



## EU funded project in Armenia

Establishment of a Chair of European and International Law and Center for European Law and Integration at the Yerevan State University and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements Promotion

## CENTER FOR EUROPEAN LAW AND INTEGRATION

Integration of European higher education system and participation of Armenia in this process

Research



This project is funded  
by the European Union



The project is implemented  
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# Center for European Law and Integration



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## Integration of European higher education system and participation of Armenia in this process

### Research

The present publication has been made possible by the support of the European Union. The content of the publication are those of the authors and the Center for European Law and Integration, and do not necessarily express the views of the European Union.



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Yerevan 2008

# **TRANSLATION**

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## Introduction

The research of amendment of the EU policies has mainly disregarded the issues of higher education. However, certain modifications in favor of higher education issues have been recently observed in the researches<sup>1</sup>. There is lack of literature where European procedure of higher education is regarded in respect of comparative policy, as well as lack of literature that may be helpful in comparing present higher education policy developments with earlier policies in European level.

The European Commission periodically reminds that higher education has never been discussed in the agenda of European governmental bodies in such a high level<sup>2</sup>. According to Lisbon Strategy the preference was given to a stronger system of higher educational institutions to create “Europe of knowledge”. The universities can promote local and regional economic development with the help of plenty of scientific recourses, as well as extend the knowledge-based economic opportunities.

However, not only EU member countries observe the universities as strategic recourses. After signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999 “more expanded” European governments (that extends to the east, up to Russia and Azerbaijan) became participants of the “wonderful” agreement, thus ensuring regional integration of their higher education systems. All these countries are interested in improving the quality of their national education systems. Moreover, most of them are willing to enroll the best overseas students and scientists. All the participating countries of this procedure are convinced that they will achieve their objective by cooperating and competing in the higher education system of the European region, which is characterized by certain generalized features.

How and why the policy of European higher education has been developed and expanded? The European community was not interested in higher education before 1970. The interest in higher education was initiated in 1971, when the ministers of higher education of the participant countries met and concluded to cooperate; or in 1974-76, when the first steps to start the Erasmus programme (ensuring academic mobility) were taken. Nevertheless, there was no research interest in the field of higher education until 1980.

Globalization had and is still having a considerable impact on education system and its management. Sklair states that capitalism succeeds by turning most spheres of social life into businesses by making social institutions—such as schools, universities, prisons,

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<sup>1</sup> Bleiklie (2005), Musselin (2005), Gornitzka and Olsen (2006)

<sup>2</sup> Figel, 2006; European Commission, 2003, 2005, 2006

hospitals, welfare systems—more business-like<sup>3</sup>. The business-like nature of these institutions expresses more aggressive approach of efficiency (application of the best method to move from one point to another).

## **1. Globalization of the higher education system**

In present realities education, particularly higher education has become an important product in the entire world. At present Europe enrolls less non-European students than US does. For instance, the number of students of Asian origin studying in USA more than twice increases in the number of students of Asian origin studying in Europe. Moreover, at present 27 thousand US students study in Europe, while more than 52 thousand European students study in USA<sup>4</sup>. To compare it should be mentioned, that in 2001 these indicators were 23,705 and 80000, respectively<sup>5</sup>. As we can see, the numbers of European students studying in USA at present twice increases in the number of US students studying in Europe. That is why it has been repeatedly mentioned in the discussions of the Bologna process that the differences of European higher education system and the degrees awarded by the universities is one of the main causes hindering the procedure of enrolment of overseas students.

The next indisputable and frequently not mentioned factor is the language of the courses. The opportunity to learn in English may be very attractive. Thus, in spite of the fact that in Great Britain tuition fees are much more for non-EU students than in other European countries, Great Britain is still the second leading “education” exporting country in the world.

The education system also affects the field of scientific researches, where Europe is again inferior to USA. Thus, the data presented in *Graphic 1* testifies that Europe should initiate special activities in the sphere of higher education and scientific research if Europe aims at being at least equal in competing with USA.

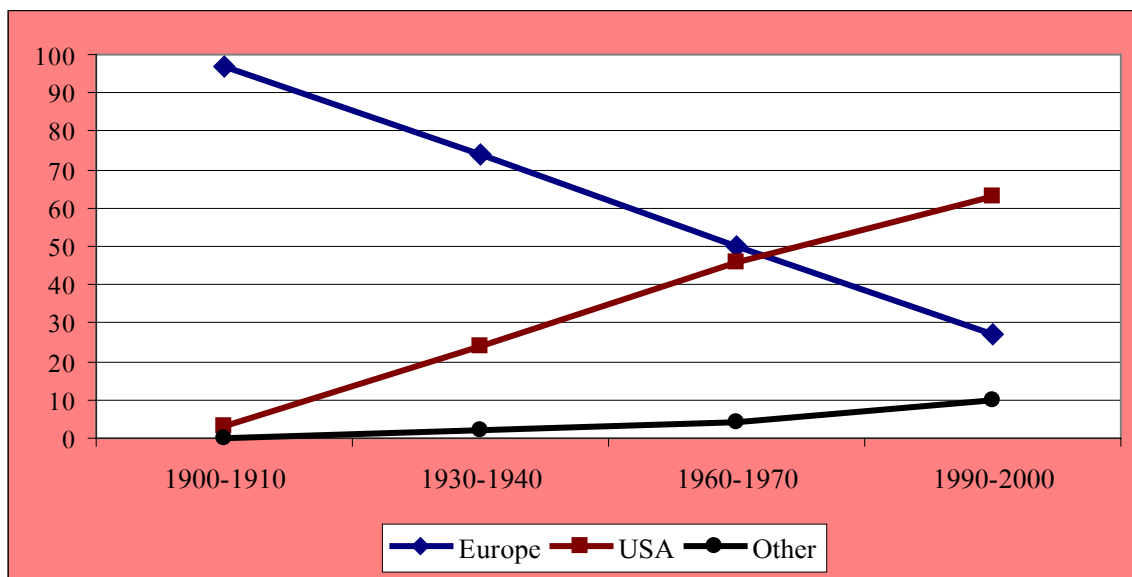
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<sup>3</sup> Sklair, L. (2001) “The Transnational Capitalist Class”, Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>4</sup> OECD, Education at a Glance 2007, Table C3.8

<sup>5</sup> OECD, 2001, Table C3.5

Graphic 1: The percentage (%) of countries granted the Nobel Prize during the period of 1990-2000



Source: [www.nobel.se](http://www.nobel.se)

Generally the historical, political and cultural relations between the countries and regions mainly explain the student mobility flow. Overseas demand is focused on the educational services offered in English, German and French. For instance, USA, Great Britain, Germany, France and Australia share 80% of overseas within the frames of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

According to Pavlovsky five factors determining the advantages of USA over the European universities are<sup>6</sup>:

- Efficient and professional management,
- High level of independence of scientific and academic members of the staff,
- Financial and organizational sustainability,
- Academic environment which creates specific relations and character as a result of correlation between the scientists and students,
- Correlation with the external environment, particularly in economic level.

Thus, student internal exchange programs implemented within the frames of EU can considerably improve EU education programs. Almost the half of overseas students all over the world study in Europe, but more than half of them are Europeans.

***The process of trans-nationalizing of the education market:*** Rapid internalization process of higher education system plays a big roll in trans-nationalization of education market. The international education is often organized by the following scheme: the

<sup>6</sup> Krzysztof Pawlowski (2004) "Rediscovering higher education in Europe", Studies on Higher Education

university offering international education together with the higher educational institution of a target country or another educational institution establishes cooperation and a joint fund or a separate education program, or a full educational institution. Besides, the university providing international education is usually responsible for education planning and partially for its implementation. The university providing international education is responsible for education quality, and the admission party implements the procedure of organizing the education. In fact, this is a kind of education franchising<sup>7</sup>.

In Europe the British universities have extended higher education programs granting education degrees beyond the Great Britain borders. For instance, the partners of British universities in Finland, German and Holland have no right to grant a master's degree independently. In some countries international education is regarded as a nonidentical approach, because it occasionally contradicts the education objectives of the target country, and the quality of education remains disputable. At the same time, in other countries, as for example in Spain, the attitude towards expanding of the international education is rather positive.

Higher education in Europe has been regarded to be a public good/service for a long time, which is being provided by the government or other state governmental bodies. This tradition is now being transformed, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe: in Western Europe, particularly in Great Britain and in the Netherlands the financial independence is more vividly expressed than in other countries. On the other hand, the private institutions providing higher education in Western Europe (e.g. in Germany, Portugal, Italy etc.) began to spread intensively and develop at the end of 1990. Many of these institutions are focused on such fields as business, management/administration, and law.

**Quality assessment of higher education:** because of the development of education market and intensification of its commercial trend the quality assessment faces new challenges: in 1990 almost in all Western European countries supervision of higher educational institutions by state governmental bodies was considerably weakened. The public administration bodies do not plan and regulate the content of education, and the universities are independent in their decision making process. As the result of these developments, as well as of the rapid development of commercial trend of education the attention is mostly focused on the quality of education.

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<sup>7</sup> Special type of patent when a well known trademark company grants another company with the right to the patent of its trademark, at the same having the right to supervise the quality, composition, and etc. of its goods.

OECD has elaborated special indicators for comparing education policies, while in the EU it is currently in process. A number of private educational institutions have been established as the result of political, socio-economic developments in the Central and Eastern Europe. The foreign higher educational institutions have established some of them. New methods have been elaborated for the monitoring of those programs. Many countries of the Central and Eastern Europe have elaborated accrediting systems to ensure minimum standards of education.

Since the Bologna process accreditation is under the extensive discussions and debates in the EU. It has become necessary to elaborate national and transnational accrediting systems in a number of countries aiming at making the European higher education system more competitive. On the other hand, American accrediting system was introduced in many European countries. Here the question is whether higher education in Europe develops to satisfy European or American needs and standards. It must be mentioned that details on the Bologna process will be presented in Part 4 of this research.

## **2. Conformity and integration of higher education in the European countries**

In recent years the Europe together with globalization development has focused attention on higher education. But still there is no joint strategy in this sphere. As there is a variety of understandings and challenges of globalization for different countries, various levels (European, national, institutional) of responsibility of higher education policy are also on hand. For instance, different aspects and phases of higher education can be considered for the European Union, particularly for the European Commission, while reaction of certain countries towards the present policy can be quite different<sup>8</sup>. Thus, lots of programs are being extensively implemented to increase international competitiveness of higher national education system in a number of European countries. In this context, the examples of Germany, France, and Sweden are typical.

*In Germany* the strategy of higher education is aimed at increasing the number of overseas students studying in Germany and encouraging the students willing to study abroad. At the same time reforms for the policies of higher educational institutions are being carried

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<sup>8</sup> Huisman, J. and M.C. van der Wende (eds) (2004) "On Cooperation and Competition; National and European Policies for Internationalization of Higher Education; ACA Papers on International Cooperation, Lemmens, Bonn

out. Together with traditional system of education Bachelor's and Master's degrees are offered. Currently there are more than 400 education programs in Germany granting education degrees that are based on the new system (bachelor + master).

The strategy of higher education in Germany also includes implementation of marketing policy. The responsibility of ensuring marketing and information access lies with German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst). Marketing policy is focused on Greece, Turkey, Iran, China and South Korea. Higher education in Germany is free for local students, and it is up to the universities to decide whether overseas students should pay tuition fees or not.

*In France* the strategy (elaborated in 1998) of higher education is aimed at increasing the role of French higher education in global education system and promoting cooperation in the field of scientific researches. Cooperation in the field of education in the strategy is regarded as an essential factor to strengthen economic and cultural position of France. France has also carried out reforms in its education system degrees by standardizing the education degrees granted by the universities. In France, as well as in Germany, higher education is mostly free, but there are no scholarships for the master's degree programs.

*In Sweden* the strategy (elaborated in 2000) of higher education is aimed at increasing the number of overseas students, particularly from non-EU countries. In Sweden higher education is free both for local and overseas students. Sweden strategy is a program that is aimed at supporting the internalization of higher education system of Sweden.

Generally, in spite of the sizable achievements in the provision process of making the degrees and quality compatible, there are still certain difficulties in achieving harmonization in the field of higher education. Thus, the comparative analysis shows that the process of carrying out reforms between the countries and implementation of the new structure can differ considerably. For instance, the two-cycle education system has already been fully introduced in the Netherlands, and in Germany the new system, is being used together with the acting old one<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, in spite of the rapid increase in the number of new programs granting academic degrees, insignificant part of the students studying in Germany are involved in those programs<sup>10</sup>.

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9 Lub, A., M.C. van der Wende and J. Witte (2003), .The Implementation of the Bachelor-master System in Germany and the Netherlands., TEAM, Vol. 9, pp. 249-266.

<sup>10</sup> Only 10% of education curriculum was organized according to the Bachelor- Master system in 2001, where 1% of students were enrolled, while in 2004- 23 and 3.5%, accordingly.

Having studied higher education systems of the six European countries it turned out that there is no joint approach in the procedure of implementation of new programs granting academic degrees<sup>11</sup>. Each country drafts a timetable and duration for the implementation of the new programs. Thus, in contrast to other European countries the duration of education programs granting master's degree in Great Britain is shorter, usually 1 year.

However, in this phase we find it more reasonable to do a more detailed study and to present integration and improvement experience of the Netherlands in the sphere of higher education, because the mentioned experience of the Netherlands is considered to be one of the successful in Europe. In spite of the fact that each country is distinguished by its peculiarities and specifications, it can be a guide for other countries. Thus, main characteristics of higher education of the Netherlands are the following since 1990:

- economization of higher education,
- political preference was given to transformation of educational institutions from state to private,
- political preference was given to the extension scale of educational institutions (scale effect),
- In the process of general supervision of educational institutions the preference was given to the involvement of special managers.

Since 1990 all education qualitative features have been defined by economic indicators. The assessment of education quality of the institutions was defined as “production of credits”- quantity assessment and the efficiency of the institutions defined the way of organizing the “production process”<sup>12</sup>. It must be mentioned that institutions are funded by the state based on a number of quantitative indicators (“produced” quantity of the credits, quantity of PhD thesis etc). Thus, when education is regarded in accordance with the economic indicators (“productivity/supply” of credits and “consumption/demand”) that procedure can be fully supervised by appropriate particular managers approving the parameters of productivity for the faculty and parameters of consumption for the students (costs of courses included). On the other hand, according to the new law on higher education (2007) of the Netherlands students are regarded as “consumers” of education, and employers

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11 Alesi, B., S. Burger, B. Kehm and U. Teichler (2005), Bachelor and Master Courses in Selected Countries Compared with Germany, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Bonn/Berlin.

12 Wissenschaftsrecht (2000) “The Myth of the Dutch Middle Way” vol.33, p.189-209.

are regarded as future “consumers” of educated “consumers”. As the “market” is the basic mechanism defining academic values the professors delivering useful and profitable courses must be paid more.

According to the new law on higher education the procedure of privatizing education system must be finalized. All higher educational institutions are to become legally private, still being partially funded by the state. Therefore, the concept “private” in the education system of the Netherlands considerably differs from private education systems of other countries.

### **3. Education system of the European Union**

In accordance with the EU founding treaties responsibility for the education policy lies with the Member States. The legal basis of vocational education is different from compulsory and higher education, since Article 150 on Education, Vocational Training and Youth of the Treaties allows the Community to agree during the elaboration process vocational training policy. On the other hand, according to Article 149 on compulsory and higher education of the same Treaties, the responsibility for the content/structure of teaching and the organization of education systems lies with the Member States, and at the same time by retaining competence of the Member States it excludes laying down and dissemination of certain national terms on the basis of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Because of the included limited possibilities, actions taken in education sphere on the Community level are focused on the increase in mobility level, development of the European dimension in education and improvement of quality education. EU budget provision for the education policy is insufficient (at about 0.5%).

Taking into account the EU education policy base, it is worth mentioning that EU aims at establishing a stronger economic and political union. Aims and content of education systems of the Member States make an immense contribution to gain this aim.

The EU education system priorities are interconnected with the productivity increase of the internal market. To assist labor mobility it is essential to encourage mobility of students. System of mutual recognition of credits and degrees directly aims at promotion of labor mobility.

Education policy has recently become important in the EU. Under the agreements Lisbon and Fera European Councils education is considered to be an essential factor in the

process of creating a competitive and dynamic Europe. Educational issues have more closely interrelated with economic and employment policies.

Lisbon European Council concluded to strengthen internal general policies of the Union. Education policy was also discussed and that means that the Union seeks to have a comprehensive strategy, the basis of which is the “open coordination method”, that is the main activity of the Union in the sphere should be coordination.

Regardless of the fact that at present the EU Member States speak out for the subsidiary competence principal with regard to education policy issues, the Member States are still trying to find the ways for extending the inter-governmental cooperation. Vivid examples are Sorbonne- Bologna processes and Florence Declaration, where all the Member States or some of them express willingness to increase the similarities of the education policy.

**The EU Education policy:** Education policy of the European Union is the sphere of intergovernmental policy. Thus, the European Union has no general education policy and role of the Community is to establish a workable cooperation system between the Member States, while ensuring independence of the Member States in the management process of education system.

The same provision is presented in the 149 Article of Amsterdam Treaty, which particularly states the following<sup>13</sup>:

*“The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.”*

The same Article presents aims of the Community in the sphere:

*“Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States,*

- *Encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study,*
- *promoting cooperation between educational establishments,*

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<sup>13</sup> Armenian version of the “Treaties on the European Union and establishing the European Community”, Center for European Law and Integration, 2007

- *developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States,*
- *encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors,*
- *encouraging the development of distance education.”*

At the same time the Community realizes that coordination of the education sphere is an essential precondition in the territory of the Member States to coordinate the professional criteria, to identify the diplomas and certificates, and to grant equal possibilities and criteria in general. For this reason Article 150 of the same Treaty defines the following:

“The Community action shall aim to:

- facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining,
- improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market,
- facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people,
- stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms,
- develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.”

The above mentioned Articles indicate that the European Union is not applying “general policy”, in education sphere. Meanwhile, content of Articles of the mentioned Treaties testifies that the European establishments play a supporting role in the development process of general strategy for the education system of the Member States. It is particularly being accomplished by implementation of joint programmes between the Member States, by development of cooperation programs between educational institutions, and by offering student exchange mechanisms. For this reason, the European Community is funding those programs, which aim at defining European education criteria, requirements consistent with professional skills, and training alternatives.

There are two main agencies in the EU education sphere: European Center for the Development of Vocational Training and Vocational Training Consulting Commission.

Availability of the relevant legislation allows the Candidate States to participate in the programmes implemented in the sphere. Ten countries of Central Europe, as well as Cyprus

and Malta, also participate in the programmes implemented by the Community in the spheres of education, vocational training and youth. European Center for the Development of Vocational Training has already been established in the mentioned countries. To ensure efficient application of 77/486 Directive on education of children of the refugee workers legislative amendments have been introduced in the former twelve Candidate States. The Member States are to take measures needed for training and further retraining of those teachers who are doing vocational training.

In 2000 the EU carried out a number of reforms being aware that improvement of quality education is essential for implementation of economic, social objectives of the Community. The EU Member States jointly initiated definitions of 13 special objectives, which are reflected in Education and Training 2010 Programme.

The European Community also participates in various intergovernmental programmes, Bologna process included, which aims at creating the European higher education area by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. One of the important documents preceding the Bologna process is Sorbonne Declaration /Declaration on harmonizing the architecture of the European Higher Education system signed by education ministers of France, Italy, German and UK/, which was signed in Paris in 1998. This document states that an open European area for higher education carries a wealth of positive perspectives, of course respecting the diversities, but requires on the other hand continuous efforts to remove barriers and to develop a framework for teaching and learning, which would enhance mobility and an ever closer cooperation. The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their external and internal readabilities. A system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence. Much of the originality and flexibility in this system will be achieved through the use of credits (such as in the ECTS scheme) and semesters. This will allow for validation of these acquired credits for those who choose initial or continued education in different European universities and wish to be able to acquire degrees in due time throughout life. Under this Declaration in the graduate cycle there would be a choice between a shorter master's degree and a longer doctor's degree, with possibilities to transfer from one to the other. In both graduate degrees, appropriate emphasis would be placed on research and autonomous work.

Interest of the European Union in education policy developed after Lisbon Summit /March 2000/, during which the EU Heads of States asked Ministers of Education of the EU

to define education specific issues and perspectives for their development. By the way, as an assessment document, the Commission publishes a document about the events that aim at encouraging close cooperation between the Member States.

The Commission publishes such documents for many years, but only some of them have been implemented since the Lisbon Summit in March of 2000. The Summit, which aimed at intensifying the cooperation between the States, encouraged cooperation of the Member States in this sphere. The European Commission and the Member States prepared the spring report in joint efforts and the Spring Summit 2002 approved their work program. The work plan includes the list of specific events for the specific year. Such joint reports are published almost each year.

The Commission aims at inspiring the Member States to improve quality of education by: *defining the objective* and *by publishing attitude of the Member States*. The process is known as “open method of coordination ”,

On February 12, 2001 the Council on the basis of the suggestion of the Commission and investments of the Member States concluded on “the further objectives of the education system reports,,. This is the first document, which defined the general approach for education national policy on the basis of the following objectives:

- improve the quality of education and training systems,
- make the “lifelong learning” more accessible,
- make education and training systems more advanced

The report was approved in March of 2001 and was adopted on February 14, 2002 during the meeting of the Council of Europe held in Stockholm. The detailed work plan was also presented during the meeting. The implementation of this method requires application of the “open method of coordination”. “Lifelong learning” is the important part of this strategy. Lifelong learning involves intended education related to personal, civic and social, as well as employment training. It is being implemented in various spheres. Lifelong learning assumes increase of human resources and investments in the scientific sphere, promotion to the process of gaining general skills/including how to make use of digital technologies/, as well as application of new, more flexible methods of education. This type of education aims at ensuring equal possibilities for people of all ages to take advantage of the right of high quality education in the entire Europe for.

Lifelong learning programme embarked on a new phase, when in November of 2006 the Decision No 1720/2006/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE

COUNCIL was adopted. The program is intended for 2007-2013 and is a joint action plan, as well as a financial document.

**EU education programmes:** The concrete measures in EU education sphere are initiated and expressed in special action plans. First of such programs were applied in 1980. In July of 1987 the European Union adopted its first education program Comett, which aimed at supporting implementation of various programs within the universities. The next program was Erasmus, which encourages inter- university collaboration and academic mobility. These programs were adopted as a result of cooperation of the EU Member States; still the major financial assistance came from the European Parliament.

It was possible for 3,244 students to participate in Erasmus in its first year. At present, at about 150,000 students enjoy the possibilities of Erasmus programme annually. Erasmus is one of the best programmes supporting academic mobility and actual for the implementation process of the new strategy. General willingness to support development of international mobility was expressed in July of 2001 in the directions adopted by the European Parliament and Council, as well as in February of 2002 in the action plan on “Skills and Mobility”.

In 1995 Socrates programme was established, which involves Erasmus and Lingua (promotion of language learning and teaching) programmes, as well as the following new projects of the Community: Comenius (focuses on the first phase of education, from pre-school and primary to secondary schools), Minerva (focuses on distance learning) and Gruntvig (adult education and other educational pathways). Second phase of the Socrates programme runs from 2000 and aims at implementation of the following objectives:

- to strengthen the European dimension in education at all levels;
- to improve knowledge of foreign languages;
- to promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education;
- to encourage the use of new technologies in education;
- to promote equal opportunities in all sectors of education.

The mentioned program was supplemented with a new program in December of 2003. Under the decision No 2317/2003/EU of the European Parliament and Council Erasmus Mundus Programme, which aims at promoting the educational collaboration with developing countries, was established.

Another important programme implemented in EU is Leonardo Da Vinci programme. The program as a result of transnational cooperation supports the Member States in the process of improving the quality of education, encouraging innovations and strengthening

training systems and experience. The main aim of the programme is to encourage the process of professional training in different spheres.

One of the eminent programmes of the European Community to be mentioned is the TEMPUS programme, which is a Trans-European university cooperation programme aiming at implementation of exchange programmes, as well as education and training of qualified specialists, carrying out of reforms in educational system, increasing education level of the citizens. From the beginning the programme aimed at establishing cooperation between the Community and Poland, Hungary. Later the programme included all the Member States of Eastern Europe before their membership, as well as CIS states and Mongolia.

TEMPUS programme was implemented in several phases. Tempus IV has already been launched and has the following features:

- Strong involvement of national authorities in the definition of priorities and selection of projects;
- Programme supported by a network of National Contact Points in EU Member States and National Tempus Offices in partner countries

Tempus solves many problems in education sphere, particularly allows improving and developing professional skills, to solve important issues in the higher educational institutions, to elaborate a team approach, to study the university culture of other countries and societies, as well as grants with a possibility to have a long-term cooperation.

All the work done within the frameworks of the programme, as done before are to be held in the unions, that is by cooperation with European universities, as well as enterprises, non-governmental organizations, state service, local authorities. Cooperation between the universities can be implemented in different levels: implementation of projects by drafting of academic programmes and by developing of university administration. Participants of the unions will be selected depending on the sequence of priorities provided to the European Commission by each country. Within the frameworks of the programme a union higher education institutions, as well as a union of academic organizations are to be established, and joint financial project is to be proposed. At about 30 people from a one country can participate in the implementation of the project. Employees of the higher educational institutions can strengthen their professional qualification in European higher educational institutions, as well as develop and update their projects related both to education programmes and university administration.

#### 4. Paris and Lisbon declarations and WTO Interrelation

Declaration of Paris, adopted in 1998 that became the basis for development of Bologna process, raised such serious issues as competition of European higher education and increase of global attractiveness, particularly, in contrast to Northern America and Australia (English speaking two global regions). Europe, except the Great Britain, as a result of competition lost the increasing market of Asian students in the field of higher education. Probably the “exceptional” success in higher education of Great Britain explains why without long discussions the Anglo-Saxon higher education structure was adopted to be the main European model in Bologna. The fact, that the success of Anglo-Saxon model is explained by the global position of the English language, and not by the formal structure of educational institutions, has not been studied deeply. The language issue in the European higher education system has almost never been discussed in political level. It will be very difficult to change the teaching language of higher education system by stating that in political documentation. Thus, the language issue is often not considered (except the cases when higher education is considered to be an export, because in this case application of English language in the higher education system is an undeniable fact).

Europeans are currently worried that the global market of higher education initiated by the Declaration of Paris had economic causes in the initial stage, despite the fact that the “European culture” had formal connection<sup>14</sup>. Economic causes were more vividly expressed during the EU Summit in Lisbon (March 2000), where the EU representatives mentioned that “the export value” of the US higher education totaled millions of USD (in 2005 US economy gained USD 13, 3 million thanks to the overseas students), and even Australian higher education is the fifth in the world by the “oversea value”<sup>15</sup>. Thus, EU expressed its intention to become “the most dynamic and competitive union”.

In this context, taking into account the fact that the present global economy is “knowledge based” and the EU also works in a “knowledge based society” the EU representatives came to the conclusion that European higher education must become the most dynamic and competitive in the world.

Thus, the Declaration of Paris (1998), the Bologna Declaration (1999), and the Declaration of Lisbon constitute one entity. On the other hand, as you have already noticed,

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<sup>14</sup> Likewise only the objectives of economic policy have been transferred to practical sphere of politics. See the European Union Lisbon strategy [www.etuc.org/a/652](http://www.etuc.org/a/652).

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times* editorial ‘Imported brains’; 3 December 2005.

all the European declarations contain economic provisions of education considering higher education as commodity the main function of which must be promotion of European Economy. This is more vividly is expressed in Declarations of Paris and Lisbon than in the Bologna Declaration, though in the latest it is also emphasized that one of the main functions of higher education must be the promotion of the labor market. Thus, the main objective of all the Declarations is to transform many different national systems of higher educations into a one competitive European “education market”. How that objective should be brought into life is not clear yet, because national governmental bodies are still responsible for the implementation of those objectives. EU has already faced serious problems, an obvious example of which is the one of the Netherlands (where there was a noncompetitive state system of higher education, lack of scale effect, difference in curricula and degrees, etc., before the amendments have been made to sphere)<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) was introduced by each higher education system for standardization of produced “values” in order to make all European degree compatible and comparable. Introduction of ECTS may be compared with the introduction of the Euro, because “the value” of higher education all over the Europe, at least theoretically, and in the case of abstraction of the language issues can be accounted, compared and changed by the same credits in future. But in contrast to the Euro, introduction of ECTS is not being carried out simultaneously. This process has different phases in various European countries, and the Netherlands are leading in this connection<sup>17</sup>.

A substantial factor in development of European higher education system, which is rarely mentioned in the EU higher education Declaration, is the World Trade Organization (WTO), particularly, Policies of General Agreements on Trade on Services (GATS). In the EU policy documentations the main cause of lack of GATS regulations is the fact that these regulations are not subject to any parliamentary supervision<sup>18</sup>. Thus, in contrast to regulations carried out within the frameworks of the Bologna, the regulations carried out within the frameworks of GATS have a status of international treaty that can be obligated by the International Law and International Court.

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<sup>16</sup> See the Netherlands state of affaires: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/macro-economie-financiele-instellingen/nationale-rekeningen/publicaties/artikelen/2005-1798-wm.htm>

<sup>17</sup> To observe the ECTS real state see: [www.esib.org/wg/education/ECTS\\_Survey.htm](http://www.esib.org/wg/education/ECTS_Survey.htm)

<sup>18</sup> The European Commission is the only entity within the EU frameworks holding competence to negotiate within the frameworks of GATS. On the other hand we know that the European Parliament has no competence to supervise the European Commission. Thus, beyond the European Parliament supervision of GATS policy is much more difficult to carry out, as the higher education still belongs to Ministries of higher education that have no connection with the European Commission.

According to GATS neo-liberal approach, higher education prescribed by the law as citizens' right of national economies, has been redefined and transformed into such international commodity that can be bought and sold in any international source. This approach will not be considered as a root amendment for US citizens, because for many EU citizens it is considered to be a root amendment carried out in the sphere of higher education. On the other hand, the GATS approach may surprise US citizens, because it defines the so-called principle of "national regime". According to that principle, the national governments are not allowed to discriminate the process of service provision within the frameworks of national economy against those serving beyond the national border.

Thus, there is a considerable obstacle in regulation of higher education within the frameworks of the Bologna process and WTO, since the Bologna process is carried out by supervision of the Member States, and WTO regulations of that sphere are carried out by the European Commission only.

## **5. The Bologna process and participation of Armenia in this process**

The issue of ensuring global competitiveness of European education system was raised at the end of 1990, because despite the inter-European mobility high level mobility level outside the Europe was quite low. Thus, Ministers of Education of four countries (UK, Germany, France and Italy) met in 1998 in Paris to discuss the harmonization possibility of the degree structure (Paris Declaration). This initiation was the base for the development of the Bologna process. The main aim of the Bologna process is to strengthen the role of European higher education in the world education market.

Thus, the Bologna process started in 1999 as an inter-governmental process and any EU activity, particularly that of the European Commission<sup>19</sup>, in the sphere of independent higher education. Ministers of higher education adopted it as a declaration to create a European area of higher education until 2010. By signing the Declaration the Ministers authorized their governments to support values of academic freedom, universities, which belong to Magna Charta<sup>20</sup>, social responsibility and independence, and to invest six criteria in their higher national education systems. The Declaration was directly signed by 29 countries including several non-EU countries. The participant countries are committed to:

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<sup>19</sup>The Commission was later involved in the process to promote competitiveness of the European higher education. Thus, in 2000 in Lisbon heads of the EU Member States declared that EU is to become the most competitive and dynamic "education based" economy of the world before 2010.

<sup>20</sup>The *Magna Charta Universitatum* signed in Bologna in 1988. [www.magna-charta.org](http://www.magna-charta.org)

- adopt “comprehensible and comparable” education degree system,
- apply an education degree system based on independent two phases,
- create a credit system,
- promote mobility,
- stimulate cooperation in the process of quality assurance, and
- promote the European dimension in higher education (See Appendix, Table 1a):

The ministers agreed to meet in 2001 in Prague, where already 33 ministers signed to:

- support lifelong education strategy,
- consider higher education and students as partners in the process of establishing European area of higher education, and
- promote enhancing of attractiveness of Europe as a study destination for non-Europeans.

In 2003 the ministers (already 40) concluded that it is important to establish close connections between higher education and scientific research systems of their countries (See Appendix, Table 1b). They agreed that European area of higher education will derive benefit from cooperation with European Research Area including doctoral degree phase, as a third phase of the Bologna process. During the meeting ministers also emphasized social dimension in higher education policy.

In 2005 in Bergen (Norway) the ministers prepared midterm assessment of primary actions. System of education degrees, quality assurance and adoption of education degrees and training duration were prioritized (See Appendix, Table 1c). Developing connections between higher education and scientific research systems, enhancing attractiveness of European area of higher education and social dimension, mobility and cooperation with other countries were considered to be further challenges.

Taking into account the fact that the Bologna process is mainly inter-governmental its decisions are not compulsory. The Bologna process is not aimed at making direct amendments in national higher education. Furthermore, the Bologna process is not trying to change status of universities, is not aimed at changing state- university connections and offers no definition for distribution of means.

## 5.1 Higher education system of Armenia and its integration with the European

Since independence in 1991 changes have been made in the education system of Armenia. Article 5 of RA Constitution provides that all RA citizens have the right to education; secondary education in state schools is free of charge, and every citizen has the right to get higher education in state educational institutions on competitive basis.

Since considerable reforms are being carried out in RA education sphere the final aim of the government is to:

- **Comply with demands of the public, state and economy:** since there are both state and private higher educational institutions in RA, a strict differentiation of activity might emerge. Thus, based on competitive basis private higher educational institutions can mainly focus on complying with public and economic needs. On the other hand state higher education institutions can focus on complying with state needs, while on the competitive basis much attention must be paid to public and economic demands.
- **Focus on educational demands of the public:** this means complying with demands of population, groups and associations of various social spheres on the basis of national and regional peculiarities.
- **To observe development tendencies and processes in the education system:** It should be mentioned that on the one hand traditions of RA education system and on the other hand world tendencies, their impact on local education system and home reaction on those processes are to be taken into account.

Statistical data of 2007 shows that there are eighteen state higher educational institutions in RA with fourteen regional branches, which provide higher and post-graduate education to more than 59 thousand students. In state higher educational institutions permanent lecturers are 6300, while average student/lecturer correlation is 8-9. In the recent decade number of private higher educational institutions, where study more than 22 thousand students, has considerably increased (72). In private higher educational institutions number of permanent lecturers is 1800, while average student/lecturer correlation is 9-10. Private higher educational institutions completely depend on fees (90% of profit), while state higher educational institutions have differentiated sources of means. Thus, state budget financing (30%), education fees (50%) and other sources (20%).

In recent years the European processes have become tangible for European countries and their citizens. By acquiring membership of the Council of Europe (in 2001) RA stated its responsibilities to participate in the European processes and willingness to carry out all the required reforms to become a competent member. At present internationalization of education system has become one of the main aims of many European countries. Obviously, Armenia cannot stay out of the international competition in the education system. For this reason, Armenia must strengthen its international competitiveness in education system, which is also a part of general economic competitiveness.

Application of legal conditions for the principles of the Bologna process were adopted by the Law on Education (1999), by higher education strategy (approved by the Government in 2002), and by Law on higher and post-graduate education (adopted by the National Assembly in 2004).

In May 18, 2004 in Strasburg, Ministers of Higher Education of South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) expressed willingness to acquire membership in the Bologna process. Reforms carried out in higher education are the essential part of the membership process. The ministers assumed obligations to adopt new legislation on higher education, which will conform to the European norms and standards, and to carry out reforms in higher education sphere according to the demands of the Bologna process.

Thus, in 2005 Armenia acquired membership to the Bologna process (See Appendix, Table 2) and assumed obligations to carry out reforms not only in the education sphere, but in the entire education system. Since 2005 RA Government, Ministry of Education and Science, as well as higher educational institutions are applying the two- cycle education system, credit transfer and accumulation system, system of diploma insert, as well as the doctoral programs have been expanded to establish a connection between the higher education and scientific research systems. It is also planned to establish an acknowledgment education body and quality assurance agency.

Let's see how the six directions of the Bologna process are being applied in Armenia:

*1. Adoption of "legible and comparable" system of educational degrees.* In May 2005 the government established Armenian ENIC/NARIC<sup>21</sup> to promote the system of objective recognition of education quality in national and organization level. After having studied the European system, the Armenian version of insert was elaborated. Currently the Armenian version of Diploma insert is under discussion in RA Ministry of Science and Education, as

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<sup>21</sup> European Network of Information Centers, ENIC/ National Academic Recognition Information Centers, NARIC

well as in higher educational institutions. In accordance with timetable stated by the Armenian government, the diploma insert provided by the higher educational institutions must be officially issued in 2007.

2. *Application of two-cycle education system.* In 2004 the law on higher education and post higher education defined a system of higher education (bachelor/master degrees) based on two phases. The Government stated that all the state higher educational institutions must present curriculum for master and bachelor courses. It is envisaged that in 2010 all the universities (including private universities) must be based on the two-cycle education system. For instance, State Architectural University has introduced the two-cycle education system in 1992, the Agricultural Academy – in 1999 and Yerevan State University in 2000, etc.

3. *Establishment of credit system.* In December 2005 the government issued a special decree on introduction of the credit system. According to that decree six state universities have to apply the credit system stage by stage. As a result, State Architectural University already has 4 years of experience in application of the credit system in its master course programmes; the Linguistic University of Yerevan has introduced credit system for bachelor and master courses for one study programme. On the other hand, four state universities reviewed their study programmes according to credit system requirements. In general all the six universities are jointly carrying out works to introduce the credit system.

Simultaneously the Ministry of Science and Education has established a working group that in national level must promote to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), prepare guidelines on ECTS application and organize training for ECTS coordinators of the universities. ECTS guidelines have been translated and are currently being published.

4. *Promotion of mobility.* The mobility between the students and professors is quite low, because there are legal and project obstacles. Available academic programmes on the basis of the special government decrees strongly regulate exchange of students, which is a serious obstacle in the process of mobility promotion. The Ministry of Education and Science encourages cooperation between higher educational institutions. According to statistic data only 10% of the total professor staff and students of the universities are involved in different mobility programmes every year. Thus, in 2005 the number of overseas students was 4,269, while 1183 study in Europe (mainly in Germany and France), and the rest in other countries<sup>22</sup>. It must be mentioned that Armenian students studying in Russia comprise over 37% (1582students).

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<sup>22</sup> OECD, Education at a Glance 2007, Table C3.8

5. *Promotion of European cooperation of quality assurance.* All the universities providing education in Armenia must be accredited. The accrediting system grants equal opportunities to both state and private institutions. According to the law on higher education and the law on post-graduate education a special body has been established within the RA Ministry of Education and Science that is responsible for licensing and accrediting the private higher educational institutions: Patent and Accreditation Service (2000). All the decrees on licensing and accrediting are issued by the minister. RA Minister of Education and Science has also established a working group that is to elaborate the quality assurance national system, on the basis of the European recommendations. Finally, it is planned to create independent agency of quality assurance.

6. *Promotion of the European dimension in higher education.* Higher educational institutions in Armenia actively participate in the European programs (TEMPUS, INTAS, etc.) the final aim of which is to promote quality improvement of education and support institutional development. In certain universities new research centers have been established within the frameworks of the European programmes, while the staff was involved in the educational process. “TEMPUS” programme is active in Armenia since 1995. During this period 92 projects have been implemented within the frameworks of programme, including 60 individual projects. The projects to be implemented within the frameworks of the Bologna process are particularly important to Armenia, and it is necessary to carry out educational amendments and to set up cooperation with the European universities. Cooperation with the European universities enables Armenian higher educational institutions to do the assessment in a new way, to aim at increasing the skills of academic staff and the level of students’ knowledge. In this connection “TEMPUS” programme is considered essential in setting up cooperation with the European partners. In this context TEMPUS gives an opportunity to invest new methods of teaching and management by applying the new technologies. Of course, the implementation of these educational programmes is essential, as the increase of academic skills will also influence the quality of teaching. Thus, it is necessary to sort out activities of corresponding structures of the universities, so that after completion of the programme implementation the lack of funding does not affect activities of the programme and development procedure of the educational institution. It was supposed to launch TEMPUS 4 programme by the end of 2007 to be implemented in 2008- 2013. Within the frameworks of TEMPUS IV, EUR 1 million is to be granted to Armenia to implement various grant projects in education sphere.

## 5.2 Assessment of the Bologna process from the point of view of the students

Aiming at not making the official analysis of the education system within the frameworks of the Bologna process, it was concluded to assess the opinion of students, the immediate participants of the education process, on the investment of the new system.

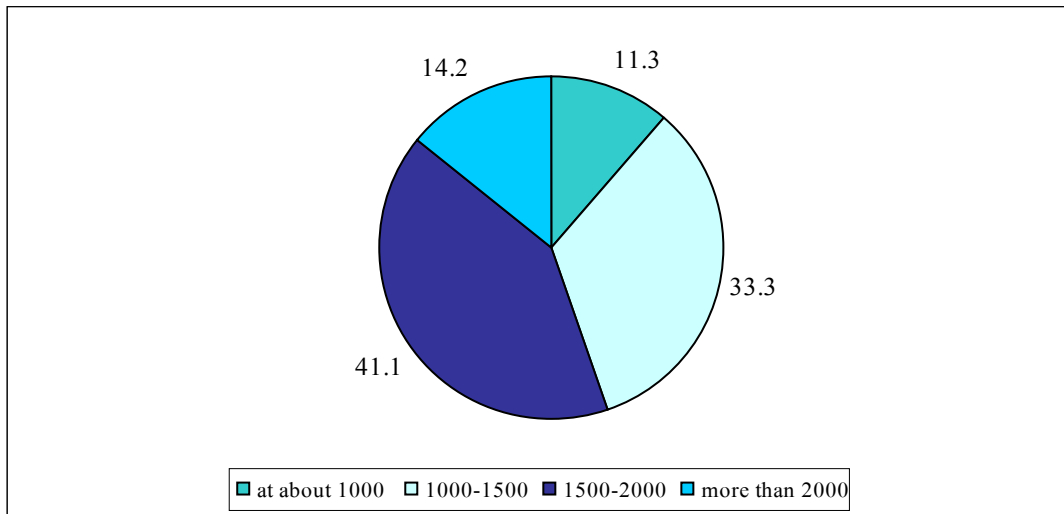
**General information on survey:** Within the frameworks of the present research surveys were carried out in two higher educational institutions: Yerevan State University and Armenian-Russian State University<sup>23</sup>: A total of 190 students, which constitutes 13.2% of students studying in both universities that apply credit systems, were surveyed. Thus, the choice is representative given the general level of the both universities. It should be mentioned that the credit system is being applied in Yerevan State University only for the master's courses, while in Armenian-Russian State University it is being applied both for bachelor's and master's courses. Gender distribution of the survey is inclined towards female, while total female/male correlation in state higher educational institutions is accordingly 51.8% and 46.9%. As far as the age distribution is concerned, 52.5% of the surveyed were 16-20 years old, while 47.4% were 21-25 years old students. 49.7% of the surveyed are students of Bachelor's Course, while 50.2% are that of the Master's Course, moreover, Master's Course students are mainly from YSU, while Bachelor's Course students are from Armenian-Russian State University. 30.3% of students are granted with state scholarships, while 69.6% are paying education fees.

The majority of students paying education fees (41.1%) annually pays AMD equivalent to USD 1500-2000, 33%` USD 1000-15000, and 14.2% more than USD (See Graphic 1):

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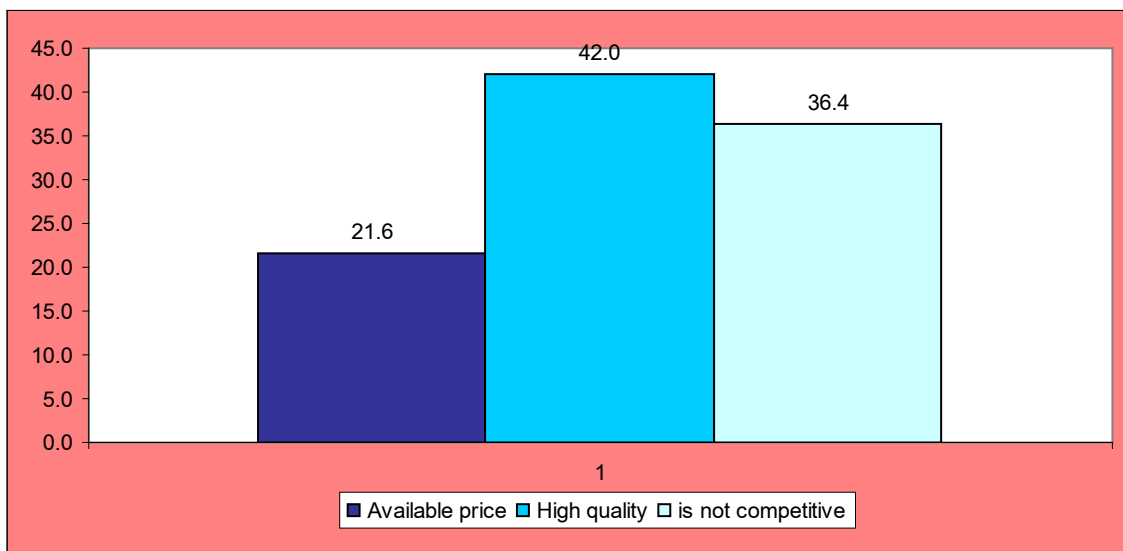
<sup>23</sup> Irina Arzumanyan and Seda Ghazakhetsyan, students of YSU Faculty of Economics, participated in the organization process, data input and development, as well as data analysis of the survey.

**Graphic 1: Distribution of education fees paid by students**



**General description of RA higher education system:** 42.0% of the surveyed thinks that in comparison with other countries RA higher education system thanks to its high quality of education is comparably competitive (See Graphic 2), while 21.6 % thinks that the main factor of competitiveness is accessibility of education fees. At the same time 36.4% of students think that RA education system is not competitive.

**Graphic 2: The main factors of competitiveness of RA higher education system**



It should be pointed out that students emphasize role of the state in the process of education development despite the fact that the majority of them thinks that higher educational institutions must be independent in defining their policies. Thus, the question “What is the impact of education fees on funding of higher educational institutions?” was answered in the following way: 13.7% of the total 190 surveyed students think that education

fees must be the main source, while 86.2% agreed that education fees must be additional source. It should be mentioned that in case of Armenia a private higher educational institution is almost in 90.0% based on education fees, while in state educational institutions the state is better (50.0%). Furthermore, in higher education and scientific research system of Armenia funding from private sources is fairly little (statistics of 2005 it was at about USD 200 thousand).

44.6% of the surveyed students think that the state must have an active role in the process of regulating the system of higher education system, i.e. to exactly define the indicators of higher education system, as well as the strategy of development of higher educational institutions. In contrast to that 55.3% of students think that the state must have an inactive role in the process of regulating the higher education system, i.e. to establish “game rules” for higher educational institutions, while it is up to higher educational institutions to choose the strategy of development of higher educational institutions. It should be mentioned that Eurobarometer in 2007 carried out a survey with participation of academic staff (5782 people), and 75.0% of the surveyed thinks that higher educational institutions must be more independent of the state government bodies.

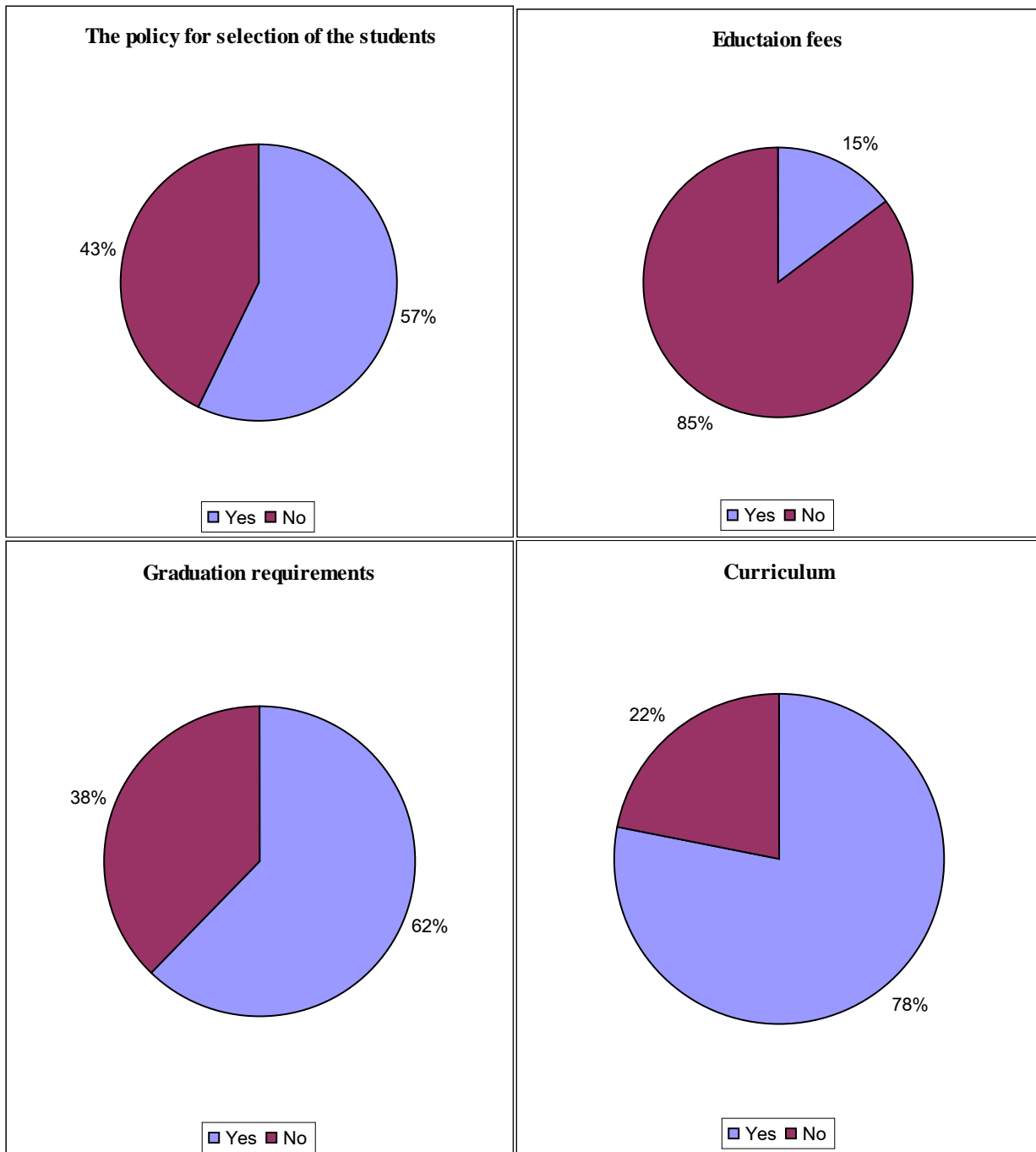
Furthermore, as far as independence of higher educational institutions is concerned the assessments are different depending on the subject in matter. Thus, if majority of the surveyed thinks that it is the higher educational institution that selects the content of the curriculum (78.0%), graduation requirements (62.0%) and policy for selection of the students (57.0%), while only 15.0% agrees that higher educational institutions must be independent in deciding the amount of education fees (See Graphic 3). Quite probably, most of the students think that higher educational institutions based on the labor market demand and competitive requirements of the market must independently select graduation requirements and draft the curriculum, still worrying about the disputable high fees decided by higher educational institutions.

It should be mentioned that such an approach is based on two factors:

Firstly, despite the fact that students think that there is competitiveness among the higher educational institutions of the system, they still worry that the universities can conclude an agreement and fix disputable fees, and

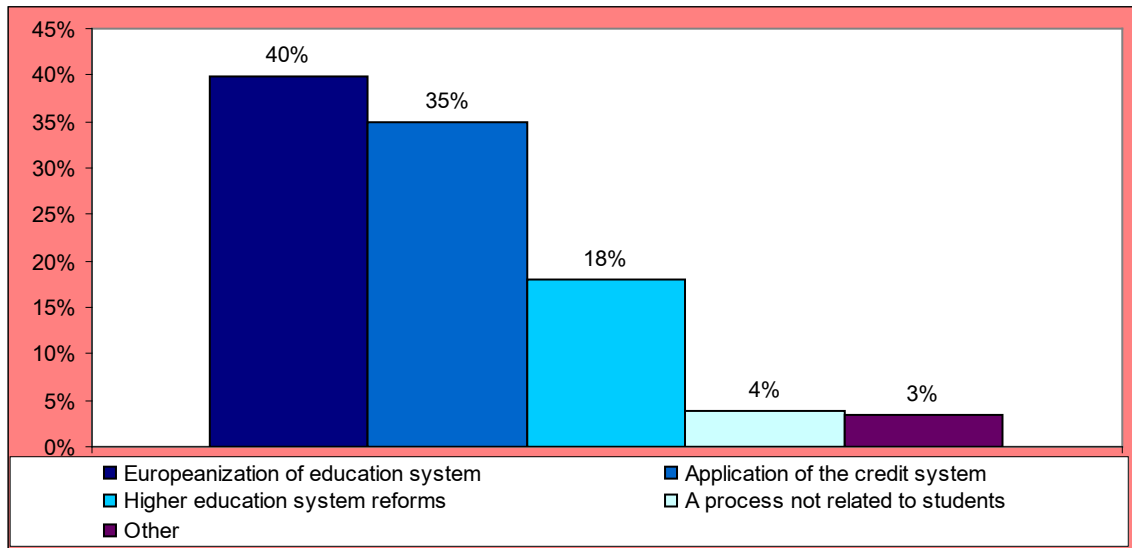
Secondly, the surveyed do not directly emphasize role of the competitiveness in pricing process.

**Graphic 3: Higher educational institutions should be independent in the following spheres**



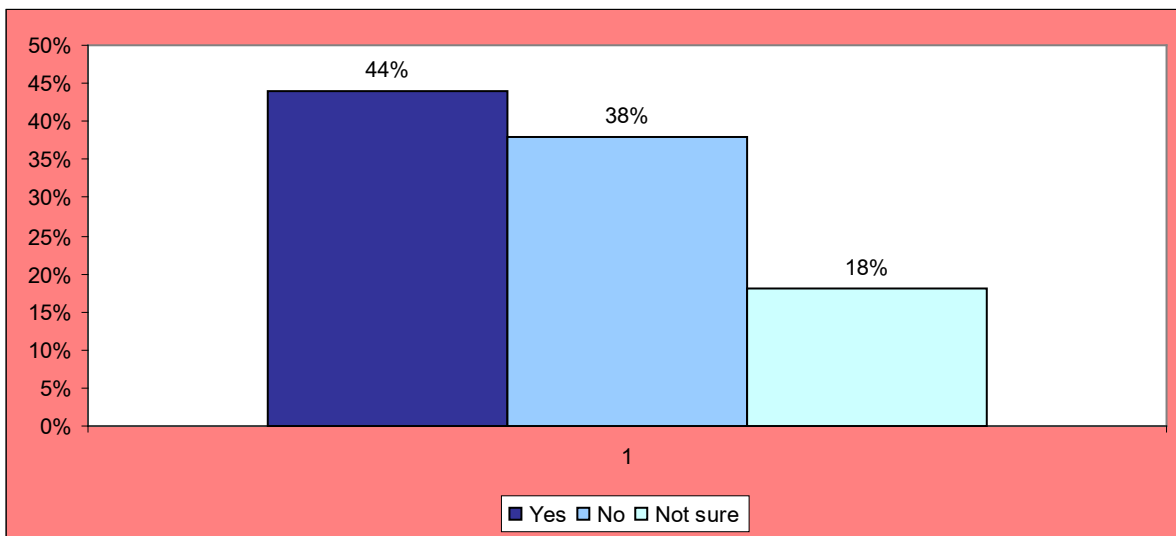
*The Bologna process from the point of view of the students:* The majority of the surveyed students (40.0%) think that the Bologna process phrase reminds them of the process education system Europeanization (See Graphic 4). At the same time most of the students (35.0%) immediately think of adoption of the credit system, 18.0% consider it to be a process of carrying out reforms in the education system. In general, the assessment shows that the surveyed students perceive main objectives of the Bologna process.

**Graphic 4: What is the first thing that comes to your mind when seeing the phrase “the Bologna Process”?**



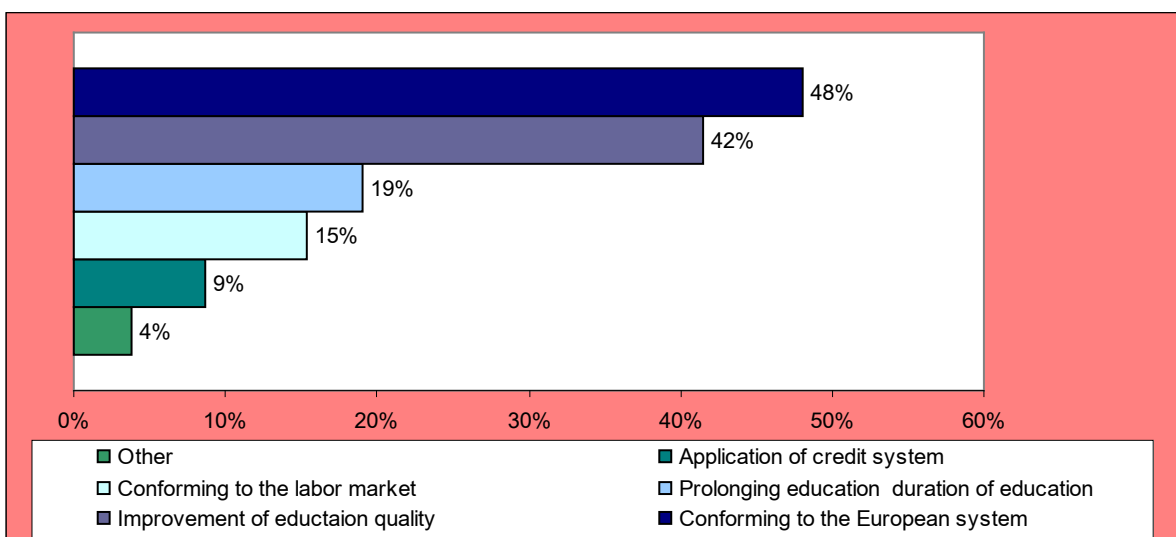
Still, majority of students (44.0%) think that that would be much better if the old education system was applied (without separation of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees) (See Graphic 5). The graphic is quite an interesting one, because most of the students are those studying in the new (two-cycle) system and it is not clear what makes them compare the new system with the old one, and to prefer the old one. It is quite possible that this approach towards the changes is a result of caution. For comparison it should be mentioned that more than half of participants (academic staff, 5782 people) of the survey carried out by Eurobarometer in 2007 think that the tree cycle system will improve or has already improved quality of education. However, 32.0% in Europe also thinks that it would be much better if the old system was applied. Still, our conviction is that each university must work in the sphere so that the students of both Bachelor’s (later without Master’s) and Master’s Courses can have a more clear understanding of the need to make changes and their positive impact.

**Graphic 5: Are you for the application of the old system?**



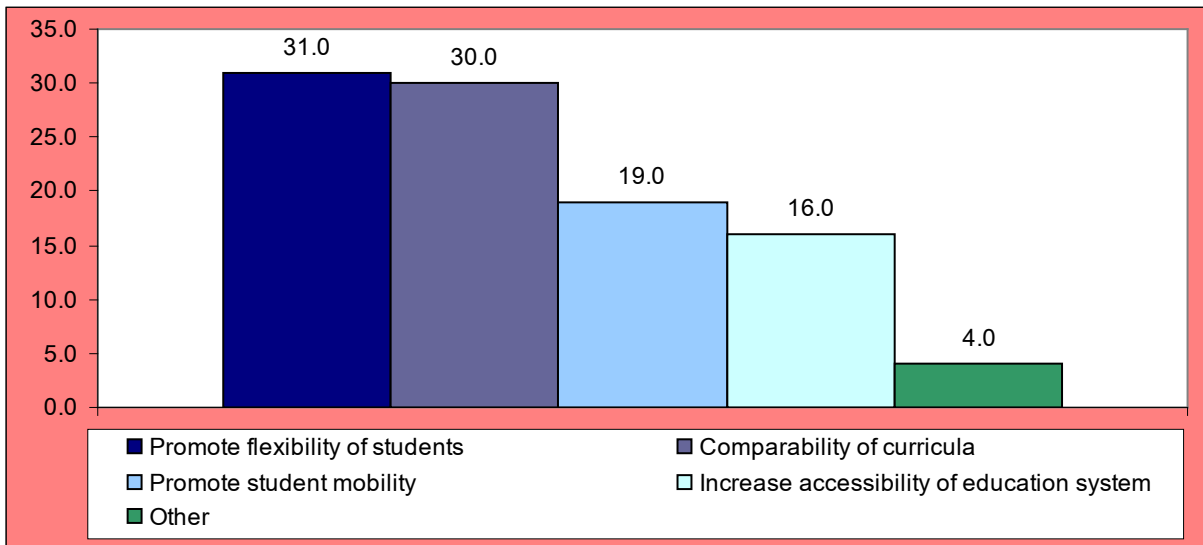
Almost half of the surveyed students think that the three cycle education system promotes the increase of education quality, and to conform our education system to European one (See Graphic 6). On the other hand, 19.0% are convinced that the three cycle system prolongs duration of education. This shows that there is still much work to be done when drafting curriculum and projects for Master's courses to ensure the demand and make the courses advanced. Otherwise, the students will have the opinion that Master's courses are artificially prolonging the duration of education.

**Graphic 6: The main objectives of introduction of the two-cycle education system**



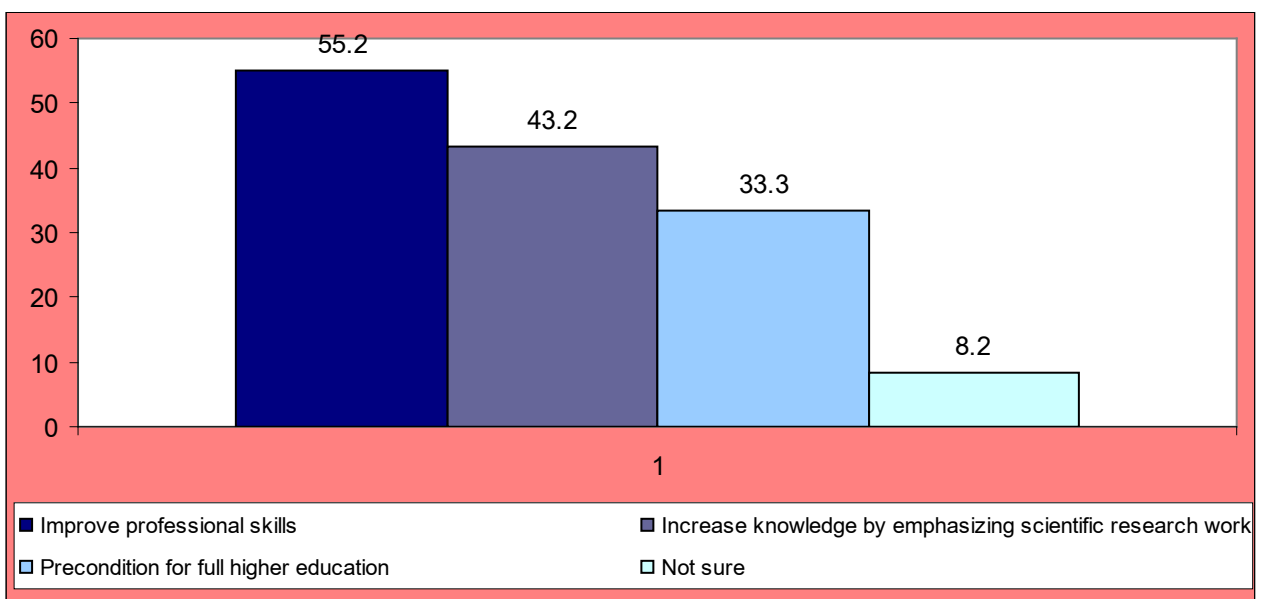
As far as the objectives of introducing the credit system are concerned, it must be emphasized that the students comprehend the main issues of the new approach. (See Graphic 7).

**Graphic 7: The main objective of the credit system is:**



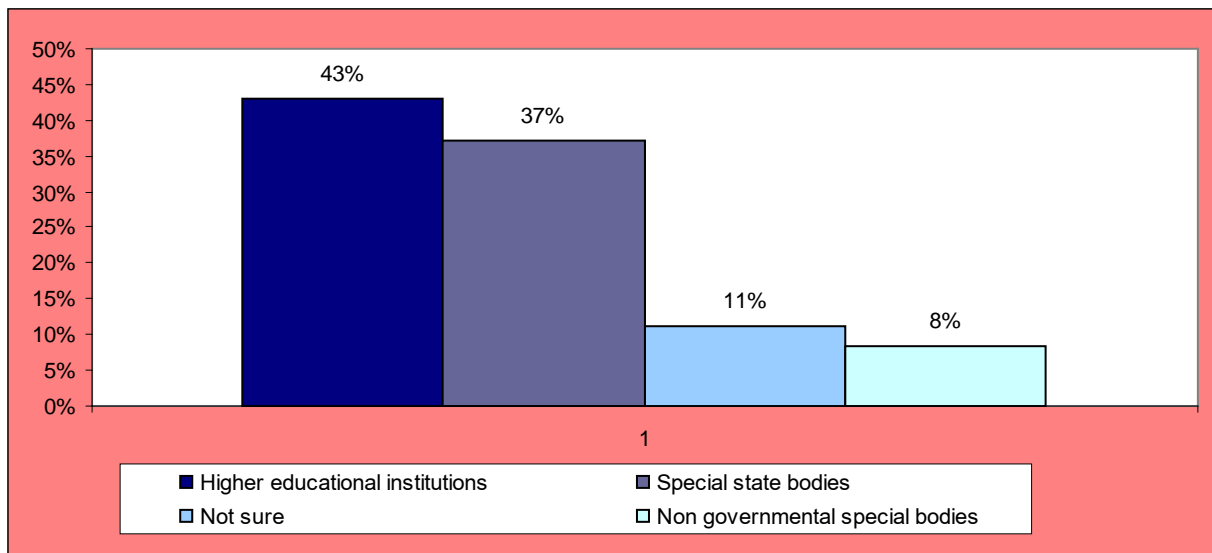
The majority of interviewed students (55.2%) consider that the master course grants an opportunity to increase the level of specialization, and from the point of view of the rest (43.2%) master course gives an opportunity to increase the knowledge acquired in bachelor course putting emphasis on the scientific work (See Graphic 8). However, 1/3 part of the students believes that the master course is a precondition to get full higher education. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Bologna process the bachelor course is regarded to be the full higher education. In this connection it is important to emphasize, that the same approach is also applied in labor market, therefore, this kind of approach of students is the direct reaction towards the employers' policy.

**Graphic 8: The master course grants the following**



From the point of view of the majority of students (43.0%) the responsibility for activities of higher educational institutions, particularly quality of teaching, lies with the higher educational institutions. On the other hand, 37.0% of the surveyed students consider that independent state bodies must be established to supervise the quality.

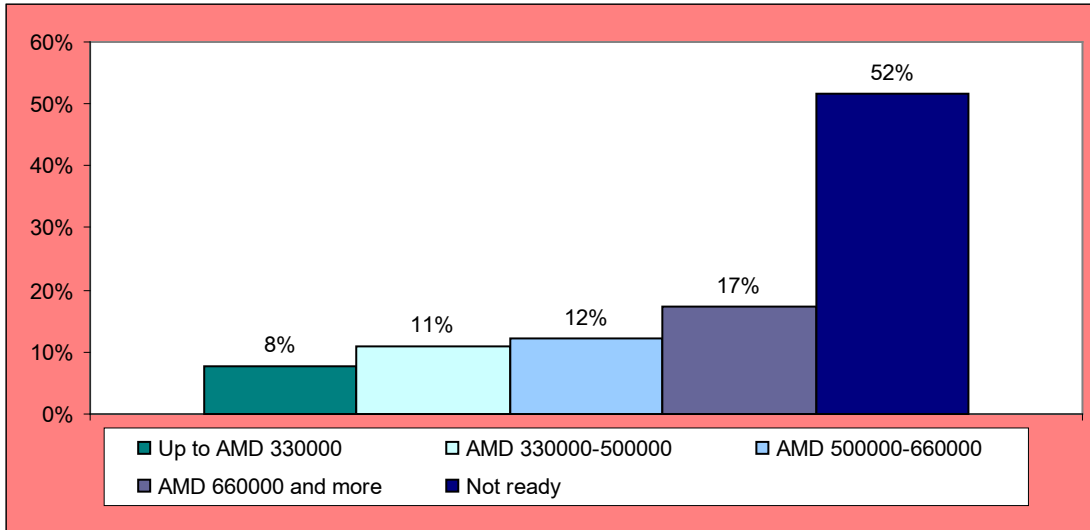
**Graphic 9: Who is responsible for the activities of higher educational institutions and quality of teaching?**



Moreover, considerable part of the students (48.0%) think that individual standards should be elaborated and applied for improving the quality and standards in the sphere of education (See graphic 9), 37.0% think that it would be better to apply the European standards of quality, while 15.0% couldn't answer. Our conviction is that it would be better to elaborate individual standards, but in the current transnational process in the sphere of education it is necessary to apply the European standards of quality and match them with local requirements in order to withstand the competition and not to fall off the process.

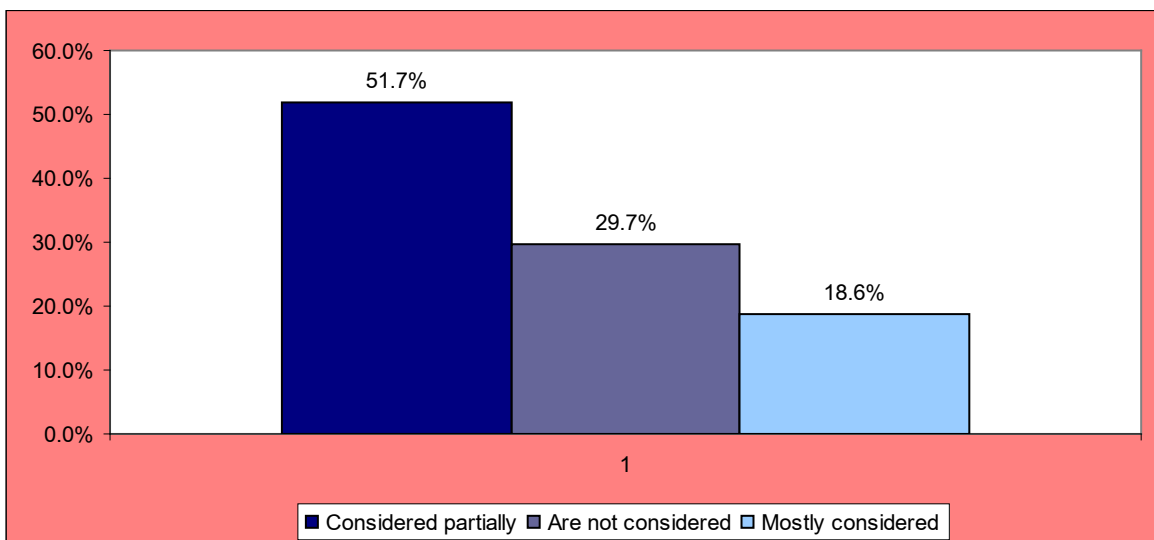
**Other factors having impact on the training process:** 52.0% of the surveyed students are not ready to pay more to get quality education (see graphic 10): Thus, we come to the following two conclusions: in Armenian reality the majority of the students are not able to pay to get quality education, or the students think that the quality of education they get is not essential for the future employment in Armenia. However, it is necessary to emphasize that a considerable part of the students, 48.0%, is ready to pay more to get a better quality education. This comes to prove that still there is an open gap in educational institutions providing valuable and quality education in the sphere of education service.

**Graphic 10: How much are you ready to pay (more than you pay at present) to get a better quality education?**



As you see in graphic 11 the majority of the students (51.7%) think that higher educational institutions at least partially take into account the requirements of the labor market in regard to the knowledge of specialists, and only 29.7% of the students consider that they are not taken into account at all.

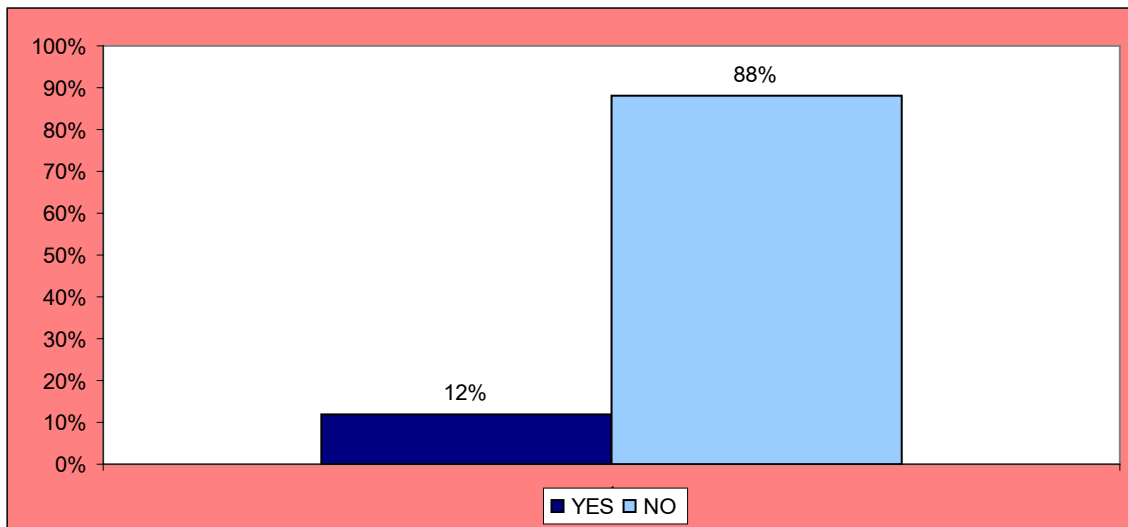
**Graphic 11: From your point of view, are the higher educational institutions currently take into account the requirements of the labor market in regard to the knowledge of specialists, and if so, how serious these issues are?**



As far as the student mobility is considered only 12.0% of the surveyed students has studied abroad (See graphic 12), 7.0% of which has studied abroad on their own initiatives,

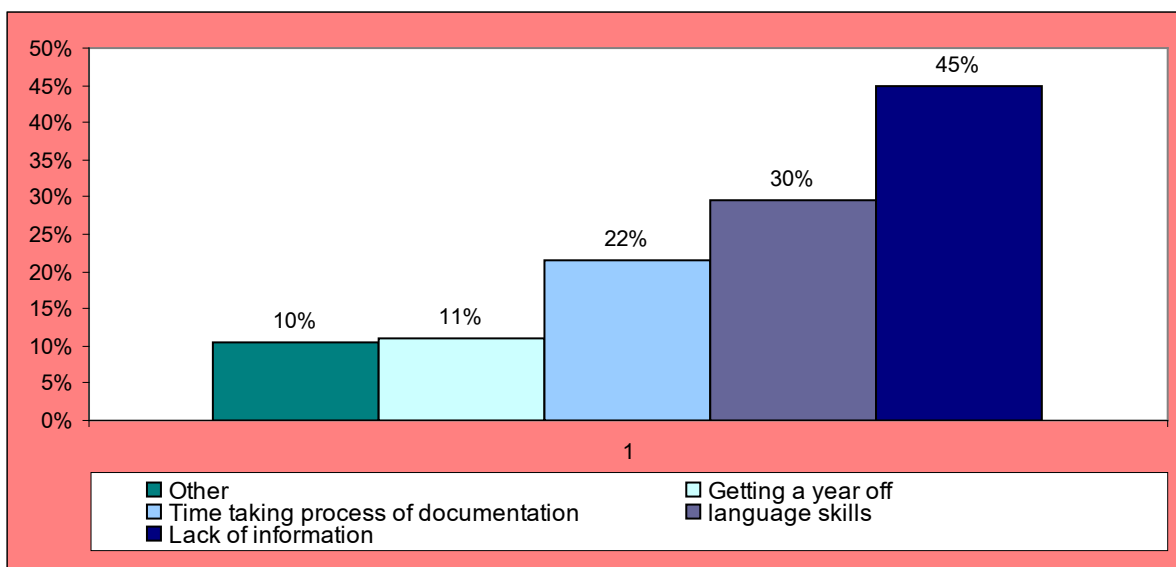
and 3.5% on the basis of interuniversity agreements. This is an obvious proof of the low level of mobility.

**Graphic 12: Have you ever studied abroad?**



Besides, the majority of students (45.0%) consider that besides financial means, the lack of available information of that sphere also greatly affects the procedure of studying abroad (See graphic13). Simultaneously, 30.0% of total students consider language skills to be an obstacle for studying abroad, while 22% consider the long process of documentation to be an obstacle.

**Graphic 13: What factors, besides financial means, greatly complicate the procedure of studying abroad?**



Thus, finalizing results of the survey we may come to the following conclusions: Education fees must be only an additional source for funding the activities of the higher educational institutions, while in Armenia they generally serve as main source.

The students still emphasize the role of the State in the development of higher education system, while the majority of them consider that the higher educational institutions must be independent in defining their policy. Thus, the State must be “passive” in regulation of higher education institutional system, that is to say, it must define “rules of the game” for higher educational institutions and the higher educational institutions must define their strategy themselves.

Higher educational institutions must decide on the content of the study programme, graduation requirements and the selection of the students independently, but they must not be independent in deciding on the education fees. The students might think that the interference and regulation of the state is very necessary in this stage, as they have fears that higher educational institutions can determine unsubstantial high education fees.

Despite the fact that students generally comprehend the main objectives of the Bologna process, the majority of students think that it would be better to preserve the old system (not dividing into master and bachelor degrees). It is possible that this kind of approach is a result of being cautious towards changes. In any case, our conviction is that each university must carry out activities in this sphere in order to clarify the importance of the changes and their advantages for the students of both master and bachelor courses (without master course in the future).

1/3 part of the total students consider that master course is a precondition to get full higher education. While in accordance with the Bologna process bachelor course is considered to be a full higher education. It is worth mentioning that the same approach also exists in labor market, therefore, this kind of approach is the direct reaction towards the employers policy. On the other hand, students consider that two-cycle education system is prolonging the duration of education. This means, that there is much to elaborate in master course study programmes aiming at providing the required deepness. Otherwise, the students will continue to have misrepresented perception that master course is an artificial prolongation of the duration of education.

## Conclusion

In present realities education, particularly higher education has become a major commodity in the entire world. According to GATS neo-liberal approach, higher education, which is prescribed by law as a civil right of national economies, has been redefined and transformed into such an international commodity that can be bought and sold from any international source.

In this context, certain countries are trying to involve as many students as possible (macro level). On the other hand, the problem exists between the higher educational institutions of certain countries (micro level). For this reason, it was many times mentioned during the Bologna process discussions that the difference between the European higher education system and the degrees granted by the universities is the main reason that is impeding the process of involving overseas students.

For a long time higher education was considered to be a public commodity/service that is provided by the government or other state government bodies. The number higher educational private institutions rapidly increased and advanced in Western Europe (e.g. in German, Portugal, Italy, etc.) in the end of 1990. Many of higher educational private institutions focused on such spheres, as entrepreneurship, management/administration and law.

The EU education system priorities are correlated with increase of productiveness of the internal market. To support labor mobility it is essential to promote student mobility. Mutual adoption of credit and degree systems is aimed at direct stimulation of the labor mobility. Within the frameworks of the Bologna process and WTO there is a considerable obstacle in the regulation process of higher education, because the Bologna process is implemented by the supervision of the Member States, and WTO regulations in this sphere are supervised by the European Commission only.

In late 1990, the issue of European education system global competitiveness emerged, since despite the high level of mobility in Europe, the mobility outside Europe was quite low. For this reason in 1998 Minister of Education of four countries (Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy) met in Paris to discuss the possibilities of harmonization of the degree system (Paris Declaration). This initiation became the basis for the development of the Bologna process. The Bologna process main objective is to strengthen the role of European higher education in the world market.

On May 18, 2004 in Strasburg the Ministers of higher education of Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) expressed willingness to acquire membership in the Bologna process. Reforms in the higher education sphere are the vital part of the membership process. The Ministers assumed obligations to adopt a new legislation on higher education that will comply with European norms and standards, and based on the Bologna process requirements to carry out reforms in the sphere of higher education. As a result, Armenia became a member of the Bologna process in 2005.

Based on the analysis and generalization of the query results the following conclusions have been made:

- Education fees must be an additional funding source for higher educational institutions, while in Armenia they are the main source of funding
- Students are emphasizing role of the state in the development process of higher education system, still the majority of students think that higher educational institutions must be independent when defining their policy. Thus, the state must be “passive” in the regulation process of higher education system, i.e. to establish “game rules” for higher educational institutions, while it is up to the higher educational institutions to decide on the strategy.
- It is up to higher educational institutions to decide on the curriculum, graduation requirements and the policy for selection of students, however, the higher education institutions must not be given independence when deciding on education fees. Possibly, students think that the state should interfere and regulate in this process, because they are worried that education fees decided on by the higher educational institutions can be disputably high.
- Despite the fact that in general the students realize the main objectives of the Bologna process, the majority of them think that it would be much better if the old education system was applied (without the Bachelor’s and Master’s differentiation). It is possible that the approach for changes is a result of consciousness. However, our conviction is that each higher educational institution must do work in the sphere, so that both Bachelor’s (later without Master’s) and Master’s students can have a more clear understanding of the need to make changed and their advantages.
- 1/3 of the students think that Master’s course is a precondition for getting a full higher education. Since the Bologna process considers Bachelor’s course to be a full higher education. It should be mentioned that the same approach is in the labor market, thus,

such an approach is an immediate response to the employer policy. On the other hand, the students think that the two cycle education system is prolonging duration of education. This shows that there is still much work to be done when elaborating the curriculum and programme of Master's courses to ensure the required depth. Otherwise, the students will have the false impression that Master's course is fake prolongation of education duration.

## Appendix

**Table 1 a: the Bologna process**

<b>Declaration of Bologna 1999</b>
1. Adopt “liable and comparable system of education degree
2. Apply system of education degree based on two independent phases
3. Set up credit system
4. Promote student mobility
5. Stimulate the cooperation in the quality assurance process
6. Promote European dimension in higher education
<b>Prague communiqué 2001</b>
7. Lifelong education
8. Higher educational institutions and students
9. Stimulate attractiveness of higher education in European region
<b>Berlin communiqué 2003</b>
10. Establish close relations between higher education and scientific research systems
- Social dimension in higher education policy

**Table 1 b: Primarily mid-term activities of the Bologna process in Berlin communiqué 2003**

<b>Quality assurance</b>
-elaborate jointly agreed criteria and methodologies
<b>Education degree system based on two cycles</b>
<b>Approval of education degrees and study period</b>
- Lisbon Agreement of Recognition must be approved by all countries participating in the Bologna process: In 2005 after graduation every student must be automatically granted with a diploma insert free of charge.

**Graphic 1 c: Primarily activities of the Bologna process in Bergen communiqué  
2005**

<b>Quality assurance</b>
-Almost all the countries have carried out measures for the system of quality assurance based on the criteria of Berlin communiqué
<b>Education degree system based on two cycles</b>
The two-cycle education system is widely applied in many countries and more than half of the students are involved in that system
<b>Recognition of education degrees and duration of education</b>
-36 countries out of 45 participating in the Bologna process have already approved the Lisbon Agreement of Recognition

**Table 2: Countries participating in the Bologna process**

	Sorbonne 1998	Bologna 1999	Prague 2001	Berlin 2003	Bergen 2005
Number of participating countries	4	29	33	40	45
Countries	France, German, Italy, Great Britain	+ Austria, Belgium, Czech, Bulgaria, Dania, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungry, Island, Ireland, Latvia, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malatya, the Netherlands, Norway, Polish, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden	+Croatian , Cyprus, Turkey,	Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Hercogovina, Russia, Serbia, Macedonia, Vatican	+ Armenia, Adrbaijan, Gorgia, Moldova.

# Questionnaire

## RA higher education system and the Bologna process

Date

*day*

*month*

*year*

Name of higher educational institution and the faculty

.....

Name, surname

(Optional)

.....

*(Surname, name position)*

*The questionnaire is filled within the frameworks of “Integration of European higher educational institution and participation of Armenia in this procedure” research paper implemented by the Center of European Law and Integration.*

## SECTION A - GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE SURVEY

### 1. Age /please select the corresponding window/

1.1 16 – 20

1.2 21 – 25

1.3 26 and older

### 2. Gender

2.1 Male

2.2 Female

### 3. Nationality /country/

3.1 Armenia

3.2 Georgia

3.3 Russia

3.4 Other

### 4. Type of the higher educational institution

4.1 State

4.2 Private

### 5. Educational programme at present

5.1 Bachelor course

5.2 Master course

5.3 Programme for professionally qualified specialists

5.4 Other

### 6. Who covers your education fee?

6.1 State scholarship

6.2 Parents

6.3 One of the employers of my parents

6.4 Other

### 7. How much do you pay for your education?

7.1 up to USD 1000 equivalent to AMD 331,800

7.2 up to USD 1000-1500 equivalent to AMD 331,800-497,700

7.3 up to USD 1500 – 2000 equivalent to AMD 497,700- 663,600

7.4 2000 and more USD equivalent to AMD 663.600 and more)

**SECTION B - GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF RA HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**8. From your point of view, what is the basic factor, that makes RA higher education system comparative compared with other countries /select one factor/**

- 8.1 Low price of education
- 8.2 High quality of knowledge
- 8.3 Higher education system is not competitive
- 8.4 Other

**9. From your point of view is there any competition between Armenian higher educational institutions?**

- 9.1 Yes
- 9.2 No
- 9.3 Not sure

**10. From your point of view what will be the role of education fee in funding the activities of higher educational institutions**

- 10.1 Fees must be the main source for funding the higher educational institutions
- 10.2 Education fees must only be the additional source for funding higher educational institutions: the main part must be funded by the State and other internal and external sources

**11. From your point of view what must be the role of the state in regulating the system of higher educational institutions**

- 11.1 The state must strictly define the criteria of higher education, as well as define the development strategy of higher educational institutions
- 11.2 The State must create general “game rules” for higher educational institutions, but the strategy must be defined by the higher educational institution

**12. From your point of view should the higher educational institutions must be independent in the following spheres?**

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12.1 Decide on the students selection policy          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12.2 Absolutely independent decision on education fee | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12.3 Decide on the graduation requirements            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12.4 Elaborate curriculums                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**SECTION C- THE BOLOGNA PROCESS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE STUDENTS**

**13. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when seeing “the Bologna Process” phrase /select one answer only/**

- 13.1 Amendments in higher education system
- 13.2 Europeanization of education system
- 13.3 Transfer to credit system
- 13.4 Non- student related state level process
- 13.5 Other

**14. Would you prefer the application of the old educational system (not dividing into the bachelor and master courses?)**

- 14.1 Yes
- 14.2 No
- 14.3 Not sure

**15. From your point of view, what are the main objectives of the two-cycle education system introduction? /select one answer only/**

- 15.1 Improvement of education quality
- 15.2 Transfer to credit system
- 15.3 Conformity with the labor market
- 15.4 Prolonging of education duration /4+2 instead of former 5 year/
- 15.5 Approximation with he European system
- 15.6 Other

**16. From your point of view what is the main objective of the credit system?**

- 16.1 To increase the accessibility of education system
- 16.2 Stimulate mobility of students
- 16.3 Promote flexibility of teaching
- 16.4 Make comparable study programmes in different countries
- 16.5 Other

**17. Do you consider bachelor courses to be full high education?**

- 17.1 Yes
- 17.2 No
- 17.3 Not sure

**18. The master course gives an opportunity to: / select one answer/**

- 18.1 Develop knowledge acquired in bachelor course putting more emphasis on scientific research work

- 18.2 Develop professional degree
- 18.3 Precondition to get full higher education
- 18.4 Not sure

**19. From your point of view who is responsible for the activities of higher education institutions, particularly for teaching quality /Select one answer/**

- 19.1 Special state entities, that must be created for quality supervision
- 19.2 Higher education institutions
- 19.3 Independent entities /not entities / established for that purpose
- 19.4 Not sure

**20. From your point of view RA education system needs to**

- 20.1 Transfer to the European quality standards
- 20.2 Elaborate and establish individual standards
- 20.3 Not sure

**21. How much are you ready to pay to get more quality education? /more than you pay at present/**

21.1 Not able to pay	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.2 Up to USD 1000 equivalent to AMD 31,800	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.3 USD 1000-1500 equivalent to AMD 331,800-497,700	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.4 USD1500 – 2000 equivalent to AMD 497,700- 663,600	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.5 USD 2000 and more equivalent to AMD 663.600 and more	<input type="checkbox"/>

**22. From your point of view, do the higher educational institutions currently take into account requirements of the labor market given the knowledge of specialists, and if so, to what extend?**

- 22.1 not taken into account
- 22.2 Take into account partialy
- 22.3 Mostly take into account
- 22.4 Fully take into account, and fully comprehend the current and potential realities

**23. Have you ever studied abroad /one month and more/?**

- 23.1 Yes
- 23.2 No /go to question 26 /

**24. What was the programme ?**

- 24.1 Title
- 24.2 On the basis of interuniversity agreement
- 24.3 Individual initiative

**25. Where from did you get means to study abroad /education and accomodation/ ?**

- 25.1 Independently
- 25.2 By financial assistance of the host country
- 25.3 Scholarship granted by a third part
- 25.4 Other

**26. What are the factors, besides the financial means, impeding to the process of studying abroad? /you can select several answers/**

- 26.1 Time taking documentation process
- 26.2 Degrees gained abroad are not accepted in Armenia
- 26.3 Poor language skills
- 26.4 Problems with taking a year off in higher education institution
- 26.5 Lack of information on exchange programmes
- 26.6 Other

**27. What will be the factor mostly affecting you to select the country you are going to study in?**

- 27.1 Language
- 27.2 Education fee
- 27.3 Accommodation
- 27.4 Education quality
- 27.5 Other

**28. Are you informed about scholarships?**

- 28.1 Yes, I am going to apply,
- 28.2 Yes, I have already applied
- 28.3 No, I am not interested
- 28.4 No, the information concerned is not available

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

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