



DEVELOPMENT OF BULGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN VISION

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Abstract:

The quality of higher education, its value and its realization are among the national priorities in Bulgaria. With the development of society, its needs and expectations, higher education seeks to meet its expectations and business needs. The purpose of this article is to trace the European tendencies for a common European educational space and their reflection in the development of higher education in Bulgaria. A theoretical reading of a number of European and national documents is made to highlight the positive development trend of higher education in Bulgaria. The quality of higher education in Bulgaria is directly tied to and correlated not only with our national traditions, mentality, but also with the European horizons of a united community called Europe.

Keywords: quality, higher education, European community

1. European projections of quality in higher education

The quality of higher education is a top priority in the European educational area. In all strategic documents from 2000 to today, higher education and quality development has been assigned a leading responsibility and role. Higher education is linked to trends such as the knowledge economy, innovation, growth, culture, and so on. Its structural, technological and innovative reforms are dictated by the projections for a single global European future. Two decades ago, the current trends in education development developed and justified. It can be said that there is a socio-scientific paradigm in the attitude towards education, technology and training methodologies that are developing in the European educational space.

The next review of European ideas for educational change outlines the path of European development and aspirations of a single European society. The Bologna process gives an epochal impetus to forming a European common space in higher

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education. This is a political project of countries that are committed to the idea of creating a common European Higher Education Area. The scope of this process is not only covered by the geographical dimensions of the European countries and those of the European Union. The European Higher Education Area is a coherent organization and management of a large number of diverse systems presenting an even greater number of higher education institutions. The accession of each of the member states to this process is an expression of the willingness of the government and the academic community to comply with the principles of the process and to contribute to a wealth of approaches and manifestations for the free movement of knowledge, students, teachers and researchers. In 1999 in Bologna, the Ministers of Higher Education of 29 countries signed a Declaration setting out the most important common European process in the policy of higher education reforms in Europe, the so-called Bologna Process. The purpose of the process is towards a single objective - the creation of a European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Declaration sets out several sub-objectives that lead to the main goal:

- A comprehensible and comparable system of higher education;
- Adoption of a system comprising two main cycles;
- Introducing a system of educational credits;
- Enhance mobility;
- Reinforcing cooperation in the field of quality assessment;
- Strengthening European dimensions in higher education.

The Bologna Declaration places the structure of higher education systems at the center of European reforms - from a one-tier to a two-tier higher education structure. This change is accompanied by the establishment and observance of common principles for quality assurance, recognition of qualifications and periods of study; increasing mobility and free movement of students and teachers. During the Bologna Process, six meetings of the Ministers of Higher Education of the Member States were held: Prague, 2001, Berlin, 2003, Bergen, 2005, London, 2007, Leuven-la-Neuve, 2009, Budapest and Vienna, 2010. Each meeting analyzes the two-year period over the priorities identified: partnership, system of degrees, quality assurance, recognition of degrees and periods of study, higher education and research, social dimension, mobility, attractiveness of the European space for higher education and cooperation other parts of the world. Prospects and actions are identified to achieve short-term goals and implementation measures. Tracking the main highlights of these meetings outlines the developmental phases of European higher education. It provides a systematic insight into the roots of modern change and national higher education. The priorities adopted over the years in the Bologna Process directly reflect economic and social changes and trends in public development. Therefore, when adopting the communiqué of the Ministers of Higher Education in this period, the public context outlined by parallel strategic documents should be noted.

The first meeting of ministers of higher education in Prague in 2001 is directly linked to the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy. The main guidelines for the "Prague Summit" are mobility programs in higher education, the two-tier system: bachelor

(master's degree), master and doctoral (post-graduate cycle) in higher education, cooperation between European countries and transnational higher education. The discourse of the meeting is highlighted by the Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000, where one of the programs is a "Memorandum of Lifelong Learning". Taking into account the specifics of this document, the objectives of the Bologna process are complemented and expanded. The Prague Communiqué puts higher education at the center of lifelong learning, includes higher education institutions and students in the development and implementation of reforms; aims to increase the competitiveness of European higher education. The new objectives set out in the communiqué complement the overall framework of the process and guide the reform process not only to architecture but also to its internal procedural improvement. The Berlin Communiqué, 2003, following the meeting in Prague, in fact, proves that the Bologna process is an adaptable and flexible project that is directly linked to social and societal changes. It can be said that the meeting of the Ministers of Higher Education in Berlin further developed the ideas of the Bologna Process. An important feature of this meeting is that the concept of the two-tier system is abolished and a three-tier structure (three cycles) is introduced in higher education. This change stems from the responsibility given to the European higher education in the EU in Barcelona in 2002 (one year earlier) - European higher education to become a "reference for quality". And it is also believed that the American model of duality is not applicable to the specifics of European education. The focus of the Berlin Communiqué is on the quality of higher education, seen through standardized procedures, with particular emphasis on the procedures carried out in the institutions themselves. At European level, ministers urge the European Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education to develop a coherent set of standards, procedures and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education. The Berlin Communiqué puts a new task at a higher level - the introduction of credit systems compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The new objective is to develop mechanisms not only for transfer but also for accumulation of credits. With this new idea, the Berlin Communiqué overturns the philosophy of higher education. From the possibility of transferring mobility credits, attention is directed to the ability to accumulate student-centered loans to value and evaluate knowledge, skills and qualifications acquired in a diverse educational and social environment.

The Berlin Communiqué has its reformist and profoundly changing role in the philosophy of the Bologna process and its proposal for integrated curricula and joint degrees. The meeting in Berlin clearly promotes the European dimension of higher education. Ministers note that, following the Prague call, additional modules, courses, curricula, European content, orientation and organization are being developed. They note that higher education institutions have already taken initiatives to pool their academic resources to develop integrated curricula. A new priority was formulated in 2005, which drew the attention of ministers at the Bergen summit in 2005 - opening up the higher education system to other educational sectors and social systems. One of the highlights is the development of activities and initiatives in the higher education institutions with the direct participation of teachers and students. The Bergen

Communiqué sets a task for Member States to develop their frameworks for national qualifications, with certain knowledge, skills, competencies. This communiqué gives a boost to the idea of clarifying the structures, criteria and access to doctoral programs; regulates the doctoral programs to be directed to independent research; PhD students should be seen as "early stage researchers" and develop transversal skills. The main element of PhD studies should be the expansion of knowledge through creative research. *"Recognizing the need to structure the doctoral programs.. we note that the normal load in the third cycle in most countries should correspond to 3-4 years of regular doctorate. The Bergen Communiqué We are calling on universities to provide such doctoral study programs to ensure interdisciplinary training, the acquisition of transferable skills."* (www.bologna-bergen2005.no). Quality assurance in higher education is promoted through activities in higher education institutions related to the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct link to external evaluation. The Bergen meeting recognizes that higher education is a crossroads of research, education and innovation. It is obvious that the initial goals set in Bologna are expanding and complementing socio-economic development. As a strategic conclusion to this process, the London Summit of Ministers for Higher Education in 2007 can be adopted. Also, as a concrete contribution in two strands - a focus on the learner and a focus on learning outcomes. Attention to learners is to provide flexible pathways for inclusion in various programs, to provide access to new knowledge and research to maximize money and time savings by recognizing the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in an informal, formal, informal system. The definition of learning outcomes focuses on their usefulness, relevance and qualification by employers, their use for motivation and personal development. The two strands are closely linked and express in a new way, at a higher level, the initial idea of the Bologna Process for Competitiveness, Competence, Mobility. London's view is no longer about the institutional system and structure, it is not about the logic of the system, it is about globalization. In this sense, comparability and comparability are aimed at transferring creativity, knowledge, technology, unity of values on which the Europe of Knowledge will act. The new element introduced at the practical level is the development and institutionalization of a European Register of Agencies for Accreditation of Higher Education. The social focus is on social cohesion. The London Communiqué recognizes that primary responsibility for quality remains with higher education institutions, and in this sense they must continue to develop their quality education systems.

The contribution of the First European Quality Assurance Forum, organized by the E4ⁱⁱ. The E4 Group provides the opportunity to discuss European development and quality assurance. The London Communiqué reiterates the importance of stepping up efforts to bring doctoral programs into institutional strategies, and to develop appropriate career paths for researchers from an early stage. From Bologna to London. The Way of Bologna. The last two ministerial meetings within the Bologna process clearly outline the benefits and developments of the Bologna process. At the meeting in

ⁱⁱ European Association of Universities; European Association for Quality Assurance; European Association of Higher Education Institutions; European Association of Student Organizations

Leuven-la-Név, 2009. The participants in the conference accept the official communiqué, which broadens one of the main goals of the Bologna Process - by 2020 at least 20% of graduates have a period of study abroad. During the meeting, issues related to the development of the European higher education reform within the Bologna Process and the future development of the European Higher Education Area by 2020 is discussed.

The globalization processes that are being addressed at the Berlin meeting find their echo at the Bologna Process Forum in León-la-Neuve, attended by 14 education ministers from all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia and China. The aim is to develop a global cooperation strategy in the field of higher education related to the goals of the Bologna Process. The Leuven Communiqué sets out the main areas of activity over the next decade, focusing on the social dimension, continuing education, employment, student-centered learning, the mission of education, openness to other countries, mobility, funding for higher education, transparency in systems and programs, etc. In 2010, the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Bologna Process was celebrated in Budapest and Vienna. Here is officially announced the creation of the European Higher Education Area and the priorities for the next phase after 2010: the social dimension, lifelong learning; student oriented learning; education, research, innovation. The Bologna process has a certain beginning and end: 1999-2010. However, the development of priorities in the priorities shows that this process has a life-giving force and a role to go beyond these borders and from the standpoint of today, it is seen as a foundation in the development of modern changes and reforms. The highlights, priorities, measures, initiatives, trends give their fruit and have a strong impact factor beyond the defined limit. Therefore, it can be argued that the strength and realization of the ideas of the Bologna Process are starting after 2010. There is a parallel, procedural-building role in the Bologna Process, with the Lisbon Strategy. Throughout the entire ten-year period of Bologna, it has developed priorities for an integrated European space. The goal in 2000 was to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth. Important core areas related to higher education are a knowledge-based economy; more investment in science and research. The strategy has an open character and is constantly updated and supplemented by 2010. It aims at ideas that complement and support the ideas of the Bologna process for an integrated European Research Area, to enhance competitiveness, to create a "European patent" in every field of science. Accepted core goals related to higher education are strategic pillars for its development. They are aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union; ensuring access for all EU citizens to education and training, opening up education to other education systems. In 2005, the Lisbon Strategy puts extra priorities in education development, one of which is focused on knowledge and innovation for growth. Higher education is identified as a key factor in facilitating innovation, ICT and sustainable resource utilization.

Higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in the dissemination of knowledge, and their contribution to the generation and dissemination of knowledge across the Union must be increased. The 2005 Lisbon Strategy Additions marked

important projections to today's education development - improving research cooperation and technology transfer between higher education institutions. The European Commission report of 11 December 2017 acknowledges that the Lisbon Strategy has contributed to the recent "significantly better outcomes of the EU economy". Structural reforms are starting to create potential for future growth, improving long-term prospects for prosperity. With regard to higher education, research and innovation, the report proposes certain steps towards the fifth freedom, the free movement of knowledge, namely the creation of a genuine European research area and an integrated patent jurisdiction with a single patent.

The next step in the trends for the development of European quality in higher education is emerging from the Europe 2020 strategy. It has built-in functions over strategies and initiatives by 2010. If they are designed to change the structural attitude and functional relationship in higher education, the Europe 2020 strategy is geared to the action-level level. One of its main priorities is building a knowledge-based economy and innovation. In the context of the issue of quality of education, initiatives are important:

- "*Innovation Union*" - a flagship initiative aimed at improving framework conditions and access to funding for research and innovation to ensure that innovative ideas are transformed into new products and services that create growth and jobs. Higher education objectives for which the Commission will work at EU level are: launching "European Innovation Partnerships"; further develop the role of EU instruments to promote innovation; promoting partnerships for knowledge and strengthening the links between education and business. Part of the higher education goals at national level are related to enhancing cooperation between universities, science, research and business operators, focusing on school curricula on creativity, innovation and entrepreneurshipⁱⁱⁱ.

- "*Youth on the Move*" - a flagship initiative aimed at improving the performance of education systems and facilitating the entry of young people into the labor market. The aim is to improve the outcomes and international attractiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. Student and traineeship mobility and the improvement of young people's opportunities are encouraged. At EU level, the Commission will work to integrate and reinforce EU mobility programs, universities and researchers (such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Marie Curie); to establish a link between them and national programs and resources; benchmarking the results of universities and learning outcomes in a global context. Part of the national targets are related to ensuring effective investment in education and training systems at all levels (from pre-school to tertiary education); improving education outcomes by addressing each segment (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education) within an integrated key competency-based approach aimed at reducing early school leaving. Increasing the openness and suitability of education systems by building national qualifications frameworks and matching learning outcomes with labor market needs.

ⁱⁱⁱ Europe 2020 initiatives are seven.

An important structural and procedural context of development are set by the European Guidelines for Higher Education after 2020. In the Conclusions of the European Council on the Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture, EU Member States, the Council and the European Commission are encouraged by 2024 to contribute to the creation of twenty "European Universities" consisting of networks of 4 to 6 universities across the EU. The aim is to enable students to obtain a degree in education by combining training in several Member States and to contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities. The main principles on which "European universities" should be based are:

- alliances of higher education institutions based on the bottom-up principle;
- opportunity for participation by all types of higher education institutions;
- geographical balance;
- social orientation (social inclusion).

In the long run, European universities set targets for:

- achieving a more united and stronger European Union, open to the wider world, by building trust between higher education institutions across the EU;
- promoting common European values and strengthening the European identity by bringing together a new generation of Europeans who can cooperate and work in different European and global cultures, in different languages and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines;
- making significant progress in terms of quality, productivity, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education institutions and contributing to the European economy of knowledge, employment, culture and well-being through the best application of innovative pedagogies and striving to become a reality; quadruple helix - the model includes higher education institutions, industry, government and civil society. "European universities" will be key factors in changing Europe's higher education, research and innovation systems and their focus on society and the economy.

The aim of the initiative is to further develop and refine changes in the field of higher education. An applicant may be any higher education institution from an EU Member State. It is applying on behalf of all the institutions involved in the network and must hold a valid Erasmus Higher Education Charter. "European University" is a transnational alliance. The alliances thus established share a long-term common strategy based on a common vision and shared values at different levels of the organization (eg management, academia, professional support, academic staff and students) and in various fields of activity (eg education or innovation). The aim is to build on their mutually supportive strengths and to achieve a high level of enhanced and sustainable cooperation.

2. European Dimension in National Higher Education Strategies

Legislative initiatives in the Bologna process, the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 should be seen as an "organic whole" of the overall process of harmonization and adaptation of

our national legislation to the general European Union legislation. (Peeva, K, 2010) With the accession of our country to the Bologna Declaration in 1999, legislative, structural, procedural and functional changes in the sphere of higher education began. The activities at national level on the implementation of the Bologna Declaration have two main aspects: legislative initiatives and activities on the priorities in the field of higher education. As a result, key changes have been made in Bulgaria:

A. A three-tier higher education system has been introduced:

- Bachelor (ISCED 5A) - the Bachelor's degree, allows you to get a complete view of the nature of the professional field and specialty. It provides opportunities to master broad-based theoretical knowledge and practical skills as well as to develop skills for adaptability in a rapidly changing labor market in the conditions of globalization. After 2000, a Classifier of Higher Education Areas and Professional Fields (State Gazette No.64/02.07.2002) was introduced, introducing the generally accepted international educational fields and directions as a reference for the Bachelor's programs.

- Master (ISCED 5A) - master's degree allows in-depth scientific theoretical and specialized training in the specialty; learning the basics of research, applied and / or artistic-creative activity. The training for acquiring the Master's degree is carried out in three main directions: deepening of the training in accordance with the Bachelor's degree; post-secondary education in specialties for which only training for master's qualification is envisaged; additional broad-based and interdisciplinary preparation for the Bachelor's or Master's degree in other specialties. Both educational and qualification degrees provide conditions for student mobility, including international comparability of acquired knowledge and acquired skills; developing adaptation capabilities in the context of social, economic and technological change. (Ordinance on the State Requirements for Higher Education Acquisition of Bachelor, Master and Specialist, SG 79/5.09.2003)

- The PhD (ISCED 6), which is the final grade in this three-dimensional system, aims to ensure the training of staff with a narrow fundamental background in a given field. The educational and scientific degree "doctor" is acquired by a person with an educational degree "master", which meets the minimum national requirements under Law on Higher Education, 2018, Article 2b (2) and (3). In order to acquire the educational and scientific degree "doctor" the person must defend the dissertation thesis under the conditions and by the order of this law. Dissertation work should contain scientific or applied research results that represent an original contribution to science. Dissertation work should indicate that the candidate has in-depth theoretical knowledge of the relevant specialty and ability for independent research. (Law on Higher Education, 2018, Art. 6).

Priority areas related to the quality of higher education and dictated by the national dimensions of the European dimension in higher education are:

a. Introduction of a reliable quality assurance system

A fundamental part of the Bologna Declaration is the question of assessing the quality of higher education. Its purpose is to establish effective quality criteria for external evaluation and accreditation, incl. post-accreditation monitoring and control as well as

effective criteria used by quality assurance systems at institutional level. The internal assessment of the quality of education is provided by internal systems for assessing and maintaining the quality of education and academic staff. At national level, the quality of higher education is monitored and evaluated by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation. From 18 June 2018, it was re-incorporated into the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) by 2023.

The Agency is a specialized state body to the Council of Ministers for the evaluation, accreditation and quality control of the activities of the higher education institutions for the acquisition of the Bachelor's Degree ("Bachelor of Professional Degree" and "Bachelor") and Master "and the academic and doctoral degree" doctor ". Performs accreditation and control of higher education institutions and for the development of science, culture, project and innovation activities; the development of research, arts, sports and health. Evaluates the ability of the institution and its main units and subsidiaries to provide high quality education and research through an internal quality assessment and quality system (SG, issue 103, 2012). The Agency shall approve the criteria for assessment and accreditation, as well as for determining the capacity of the higher school, the professional field and the specialties of the regulated professions in compliance with the Higher Education Act and the state requirements. Evaluation and accreditation aim to stimulate higher education institutions to develop their potential and to enhance and maintain the quality of the education offered.

b. A system for accumulation and transfer of credits has been developed

The Bologna process requires the development of flexible, broad-based curricula that will be oriented towards student mobility based on the transfer of educational credits. Within this aspect, a process of accreditation of higher education institutions is under way in the country. The credit system is an organization of the learning process that is based on full student employment in the learning process and in each particular discipline. It provides students with the opportunity to choose disciplines, forms and forms of self-employment, as well as mobility based on mutual recognition of separate periods of study. The credit is a numerical expression of the student employment required to acquire certain knowledge and skills in the process of learning to acquire an educational qualification degree in higher education. The credits are distributed in school years, semesters and disciplines (SG 89, 2004, Ordinance 21/09.09.2004). The Ordinance regulates the formation, accumulation and transfer of credits. For each degree, a minimum number of credits is determined: for Bachelor's degree - 240, for Master degree - 300. They are also covered by credits for the different bachelor degree options. Credits are determined for the whole of the curriculum of student and lecturing, compulsory and elective, depending on the specifics of the respective specialty (lectures, practical and seminar exercises, individual work, individual work with the lecturer, projects, participation in practice, internship, course or diploma work, etc.).

Each discipline receives a credit equivalent depending on the curriculum of the specialty and its full-time student employment (Ordinance 21/30.09.2004). For the

transfer of credits, the higher education institution develops rules for the organization of student mobility and recognition of educational credits and periods of study acquired in another higher education or curriculum of another specialty and ensures their publicity. Special committees are set up to carry out recognition of credits earned in another higher education institution or credits in similar disciplines from another specialty. These normative activities clearly demonstrate the realization of the ideas of the Berlin meeting in 2003.

c. Recognition of acquired tertiary education and completed training periods

(Published Ordinance on the State Requirements for the Recognition of Higher Education Acquired and Completed Training Periods in Foreign Higher Schools, adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers 168/14.08.2000, last updated and promulgated, SG 62/12.07. 2013, Collection of Laws -Apis, 9/2000, p. 355, Laws Library-APIS, p. 4, p. 2, No 323) An ordinance defines the state requirements for recognition of acquired tertiary education and completed periods of study in foreign higher education institutions. The right to recognition of acquired tertiary education and completed periods of study at foreign higher education institutions have Bulgarian citizens, foreigners and persons with refugee status who have been trained in higher education institutions established and operating in accordance with the law in the country in which they were acquired higher education, or completed training periods. Recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher education institutions is a formal written confirmation of the value of a higher education diploma or of another equivalent document issued by an educational institution recognized by a competent state authority as part of the system of secular higher education of the country concerned. It is carried out in order to access further education in the higher education system, upgrading training and PhD. The Higher School has established its own recognition procedures when it comes to continuing education and doctorate. In this case the recognition procedure shall be carried out under conditions and by an order determined by the respective regulations of the higher school.

Recognition of training periods means establishing the conformity of a part of a higher education program that has been assessed and documented by a foreign higher education institution with the program of the Bulgarian higher education institution in which recognition is sought. The Higher School organizes the activity of recognizing periods of training under the terms and conditions laid down in the Regulations for its Structure and Activities and observing the established requirements for acquiring higher education in the same and / or related specialty in the Bulgarian Higher Education Institutions. In this and previous regulations, the statutory autonomy of the higher education institutions is clearly visible, through which they are reformed structurally and institutionally in a European educational structure. The legal framework governing the structure and problems of higher education is fully in line with the Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications relating to Higher Education in the European Region of 11 April 1997 (the Lisbon Convention). In 2000, the Lisbon Convention was ratified with a special law (SG 25/ 28.03.2000) and in

accordance with it adopted an Ordinance on state requirements and recognition of completed higher education or periods of study at foreign higher schools (Council of Ministers Decree 168/14.08.2000). According to her, the competent authorities for the recognition of higher education received abroad are the Minister of Education and Science and the rector of the respective higher education institution. The Ordinance authorizes a special committee of 10 members, comprising eight academic habilitates and two representatives from the Ministry, whose function is to set precise criteria for the recognition of higher education received abroad. Its activity is supported by the National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility. This center is part of the ENIC/NARIC European Network of Academic and Professional Recognition and actively participates in the cooperation with the European Information Network in the field of Education EURYDICE, in the regional Academic Exchange programs, etc. With the adoption of amendments to the Law on Higher education since May 2002 introduces the notion of "regulated profession", which provides the necessary legal basis for the final formulation of the legal framework concerning the procedures for the recognition of specialties by the regulated professions. With this, as well as with the Vocational Education and Training Act 1999, Bulgaria fulfills a significant part of the European Community's requirements in this respect.

d. Development of higher education institutions as research centers

The focus is on creating research infrastructure, providing state support for participation in major international projects, encouraging the participation of scientists from different institutions in joint projects. Normally this requirement is fulfilled through a number of innovations in the Law on Higher Education, 2018. For the first time in the Higher Education Act of 2018, the term "research universities" was introduced, as well as the universities' ability to realize, the research results and the intellectual property created. The regulation of the recognition of degrees in order to continue education or labor market entry, credit system validation and credit transfer opens the spaces of the Bulgarian higher education to the European scientific achievements as well as the opportunity for the Bulgarian universities to become research centers. Another aspect in the development of universities as research centers is mobility, also seen in its autonomy as a procedural element in the quality of academic teaching and learning. At the Leuven Summit in 2009, the Ministers of Education of the European countries set out the main objective of the Bologna Process - by 2020 at least 20% of the graduates in the European Higher Education Area should participate in the various forms of academic exchanges. At the Bucharest Summit in 2012, the target was refined by adopting a "Mobility for better quality of education" strategy, which identified concrete measures to achieve this goal at institutional, national and European level (Angelov, B., Popova, Y. 2013) Student and teaching mobility is aimed at developing and enhancing competencies, knowledge and skills. The impact of the mobility impact factor is to disseminate new knowledge and innovation within the European Higher Education Area. It opens cooperation systems and institutions for higher education and develops them, comparing them with each other. Thus, through

mobility, sharing and cooperation, universities form one of their important structures - to develop as research centers.

d. European Diploma Supplement An essential component of the activity of adapting the Bulgarian education system to the European standards is the introduction and promotion of the European Diploma Supplement, a document endorsed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission

The activity in this direction started in 2000, with the main task of the National Center ENIC/NARIC. A comprehensive Action Plan for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement, funded to a large extent by the European Commission, was also developed in 2002. These are the main structures and initiatives that allow the effective adaptation of Bulgarian higher education to European and world standards in this field, in accordance with the principles of the Bologna and Lisbon Declarations.

The national dimensions of the European Higher Education Area are initially outlined by legislative and structural reforms. Essential requirements for the education process in the new conditions and in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration are to increase its effectiveness in maintaining equal access to education, strengthening the relationship with social partners and employers, developing the forms of lifelong learning fundamentally necessary in the ever-changing competitive environment. As a result of all processes, strategies and initiatives to build a common European space, and as a leading generator in the European dimension of national higher education, the Law on Pre-school and School Education and Education of 2016, the Higher Education Act, 2018 d; The Law of Academic Development, 2018. In the context of the quality of education, they have a leading role in regulating the procedural part of structural and institutional reforms. Considered in their connectivity and interdependence on results and productivity, the initial steps of learning changes that are tied to the learner's personality and learning outcomes are outlined as a direct relationship with teaching. The comparative reading of the normative documents is important for the theoretical rationale of the study because the product of secondary education directly affects the teaching methods in higher education and hence the teaching and learning technology as elements of the quality of education.

The changes to the Pre-school and School Education Act, 2016, are directly related to higher education, in the context of personality development, sense of dignity, freedom, authority, self-control, information skills - everything on which the authority of an academic person can be built. Because, in reverse order - the quality of higher education begins to build up the undeveloped, overlapping missed years of secondary education. In this sense, changes such as the introduction of innovations, author's curricula, the interdisciplinary focus of learning are crucial to the development of the quality of education. Direct changes to the academic education are the changes in the Higher Education Act (SG 98, 2016, SG 30, 2018). Such a working mechanism is that of determining the admissions and subsidies of universities. It is regulated that funding for higher education from the state budget will be distributed according to the students' realization and the quality of the research. Serious scientific significance is the definition

of the status of universities. "*Higher education institutions are universities, research universities, specialized colleges and independent colleges*" (SG 17, 2016, Article 17). Research universities will make a significant contribution to the development of important public spheres through cutting-edge research and high research results. One of the important tasks of the research university is to appear on the international university research field, which is regulated in the guidelines for the creation of a "European alliance of universities". An important change for the economic growth of our country is the determination of priority directions in the areas of higher education, protected specialties, regulated professions.

Priority areas are those in which there is an increased need for training of highly qualified specialists for the purposes of the economy and society. These areas include engineering and natural sciences, mathematics, computer science and communications, pedagogy and agrarian sciences.

Protected specialties are specialties of higher education, for the education where there is no declared interest or the declared interest is low, but at a certain stage of the economic and social development of the Republic of Bulgaria there is a need for training of highly qualified specialists for these specialties. (SG 62/2006)

A regulated profession is an activity of public importance and / or essential for the life and health of the person and the exercise of which is determined by law, regulation or administrative provision for the possession of a specific professional qualification certified by documents for education, qualification or membership of a professional organization working to maintain a high level in the relevant professional field, for which it has received special recognition from the country. (SG 77, 2005) Legislative and regulatory acts are a reflection of the European priorities identified by the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy. National strategies, changes in the law on higher education, the law on the development of the academic staff are conducive to the European tendency for comparability, comparability and interaction. An important research support in the context of the national projections for quality of higher education is also recognized in certain amendments to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (SG, 30, 2018). National minimum requirements for their scientific, teaching and / or artistic-creative or sporting activities have been introduced.

The National Framework of Minimum Requirements for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria aims not to unify but to motivate to real achievements, to a research and reflective approach to their own professional realization of academic teachers. Minimum national requirements are a set of requirements, each of which is determined by the numerical values of one or several objectively measurable indicators. They are relevant to the relevant scientific field and / or professional field. Narco-metrics reflect the scientific results and their impact on scientific literature and/or indicators that reflect measurable achievements in artistic or sporting activity. In the continuation of the research context for development of the quality of higher education is also considered the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, the National Strategy for the

Development of Scientific Research in the Republic of Bulgaria 2017-2030. One of the main difficulties in the quality and compatibility of higher education with the European higher education systems is the lagging of the teaching methods from the innovative trends in the practice and the development of the abilities of Uden, need for modernization of curricula. This problem is directly related to both the topic of dissertation research and the normative changes in both strategies. Directly and indirectly, the problem of innovative practices, methods and trends in the development of higher education quality are leading in solving a number of objectives and activities described in the Strategies. It is a priority for the 2014-2020 Strategy:

- Improving the quality of higher education and its compatibility with European higher education systems in order to take a prominent place in the European Higher Education Area (measure: curriculum reform and curriculum: stimulating curriculum and curriculum renewal; the internationalization of academic programs and e-learning, the stimulation of more joint programs, the promotion of the increase of foreign language curricula).
- Establishing a sustainable and effective relationship between HEIs and the labor market and achieving dynamic match between demand and supply of higher education specialists. (measure: creating a profile of competencies for each specialty, encouraging the dialogue between higher education institutions and businesses on the content of the training.)
- Stimulating research at HEIs and developing innovation oriented towards the market economy, expanding and strengthening the lifelong learning network; (measure: promoting and optimizing the integration of higher education institutions and regions (stimulating the National Network of Regional Academic Centers for Applied Science established in 2012-2013 in partnership with higher schools and with local businesses, stimulating the integration of scientific and innovative activity of the higher education institutions in Bulgaria with the national and European business.)

An important role for the development of this activity is the National Strategy from 2017-2030. It provides for the development of scientific research to have a significant positive effect on a number of areas of public life. First of all, scientific development will have a positive impact on education at all levels. The high level of research in the leading scientific institutions and higher education institutions combined with the positive results from the implementation of the Higher Education Strategy will attract more Bulgarian and foreign students to study and complete a PhD in Bulgaria. This will help not only the growth of new generations of scientists, teachers and teachers but will also have a positive impact on the preparation of highly qualified specialists for the industry and the retention of qualified staff in Bulgaria. The contribution of research to industry is related to innovation and the development of new or improved technologies. Whether the relevant scientific research is carried out in Bulgaria or abroad, the availability of highly qualified Bulgarian scientists competent in the relevant scientific field will allow us to quickly absorb the results of the research and their practical application in our country. As a further result, increased state

support for research will contribute directly and indirectly to raising the country's innovation index and increasing foreign investment.

3. Summary

The quality of higher education in Bulgaria is directly related and relevant, not only with our national traditions, mentality, but also with the European horizons of a united community called Europe. Despite the economic crises to which the community is exposed, and our country, we have reached the general belief that education is one of the ways to overcome a number of global and regional negative phenomena - dropping out of school, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion but also economic growth, innovation development, etc. It is obvious that combining efforts against these social phenomena improves the quality of life, creates capacity and resources to positively resolve problems with refugees, migrants and their cultural specificity. Higher education has its vocation to prepare intellectual resources and human capital, develop the intellectual and research skills of its alumni so that they can "tomorrow" develop the new generation, manage new attitudes and solve new problems. Future managers in higher education will work in a radically changed regulatory, cultural and research environment. And this is the strength of today's efforts for a common vision of higher education and the introduction of a new research level in higher education. According to Tsokov, G. *"education policy is one of the main elements of domestic politics in each country. It is also seen as a process of acceptance by the state of certain responsibilities in terms of the functioning and development of education (in the modern, democratic society, education is seen as one of the basic social benefits)"* (Tsokov, D, 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that the national education policy, while sticking to the European priorities of the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and through its Strategies 2014-2020, 2017-2030, clearly outlines the vision of our national higher education as a European one. A lot of efforts have been made in strategic and normative context, academic mobility has been expanded and expanded, motivated supports have been set, minimum requirements for academic development, new statutes of universities - research and education have been set, motivating the academic staff not only to personal-professional development, but also a change of the university status quo. Another important element in the European vision of the quality of higher education in our country is the strong added value in the social dimension. Measures and initiatives to overcome illiteracy, dropping out of school and normative strategic ambition 36% of graduates are also trained in European university structures are transformations of European goals into national and constructing ways/measures to achieve them. The social dimensions of higher education quality are implicated in different levels and reflect in different social strata. This is why higher education needs adaptive research, so that curricula and teaching methods create conditions and develop adaptive and research skills in students.

The trend towards creating "European alliances" overcomes a serious difficulty over diverging education and training systems in Europe. Europeans usually have

difficulty using their qualifications acquired in one EU country to apply for work or training in another. Increased coherence between education systems allows students and jobseekers to move more easily to different European countries. Moreover, thanks to the Bologna reforms, European higher education institutions are becoming more competitive and more attractive to the rest of the world. European education processes also support the modernization of education and training systems to ensure that they meet the needs of a changing labor market. This is important because the share of jobs requiring high skills is growing and the need for innovation and entrepreneurship is growing.

The Common European Vision for National Educational Priorities is also reaffirmed by the Rectors of the European Universities Group (ELU Group). They aim to work on the development of a common reference system for indicators and procedures for the evaluation of universities. The aim is to build on the knowledge-based economy as well as the higher contributions that universities expect from economic, social and cultural development to provide the means for a better planning of their future and better monitoring of the teaching and its research activities. If all European universities use the same criteria, they will have a means of comparative assessment that will improve their performance. Moreover, in line with the decisions of the European institutions, the introduction of common assessment procedures for students in the Group will provide to a great extent the same quality of higher education programs in these countries and will facilitate student mobility among these universities. By using objective criteria for their activity, resources and tasks, institutions will be well informed to engage in a constructive dialogue with the legislative authorities and all the partners ensuring their funding. Using recognized objective criteria and assessment systems, institutions will be able to make a rational justification to protect higher education as a public service and to promote it as a critical sector for society in the age of the global knowledge economy.

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