A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

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• Ministers encourage the member states to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile.
• They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.
Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA - status

- Developed by working group, with expert consultants, in 2004-05 in response to request of the ministers at Berlin
- Endorsed by Seminar in Copenhagen in January 2005
- Recommended by the Bologna Follow-up Group to the ministers at Bergen in May 2005
A Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area
Why move towards a Bologna Qualifications Framework?

- Until 2003, little Europe-wide agreement or common understanding to resolve what distinguishes the first 2 cycles.
- Bologna process implies the development of rigorous qualification frameworks that make qualifications really transparent.
Principles

- Qualifications are a matter of national policy and law
- Framework for the EHEA is an overarching “framework of frameworks”
- EHEA framework will not cover all the features required in national frameworks
Purpose of EHEA framework

- International transparency
- International recognition
- International mobility
- Assist in identifying points of articulation between national frameworks
EHEA Framework

• Three main cycles (& short cycle)
  – Short cycle (within or linked to first cycle)
  – First cycle (e.g. bachelors)
  – Second cycle (e.g. masters)
  – Third cycle (e.g. PhD)
Learning outcomes

- Key conceptual development
- Descriptors of learning outcomes, including competences
- Generic end-of-cycle outcomes
Dublin Descriptors

• knowledge and understanding
• applying knowledge and understanding
• making judgements
• communications skills
• learning skills
Credits

- European credit transfer system guidelines
- 60 credits = one year FTE
- All awards should be linked to ECTS
- Detailed credit arrangements a national matter
ECTS

- Short cycle (within or linked to first cycle)
  - 120 approx
- First cycle
  - 180-240
- Second cycle
  - Min 60, normally 90-120
- Third cycle
  - Usually not credit bearing
European Qualifications Framework

• “European Qualifications Framework” ≠ Framework for EHEA
• EU initiative, linked to Lisbon Strategy and Maastricht Communique on VET
• Expert Group working proposal due by late 2005
• A meta-framework for HE and VET
• Based on common reference levels
Linking frameworks
National => European

- Criteria
- Procedures for self-certification
Criteria for national frameworks

- Ministerial designation
- Based on learning outcomes
- Bologna-compatible QA arrangements
- Diploma supplement referenced
- Qualifications linked to descriptors
- Published responsibilities
Procedures

• Self-certification by competent authority
• Process evidence published
• Relevant national QA agreement
• International dimension to certification process
• ENIC/NARIC maintain listing of the self-certified
• Diploma supplement note
National Framework - the Irish experience

- Published in 2003
- Implementation in Institute of Technology sector through HETAC
- New awards structures and standards
- Procedure for transition to new awards
- Determination of standards for fields of learning
Issues for EURASHE sector in national framework development

- Recognition of sector qualifications
- Parity of esteem for binary qualifications and the question of profile
- Voice in determination of standards
- Arrangements for quality assurance
- The inclusion of short-cycle (within or linked to the first cycle)