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Fördermöglichkeiten durch das 7. EU-Rahmenprogramm für Forschung

Hans R. Friedrich Joint Degrees

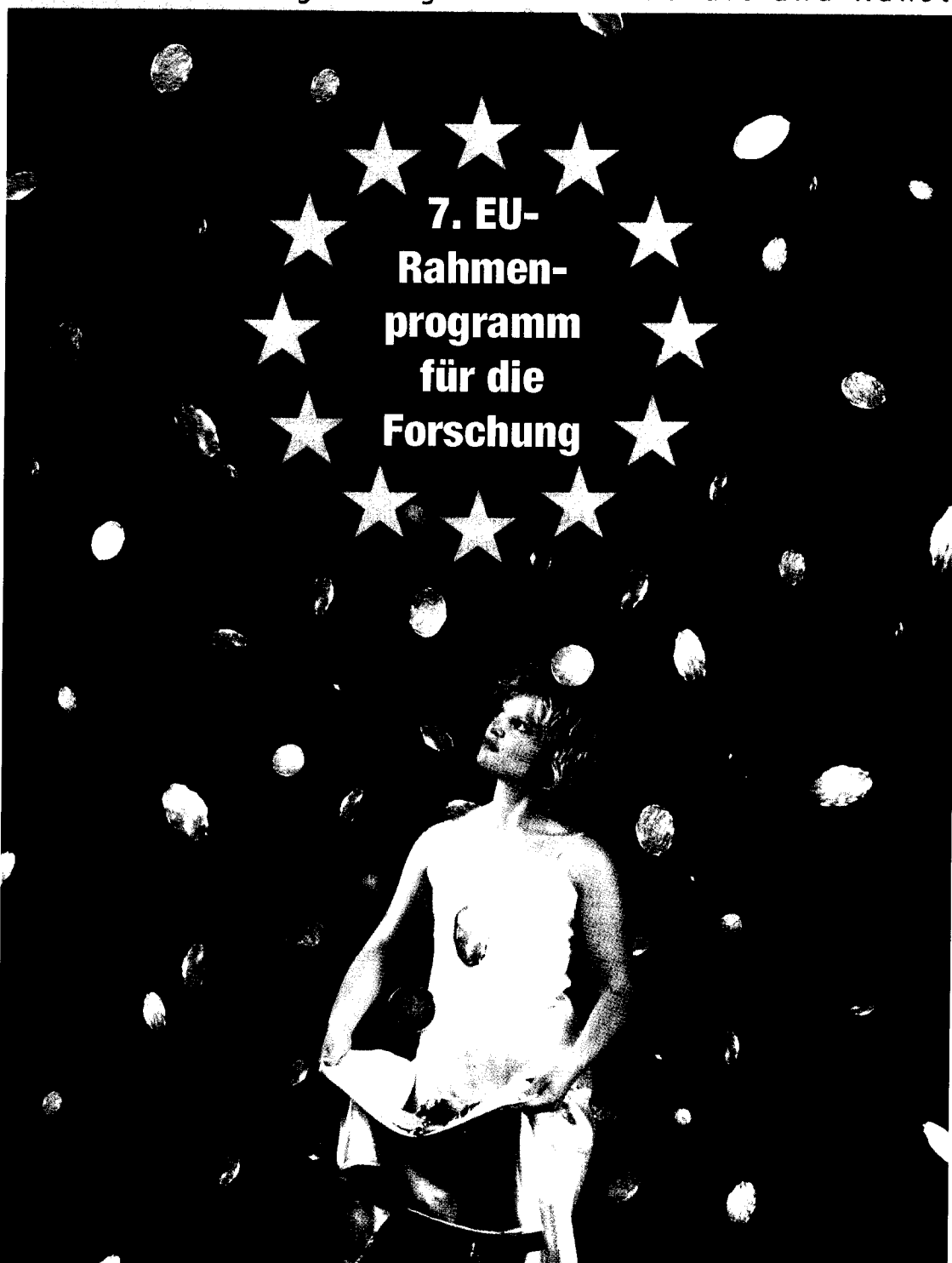
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Joint Degrees – A Hallmark of the European Higher Education Area?



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Background

The ministers responsible for higher education of the 45 Bologna member states gave the following mandate for this Bologna seminar in their Bergen Communiqué¹⁾ under chapter IV which is entitled „Taking stock on progress for 2007“.

In this chapter they said:

„... In particular, we shall look for progress in:
...– the awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including at the doctorate level.“

There is already a „joint“ history of endeavours to clarify what joint degrees are and how they could best be put into practice. This history has to be taken into account.

This concerns primarily the Stockholm Conclusions of May 31, 2002,²⁾ the final report on the Mantova Seminar of April 11–12, 2003³⁾ and the Stockholm Seminar „Joint Degrees – Further Development“ of May 6-7, 2004.⁴⁾

The Stockholm 2002 Conclusions make an explicit reference to the Lisbon Recognition Convention of 1997⁵⁾ on the recognition of degrees and study phases in higher education with a proposed amendment to include joint degrees dating from 2004.⁶⁾

In the Bergen Communiqué the ministers state under the chapter „recognition of degrees and study periods“:

„...We express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and call upon all national

authorities and other stakeholders to recognise joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA.“

The Stockholm 2002 Conclusions also contain a list of 9 criteria which could be useful as common denominators for the design of joint (or integrated) study programmes (this list is very much compatible with the criteria that TAUCH and RAUHVARIGERS listed in their survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees⁷⁾).

Three of these nine criteria should be mentioned here again, namely:

- the duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial, e.g. 1 year at bachelor level
- joint study programmes require to be settled on by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions
- full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement (DS).

From the Mantova Final Report 2003, two statements might be worth being highlighted: „...Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are one of the major priorities for the building of a European identity“ (including cultural, linguistic and social aspects) and „...Joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe are a cornerstone for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge.“

Under the auspices of the German Rectors Conference (HRK) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and co-financed by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, an official Bologna-Seminar on questions and strategies related to the awarding of „Joint Degrees“ in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was held on September 21–22, 2006 in Berlin. Five working groups discussed specific aspects of Joint Degrees: such as Recognition, Quality Assurance, Designing Legal Frameworks, Mobility, Financing and Funding. The author reports a summary, conclusions and recommendations.

The Stockholm 2004 Report and Conclusions⁸⁾ stress the need to map the experience of higher education institutions and students and to anchor the possibility of awarding joint degrees in the national legislation on higher education.

Summary of the Berlin Seminar

The discussions and contributions in Berlin made clear that all over Europe there are various models of joint study programmes with different types of degrees in place (integrated programmes with double, multiple or joint degrees). Irrespective of the type of the final degree, in all models of joint programmes students have to spend a substantial part of their study programme in a host university abroad.

The seminar participants agreed that it might be useful to distinguish more precisely between joint or integrated study programmes as a procedural work on the one hand and the awarding of a degree that recognises and reflects the new contents and the added European value on the other hand.

There are already some definitions of what a joint degree is or in which framework it can be defined. We have definitions of this kind on the Bologna-Bergen homepage, of the Council of Europe (CoE) and UNESCO, in the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and of ESIB (these definitions are wider) and one by the ERASMUS-MUNDUS-Programme (which is narrower and closer to a „true“ joint degree of the one certificate or -diploma type).

These definitions are partly contradictory, even though all of them have been officially agreed upon at different points in time. Since there are obviously concerns in some countries of too narrow definitions of joint degrees to insert in their national legislation, it could be advisable to start with a wider and more liberal definition of the Lisbon/Unesco/Council of Europe type.

The Lisbon/Unesco/CoE-definition of a joint degree is: „A joint degree should be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions. A joint degree may be issued as

a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas
 a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma,
 one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of joint qualification in question.“

In any case, it is important that ministers commit themselves to making the necessary legal steps to allow the awarding of joint degrees in their respective national legislation.

It might perhaps be useful to compile the legal provisions for joint degrees of those countries which already have them and to present them to all ministers, perhaps with a brief additional (juridical) comment. This would be a task to be initiated by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG).

In the Berlin Seminar five working groups discussed specific aspects of Joint Degrees:

1. Recognition
2. Quality Assurance
3. Designing Legal Frameworks
4. Mobility
5. Financing and Funding

Some of the working groups' results are taken into consideration in the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The seminar agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations to the ministers concerned

- (1) There is already evidence that joint (integrated) programmes are a step forward to a truly bottom-up process in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and thus contribute largely to the building of a European identity of a specific, higher-education-related kind. They combine international experience, enhanced linguistic, cultural and social competence. If these contributions to the coherence of a European Higher

Education Area (EHEA) are really valuable and appreciated, there must be some kind of specific funding for them either on the national or on the European level or perhaps even as a combination of the two.

This request is justified because – at least in the initial phase – there are additional (overhead) costs that are specific to such programmes. On the other hand, there is an added value of these programmes and in the long run and with more experience gained, there could even result less costs or greater capacity options by the (international) pooling of resources.

(2) Since there are still comparatively few joint degree programmes with a small number of students and there seems to be a recruitment problem in terms of attracting the „right“ students, additional funding is needed to ensure the desperately needed enhanced marketing and information campaigns on the added benefit of joint degree programmes which are virtually unknown yet.

(3) Competent authorities at the national and the European level should be asked to compile a survey and description of existing double, multiple and joint degree programmes to better illustrate what these programmes are for and what their European value both in terms of academic world-competitive education and of employment perspectives are. Such studies could be initiated simultaneously at the national and the European level.

(4) There are different proposals of criteria for the design and development of integrated European (joint) programmes. It is suggested to set up a final list of „good criteria“ (or „golden rules“) that can be derived from the Stockholm, Mantova and Berlin Seminars and other relevant documents in this connection. Such a list should then be published as a Bologna document of reference and relevance.

(5) As regards the legal definition of a „true“ joint degree this is not the case (no broad consensus) and it may be difficult to achieve it with a formula that covers all aspects. Probably it is not even necessary. All ministers whose countries have already ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (these are 39 at the time being) have at least in general agreed to the formulation chosen for the Lisbon Subsidiary Documents⁹⁾ of Unesco and the Council of Europe (which is a broader one for the design and description of joint integrated programmes). Therefore, the ministers are asked to incorporate in their national legislation on higher education at least the written option for the awarding of joint degrees with a reference to the Lisbon Convention descriptions and making sure that they are quality-assured according to national standards and European principles and guidelines already agreed upon.

In addition to legal provisions allowing for joint degrees it is also of utmost importance to make extensive use of a precise and informative Diploma Supplement. It could also be possible to combine the single or multiple diploma document with a joint diploma supplement in such a way that the different parts or sheets cannot be separated any more.

In the meantime, the ministers should encourage institutions to continue and enhance their work for the preparation and design of integrated joint programmes.

(6) Ministers should encourage institutions engaged in joint study programmes to make use of mutual tuition waiver for study periods spent in the foreign partner institution.

(7) Ministers are asked to make sure that the procedures for the attainment of visa and other necessary documents or permissions will not produce obstacles for the development of joint study programmes.

(8) In terms of Quality Assurance, the implementation of the ENQA Standards and Guidelines passed in Bergen and the further development of a European Register of Quality Assurance agencies facilitating mutual recognition of QA decisions in the Bologna signatory countries remain essential to make quality assurance of joint degrees easier and more transparent within the Bologna context and to avoid multiple QA procedures. Furthermore specific criteria aiming at the assessment of the added value of joint degrees as opposed to national degrees need to be developed.

- 1) „The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals“, Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen (Norway), 19-20 May 2005 (www.bologna-bergen2005.no)
- 2) Ministry of Education and Science, Stockholm, Sweden: „The Stockholm Conclusions – Conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar on Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna Process“, Regeringskansliet, Stockholm, 31 May 2002
- 3) Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca: Seminar on „Integrated Curricula – Implications and Prospects“, Final Report, Mantova, 11-12 April 2003
- 4) Ministry of Education and Science, Sweden: „Bologna Follow-up Seminar Joint Degrees – Further Development“, Stockholm, May 6-7, 2004
- 5) „Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region“, Lisbon, April 11, 1997
- 6) The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region: „Recommendations on the Recognition of Joint Degrees“, adopted on 9 June 2004
- 7) Tauch C. / Rauhvargers A. (2002). Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe. Genf: European University Association. Siehe: http://www.unige.ch/eua/En/Publications/Survey_Master_Joint_degrees.pdf
- 8) Pavel ZGAGA: „Bologna Follow-up Seminar Joint Degrees - Further Development. Report by the Rapporteur“, 7 pages, Stockholm/Ljubljana, May 2004 (www.bologna-bergen2005.no)
- 9) Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region: „Recommendations on the Recognition of Joint Degrees“, adopted on 9 June 2004