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**REFORMING THE STUDY PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROVISIONS  
OF THE BOLOGNA DECLARATION**

**A Case Study (January 2003)**

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## **I. Introduction**

Qualitative formation of higher specialists in Albania has been an important aim of the Higher Education System of the country, especially after important democratic changes of 1990, giving to the country necessary specialists according to new economic orientations. During this period this Higher Education System and, in particular, University of Tirana, has been subject of many European projects aiming the restructuring of the teaching and research system and curricula. This process has helped all political and economical aspects of the establishing of democracy and marked economy in the country and has created all conditions of a great and fruitful cooperation with other universities all over the Europe, to the aim of participation of Albanian Higher Education System in the European Higher Education Area.

### **1. Trends and challenges facing the Higher Education System in Albania**

The mission of Higher Education System in Albania is to prepare higher education specialists to the highest academic and research levels, in order to contribute to the development of the country, with relevance to the internal economic activity, international relations needed by present European co-operation.

Actually, Albanian System of Higher Education needs improvements as an important weapon in the way of competence and competitiveness. According to the European recommendations, in the frame of his university network and bilateral cooperation, it is going to be improved and reorganized by attending all principles of Bologna Declaration of Ministers of Education of Europe.

#### ***1.1. Higher Education System of Albania, presentation***

##### **History.**

After the II World war the Higher Education System in Albania has been composed by five so-called High Institutions, which has been created to meet the emergency needs in formation of specialists in the most important sectors of life. For the University studies, Albania sent the students abroad, in the universities of Eastern Europe.

In 1957, five former Higher Education Institutions (Pedagogic, Polytechnic, Economics Juridical and Medical Institute) has been joined together and formed the University of Tirana. Originally composed of ten faculties, this University was split up, in 1992, when the engineering faculties were brought together in the Polytechnic University of Tirana, leaving the University of Tirana with seven faculties, covering the human, economic, natural and medical sciences. In 1992, the Agricultural Institution, has been transformed in Agricultural University of Tirana and, till now, in Albania have been created five other universities, in five other cities.

## **Structure.**

Higher Education System in Albania is composed of eight universities, two academies, one Higher School (except of three military academies):

1. University of Tirana (seven faculties), established in 1957;
2. Polytechnic University of Tirana (four faculties), created in 1992;
3. Agricultural University of Tirana (four faculties), established in 1992;
4. University "L.Gurakuqi", Shkoder (six faculties), created in 1992, basing to the pedagogical Institution of the city;
5. University "A.Xhuvani", Elbasan (five faculties), created in 1992, basing to the Higher Pedagogical Institution of the city;
6. University "E.Cabej", Gjirokaster (three faculties), created in 1992, basing to the Pedagogical Institution of the city;
7. Polytechnic University "F.S.Noli", Korce (three faculties), created in 1992, basing to the Higher Polytechnic Institution of the city;
8. University "I.Qemali", Vlore (three faculties), created in 1994.

Academy of Arts;            Academy of Sports;            Higher School of Nurses

## **Size**

There are about 30 000 students, means 1% of the population;  
Academic staff is composed of 201 Professors, 243 Assistant Professors, 530 Pedagogues, 449 Assistants.

The administrative staff is composed of 1174 specialists and other workers of services and entertainments.

## **University of Tirana.**

1. University of Tirana is composed of seven faculties altogether, 26 branches and a total number of 43 departments (including the library in each faculty) and 11 research and service centers. It is composed by following faculties:

- Faculty of Medicine (16 departments), with branches General Medicine, Stomatology;
- Faculty of Social Sciences (3 departments), with branches Philosophy-Sociology, Psychology, Social Assistance, Political Sciences;
- Faculty of Natural Sciences (6 departments), with branches Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Informatics, Pharmacy;
- Faculty of History and Philology (5 departments), with branches History, Geography, Albania Linguistic, Literature, Journalism;

- Faculty of Law (3 departments), one branch;
- Faculty of Economic Sciences (5 departments), with branches Finance-Computability, Economics, Business Administration, Marketing-Tourism;
- Faculty of Foreign Languages (5 departments), with branches English, French, Italian, German, Balkan Languages;
- Department of Physical Education and Sports, serving for University of Tirana and Polytechnic University of Tirana;
- Department of Distant Education.

2. There are about 10 000 full time and 3000 part time students, as well as about 673 full time and 580 part time academic staff; the institution offers higher education and training in more than 65 study courses (diplomas); the entire range of faculties functioning in University, offers post-graduate courses of study, the final target being the preparation of doctoral degree of thesis.

University of Tirana is the most important higher institution of the country and the greatest one. Most of his professors has been graduated (PHD) abroad and all of them has passed several short stays in other universities; many of our students have continued graduate and postgraduate studies in Europe, their studies in Albania being recognized by European universities and their results evaluated; the majority of high administration specialists are they graduated in University of Tirana and so on.

3. University of Tirana is member of main university network in Europe, as: EUA, CRE, UNICA, CUM, AIMOS, AUF, BSUN, SEEU and have signed bilateral agreements with about thirty European Universities.

## ***2.2. National Higher Education Legislation***

Higher Education Law (Law Nr. 841, date 25.02.1999 “Higher Education in Republic of Albania”, approved by the Parliament)

### **● Main Traits.**

The Higher Education Law establish:

- Rights of teaching plans and program making;
- Rights of freedom in research and idea exchange;
- Rights of elections of university governors and councils;
- Rights of student mobility and their non political organizations;
- Rights of making academic relations with other universities;

Rights of self administration of the public budget and other incomes by services and tuition fees. The public budget being the part of the budget of Ministry of Education, not allow really the needed flexibility; the incomes are yet considered in the same manner that public budget and the incomes do not transferred in the next year

(reallocation of funds); we need also the decentralization of financial counts to faculties.

Studies are organized in two degree program; a) university training (4-5 years duration), b) postgraduate (doctoral) training (at least 4 years of academic and scientific activity), including the Master of Science completion, relevant to each faculty; the faculty of Medicine applies the four year program of specialization.

### ***2.3. Development for the Bologna Process***

#### **● Beginnings.**

According to his mission, the Higher Education System of Albania, in relevance to the internal economic and social activity and his important international relations, has realized important developments toward Europeanization /Internationalization process, related to:

- curriculum developments, to introduce the best experience of the partner universities, in order to establish curricula compatible with European universities and the needs of the country;
- institutionalizing the Quality Evaluation and the necessary procedures;
- establishing of the ECTS as proof of compatibility for the teaching process established between different universities;
- improvement of International Relation Offices (IRO) activity, enabling them to support the important process of internationalization and university exchanges;
- development of the information centers for students, internet access and on-line services, Distant Education System (DES), library computerization;
- assumption of the responsibilities for the international student training in the fields of specific Albanian courses of studies, interesting for the foreign students (future specialists);

In March 2001, the Albanian university delegation has participated in Conference of Salamanka and has signed the Convention; from that moment, serious engagement has been engaged for the preparations of needed changes. In October 2001, the Ministry of Education of Albania, has ordered officially the organization of the preparations for Bologna process, in all Albanian HES; the signature of the Declaration by the Minister of Education and Science of Albania, has been foreseen to happen in the meeting of Ministers in Berlin, in October 2003.

#### **● Toward specific actions.**

The universities and higher schools in Albania, in close contact with their European homologues, have actually begun the procedures of important reforms in HES, to respond the Bologna Declaration conditions. The main orientations have been

elaborated and the departments are finishing the academic restructuring of the programs of teaching. The system adopted, after many discussions, seems to be general in Albania: 3+2+5; for teacher formation the system will be 3+1 (and probably +2+5 in pedagogical sciences).

This process has been defined as the most important priority of Albania in the frame of Tempus program and each university has proposed projects in this program in cooperation with most important university partners; in some faculties and departments, the new system has begun the application as a pilot phase (Physics Department, Electric Engineering, Agricultural Faculty etc.).

Important changes in our Law of Higher Education are needed and we have begun to formulate the propositions; this process will be closed at the end of the school year; most of the changes are related to Bologna Declaration principles and the reorganizing of curriculum in all the faculties of the institution.

Finally, considering that the political decision by the Ministry of Education and the Government has been taken, the formal signature of the Declaration by Albania will happen in the Conference of the Ministers in Berlin in 2003.

## **II. The state of curricula in view of the provisions of the Bologna Declaration**

### **1. Changes in curricula and their development**

#### **◆ Policy documents.**

University of Tirana has begun his important changes in academic system, to respond better to university cooperation, after:

- finishing the first Institutional Quality Evaluation, in the frame of Phare Multi-Country Program in Higher Education ZZ-95.20 Quality Assurance in Higher Education, under the guidance of Open University of London and having the External Evaluation report;
- having written the European Policy Statement, in the frame of Phare Multi-Country Program in Higher Education: “European Dimension of Institutional Quality Management”

On March 2000, the Senate of the University of Tirana has adopted the European Dimension of the Institutional Strategy with the aim “to link together several strands of recent international initiatives that have been developed independently: Quality Assurance, Academic Recognition, European Policy, within the framework of improved institutional strategic management”, with the main objectives:

- to integrate the best European practice into a process of strengthening and consolidating compatible mechanisms in the evaluation and recognition of educational qualifications as well as the introduction of credit transfer system within the perspectives of ECTS.

- to consider the Diploma Supplement as an instrument to improve the possibilities of diploma recognition by increasing the national and international transparency of qualifications (revised model, 1999);
- in application of the European Policy Statement, to consider the Europeanization/ Internationalization process as an important component of his strategy and promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance.
- as a legal framework to have the Bologna Declaration with objectives as follows:
  - studies of the new academic architecture to be implemented;
  - the implementation of Diploma Supplement;
  - the establishment of a system of credit;
  - the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance.

On October 2001, the Ministry of Education and Science of Albania, after reports of his Directory of Higher Education and the Conference of Rectors, has oriented the Higher Education System of the country to intensive work for the application of Bologna Declaration principles.

The meeting of the deans of the University of Tirana, on 24.12.2001, has précised the main political traits and modalities of discussion and the first important ideas for the institution as a whole; the same meeting of 1.04.2002 has prepared the final meeting of the Senate.

On April 2002, the Senate of the University has decided the final traits of the implementation of the principles of Bologna Declaration in University of Tirana, certifying the final date of finalizing the end of 2003.

## **2. Implementation**

### ***2.1. University architecture***

The majority of departments of the University has been pronounced in favor of the system presented by the scheme 3 years (BA) +2 years (MA) +5 years (PHD), in respect of following reasons:
 

- forming the new specialists in the younger age;
- the preparation of new specialists becomes less expensive;
- facilities in diploma recognition, because of the same system of the most of the partner universities.

Studies of the first 3 years (first cycle) would provide the most essential knowledge needed for a general higher education in the field, both theoretical and application, giving the possibility to follow the second cycle in Albania or other European University; the new curricula would provide students with the possibility to follow also further studies in different fields of science (in comparable fields). Practically, we shall consider the actual teaching plan, changing it and improving in terms of general formation in the field, omitting some special subjects and shorting some very general one's.

After this study course, the University will deliver un University Diploma in ...(field); the graduate person is prepared in most higher level with a general formation in the field and will be able to work as a higher specialist of the field, in applicative duties.

Studies of the second cycle (2 years) tend to prepare a higher specialist, oriented specifically in a special direction of the field, being able to work as a director, programmer, projector and as the head of an group of specialists, as well as a future researcher (to be able to prepare PHD). It can be understood that the programme of this cycle will be based especially to the programme of actual Post-University School, with serious modifications because this cycle must lead one hand to research and, on the other hand, to resolving of important practical specialized duties; this formation will be closed-number and the choice of the best students will be applied by the way of competition.

After this study course, the University will deliver un University Master Diploma in ....(field).....(specialty); the graduate person is prepared in most higher level as a specialist in the field and will be able to work as a director, programmer, projector and as the head of an group of specialists, as well as a future researcher.

The following 5 years will be reserved to PHD preparation, which includes some examinations (but not lectures!) and the guided research, in the composition of a research team (University or Research Institute); this phase will be also closed-number.

For the Medicine Faculty, this scheme is not yet applicable, not only in Albania but in many other European countries; European university opinion is yet discussing for the common traits of the higher formation in this field; actually, this formation includes 6 years higher studies and 4 years other in specialized studies.

Teacher preparation will attend the scheme 3 years general studies in the field +1 year pedagogical trainings; after this 4 year formation, the candidate can attend the second cycle in the field (3 year formation known) or un other second cycle in pedagogical sciences in completing the second year (3+1 formation period known).

There are some problems discussed by academic staff of the University of Tirana: • we need to consider modular organization of the subjects and the reconstruction of the teaching plans and programmes will take it into account; • being conscious of many difficulties in the reconstruction of the curricula (there are many propositions), we need to work in close cooperation with our partners all over the Europe; • the encouragement of vertical mobility, the multidisciplinary formation in second cycle is needed and the departments consider it as the most difficult duty, which will be accomplished in close cooperation with other higher education European institutions which present similar formations.

## ***2.2. Credit System***

- a) Establishment of Credit Point (Transfer) System (ECTS) in the University of Tirana constitutes important attempts in view of carrying out new significant reforms in the institution, as an indispensable requirement for being able to be competitive with other partner universities all over the Europe. The introduction of this system is one of main axes of the restructuring of higher education system according to Bologna Declaration principles, recognized by our institution.

This system will help the student mobility; it will enable our students' transfer to the European universities, likewise enabling the foreign students to be transferred to our University, as it is foreseen by the Declaration.

University of Tirana has been involved in some important European Phare Multi-Country Projects concerning Higher Education, between them: "Quality Assurance in Higher Education", "European Dimension of Institutional Quality Management" and "Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas and Study Credit Points Across Borders" and has been subject of the first pilot Quality Evaluation, has written the European Policy Statement and, finally, has taken the initiative to develop the ECTS in Albania.

The work done for the elaboration of the system is reflected in the document called "Information Packages", compiled by the work groups established in the respective faculties of the University. These documents are conceived upon three fundamental elements as follows:

1. The Information on the curricula and syllabi, as well as the Albanian system of marks evaluator of student's knowledge (1 to 10) and the correspondence to the European system of evaluation A,B,C,D.. etc., making known also that the mark system express the quality of the students' efforts, the credits express the quantity of these efforts in each school subject, in lessons, library, laboratories, home etc. In Europe there has been recognized the system of calculating the credit points from 1 to 60 points, which do not create any difficulty to their transfer from one country to another. With the aim to avoid the incompatibilities, we have studied the average distribution of marks for students and have proposed the appropriate scale for the adequate correspondence between two systems of evaluation.
2. Utilization of the credits, which reflects the quantity of the work in lectures, seminars, laboratories, libraries, private home study (individual or tutorial), examinations and all other assessment procedures.
3. The mutual agreements, signed between universities and the students interested to the mobility by utilization of unified model documents, accepted by European universities that have accepted and recognized the Credit Point (transfer) System.

This job has been accomplished by an important team of the University, composed by several representatives of the faculties, after a great work of trainings, seminars, conferences and studying of different materials coming in the frame of Phare Program of European Community. The special training of university experts, drafting the special manual provided detailed explanations concerning the idea of ECTS, the modalities of correct calculation of credit points and modalities of translating the Albanian system of evaluation (marks) into recognized European scale of evaluation (founded in a detailed study of distribution of marks in different branches of the University, see below, Table 1, Table 2), and the detailed work required to instruct the teams set up in different faculties, rigorously following up the entire process, the numerous difficulties encountered have been successfully overcome. It's for the first time in the history of the University of Tirana that we have our Credit Point System as the most

important step in the mutual recognition of formations and diplomas between European universities.

**TABLE 1: The ECTS grading scale been adopted by the University of Tirana:**

<b>ECTS</b>	<b>Albanian</b>	<b>Percentage of successful</b>
Grade	grading scale	students achieving the grade
A	10	10
B	9	25
C	7-8	30
D	6	25
E	5	10
FX	4	-
F	1-3	-

**TABLE 2: Definition of Performance Attainment Level:**

A	EXCELLENT	outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	VERY GOOD	above average standard with some errors
C	GOOD	generally sound work with some notable errors
D	SATISFACTORY	fair, with significant shortcomings
E	SUFFICIENT	performance meets minimum criteria
FX	FAIL	more work required before the credits can be awarded
F	FAIL	considerable further work required

The work in respect of Credit Point System is not considered exhausted, since the curricula and syllabi for the respective faculties will be periodically revised and improved, especially during the restructuring according to Bologna Declaration principles. Consequently, such changes will be reflected even in the changes of credit points for certain subjects; it will be the duty of faculty appropriate structures (special bureau of coordination) the reflecting of possible changes in the Information Packages, according to the experience of this first important step that has been taken.

Further, we should conceive the credit points, not simply as a system which assesses the quantity of work each course unit requires from the students of our University to complete, but also as a challenge towards quantitative improvements in several aspects concerning their academic training.

The process of managing the student mobility and transferring undoubtedly requires a new institutional unit for each faculty. In this respect the Rector's Office of the University of Tirana is working towards introducing the institutional practice needed for this new system to function.

The creation and development of the Credit Point System in our University, marks the further continuation of the university reforms and it is immediately followed by determining of the essence and function of the Diploma Supplement (which will be delivered in this school year) and other endeavors according to principles of Bologna Declaration.

- b) Being for a long time under the total isolation of the country, the Albanian Higher Education System did not have the possibility to follow the developing rhythm of European Higher Education. For the Albanian society, which aims to join the European Community, the most important need is to build an educational system compatible with that of European Community countries. After the Albania had fulfilled the political, juridical and economical engagements toward this Community, just before acceptance, the main problem will be the compatibility of preparation of specialists in Higher Education and the innovative skills of these specialists which needs to be comparable to their of the Community; otherwise, the European links will not be real and effective.

Last years, the governments of European countries have emphasized the role of the creation of the European Area of Higher Education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the continent overall development.

Universities of European countries are engaged in a process of reforming, starting from Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988, Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998 and Bologna Declaration of 1999, in order to establish the European Area of Higher Education there are these most important points of Bologna Declaration to be considered:

- adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European

citizens` employability and the international competitiveness of the European Higher Education System.;

- adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles, undergraduate and graduate; access to second cycle shall require successful competition of first cycle studies, lasting at minimum of three years;
- the degree awarded after the first cycle studies shall also be relevant to the European labor market as an appropriate level of qualification; the second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries..;
- promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research..

As a member of different European university networks (EUA, UNICA, CUM, AUF, CRE, SEEU etc.), our institution recognize actually that that our students need and demand qualifications which can use effectively for the purpose of our students and careers all over the Europe; the University of Tirana, join the members of the networks to acknowledge of our role and responsibility in this regard and has confirmed his willingness to organize ourselves accordingly within the framework of autonomy.

Accordingly to Salamanka Convention, University of Tirana, attending the Senate decisions, to accomplish his duties in this important activity, sought to:

- open a debate on the nature and importance of subject-specific and general competences, involving stakeholders, including academics, graduates and employers;
- identify and exchange information on common subject-base reference points, curricula content, leaning outcomes and methods of teaching, learning and assessment;
- improve European co-operation and collaboration with our European university partners and in the frame of university networks, in the development of the quality, effectiveness and transparency of European higher education by examining ECTS credits ad other suitable devices to progress..

Until now, in university is going on three Tempus Projects in restructuring of the curricula, according to these principles and we have proposed further four till projects, as well as all the Faculties, to be involved in an programmed work in en European Project, to this aim.

In respect to these principles and the work carried out in the University of Tirana by all the departments, in close cooperation with European partners, as it has been mentioned above, we have been focused to the general organization of curricula as follows:

- We are going to reform the curricula according to the system 3+2+3 (so called 3-5-8 model);

- the first cycle degree (3 years) is accepted to be recognized as an appropriate level of qualification;

- the graduate cycle with a shorter master's degree (2 years) is recognized as specialized studies with important thorough theoretical advancements and treatment of particular difficult practical situation problems; teacher preparation will attend only one year (after the first cycle) in pedagogical trainings, linked to the particularities of the subject and other matters important in the teacher education;

- a longer doctor's degree (maximum 3 years), understanding or not (it depends from branches and particular orientations in the second cycle) specific examinations; this particularity will make easy the multidisciplinary orientation of the students and multiplicity of specialties certified in the University, according to the labor market requirements;

- Regarding the particular conditions of a small and country like Albania, where the labor market is scarce (for example in Physics), has been decided not to have orientations for the first cycle, but to have a common curricula, in which the fundamentals of the science and the most useful and elementary knowledge of applied science would be included; in some similar branches (for examples in Mathematics), it has been judged better to have some general orientations, according to main important developments of this science.

Finally, in some other branches (in economics, for example), we need to think over of some practical orientations according to the needs of labor marked in the country.

All these schemes are on the way of discussion with our European partners.

- Doctoral studies will be organized basing to the guided research of the better students after finishing master's degree; depending of the particularities of master's program, we shall introduce some examinations during this period of time, also with the aim of creation of facilities of interdisciplinary research studies.

- Examples.

## **PHYSICS:**

The existing curricula are rigid ones that do not allow the possibility of choice of further studies. Up to now, after the second year of studies, the separation of students in 4 year studies (physics teacher) and 5 year studies (physicist) have been decided upon the decision of the Department according to the scores of two first years of studies (the best were selected to attend the 5 years studies). In new curricula the

choice for the second cycle should be made according to the wish of students and by competition (if number closed)

During the compilation of the new curricula proposal for the first cycle, the Department has been informed about different curricula, approved by several universities in Italy (Bari, Lecce, Ferrara and Bologna etc.) and taken care of preparing the curricula similar to them of those universities.

Regarding our particular conditions relative to labor market of Physicists, it would be better not to have orientations for the first cycle but to have a common curricula, in which the fundamentals of Physics and the most useful and elementary knowledge of Applied Physics would be included. Further, by the tradition of Albanian school, the higher education in Physics has been general, relatively strong, and more oriented to theoretical formation, among other things, because of the lack of equipments; more than 30 Albanian students graduated in 5 years option of Physicist of University of Tirana, are now carrying out successfully the PHD studies in United States of in Europe; this can be another reason of having non-oriented curricula for the first cycle in Albanian conditions.

During the last modifications of Physics curricula, 1987-1990, among professors of Physics Department there was an enthusiastic wish to insert in the curricula a lot of courses that could be offered as training courses, for instance special courses, physics of metals, physics of crystals, technical physics etc. Such courses will be eliminated at least in the curricula of first cycle; for the second cycle we have to choose among them to modify the title and their content.

Finally, the new curricula proposed to be established (the next school year), is founded on the model: 3+1 for the Physics Teacher Diploma; 3+2 for the Physicist Diploma; the 3 first years are common for the two options.

- ▶ According to Italian university experience and proposals for the first cycle, in average there are 20-30 credits for the based formative activities (Mathematics, Informatics), 80-90 credits for proper physics subjects, 20-30 credits for affinity subjects (chemistry, electronics etc.), 10-15 credits for the individual wok, 3-5 credits for foreign language, 5-10 credits for the final test.

Studies of the first 3 years (first cycle) would provide the most essential knowledge needed for a general higher education in Physics, both theoretical and application, giving the possibility to follow the second cycle in Albania or other European Universities. This curriculum would provide students with the possibility to follow also further studies in different fields of science and engineering.

- ▶ The second cycle of studies in Physics, should be organized in four orientations:

- Physics Teacher (one year)
- Theoretical Physics (two years)
- Condensed Matter Physics (two years)
- Physics of Bio-systems and Environmental Physics (two years)

These orientations have been chosen according to existing capacities at our Department of Physics – both staff and equipments and, also, according to the possible perspectives of economic development of Albania and the expected needs of the labor market.

- The curriculum of the second cycle for the teaching orientation is based mainly on didactic subjects (Didactic of Physics, Psychology, Pedagogy, History of Physics etc.) Subjects, such as Astrophysics and Solid State Physics, are foreseen with the aim to provide to the students some knowledge and information in order to enable them to teach in High Schools these subjects which are included in the curriculum of these schools.

- The curriculum for Theoretical Physics orientation aims principally to the formation of theoretical physicists in general, without any particular field of study. This curriculum will enable the students to pursue more profound studies, in particular fields of research, after further training and specialization. In this curriculum is foreseen the existence of two subjects of choice (biophysics and Geophysics) because we think that some formation and information in such fields, would possibly permit them to pursue, after the Diploma, research in these fields of interest and perspective for the country.

- The curriculum Condensed Matter Physics orientation is based on a relatively good experience we have in the field of Condensed Matter Physics and some existing laboratory equipments. Nevertheless, the subject of Quantum Optics and Optoelectronics are new and we do not have experience in this field. This curriculum would permit students to be able to pursue further studies in Applied Physics with a particular interest in Albanian conditions.

- The curriculum of Physics of Bio-systems and Environment orientation has two particular parts: the part of Biophysics is based on an existing experience; the part of Environmental Physics is totally new both in staff specialization and necessary laboratory equipments. There exists now a particular demand for specialists in the field of Environmental Physics.

## **HISTORY:**

The Department of History, actually, provides diplomas for teachers of History in high schools and specialists on history. The latter ones have great possibilities to be employed in scientific institutions of History, Archeology, Ethnography, Archives, Museums and many other political and social institutions.

In the field of History, all the problems are on the way of discussions in the Department; the main and principal first conclusions are as follows.

It's very important for the students to be formed in general problems of the history of the world and the history of the country and many problems associated, during the 3 first years (first cycle); that's why the provisions expressed are focused in general formation in his cycle and to allow all specializations in the second cycle; we haven't

yet decided for the different specialties, but the Archeology will surely be one of the most important and the others will be linked to different periods of the history. Finally, the new curricula proposed to be established (yet in full discussion), is founded on the model: 3+1 for the History Teacher Diploma; 3+2 for the Specialist of History Diploma (first of all specialist of Archeology); the 3 first years are common for the two options.

► According to experiences and discussions, there are about 30-35 credits for the world general History, 60-70 credits for the History of the region and Albania (including 30 credits for Archeology); then, it seemed very important different aspects of other cultural developments of the humanity which will be supported by about 30-40 credits and, finally, 10-15 credits for foreign languages and 5-10 credits for final tests.

Studies of the first 3 years (first cycle) would provide the most essential knowledge needed for a general higher education in History of world, populations and humanity culture, giving the possibility to follow the second cycle in Albania or other European Universities. This curriculum would provide students with the possibility to follow also further studies in Social Sciences, European Studies, Political Sciences, Diplomacy and History of Science.

► The second cycle of studies in History, should be organized in different orientations, one of them being actually determined Archeology. Other orientations will be as a conclusion of discussions carrying out actually between University and Academy of Science and inter Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities, by the aim of determining the most interesting orientations for the country.

### **3. Institutional quality culture, recognition of qualifications**

*A. Actually, the University of Tirana has adopted (from 1998) the Quality Evaluation as one of important academic activities of the institution; this procedure is guided by the Teaching and Learning Office of the University and the vice-deans of the Faculties. This duty includes mainly program evaluation.*

From 2000, as a result of a Tempus Project in cooperation with Open University of London, in Albania is established and carrying out its activity the National Center of Accreditation, which takes care and organizes the evaluations in the Higher Education System of the Country, in cooperation with universities.

University of Tirana has accumulated a great experience in recognitions of degrees and periods of study (mobility of students between universities of Albanian Higher education System, many specialists coming in Albania, after being formed abroad or after having carried different university formations abroad), founded to the programs realized.

Actually, the ECTS established in the University and the training of coordinators in each faculty, can help us to the reconsideration of this important process according to the new European principles of recognition of diplomas and formations. This

recognition is founded now upon the number of credits accumulated and the subject corresponding. The new international system of classification of the studies (see Tab. 1 and 2 above) is operational in the University of Tirana, after elaboration of ECTS and necessary procedures of equivalence.

The Diploma Supplement is prepared (in Albania and in English), and has been distributed to all Faculties, recognized by the Senate and the Faculty Councils (from 2001). We have foreseen and elaborated all the official procedures of the fulfillment, as it has been recommended by European Higher Education Institutions.

*B. Beginning from the 2002-2003 academic years, University of Tirana will deliver the Diploma Supplement for all the students which will ask to go abroad.*

In general, Albanian students go abroad for master formations of employment. The majority of them have been able to continue their studies, according to the full recognition of their formations in the home University especially after the confirmation from our University of the diploma delivered. It has been easy the procedure of recognition of diplomas by the Universities with which we have the bilateral Agreements or in the frame of University Networks.

The majority of our students go abroad by their own initiative and expenses (or sponsored); an interesting ratio of students has been moved abroad by Tempus Projects (horizontal mobility); the action of Tempus mobilities being 20% of all these mobility, during 10 years of Tempus application in Albania, there are about 100 students mobility for our University.

Our presence in European University Networks has contributed in this process of mobility; thus, we have, each year, 2-3 students which profits horizontal mobility in the fame of UNICA fellowships and about the same number each year in the frame of AUF Network.

On the other hand, we have been very successful in regional university cooperation in Master formation, organized in the frame of European projects, applied in the development of Higher Education in South-Eastern European countries. During four past years, we have sent in Athens about 20 students in the Master of South-Eastern European Studies; actually, we participate in the South-Eastern European master in Humanities, guided by "La Sapienza" University of Rome, in cooperation with Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia.

We have proposed this type of common formation also in the frame of UNICA, AUF, CUM, AIMOS networks.

By the point of view of European modalities (documentation, procedures etc.), our University is ready of the realization more mobility than until now. We can also offer interesting formation in Albania Culture and Language, in Balkan Studies, in Archeology, probably in Informatics and Medicine, and in specific formation (linked to the situation in Albania and in the region) in Economics, Law and Social Sciences.

The main difficulties in this process are linked to the visa procedure difficulties and to the poor capacities of University City in Tirana for the student's accommodation. The later obstacle is our duty and the Ministry of Education of Albania is preparing the important actions to the increase of the capacities and improvement of the conditions and, very soon, we will be able to offer good possibilities to the foreign students. Concerning visa, we need political agreements between different countries for visa facilities for the students authorized for the mobility by respective universities.

We have prepared also all the documentation for the regular procedures of inter-university student mobility (as it has been recommended by EUA etc.):

- Application Form, in four pages, filled by the students, when he they decides to transfer the studies to another institution;
- Learning Agreement, in four pages, filed by the interested student, signed by student and both institutions;
- Transcript of Records, in four pages, filed by the sending institution and accepted by the host institution.

All these documents are incorporated in the Information Package of ECTS of the University (each Faculty) and we are training now the administrators for the necessary modalities to be known.

Only about 5% of staff moves abroad as "invited professor", but about 80% of them have moved abroad by Tempus Projects (or individual fellowships). We have important capacities to be exploited as "invited professors" which will be considered as an important capacity of professor's exchange with other European universities; on the other hand, also full number of professors has known European partner universities and has their important contacts with their colleagues.

### **Envisaged developments.**

Apart of European recommendations, our institution and the whole Higher Education System in Albania are conscious to the needs of curricula transformation and to become competitive with other European universities. The existing curricula are, generally, not so attractive for the new orientations of the labor market of Albania and even more for the labor market of Europe.

Apart of the difficult situations passed during twelve years, after democratic changes, this must be the second important reason why the Albanian students prefer to study abroad. Only in Italian universities, there are more than 5000 Albanian students. If we would have an university curriculum (especially the first cycle curriculum) comparable with those of European countries, then according to the Albanian student aspiration, it would be easier for a student to transfer from Albania to other countries. Otherwise, foreign students can very well come to Albania for continuing their formation o taking an interesting for them formation in a particular field.

We are engaged seriously in this important action, as active members of EUA and other university European networks and, especially, as multiple subject of many

European projects in Higher Education applied in our country and in our University, in every important fields, which has prepared this action as Quality Assurance, Internationalization /Europeanization Process, European Policy Statement, Credit Point System etc.

University of Tirana, after full preparation of ECTS for each faculty and diplomas delivered, according to European transcription, thorough preparation of Diploma Supplement and other official and administrative modalities for students' transfer and diploma and formation recognition, is fully engaged in changes in curriculum, according to Bologna Declaration principles.

Many discussions we have had the last year; actually some faculties as Economics, Law, Social Sciences and some particular departments as Department of Physics, Department of Biology, Department of Geography, have engaged the concrete work for curriculum construction, as well in cooperation with their European partners as being active in Tempus Projects with the aim of curriculum changes; they will finish at the end of 2003, having the curriculums ready for the school year 2004-2005.

The faculties of History and Phylology and the Faculty of Foreign Languages as well as the departments of Pharmacy, Informatics (Mathematics) and Chemistry, are finishing (until June 2003) the fusibility study for the reconstruction of the curriculum and will prepare it in the period 2004-2004.

All curricula changes, will be associated with respective changes in ECTS system, by the specialists of faculties being already trained for this making; all the process is guided by the most important authorities of the faculties and university, being attended especially by teaching an learning Office of the University and Vice-Deans of Faculties.

### **III. Conclusions**

University of Tirana is seriously prepared for the European competition in view of realizing the main important aims of Higher Education reform in the country and to follow and support all the efforts for the construction of the European Higher Education Area.

An important debate has taken place in Albanian Higher Education System, and particularly, in University of Tirana, the most important university of the country, around Bologna Declaration and the modalities of realization of his principles. We are convinced that in this phase of the debate the voice of the most experienced actors of academic life is heard and the broader issues relating to the transformation of our Higher Education System are addressed.

Much of the debate within departments so far has focused in the Bologna proposal for a more consistent European model of higher education qualifications, based on Bachelors', Masters' and Doctoral degrees, with specific time limits. The faculty and department responses to these proposals, firstly, have been very mixed, according to specificities of formations, but the system 3+2+5 has been accepted in university level; discussions now are engaged to the problem of program structuring. In this

field, we are determined to co-operate strongly with our European university partners, in the fame of bilateral co-operation, European university network co-operation and, especially, by the realization Tempus Projects actually on way and by proposing others covering all the formations in our institution.

The activity is very important and exercising the respective responsibility is a complex task; the University have a social responsibility and must be publicly accountable, but on the other hand it must retain the institutional autonomy which is essential to advance the study and research, and to academic freedom. The character of universities and their relationships to the State is changing as a result of mass higher education; however, the fundamental principles on which they are founded remain valid and the university must be cautious in his responses to “market place” pressures, if the vital character is to be maintained. The principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom need to be balanced with social responsibilities, but they remain important characteristics of university and academic staff relationships.

This is important in itself, but is also essential if university is to remain as key source of innovation in response to continuing and accelerating social and scientific demand. So, it rest very important for our University, and we are tying to realize fully this autonomy. The progress that we have arrived until now in the new autonomous feature if the institution, has been a source of experience and new ideas for further developments and, on the other hand, it has presented new problems of the process, especially linked to the Bologna Declaration principles.

Thus, it rests the main and important problem in Albania and in our institution, because of administrative obstacles. The environment in which the university and his academic staff operate being very shaped by many forces, we consider that the institution must work with the Government and the components of civil society to defend and develop the university role in appropriate ways and this shared effort is essential if the intention behind the Bologna process is to be met. Particular problems which need to be tackled, are casualisation, short term contracts, increasing difficulties in pursuing a career in higher education or research and growing demands to undertake administrative duties of pursue outside funding. Academic staff needs a stable and supportive environment in which to work and the prospect of a proper professional career. We believe that it is in the interest of all the parties in higher education and of society itself, to enable professors and researches in higher education to achieve these conditions.

The Bologna proposal for more comparable degree, raise the question of quality assurance. We are conscious that the issue of quality has also been raised by the process of massification of higher education in the last twenty years in Europe and it is the new nature of the higher education institutions. University of Tirana and Albanian Conference of Rectors are committed to the maintenance and improvement of quality. Our specialists, already trained (Phare Multi-country Program in Higher Education), working in the sector and university governing bodies have struggled to maintain quality, in the face of new demands and changes as well as the lack of a full necessary financial autonomy of the University. We would assert that quality assurance must be primarily the responsibility of teachers themselves both through personal responsibility as members of the academic profession and also through peer assessment and support.

One of the main achievements in our University, which includes all the quality indicators, is the elaboration of ECTS system, for the first time in Albania, being published as Information Packages for each faculty, in Albanian and in English (recently appeared in Internet, site UNITIR.EDU.AL). Further, in quality assurance problems, we are guided by the first important Institutional External Quality Evaluation of the University, exercised by a team organized by Open University of London, in the frame of Phare Multi-country Program in Higher Education; in this optics, each faculty has prepared the guidelines of internal evaluation and the external one has begun to be realized with the help of Accreditation Center in Tirana.

Mass higher education and life long learning, taken together, will amount to an educational and social development. This is particularly true when we are able to see the full impact of communication technologies and globalization. By the aim of realization of Bologna Declaration principles, we are thinking of this important process and we are elaborating real planning involving all the partners and stakeholders of higher education in the country.

The most difficult area to predict the future is in respect of electronic communication and the internet. Already, in our institution, most university professors and researchers have experienced a transformation in their working practices and in the information and communication potential. While this has generated new opportunities on a dramatic scale, it has also added new pressures on their lives. The space of change and the development of new technical capacities require continuous responses from academics, including the regular updating of their own skills. However, significant as these changes are, the changes which are to come in respect of education delivery through electronic media will be far greater. Professors are right to be concerned about these trends, not only for their own sake, but for the quality of education and for its ability to continue to meet the changing needs of students. We are convinced that the professors and students must be closely involved in the development and application of new media for the delivery of higher education.

Usually the trends which will eventually affect the whole of education, have their first impact on higher education. This is particularly true of globalization, where professors and researchers have been part of a global intellectual community for many years, but where the internet and other globalization trends have marked a dramatic intensification of worldwide cooperation and dialogue between academics. Among many other functions in society, higher education institutions provide the “home” for teacher educators and teacher education is the driving force for change in education system as a whole. Teacher education now is marked by patterns of cooperation between universities and schools; also teachers at all levels have been quick to recognize their own particular need for continuous professional development and universities and schools together have often worked to meet these needs. In our efforts for organization of teacher preparation, we welcome these trends which reinforce the sense of unity of the teaching profession and a holistic approach to the development of education.

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