the French diploma, for the sole purpose of improving the readability of the international partnership. This document may be written in the language(s) chosen by the partner(s), including the seal of the French establishment and the signature of the president of the university, but not having no legal value, it cannot under any circumstances be countersigned by the rector of the academy, chancellor of universities. It cannot in any way replace the diploma supplement. Furthermore, there are additional certifications for certain diplomas: in language, computer science, etc. Some are required nationally, others by the university, and finally others can be offered or organized by the faculty or training team. For any certification, the evaluation procedure must be validated by the *Commission de la Formation de la Vie Universitaire* (CFVU) training committee (Education Committee of the University). Some may include external organizations in the process (professional branches for example). In case the EDL would be issued in a form of certificate, it should be further examined whether it would require such an CFVU-validation.

In Lithuania (KTU), upon completion of a joint degree programme, students receive a joint diploma and a diploma supplement. The diploma supplement contains information about the achieved study results and specifies the name of the study programme. Bachelor's and master's diplomas and supplements are bilingual and issued in English and Lithuanian. For joint diplomas leading to a joint qualification, the seals of the higher education institutions are included on both the diploma and the diploma supplement.

In the Netherlands (UM, UvA), in addition to the diploma, a supplement is issued to the student. This supplement provides information about the content and nature of the study, including the programme's name and institution, whether it is scientific or of applied sciences, a description of the programme's content, and the workload. The supplement is provided in Dutch or English, following the European framework.

### **Other mandatory EDL criteria<sup>44</sup>**

A broader look was taken at other mandatory EDL criteria, including ‘Transnational campus – access to services’, ‘Innovative learning approaches’, ‘Graduate outcomes’, and ‘Inclusiveness and sustainability’ which are aspects that are generally less regulated than the other proposed mandatory criteria. These could be generally observed in the regulatory framework of all universities analysed in this report. Regulations included provisions on equal treatment, equal opportunities, and inclusiveness among students (Netherlands – UM and UvA, Croatia – UNIRI, Lithuania – KTU). In Belgium, regulations referred to, also in the context of international mobility, access to facilities and the accessibility and reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Croatia (UNIRI) and Lithuania (KTU) provided in their regulations access to libraries and study materials. Specifically in Croatia (UNIRI), the regulations stipulated rights for full-time EU students to access library sources and other learning sources, student grants, subsidised food, and accommodation. UNIRI also provides various leisure activities and psychological and career counselling. In Poland (TUL) and Greece (AUTH) innovative learning approaches are implemented, modern teaching methods with emphasis on interdisciplinarity and innovative research at the highest level of quality according to internationally recognized criteria, including distance learning. France’s higher education also follows the UN sustainable development goals and is aiming to have the transition toward a sustainable society. Furthermore, it ensures the adequacy of training courses with the needs of the job market to help students find lasting employment. It is possible that these aspects of innovative learning, inclusiveness, and access to services are applied across all the universities, this section only referred to what was explicitly already mentioned in the main legislative texts on higher education.

### **Conclusions on the legal and administrative feasibility of the mandatory European degree label criteria**

Table 3 below concludes the findings on the mandatory EDL criteria and their legal and administrative feasibility pursuant to the current national and institutional framework of the universities and countries analysed in this report.

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<sup>44</sup> This refers, where possible, to the EDL criteria under ‘Transnational campus – access to services’: The joint programme provides enrolled students, regardless of their location, with seamless and free access to the participating HEI’s services such as e.g. IT services, shared infrastructure and facilities, (online) library services, faculty development and support, academic guidance and psychological counselling, career advice/mentoring, alumni systems, ‘Innovative learning approaches’: The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components using student-centred and/or challenged-based approaches, ‘Graduate outcomes’: The joint programme has a system to monitor graduate outcomes. This system can be at the level of the programme or institutional level(s). If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of EUROGRADUATE, ‘Inclusiveness and sustainability’: The joint programme commits to wide participation through socially and geographically inclusive admission through tailored measures for all categories of disadvantaged students; EQF 8 - The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter.

Table 3 – Legal and administrative feasibility of the mandatory European degree label criteria

Mandatory EDL criteria for joint programme	Legally feasible per current national and institutional framework
<b>Jointly designed programme by at least two HEIs from two Member States</b>	Yes
<b>Joint programme includes period of physical mobility</b>	Yes
<b>At least two EU languages</b>	Yes, but with some limitations and recent developments towards promoting national language in education (Netherlands and France)
<b>Use of ECTS</b>	ECTS system implemented in national legislation, but variations exist in the work hours dedicated for each credit, and on mandatory study components of higher education programmes or minimum stays stipulated in ECTS. At the doctoral level in France, no ECTS are used as it is not considered as a teaching-based curricula.
<b>Quality assurance in accordance with EA, accreditation by EQAR-registered agency</b>	EA implemented by the national legislation; however, the degree of implementation differs (whether EQAR registered agencies are automatically recognised by local QA agencies), specific obstacles in Greece in relation to EA and terminology (joint/double degree), in France stakeholders noted that EA cannot be mandatory, otherwise it would contravene with national legislation. Administrative obstacle may arise from additional procedures, such as mandatory macro-efficiency tests (Netherlands).
<b>Joint policies for the joint programme</b>	Possible but large variations on admission criteria, language requirements and the recognition of documents, prior learning, diplomas and professional qualifications that may lead to (legal or administrative) obstacles.
<b>Co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations</b>	Yes, although the meaning of ‘co-evaluation’ not clear as such.
<b>Joint degree can be awarded</b>	Joint degree can be awarded in Belgium, France, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania (bachelor, master), Netherlands. In Lithuania, joint degree on doctoral level not possible.

	Greece noted to experience many legal barriers in awarding joint degrees.
<b>A joint diploma supplement is issued</b>	Yes (generally when issuing a joint diploma is possible)
<b>Other mandatory EDL criteria</b>	Yes

The assessment of the legal and administrative feasibility of the mandatory European Degree Label (EDL) criteria depends on the perspective from which they are examined. When considering a simplified view, that is, whether these criteria can be met for existing joint programmes within the framework of national and institutional regulations, the answer is generally yes. For example, if it is assessed whether the ECTS system is implemented in the current regulatory framework, the answer is affirmative.

However, when delving deeper into how these criteria are actually implemented in the national legislative frameworks and the conditions they entail, differences and potential obstacles are uncovered. This more nuanced perspective is also applied when completing Table 3, which outlines the various EDL criteria. While criteria such as joint programme design, physical mobility, co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations, and the provision of a joint diploma supplement align with existing regulatory frameworks, some challenges may arise in areas like creating joint programmes in two EU languages, ensuring the effective use of ECTS, implementing quality assurance measures, and establishing joint policies. Furthermore, it is worth noting that not every country or institution can issue a joint degree on all levels of higher education programmes.

This leads to the first key conclusions regarding the mandatory EDL criteria. While these criteria can be valuable for assessing whether an existing joint program possesses ‘European value’ (as one of the objectives of the EDL initiative), they may not comprehensively address the complexity of whether joint degrees or even a European degree, can be successfully created (which is also an objective of the EDL initiative). This conclusion raises three important points:

- Firstly, some EDL criteria are somewhat simplistic but highly specific in others. For instance, while the requirement for the use of ECTS is met by simply describing a joint programme with that credit system (without necessarily ensuring compatibility or uniformity in implementation or credit allocation, e.g., for minimum stays or mandatory study components), the EDL criteria also include very detailed requirements, such as co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations. On the other hand, it is not clear whether this refers to the evaluation of the dissertation or (also) joint supervision. Another example is the criteria on 'joint policies' that is used as an umbrella criterion for multiple aspects (admission, selection, evaluation, assessment, monitoring, and recognition). While it is possible to agree on joint policies by means of a consortium agreement, several obstacles still arise in admission and recognition. For instance, differences exist regarding whether

the documents submitted by students are automatically recognised in the admission process. As noted under the following point some critical aspects of joint programmes on the other hand are completely missing from the EDL criteria.

- Secondly, the EDL criteria do not encompass all the necessary elements required for the creation of a joint programme (or a joint degree leading to a joint diploma) on a European level. The fact that national and institutional regulations align with the current EDL criteria does not guarantee that the establishment of joint programmes on the European level will be without obstacles. Other challenges may emerge that are not necessarily reflected in the EDL criteria when creating a joint programme, such as financing arrangements, including tuition fee structures. Although the EDL may be a step towards transnational education and may bring back the conversations relating to fully implementing the Bologna Process in the EU<sup>45</sup>, it may only have a limited effect in alleviating the obstacles and challenges experienced in the creation of joint degrees on the European level. Nevertheless, the assessment and awarding of a European degree (label) must also remain feasible without extensive administrative burden. Therefore, it must be carefully evaluated whether it is the most appropriate approach to address this issue by extending the list of criteria.
- Hence, while the EDL criteria can serve as a valuable tool for evaluating whether a joint programme aligns with ‘European values’, the criteria are rather limited. Their current form is not adequate for the comprehensive creation of (European) joint degrees. This conclusion also raises the question and the need for clarification: what is the purpose of the EDL criteria, what is it aiming to achieve? Are they only meant as a tool to reflect policies on European higher education, or (also) a tool to facilitate overcoming barriers in the creation of joint degrees? This should be made clear before a final conclusion on the legal feasibility or appropriateness of the EDL criteria can be made.

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<sup>45</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 33.



## 2.3 Potential outcomes of the European degree label

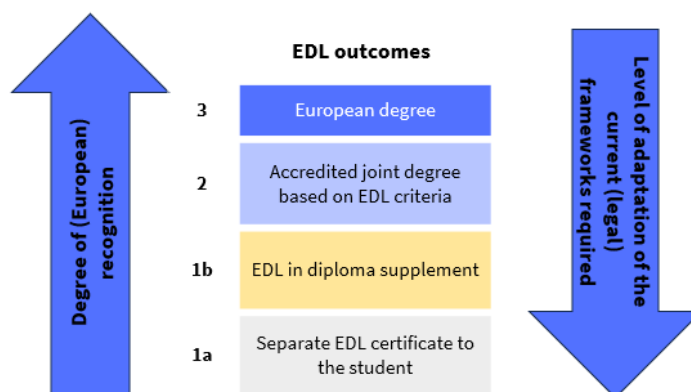
This section will evaluate what the potential outcomes of the European degree label would be, i.e., if a joint programme or other joint educational unit meets the EDL criteria, and in which form the European degree (label) could be issued pursuant to the current legislative framework. Shortly, reflections will be made on the desirability of such outcomes on the basis of FOCI stakeholder needs analysis. In total, three outcomes will be evaluated. The evaluation process begins by considering the least legally complex option and then progresses towards options of greater recognition on the European level but with changes required to the legal framework, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Again, it is important to reiterate the significance of understanding the relevant terminology. This understanding relates to the objective of the European degree label: whether it can (or should be) issued for various types of joint programmes (including joint, double, or multiple degrees), only for joint degrees or/and for other joint educational units. Outcome 1 primarily addresses joint programmes and educational units that align with this terminology, whereas Outcome 2 and 3 specifically concentrates on joint programmes that culminate in the attainment of a joint (European) degree.

Figure 4: Outcomes of the EDL

### Outcome 1: Awarding a European degree label

This option entails that a European degree label would be awarded to joint programmes and other joint educational units that meet the common European criteria. It could be issued in two ways: either in a separate certificate issued to the student (Option 1A), or as a label in the diploma supplement that is awarded to the students (Option 1B).



### Outcome 1A: European degree label in a separate certificate issued to the student

This option presents the fewest legal challenges. There are no (major) legal obstacles to providing students with an additional document alongside their diploma and diploma supplement that certifies their education programme's (or joint educational unit's) compliance with the EDL criteria and provides more information on it. However, the legal feasibility of this approach is tied to some drawbacks. Such a document may not necessarily hold national recognition, which could limit its additional value. One key aim of the European degree label is to serve as a promotional tool for higher education institutions and employers in recognizing transnational qualifications

and certificates. Since this document would lack legal validity, it might not be the most effective means of achieving this objective. Nevertheless, it would be the simplest option in terms of legal and administrative considerations.

**Outcome 1B: European degree label as a label in the diploma supplement**

Another option involves incorporating the label on the diploma supplement for joint programmes that meet the common European criteria. This option may be legally more complicated than Outcome 1A because it necessitates an examination of national and institutional regulations to determine whether they permit the inclusion of additional information or labels in the diploma documents. Some national regulations are quite prescriptive regarding the content and format of diplomas, making it more advisable to include the label in the diploma supplement, as it generally offers greater flexibility. As discussed under the criteria for 'A joint degree can be awarded', the regulatory framework exceptionally allows that the diploma supplement issued in the context of joint programmes may be supplemented with any pertinent information that is relevant to the joint programme. Given that many countries adhere to the European format for diploma supplements, this European model could be utilized to incorporate a label for such programmes. This option might be more appealing than Outcome 1A, as the label would become an integral part of the diploma documents rather than a separate document with limited value.

**Outcome 2: Accredited joint degree based on common European criteria**

This option would entail that a joint study programme leading to a joint degree would be accredited based on common European criteria. This outcome slightly overlaps with 1B, as at the end the result of the accreditation could be presented as a label in the diploma (supplement). However, under this outcome, the label confirming the accreditation would hold additional value in a joint degree as an accredited 'quality label'.

As it was observed in Chapter 2.2 of this report on the evaluation of the mandatory EDL criteria, there would be a need to refine the criteria or to find another approach to overcome the obstacles in the creation of joint degrees. In order to facilitate the creation of joint degrees, identifying the most critical national regulations on higher education and establishing common ground is vital. Achieving this would demand greater transparency and an in-depth analysis of national institutional legislation, similar to the approach taken in this report, but extended to the disciplinary and program levels. It is worth noting that this option might require amendments to both national and institutional regulations, making it potentially less feasible in the short term. In this context, the stakeholders' analysis in the FOCI stakeholder needs assessment revealed significant challenges, particularly concerning the development of tools that align with national accreditation systems. The survey results clearly indicated a somewhat reduced level of optimism among accreditation agencies, which are also responsible for shaping quality assurance policies in higher education at the national level, regarding the implementation of the label. The relatively low scores given by representatives of this stakeholder group in the survey may be attributed to concerns about the need to safeguard national regulations. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the awarding of (accredited) joint degrees should enhance the attractiveness of European

education. However, it should not undermine or compete with national qualification systems and the regular educational offer.

**Outcomes 1 and 2: Who will check the compatibility of the joint programme (degree) with the European criteria and issue the label?**

One of the main questions for these implementation options is then who would carry out the assessment of whether the programme meets the European criteria and decides if in the context of that programme a European degree (label) can be issued. A key point is to find an approach that would ensure that the criteria are applied uniformly. This could be for instance via a dedicated body (where universities would submit the programme for evaluation, potentially including a stage of self-assessment and review by the dedicated body). This approach is known for the “Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation” (CeQuInt), a label from the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).<sup>46</sup> If the label is issued via programme accreditation, it could be done by an agency for instance registered in the EQAR as part of the mandatory accreditation process, potentially involving multiple agencies in the process to guarantee an international dimension. The common European criteria would then be integrated into the European approach to quality assurance (EA). It is worthwhile to note that there is already some overlap between the EDL-criteria and the EA.<sup>47</sup> The stakeholders during the FOCI Kaunas policy workshop also raised this point and the importance to ensure that specific elements are not externally evaluated twice. Nevertheless, this approach may entail some obstacles since not all EU Member States have incorporated the EA in their legislation. In the FOCI stakeholder analysis, ministries and quality assurance agencies agreed that Member States that have not done so should consider implementing the EA.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, preference among the survey participants was given to existing mechanisms to accept and recognize the label criteria.<sup>49</sup> Another option would be to award the label automatically (and exclusively) to joint programmes offered within the university alliances that are part of the Commission’s European Universities Initiative. As seen from Chapter 2.2, the national and institutional framework already provides some specific exceptions and attention to joint programmes created in the context of the European Universities Alliances. Here, also the results of the other EDL-pilot projects on legal status for such university alliances are relevant to consider.

**Outcome 3: European degree**

The highest degree of European recognition in higher education would be the establishment of a (joint) European degree. This would entail the accreditation of a European degree programme leading to a qualification that is universally recognized across the European Union (EU) in accordance with the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Member States. Although the European degree could potentially have the benefits of a fully recognised qualification enhancing access to further stages of education and opportunities in the labour market, given the current national and institutional regulations and persisting challenges in the creation of joint programmes, it appears to be the least feasible option in terms of legal changes required. Instead,

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<sup>46</sup> <https://cequint.eu/>

<sup>47</sup> For instance, the use of ECTS, admission and recognition (‘joint policies’), joint design and delivery.

<sup>48</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 30.

<sup>49</sup> FOCI 2.1 – Report on stakeholders needs analysis and developed evaluation methodology, p. 33.

a more practical approach might be to focus on strengthening and fully implementing existing tools and agreements that support the development of joint programmes. This includes the full implementation of the Bologna Process, which promotes academic mobility and cooperation across European higher education institutions, the Lisbon Convention on the automatic recognition of qualifications, and the European approach to quality assurance of joint programmes. It was found and also recognised during the FOCI Kaunas policy workshop that in this discussion, it is important to find a synergy between the existing instruments and the EDL-initiative, rather than creating additional parallel procedures. Moreover, the stakeholders highlighted that significant changes in the regulatory frameworks would be necessary for a European degree to be implemented, however such revisions of regulatory frameworks can only happen if the added value is clear, and the necessity of the European degree is clearly demonstrated.

To conclude, it seems that the most practical and legally feasible option at this stage is to designate the European degree as a label in the diploma supplement. To achieve this, a comprehensive step-by-step plan can be developed to navigate and address the legal obstacles present at both national and institutional levels. This approach aims to progressively overcome challenges, which may eventually culminate in broader European-level recognition in the form of a joint European degree.

### 3. Conclusions & Recommendations

As one of the key deliverables of the FOCI project, the aim of this report was to identify legal, administrative, and procedural pathways for issuing a European degree label and to evaluate the proposed mandatory European Degree label criteria in light of the national and institutional regulatory framework of the participating universities in the FOCI Consortium, namely of Belgium (UAntwerp), Croatia (UNIRI), France (UNISTRA), Greece (AUTH), Lithuania (KTU), the Netherlands (UM, UvA), and Poland (TUL). Through a comparative analysis, the report identified potential legal or administrative obstacles that could impede the alignment of joint programmes with the EDL criteria and ultimately with the creation of joint (European) degrees.

As a starting point, the report observed variations in definitions and terminology across the EU Member States concerning terms such as "European label", "European degree" and "joint programme or degree" and how they can be understood in different contexts and European languages (translations). To address this, the report recommended the creation of **standardized definitions to clarify their meanings and establish terminology that is applied consistently and uniformly in the policy discussions surrounding the European degree (label)**. For instance, one notable ambiguity addressed in the report pertained to whether the potential European Degree label should be issued on other types of joint programmes than those leading to joint degrees (or a joint diploma or joint qualification, as understood under some legal frameworks), including double or multiple degrees, or/and well as other joint educational units and innovative models, such as micro-credentials.

The report uncovered several challenges in creating joint programmes in international cooperation between two or more higher education institutions. Early in the research process, it became evident that, depending on the national system, there were multiple regulatory levels – ranging from national or regional to institutional, and down to specific faculty and program-level regulations. **The existence of these diverse regulatory models, scattered regulations and the fact that English translations were often unavailable may complicate the development of joint programmes.** These complexities can present hurdles when institutions are assessing the compatibility of their regulations with the envisioned structure of joint (degree) programmes. Nevertheless, identifying the (levels of) regulations allows for the pinpointing of the origins of potential obstacles, thereby facilitating the pursuit of amendments or changes at the appropriate regulatory level, should the need arise. However, it is also because of this complexity that, in the context of this report, it is difficult to draw specific recommendations on what legal changes must be made in order to make a joint (European) degree (label) possible. These recommendations cannot be made uniformly to every Member State or institution since there may even be regulatory differences on the disciplinary level that may (not) be a source of obstacle. However, this report made conclusions on the general perspective of *legal feasibility*: whether the criteria would be implementable within the current national and institutional frameworks.

When assessing the compatibility of the current national and institutional frameworks with the mandatory EDL criteria, the conclusions depended on the perspective applied. When considering

a simplified view, that is, whether these criteria can be met for existing joint programmes pursuant to the framework of national and institutional regulations, the answer is generally yes. For example, if it is assessed whether the ECTS system is implemented in the current regulatory framework, the answer is affirmative. However, when delving deeper into how these criteria are actually implemented in the national legislative frameworks and the conditions they entail, differences and potential obstacles are uncovered. While criteria such as **joint programme design, physical mobility, co-evaluation of doctoral dissertations**, and the provision of a **joint diploma supplement align with existing regulatory frameworks**, some **challenges may arise in** areas like creating joint programmes in **two EU languages**, ensuring the **effective use of ECTS**, implementing **quality assurance** measures, and establishing **joint policies** on admission and recognition. Furthermore, it is worth noting that **not every country or institution examined in this report can issue a joint degree on all levels of higher education.**

This led to the initial key findings concerning the mandatory European Degree Label (EDL) criteria. While the **EDL criteria can be a valuable tool for assessing whether a joint program possesses a European dimension** and aligns with 'European values' (another term that could benefit from clarification), their current form is somewhat limited. **The current form of the criteria may not be sufficiently comprehensive to address the complexity of successfully creating joint degrees or a European degree**, for two main reasons. First, certain EDL criteria are relatively simplistic, while others are highly specific. For example, meeting the requirement for using the ECTS credit system could be achieved by merely describing a joint programme with that credit system, yet without ensuring compatibility with the legal frameworks mandating credit allocation on specific study components or minimum stays stipulated in ECTS. Furthermore, the EDL consists of highly specific criteria, such as the co-evaluation of dissertations on the doctoral level, but also an 'umbrella' criterion to cover multiple aspects such as 'Joint policies' on admission, selection, recognition and evaluation. Secondly, the EDL criteria do not cover all the necessary elements for establishing a joint programme or a joint degree. Compliance with current EDL criteria in national and institutional regulations does not guarantee the smooth establishment of joint programs on the European level. Additional challenges may arise during the creation of a joint programme, such as navigating financing arrangements, including tuition fee structures. However, it is important to keep in mind that expanding the list of EDL criteria may not be desirable to maintain the effectiveness and feasibility of the label assessment and awarding process, avoiding significant administrative burdens. Hence, it is imperative to strike a balance in the evaluation of the suitability of the EDL criteria, ensuring they effectively capture the essential elements for (European) joint programmes but also remain feasible to assess. However, this conclusion raises an important question: is it even the intention of the EDL initiative to support the *creation* of joint programmes on the European level in this sense?

Indeed, this conclusion raises this question and **need for clarification regarding the purpose of the EDL initiative**: the intended role of the EDL criteria and their overarching objectives. Are the criteria designed solely as a tool to reflect policies in European higher education, highlight the European character and values or do they also serve as a means to indicate excellence (mark) and/or facilitate the resolution of barriers in creating joint degrees? The precise aims of the EDL

criteria remain unclear within the European Commission's initiative. Following the earlier discussion on terminology, there is a parallel need to explicitly define the purpose. In a similar vein, the connection with other initiatives in the framework of European Education Area should be emphasized. For example, the question to what extent the EDL is connected to the European University Initiative and the new forms of learning that are created. Additionally, these considerations, coupled with the legal obstacles surrounding joint degrees, should be taken into account when discussing refinements to the EDL criteria. These aspects will also be addressed in the FOCI Policy recommendations to be issued in Spring 2024.

In the second part of the report, the focus shifted to exploring **potential outcomes regarding the format in which the European Degree Label (EDL) could be issued within the current regulatory framework**. The evaluation process began by considering the least legally complex option and then progressed toward options with greater recognition on the European level, albeit requiring changes to the legal framework. Next to these aspects, the report also made brief remarks about the 'desirability' or added value of such an outcome.

**Issuing a separate certificate** to a student upon completing a joint programme or joint educational unit that aligns with the EDL criteria was identified as the legally least complex option. However, stakeholders noted its limited added value, particularly in terms of legal validity and recognition, making it the least desirable. A **more viable option, both from legal and administrative perspectives, is to incorporate the ED label into the diploma supplement**. Although this option requires an examination of national and institutional regulations to determine their flexibility in allowing additional information or labels in diploma documents, the report's analysis indicated that supplementary documents generally offer more flexibility. This option may be more appealing than the separate certificate, as it integrates the label as an integral part of the diploma documents. Stakeholders at the FOCI policy workshop also highlighted that including the European degree (label) within the diploma supplement of joint degrees is **perceived as the best 'backup option'**, as it is already feasible in most regulatory contexts, though some countries may require modifications to their regulatory frameworks to adopt this approach.

The report explored additional steps, considering the potential outcome of achieving an **accredited joint degree based on common European criteria**. This option, slightly overlapping with the label in the diploma supplement, adds value as an accredited quality label in a joint degree context. However, it requires greater transparency and a comprehensive analysis of national and institutional legislation, possibly leading to regulatory amendments and making it less feasible in the short term. Stakeholder analysis revealed challenges in aligning tools with national accreditation systems, and survey results indicated reduced optimism among accreditation agencies. While the option of an accredited joint degree based on European degree label criteria is supported, **there are differing opinions on its desirability, with some recognizing its value and others suggesting it requires regulatory changes with limited added value**.

The final outcome examined in this report was EDL as a **fully recognized qualification as a joint (European) degree**. This would entail the accreditation of a European degree programme leading to a qualification that is universally recognized across the European Union (EU) in accordance with the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Member States. Although the European degree could potentially have the benefits of a fully recognised qualification enhancing access to further stages of education and opportunities in the labour market, given the current national and institutional regulations and persisting challenges in the creation of joint programmes, **it appears to be (legally) the least feasible option**. It was found and also recognised during the FOCI Kaunas policy workshop that significant changes in the regulatory frameworks would be necessary for that format to be implemented, however, **such revisions of regulatory frameworks can only occur if the added value is clear, and the necessity of the European degree is clearly demonstrated**.

**Progressing towards a European degree necessitates changes in regulatory frameworks at both national and institutional levels, alongside political will and advocacy. The label, as an initial step, can serve as an incentive, fostering trust-building. A clear understanding of the additional value** that the European degree label and dimension bring to higher education is imperative. Moreover, efforts should be directed toward fortifying and **fully implementing existing tools and agreements** supporting joint programme development. This involves the comprehensive implementation of the Bologna Process, fostering academic mobility and collaboration across European higher education institutions, adherence to the Lisbon Convention on the mutual recognition of qualifications, and embracing the European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes. Stakeholders consistently emphasized the **importance of synergies with existing instruments. Rather than introducing a separate track alongside existing tools, the focus should be on implementing and optimizing these instruments to reinforce each other effectively**.

Moving forward, overcoming the challenges on the path to a European degree requires collaborative efforts, strategic initiatives and alliances as presented in the FOCI-project. The European Degree Label is the first step in this journey toward establishing a European degree.

### **3.1 Research limitations**

Several limitations can be identified in this research. The accuracy of the (comparative) analysis heavily relies on the data provided by the universities and stakeholders involved in the FOCI project. This is also the case for the analysis in the Annex. Due to feasibility concerns and the demarcation of the research, not all potentially relevant regulations were analysed in this report. In instances where English translations were unavailable, machine translations were utilized, introducing a potential for inaccuracies. The report also focused on the mandatory EDL criteria only, overlooking the relevance of optional criteria. Moreover, the report predominantly adopts a legal perspective, rather than a comprehensive discussion of policy objectives and the aspect of 'desirability.' Consequently, making specific recommendations for changes in legal frameworks proves challenging, especially given the ongoing discussions and potential developments on the



EDL criteria and the complex legal framework that would require a more extensive and detailed look beyond the scope and purpose of this report. For the section on France, some of the internal regulation from UNISTRA was partially missed from the final report, and little room was provided to check all the analysis considering the delivery of the materials a few days before the deadline of the project.

## Annex 1: National- and institutional-specific analysis

### Belgium (University of Antwerp)

In Belgium, regulation on higher education is found on the regional level<sup>50</sup>, as the competences on education are divided among the three Communities.<sup>51</sup> Since this analysis will focus on the University of Antwerp, focus will accordingly be placed on the Flemish Community of Belgium and the applicable regional legislation.<sup>52</sup> Next to regional legislation, higher education is further regulated on the institutional (general and faculty) level.<sup>53</sup>

Higher education comprises programmes leading to bachelor's, master's, and advanced master's degrees, and postgraduate certificates<sup>54</sup> with the corresponding title.<sup>55</sup> The fields of science in which degrees may be awarded by the University of Antwerp are listed in the Codex.<sup>56</sup> The Codex also elaborates on admission criteria (see below). In general, a student with a previous education diploma (secondary or higher education diploma, depending on the programme level applied for) may be admitted.<sup>57</sup> Special admission criteria apply to specific programmes, such as Medicine.<sup>58</sup> A foreign diploma of higher education is equated with the corresponding Flemish qualification on the basis of 1) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and 2) the presence of a training structure that is current in the European Higher Education Area.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, in the context of programme of international cooperation (leading to multiple or joint degrees), the Steering Committee may assess the suitability and competence of the student to follow the programme<sup>60</sup>, on the basis of legalised documents submitted by the student.<sup>61</sup> The Steering Committee may also attach language requirements on admission, i.e. requiring a sufficient level of Dutch or the language of the instruction.<sup>62</sup> The language of instruction is generally Dutch, however, other languages of instruction may be used in exceptional situations, for instance when a programme

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<sup>50</sup> This analysis focused on the following legislation applicable on the regional level of the Flemish Community: Decision of the Flemish Government to codify decretal provisions relating to higher education, Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>51</sup> Article 127(1)(2) Belgian Constitution.

<sup>52</sup> Decision of the Flemish Government to codify decretal provisions relating to higher education, hereinafter: Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>53</sup> Due to limited availability of the materials, and the fact that higher education was to a large extent regulated on the regional level, this analysis focused only on one institutional regulation: Regulations relating to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at the University of Antwerp.

<sup>54</sup> Articles II.57-58 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>55</sup> Article II.75. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>56</sup> Article II.80. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>57</sup> See, for instance, admission criteria for bachelor's programme in Article II.178 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>58</sup> Chapter 1 Admission Requirements, Section 3 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>59</sup> Article II.255-258 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>60</sup> Article II.151. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>61</sup> The Belgian government requires that students submit legalised copies of each document. See: <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/legalisation-documents>.

<sup>62</sup> Articles II.193-194 Codex on Higher Education.

is part of a European Universities Initiative, or when the training programme is specifically designed for foreign students.<sup>63</sup> In case of joint programme organised with a foreign institution, the deviation from the language requirement must be requested from the Flemish government.<sup>64</sup>

The academic year runs from September 1 (latest from 1 October) and ends the day before the start of the following academic year.<sup>65</sup> At University of Antwerp, the academic year typically commences around the penultimate week of September and extends until the end of June (with a resit possibility in late August/September).<sup>66</sup> Credits, defined as international unit accepted by the Flemish Community (ECTS), correspond to 25-30 hours of prescribed teaching, learning and evaluation activities.<sup>67</sup>

A joint diploma may be awarded by two or more universities, within their educational competence, to a student who has successfully completed a bachelors, masters or doctoral programme organised jointly by the universities.<sup>68</sup> The framework, organisation of the joint programme and collection of fees is laid down in a (mandatory) cooperation agreement between the institutions involved.<sup>69</sup> The student must acquire at least 20 credits at the institution(s) other than the one they were initially enrolled.<sup>70</sup>

Higher education institutions are subject to internal and external quality assurance.<sup>71</sup> Programme are accredited by a decision given by an independent body<sup>72</sup>, NVAO.<sup>73</sup> Joint study programme, organised by Flemish higher education institutions together with one or more foreign higher education institutions, which lead to a joint diploma, are assessed on the basis of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programme. The assessment may be carried out by an evaluation body registered in the EQAR.<sup>74</sup>

After the completion of the higher education programme, the student is awarded a diploma with a degree and specialisation according to the level of the programme and study load. The diploma is accompanied by a diploma supplement, and alternatively, by a certificate of competence. The diploma supplement states the nature of the study programme, its duration, and the credits obtained. The Flemish Government determines further the form and content of the diplomas and diploma

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<sup>63</sup> Articles II.261-262 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>64</sup> Article II.265. §3 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>65</sup> Article I.3. 1° Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>66</sup> Information from university representative of UAntwerp.

<sup>67</sup> Article I.3 67° Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>68</sup> Article II.171. §1 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>69</sup> Article II.172. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>70</sup> Article II.172 §2 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>71</sup> Chapter 8 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>72</sup> Article I.3. 2° Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.nvao.net/nl>

<sup>74</sup> Article II. 153/5. Codex on Higher Education. See also Article II.151.

supplements<sup>75</sup> in a Decree.<sup>76</sup> The Decree specifies the mandatory elements and information to be listed on the diploma. The diploma must be signed by the head of the institution (s)<sup>77</sup> and the diploma includes the seal of the institution and additionally, their logo.<sup>78</sup> The diploma supplement follows the model of the European Commission.<sup>79</sup> In the case of joint (or multiple) certificates, the diploma and the supplement must include the information as laid down in the Decree, but the institutions may supplement the information due to the special nature of the diploma.<sup>80</sup> The diploma and the accompanying supplement are provided by the awarding institution free of charge, in Dutch and English.<sup>81</sup> The diploma supplement can also be provided free of charge in English, or in another language that was the language of the instruction of the programme.<sup>82</sup>

### **Bachelors**

A bachelor's degree programme is at least 180 credits<sup>83</sup> and it is followed after secondary education.<sup>84</sup> The successful completion of the programme leads to the awarding of a bachelor's degree with further qualifications and specifications.<sup>85</sup>

### **Masters**

A master's programme is followed after completing a bachelor's program (or another Master's programme), and the programme is at least 60 credits.<sup>86</sup> The programme is concluded with a master's thesis, which is equal to at least 1/5 of the total number of credits of the study programme, with a minimum of 15 credits and a maximum of 30 credits.<sup>87</sup> The successful completion of the programme leads to awarding of master's degree with further qualifications and specifications.<sup>88</sup>

### **Doctoral studies**

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<sup>75</sup> Article II.252. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>76</sup> Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>77</sup> Article 2 Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>78</sup> Article 2 Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>79</sup> Article 5 Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>80</sup> Article 5 Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>81</sup> Since the academic year 2007-2009, the diplomas and diploma supplements of the University of Antwerp have been bilingual in Dutch and English. Information from university representative of UAntwerp.

<sup>82</sup> Article 4 Decree of the Flemish Government establishing the form of the higher education diploma and the content of the accompanying diploma supplement.

<sup>83</sup> Article II.64. §2 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>84</sup> Article II.64. §1 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>85</sup> Article II.247 §2 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>86</sup> Article II.65. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>87</sup> Article II.58. §6 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>88</sup> Article II.247 §3 Codex on Higher Education.

In general, a master's degree is required in order to be admitted to a doctoral programme. However, the university board may make an exemption based on the suitability of the candidate.<sup>89</sup> The doctoral thesis must demonstrate the ability to create new scientific knowledge in a specific field(s) on the basis of independent scientific research.<sup>90</sup> The doctoral candidate is supervised by a member of a senior academic staff.<sup>91</sup> Postgraduate certificates can be awarded after the successful completion of a training programme of at least 20 credits.<sup>92</sup>

The institutional regulations of University Antwerp also refer to the possibility of awarding a joint, double, or multiple degree with another foreign university, subject to a cooperation agreement.<sup>93</sup> When a doctorate programme leads to a double or joint diploma, mobility to the partner university in the context of the doctoral dissertation is mandatory for at least 6 months. The dissertation must be evaluated by means of a public defence before a jury composed of professors from the involved institutions.<sup>94</sup> The successful completion of the programme leads to the degree of doctor.<sup>95</sup> The supplement to the joint diploma must clearly state that the research was conducted at all universities involved.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Articles II.184-185 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>90</sup> Article II.58. §7 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>91</sup> Article V.4. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>92</sup> Article II.62. §1 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>93</sup> Article 41 Regulations relating to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at the University of Antwerp.

<sup>94</sup> Article II.172. §4 Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>95</sup> Article II.251. Codex on Higher Education.

<sup>96</sup> Article 46 Regulations relating to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at the University of Antwerp.

## Croatia (University of Rijeka)

In Croatia, higher education is regulated on the national<sup>97</sup> as well as institutional (university) level<sup>98</sup>. At the moment of this research<sup>99</sup>, significant legal amendments at both levels are in progress or have been just implemented. These amendments are also especially relevant for this analysis, as they are based on to desire to increase the international cooperation and mobility of the Croatian higher education system in Europe, in light of the EEA objectives.<sup>100</sup> Considering that at the time of analysis some of the amendments were still in the draft status, the emphasis of this analysis was directed, when relevant and possible, towards the forthcoming (draft) legislation currently in the pre-final phase of development (undergoing public consultations).<sup>101</sup> Legislation subject to revision, yet for which a draft legal act was not found, was examined based on the existing legislation.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the analysis focused on relevant legislation that was recently adopted or which was not subject to revision.<sup>103</sup>

The Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity<sup>104</sup> lays down the fundamental principles and the rights and obligations in organising higher education.<sup>105</sup> The Law specifically states that higher education is to be based on European values<sup>106</sup> and mentions that scientific research is carried out in

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<sup>97</sup> This analysis focused on the following national regulations applicable in the Republic of Croatia: Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science, Law on the Croatian Qualification Framework, Law on Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Educational Qualifications, Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents, and the Rulebook on the content of the license and conditions for issuing a license for the performance of higher education activities, the delivery of study programme and the reaccreditation of higher education institutions.

<sup>98</sup> This analysis focused on the following institutional regulations applicable to the University of Rijeka: University Statute, Rulebook on accreditation of study programmes, Rulebook on studies, Rulebook on postgraduate university doctoral studies, Decision on processing requests for initial accreditation of the joint study, Rulebook on the form of the diploma and the content and form of certification documents, Rulebook on the quality assurance and enhancement system, Rulebook on recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, Rulebook on the international exchange of students, teachers and other staff within the Erasmus programme.

<sup>99</sup> This analysis was conducted between 15 July – 15 August 2023.

<sup>100</sup> Explanatory text: Public consultation on the proposed amendments on Law on Higher Education.

<sup>101</sup> Regulations on postgraduate university courses (doctoral) studies in University in Rijeka, Regulations on the systems of internal assurance and quality improvement in University in Rijeka, Regulations on studies and studying at the University of Rijeka, Regulations on the international exchange of students, teaching and non-teaching staff within the framework of the Erasmus programme in University of Rijeka.

<sup>102</sup> Regulations on licence and conditions for issuing the licence in higher education (national level), Regulations on the format and content of the diploma and diploma supplement (national level), UNIRI Decision on joint programme accreditation, UNIRI rulebook on the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, UNIRI rules on accreditation of study programme.

<sup>103</sup> Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework, Law on Higher education and scientific activity, Law on Quality assurance in higher education and science, Law on the recognition and evaluation of foreign educational qualifications, UNIRI Statute.

<sup>104</sup> Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>105</sup> Art. 1 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>106</sup> Art. 2(2)(1) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

the context of development of the European Research Area.<sup>107</sup> The Statute of the University of Rijeka also outlines these European values and the participation to ERA<sup>108</sup>, and networking with other European Universities.<sup>109</sup>

Higher education institutions have a strong role in organising education and enjoy academic self-governance and university autonomy. This entails that the universities may determine the rules for studying, admission, programme, and have financial autonomy (within the framework of national performance agreements).<sup>110</sup> Part of this autonomy is the power of the universities to decide themselves whether to engage in international cooperation.<sup>111</sup> In the University of Rijeka, it is the Senate that decides on and coordinates international strategic cooperation.<sup>112</sup> The University encourages the use of dedicated funds for the purposes of international mobility and international inter-institutional cooperation with special support for inclusion in university networks as part of the European Universities Initiative.<sup>113</sup>

The national and institutional regulations in Croatia and the University of Rijeka explicitly foresees the possibility of on international cooperation by means of joint degrees. A reference is made to ‘joint studies’, which is defined by the Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity as a *study conducted jointly by at least two domestic or at least one domestic and one foreign higher education institution*.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the definition is applied by the institutional regulations of the University of Rijeka.<sup>115</sup> By a mandatory consortium agreement, the higher education institutions will further define the organisation, performance, completion, place of performance, holder, accreditation procedure, and the method of issuing the final document of a joint study.<sup>116</sup> The decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka lays down the mandatory and recommended elements to be included in the consortium agreement.<sup>117</sup> The agreement must contain the professional or academic title (degree) obtained upon completion of studies, cooperation arrangements and responsibilities of the involved partners, financial organization, enrolment conditions, mobility of students and teachers, examination and evaluation methods of students.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Art. 2(4)(5) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>108</sup> Article 5(3) Statute of UNIRI

<sup>109</sup> Article 5(4)(12) Statute of UNIRI

<sup>110</sup> Art. 4 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity + Constitution, and international agreements

<sup>111</sup> Article 4(3)(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, for UNIRI see Art. 6(2)(3) Statute of UNIRI.

<sup>112</sup> Article 34 Statute of UNIRI

<sup>113</sup> Article 92(3) and 92(5) Statute of UNIRI.

<sup>114</sup> Article 64(1) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>115</sup> Article 1(2) Decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka defines joint study as: *A joint study within the meaning of this Decision is a joint study programme of two or more higher education institutions that form a partner consortium, of which at least one higher education institution is outside the Republic of Croatia and of which at least one higher education institution is a member of the University of Rijeka.*

<sup>116</sup> Article 64(2) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, Article 1(3) Decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka.

<sup>117</sup> Article 3 Decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka.

<sup>118</sup> Article 3(1) Decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka.

The joint study can be accredited by the national accreditation agency (Agency for Science and Higher Education, ASHE) or another international accreditation agency in the EU that is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The accreditation procedure is carried out in accordance with the Regulations governing Quality assurance in higher education and science.<sup>119</sup> This means that ASHE and the responsible Ministry of Science and Education will accept the accreditation decision of the competent agency responsible for the accreditation of joint studies, provided that the agency is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).<sup>120</sup>

University studies are organised in the form of undergraduate-, graduate-, integrated-, short professional, university specialist- and doctoral studies<sup>121</sup> pursuant to the Croatian Qualification Framework and the European Qualification Framework.<sup>122</sup> Undergraduate and graduate studies can be either a university or professional (applied) type, while specialist and doctoral studies are exclusively university studies and short studies are exclusively professional (applied). The student may be enrolled full-time or part-time.<sup>123</sup> The study programme must determine the title resulting from the completion of the studies, enrolment conditions, list of compulsory and optional courses, compliance of the study programme with the corresponding qualification in the Croatian Qualification Framework, number of study places, learning outcomes and their assessment, structure and format of teaching, and method of completing the studies.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the amount of work in the study is reflected by ECTS, where one credit represents 30 hours of estimated average student work.<sup>125</sup>

The higher education institution must guarantee equality of all applicants when determining the procedure for enrolment.<sup>126</sup> Foreign educational qualifications are evaluated and recognised pursuant to the Law on the Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Educational Qualifications. The enrolment will be carried out by a public tender published on the website of the institution no later than 1<sup>st</sup> May of the current year.<sup>127</sup> The academic year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October (exceptionally earliest from 1<sup>st</sup> September) until 30<sup>th</sup> September the following year.<sup>128</sup>

After the completion of a higher education programme, the student is issued a diploma and a supplementary study document (diploma supplement).<sup>129</sup> The certificate, diploma, and supplementary study document are issued by the higher education institution free of charge, in a

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<sup>119</sup> Law on quality assurance in higher education and science. See also Art. 5(2), 64(3) and 65(2) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity.

<sup>120</sup> Article 1(4) Decision on proceeding with the request for initial accreditation of joint studies of the university in Rijeka.

<sup>121</sup> Art. 57(4) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>122</sup> See Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

<sup>123</sup> Art? Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework. See also on the status of students in Article 78 Statute of UNIRI.

<sup>124</sup> Article 66 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>125</sup> Article 67 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>126</sup> Article 69(1) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>127</sup> Article 69(2) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>128</sup> Article 69(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>129</sup> Article 73(1) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity



signed certified printout, and in digital format, both in Croatian and English language.<sup>130</sup> The form and content of these documents are determined further<sup>131</sup> by Regulations on the form and content of certificates, diplomas, and supplementary documents.<sup>132</sup> This Regulation provides for a list of mandatory elements and information to be included in the diploma.<sup>133</sup> If the diploma is issued after the completion of a joint study, the diploma should contain the full name, seats (location) and signatures of heads and seals of all higher education institutions participating in the execution of the joint study.<sup>134</sup> The diploma may include additional information if prescribed by the general act of the higher education institution<sup>135</sup>, and may also be issued in another language.<sup>136</sup> Next to the diploma, a diploma supplement is issued in Croatian and English free of charge, or in another language of the studies.<sup>137</sup> The diploma supplement must contain a certain list of information, providing more information about the completed study and the higher education institutions involved<sup>138</sup>, for instance in the case of a joint study, any other information important for understanding the qualification.<sup>139</sup> Pursuant to amendments to the Regulation on the content of diplomas, a joint diploma and diploma supplement may be issued after the completion of a joint programme.<sup>140</sup>

After the successful completion of the studies, the student acquires the appropriate professional or academic title and degree.<sup>141</sup>

### **Bachelor's**

A person with a corresponding high school education programme lasting at least four years, and who has passed the state matriculation examination can enroll<sup>142</sup> to an undergraduate study of three years (at least 180 ECTS), or four years (at least 240 ECTS).<sup>143</sup> Further admission requirements are determined by universities autonomously.<sup>144</sup> The study programme is completed by taking a final exam or defending a bachelor thesis.<sup>145</sup> The thesis is obliged to be published by the higher education institution within 30 days from the day of the defence in a repository either within the institution or

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<sup>130</sup> Article 73(4) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>131</sup> Rulebook on the Content of the Diploma and Diploma Supplement

<sup>132</sup> Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>133</sup> Article 3(1) Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents, for instance: name and surname, scientific area and field, acquired academic or professional title(s), number of ECTS, name of higher education institution.

<sup>134</sup> Article 3(3)-(4) Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>135</sup> Article 3(8) Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>136</sup> Article 4(7) Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>137</sup> Article 5 Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>138</sup> Article 6 Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>139</sup> Article 6(1)(c)(4) Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents.

<sup>140</sup> Articles 3-4 Regulation on the form and content of certificates, diplomas and supplementary study documents & E-mail correspondence with University of Rijeka in August 2023.

<sup>141</sup> Article 74 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>142</sup> Article 58(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity. Note: exception to this rule is made in the field of art, under the conditions established by the statute of the higher education institution (see Art. 58(4)).

<sup>143</sup> Article 58(1) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>144</sup> Article 68 Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>145</sup> Article 58(5) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

national repository.<sup>146</sup> After the successful completion of the study, the student acquires the title of university bachelor (baccalaureus or baccalaurea) with an indication of the profession: univ. back [profession]<sup>147</sup> Regulated professions can have different titles awarded.

### **Master's**

A university graduate study programme (a Master's programme) may be enrolled, in general, after completing a corresponding undergraduate (bachelor's) programme or a university-integrated study programme.<sup>148</sup> The master's programme where students enrol after a three-year bachelor's is two years in duration (at least 120 ECTS), while master's programme enrolled after a four-year bachelor's is shorter in duration, lasting one year (at least 60 ECTS).<sup>149</sup> The programme is completed by preparing and defending a (master's) thesis or passing a final exam.<sup>150</sup> The thesis is to be published within 30 days from the defence either in the national or the institution's repository.<sup>151</sup> After the successful completion of the study, the student acquires the title of university master with an indication of profession: univ. mag. [profession].<sup>152</sup> Regulated professions can have different titles awarded.

### **Doctoral studies**

A person with a corresponding university graduate study (master), university specialist study or integrated undergraduate and graduate study, in general, may be enrolled into doctoral studies, subject to the admission conditions determined by the higher education institution.<sup>153</sup> The doctoral study lasts three years (180 ECTS)<sup>154</sup> and it ends with creating and defending a doctoral thesis or by creation, performing and displaying a work of art.<sup>155</sup> The university regulates further the application, assessment and defence of a doctoral thesis or the work of art.<sup>156</sup> The holder of the doctoral degree is obliged to make the doctoral thesis available to the public by publishing it on the website at least 30 days before the day of the defence, as well as within 30 days from the defence in the national repository or the repository of the higher education institution.<sup>157</sup> After the successful completion of the doctoral studies, the student acquires the academic degree of Doctor of Science with an indication of the scientific field (Ph.D.).<sup>158</sup> Exceptionally, the University of Rijeka provides the

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<sup>146</sup> Article 58(5) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>147</sup> Article 74(2) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>148</sup> Article 59(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>149</sup> Article 59(2) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>150</sup> Article 59(4) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>151</sup> Article 59(4) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>152</sup> Article 74(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>153</sup> Article 62(4) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>154</sup> Article 62(3) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>155</sup> Article 62(5) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>156</sup> Article 62(6) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>157</sup> Article 62(7) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

<sup>158</sup> Article 74(5) Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

possibility to conduct the doctoral dissertation according to the standards obtaining the informal title of European Doctor of Science (*Doctor Europeans*).<sup>159</sup>

Regulation on postgraduate university courses elaborates on the requirements, structure and delivery of doctoral studies in the University of Rijeka. The doctoral studies consist of scientific research under supervision and guidance of the supervisor (doctoral dissertation of at least 90 ECTS), compulsory and optional subjects (at least 30 ECTS), mobility or another type of international cooperation or networking with other domestic or foreign university or scientific institution for a duration of at least three months (at least 20 ECTS), and other study obligations (e.g. teaching) which consist of different methods of teaching and knowledge transfer, scientific paper presentations at domestic or international conferences, producing scientific papers etc. (at least 10 ECTS).<sup>160</sup> Doctoral studies may be conducted in Croatian or another official language of the EU.<sup>161</sup> The doctoral candidate is supervised by a mentor, appointed by a doctoral study council from the ranks of the doctoral study teacher.<sup>162</sup> The doctoral dissertation is publicly defended and evaluated before a committee, consisting of at least three members who are recognised experts in the field from which the dissertation topic is submitted, and at least one of whom is from a university or scientific institution outside the University.<sup>163</sup>

Doctoral programme in collaboration with other domestic or foreign universities may be organised<sup>164</sup>, subject to accreditation requirements. The organisation, performance, and completion of such programme must be regulated by an agreement between higher education institutions.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Article 41 Regulation on postgraduate university courses elaborate on the requirements of doctoral studies in the University of Rijeka.

<sup>160</sup> Article 9 Regulation on postgraduate university courses.

<sup>161</sup> Article 12 Regulation on postgraduate university courses.

<sup>162</sup> Article 26 Regulation on postgraduate university courses.

<sup>163</sup> Article 36 Regulation on postgraduate university courses.

<sup>164</sup> Art. 3(3), 122(3) Statute university

<sup>165</sup> Art. 56 Law on Higher Education and Research.

## France (University Strasbourg)

The educational code in France specifies that the minister in charge of higher education together with other responsible ministries supervise the higher education establishments and participate in the definition of educational project of these establishments.<sup>166</sup> He can also be represented on the board of directors for this purpose.<sup>167</sup> It is the ministry that authorizes the delivery of diplomas with a national list of mentions and courses (lower level, several courses that can be included or linked to a mention.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, any educational institution that aims to make an agreement with an educational institution abroad or on an international level must communicate the agreement to the minister of higher education, his supervisory authorities, and the minister of foreign affairs.<sup>169</sup> Educational institutions can also submit cooperation projects to these authorities in the form of multi-year agreements, but their lengths cannot exceed 5 years.<sup>170</sup> In addition, within the same regulation, universities taking part in public service have been given a particular responsibility to connect with other universities abroad.<sup>171</sup> Universities can also enter into agreements with foreign or international institutions particularly institutions of higher education in various states, other institutions of the European Union, institutions whose States are party to the Agreement on the Economic European Area, and other foreign establishments that provide their teachings partially or thoroughly in French.<sup>172</sup> These agreements aim to issue national or institutional diplomas jointly or independently.<sup>173</sup> Cooperation actions take place under the responsibility of the director of the institutions who also ensures the implementation of these agreements under the regulatory provisions governing the relations between France and foreign natural and legal entities.<sup>174</sup>

Furthermore, France Education International<sup>175</sup> is an organ in France whose responsibilities are mainly mentioned to be the contribution to the implementation of educational cooperation programs organized at the bilateral and multilateral framework. In addition, France Education international has the following responsibilities:

- comparative analysis of foreign French documents relating to the organization and functioning of educational systems;
- ensuring the training and development of specialists in teaching the French language in liaison with specialized French and foreign institutions, as well as documentation on language teaching and the development of corresponding teaching materials;

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<sup>166</sup> Légifrance (n 40). Article L 122-7

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> [La licence | enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr](https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr)

<sup>169</sup> Légifrance (n 40). Article D123-19.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Article D123-18.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. Article L 123-7.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. Article D123-20.

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.france-education-international.fr/>

- Encouraging the development of international educational and scientific exchanges, in particular through exchanges of researchers, teachers and students, internships and language stays, conferences and seminars;
- Contributing to the development of international education in France and abroad.<sup>176</sup>

The aforementioned provisions also seem in harmony with other aims of higher education in France addressed in the French educational code in which higher education strives to encourage cross-border cooperation and shall encourage the higher education establishments to contribute to their influence in overseas departments.<sup>177</sup> At this point, the joint Erasmus Mundus master program is offered through the involvement of a minimum of two countries.<sup>178</sup>

The use of ECTS as followed by the national application of higher education regulations has also been acknowledged in France.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that using ECTS is not a common practice at the doctorate level. This will be further elaborated on in the next section.

Regarding the language, the public service of higher education encourages French institutions to have the promotion of teaching French abroad and develop digital educational services that promote knowledge. It also encourages educational establishments that provide foreign students with education in the French language.<sup>180</sup> On the same notion, mastery of the French language together with two other languages is part of the fundamental objectives of education in France.<sup>181</sup> The language of instruction, exams, and classes are in French except for the instances where the associated or invited faculty members are foreigners or the instances where there is an agreement with a higher education institution abroad under which lessons are provided in another language than French.<sup>182</sup> In addition, the French education code stipulates that foreign students who benefit from foreign language training will follow an instruction of the French language when they do not have sufficient knowledge of this language.<sup>183</sup> The level of mastery of the French language is evaluated for obtaining the diploma.

On the subject of international mobility and cooperation, the French educational code highlights the mission of higher education by affirming that one of the aims that higher education follows is international cooperation<sup>184</sup> and that educational institutions encourage the mobility of trainees in particular within the framework of the European Union.<sup>185</sup> Following the same goal, internships or training periods can be done abroad to promote international mobility. The regulations on

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<sup>176</sup> Légifrance (n 40).

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.* Article L123-7.

<sup>178</sup> Campus France, 'Trouvez La Formation Qui Vous Correspond | Campus France'

<<https://www.campusfrance.org/fr/trouver-formation-universitaire-France>> accessed 14 November 2023.

<sup>179</sup> Légifrance (n 40). Article D123-13.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.* article L123-07

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.* Article L121-3.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.* Article D314-52

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.* 168.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.* Article L123-3.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.* Article L124-2.

supervision of such internships are subject to prior exchanges between the educational institutions involved.<sup>186</sup> The general policy of educational establishments, along with other international cooperation of these institutions are determined by the board of directors at the establishment.<sup>187</sup>

Higher education institutions also have the capacity to enter international partnerships.<sup>188</sup> Accordingly, an international partnership is organized by an agreement concluded between one or more French higher education institutions and one or more foreign higher education.<sup>189</sup> On this account, French universities can only issue diplomas in this partnership if they have already been authorized by the State. The French educational code also mandates the contracting foreign parties to have the capacity to deliver, at the same level and in the same field of training, a diploma that is recognized by the competent authorities of their country.<sup>190</sup> Diplomas in international partnership are awarded by the heads of establishment on the recommendation of the juries. The joint diploma awarded is automatically recognized in France. It must also be recognized in the partner country(ies) according to the terms of the agreement signed between the establishments.<sup>191</sup> The diploma supplement is drawn up in French, and translated, if necessary, into a foreign language(s). Furthermore, depending on the national legislation of the partner establishments, different types of diplomas such as joint degrees, and bi-or multilingual diplomas could be awarded.

There are also other types of diplomas that could be awarded according to the French legislation:

a) French diploma delivered in partnership

In the event that the partner establishments do not accept the multilingual parchment proposed by the French side and in order to clearly display the international partnership on the French parchment, it is possible to adapt the parchment of the national diploma by indicating, in French, foreign partner establishments and mentioning the partnership agreement. This parchment does not include any signatories other than those provided for in this circular.

c) Document accompanying a French diploma

In all cases and more particularly when a joint diploma could not be issued, a document without legal value can accompany the French diploma, for the sole purpose of improving the readability of the international partnership. This document may be written in the language(s) chosen by the partner(s), including the seal of the French establishment and the signature of the president of the university,

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<sup>186</sup> *ibid.* article L124-19

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.* Article L715-2.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.* article D613-18.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> 'Modalités d'élaboration et de Délivrance Des Diplômes Nationaux et de Certains Diplômes d'État Par Les Établissements d'enseignement Supérieur Relevant Du Ministère de l'éducation Nationale, de l'enseignement Supérieur et de La Recherche | Enseignementsup' (*Bulletin officiel, Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche*) <<https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/bo/15/Hebdo16/MENS1507196C.htm>> accessed 14 November 2023.

but not having no legal value, it cannot under any circumstances be countersigned by the rector of the academy, chancellor of universities. It cannot in any way replace the diploma supplement.<sup>192</sup>

With regard to the award of diplomas, the academy rector may receive a delegation of authority from the minister of higher education to sign diplomas and attest them to the higher education training or state diplomas.<sup>193</sup>

It should be noted that the diploma supplement exists and is used at the University of Strasbourg and in France. There are additional certifications for certain diplomas: in language, computer science, etc.<sup>194</sup> Some are required nationally, others by the university, and finally others can be offered or organized by the faculty or training team. For any certification, the evaluation procedure must be validated by the CFVU<sup>195</sup> training committee (Education Committee of the University). Some may include external organizations in the process (professional branches for example). Moreover, there are several Erasmus Mundus masters in France.

The education code defines the evaluation process of universities via the French national agency HCERES.<sup>196</sup>

Considering the regulations on facilitating the mobility of students the regulation establishing the national framework for training leading to the delivery of national diplomas specifies that the organization of training courses is based on the acquisition of European credits which aims to facilitate the comparison of training courses and the mobility of students.<sup>197</sup> Each teaching unit has a defined value in European credits.

The number of European credits per teaching unit is defined based on the total workload required from the student to obtain the unit. This workload, representing according to European standards between twenty-five and thirty hours for European credit, is estimated according to the total load induced for the student by the characteristics of the course and, in particular, the number of hours of teaching, the various educational activities implemented, and independent work.

Also, with regard to the mobility of students, the same law mentions that periods of study abroad are the subject of an agreement signed by the home establishment, the host establishment, and the student. They may include periods of training in a professional environment or in a research structure.<sup>198</sup> These periods are part of the student's training course and are subject to validation. When the study project has been accepted by the educational managers prior to the student's departure and the student has obtained validation of his period of study by the foreign

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<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Légifrance (n 40). Article D 222-27.

<sup>194</sup> Information on this section is provided by the expert opinion of faculty members at the University of Strasbourg.

<sup>195</sup> Commission de la Formation de la Vie Universitaire, <https://www.u-pec.fr/fr/universite/organisation/conseils-comites/conseil-academique/commission-de-la-formation-et-de-la-vie-universitaire-cfvu>.

<sup>196</sup> Haute conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur, <https://www.hceres.fr/fr>.

<sup>197</sup> 'Arrêté Du 22 Janvier 2014 Fixant Le Cadre National Des Formations Conduisant à La Délivrance Des Diplômes Nationaux de Licence, de Licence Professionnelle et de Master - Légifrance'

<<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000028543525>> accessed 10 November 2023. Article 8.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.* Article 13.

establishment, he benefits from the credits corresponding to this period of study, according to the terms provided for in the study agreement.

It is worth noting that in France quality agencies, such as Hcéres, undertake a self-assessment process every 5 years, followed by an external evaluation. This European recognition attests to the compliance of Hcéres' practices with the ESG.<sup>199</sup> It concerns the evaluation activities of higher education establishments, training courses and doctoral schools/colleges, carried out in France and abroad. It is a major issue for the High Council and for the entities it evaluates: it strengthens the credibility of the French research and higher education system and contributes to the international visibility of Hcéres. Beyond recognition issues, this process, fully integrated into the quality approach, stimulates the High Council's improvement actions.

As provided for in the European framework, Hcéres initiated the renewal of this recognition at the beginning of 2021. The main stages of the process:

- January - June 2021: Hcéres self-assessment<sup>200</sup>. This periodic unifying exercise is fully integrated into the High Council's continuous improvement approach. Questioning the functioning and practices in place makes it possible to build avenues for improvement and development;
- September 2021: Visit by the committee of international experts coordinated by ENQA;
- May 2022: Publication of the external evaluation report after a contradictory process and Hcéres application to EQAR.

However, stakeholders from France noted that the EQAR/EA criterion in the EDL-criteria should apply to evaluation only, as accreditation in France is the exclusive responsibility of the state. If the criteria would be mandatory, it may contravene with French regulations and would oblige institutions to pay for an additional evaluation for a degree course, when this degree is already evaluated and is sufficient for accreditation in France.

Furthermore, France's higher education follows the UN sustainable development goals and is aiming to have the transition toward a sustainable society. Furthermore, it ensures the adequacy of training courses with the needs of the job market to help students find lasting employment.<sup>201</sup>

### **Bachelor's**

In France, a bachelor (license) takes 3 years and is the cycle after the final diploma of secondary education (baccalauréat). The regulation on establishing the national framework for training leading to the delivery of national diplomas stipulates that to promote recognition of the training course followed by the student and develop national and international mobility, each diploma is

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<sup>199</sup> Hcéres, 'Le Cadre Européen de l'assurance Qualité Dans l'enseignement Supérieur | Hcéres' <<https://www.hceres.fr/fr/le-cadre-europeen-de-lassurance-qualite-dans-lenseignement-superieur>> accessed 27 November 2023.

<sup>200</sup> [https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/downloads/hceres\\_rapport\\_autoevaluation\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/downloads/hceres_rapport_autoevaluation_2021_0.pdf)

<sup>201</sup> 'Objectifs de Développement Durable, Quelles Contributions Des Métiers de L'enseignement Supérieur et de La Recherche En France ?' franceuniversities.



accompanied by the diploma supplement<sup>202</sup>This summary document retraces all the knowledge and skills acquired during the training course followed by the student. It makes it possible to take into account the characteristics of the training course and the specific achievements of the student, including when they were obtained outside the establishment. At UNISTRA, bachelor's programs consist of 180 ECTS.<sup>203</sup>

### **Master's**

The regulation on establishing the national framework for training leading to the delivery of national diplomas specifies that the training leading to the national master's degree is based on research activity which can be present in several forms: certified research units, emerging teams, including technological research.<sup>204</sup> This research activity must directly concern the accredited establishment, alone or in partnership with other research or higher education establishments or with economic, cultural, or social circles. This support for research applies to all training even if it can take different forms. Standard pathways aimed at immediate professional integration outside of doctoral studies must combine knowledge and practices, integrating the skills provided by higher education establishments and by economic and social environments. Also, it has been stated that with the aim of international recognition, the national master's degree can be issued either by public establishments of a scientific, cultural, and professional nature or public administrative establishments or jointly by public establishments of a scientific, cultural, and professional nature with other institutions of higher education.<sup>205</sup>At UNISTRA, master's programs consist of 120 ECTS.<sup>206</sup>

### **Doctoral studies**

The French educational code specifies that a doctoral diploma is awarded after the defense of a thesis or the presentation of a set of original scientific works. This thesis or work may be individual or, if the discipline so requires, and justifies, collective, already published, or unpublished.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, the Order of May 25, 2016, establishing the national training framework and the modalities leading to the delivery of the national doctoral diploma elaborates on the specification of the thesis jury. The thesis jury is appointed by the head of the establishment after consulting the director of the doctoral school and the thesis director. The number of jury members is between four and eight. It is made up of at least half of French or foreign personalities, outside the research unit where the doctorate was prepared, the doctoral school, and the doctoral student's registration establishment and chosen because of their scientific competence or professional in the field of research concerned, subject to the provisions relating to international joint supervision of doctorates defined in Title III of this

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<sup>202</sup> 'Arrêté Du 22 Janvier 2014 Fixant Le Cadre National Des Formations Conduisant à La Délivrance Des Diplômes Nationaux de Licence, de Licence Professionnelle et de Master - Légifrance' (n 196). Article 5.

<sup>203</sup> Information was received through an email exchange with a faculty member at UNISTRA.

<sup>204</sup> 'Arrêté Du 22 Janvier 2014 Fixant Le Cadre National Des Formations Conduisant à La Délivrance Des Diplômes Nationaux de Licence, de Licence Professionnelle et de Master - Légifrance' (n 196). Article. 17.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.* Article. 18.

<sup>206</sup> Information obtained through an email exchange with was a faculty member at UNISTRA.

<sup>207</sup> Légifrance (n 40). Article L612-7.

order.<sup>208</sup> In addition, the same set of laws specifies that the accreditation order of a public higher education establishment authorizes the latter to issue the doctoral degree in the specialties concerned, alone or jointly.<sup>209</sup> The thesis supervision can also be provided in the form of co-direction established by agreement between one or two thesis directors meeting the conditions set out above and a person from the socio-economic or cultural world recognized for their skills in the field. The co-supervision proposal is subject to the decision of the head of the accredited establishment, upon proposal from the director of the doctoral school. In this case, the doctoral students are placed under the joint responsibility of the thesis co-directors.<sup>210</sup>

At the institutional level of the University of Strasbourg, the Charter of the Doctorate of the Universities of Strasbourg and Haute-Alsace specifies that “the thesis supervisor and/or co-supervisor must be part of a research unit that is tied to the doctoral school.”<sup>211</sup> In addition, the program concludes with the writing of a thesis to validate a scientific project and after defending the thesis, a candidate is recognized with the degree of Doctor.<sup>212</sup>

It should be noted that at the University of Strasbourg, all the training courses for the doctoral program are subject to a certificate issued by the director of the doctoral school or his/her representative at the college and a diploma supplement issued by the university. This document must highlight the skills acquired by the doctoral student. It could be conferred that at the university level, issuing a diploma supplement is possible.

With regard to the use of ECTS during a doctoral program, it should be mentioned that the French universities do not award ECTS during this program, considering that the doctorate is not or very weakly teaching in the form of courses.<sup>213</sup> It is mainly considered as an apprenticeship in research.

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<sup>208</sup> Légifrance, ‘Arrêté Du 25 Mai 2016 Fixant Le Cadre National de La Formation et Les Modalités Conduisant à La Délivrance Du Diplôme National de Doctorat - Légifrance Article. 18.’

<<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000032587086>> accessed 9 November 2023.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.* Article 5.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.* Article 16.

<sup>211</sup> Charter of the Doctorate of the Universities of Strasbourg and Haute-Alsace, Doctoral College, University of Strasbourg.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> ‘Est-Ce Que Le Doctorat Permet d’obtenir Des Crédits ECTS (European Credit Transfert System) ? | Campus France’ <<https://www.campusfrance.org/fr/node/2171>> accessed 14 November 2023.

## Greece (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

In Greece, the Higher Education is regulated at the national level. Through the framework of missions for higher education, the Supreme Council recommends to the Minister of Education and Religious the proposals to ensure the continued high quality of higher education and the measures to strengthen the internationalisation of the universities.<sup>214</sup> In the context of the missions for higher education, the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education" (H.A.H.E.) ensures high quality in higher education.<sup>215</sup> NTH.A.A.E. also participates as a member or cooperates in international networks, bodies, or organisations. The NTHEA takes into account and applies the standards and guidelines (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance) set by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).<sup>216</sup>

In Greece, the criteria for admission and any relevant procedure are defined by the decision of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, issued on the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the H.A.A.E.<sup>217</sup>

The Minister of Education and Religious Affairs also oversees the State in higher education institutions (HEI)s.<sup>218</sup> The HEIs on the other hand have specified their missions to:

- Promote cooperation with other domestic HEIs, research, and technological institutions in Greece and abroad, as well as with public, European, and international organizations and productive bodies;
- Develop partnerships and alliances with higher education institutions abroad, creating joint study programme, enhancing the mobility of students, teaching and other staff of HEIs, as well as researchers, contributing to the construction of the European Higher Education and Research Area;
- Develop joint educational and research infrastructures in Greece and abroad for the promotion of education, research, technology, and culture;
- Apply modern teaching methods with emphasis on interdisciplinarity and innovative research at the highest level of quality according to internationally recognised criteria, including distance learning.<sup>219</sup>

The education law in Greece also permits the award of a single degree or joint degrees for joint Postgraduate Programmes organized in collaboration with foreign institutions. Accordingly, the special cooperation protocol between Greek universities and foreign institutions determines whether, upon the successful completion of the joint Postgraduate programmes, a single degree by the

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<sup>214</sup> ΤΗΣ Ελληνικης Ημοκρατιασ and others, 'Τησ Κυβερνησews'. Article 7, paragraph 2.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.* Article 2. Paragraph 3.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.* Article 59. Paragraph 13.

<sup>218</sup> Ελληνική Δημοκρατία, 'Νόμος Αει 4957'. Article 3.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.* Article 3. Paragraph 2.

collaborating institutions or the acquisition of distinct degrees by each collaborating institution should be awarded.<sup>220</sup>

The Senate of a Higher Education Institution also takes the responsibility of establishing the interdepartmental or interinstitutional, or joint Postgraduate Programmes.<sup>221</sup>

The purpose of the Center for Training and Lifelong Learning (K.E.ΔI.BI.M.) of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is to organize all kinds of educational and training programmes, that do not concern formal education programmes. In particular, as actions of K.E.ΔI.VI.M. of HEIs are defined as:

- cooperation with K.E.ΔI.VI.M. other HEIs, foreign universities, research, and technological bodies of article 13A of Law 4310/2014 (A' 258), and other research and technological bodies for the development of educational activities.

The Greek education law also has specific provisions for joint European or foreign programmes. In the case of quality certification of a joint cooperation programme with a higher education institution abroad, at least one member of the HAU must have a documented good knowledge of the place of education in the State of origin of that institution. In the case of a joint European cooperation programme with a country of the European Higher Education Area, the S.A.U. may designate as the accreditation body of the cooperation programme the corresponding European accreditation body of the country of the institution that will participate in the cooperation and applies the applicable standards and guidelines (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance) set by the European Network for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR)).<sup>222</sup>

It should be noted that Greek Universities are not entitled to issue additional certificates recognised by Law unless they are determined by the Ministry or national legislation.<sup>223</sup>

Upon interview with the university authorities, it has been conferred that the university of Thessaloniki has – have little experience in organizing joint and even more double degrees. This is due mostly to the difficulties imposed by the legislative framework which discouraged departments and faculty from attempting to organize such joint ventures. It is expected that the recent law facilitates the organization of double degrees, but some hurdles are to be expected:

- Greek legislation cannot understand the distinction between joint and double degrees in particular regarding the organization of courses and the management of quality assurance. To give an example – the requirement of the QA description of courses for the courses offered by

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<sup>220</sup> *ibid.* Article 80.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* Article 82.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.* Article 386

<sup>223</sup> This information has been provided to the researchers through the experts at the university.

the partner university must be made as provided for in the Greek case rather than as provided by the partner university.

- legal requirements (such as 13 weeks of classes or the MA governance regulations) are compulsory for the courses offered by the partner university and are supposed to cover the entire programme rather than the courses offered by our university.
- The requirements for accreditation of new MAs before they start can also be an obstacle to a successful joint or double degree.

According to Article 80 paragraph 3 of the New Horizon in Higher Education Institutions Law, by decision of the Senate of the University, upon the recommendation of the Assembly of the Department and the opinion of the Postgraduate Studies Committee, the establishment of a new Postgraduate Program is approved. The decision establishing the first paragraph determines all issues governing the organization, operation, and management of the Postgraduate Program and regulates at least the following:<sup>224</sup>

- i) the official language of the program and the language of preparation of the dissertation, which may differ from Greek,

Also, by the decision of the Senate of the Higher Education Institution (HEI), upon the recommendation of the Assembly of the Department, the program of doctoral studies and the regulation of the program of study are determined. If the doctoral programme includes an organised programme of courses or other educational and research activities, the decision shall include the titles of the courses, their content, weekly teaching hours, the sequence or interaction of courses, and the number of credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ECTS) assigned per case.

2. The decision referred to in paragraph 1 shall contain at least the following elements:

- c) the languages in which the doctoral dissertation may be prepared, other than Greek, with mandatory provision for preparation in English or another foreign language, in case of co-supervision with foreign institutions.<sup>225</sup>

That is to say that the Senate of the Higher Education Institution will decide if the language of instruction is anything other than Greek.

### **Bachelor's**

The regulations for undergraduate studies at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki stipulates that the first cycle of studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki<sup>226</sup> consists of the attendance of an Undergraduate Studies Programme, which includes courses equivalent to two hundred and forty (240)

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<sup>224</sup> New Horizons in Higher Education Institutions: Enhancing the quality, functionality, and connection of HEIs with society and other provisions.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> This information refers to the regulation at the only available source at the time of writing this report which was from the faculty of law of AUTH.

credits and is completed with the award of a degree. Each academic year includes educational activities corresponding to sixty (60) credit hours. The above credits do not include those that will be counted in the event that the students, in accordance with the law and the regulations of the institution, takes a foreign language course.<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, the award of the first cycle degree may require, in accordance with the law and the regulations of the Institution, the successful completion by the student of at least one foreign language course (with any additional equivalent credits) or proven knowledge of a foreign language.<sup>228</sup>

The same regulation specifies that Students participating in an international student exchange program (e.g. Erasmus), in execution of a contract concluded by the AUTH with the foreign university which is hosting them, in order to carry out part of their studies, they can apply to the School's Secretariat after completing their studies at the foreign university, apply for recognition of the courses in which they have passed the foreign university examination, provided that the relevant teachers (who teach the courses concerned) consider them to be equivalent in terms of content and credit points to courses taught under the curriculum in force at the time. Courses recognized in this way may not be awarded more credit points (ECTS) than those provided for the corresponding courses in the undergraduate program.<sup>229</sup>

The number of ECTS depends exclusively on the duration of the program. The programs have 30 ECTS for every semester and so undergraduate programs of 4, 5 or 6 years of study have 240, 300 and 360 ECTS respectively.

### **Master's**

The Departments and (single-unit) Faculties of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki may organize - both independently and in cooperation with Departments or (single-unit) Faculties of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki or other Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) of the domestic territory or similar recognized institutions of higher education abroad or with recognized research institutions of the domestic territory - independent Postgraduate Study Programmes (M.Sc.) or Interdepartmental/Interdepartmental Postgraduate Study Programmes (I.Sc./I.Sc.I.P.M.S.), respectively.<sup>230</sup> MSc courses can only be organised in Departments or (single-unit) Schools that offer undergraduate studies and are required to refer to the same or related specialisations as the subjects of the relevant Department or (single-unit) School. Exceptionally, the organisation of independent MSc courses is also permitted by General Departments of the U.P.Th.<sup>231</sup>

postgraduate programs may have 2, 3, 4 or more semesters with 60, 90, 120 or more ECTS. The workload for every ECTS is defined at Program of Studies level and may be between 25 and 30 hours. The "Program" Designers decide about that.

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<sup>227</sup> UDOM, 'Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes' (2019) 95 22.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Approval of the Regulation of Postgraduate Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 2011.

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*

### **Doctoral studies**

The doctoral dissertation is publicly defended by the doctoral candidate before the seven-member examination committee, which submits questions to the candidate. After completion of the dissertation support, the seven-member examination committee meets without the presence of third parties, evaluates the doctoral dissertation in terms of quality, completeness, original thinking, and contribution to science, and based on these criteria, approves, or rejects the award of the doctoral degree. For the award of the doctoral degree, an agreement and positive evaluation of a doctoral dissertation by at least five (5) members is required.<sup>232</sup> The evaluation committee of doctoral dissertations may consist of members from foreign institutions as well.

The evaluation of the postgraduate thesis is carried out by a three-member examination committee, which includes the supervisor and two (2) other members of the teaching staff or researchers of grades A, B or C who hold a doctoral degree. The members of the committee must have the same or a related scientific discipline as the subject of the program.<sup>233</sup>

The doctoral thesis is written in Greek. With a reasoned decision of the G.S.E.S., it is possible to write the doctoral dissertation in another language.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Ελληνική Δημοκρατία (n 217). Article 95. Paragraph 3.

<sup>233</sup> Approval of the Regulation of Postgraduate Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*

## Lithuania (Kaunas University of Technology)

In Lithuania, higher education is subject to regulation on both national<sup>235</sup> and institutional<sup>236</sup> levels. Law on Science and Studies and Education Law of the Republic of Lithuania lays down regulations on the organisation of higher education. Next to principles on sciences and studies, such as academic ethics and equal opportunities, the Law mentions the (importance of) participation in international and European research space and the European Higher Education Area.<sup>237</sup> It is the Minister of Education and Science who determines the main directions, priorities, and measures for promoting the internationalization of higher education.<sup>238</sup>

Higher education institutions enjoy autonomy on academic, administrative, and financial management, on the basis of principle of self-governance and academic freedom.<sup>239</sup> This also entails that the institution may determine the forms of cooperation with natural and legal persons abroad<sup>240</sup>: Universities may offer joint university study programmes together with Lithuanian or foreign higher education institutions.<sup>241</sup>

Kaunas University of Technology defines in their regulations a joint degree as a *programme with one or more national or foreign higher education institutions authorised to offer university studies at the same level*.<sup>242</sup> The completion of these programme leads to (joint) qualification(s)<sup>243</sup> and may lead to a joint degree and a diploma supplement<sup>244</sup> (see details below).

The joint programme must be implemented by ensuring the integrity of the content and learning outcomes delivered by the partner institutions. A physical mobility of the student in the joint programme is mandatory.<sup>245</sup> The tuition fee will be determined by the institutions in agreement with each other.<sup>246</sup> Indeed, a (consortium) agreement between all higher education institutions partners

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<sup>235</sup> This analysis placed focus on the following national legislation: Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Education Law of the Republic of Lithuania, and the following orders from the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania: Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies, Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement, Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>236</sup> This analysis placed focus on the following institutional legislation in Kaunas University of Technology: Academic Regulations, Regulations for Student Admission, Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies, Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof, Doctoral programme regulations.

<sup>237</sup> Article 3 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>238</sup> Article 3(4) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>239</sup> Article 8 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>240</sup> Article 8(11) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>241</sup> Article 6 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>242</sup> Article 9.1 Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>243</sup> Article 53(12) and (15) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>244</sup> Article 6 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>245</sup> Article 20 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies, Article 9.1 Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>246</sup> Article 83 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.



must be drawn to determine the following elements: the name of the programme in the language(s) in which the studies will be conducted, scope, duration, language(s), study results, quality assurance tools, student admission conditions and study procedures, study financing provisions, provision of scholarships and other support to students, principles of assessment and crediting of student achievements, conditions of academic mobility of students and teachers, study administration, provision of a joint qualification degree and issuance of document(s) certifying higher education qualification, other obligations, responsibilities of partners institutions, term of the contract, procedure for amending, terminating and resolving disputes, and any other conditions agreed by the parties.<sup>247</sup>

Higher education studies are conducted according to accredited study programme.<sup>248</sup> The quality assurance of higher education studies is based on regulation and guidelines in the European Higher Education Area.<sup>249</sup> The external evaluation of studies is carried out by an external, national authority (Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, SKVC)<sup>250</sup> or another quality assurance agency included in the European Quality Assurance Register, EQAR.<sup>251</sup> Specifically on joint programmes, the institutional regulations of the Kaunas University of Technology outline that the approval process of is carried out by all participating institutions, or by the coordinating institution. If the Senate decides to establish a joint study programme, a contract (consortium agreement) for the implementation of the joint study programme shall be signed and submitted for external evaluation. Once the joint degree programme is accredited and registered, a financial agreement shall be signed between the partner universities.<sup>252</sup>

In Lithuania, higher education is organised on three levels: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies<sup>253</sup>, pursuant to the Lithuanian and European Qualifications framework<sup>254</sup>. The normal length of a full-time study is 45-60 credits per year, corresponding to the ECTS system<sup>255</sup>. While the national regulations indicate that one study credit includes 25 to 30 hours of student work<sup>256</sup>, the institutional regulations at KTU specify that one credit represents 26.67 hours of work.<sup>257</sup> The language of education is Lithuanian, but teaching in other languages is possible in certain situations, for instance when studies take place according to joint study programmes with foreign universities.<sup>258</sup> In that case,

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<sup>247</sup> Article 23 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>248</sup> Article 13(3) Education Law of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>249</sup> Article 46(3) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>250</sup> See also: Order concerning the approval of the methodology of the external assessment of study fields, the methodology of evaluation of the intended study programmes, the external assessment plan of study fields, the description of the selection of experts, the description of the organization of experts' work.

<sup>251</sup> Article 48(2) and (7) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>252</sup> Articles 67-68 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>253</sup> Article 52 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>254</sup> Article 1 Resolution regarding the approval of the description of the structure of qualifications in Lithuania.

<sup>255</sup> Article 53(5) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>256</sup> Article 23 Order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies.

<sup>257</sup> Article 41 Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>258</sup> Article 55 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

English is most common. Doctoral studies are carried out in English if there is at least one foreign student.<sup>259</sup>

A student who has at least secondary education and who can study independently may be admitted to higher education.<sup>260</sup> The national legislation provides specific rules on admission. In general, admission to higher education institutions shall be granted by competitive examination to persons who have passed at least three<sup>261</sup> state matriculation examinations and who have at least secondary education, taking into account the results of their studies, entrance examinations, or other criteria established by the higher education institution.<sup>262</sup> This requirement does not apply if the individual has obtained a qualification according to educational programmes of foreign countries entitling them to higher education, or when exempted by the cases established by the Minister of Education and Science.<sup>263</sup> The admission requirements are to be published by the higher education institutions every year by 1<sup>st</sup> December, at least 6 months before the start of admission. The institution and the Minister of Education and Science also determine the total number of study places available according to the field of study.<sup>264</sup> At Kaunas University of Technology, admission criteria are further elaborated on Regulation on Student Admissions. This Regulation outlines, for instance, that when the degree programme is provided in English, a minimum B2-level is required from the student.<sup>265</sup>

National level regulation sets out the mandatory elements and information to be included in the diploma<sup>266</sup>, and requires higher education institutions to apply a mandatory form for the documents pursuant to the national law.<sup>267</sup> At the completion of the joint degree programme, the student is issued a joint diploma and a diploma supplement.<sup>268</sup> The diploma supplement contains information about

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<sup>259</sup> Information from university representative of KTU.

<sup>260</sup> Article 13(2) Education Law of the Republic of Lithuania. See also Section 3 Academic Regulations of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>261</sup> Those entering arts studies and those who have completed short-term studies: at least two.

<sup>262</sup> Article 59(1) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>263</sup> Article 59 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania. Academic recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and acquired according to educational programmes of foreign countries and international organizations is carried out by the Study Quality Assessment Center, the Lithuanian Science Council and higher education institutions authorized by the Minister of Education and Science in accordance with the procedure established by the Government. Academic recognition is considered to be the decision of the competent institution, which names the value of that qualification (education) determined during the evaluation of the qualification (education) when intending to study and/or work in the Republic of Lithuania, see Article 52(11) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>264</sup> Article 59 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>265</sup> Article 89.3 and 194.5, 211.4 Regulations for Student Admission to Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>266</sup> Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>267</sup> Articles 20-23 Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>268</sup> Article 58 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 23.2 Kaunas University of Technology: Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof.

the achieved study results and indicates the name of the study programme.<sup>269</sup> Bachelor's and master's diploma and supplements are bilingual and issued in English and Lithuanian. For joint diplomas leading to a joint qualification, it is specified that the seals of higher education institutions must be included in the bachelors or masters diploma.<sup>270</sup> The same applies for a joint diploma supplement.<sup>271</sup> The joint diploma and supplement are signed by the rectors of the universities, and a stamp of the university is included.<sup>272</sup> The preparation of these documents is done by the university identified in the consortium agreement.<sup>273</sup> For doctor's diplomas, the names of other (foreign) awarding institutions must be included if they hold a joint doctoral right in that field of science.<sup>274</sup> In other words, a joint programme on doctoral level according to Lithuanian regulations may only lead to a double or multiple degree/diploma when it is created with foreign study or research institutions. Doctoral diplomas are issued in Lithuanian unless an English translation is necessary (subject to a fee set out by the university).<sup>275</sup> In this regard, it is noted that as of 2024 there is a goal to issue dual language (Lithuanian and English) diplomas, all needed procedures are being finalised now with relevant institutions. When it happens, there will be no longer any diploma translations.<sup>276</sup> Any other additional information about the study not mentioned in the Regulations, for instance, information about completed joint study programmes, may be included in the documents.<sup>277</sup>

### **Bachelor's**

The duration of the studies is between 3-4 years in full-time, corresponding to 180-240 study credits. Students complete a bachelor's programme by final thesis (project) and/or final exams (per national regulations)<sup>278</sup> or 'bachelor's final degree project' (per institutional regulations)<sup>279</sup>.

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<sup>269</sup> Article 58 Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>270</sup> Article 10.3 Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>271</sup> Article 16 Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>272</sup> Article 22 Kaunas University of Technology: Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof.

<sup>273</sup> Article 33 Kaunas University of Technology: Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof.

<sup>274</sup> Article 11.2 Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>275</sup> Article 21 Kaunas University of Technology: Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof.

<sup>276</sup> Information from university representative of KTU.

<sup>277</sup> Article 6 Description of Procedure for the Preparation, Production, Accounting, Registration and Issue of Compulsory Forms for Diplomas, Diploma Supplements and Study Certificates and the Recommendations for Completing the Diploma Supplement.

<sup>278</sup> Article 9 Minister of education, science and sports of the republic of Lithuania order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies, Chapter IV Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>279</sup> Information received from university representative at KTU.

### **Master's**

The length of a master's degree programme is 1-2 years in full time, corresponding 60, 90 or 120 credits.<sup>280</sup> The programme is completed by a master's final thesis (project) and/or examinations.<sup>281</sup>

### **Doctoral studies**

The duration of the doctoral studies is 4 years full-time, including studies (total of 30 ECTS for research doctoral studies or 40 ECTS for art doctoral studies), directed research, preparation and defence of a dissertation,<sup>282</sup> during which international doctoral mobility is encouraged<sup>283</sup>: at least one subject during the doctoral studies must be taken at a foreign research or study institution.<sup>284</sup> It is recommended for each doctoral student to complete at least a three-month traineeship at a foreign research or study institution abroad.<sup>285</sup> The doctoral candidate is supervised by an active researcher conducting research in the scientific field of the doctoral research. In comparison, in art doctoral studies the student is supervised by two supervisors, focusing on the creative and research part of the respectively. Next to the scientific advisors, the candidate may also be appointed a maximum of two PhD advisors. A researcher from a foreign institution may also be appointed as a supervisor or advisor.<sup>286</sup> The doctoral dissertation (art project) before public defence is evaluated by a Doctoral Committee<sup>287</sup> which is composed of 9 high-level research scientists, working either at the University or at other Lithuanian or foreign research and study institutions.<sup>288</sup> After the successful completion of the doctoral studies and defence of dissertation (art project), the doctoral candidate is granted the degrees of Doctor of Science or Doctor of Arts.<sup>289</sup> In addition, the candidate may be awarded the title of *Doctor Europaeus* together with their doctor's diploma to certify the internationality of their doctoral studies.<sup>290</sup>

According to the Regulations on Doctoral Studies approved by the Republic of Lithuania and Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, joint (double-degree) doctoral studies may be organised together with foreign research and study institutions with the aim to enhance the internationalisation and quality of doctoral studies. Such cooperation is governed by a partnership agreement on joint supervision or double degree, that specifies the conditions and obligations on organisation of doctoral studies, funding, requirements, dissertation defence, degree awarding

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<sup>280</sup> Article 10 Minister of education, science and sports of the republic of Lithuania order on the approval of the description of requirements for general studies, Article 53(7) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, Chapter V Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>281</sup> Article 41.2 Kaunas university of technology description of the procedures for managing study programme.

<sup>282</sup> Article 6 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>283</sup> See, for instance, Articles 8, 35.3 and 64.4 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>284</sup> Article 39 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>285</sup> Article 39 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>286</sup> Articles 30-31 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>287</sup> Article 71 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>288</sup> Article 3 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

<sup>289</sup> Article 52(7) Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania.

<sup>290</sup> Article 26 Kaunas University of Technology: Guidelines for the preparation and issue of diplomas, supplements, study certificates, academic title certificates and duplicates thereof.

procedures and issue of diplomas.<sup>291</sup> As outlined above, this means that pursuant to national legislation in Lithuania, in comparison to joint bachelor or master programmes, joint doctoral programmes leading to a joint diploma organized in cooperation with foreign study or research institutions are not possible in Lithuania.

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<sup>291</sup> Article 13 Regulations on Research Doctoral Studies of Kaunas University of Technology.

## Netherlands (Maastricht University, University of Amsterdam)

In the Netherlands, higher education (HE) is regulated on the national<sup>292</sup> as well as institutional (university) and programme level<sup>293</sup>. At the national level the Act on Higher Education and Scientific Research ('Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek'; WHW) is the central act with provisions on higher education and research. Here the starting point is the autonomy of the HE institutions. Nevertheless, with the WHW the government is responsible for the system of higher education.<sup>294</sup> In the WHW several delegation provisions are made towards the Executive Boards of universities (hereafter: boards). Furthermore, boards have to, among others, formulate an education- and exam regulation per study or programme<sup>295</sup> as well as a student statute<sup>296</sup>.

The WHW is applicable to a wide range of higher education institutes: universities, universities of applied science, the Open University, and legal entities for higher education, for public and private as well as funded and non-funded institutions. The Act includes provisions on several aspects, such as funding, accreditation, educational offer, education, governance of educational institutions, and also on cooperation of funded higher education institutions. The Act also regulates and protects the names of university of applied science and university<sup>297</sup>, as well as the names and grades of degrees.<sup>298</sup> The WHW is furthermore applicable to bachelor, master, and doctoral programme. Degrees can be granted by an authorised university, open university, or philosophical university.<sup>299</sup>

Regarding internationalization, a bill of 2017 amended the WHW.<sup>300</sup> In short, the bill, amongst others, aimed at easing to offer of joint education, adapted a framework for study activities for students and introduced the option for institutions to provide scholarships to students from the '*profileringsfonds*' to students in connection with pursuing higher education outside the Netherlands. For internationalization, the Act indeed allows boards to introduce financial support for education abroad, or for international students.<sup>301</sup> Both the UM and UvA have several support instruments in

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<sup>292</sup> This analysis focused on the national Law on Higher Education and Science and Implementing Decision WHW 2008 and Regulation Higher education macro-efficient courses 2023.

<sup>293</sup> Regarding Maastricht University, this analysis focused on the Registration Decision 2022-2023, the Student Statute 2022-2023, Promotion Regulation and Code of Conduct Speaking language of Maastricht University. Regarding the University of Amsterdam, this analysis focused on Registration Decision, the Student Statute, Promotion Regulation 2020 and Code of Conduct foreign languages. As also obliged by national law, there are education and examination regulations per study programme.

<sup>294</sup> See also Louw, R. G. (2011, June 9). Het Nederlands hoger onderwijsrecht: een thematisch commentaar op de Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Leiden University Press, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17700>

<sup>295</sup> Article 7.13 WHW.

<sup>296</sup> Article 7.59 WHW.

<sup>297</sup> Articles 1.22 & 1.23 WHW.

<sup>298</sup> Articles 7.10a & 7.19a WHW.

<sup>299</sup> Article 1.12 WHW.

<sup>300</sup> Act on promotion of internationalization of higher education and internationalization of scientific research, *Staatsblad* 2017, nr. 306.

<sup>301</sup> Article 7.51d WHW.

place. More relevant, a special reference is made to ‘joint education’ in the WHW<sup>302</sup>: an institution can offer jointly with one or more Dutch or foreign institutions programme or track<sup>303</sup>. A joint programme is formulated as ‘*educational programme as referred to in Article 7.3c of the WHW which has been established in cooperation with one or more (international) higher education organisation(s), where successful completion of the programme, depending on the agreements made, entitles the holder to one joint or two or more separate degree(s), depending on the number of higher education institutions involved*’ by Maastricht University (UM).<sup>304</sup> There is no definition included in the University of Amsterdam’s (UvA) Registration Decision.

For the design of a joint programme, the universities together are bound by Dutch legal provisions. The Dutch institutions are in principle liable for the entire programme, especially regarding the elements mentioned in Article 7.3d (1) WHW. Other responsibilities can be divided in a consortium agreement.

A new joint programme has to undergo an assessment for the new programme, just like ‘normal programme’. However, for the accreditation of a joint programme in cooperation with one or more foreign institutions, the partners can also choose the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programme. This assessment will be done by an EQAR registered Agency (including the NVAO) according to international quality requirements. It is also possible to have the accreditation following Dutch law with the Dutch accreditation body (NVAO)<sup>305</sup>. In case a joint programme consists of an already existing programme for the assessment of the NVAO, no new programme-assessment has to be made.<sup>306</sup> The quality criteria of the assessment framework are formulated in the WHW.<sup>307</sup>

In the case of government-funded programme, new (joint) programme also has to pass a macro-efficiency test for the assessment of the Minister.<sup>308</sup> The macro-efficiency test is run by the *Commissie Doelmatigheid Hoger Onderwijs* (CDHO) and is necessary for new programme. Again, the same provisions apply to the joint programme. Via the test, the CDHO mainly assesses whether the board has sufficiently proven that the labour market needs the programme and whether there is room for the programme in the existing educational offer.<sup>309</sup> The macro-efficiency test is not applicable to (joint) programme without government funding. An educational programme should be registered in the Register institutions and studies.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Article 7.3c WHW.

<sup>303</sup> Article 7.3c (1) WHW.

<sup>304</sup> Article 1(m) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM. Own translation.

<sup>305</sup> Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (NVAO), Article 1.1 (p) WHW.

<sup>306</sup> Article 5.6 (4)(c) WHW.

<sup>307</sup> Article 5.7 WHW.

<sup>308</sup> Article 6.2 (2) WHW. Regulation higher education macro-efficient courses 2023.

<sup>309</sup> Article 6 (1) Regulation higher education macro-efficient courses 2023.

<sup>310</sup> Article 7.3 (4) & Article 6.13 WHW.

Regarding the degree, a distinction is made between cooperation with only Dutch institutions or with a foreign institution. Regarding the former, it is only possible to issue a joint degree.<sup>311</sup> Regarding the latter, it is possible to issue a joint degree or two or more separate degrees.<sup>312</sup> For a joint programme with a foreign institution, it is mandatory for the board to conclude an agreement regarding that particular educational offer.<sup>313</sup> In the agreement at least the following elements should be included: the content of the joint education, the respective educational activities per institution, the issuance of a grade, the enrolment of students, and the tuition fee for students.<sup>314</sup> In the case of UM, additional elements are formulated the right of restitution of tuition fees in case of interim deregistration and the requirement in case of a joint programme with foreign partners that the student fulfills the Dutch statutory admission requirements of a study.<sup>315</sup> In the case of a joint programme, UM's board can set the tuition fee at a lower rate (including nihil) than it would be the case when UM would offer the programme entirely.<sup>316</sup> Indeed, the WHW allows in case of joint programme to adapt the tuition fee.<sup>317</sup>

Regarding the enrolment for the joint programme, details can thus be agreed upon in the consortium agreement. In the case of a joint programme with foreign institutions, a board of a Dutch university can still request from the students that they are enrolled at their university for the whole period.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, the UM states that the institution in charge of the enrolment also ensures that the enrolment at Dutch universities is arranged.<sup>319</sup>

Regarding the (joint) programme, the speaking language during education and exams should in principle be Dutch.<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless, other languages are also possible in case of a programme on a certain language, in case of guest lectures, or in case of a specific nature, organisation, or quality of the education or the origin of the students requires it, in accordance with a code of conduct adopted by the Executive Board. Both the UM and UvA have adopted a code of conduct. The UM stipulates that the speaking language is Dutch and English<sup>321</sup>, given the international character<sup>322</sup>. The code of conduct furthermore stipulates that faculty boards are responsible for bilingual language proficiency.<sup>323</sup> The UvA stipulates Dutch as speaking language for education and exams.<sup>324</sup> The use of other languages is allowed if it is necessary and enshrined in the education and exam regulation of a programme.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Article 7.3c (2) WHW and Article 9 (2) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM.

<sup>312</sup> Article 7.3c (3) WHW and Article 9 (3) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM.

<sup>313</sup> Article 7.3c (4) WHW.

<sup>314</sup> Article 7.3c (5) WHW.

<sup>315</sup> Article 9 (4) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM.

<sup>316</sup> Article 9 (5) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM.

<sup>317</sup> Article 7.3f WHW.

<sup>318</sup> Article 7.3e (2) WHW. Also mentioned in

<sup>319</sup> Article 9 (3) Registration Decision 2022-2023 UM.

<sup>320</sup> Article 7.2 WHW.

<sup>321</sup> Article 3 Code of Conduct Speaking language of Maastricht University.

<sup>322</sup> Considerations to Code of Conduct Speaking language of Maastricht University.

<sup>323</sup> Article 6 Code of Conduct Speaking language of Maastricht University.

<sup>324</sup> Article 2 code of conduct foreign languages UvA.

<sup>325</sup> Articles 3 and 4 code of conduct foreign languages UvA.



At the moment there is a bill ‘Internationalisation in balance (‘Wet internationaliseren in balans’), amending the WHW.<sup>326</sup> This bill aims to have more steering options on the inflow of international students at Dutch higher education institutes. The bill has measures regarding language, number of hours, and direction. A prominent aspect is a proposal that at least two-thirds of a track or programme in Associate Degree- and Bachelor education should be taught in the Dutch language.<sup>327</sup> The other one-third can be a foreign language, not being specified. However, an exceptional clause is foreseen, allowing deviations from the ‘two-thirds rule’. An exception should be granted by the Minister of Education and Science, that is based on a so-called efficiency assessment. Under current provisions, it is stated that this principle does not apply to joint programmes with foreign institutions. An exception to the ‘two-thirds rule’ would therefore be expected to be granted. Nevertheless, in all circumstances, the bill stipulates that the promotion of Dutch language skills should be included in the curriculum of the programme and laid down in the teaching and examination regulations. Higher education institutions are thus left with great freedom on how language promotion will take place. Nonetheless, the regulations must state how the number of hours is spent to promote Dutch language proficiency, which should be at least 140 hours in total for a bachelor’s degree and 56 hours for associate degrees and master’s programme.<sup>328</sup> The parliamentary process of the bill has recently started, and it can be expected that the bill will still take several months.

Scientific education at universities is organised via bachelor- and master education, as well as post-initial master programme.<sup>329</sup> A full study year equals 60 study points, which is equal to 1.680 hours of study.<sup>330</sup> Programme can be offered also part-time or dual.<sup>331</sup> Every programme should have an exam and for each course a test.<sup>332</sup> The exams should be kept for a period of seven years.<sup>333</sup> After completion, after successful completion of the studies, the institution should grant a degree. The degree is subject to some criteria: the name of the institution and programme, the courses, the grade, and when accreditation is granted. For a joint programme, the names of the other institutions should be added.<sup>334</sup> In the case of a joint programme, the exam commission can issue a joint degree on behalf of all partners if it is chosen to do so.<sup>335</sup>

Next to the degree, a supplement will be provided that informs on the content and nature of the study, including the name of the programme and institution, whether it is scientific or of applied sciences, a description of the content of the programme and the workload. This will be made in Dutch or English, following the European framework.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> <https://internetconsultatie.nl/internationaliseringho/b1>

<sup>327</sup> Section O of the bill Internationalisation in balance, a proposed amendment of Article 7.2 WHW.

<sup>328</sup> Section P of the bill Internationalisation in balance, a proposed Article 7.2a WHW.

<sup>329</sup> Articles 7.3a (1) and 7.3b (a) WHW.

<sup>330</sup> Article 7.4 (1) WHW.

<sup>331</sup> Article 7.7 (1) WHW.

<sup>332</sup> Article 7.3 (2) WHW.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid, (5).

<sup>334</sup> Article 7.11 (2) WHW.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Article 7.11 (4) WHW.

### **Bachelor's**

The amount of study points (ECTS) of a scientific bachelor programme is 180.<sup>337</sup> This amount can be higher upon request, up to maximum of 240 study points.<sup>338</sup> The duration of a bachelor is 3 years in full-time time. A person with a corresponding high school education (vwo) can enroll to a bachelor programme.<sup>339</sup> Universities can require a certain specialization or profile regarding the vwo-degree.<sup>340</sup> Foreign degrees should be regarded in the Ministerial Decree as comparable, or by the board in case they perceive it as comparable.<sup>341</sup>

A bachelor's ends with a bachelor's thesis, which is enshrined in the different education and examination regulations per programme. A successfully completed bachelor's programme results in a Bachelor-degree<sup>342</sup>, with the academic title of Bachelor, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, or another Bachelor with other specialization.<sup>343</sup>

### **Master's**

The amount of study points of a scientific master programme is 60.<sup>344</sup> In the case of a certain field of science this can be 120 study points, for certain professions the amount is also higher.<sup>345</sup> E.g. for medicine, this is set at 240 points.<sup>346</sup> Again, like for bachelor's, on request a master's programme can amount up to a maximum of 120 points.<sup>347</sup> A person can enter a master programme with the possession of a bachelor-degree or with knowledge and skills equal to a bachelor-degree.<sup>348</sup> Additional qualitative requirements can be added, which are mentioned in the education and exam regulations of the programme.

A master's program ends with a master's thesis, that is enshrined in the different education and examination regulations per programme. A successfully completed master programme results in a Master-degree<sup>349</sup>, with the academic title of Master, Master of Arts, Master of Science, or Master with another specialization.<sup>350</sup>

### **Doctoral studies**

A doctoral defence is open to a person who holds the Master-degree, has written a PhD thesis independently, and has fulfilled the requirements of the university's requirements.<sup>351</sup>, In exceptional

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<sup>337</sup> Article 7.5 (1) WHW.

<sup>338</sup> Article 7.5c (1) WHW.

<sup>339</sup> Article 7.24 (1) WHW.

<sup>340</sup> Article 7.25(1) WHW.

<sup>341</sup> Article 7.28 (2) WHW.

<sup>342</sup> Article 7.10a (1) WHW.

<sup>343</sup> Article 7.19a (2) WHW.

<sup>344</sup> Article 7.5 (1) (b) WHW.

<sup>345</sup> Article 7.5a (b) WHW.

<sup>346</sup> Article 7.5a (d) WHW.

<sup>347</sup> Article 7.5c (2) WHW.

<sup>348</sup> Article 7.30b WHW.

<sup>349</sup> Article 7.10a (1) WHW.

<sup>350</sup> Article 7.19a (2) WHW.

<sup>351</sup> Article 7.18 (2) (a) WHW.

cases, it is possible to have a promotion without a master's degree.<sup>352</sup> For every defence, a promotor should be appointed. A promotor could be a professor or another doctorate who works at a university.<sup>353</sup> A successful defence results in the title of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy, both are equal to each other.<sup>354</sup> A University can grant the title together with one or more Dutch or foreign universities, taking into account the same regulations.

Next to the national legislation and especially regarding joint or multiple degrees, an important source is also the regulations at the university-level.<sup>355</sup> The UM and UvA both have one regulation for all faculties. Both regulations allow writing a dissertation in English or Dutch and have provisions on the structure of a thesis.<sup>356</sup> In UM's regulation, chapter 7 is dedicated to joint and double doctorates: the university can supervise a doctoral student together with one or more Dutch or foreign universities, that can grant a doctor-title. After a successful defense, the UM can grant either a joint degree or a double degree.<sup>357</sup> There are some requirements<sup>358</sup>:

- The doctoral student has access to the promotion, thus has fulfilled all necessary conditions;
- There is a maximum of four supervisors, of which at least one is from the UM and acts as principal promotor for the UM;
- The assessment commission is formed of at least one member of each cooperating institution and two other members;
- A cooperation agreement should be made and approved by the Rector;
- The name of the foreign university will be added to the title page of the thesis for it to be approved by the Rector.

The cooperation agreement should include further agreements, minimally that amongst others<sup>359</sup>:

- Substantial input should be provided by each university, preferably defined;
- Where and, in case of a double degree, when a defense will take place;
- The language of a thesis;
- In case of a joint degree, the design of public defence if it takes place at the partner institution and a common procedure for cum laude;
- A model for a joint title page;
- The procedures in case of disagreements.

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<sup>352</sup> Article 7.18 (3) WHW. For the UM, this can be decided by the Board of Deans following Article 3 (2) Promotion Regulation UM 2023. For the UvA, this can be decided by the Board of Promotions based on a set of provisions following Articles 7 and 8 of the Promotion Regulation 2020 UvA.

<sup>353</sup> Article 7.18 (4) WHW.

<sup>354</sup> Article 7.18 (1) WHW.

<sup>355</sup> Article 7.19 (1) WHW.

<sup>356</sup> Article 15 (3)(4) Promotion Regulation 2020 UvA & Article 12 (11) ) Promotion Regulation UM 2023.

<sup>357</sup> Article 26 (1) Promotion Regulation UM 2023.

<sup>358</sup> Article 26 Promotion Regulation UM 2023.

<sup>359</sup> Article 27 Promotion Regulation UM 2023.

For a joint degree there is one public ceremony. In case the ceremony takes place at UM, the internal regulations apply. Deviations are possible after approval of the Rector. In case the ceremony takes place at the partner university, it is deemed that it is formed on behalf of UM's Board of Deans.<sup>360</sup>

For a double degree, the partners can decide themselves on the requirements for issuing the degree. The earlier Articles include provisions on the promotor, the trajectory, assessment, defense and degree.

Also, the Promotion Regulation of UvA includes a separate provision for a Joint Doctorate.<sup>361</sup> In principle, the same provisions apply, nevertheless a cooperation agreement should make further agreements.<sup>362</sup> The rector has the mandate to conclude a cooperation agreement, after a request by the promotor.<sup>363</sup> Again, the cooperation agreement should show the contact and composition of the joint doctorate and that both partners have substantial input to the doctorate.<sup>364</sup> There should be a promotor from both universities and the trajectory will adhere as much as possible to the different institutional regulations. In the cooperation agreement, the partners will also agree upon the design of the joint degree.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Article 28 Promotion Regulation UM 2023.

<sup>361</sup> Article 40 Promotion Regulation 2020 UvA.

<sup>362</sup> Article 40 (3) Promotion Regulation 2020 UvA.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid (4).

<sup>364</sup> Ibid (5).

<sup>365</sup> Ibid (11).

## Poland (Lodz University of Technology)

Higher education is regulated at both national and institutional levels in Poland. At the national level, the minister of higher education shall be responsible for the specifications of regulations governing the study programme requirements, application requirements, maximum number of ECTS, the methods for authenticating diplomas intended for legal circulation with foreign universities<sup>366</sup>, programme evaluation, comprehensive assessment,<sup>367</sup> requirements for the conduct of classes using distance learning methods, diploma supplement, and the tuition fees.<sup>368</sup> If the degree programme refers to a health-related field, the responsibility of issuing a permit to the institution meeting the requirements will be taken by the minister of health.<sup>369</sup>

The elements of graduate certificates will be determined by the Minister of Higher Education. Moreover, this Minister will decide on the necessary elements of a postgraduate certificate, or a certified specialist certificate.<sup>370</sup> Moreover, the Minister of Education shall decide on the necessary elements of a doctoral diploma.<sup>371</sup>

The Polish law on higher education and science has also permitted the organization of joint degree programmes between Polish universities or with other higher education institutions.<sup>372</sup> The conditions for organizing these joint degrees are: 1. A study programme from the universities with a scientific category of A+, A, or B+ is not required to obtain any permission.<sup>373</sup> 2. Other categories of educational institution need to obtain permission to establish studies.<sup>374</sup> Under the same regulations, a graduate of a joint degree may be awarded a joint diploma.<sup>375</sup> In the case of joint diplomas, the home university usually issues its diploma with the logos of the partner universities. A representative from TUL noted that they have moved away from a common diploma signed by all partner universities because it is a logistical problem.<sup>376</sup>

Regarding the education standards, Article 68 of the Polish law on higher education and science refers to the role of ministries in charge of determining the educational standards. The ministries shall determine these standards through regulations not only for the higher education institutions but also for the training programmes. The assessment of educational quality in the event of joint degrees shall be conducted by PKA<sup>377</sup> or another entity registered in the European Register of Institutions for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR). This accordance will be carried out in accordance with

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<sup>366</sup> Dziennik ustaw 1360, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce Uznając, 2018 1., Article 80.

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.* Article 248.

<sup>368</sup> *ibid.* (256)

<sup>369</sup> *ibid.* Article 54(3).

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.* Article 164.

<sup>371</sup> *ibid.* Article 181.

<sup>372</sup> *ibid.* Article 60.

<sup>373</sup> *ibid.* Article 53(7).

<sup>374</sup> *ibid.* Article 60, paragraph 2.

<sup>375</sup> *ibid.* Article 60, paragraph 4.

<sup>376</sup> Information from university representative of TUL.

<sup>377</sup> PKA is an institution working independently to improve the quality of education (Article 251)

international standards for quality assurance of education in joint degree programmes.<sup>378</sup> The PKA has also been assigned other tasks such as cooperation with national and international institutions and organizations operating in the field of higher education.<sup>379</sup> In addition, as of 2008, by virtue of a resolution of the TUL Senate, the Internal Education Quality Assurance System (IEQAS) was implemented at TUL, which aims to improve the quality of education.<sup>380</sup>

With regard to the mobility of students, the Erasmus+ program specifies that<sup>381</sup>: “A student may take advantage of a **short-term mobility** abroad for studies or internship, lasting **from 5 to 30 days** and **obligatorily combined with virtual component**, before or after the mobility period. In case of doctoral mobility - the virtual component is optional. For short-term mobility for studies, the student must obtain min. 3 ECTS for the achieved learning outcomes (this requirement does not apply to internships). Recruitment takes place continuously as long as the funds are still available.

Short-term mobilities are, for example: an organized activity of the BIP (Blended Intensive Program - a type of intensive courses, training), summer/winter school or other short scientific mobility etc.”

### **Bachelor's**

A person may be admitted to full-time and part-time first-degree studies at the Technical University of Lodz who has:

- 1) matriculation certificate or matriculation certificate and certificate of the results of the matriculation examination in individual subjects, as referred to in the regulations on the education system;
- 2) A high school diploma and a diploma confirming qualification of professional qualifications in a profession taught at the technical level, as specified in the regulations on the educational system;
- 3) A high school diploma and a vocational diploma in a profession taught at the level of a technician, referred to in the regulations on the educational system;
- 4) matriculation certificate and a certificate of the results of the matriculation examination in individual subjects, as well as a diploma, confirming professional qualification in a profession taught at the technical level, which can be found in the regulations on the educational system;
- 5) A high school diploma and a certificate of the results of the high school diploma exam in individual subjects, as well as a vocational diploma in a profession taught at the technical level. As referred to in the regulations on the educational system.<sup>382</sup>

Admission to full-time or part-time studies to the bachelor's programme is on the basis of the grades obtained in the secondary school graduation certificate or an equivalent outside the Polish

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<sup>378</sup> Dziennik ustaw 1360, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce Uznając,. Article 249.

<sup>379</sup> *ibid.* Article 258, paragraph 6.

<sup>380</sup> 'Internal System Assurance Quality Education | TUL' <<https://p.lodz.pl/en/education/quality-policy/internal-system-assurance-quality-education-lodz-university-technology-ieqas>> accessed 18 September 2023.

<sup>381</sup> Lodz University of Technology, 'Short-Term Mobility | International Cooperation Centre' <<https://cwm.p.lodz.pl/en/student-mobility/short-term-mobility>> accessed 27 November 2023.

<sup>382</sup> Approval of the Regulation of Postgraduate Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

educational system.<sup>383</sup> Bachelor level studies range from 180 to 240 ECTS (There are 6-, 7- and 8-semester studies)<sup>384</sup> In Poland, each ECTS consists of 25-30 study hours.<sup>385</sup>

Candidates for admission to full-time and part-time studies of the first and second degree with the mode of transfer from another university or foreign university, are admitted after conducting the qualification procedure, which is based on verification of documentation of the previous course of study at another university or foreign university.<sup>386</sup>

### **Master's**

Admission of candidates for full-time and part-time first- and second-cycle studies in the recruitment mode is carried out by the University Admissions Committee, and in the case of foreigners, the admission of candidates for full-time and part-time first- and second-cycle studies in the recruitment mode is carried out by the Rector of Lodz University of Technology.<sup>387</sup> Regulations on diploma theses and anti-plagiarism procedures at TUL specify the regulations on joint theses. In the case of diploma theses performed on the basis of a double diploma agreement, the diploma thesis is carried out under the guidance of two promoters (one from the Technical University of Lodz and one from a partner university), appointed according to the rules in force at the respective university.<sup>388</sup> The promoter from the Technical University of Lodz verifies the compliance of the thesis with the substantive and formal editing requirements.

### **Doctoral studies**

Doctoral studies in Poland are regulated at the ministerial and institutional level. The minister responsible for higher education and science shall determine, by regulation, detailed criteria for evaluation of the quality of education in a doctoral school and the manner of its conduct, taking into account the specifics of education in a doctoral school.<sup>389</sup> Polish law on higher education and science also permits issuing a joint degree. Accordingly, a person who has been awarded a doctoral degree shall receive a joint doctoral diploma issued by the entities awarding the doctoral degree, or a doctoral diploma issued by one of the entities specified in the agreement.<sup>390</sup>

The Polish law on higher education and science permits only specific categories of universities to conduct joint doctoral programmes. The doctoral degree may also be conferred in a discipline jointly by universities, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, research institutes or international institutes in a discipline in which each has a scientific category of A+, A or B+, including the participation of foreign entities authorized to confer the doctoral degree in the discipline in which the

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<sup>383</sup> 'Qualification for Bachelor's Degree Studies | Politechnika Łódzka - Rekrutacja' <<https://rekrutacja.p.lodz.pl/en/grades-required-entry>> accessed 18 September 2023.

<sup>384</sup> 'BA - BACHELOR'S DEGREE' <<https://www.uni.lodz.pl/en/ba-bachelors-degree>> accessed 18 September 2023.

<sup>385</sup> [https://p.lodz.pl/arch/sites/default/files/pliki/international\\_students\\_guide\\_2](https://p.lodz.pl/arch/sites/default/files/pliki/international_students_guide_2)

<sup>386</sup> Approval of the Regulation of Postgraduate Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

<sup>387</sup> Resolution No . 36 / 2022 of the Senate of Lodz University of Technology of 29 June 2022 Admission rules for first- and second-cycle studies at Lodz University of Technology in the academic year 2023 / 2024 2023.

<sup>388</sup> 'Regulamin Dyplomowania Oraz Procedury Antyplagiatowej Prac Dyplomowych w Politechnice Łódzkiej,' Article 6.

<sup>389</sup> Dziennik ustaw 1360, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce Uznając,, Article 263.

<sup>390</sup> *ibid.* Article 179.

degree is conferred.<sup>391</sup> The rules of cooperation shall be specified in a written agreement.<sup>392</sup> The detailed division of tasks related to the operation of the doctoral school and the manner of their financing shall also be specified in a written agreement.<sup>393</sup>

The Polish law on Higher Education and Science specifies the language requirements for dissertation and their abstracts. The dissertation shall be accompanied by an abstract in English, and a dissertation prepared in a foreign language shall also be accompanied by an abstract in Polish. If the doctoral dissertation is not a written work, a description in Polish and English shall be attached.<sup>394</sup>

For receiving the doctoral diploma, there is a defense procedure: according to Article 191 of Polish law on higher education and Science:

*“1. A person may be admitted to the defense of a doctoral dissertation who has received positive reviews from at least 2 reviewers and has met the requirements referred to in Article 186, paragraph 1, item 5.”*

Moreover, Article 188 specifies that “1. The doctoral subject shall, no later than 30 days before the designated day of defense of the doctoral dissertation, make available in the BIP on its subject page the doctoral dissertation which is a written dissertation together with its abstract or the description of the doctoral dissertation which is not a written dissertation and reviews].”

Also, according to Article 192 of the same regulation:

“The Senate or the Academic Council shall determine the procedure for granting the doctoral degree, in particular:

(3) mode for dissertation proposal

(5) The method of appointing reviewers;”

Pursuant to Article 190(5) the promoter and reviewer may be a person who is an employee of a foreign university or scientific institution, if the authority referred to in Art. 178 section 1 (University Senate), will recognize a given person for significant achievements in the field of scientific issues covered by the doctoral dissertation.

In addition, the same regulation stipulates that the scientific supervision of the preparation of a doctoral dissertation shall be exercised by the supervisor or supervisors or by the supervisor and assistant supervisor. In the proceedings for the award of the degree of doctor, 3 reviewers shall be appointed from among persons who are not employees of the entity awarding a degree and the higher education institution, institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, research institute, international institute, Centrum Łukasiewicz or Łukasiewicz Network institute, in which the person applying for the degree of doctor is employed. Reviewers shall review the doctoral dissertation within 2 months of its provision. A supervisor and reviewer may be a person holding a degree of doctor *habilitowany* or the title of professor, and an assistant supervisor may be a person holding a degree of doctor. A supervisor and reviewer may be a person who does not meet the conditions set out in sec. 4 who is an employee of a foreign higher education institution or a research institution if the body

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<sup>391</sup> *ibid.* Article 185, paragraph 2.

<sup>392</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> *ibid.* Article 198, paragraph 5.

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.* Article 187, paragraph 4.



referred to in Art. 178 sec. 1 considers that the person has significant achievements in the scientific field associated with their doctoral dissertation. A supervisor shall not be a person who in the last 5 years: 1) has been a supervisor of 4 doctoral students who were removed from the register of doctoral students due to a negative result of mid-term evaluation, 2) has supervised the preparation of a dissertation by at least 2 persons applying for the degree of doctor who did not receive positive reviews as referred to in Art. 191 sec. 1<sup>395</sup> Resolution of the Senate of TUL further specifies that the the Committee, however, may not include a supervisor nor an auxiliary supervisor of the doctoral candidate.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Dziennik ustaw 1360, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce Uznając,. Article 190.

<sup>396</sup> §13(5) Resolution No. 21/2022 of the Senate of Lodz University of Technology of 27th April 2022 on the adoption of the Regulations of the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School of Lodz University of Technology (Consolidated text as amended by Resolution No. 30/2023).