

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

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**Towards Implementing the Instruments
of Bologna Process in the Area of
Recognition of Foreign Diplomas in the
Czech Republic**

Diplomová práce

Praha 2012

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Rok obhajoby: 2012

Bibliografický záznam

PETERKOVÁ, Michaela. *Towards Implementing the Instruments of Bologna Process in the Area of Recognition of Foreign Diplomas in the Czech Republic*. Praha, 2012. 146 s. Diplomová práce (Mgr.) Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Institut sociologických studií. Katedra veřejné a sociální politiky. Vedoucí diplomové práce Dr. Aleš Vlk.

Abstrakt

Tato studie se zabývá implementací jako stádiem politického cyklu, které může značně ovlivnit, jestli implementovaná politika bude mít požadovaný dopad. Autorka se zaměřuje na implementaci nástrojů Boloňského procesu v oblasti uznávání zahraničních diplomů v České republice. Hlavním cílem je odpovědět na otázku, v čem analýza implementace těchto konkrétních nástrojů může obohatit obecné znalosti o implementaci politiky. Pro zodpovězení této otázky je vytvořen koncepční a výzkumný rámec, na jehož základě autorka navrhuje teze, které slouží jako předběžné odpovědi na výzkumné otázky. Koncepční a výzkumný rámec je nadále použit v analýze dat, jejichž zdroje zahrnují dotazníkové šetření, analýzu dokumentů a polostrukturované rozhovory. Na základě analýzy dat autorka předloží doporučení pro implementaci nástrojů Boloňského procesu v oblasti uznávání zahraničních diplomů v České republice. V závěru studie jsou pak vyhodnoceny výhody a nevýhody použitého koncepčního a výzkumného rámce. Hlavním přínosem této studie jsou doporučení v konkrétní oblasti uznávání zahraničních diplomů v České republice a vyhodnocení praktického použití koncepčního a výzkumného rámce.

Abstract

This study perceives the implementation stage of a policy cycle as an area, which may influence whether the policy has the intended effects. The author focuses on the implementation of the instruments of the Bologna Process in the field of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic and asks, what can one learn about the implementation of a policy in general from studying this specific policy area? To answer this questions the study develops a conceptual and research framework, based on which the author presents propositions as tentative answers to the research questions.

The conceptual and research framework is then used to analyze the sources of data, which include a questionnaire survey, analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews. Based on these the author presents recommendations for the implementation of the instruments of the Bologna Process in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic. At the end of the study, the shortcomings and benefits of the application of the conceptual and research framework are evaluated. The main contribution of this study therefore lies in producing recommendations and evaluations in the specific area of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic and also by testing a practical application of a conceptual and research framework.

Klíčová slova

Boloňský proces, implementace politiky, vzdělávací politika, uznávání diplomů, Evropský prostor vysokoškolského vzdělávání, vysoké školství v ČR

Keywords

Bologna Process, implementation of policy, education policy, diploma recognition, European Higher Education Area, higher education in Czech Republic

Rozsah práce: 256 811 znaků (s mezerami bez abstraktu a příloh)

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V Praze dne ...

Michaela Peterková

Poděkování

Ráda bych poděkovala Dr Aleši Vlkovi, který mi byl velmi vstřícným a upřímným konzultantem. Aktivně se zajímal o průběh mé práce a pomohl mi získat kontakty na MŠMT, kde jsem následně absolvovala praxi. Díky patří také všem odborníkům, se kterými jsem měla možnost provést rozhovory a kteří mi vstřícně přiblížili své názory. Děkuji.

Institut sociologických studií
Teze diplomové práce

Suggested title:

Diploma Recognition as an instrument of the Bologna process implementation

Author: Michaela Peterková

Supervisor: Dr Aleš Vlk

Subject of study:

The Europe is undergoing a process of integrating and harmonizing economic, political and largely also social and public policies. The so called “Bologna Process” reflects an increasingly shared aspiration of the European countries to harmonize higher education systems in order to achieve greater student mobility and economic effectiveness. The Bologna Process promotes achieving this goal by implementing a number of instruments including simplified and clear diploma recognition. However, to achieve effective diploma recognition as portrayed in the Bologna Process, a number of specific interacting policies and instruments must be implemented and utilized in practice.

The institutions of the Bologna Process monitor the implementation of individual instruments and the results are published in various documents. This study will analyze the way these documents portray the stage of implementation of diploma recognition in the Czech Republic by comparing them with empirical data collected by the author.

The topic of this study has been inspired by the first-hand experience of the author with diploma recognition in the Czech Republic, which was significantly different than what the official documents illustrate. This has also influenced the primary hypothesis of the author, which states that the official documents of the Bologna Process are too optimistic in terms of portraying the stage of implementation of diploma recognition policies in the Czech Republic as more advanced than they are in practice.

Annotation:

The aim of this study is to provide a practical insight into the stage of implementation of diploma recognition policies in the Czech Republic. The study will investigate how the Bologna Process instruments of diploma recognition are applied by public higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other relevant bodies deciding on diploma recognitions.

The author will introduce implementation theories and use the factors and requirements for effective implementation of policies put forth by them when structuring the analysis of both documents and empirical data. The author will also utilize theories of europeanization to achieve greater understanding of strategies, goals and obstructions when harmonizing the policies.

At the beginning of the study the author will outline the basic strategy, objectives and a structure of the instruments of the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the author will provide a background on introducing Bologna Process policies within the Czech setting and the standard procedure of recognizing diplomas in the Czech Republic.

In the analytical part of the study, the author will analyze the documents of the Bologna Process institutions monitoring the progress of implementation of diploma recognition in the Czech Republic and identify how the implementation stage is portrayed. This will be then contrasted with the results of analysis of semi-structured interviews with the relevant Czech institutions, and the author will outline the key similarities and differences in the results of the two methods. By identifying areas of the implementation of diploma recognition in the Czech Republic that lag behind, the author will be able to provide recommendations regarding what to focus on in order to achieve greater level of implementation of diploma recognition policies.

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1. Introduction

The method of implementing a policy may largely influence, whether the policy will actually have a significant effect on the public and practice or become just a formal commitment. This realization has led to an increasing focus on studying the process of implementing a policy. This study aims at contributing to this effort by analyzing the implementation of instruments of the Bologna Process¹ in the area of foreign diploma recognition within the Czech Republic (CR).

Europe is undergoing a process of integrating and harmonizing economic, political and largely also social and public policies. The so-called Bologna Process (BP) reflects an increasingly shared aspiration of the European and other countries to harmonize higher education systems in order to achieve greater competitiveness and become a more attractive destination for foreign higher education students. The Bologna Process promotes achieving this goal by implementing a number of instruments including simplified and clear diploma recognition.

The implementation of the Bologna Process instruments includes decision-making on a supranational level, policy adjustment on the national level and practical application on local level. The implementation of the Bologna Process instruments therefore includes a chain of implementing bodies as well as individuals, who interact and follow guidelines in a specific way. This implementation arrangement is the core of this study, which is reflected by the basic research question of this study, which is: What can we learn about the implementation as a stage of a policy cycle when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic?

To answer this question, one needs to begin with a focus on the theoretical background of the implementation as such and answer: How to study implementation? This study outlines a number of approaches, which have been developed for the study of

¹ The Bologna Process is the process of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is based on cooperation between ministries, higher education institutions, students and staff from 47 countries, with the participation of international organisations (Bologna Process official website).

implementation and argues that all can provide a fruitful theoretical background. However, for specific purposes, which are explained in the chapter on theoretical background, this study adopts a theoretical framework, which essentially perceives effective implementation as a balance between trust and responsibility. This framework provides the factors to be considered and categories, which tend to result in efficient implementation outcomes. It also helps to theoretically answer: Is the structure of implementation, which was adopted, efficient?

Equipped with the theoretical tools, this study focuses on the recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic and how the Bologna instruments are utilized in this area. The study investigates how the Bologna Process instruments of diploma recognition are applied by public higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and other relevant bodies deciding on foreign diploma recognitions. Therefore the study answers the following questions:

- ➔ Which instruments of the Bologna Process are relevant for the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR?
- ➔ How do these instruments influence the process of foreign diploma recognition?
- ➔ How are these instruments implemented in CR?

These questions are answered through the analysis of documents, collecting data from questionnaires and conducting semi-structured interviews. By collecting suggestions from the implementing bodies and comparing the key findings with the theoretical conceptions, the author will be able to provide recommendations regarding what to focus on in order to achieve greater efficiency of implementation of diploma recognition policies in the Czech Republic. Therefore this study answers:

- ➔ What can we recommend for the implementation of these instruments in the CR?

However, the main objective of this study is to contribute to the general discussion of implementation as such and therefore this study also generalizes the findings and suggests possible areas for further study of the implementation of a policy.

- ➔ What can we learn from the case of the implementation of these instruments in CR about the implementation of a policy?

1.1 Problem statement

The topic of this study has been inspired by the first-hand experience of the author with foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic for the purpose of continuing studies. The author encountered a relatively complicated and lengthy procedure. This has influenced the primary hypothesis of the author, which states that the official documents of the Bologna Process are in many ways very optimistic in terms of portraying the stage of implementation of diploma recognition policies in the Czech Republic as more advanced than they actually might be.

In other words, the formal implementation of a policy may not ensure the policy is effectively applied in practice. The implementation of a policy contains a number of pitfalls, which may result in a failure of a policy to be established as was intended. Before one can evaluate, whether the policy was designed well in the first place, one needs to be able to observe its effects. But how to ensure, that the policy actually does have the planned effects? In other words, how to implement the policy in such a way, that it would influence the target groups in a manner initially planned? How to implement policies effectively?

The objective of this study is to contribute towards answering these questions by studying the process of foreign diploma recognition and how the Bologna Process instruments are implemented in this area. By exploring the implementation within this field equipped with theoretical tools, this study contributes findings both to the specific area of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic and to the study of the implementation itself, since it is testing a practical application of a theoretical conception.

1.2 Research questions

Main research question of the study:

- ➔ What can we learn about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR?

Research subquestions:

- ➔ How to study implementation?
- ➔ Which instruments of the Bologna Process are relevant for the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR?
- ➔ How should these instruments influence the process of foreign diploma recognition?
- ➔ How are these instruments implemented in CR?
- ➔ How effective is such arrangement for implementing BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the CR?
- ➔ What can we learn and recommend for the implementation of these instruments in the CR?
- ➔ What can we learn from the case of the implementation of these instruments in CR about the implementation of a policy?

1.3 Structure of the study

This study is opened by chapter 2 on Context, which outlines the background of the Bologna Process in general and the implementation of its instruments in the Czech Republic. The chapter also describes the general process of foreign diploma recognition and how it is influenced by the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Convention. Furthermore, the standard procedure of the foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic is outlined. The following chapter 3 introduces the theories of implementation and the various approaches to the study of implementation of a policy. At the end of this chapter the author identifies, which approach is adopted in this study and why. The third chapter named Conceptual and Research Framework outlines the knowledge claims underpinning this study, the strategies of enquiry, which are adopted and the methods

used. The research framework is introduced after the theoretical background because the theories provide variables to be considered during the analysis. Therefore in this study the theoretical background is essential for developing the research framework. The fifth chapter includes analysis of the individual sources of data, which are then compared in the chapter 6. Here the key findings from the comparison of the various sources of data are presented. The seventh chapter provides recommendations for the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition. Finally, the last chapter named Conclusions and Generalizations considers how this study contributes to the general analysis of implementation as a stage of policy cycle. The author evaluates, to what extent has the conceptual and research framework based on the theoretical background proved as a useful tool for analysis of implementation of a policy in general.

2. Context

2.1 Bologna Process

2.1.1 Why was Bologna Process launched?

The Bologna Process is a result of reaction to a significant trend, which was occurring in the European education at the end of the twentieth century. At this time,

higher education in Europe is confronted with a new environment marked by globalization, new communication technologies, English as *lingua franca*, increased competition and growing commercialisation (Trends I, 1999, p.5)

The strongest impetus to initiate the Bologna Process was the fact that in the early 1990s for the first time the number of European students studying in the USA exceeded the number of American students in Europe (Trends 1, 1999, p.5). Furthermore, the overseas higher education institutions had increasing outreach in Europe since they offered increasing opportunities for distance learning as well as opened branch campuses in Europe. The result of this trend was that the transnational education was imported without appropriate export. This has had significant influence even on the economies concerned since for example in 1998 the estimated contribution of foreign students to the US economy was US\$ 7.5 billion.

The Trends I Report of 1999 focused on the factors, why do students chose education overseas over the Europe and found out that most universities and governments in Europe are poorly prepared to compete on the new world market of education (1999, p.12). The transnational education was often based on professional marketing, which was not common in Europe, offered good quality service for accommodation, equipment and attractive educational packages. The European education itself has, however, had a low reputation among the European students and therefore they were willing to pay for the overseas services. All of these trends lead to a decreasing demand for European education, whose attractiveness and competitiveness in relation to the transnational education fell.

The higher education systems were also undergoing a process of expansions since the overall student participation in the higher education was rapidly increasing. As the Eurydice report outlines, the speed of the massification trends in the higher education was even higher in other world regions than in Europe (2010, p.15) and therefore this has created a great opportunity to attract educational capital back into Europe.

2.1.2 What is Bologna Process?

Taking the definition from the Bologna Process website,

the Bologna Process is the process of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is based on cooperation between ministries, higher education institutions, students and staff from 47 countries, with the participation of international organizations.² (MŠMT, Boloňský proces – oficiální webové stránky, 2010)

The creation of the EHEA is the overarching instrument, which is achieved by adopting a number of specific instruments on the national levels. The process is aimed at preserving the unique characteristics of the national education systems and introduces measures that should facilitate comparability rather than synchronize the systems under strict rules.

As Witte outlines, “the core of the Bologna Process at the European level is a series of intergovernmental conferences of European education ministers at which programmatic declarations and communiqués were passed” (2006, p.123). The ministers meet every two years to discuss the progress made and set the strategy goals for the upcoming years. The conferences are prepared by the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), which has also on its agenda preparing the Stocktaking Reports, in which the progress of the signatory countries towards reaching the shared goals is monitored.

² Bologna Process website <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

These are, however, based on National Reports, which are prepared by each signatory country on a self-assessment basis.

2.1.3 What are the goals of the Bologna Process?

The goals of the Bologna Process have been gradually refined but the basic goals formulated in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 remain constant throughout the first decade of the process. Witte sums these up in the Box 1 below:

Goals formulated in the Bologna Declaration

- *to construct a EHEA*
- *to promote citizens' mobility and employability*
- *to achieve greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education (HE) in Europe*
- *to increase international competitiveness of the European system of HE and its worldwide degree of attraction*

(Source: Witte, 2006, p.131)

These overarching goals have been specified in 6 action lines, to which the signatory countries committed. These included:

Bologna 6 action lines

- *adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees*
- *adopting an essential system of two main cycles (undergraduate and graduate)*
- *establishing a system of credits (such as ECTS)*
- *supporting mobility of students, teachers, researchers and admin. staff*
- *promoting European cooperation in quality assurance*
- *promoting European dimensions in higher education via revising curricula, inter-institutional cooperation*

(Source: Bologna Declaration 1999)

Throughout the developments of the process during the first decade of the 21st century, additional action lines have been added. During Prague Communiqué in 2001 the following three action lines were emphasized:

- focus on **lifelong learning**
- stressing the importance of active participation of **higher education institutions and students** in the BP
- promoting the **attractiveness of the EHEA**

During the Berlin Communiqué in 2003 a tenth action line was added and it contained a commitment to include **doctoral level as the third cycle** in the Bologna Process.

2.1.4 How has the Bologna Process developed?

The process has started with the Sorbonne declaration signed in 1998 by the ministers of education from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. This declaration has been quite general in its goals and its signatories committed themselves to a **gradual convergence towards a common framework of qualifications and cycles of study**. It outlined a two-cycle degree structure, in which the qualifications

should be identified as undergraduate and graduate. The graduate cycle should include both master and doctoral studies but the lengths of the cycles or their content has not been specified. The signatories also expressed their commitment to promoting the mobility of students and university staff. Part of this was to be facilitated by the use of credit systems such as ECTS. The grounding principle was to achieve a “common frame of reference” but as Witte argues, the declaration was quite unclear about the definition of harmonization since in French, which was the leading nation of the process) its meaning is different from unification or standardization (2006, p.129). The Sorbonne declaration was therefore quite modest in its nature since it emphasized rather general goals and via these was committed to protecting the uniqueness of the culture and experience of each signatory country.

The **Sorbonne Declaration** has called upon the other European ministers to join the initiative and commit themselves to the harmonization of the European higher education systems. The eagerness of the response was, however, quite unexpected and as Witte argues, “it soon became clear that the Bologna conference would bring together a much wider range of countries than the Sorbonne conference, and that a new declaration text had to be formulated” (2006, p.129). The involvement of this higher number of countries changed the pace of the process from rather personal co-operation to more institutional and this was reflected even in the preparations for the Bologna conference of 1999. The European Commission funded a *Trends in Learning Structures* Report, which provided a number of recommendations on which direction should the Bologna negotiations focus on. It suggested the need to improve the standing of bachelor degrees to make them valuable on their own and not just as an intermediate step in traditional long studies. It also called for a common but flexible frame of reference for qualifications and discussed, how useful could a 3-5-8 model be in this regard. Furthermore, it recommended the use of the ECTS also for credit accumulation and stressed the need for quality assurance, which to also provide European-wide subject-based evaluation to ensure that the European dimension is contained in the curricula. The last recommendation concerned the promotion of students, teacher and staff mobility and encouraged diverse study paths. This report provided a major background for the Bologna Declaration and also marks introducing the influence of the European Union into the process.

The **Bologna Declaration** was signed by 29 countries in 1999 and served as a long term agenda for structural change. The major strength of the Bologna Declaration was its complementarity with other developments in progress, such as the Lisbon Convention, adoption of Diploma Supplement, EU Directives, other EU mobility programmes and reforms entailed in many countries by the accession process to the EU. Bologna Process therefore achieved such attention since it became both the consequence of and contribution to the process of integrating the European higher education. (Trends II, 2001, p.5). It also reflected the commonly shared values across the region at the time and therefore the Bologna Declaration reflects the consensus on the core objectives of the process (Trends II, 2001, p.5).

In 2001, the ministers met up in **Prague** and passed additional three action lines. Also, the need to keep a continuous monitoring of the implementation and the progress of the process was acknowledged by establishing the Bologna Follow Up Group, which was to help implement the strategic goals in the time between the conferences.

Two years later, during the ministerial conference in **Berlin**, the participants charged the BFUG with preparing detailed reports on the implementation of the Bologna Process and organizing a stocktaking before the next ministerial conference in 2005. This has turned into a continuous practice and became the core structure of the monitoring of the progress made. The BFUG official secretariat was also established and was to be located at the host country of the next conference. This, according to Witte, reflects the growing institutionalization of the BP (2006, p.141). The ministers have also adopted major priorities, which are outlined in the box below.

Priorities adopted at the ministerial conference in Berlin (2003)

- *development of quality assurance at international, national and European levels*
- *implementation of the two-cycle system*
- *recognition of degrees and periods of studies incl. provision of Diploma Supplement free and automatically for all graduates as of 2005*
- *elaboration of an overarching framework of qualification for the EHEA*
- *inclusion of doctoral level as the third cycle in the process*
- *promotion of closer links between the EHEA and European Research Area*

(Source: Berlin Communiqué, 2003)

The objective to promote quality assurance was also reflected by appointing the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) with a task to develop in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESU an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance. The ministers also committed themselves to ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention by the conference in 2005 and that by 2005 every graduate should receive a Diploma Supplement for free.

The ministerial conference in **Bergen** in 2005 marked the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) as proposed by the ENQA. Furthermore, the Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA (FQ-EHEA) was adopted and the ministers also committed themselves to developing compatible national frameworks for qualifications, “through which the national systems could be internationally understood” (BFUG – FQ-EHEA Background report, 2005, p.31).

The priorities for the next two years were set as follows:

Priorities adopted at the ministerial conference in Bergen (2005)

- *reinforcing the social dimension and removing obstacles to mobility*
- *implementing the standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the ENQA report*
- *developing national frameworks of qualifications in compatibility with the adopted Framework of Qualifications for the European Education Area*
Creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education

(Source: Bergen Communiqué, 2005)

The growing institutionalization of the BP was reinforced further during the ministerial conference in **London** in 2007, when the ministers for the first time established a legal body through the BP – the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). It contains quality assurance agencies that comply with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA on the basis of external evaluation. These may be used by the participant countries when ensuring that their qualifications meet the Bologna Process standards. The following priorities were adopted for the following two-year period:

Priorities adopted at the ministerial conference in London (2007)

- *creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)*
 - *commitment to completing national frameworks of qualifications in compatibility with FQ-EHEA by 2010*
 - *promise to report on national action to remove obstacles to the mobility of students and staff*
 - *promise to implement and report on national strategies for the social dimension, incl. action plans*
- adopted a strategy for the EHEA in global setting*

(Source: London Communiqué, 2007)

The conference of ministers in **Louvain-la-Nueve** in 2009 became an opportunity to look back at the ten years of the Bologna Process and evaluate, whether the priorities and goals have been achieved. The implementation of Diploma Supplement and ECTS facilitated a significant progress towards comparability of European education systems and mutual recognition of qualifications. The EHEA, it has however been acknowledged, has not become a reality yet. The national qualification frameworks are making a slow progress and therefore the overall benefit of the FQ-EHEA cannot be utilized.

The conference set the following priorities:

Priorities adopted at the ministerial conference in Louvain-la-Nueve (2009)

- *each country should set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing the participation of under-represented social groups*
- *by 2010 at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad*
- *stress on student-centered learning*
- *stress on lifelong learning and employability*

(Source: Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué, 2009)

2.1.5 Instruments of the Bologna Process

The core general instruments of the Bologna Process are three-cycle structure, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications (and parts of studies). In more detail, the three-cycle structure employs qualification frameworks (FQ-EHEA on the European level and National Qualification Frameworks on the national level) and the recognition of qualifications makes use of Diploma Supplement and ECTS. However, all of the instruments more or less depend on each other and reinforce each other.

The **Bologna three-cycle structure** is incorporated into the FQ-EHEA, but in more general has been introduced in most institutions and programmes in Bologna countries. Still, certain fields such as medicine keep a number of traditional long programmes, which are not following the three-cycle structure. As the Eurydice Report outlines, the bachelor and master programmes across the participant countries mark similarities in terms of workload and duration. The doctoral cycles are still very diverse and are only marginally receiving attention of the Bologna Process strategists (2010, p.21). In relation to diploma recognition, it provides a general framework of levels, within which the qualifications may be achieved and which allows for progress.

Quality assurance (QA) is another major instrument of the Bologna Process and “can be understood as policies, procedures and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance quality as it is understood in a specific context“ (Eurydice

2010, p.24). Quality assurance should also reflect interests of students, employers and society in more general, which should ensure that the educational system fulfils its role in preparing the citizens for their active role in the nation and the economy. Nowadays, nearly all countries have one or more QA agencies. The development of the ENQA and the creation of the EQAR have facilitated these developments and also helped to enhance trust and confidence in European higher education. QA agencies, however, vary greatly across the participant countries. Although the common ESG have been agreed, the QA systems of individual countries may have different powers and especially vary in the question of whether they serve as a supervisor of an advisor. Either they can grant a permission for institutions or programmes to operate, or rather empower HEIs with the responsibility for quality improvement. The Eurydice report of 2010 concludes that although there is a growing autonomy of HEIs, 75% of QA systems are supervisory and ensure that minimum standards are met. Furthermore, there is a certain convergence towards particular models of degree structures as well as to a certain model of QA system (2010, p.26). The diploma recognition is largely based on trust between the BP participants, who have to acknowledge that the quality of education gained in one part of the region may be equivalent or at least comparable to that from the other side. QA then serves the role of reinforcing this trust, since the participant countries themselves actively promote the quality of the education by implementing the QA system.

On the basic level, the most utilized instrument for the diploma recognition is the Diploma Supplement. This instrument has been developed in the 1990s and only adopted by the BP. It entails

a standardized template containing a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by the individual noted on the original diploma (Eurydice 2010, p.21)

Its goal is to increase the transparency of education acquired and describes the detailed content of the qualification achieved. Part of it should also be the description of the national higher education system, within which the diploma was awarded. For the effective use of the Diploma Supplement, however, the nation has to be able to refer to

the 3-cycle structure in order to articulate the grade of the diploma and express the level of proficiency achieved. In the year 2009/2010, 36 of the signatory countries issue the Diploma Supplement to their graduates for free. Therefore, this instrument is largely implemented and in terms of diploma recognition is the pilot tool.

Another powerful instrument, which the BP has adopted, is the **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System**. This has been developed in the 1980s to facilitate credit transfer in the Erasmus programme and to foster student mobility. In Berlin Communiqué of 2003, however, it has been stressed that the system should be used for credit accumulation as well and in Bergen 2005 the ministers further decided on credit ranges for the first and second cycle programmes.

Based on the commitments made by the ministers in the various communiqués, ECTS is regarded as fully implemented when more than 75% of institutions and programmes use ECTS for credit accumulation and transfer, and when it satisfies the requirements of credits being awarded on the basis of defined learning outcomes. (Eurydice 2010, p.21)

According to the Eurydice report from 2010, today, 24 countries use the ECTS in more than 75% of HEIs and in majority the ECTS has been introduced in the legislation, which marks a first step of its implementation. Furthermore, the ECTS is gradually replacing the national credit systems across the region. While the Diploma Supplement describes the content of the diploma awarded, it does not explain in detail the weight of the individual subjects taken. The ECTS does this by illustrating the workload spent on individual subjects and therefore identifies the major and minor subjects of the diploma.

The diploma recognition therefore on more general basis depends on the trust, which is being reinforced by the QA systems. However, more specifically, it uses the Diploma Supplement, which outlines the content of the diploma and identifies its position within the three-cycle structure, and the ECTS to illustrate the relative weights of the individual courses taken within the programme.

The last instrument of the Bologna Process is largely still being developed and it is the **National Qualification Frameworks (NQF)**. Each country should describe the

differences between qualifications in all cycles and levels of education and the descriptions should include reference to the three-cycle structure as well as generic descriptors based on learning outcomes, competences and credits (for first and second cycle). (Eurydice 2010, p.22) However, meanwhile the EU has adopted the Lisbon strategy of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning, which uses different descriptors than the FQ-EHEA. The BP participant countries therefore face a task of developing National Qualifications Frameworks compatible with both the FQ-EHEA and EQF. Furthermore, the NQFs should reflect a shift from the traditional input-based approaches to categorizing qualifications to focusing on the outcomes and competences (Eurydice, 2010, p.23). After developing the NQFs, the countries are to undergo a process of self-certifying their frameworks and only then will the NQF be considered as put in place. Initially, the deadline for achieving this was the year 2010, but this has proven too ambitious and so the development of the NQFs has been identified as a priority for the upcoming years. Until now, 8 higher education systems are fully self-certified, 11 are on the way, while the rest is still in preparation. (Eurydice 2010, p.23) The NQFs will help to locate the level of the diploma achieved and will increase the efficiency of diploma recognition. However, its existence is not essential for the diploma recognition, as with the three-cycle, structure, Diploma Supplement and the ECTS used in practice, the diploma recognition may be conducted fairly effectively.

2.2 Bologna Process in the Czech Republic

2.2.1 Who is responsible for the implementation of BP policies in the CR?

According to the National Report of 2005 the National Bologna Group was established in the CR before the Berlin conference in 2003 and at present consists of 12 academic experts (HE managers – rectors, vice-rectors, deans, experts in the field of ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation, ENIC/NARIC representative and students). The group is coordinated by the Czech representatives in the BFUG. Many of the members are also representatives of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (the Council of HEIs), the Czech Rectors Conference (CRC) or the Accreditation Commission (AC) and therefore the memberships overlap and create a body of interacting and cooperating experts. Each member of the National Bologna Group is further responsible for a certain area of the implementation of the Bologna Process policies such as quality assurance, structured study programmes, recognition or the ECTS and Diploma Supplement.

At the present the key project underpinning the actions of the National Bologna Group is the Bologna Experts 2009 – 2011, which is co-funded by the European Commission as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and by the MEYS budget. The project is administered and organized by the House of International Services of the MEYS, within which the responsible body is the National Agency for European Educational Programmes (NAEP). NAEP is responsible for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and other educational programmes in the CR and its representative is also taking part in the Bologna Experts group. The coordination of the project is the responsibility of the Czech representatives in the BFUG and the aim of the project is to support the implementation of the principles of the BP in HEIs in accordance with the priorities set at the national level (NAEP website, Projekt Bologna Experts, 2011).

At the present, the project focuses on awarding the certificates “ECTS Label” and “DS Label” to HEIs, who meet criteria for implementing the ECTS and DS in their bachelor and master study programmes. Furthermore the project includes seminars

focusing on various topics of the BP and aimed at relevant actors within the CR, whose understanding of the process is a key part of the implementation of BP principles.

2.2.2 Through which channels are the BP policies entering the process of foreign diploma recognition in the CR?

Legislation

The Czech Republic has been one of the signatories of the Bologna Declaration in the 1999 and has therefore been participating in the strategy literally from the very beginning. The MEYS has played a key role in drafting legislation, which corresponded with the BP. The reform of the tertiary education came about in the CR in 1990 with the Act. No. 172/1990. However, the implementation of this law together with the knowledge regarding the developments in the Europe has led the MEYS to a preparation of a new law for the HE, which became the **Act. No. 111/1998**. As stated in the National Report (2003, p.3), this act has included the legal conditions for implementing the principles of the Bologna Declaration. It already contained the key elements of the BP, which majority of the other signatory countries was only about to adopt. The three-cycle structure, quality assurance system, recognition of foreign diplomas and periods of study, participation of the students in the management of the HEIs and other features have all already been set in the Act. No. 111/1998. The legal conditions, however, do not have to correspond with the pace of the implementation and this became evident, for example, in the adoption of the three-cycle structure. The restructuralization of the traditional “long” master study programmes had to be further reinforced by an **Act. No. 147/2001**, which made the restructuralization mandatory and allowed for the existence of the traditional master study programmes only in areas, in which the character and the content requires so.

The main legal document for academic recognition of qualifications in the European Region is the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education (Lisbon Convention)*, which was adopted in Lisbon on April 11, 1997. The Czech Republic is a signatory and in 2000 the Lisbon Convention went into force in the CR. It states that unless a substantial difference can be shown between the foreign and national diplomas, the recognition should be granted

(Article IV.1, Lisbon Convention, 1997). It is also up to the body authorized for recognition to prove, why should the request for recognition be rejected and therefore to illustrate the substantial differences between the diplomas. Apart from this principle, the Lisbon convention also includes a right for a fair assessment of foreign qualification and declaration of mutual trust and information provision of the signatory countries. Therefore the countries must publish lists of their recognized institutions and programmes and provide information on the qualifications, programmes and institutions (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.334). Furthermore, in June 2001, the Intergovernmental Committee of the Lisbon Recognition Convention adopted The Council of Europe/UNESCO *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for Recognition*. Its main purpose, according to Rauhvargers, was “to help to ensure that similar recognition cases would be considered in similar ways throughout the European region” (2004, p.334). Rauhvargers lists the principles, which The Recommendation included. For this study, two principles are of particular importance and will be emphasized:

- The Recommendation shifts the focus of credential evaluation from input characteristics of the programmes to the learning outcomes and competencies
- When analyzing the differences, one should bear in mind the purpose for which recognition is sought. Given the wide diversity of programmes and qualifications in Europe, any foreign qualification will always differ from the one with which it is compares. The Recommendation calls for a positive attitude, asking whether the differences are so great that they cannot be used for the purpose for which recognition is sought and, if they are, whether an alternative or partial recognition can nevertheless be granted. (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.335)

Strategic documents

The BP policies have not entered the governmental processes, which relates to the diploma recognition, only via legislation. The principles of the BP have also been reflected in key strategic documents, which have been issued by the MEYS. These include the *National Programme of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper)* approved by the Government in 2000 and the *Strategic Development of the Tertiary*

Education issued by the MEYS for the period 2000-2005 and later for the period 2006-2010.

Projects

The legislation and the underpinning strategic documents have stimulated initiation of various projects, which have led to the implementation of the individual instruments of the BP that are utilized in the process of diploma recognition.

As outlined above, the key project for the implementation of the BP instruments is currently the **Bologna Experts 2009-2011**, which is focusing on the various stages and areas of the implementation. The main tools for interaction of the agents participating in the implementation are seminars and consultations, which the Bologna Experts provide for the HEIs, academic staff, students and quality assurance agencies. This project therefore includes activities in various areas of the implementation of the BP policies, but mainly serves as an information forum, space and a channel of communication of the various participants in the process of implementation.

The Bologna Experts project, however, does not focus on the three-cycle structure and the development of the national qualifications framework, which will be in accordance with the FQ-EHEA. This has become the task of the **project Q-Ram**, which was initiated by the MEYS in 2009 and is co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Czech national budget (Individuální projekty národní – Národní kvalifikační rámec terciárního vzdělávání, 2011). The outcome of the project is the development of the Qualification framework for tertiary education (NRK TV), which will outline the competences and qualifications, which a student of a HEI has to demonstrate in order to be awarded with a diploma in the given area of study (Národní kvalifikační rámec terciárního vzdělávání – Otázky a odpovědi, 2011). This framework is then to be used by the HEIs as an illustration, what minimum standards should each qualification contain. Overall, the framework should facilitate a better understanding of the various qualifications and study programmes and since the NRK TV is developed in close co-operation with the Accreditation Commission, the reference to the framework should also serve as a quality standard. The NRK TV is, however, also a key instrument of the BP for the diploma recognition, since it allows for a shared reference to the descriptors of each qualification obtained and therefore should allow for a better understanding of

competences gained by graduates, which may be utilized either for further study or entering the labor market (Národní kvalifikační rámec terciárního vzdělávání – Otázky a odpovědi, 2011).

2.3 Diploma Recognition

2.3.1 What is diploma recognition?

Rauhvargers argues that there are a number of interconnected definitions of recognition. These include recognition of higher education institution, recognition of a higher education programme, national recognition of an individual qualification and recognition of an individual qualification abroad. (2004, p.333). Recognition of a higher education institution is a precondition for international recognition of any qualification, the institution issues. However, this does not mean that all qualification, the HEI issues have to be recognized. Only in those areas, in which the institution has nationally recognized higher education programmes can individual qualifications be also recognized. In other areas the institution may issue qualifications ‘in its own name’, which usually have a different status from the national qualifications. Furthermore, if both the institution and programme are nationally recognized, the qualifications issues within these are also recognized. This is Rauhvargers’s third definition of the recognition. In the last sense, the recognition can relate to how the qualification is translated in other countries and therefore to the recognition of an individual qualification abroad (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.333).

As Rauhvargers has pointed out, it is necessary to clarify, what sense of ‘recognition’ does one study, since the different meanings relate to different levels of the education system. Rauhvargers uses the following definition in his article. In his approach, recognition is understood as *“the assessment of a foreign qualification with a view of finding ways for its application for further studies and/or employment in the host country”* (2004, p.333).

This study, however, focuses on the recognition for the purpose of further study only. Recognition for the purpose of employment in regulated professions requires the participation of different actors and undergoes different procedures than when the graduate wishes to use

the qualification to continue his or her studies. This study therefore adopts the following definition of recognition, which is based on that of Rauhvargers:

Academic recognition is the assessment of a foreign qualification with a view of finding ways for its application for further studies.

2.3.2 Recognition and the Bologna Process

Diploma recognition can be understood as an instrument of the Bologna Process as well as a result of effective implementation of lower-level instruments. As Rauhvargers argues, “several goals can only be reached if proper recognition of qualifications between States is ensured” (2004, p.331). These include proper mobility of persons and labor force or the competitiveness of the EHEA on a world scale (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.331). In this sense, the diploma recognition can be understood as an instrument of the Bologna Process implemented in order to achieve specified goals.

But how can diploma recognition be achieved itself? According to the Trends III Report (2003) the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué clearly indicate the necessary steps toward improved recognition in Europe:

- Awareness of the existing legal tools, mainly the Lisbon Convention, and application of the principles contained therein;
- Cooperation of the national recognition bodies (ENIC/NARIC) with their HEIs and among each other at European level;
- The widespread use of credits and the Diploma Supplement. (Trends III, 2003, p. 60)

Therefore achieving diploma recognition is related to the implementation of instruments on the practical level of the recognition process, such as the Diploma Supplement, ECTS and Lisbon Convention and on broader level such as the quality assurance, adequate qualification frameworks and international cooperation within the ENIC/NARIC network.

2.3.3 Recognition and The Lisbon Convention

On the international level, the basic legal instrument for academic diploma recognition is the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications*

Concerning Higher Education (Lisbon Convention). Under the Lisbon Convention the most important principles are:

- Right for a fair assessment of foreign qualification
- Recognition if no substantial differences are evident
- Mutual trust and information provision

The Lisbon Convention also states that each signatory country shall establish a national centre, which will become part of the ENIC network. The countries of the EU/EEA then form also the NARIC network, which focuses on specific tasks and implementation of specific instruments within the EU. Therefore the centers in EU and EEA countries participate in both networks.

The ENIC/NARIC networks also work towards developing more effective system of diploma recognitions through working groups, which publish reports on how the implementation progresses and also recommendations, where should further improvements be made. Within the networks, the centers cooperate and exchange information on educational systems and recognition issues and also publish descriptions of their own HE systems. As Rauhvargers argues, however, the national situation of the ENIC/NARIC centers can differ (2004, p.337).

In most countries, the expertise and knowledge of foreign educational systems are concentrated at the ENIC/NARIC centers, which evaluate the credentials and give advice to the different decision-making bodies... in others the ‘recognition information centre’ may be a single ministry employee appointed as a national contact who may have several other duties.” (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.337)

The result of such small-scale ENIC/NARIC centre with limited capacity may be uncoordinated recognition of foreign diplomas, since the central coordinating institution is missing.

The development of the ENIC/NARIC networks therefore affects also the recognition of foreign diplomas within the Czech Republic, since these centers are supposed to provide the Czech HEIs and the Czech ENIC/NARIC centre with information regarding the applicants’ qualifications. Therefore the capacity and functionality of the foreign ENIC/NARIC centers may influence, whether the foreign diplomas are recognized in a

coordinated manner and whether there are reliable sources of information available to the recognizing institutions.

2.3.4 Recognition issues

The primary issue related to recognition of diplomas on international level is how to assess the level of the qualification and to how it can be applied in the foreign country. Rauhvargers concludes, that quality assurance is now largely accepted as a *necessary* precondition for the recognition of individual qualifications (2004, p.340). However, not all HEIs have adequate access to quality assessment and not all outcomes of quality assessment are available to public. Furthermore,

while quality assurance is a *necessary* precondition for the recognition of individual qualifications, it is *not enough* in itself. To position a credential correctly in the education system or labor market of the host country, one need a thorough knowledge of the system that conferred it (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.340)

But how to gain a thorough knowledge of the education system, from which the qualification has been issued? The basic understanding may come from the three-cycle structure, but this provides only information about the level of qualification awarder.

To place a foreign qualification in another country's system, the focus of credential evaluation should be shifted from input characteristics to learning outcomes and competencies earned (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.343)

Rauhvargers further argues that the DS and ECTS are useful for recognition, but they do not provide a description of the qualification's learning outcomes. Instead the ECTS quantify the workload inputs of the qualification and the DS provides too general indication of learning outcomes for its evaluation in terms of application in the host education system (Rauhvargers, 2004, p.343-344).

For full understanding of the learning outcomes of a qualification, a deeper insight into the foreign education system is needed. Furthermore, a common definition of the learning outcomes helps to achieve coordinated understanding on individual levels of qualifications. Defining learning outcomes has, however, been an ongoing process, in which much progress has been made, but further developments are still needed. Three key initiatives can be noted

here, which have attempted to assign learning outcomes to qualifications. The Joint Quality Initiative (<http://www.jointquality.org>) attempts to assign very general learning outcomes to first and second cycle qualification. The Tuning project (<http://odur.let.rug.nl/Tuning-Project/>) attempts a description of learning outcomes according to subjects of the qualifications. The third is the development of national qualification frameworks, which are supposed to include

a precise description of the structure of national qualifications system, indicating the workload, level and learning outcomes of each qualification and the sequence in which the qualifications follow each other (Adam cited in Rauhvargers, 2004, p.344).

Rauhvargers concludes that

we are approaching the limits of what can be done at European or international level. The further success requires involvement of national authorities, and, what is much more difficult to achieve – all levels of higher education staff (2004, p.345).

2.4 Diploma Recognition in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the process of recognition of foreign diplomas is subject to the **Act No. 111/1998**, § 80 and 90 stating that in majority of cases the responsible authority is a Czech public university. However, in cases underlined by international agreements and under special circumstances, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) may become the decisive body.

The CR currently has a **bilateral agreement** on equivalence of educational documents and academic titles (so called “equivalence agreement”) with Slovenia, Hungary, Germany, Poland and Slovakia. Holders of diploma issued in Slovenia, Hungary and Poland may automatically use it within the CR. Holders of diploma from Germany have to request a recognition from the MEYS, which will be automatically issued, if the request has all the prescribed formalities. Those holding a diploma from Slovakia may use it in the Czech Republic, but voluntarily may request recognition from a Czech public university (MEYS website). Therefore the bilateral agreements are generally following the same principle, but with various formal and administrative requisites.

If the CR does not have a bilateral agreement with the country issuing the diploma, the standard **procedure without the equivalence agreement** is followed. The recognition is granted by a public university, which offers an accredited study programme, which is similar in content to the foreign diploma. The MEYS and the ENIC/NARIC center publish a list of public universities and their accredited study programmes on their websites. In case there would be uncertainties regarding, whether there is an adequate university available, the MEYS may decide on which one to appoint or recognize the diploma itself. If the recognition would be rejected, the holder of the diploma may also appeal to the MEYS for reconsideration. Diplomas in the area of security or military are recognized by the appropriate ministries (MŠMT, *Obecný postup bez ekvivalenční dohody*, 2011).

The process of the diploma recognition itself, in case of countries without the equivalence agreement, is initiated by a written request from the graduate of the foreign university, which is sent to the Czech public university's rector's office. The university may then request a further verification of the authenticity of the diploma's signatures and stamps, but this excludes countries that have an agreement with the CR on the legal aid in civic matters including the mutual recognition of documents without the necessity of their further verification. Furthermore, the university may request a **super-legalization**, during which the authenticity of the diploma has to be verified by an authorized institution within the country of origin (for example local ministry of education), ministry of foreign affairs and consulate of the country, in which the diploma is to be used. The process of super-legalization, which is quite complex, does not concern the signatories of the Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement for the Legalization for Foreign Public Documents. Within the signatories of the **Hague Convention** (including the Czech Republic), the super-legalization is replaced by a verification via Apostille, which is granted by a local competent authorities (apostille authorities). This simplifies the process as the signatures and stamps do not have to be verified twice as in the case of super-legalization.

2.4.1 Main actors on the field of Diploma Recognition in the Czech Republic

There are a number of actors taking part in the process of diploma recognition in the Czech Republic. This chapter is outlining the diploma recognition structure under the current legislation and therefore the Czech government, which is a crucial decision-making body in

terms of passing laws, will not be included in the list of actors. Its influence, however, cannot be overlooked, since the government sets the framework and principles within which the diplomas are recognized. For example the adoption of the Lisbon Convention illustrates the extent, to which the decisions on the governmental level affect the every-day practice of recognizing diplomas.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS)

The MEYS has a key decisive role in the field of education and therefore also within the diploma recognition. As outlined above, it serves as the ultimate decision-maker in situations, when uncertainties about the diploma recognition process exist and also those, whose diploma recognition has been rejected, may appeal to the MEYS for reconsideration. It may recognize the diploma, even though it is not equivalent to any accredited study programme in the Czech Republic and grants accreditations and state permissions to study programmes based on the expert opinion of the Accreditation Commission. Therefore it directly influences, which diplomas may be recognized not only by processing recognitions itself but also by managing the list of accredited study programmes, to which the public HEIs compare the foreign diplomas, when assessing possible recognitions.

The MEYS also publishes the list of accredited study programmes, which the holders of the foreign diplomas may search through in order to find a public HEI eligible for recognizing their diploma.

The MEYS influences the process of diploma recognition also by issuing long-term strategic documents and recommendations, which may influence the process of recognizing diplomas on various levels.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

The HEIs are essential for the process of foreign diploma recognition, but the implementation of the BP policies through cooperation of the governmental institutions with the HEIs is quite limited as a result of the transformations of the HE governance, which was introduced in the CR after the “velvet revolution” of 1989. The centrally controlled HEIs have been transformed into autonomous units and the experience of the centrally controlled governance of the HE, renders any state impact on the educational policies of the HEIs quite limited (Šebková & Hendrichová 1995 in Vlk, 2006, p.102). Nevertheless, there are

communication channels between the HEIs and the governmental institutions, which are facilitated by a representation of the HEIs.

The representation of the HEIs, which is embodied in the Council of HEIs and The Czech Rectors Conference, discusses proposals and measures that have a significant impact on higher education institutions with the minister of the MEYS. According to the §92 Act No. 111/1998, the representation of the HEIs also enters the process of diploma recognition by nominating the members of the Accreditation Commission (AC), which are then appointed by the MEYS.

The Council of Higher Education Institutions (The Council of HEIs)

The Council of HEIs is providing viewpoints and recommendations to the MEYS and other institutions in the fields of development, economic security, legal regulation, activities, organization and management of the HEIs and key issues concerning the development, activities and interests of the HEIs, academic staff and students (Art.2, Sec. 1, Status Rady vysokých škol, 2010).

The council consists of two representatives from each HEI within the Czech Republic delegated by the academic senate or representative academic authority of a private HEI, one representative of each of the HEI's departments and two representatives of the students of each HEI – a delegate and an alternative delegate. Within the council the students are associated in a student chamber. All the representatives are appointed for a three year period but have to be members of the academic institution, otherwise their representation will be withheld (Art. IV, Sec. 1. ,Statut Rady vysokých škol, 2010).

The Czech Rectors Conference (CRC)

The CRC was established in 1993 and is the association of representatives of the public, state and private HEIs in the CR and ensures their coordinated activities in the main areas concerning the development of education, science, research and creativity (Statut České konference rektorů, 2008). The CRC represents the interests of the Czech HEIs in negotiations with the governmental and non-governmental institutions within and outside of the CR. Within the nation it primarily cooperates with the MEYS and the Council of HEIs but it also works with the foreign rectors' conferences, international organizations and especially with the European University Association (Statut České konference rektorů, 2008).

Accreditation Commission (AC)

Another important agent in the field of diploma recognition is the AC. As set in the Article 1 of the Statute of the Accreditation Commission (2004), the AC “takes care of the quality of higher education and performs comprehensive evaluation of educational, scholarly, research, developmental, artistic or other creative activity of higher education institutions”. This also includes evaluation for the purposes of granting accreditation to higher education study programmes and their extensions. According to the Article no. 79 Act No. 111/1998, the requests of the HEIs for accreditation of their study programmes are submitted to the MEYS, who assigns the evaluation to the AC. The decision of the MEYS is then based on the

standpoint of the AC and a similar procedure is followed when extending the accreditation of a study programme. Therefore the AC is the key agent influencing the count and nature of accredited study programmes in the CR. As outlined above, the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR proceeds by comparing the diploma to a Czech accredited programme and therefore the evaluations of the AC may influence the type of foreign diplomas, which will be recognized within the CR.

Since 2001 the Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic is a member of ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), which ensures that the Accreditation Commission follows the best practice examples and a framework of reference common with the other Bologna countries. Furthermore, the Czech Republic is one of the founders of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEEN), which aims at establishing a deeper discussion and knowledge about the quality assurance in the region (National Report, 2003, p.9).

Centre for Higher Education Studies (CSVŠ)

The main agents of the implementation of the Lisbon Convention are the ENIC and NARIC networks. Within the Czech Republic, the function of the ENIC/NARIC centre is provided by the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CSVŠ), which provides information on diploma recognition to the HEIs as well as the students, publishes the list of the Czech HEIs and the accredited study programmes. The representative of the centre is also actively taking part in the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments as a member of the Bologna Experts group.

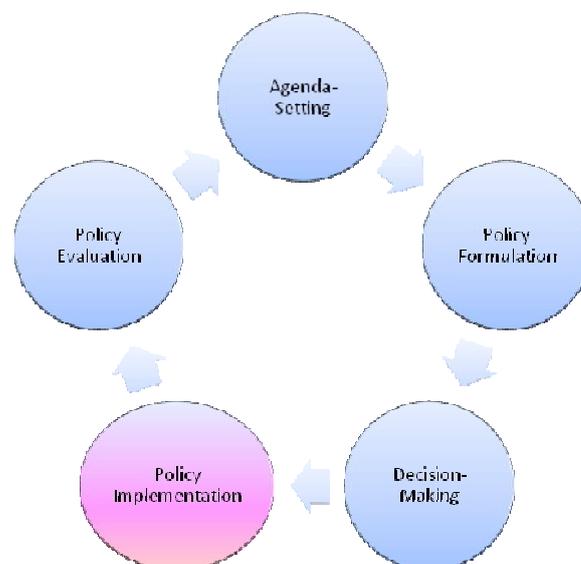
3. Theoretical background

3.1 *What is implementation?*

For the investigation of the implementation of the foreign diploma recognition instruments of the Bologna Process, the key theoretical background will be provided by the theories of policy implementation. Adopting the definition of implementation by Van Mater and Van Horn,

policy implementation encompasses those actions by public and private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions (1975, p.447).

This study stems from the policy cycle perception of the policy process, which maintains that the policy process has key stages, that may be identified and that continuously follow from each other and interact. The policy cycle perception is based on the systemic model developed by Easton, in which the policy process is compared to an organic system, which includes stages that need to be balanced in order for the system to continue its functioning. This model has been developed further by Howlett and Ramesh (2009) (see below), who emphasize the element of continuous learning in the policy process.



Source: Howlett and Ramesh, 2009, p.13

The model

facilitates an understanding of multi-dimensional process by disaggregating the complexity of the process into any number of stages and sub-stages, each of which can be investigated alone or in terms of its relationship (Howlett and Ramesh 2009, p.13).

This separation of the policy process into stages has been criticized for example by Sabatier (2007) for it might be quite artificial to separate the policy formulation from the implementation since the two may intertwine. For example, as the policy is implemented, decisions are continuously made in reaction to arising implementation problems and to developments in the policy itself (Sabatier in Paterová et al. 2007, p.313). Furthermore, implementation of a programme may become an end in itself, since in terms of continuous negotiations stemming from the implementation, the end of the implementation stage may never be reached. However, separating the implementation stage is useful for the purposes of analysis, because it allows the analyst to focus on specific stage of the policy process and may stimulate further ideas (Howlett and Ramesh 2009, Paterová et al. 2007). For this reason this study adopts the policy cycle approach to the policy process, which distinguishes the implementation as a specific area of study.

The implementation may be divided into individual stages, which are illustrated by the diagram below. According to Paterová et. al. (2007), each stage is associated with different tasks to be performed. The conditions within each stage may influence the potential for success in the following stages and therefore the investigation of the past stages may advise the successive implementation procedures. Reflecting on the problems within one stage can also help to avoid complications, as the implementation progresses.

The first stage is a pre-requisite for the implementation process – adoption of the policy. At this stage, as Paterová et. al. (2007) argue the key to success is the consensus and support of the political actors with authority. The goals should also be carefully formulated and allow clear monitoring. At this stage, the implementator responsible for the implementation is appointed.

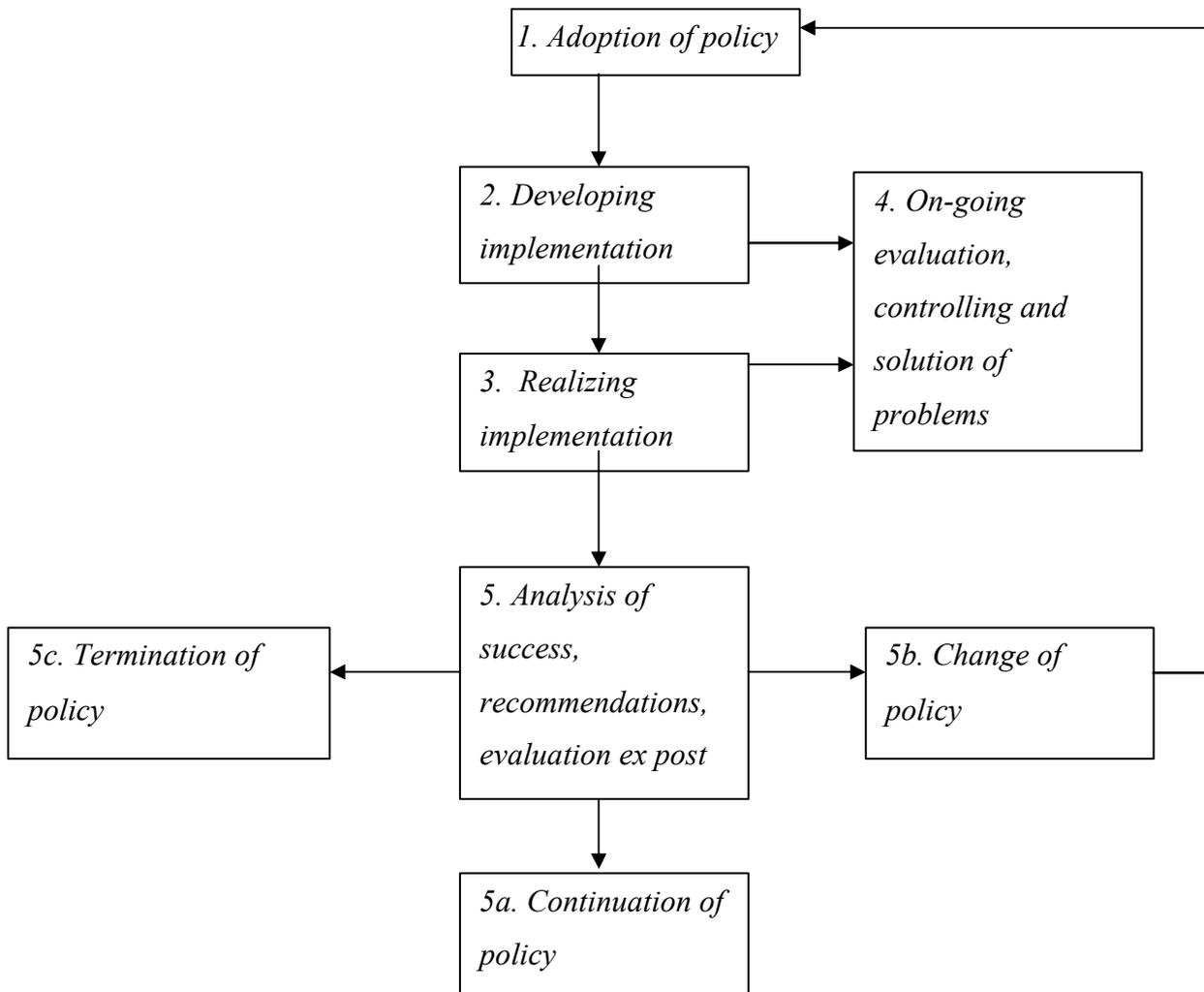
From this the development of the implementation plan follows as the second stage, in which the implementator creates a “roadmap” to the implementation process. According to

Paterová et. al. (2007, p. 322) at this stage the implementator should analyze the critical factors of the implementation and recommend solutions via scenarios.

During the third stage, the realizing of the implementation plan, the implementator delegates specific tasks to individual bodies, which are also granted authority to put these into practice. As Paterová et. al (2007, p.322) argue, the selection of the implementing bodies is the key to successful implementation and should especially evaluate the motivation of the individuals.

The fourth stage contains evaluation of the on-going process. The implementator should stay informed about the progress and the implementing bodies should compare the reality with the “roadmap” and identify differences, about which the implementator should be informed Paterová et. al (2007, p.323).

In the last stage of the implementation, the success of the process is analyzed and possible recommendations for future are devised. The implementation should be evaluated according to its efficiency and provide the policy-makers with background information regarding, whether continue with the policy, change it or terminate it Paterová et. al (2007, p.323).

Stages of the policy implementation process

Source: Paterová et.al. 2007, p. 322

3.2 How to study implementation?

3.2.1 Top-down approach

There are a number of approaches to the study of the implementation. From the 1970s the study of the implementation developed with a *top-down* approach, which understands the implementation as rationally directed from the “top“, as a policy established from the centre via official documents (Hill and Hupe 2002 in Paterová et al. 2007, p.325). The key actors are the policy decision-makers who set the policy objectives. The task for the analyst is then to examine, how the objectives are reached and what may act as a barrier. According to Winkler (2002, p.68) the researcher begins the analysis by focusing on the documents formulating the policy and then attempts answering the following questions:

- To what extent were the activities of the implementing officials consistent with the goals and procedures set by the policy-makers at the central level?
- To what extent were the planned goals reached? In other words, to what extent were the outcomes and outputs of the programme consistent with these goals?
- What were the key factors, which have influenced the outcomes and outputs of the programme? The subjects of the investigation are both the factors influencing the implementation of the official programme as well as the factors and conditions affecting the unexpected and unplanned outcomes of the programme.
- How was the programme managed based on the concurrent experiences with the implementation?

The top-down approach has been criticized since the policy objectives are not always clear and when set by the top bureaucrats, may not reflect the interests of the lower levels, which are implementing the policy in practice. As a consequence the consensus for reaching the goals may be missing and the rate of its achievement is difficult to evaluate (Paterová, 2007, p. 316). Since the second half of the 1970s, there has also been a growing number of studies illustrating that local actors on the operational level of the implementation may suppress the centrally planned goals and enforce their own interests when it comes to the implementation (Winkler, 2002, p. 68).

3.2.2 Bottom-up approach

Since approximately the 1970s, A *bottom-up* approach has developed as a reaction to these shortcomings. It admits a greater autonomy to the street-level administration, which may influence the outcomes of the policy implementation or even hamper the implementation process (Lipsky in Potůček et al.2005, p.43). When following this approach, the analyst focuses on the interests, norms and motivations of the various street-level bureaucrats. According to Birkland, the bottom-up approach assumes the possibility of not clearly stated or conflicting goals. Therefore it perceives the implementation as a process occurring within a network of actors rather than a strictly specified process within a bureaucratic structure (Birkland in Paterová, 2002, p. 316).

Winkler (2002) finds a number of advantages of the bottom-up approach compared to the top-down variant while studying the approach of Benny Hjern and his colleagues. According to Winkler, the bottom-up approach has developed an explicit and repeatable methodology of identifying a network of programme actors, the so called “implementation structure”. This approach also begins the analysis with studying the strategies and solutions devised for resolving problems perceived by individual actors and therefore reflects the variability of governmental programmes, which is caused by the participation of private actors and economic forces in the problem solving process. The third advantage of the bottom-up approach lies, according to Winkler, in its ability to investigate unintentional effects of the governmental and private programmes (2002, p.72). The bottom-up approach can also investigate a specific field of policy, in which a number of programmes are taking place. In the case of the top-down approach, investigating such policies is problematic. Finally, by focusing on the strategies of a number of policy actors, the researchers following the bottom-up approach reflect well on the change in the strategic interaction of the political actors (Winkler, 2002, p. 72).

The *bottom-up* approach has also been criticized for it may overestimate the influence and power of the street-level administration and by focusing on the participants of the policy programme has shortcomings in investigating the external factors that influence the participants’ behavior Sabatier (1986).

3.2.3 Usefulness of top-down and bottom-up approaches

Although both approaches have been criticized, authors such as Birkland (2001) maintain that there are cases, in which either one may become useful. According to Birkland,

the top-down approach is suitable when there is one dominant programme, which is to be analyzed or when the researcher has too limited resources for an extensive analysis of the implementation structures, the actors and interests, which have influenced the implementation. On the contrary, when the researcher is focusing on multiple programmes, the local dimension as well as the overall dynamics of the implementation, the bottom-up approach is more suitable (Birkland, 2001, p.184). As Winkler (2002, p. 73) emphasizes, Sabatier has empirically verified that according to the political context and the conditions, in which the political processes are taking place, either one approach may become more useful.

According to Sabatier, the either one approach can be used, when all of the conditions he describes are met. In cases, when they are met only partially, the methodology should be chosen according to the focus of the researcher and the extent, to which one is interested in the average or the interlocal variability. Winkler argues, however, that this approach is limited, since the choice of the methodology depends on the outcomes of the analysis and the socio-political context of the public programme under investigation (2002, p. 74). According to Winkler, Sabatier has pointed out this shortcoming as well and this has led him to developing a synthesis of both approaches, which would avoid this methodological deficiency (2002, p. 74).

3.2.4 Syntheses of both approaches

In reaction to the criticism towards the top-down and bottom-up approaches some authors have developed a synthesis of the two perceptions. As Winkler outlines, Sabatier has developed in his work from a top-down approach to attempting a synthesis of both approaches. In his earlier work, Sabatier adopted a top-down approach by including aspects of a theory of management in his conception of the study of implementation. His six critical factors to be considered for successful implementation include both factors associated with the management of the implementation and external “objective factors”, which the managers of the implementation cannot influence (Winkler, 2002, p. 75). In other words, Winkler emphasizes the importance of specific external environment and a strong implementation culture oriented towards the goals of the public programme as the key to successful implementation in the earlier work of Sabatier (2002, p.76). The lack of specificity of the environment and a weak implementation culture provide the managers with too much of freedom, which tends to result in inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the decision-making. The

empirical evidence has, however, shown the complexity and dynamics of the external environment.

Together with the generally weak implementation culture, the approach including the aspects of the theory of management cannot be applied when studying a number of public programmes (Winkler, 2002, p.76). This has led Sabatier (1986) to apply his *Advocacy Coalition Framework* (ACF) to the study of implementation. The bottom-up approach provides an overview of the public and private actors associated with the solution to a given problem. The top-down approach provides a simplified abstract model of the complex system including the structural characteristics of the policy. In this new approach, Sabatier attempts to combine the rationalistic approach with a normative aspects (values) determining the implementation behavior. The ACF approach, however, distinguishes between mature and immature policy subsystems and limits its analytical contribution only to the study of mature subsystems. In such, the participants of the policy process hold strong beliefs, which are very stable and make major policy change very difficult. Ultimately, the ACF is interested in policy change over a decade or more, since this is perceived as the timeframe for developing the coalitions within the subsystems (Sabatier, 2007, p. 192).

Other synthesis was developed by Jan-Eric Lane (1987). He argues that the structure of the implementation is determined by its social organization and its cultural context. The internal organization of the programme is consisting of people, who are dependent on a variety of social and cultural contexts and interpret the programme goals and instruments in different ways. This way they modify the outcomes of the programme. The organization structures then determine which people influence the progress and outcomes of the implementation (Winkler, 2002, p. 82).

Lane emphasizes two key variables for the study of implementation – the responsibilities within the organization structure and trust. The responsibilities of the individual politicians, administrators and professionals for completing the implementation and reaching the desired state can be associated with the top-down approach. The second aspect is the level of trust, which the implementators have received. This is demonstrated by the autonomy they have when deciding among alternative instruments to be employed for reaching the goals (can be associated with the bottom-up approach) (Lane, 1987). In Lane's view, the top-down and bottom-up approaches are useful for the theory of the implementation, but are rather basic theoretical models, between which there is no clear dividing line. By combining their aspects, the researcher can obtain a useful tool for

describing individual typical empirical states of the implementation (Winkler, 2002, p.80). Lane has outlined nine different approaches to implementation, which can be adopted according to the nature of the programme and its conditions. These are listed below:

1. Implementation as a complete administration of the goals
2. Implementation as a management of a political programme
3. Implementation as an organizational development of a programme
4. Implementation as a process of learning programme procedures
5. Implementation as activities of informal implementation structures
6. Implementation as programme outcomes
7. Implementation as a perception to approaching a programme
8. Implementation as a political symbol
9. Implementation as a negotiation tool of programme coalitions

(Winkler, 2002, p. 80-81)

Winkler (2002) has adopted Lane's distinctions between the top-down and the bottom-up approaches as a core of the discussions regarding the analytical approach to the study of implementation and set it in a wider context. According to Winkler the construction of the links between the responsibilities and trust answers a basic question of how to reach a stability of the performance of officials and administration based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allow a flexibility of the organizational system, which includes individuals reacting to changes in the programme environment (2002, p. 85). In other words, there has to be a certain balance between the responsibilities and trust, which would give the administrators a certain level of flexibility when interpreting the programme rules in specific situations.

As Winkler argues, the level of responsibility of an individual towards the shared norms of the common action of the society and the level of trust one receives to make decisions independently of commonly shared rules outline three basic models of interaction: hierarchy, market and community (2002, p. 86). This basic organizations of a collective life is influenced by what many call an *organizational context*, which includes factors such as the character of the organized activity, complexity of goals and tasks of the collective activity, character and diversity of the individuals organizing the activity, time and space frames of the activity or communication technologies allowing interaction between the individuals (Winkler, 2002, p.86).

Organizational culture of public programmes

The organizational context, however, only determines that institutionalized rules will form within the organizational relationships. It is formal and informal set of rules, which determines the structure of the responsibilities and trust within the organizational relationships (Winkler, 2002, p.86). Winkler calls this set of rules as *organizational culture of public programmes*.

The constructions of the links of responsibilities and trust are made within institutionalized forms of interactions, which have been developed by the society over time. These interactions differ according to the emphasis on the responsibilities of the individuals towards the values and norms of the social action and according to different levels of trust, which the individuals obtain to conduct certain part of the activities independently of the commonly shared rules.

For the purposes of analysis, Winkler divides the organizational culture between institutionalized commonly shared rules and organizational procedures and between specific programme situations and interactions, in which the individuals interpret and redefine the more or less institutionalized rules (Winkler, 2002, p.87). Winkler calls these two dimensions of the organizational culture as *cultural models of interaction* and *social organization* of the programme (Winkler, 2002, p.87).

Winkler has presented a count of five cultural models of interaction, which illustrate various structures of responsibilities of the individuals towards the organizational rules and a level of institutionalized trust in individual behavior of the programme actors (Winkler, 2002, p.102). Also, the models vary according to the flexibility of the organizational behavior, which they regulate.

Within the social organization, the individuals interpret and reinterpret the meaning of the programme goals, values and norms in relation to the situational context. They create networks of mutually connected expectations, which determine their behavior (Winkler, 2002, p.87). As Winkler further points out, this distinction largely reflects the split between structuralistic and agent-based approach to the organizational theory. For Winkler, the empirical research may be conducted from either one perspective depending on the structures, which the researcher wishes to focus on. The structuralistic perspective describes relatively stable structures of interconnected rules of the implementation while the agency perspective finds the cultural rules as forming within the meaningful action of individuals (Winkler, 2002, p.90).

3.3 Normative aspects of organizational culture

When evaluating the implementation, comparing the actual state with the desired outcome might seem as a logic step. However, this does not provide full information regarding the effectiveness of the implementation process. Furthermore, an evaluation of an on-going implementation process also requires complex evaluation tools that allow the analysis of the implementation procedures. For this reason, however, a normative model of the implementation has to be adopted. The theories of implementation provide normative models, which can be utilized for this cause.

Paterová et. al. (2007, p. 324) outline, that even in this area the split between top-down and bottom-up approaches can be found. Those adopting the top-down approach tend to emphasize the importance of the change of the thinking of the elites, while those adopting the bottom-up approach focus on the organizations in the first line and their workers (Paterová et. al., 2007, p. 324).

Following Lane's argument, the top-down and bottom-up approaches may be taken as theoretical basis for developing a synthesis, which is more relevant for an empirical study of a programme. In his approach there are a number of social organizational structures that may lead to effective implementation. In other words, there is a variety of combinations of the responsibilities and trust, which may lead to reaching the goals of the implementation. The responsibility structure is set up by directive instruments, but requires participation of a variety of actors to ensure a sense of trust in the organizational structure. Negotiation of compromises is a necessary step in assuring a balance between directive management and lower-level implementors and the model of never-ending process of learning should be incorporated to reflect changes within the policy field.

3.3.1 Cultural models of implementation

Winkler elaborates the work of R.E. Elmore, who has outlined four types of cultural models of implementation by distinguishing between their normative and positive aspects and by adding another type of model. Winkler therefore presents a count of five cultural models of implementation. These models include both normative and positive aspects, but most importantly mechanisms and rationale, through which an effective implementation is to be reached. Each model is to be employed when assumptions regarding the programme area and environment are fulfilled and therefore the models may help to identify, whether the

organization of the implementation adopted by a programme suits the programme conditions or whether a different model would, according to Lane and Winkler, be more efficient. The normative models also suggests areas, which play the most important role in achieving the successful implementation in a given programme conditions and therefore, each model also helps to identify ways, how to develop efficient institutionalized rules of the implementation.

The first model is conceptualizing the *implementation as bureaucratic administration* and is based on work of Weber. The administrators are expected to work according to prescribed procedures at a standard rate and their own initiative is highly reduced to a routine type of work (Winkler, 2002, p.82). Specialization within the organization leads to breaking down the activities, which requires significant level of central planning, since the administrators at the lower levels focus on a narrow area of the organization's action. This higher level of the organization's management therefore must possess a significant level of authority. This is also illustrated by the need of the organizational goals to be perceived by the lower levels of the administration as rational and sensible. The result of such organizational structure is a stable and mechanical implementation of the goals (Winkler, 2002, p. 92). As Winkler argues, the dominant attribute of such organization lies in its resistance to change, since the inferior units perform the same work in the same way until they are somehow forced to change their procedures (2002, p.92).

The second cultural model is the *implementation as a management of a programme system*. This model is largely reflecting a corporate culture with a focus on the output, effectiveness and reaching the goals via behavior maximizing the purpose (Winkler, 2002, p.93). This model provides the inferior levels with a greater autonomy than in the bureaucratic conception of the implementation, since the superior levels are supposed to delegate decisive power. In this way the organization is supposed to search for an "optimal mix" of hierarchical control and a freedom of decision-making at the lower levels, which is supposed to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of the organization's action. This optimization, however, considers searching for optimal solutions to minor problems rather than delegating the responsibility for the general goals of the organization. Winkler points out that for this reason Hitch and McKean call this process a 'suboptimization'. As Winkler further outlines, the main criterion of successful delegation of the responsibilities and trust are outcomes, which are consistent with the general goal of the organization. This way there may be a space for a certain level of autonomy in choosing the instruments for reaching these outcomes (2002, p.93). Therefore, the superior level within the organization is mainly supposed to foresee

problems at the lower levels and prepare these to tackle such problems in a standard way. Within the organization, the control mechanisms are supposed to work in two ways: Firstly, created rules and expectations should standardize the rational decision-making of the lower levels (rational regulation of behavior). Secondly, through socialization of the members of the organization, the individuals are supposed to learn to place the requirements of their formal roles above their own requests. Winkler further outlines four basic assumptions, which according to this model are prerequisites for effective implementation:

1. Clearly specified tasks and indicators, which reflect the aims of the programme
2. Plan of the management, which allocates tasks and standards of the output to the lower-level units
3. Objective methods of monitoring output of the lower-level units
4. System of controlling mechanisms and social sanctions sufficient for ensuring responsibilities of the inferiors for their outcomes (Winkler, 2002, p.94)

The analyst is then supposed to focus on the clarity, complexity and rationality of the initial programme, the technical capacity of the implementation and the extent of the change of the organization outcomes after the introduction of the innovation (Winkler, 2002, p.94).

The third model conceptualizes the *implementation as a professional intervention of a programme*. This model is emphasizing the authority of the professional experts, who provide services to clients that have to trust their intervention based on their expertise (Winkler, 2002, p.95). An example of such implementation, as Winkler outlines, may be a help to drug-addicted or medical programmes. The professionals possess a relatively high level of freedom of decision-making, since their clients cannot provide a control mechanism. The key control aspect lies in the professional culture, which includes norms, values and sanctions for breaching the professional conduct. As Winkler argues, this internal control mechanism assures cohesiveness and loyalty within the professionals. The professionals, however, depend on the clients' requests of their services and for this reason the professionals must seek consensus with the clients when making decisions. Winkler argues that for this reason the model of implementation as a professional intervention of a programme contains a cultural contradiction. The professionals possess the freedom to make expert decisions, but at the same time they have to make sure that these are in consensus with the clients' perception, which limits their decision-making space (Winkler, 2002, p. 96).

The fourth model is the *implementation as an organizational development of a programme* and emphasizes the importance of the interpersonal relationships in working

groups. These influence the effectiveness of the organization, since the interpersonal relationships influence the cohesiveness of the organization members. Responsible behavior is then a natural outcome of such cohesive environment, because the members act according to the expectations of the others and their trust in others is based on mutually responsible behavior. As Winkler outlines, according to this model an effective organization requires:

1. Majority of the responsibility for the decision-making is delegated to the lower-levels of the organization
2. The focal point of the organizational activity consists of a working group of people focused on a common task
3. Information regarding evaluation and requests for changes is exchanged without negative social consequences on all the levels of the organization (Winkler, 2002, p.98).

The success of the implementation is therefore in this perception ensured by a greater participation of the implementation administrators on the formulation of the programme, a greater support of the individuals' judgment and an emphasis on the development of cohesive working groups (Winkler, 2002, p.98). In this model there is a lower importance of the top levels of organization, since the capacities to implement programme are expected to lie at the operational level of the organization. In this sense this model emphasizes the bottom-up approach to the implementation, rather than the top-down, of which the elements could be found in the previous models. The conception of the implementation as an organizational development emphasized consensus and adjustment among the programme creators and implementation workers. As Winkler argues, this is not a matter of democratic principles, but a mere necessity to achieve effectiveness, since the implementation workers are assumed to perform their jobs effectively only when they can translate their own personal interests and judgments into their work (2002, p. 99). Winkler, however, further points out the shortcoming of this model, which lies in its inability to conceptualize politics and a struggle for power (2002, p.99).

The last, fifth, model is the implementation *as a conflict and negotiation of programme actors*. In this perception, the implementation is stemming from a number of actors trying to promote their own interests and can be characterized by a constant conflict (Winkler, 2002, p.100). The variance in interests of the actors leads to a number of interpretations of the outcomes of the implementation. The position of the actors in the process of negotiations may influence, whether they interpret the implementation process as

positive or negative development. However, being part of the negotiation process is a basic need of the actors, since the exclusion would lead to their loss of potential power and therefore, the conflict and variety of interpretations are underlined by a mutual dependency of the actors on each other. As Winkler points out, the dynamics of the negotiation process are an essential tool of the implementation, which in this perception never reaches an optimal point but rather a temporarily suitable consensus among the competing actors (2002, p.101). Following this perception, the structure of the organization is not seen in its hierarchy or technological routines but rather in its negotiation processes that over time lead to a certain level of stability. Winkler identifies also a shortcoming of this perception, which lies in its inability to develop an objective definition of either success or failure of the implementation, since all normative judgments are assumed to only present relative advantages or disadvantages in the negotiation process (2002, p.102). In other words, the focus on the negotiation processes and the variety of interpretations does not allow any preference of values and adds relativism into the evaluation of the implementation process.

3.3.2 Social organization

The second aspect of the organizational culture of public programmes consists, according to Winkler, of the individuals interpreting the meaning of the programme goals, values and norms in specific situations (2002, p.87). This is what Winkler calls social organization of the implementation process. Winkler argues that in specific programme situations not all interactions and behavior of the actors may be explained by one of the cultural models of interaction. Most probably, a number of the models of the cultural regulation will act at the same time, intertwine, collide and result in conflicts, which will lead to redefinitions of these institutionalized rules by the individual programme workers (Winkler, 2002, p.105).

Within the social organization of the implementation, the researcher may focus on formal or informal networks of interactions. Following the formal networks may be perceived as rather structuralist approach since these form within institutionalized rules. The informal networks, however, form across a variety of organizations and the actors do not have to be in direct relationships influenced by institutionalized rules. Therefore these networks are influenced by the initiative of individual actors and their study follows a rather agency-based approach. As in the previous sections, the emphasis will be placed on the synthesis of both

approaches, which will provide a complex picture of the social organization of the implementation process.

Nevertheless, the theoretical background for investigating the social organization of the implementation process will be provided by Hjern and Porter (1981) and Winkler (2002). Hjern and Porter (1981) emphasize the informal networks of interactions between the actors of the implementation process and Winkler summarizes the main shortcomings of this approach. By utilizing the work of these authors a synthesis of the structural and agency perceptions will be adopted to study the social organization.

Implementation and organization structures

Hjern and Porter discuss the units of the analysis of the implementation. They propose an administrative theory with ‘implementation structures’ as the core units of analysis, in which the implementation structures are defined as “interconnected clusters of firms, governments, and associations which come together within the framework of a programme” (Hjern and Porter, 1981, p.213). Hjern and Porter emphasize that the rapid increase in the number of organizations has led the social structure to develop into an ‘organizational society’, in which many important services are provided through multi-organizational programmes. In this setting, the traditional approaches to the study of programme implementation, which included public administration and political economy, became obsolete. The public administration focusing on a comprehensive hierarchy does not account for the growing number of autonomous and semiautonomous actors. The political economy fails to encompass the planning and steering function of the bureaucracy. (Hjern and Porter, 1981) Furthermore, Hjern and Porter argue that

programmes are neither implemented by the invisible hand of markets nor with the heavy hand of large government bureaucracies. Programmes are implemented through multiorganizational clusters of organizations, some of which are part of markets and others of government bureaucracies. (1981, p.213)

For this reason, Hjern and Porter maintain that implementation structures should be adopted as the core units of analysis, when studying the implementation process.

They contrast the implementation structures with organizational structures, which follow a different rationale. Within organizational structures, according to Hjern and Porter,

institutional structure (2002, p.110). His third criticism is directed towards Hjern and Porter's lack of theoretical arguments for the distinction between the implementation structures of public programmes and the internal relationships within the formal organizations (2002, p.111). As Winkler summarizes, in his perception an analytical framework of implementation structures, which does not include the area of relationships and interactions within the organizations is incomplete (2002, p.111).

Winkler provides valid arguments emphasizing the low potential of the implementation structures as the core units of analysis across a variety of public programmes. The emphasis of the interpersonal relationships may lead to overlooking important formal structures. In this study, however, the implementation structures will be utilized as one part of the analysis of the social organization of the implementation process. They will, however, not be a priori prioritized to organizational structures, but these will provide a second part of the analysis of the social organization of the implementation process. In other words, the matrix relationship between organizational and programme rationales will help to analyze the specific interactions of the actors of the implementation process and identify the competing roles and rationales they are following. The question of whether the implementation structure or the organization structure dominates the actions of the relevant actors is open and this study will try to answer it for its specific field of focus.

3.4 The implementation theories and the Bologna Process

3.4.1 Bologna Process within the policy cycle

In the case of the Bologna Process, the formulation stage of the policy cycle is occurring partially on a supranational level and on the national level. The general strategies are formulated by the ministerial conferences on a supranational level, but the specific instruments are selected on a national level. Therefore this study has to focus both on the national and supranational documents and strategies, but to specify its scope, the supranational strategies will be considered only in cases where they directly relate to the diploma recognition policies within the CR.

Within the stages of the policy implementation process (see diagram above), the adoption of the diploma recognition instruments may be viewed as oscillating between the stages 2, 3 and 4. In other words, the implementation plan has been developed and is being carried out. The ministerial conferences, which are held bi-annually, request monitoring and therefore under this stimulus the implementation of the BP instruments within the field of the diploma recognition is evaluated on an on-going basis and solutions to upcoming problems are devised. The implementation of the BP instruments within the field of foreign diploma recognition does not, however, have a clear boundary of when should the policy be terminated and evaluated ex post and therefore one may expect the oscillation between the stages 2, 3 and 4 of the policy implementation process to continue for an extended period of time.

3.4.2 Bologna Process and the various approaches to the study of implementation

In this study, both the top-down and bottom-up approaches have been presented as valuable perceptions to the study of the implementation process. However, the programme under investigation may make either approach preferable. Furthermore, the syntheses have been presented to illustrate the flexibility of the two distinctive approaches and how they may rather be taken as two poles of a spectrum.

According to Sabatier (1986), the top-down approach has a comparative advantage in cases when:

- There is a one dominant public programme in the policy area under investigation

- There is a lower number of participants entering the public programme with asymmetric power
- There is a legislation, which clearly structures situations of the public programmes
- The resources for the analysis are limited and the researchers are rather interested in the average outcomes than the regional and local variances of the programmes
- The goal of the analysis is to investigate the “exclusive effectiveness of the programme” as such

The dominance of the Bologna Process as a programme within the setting of the Czech higher education is questionable, but there are definitely not a lower number of participants entering the public programme with asymmetric power. The participants are the higher education institutions, which possess a relative autonomy in formulating their internal policies. Also, there is no legislation, which would clearly structure the situations of the programme, since the diploma recognition procedures are highly dependent on the potentially subjective review of the HEI and the use of the BP instruments is also not clearly prescribed by binding regulations. Therefore the use of the top-down approach for the analysis of the Bologna Process instruments would not yield valid information and would not meet the goal of this study, which is not specifying only on the effectiveness of the programme as such, but rather the implementation process.

According to Sabatier (1986), the bottom-up approach has a comparative advantage to the top-down approach in cases when:

- There is a number of relatively independent political actors participating in the implementation of the programme or programmes within one field
- There is no clear legislation underpinning the investigated programme
- The researchers are interested in interlocal variance of the implementation including the identification of unintentional effects of the programme (Sabatier, 1986)

As stated above, there are a number of relatively independent political actors participating in the implementation of the BP instruments within the higher education in the CR and there is no clear legislation underpinning the investigated programme. However, the aim of this study is not to investigate the interlocal variance of the implementation but rather to study the structure of the implementation process on a national average. The bottom-up approach would therefore provide too local information, which would limit the potential for generalizations.

Therefore both the top-down and bottom-up approaches have significant shortcomings for the study of the implementation of Bologna Process instruments. The presented syntheses therefore will be considered.

The synthesis provided by Sabatier, which is focusing on the advocacy coalitions, is not suitable for the study of the Bologna Process, since the process it is just finishing its first decade of existence. Although one might identify developing coalitions within the field of the Bologna Process, these are quite immature, since the instruments of the BP are developed gradually and the nature of the process has been changing dramatically during the decade. Identifying a structure of core beliefs of the actors would, therefore, at this point be significantly superficial.

An alternative approach was presented by Lane (1987) and elaborated by Winkler (2002). They emphasize the responsibilities within the organization structures and the trust to combine both the top-down and bottom-up approach. Furthermore, when considering the list of approaches, which may be adopted according to Lane (1987), the study of the implementation of the BP may fall between two categories. Firstly, the BP itself has been gradually changing its organizational structure towards greater bureaucratization. This has been accompanied by a widening spectrum of primary goals and therefore by a growing number of implementing bodies taking part in the process. Therefore the process may be perceived as a process of organizational development of a programme (number 4 in Lane's list). The implementation of the BP instruments in the Czech Republic is, however, also reflecting on any problems arising as the implementation progresses. On both the supranational and the national levels the decision-makers react to changing conditions within the global education "market" and the national needs, which are changing within this context. On the supranational level, the existence of the BP itself is a reaction to a change in the global context, in which the mobility of the need for a mobility and attractiveness of the education has grown. Trends associated with globalization have raised the need for competitiveness of education institutions and the countries of the BP are reflecting these changes by organizing a common effort to establish their position on the global market for education. Furthermore, within the national level, the decision-makers have to respond to any commitments made on the supranational level and translate these into their national context. For majority of countries this entails creating new institutions, developing new strategies and communicating with the functioning structures within the higher education to ensure that the supranational goals are not perceived as a remote strategy detached from the local needs. In this sense the

implementation of the BP instruments may also be perceived as a process of learning programme procedures (number 5 on Lane's list).

Nevertheless, Lane's list of perceptions to the study of the implementation is based on different focus on either the responsibility or trust structures. Therefore this approach provides significant flexibility, which allows investigation of the BP instruments from a number of standpoints. Furthermore, the distinction between cultural models of interaction and social construction helps to analyze both the modeled interactions and real-life everyday situations. The models are partially formed on the supranational level and therefore, in the case of the BP instruments especially, the correspondence between the cultural models of interaction and the specific social construction of the situations will help to understand, how the Czech setting interprets the model of interactions formulated at the supranational level.

The cultural models of interaction provide a structure of the responsibilities and trust, which conceptualizes the positive and normative aspects of the implementation process. These may, therefore, be used to analyze, whether the gathered data reflect one model, whether the actors on both the national and supranational level follow the same model or in what areas the models diverge.

The social constructions of the interactions, on the contrary, help to analyze the Czech setting by focusing on the implementation and organization structures. The multiorganizational structure of the implementation process of the BP instruments might be perceived as a matrix with the actors participating within both the implementation and organization structures. The study will therefore analyze both the formal and informal relationships between the actors and the bonds they have to either an implementation or organization structure. A key question to be answered in this area is, what are the priorities of the relevant actors – whether they follow the organizational rationale of those organizations they are members in or whether they make compromises, which would incorporate both the programme and organization rationale

Hjern and Porter outline the methodology, which should be employed when studying the implementation structures. The first step should include analyzing 'administrative imperatives' behind the legislation authorizing a programme (1981, p. 214). Analysis of the legislation, should allow the researcher to develop a 'pool of organizations', which will *potentially* be involved in the implementation. This pool represents a raw material, from which the implementation structure is formed. The subsequent analysis should significantly rely on empirical research, which adopts phenomenological approach. In other words, each

implementation structure is unique and should be assessed as such. The information about the implementation structure may often be gathered only from the participants themselves, since the structure is formed on a self-selection basis, is generally not legally defined and is largely informal. Since, however, this study focuses on the organizational structures as well this has to be accompanied by analyzing the organizational rationale by identifying, what priorities are competing within the organization and what portion of its activity is directed towards the programme goal.

4. Conceptual and Research Framework

The key research question outlined in the introduction asks: What can we learn about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR? In order to answer this question in a systematic manner a research framework has to be developed. According to Creswell, a research framework includes

philosophical assumptions about what constitutes *knowledge claims*; general procedures of research called *strategies of inquiry*; and detailed procedures of data collection, analysis, and writing called *methods* (2003, p.3).

Every study is underlined by intrinsic perceptions of the researcher. The researcher makes claims about what is knowledge (*knowledge claims*), how to go about finding it out (*strategies of enquiry*) and how to study and analyze it (*methods or more broadly methodology*). The first two aspects constitute ontology and epistemology and influence, what information is the researcher actually searching for and what sources he or she finds valid. Methods and methodology outline, what specific steps will the researcher make in order to reach the valid sources of information and gather the relevant data.

4.1 Knowledge Claims

The author adopts a social constructivist approach. The phenomena are perceived as possessing subjective meanings, which are negotiated socially and historically. Therefore, the author argues that in searching for knowledge there cannot be any uncovering of the ‘real truth’, which would be independent of the social influence. She, however, does not claim that one cannot reach any valid conclusions based on systematic research. However, the author maintains that any conclusions should be contextualized, since contextualization consists of one of the key elements distinguishing the research in social sciences from research in natural ones.

This study therefore also rejects the notion, that research within the social sciences can be as objective as research in natural sciences. As Hollis (1994, p. 45) argues, quantitative

purists aim at minimizing the role of the researcher by imposing strict research rules that are attempting to neutralize the researchers normative approach. "Induction is used as a principle to supplement perception in order to justify further inferences and universal conclusions" (Hollis, 1994, p. 45). However, induction and reason do not necessarily provide basis for universality. According to the author of this study, reason is itself a subject to normative influence. Historically and contextually specific principles contained in our unconscious perception constrain individuals' reasoning and therefore the researcher himself is under the influence of specific context.

4.2 Strategies of Enquiry

The impossibility of achieving objectivity within social sciences, supported in this study, also relates to the role and potential assigned to any theory used. The social constructions are perceived as constantly changing and therefore any theory must in first place be able to have enough flexibility to be applicable in various contexts. At the same time, however, it has to possess enough explanatory power, to be able to help the researcher understand, why certain arrangement of interactions produces specific results in the given context. Such explanation might then provide even a certain level of predictive power and allow the development of recommendations. These, however, need to be again contextualized and areas, in which these may not be applicable, should be suggested.

4.2.1 Conceptualizing Theoretical Background

Reminder from the Theoretical background:

Responsibility – responsibilities of the individual politicians, administrators and professionals for completing the implementation and reaching the desired state

Trust – the level of trust the implementators have received

Formal and informal sets of rules determine the structure of the responsibilities and trust within the organizational relationships.

Lane's and Winkler's approaches divide the organizational culture, which influenced the balance between the level of responsibility and trust needed for the implementation, between cultural models of implementation and social organization. In terms of conceptualizing the theoretical approach, this distinction outlines two main focuses during the analysis – focus on institutionalized rules and on programme interactions and specific situations.

As Winkler argues, **the core of the implementation theories is answering the question, how to achieve a stability of the output of the administrators based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allow for a flexibility of the organizational system, which would enable individualized reactions of the administrators to various conditions of specific cases** (2002, p.85).

The formal stability and flexibility arise primarily from the **cultural models of implementation**, which outline various levels of institutionalized rules and procedures. For example, the cultural model of implementation as bureaucratic administration does not allow much flexibility of the administration staff. Rather the administration has clear directives on what should be a reaction in a specific situation. On the contrary, the cultural model of implementation as an organizational development of a programme emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and participation of the administration on the formulation of the programme. In this sense the administration has more autonomy and can also react with more flexibility to individual cases.

The author of this study therefore identifies, which cultural model of implementation has been adopted within the implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the CR. For this purpose, the analysis of documents will provide the most data, since the documents include directives on who should oversee the implementation and the more specifically the foreign recognition and how. The institutionalized norms can also be informal and the information about this is gained from the questionnaires as well as the interviews.

The institutionalized commonly shared rules are, however, not the only factor affecting whether the stability and flexibility of the organizational system will be reached. The institutionalized rules are interpreted in various specific situations and interactions. These interpretations may or may not differ from case to case, but compound the second key aspect influencing the stability and flexibility of the organizational system – the **social organization**. Within the social organization, the individual interests of the administrators come into focus,

because these may collide with the commonly shared norms but still get reflected on the outcome of the administration.

The information about the social organization is gathered from the semi-structured interviews and partially also from the questionnaire survey. The focus is the interpersonal relationships between the administrators as well as their interpretation of how to implement the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the CR.

4.2.2 Finding the Right Balance of Responsibilities and Trust

As Winkler argues, there is no single optimal combination of arrangement of the implementation, which would lead to successful realization of the goals (2002, p.131). Instead there is a number of ‘right combinations’ of responsibilities and trust, which yield successful results. Whether the combination is effective largely depends on the context of the specific policy and programme. The role of the researcher, therefore, lies in collecting data on whether the arrangement works efficiently and if not, why.

The criteria of efficiency may themselves, however, be constructed differently by various participants of the implementation process. For that reason it is crucial to collect data from multiple sources and compare the individual constructions of efficiency. Also, when formulating recommendations, this study considers multiple points of perception and discusses, whether there are shared constructions of the criteria of efficiency on which the recommendations can be based or whether the various participants of the implementation process diverge on what development is needed further.

For the specific case under investigation, which is in this study the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR, generating recommendations is possible, since we can easily contextualize, when, in what area and under which conditions the recommendations will apply. For the more general study of implementation of policy, however, the recommendations have to be much more modest. The contribution of this study to the broader study implementing a policy therefore largely lies in testing the applicability of the theoretical background on a specific implementation case and within specific context.

Lane’s and Winkler’s conception therefore provide the desired flexibility to be applicable in various contexts but does it also provide the explanatory power to help understand, why a certain arrangement of an implementation provides satisfactory results while another does not? This remains a questions, which this study discusses and attempts to answer. The analysis of the implementation of the Bologna process instruments on the foreign

diploma recognition and how the responsibilities and trust are distributed within this area in the Czech Republic is therefore followed by discussing, to what extent is such distribution effective and how can Lane's and Winkler's conception help to answer this question.

4.3 Structure of the research framework

To visualize the research framework, which is used in this study, the author uses the conception of Verschuren and Doorewaard (1999). As the diagram on page 65 illustrates, the study is conducted in five stages. For each of the stages, central questions have been formulated, which need to be answered before proceeding into the next stage. These questions are summarized in the table on page 67 and reflect the research questions outlined in the introduction. The central questions have been further broken down into sub-questions. Verschuren and Doorewaard outline two main principles that need be followed when formulating the research questions and progressing towards answering them: *steering function* and *efficiency* (1999, p.67).

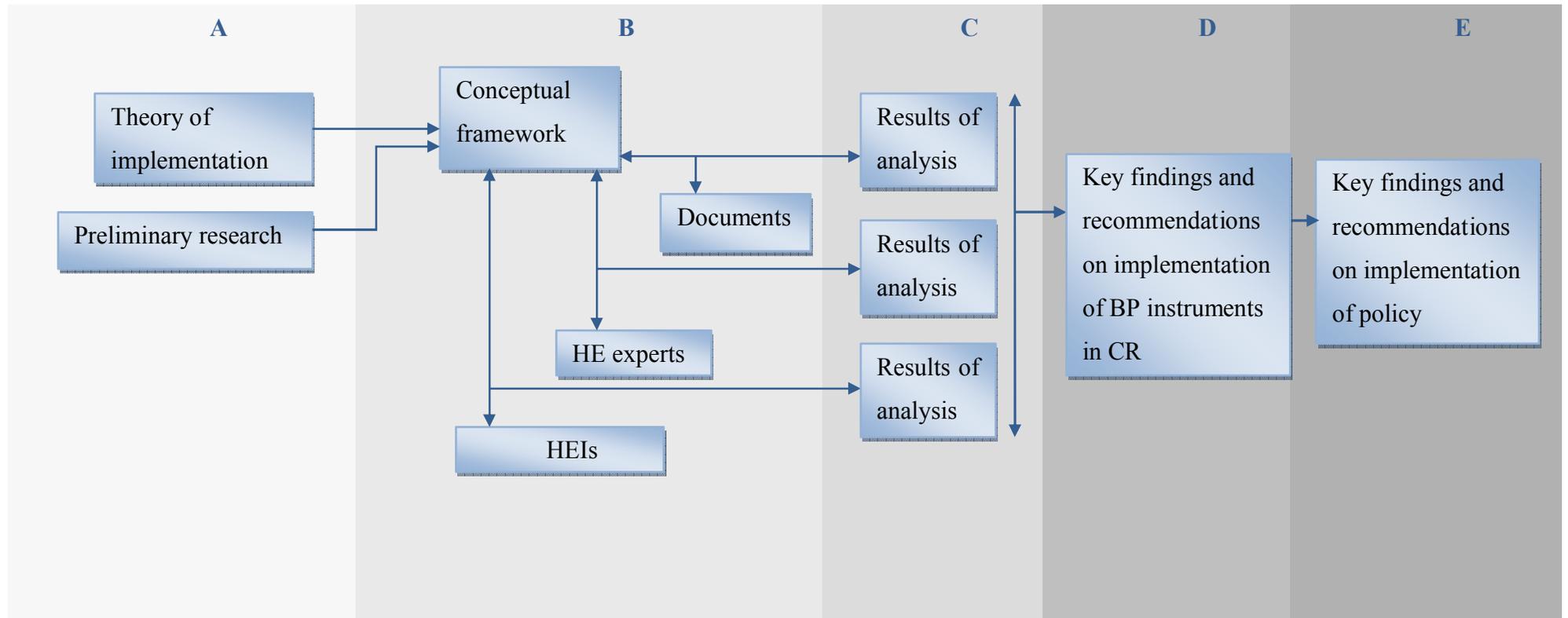
The first principle, the steering function, „refers to the extent to which the research issue throws light on what activities still need to be performed in the course of the research project“ (Verschuren and Doorewaard 1999, p.67). This principle is followed by formulating the questions in a manner indicating the source of the knowledge needed to generate the answer. The second principle, the efficiency, can be tested by confirming the following rules for generating the questions:

The answer to the central questions *collectively* is sufficient to realize the objective of the assignment, thesis or dissertation *and no more than that*.

The answer to the sub-questions *collectively* provides a satisfactory answer to the central question from which they have been derived *and no more than that*. (Verschuren and Doorewaard 1999, p.70)

These rules have been confirmed and therefore the research framework, which is illustrated by the diagram on page 65 has been accepted. The outcomes of the stage A are chapters 2 and 3 on context and the theoretical background of policy implementation. This information is then utilized in stage B of the research framework, where the theoretical perceptions and conceptualized (chapter 4) and the data from the various sources are gathered

in relation to this conceptual framework. In other words, the conceptual framework helps to identify, what data to search for and how to go about finding these. In the stage C of the research framework, the data are analyzed and the outcome is the chapter 5 - Analytical part. Stage D includes comparison of the various sources of data and identifying the main issues and aspects. The outcome of the stage D is chapter 6 Key findings from the comparison of the sources of data and chapter 7 named Recommendations. In the last stage of the research framework, the stage E, the study returns to the main research question: What can we learn about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR? The author answers this in the chapter 8 named Conclusions and Generalizations.

Research framework

Summary of the research questions

Name of the study: Towards Implementing the Instruments of the Bologna Process in the area of Recognition of Foreign Diplomas in the Czech Republic

Main research question: What can we learn about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR?

Stage of research framework	Central question	Sub-questions
A	How to study implementation?	
		What are the approaches to studying implementation?
		Which approach is most useful for the study of implementation of the BP instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas?
		How can the approach be used in the study of implementation of the BP instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas?
		Which instruments of the Bologna Process are relevant for the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR?
B	How should these instruments influence the process of foreign diploma recognition?	
	How are these instruments implemented in CR?	
		How is the implementation of BP instruments for diploma recognition portrayed by the documents?
		How is the implementation of BP instruments for diploma recognition portrayed by the higher education experts?
C		How is the implementation of BP instruments for diploma recognition portrayed by the higher education institutions?
	What do we learn from the comparison of the various sources of data?	
		How are the instruments implemented on a supranational level?
D		How are the instruments implemented on a national level?
		How are the instruments implemented on a local level?
	What can we learn and recommend for the implementation of these instruments in the CR?	
E		What areas of the implementation of the instruments of the BP in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR require further action?
		How should these areas be advanced in relation to the theoretical framework?
E	What can we learn from the case of the implementation of these instruments in CR about the implementation of a policy?	

4.2.4 Propositions

Based on the theoretical background and its operationalization into a research framework, the author presents the following propositions as tentative answers to the main research questions:

1. The top-down and bottom-up approaches may be considered in many cases as two ends of a spectrum. For the analysis of the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition, a synthesis focusing on responsibility and trust allows an investigation of the strength of directive instruments and the autonomy of individual actors on the lower levels of the implementation.
2. The recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic is influenced by the instruments of the Bologna Process, which affect the institutionalized rules and social interactions within specific situations.
3. Efficient implementation consists of reaching a stability of the performance of officials and administration based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allowing a flexibility of the organizational system, which includes individuals reacting to specific characteristics of cases under investigation.

4.3 Methods

This study adopts a mixed method research, since both quantitative and qualitative methods are perceived as providing essential information about the interactions of the actors within the area under investigation. As Turner argues,

researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Turner cited in Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.18).

Quantitative methods will be used to collect a larger amount of data from a representative sample of respondents while the qualitative methods will be used to achieve a deeper understanding of the various perceptions and social constructions.

To answer the research questions outlined in the table on the page 66 the following methods are employed: analysis of documents, a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews.

Analysis of documents provides general information about the structure of the Bologna Process. The analysis includes on a supranational level the declarations and communiqués and EUA Trends Reports and on the national level the National Reports, legislation, strategic documents issued by the MEYS and information published by the HEIs. For each of the documents, the areas relating directly to the recognition of foreign diplomas or to implementation of relevant instruments in order to achieve foreign diploma recognition are identified. These are then studied in relation to the theoretical framework, which means identifying, what is the stress on responsibility and trust. In other words, whether the documents are directive, committing to achieving certain goals by certain time, whether they identify, who is responsible for what or whether they suggest rather broad aims, towards which the actors should direct their attention.

To gain deeper understanding of the perception of the HEIs themselves, the author has developed a **questionnaire**, which was sent to the public HEIs through the MEYS. The sample of the questionnaire is attached in the appendix as Appendix no. 2. The author has undertaken a work experience in the MEYS, part of which was compiling materials for developing a methodology of foreign diploma recognition,

which would then be distributed to the public HEIs. This has enabled her to have the questionnaire distributed via the MEYS, which resulted in a high return rate. Out of 26 HEIs, 23 have submitted their answers to the questionnaire. The questionnaire included both open and closed questions, which were then summarized in a spreadsheet. Where necessary, the quantitative data were also weighted according to the number of requests for foreign diploma recognition, which the HEI has received over the specified period of time.

The third source of data is the **semi-structured interviews** with the HE experts. The author conducted 6 interviews with representatives of the MEYS, the Czech BFUG member and representatives of the HEIs. The list of interviewees is attached as Appendix no. 3. During these interviews, the respondents were confronted with the results of both the analysis of documents and data from the questionnaires. Furthermore, in many cases they have also been asked the same questions as included in the questionnaires, which resulted in gaining a deeper understanding of various perceptions of the implementation process. The respondents were also asked about their interaction with the other actors relevant for the implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the CR to gain information on the informal structure of relationships within the implementation.

5. Analytical part

5.1 Analysis of documents

5.1.1 Supranational documents

Declarations and Communiqués

Sorbonne Joint Declaration - 1998

The Sorbonne Joint Declaration is a largely political manifesto outlining common strategies but using very ‘careful’ language such as “*students should be able to enter...*“, “*students would be encouraged...*“, “*undergraduates should have access...*“ or even “*we hereby commit ourselves to encouraging a common frame of reference*“ rather than actually committing to adopting a common frame of reference. Such manifesto does not bind the signatory countries to any specific procedures to be adopted but rather suggests that they share certain common goals which when acted upon could bring benefits to all the signatory countries. The Sorbonne Declaration therefore does not provide any directives related to the implementation of its conclusions.

The Bologna Declaration -1999

The Bologna Declaration reacts to the Sorbonne Declaration by appreciating its intention but admitting that “*We need to support it [greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education] through promoting concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps*“ (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The Bologna Declaration continues with much more specific and binding use of language and sets up objectives to be reached by 2010. The signatory ministers “*undertake to attain these objectives – within the framework of our institutional competences*“ (Bologna Declaration, 1999) and agree to specific timing of next meeting. In this sense the Bologna Declaration has much greater impact when it comes to the implementation of its goals because it sets, that by certain deadline, effort should be made towards specified goals and that these will be monitored. The Bologna Declaration is therefore

the initial document stimulating the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the Czech Republic, since Eduard Zeman, the former Minister of MEYS, is one of the signatories.

Prague Communiqué – 2001

The Prague Communiqué continues the progress towards more specific definitions of the Bologna Process objectives. Even the initial paragraph includes quite explicit summary of the Bologna Declaration: “*Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the objective of establishing the European Higher Education Area by 2010.*“ (Prague Communiqué, 2001). This is the first time the EHEA is given its official name. The Prague Communiqué also illustrates in more detail, what will be the nature of the implementation of the Bologna Process to come. It summarizes the measures that have been adopted in reaction to the Bologna Declaration and includes that the ministers have appreciated “*the active involvement of the European University Association (EUA) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESU) in the Bologna Process*“ (Prague Communiqué, 2001). This illustrates that the process is not solely directed from the top down, but rather the individual actors participate and join at their own initiative to influence the process development (bottom-up approach).

Another important aspect included in the Prague Communiqué is the commitment to setting up a structured follow-up work consisting of a follow-up group and a preparatory group (Prague Communiqué, 2001). The ministers’ communiqué includes a specific arrangement outlining who will be member of the follow-up group and who will chair it.

Berlin Communiqué – 2003

The following communiqué, which was concluded in Berlin, illustrates the growing agenda of the Bologna Process, which now includes the social dimension as a priority of the strategy. It also shows the growing bureaucratization of the process by acknowledging the Bologna Follow-Up Group’s work and the Trends III-Report prepared by the European University Association (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). These illustrate that with the growing number of signatories and participating institutions the Bologna Process is gradually becoming more organized. The communiqués also continue to be increasingly specific. In the Berlin Communiqué the new priority of

quality assurance was adopted and with it the nations committed to developing national quality assurance systems by the year 2005, which would include specific aspects listed in the communiqué. Therefore from the bottom-up approach of the implementation the Bologna Process is slowly introducing aspects, which are more directive and may be considered as top-down, since concrete procedures are adopted at the supranational level, with the specific details being left for the national bodies. This is also illustrated by the fact that the communiqués are increasingly more detailed.

Bergen Communiqué – 2005

The Bergen Communiqué begins with looking back at the past 5 years of the process and concludes that significant progress has been made especially in setting up the formal structures needed for the implementation of the instruments of the Bologna Process. However, their application and integration is now to be encouraged (Bergen Communiqué, 2005). Also, the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA is adopted and the nations commit to developing national frameworks by 2010 and to starting work on these by 2007 (Bergen Communiqué, 2005). The communiqué therefore illustrates the gradual shift from the documents serving as a manifestos, to serving more as a broad action plans and declarations of what has already been achieved.

London Communiqué 2007

The London Communiqué further illustrates the tendency towards greater organization. The document is well structured, detailed and specific. It includes specific steps of who is to participate at achieving certain objectives and it describes the developments of the past two years in detail. The structure of the document shows that the Bologna Process has developed into encompassing a broad spectrum of areas within the higher education and the BFUG has become a central body for providing information about the developments and possible future steps of the process. Together with the BFUG, the EUA and ESU also issue reports and therefore the pool of participants is increasing, which contributes to the widening agenda of the Bologna Process.

Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué – 2009

The Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué shows that by the end of the first decade of the Bologna Process, the formal strategies are in place, but what is further needed is their establishment in the structures of the participant countries. The communiqué summarizes the developments in the individual areas of the process and in detail outlines the role of the BFUG, which is becoming essential monitoring body producing reports and support for the implementation. The monitoring is to be coordinated and based on data from Eurostat and Eurostudent to ensure that apart from the self-evaluations, which are conducted by the participant countries, there are also external sources of data.

EUA Trends Reports

Following the Sorbonne Declaration, the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (in 2001 to be merged into the European Universities Association) conducted a project *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education* funded by the European Commission, which was to serve as a background paper at the Bologna conference in 1999. This opened a series of Trends Reports, which represent the interests and perceptions of the European universities regarding the developments within the Bologna Process.

Trends I – 1999

The Trends I focuses on convergence and divergence among EU and EEA countries, which at the time excluded the CR. However, it illustrates the emphasis on flexibility of the European framework, which was to be developed and the sensitivity towards individual national education system, with which any developments should be made.

Trends II – 2001

The Trends II emphasizes the international context of the Bologna Process. “*The Bologna Process is both a consequence of, and a contribution to the process of integration of European higher education*“ (Trends II, 2001, p. 4). It also identified the main reason, why so many countries joined the strategy, which lied in the strong consensus on the core objectives of the process (Trends II, 2001, p.17).

Trends III – 2003

Trends III published in 2003 reflects a growing concern that formal adoption of policies and instruments may not be translated into practice that easily. As outlined in the aim and methodology of the Trends III, previous Trends reports were based on information from the ministers and rectors‘ conferences (Trends III, 2003, p.12). “*Trends 2003 tries to reflect not only these two perspectives but also those of students, employers and, most importantly, the HEIs themselves*“ (Trends III, 2003, p.16). Therefore the Trends III may be considered an important step in monitoring the progress of the Bologna Process and how it translates onto the institutional level of the HE systems. The Trends III

sought to highlight what interpretations are given by institutional actors to the various Bologna goals and objectives and what success factors they attribute to the individual change processes involved in making the EHEA a reality (Trends III, 2003, p.16).

The report draws on data from questionnaires, which were sent to a number of ministries in charge of HE, rector’s conferences, heads of HEIs, national and European student associations and national employers‘ associations (Trends III, 2003, p.16).

In the area of recognition of diplomas, the report comes to a conclusion that

awareness of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention, but also of the ENIC/NARIC initiatives (recognition procedures in transnational education etc.) among academic staff and students needs to be raised (Trends III, 2003, p.12)

The Czech Republic is considered to be among countries with relatively high percentage of reasonable awareness of the Lisbon Convention provisions (51%), however, at the same time it is noted as one of the countries where no information available to HEIs applied most frequently (14%) (Trends III, 2003, p.62). Furthermore, the report emphasizes the lack of information, which is reaching the students. *“Even where formal procedures exist, students, as the primarily concerned group, often say they are unaware of these“* (Trends III, 2003, p.12).

The adoption of the Lisbon Convention principles is largely dependent on the cooperation of the HEIs with the ENIC/NARIC network. However, as Trends III illustrate, in 2003 only 20% of HEIs reported close cooperation with the ENIC/NARIC centers (Trends III, 2003, p.63).

Trends III draw attention also to the institution-wide policies. Out of the various recognition procedures, the weakest point appears to be the recognition of foreign degrees. Only 58% of HEIs declared they had an institution-wide procedure for this issue (Trends III, 2003, p. 64).

Trends IV – 2005

The Trends IV, published in 2005, continues with the report serving as an alternative source of data of the progress in the implementation of the BP instruments. This is reflected by the methodology, which included 62 site visits to HEIs in 29 European countries. The questions asked addressed the topics as outlined in the Berlin Communiqué for the stocktaking of the “mid-term priorities“ in order to be compatible with the stocktaking and allow comparisons (Trends IV, 2005, p.8-9). During these one to one-and-a-half days visits the researchers conducted small group interviews with different groups within the institution: institutional leadership (rector and vice-rectors), deans, academics, junior staff, PhD candidates, students, and administrators (Trends IV, 2005, p.9). Out of the Czech Republic, the Brno University of Technology was visited.

In the area of diploma recognition, the Trends IV reported progress in a number of countries. The Czech Republic was not named in particular in terms of significant developments since 2003.

Trends V – 2007

The Trends V adopted a methodology of questionnaires sent via email to a number of HEIs and included many questions similar to those in the Trends III report of 2003 in order to allow comparability and to track progress during the 4-year period (Trends V, 2007, p. 14).

The Trends V emphasize that although many policies have been introduced widely, their application may vary across the individual countries. An example of this is the ECTS, which may be effectively useful for the recognition of foreign degrees only once it is used in a coordinated manner across the various countries (Trends V, 2007, p. 40). The Trends V, however, does not focus on the individual issue of the recognition of foreign diplomas. Rather it compares the general progress across the region in the implementation of the individual instruments of the BP and illustrates progress, which cannot be directly related to the Czech Republic specifically.

Trends 2010

The Trends 2010 again applies a multi-method approach by embracing both qualitative (site visits, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews) and quantitative methods (two surveys) (2007, p. 12). Its significant contribution lies in summarizing, how the BP developed over the decade. This is achieved by comparing the various sources of data over time.

The implementation of the ECTS as accumulation credit system has progressed from 50% in 2003 to 88% in 2010. However, the concern about different application of the ECTS across countries and its superficial implementation in many cases still remains even at the end of the decade (Trends 2010, p. 54)

The same concern remains also for the implementation of the Diploma Supplement across the region. A recent joint ENIC/NARIC and ENQA project concluded that during a survey of 26 Diploma Supplements from 22 countries the content, structure and lay-out varied hindering the relevance and quality of the document (Trends 2010, p. 55).

The Lisbon Convention remains as the key instrument of the foreign diploma recognition. Trends 2010 illustrate that while in 2003 only 28% responding HEIs stated that their academic staff were “reasonably aware“ of the Lisbon Convention and recognition procedures, in 2010 this increased to 46%. However, 41% of institutions

across Europe are still “not very aware“, and there is a minimal drop of this value since Trends III (Trends 2010, p. 64). Accordingly, the cooperation of the HEIs with the ENIC/NARIC centers has increased, but the Trends 2010 suggest that the explanation might lie in the greater influx of non-European students with full degree into the European countries (2010, p. 64).

In general the Trends 2010 marks a stable progress in both quantitative and qualitative terms towards greater use of the instruments of the BP for diploma recognition on the European level. The use of these instruments in the foreign countries is essential for improvement of the recognition of foreign diplomas within the Czech Republic and therefore these developments have positive impact on the Czech recognition procedures since the applicants bring clearer information regarding their degrees. Nevertheless, Trends 2010 illustrates that there are many developments still needed especially in relation to a coordinated use of already formally adopted instruments.

5.1.2 National Documents

National Reports

National Report of 2003

The first National Report, which was prepared for the Berlin Conference in 2003, contains mainly a description, which is as quantitative as possible, of the Czech HE system. It also outlines that much of what was to become instruments of the Bologna Process has been already in place. This includes the legal conditions for implementing the BP principles, which are included in the Act No. 111/1998 Coll. and its Amendment No. 147/2001, the adoption of the two-cycle structure or the Diploma Supplement, which is issued upon request. The implementation of the BP principles is to be included in strategic documents of the MEYS such as the *National Programme of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper 2000)*. The use of ECTS is not imperative by law but all HEIs use it or use a compatible credit system. However, the HEIs adopted the credit systems because of international mobility and the report admits persisting problems with their recognition. It is further admitted that the Accreditation

Commission (AC) does not take into account or monitor the use of neither the ECTS nor the DS when accrediting programmes.

The report also states that two national consultants for ECTS and DS have been established and are starting to communicate with HEIs, CRC, Council of HEIs or the ENIC/NARIC centre. *“They will try to establish links to the Czech AC”* (National Report, 2003), but this implies that these links were not existing yet. The tendency is therefore towards spreading information about the ECTS and DS, which are the basic instruments for diploma recognition. Such communication occurs also via an information website and motivation of the HEIs to apply for DS and ECTS Labels.

Recognition of full qualifications has only a minor mentioning in the report.

Our strategy concerning recognition is based on the implementation of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention. The Czech Republic ratified the Convention in February 2000. Since then, seminars and workshops have been organized with HEIs representatives to implement the basic principle... The assessment should be based on students‘ study load expressed by the gained credits and the quality of the respective institution. (National Report, 2003)

As this quote illustrates, the report does not monitor, what progress has been made, but outlines, what actions have been taken. How effective these were remains a question. Also, the assessment is based on study inputs and the quality of the institution. The focus on study inputs illustrates the traditional approach and the quality of institutions is difficult to assess, as is outlined further in the report.

In general, the National Report of 2003 can in no way be perceived as a source of data for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the BP principles. Rather it includes a quantitative description of the Czech HE system and outlines, what has already been in place, which is in accordance with the BP.

National Report 2005

Compared to the 9 areas examined in the National Report of 2003, the National Report of 2005 consists of 13 topics with subquestions. Therefore the report is more detailed, structured and thorough. The National Report of 2005 also illustrates a

tendency towards the report implicitly including directive formulations. Three questions, which all relate to the quality assurance, are formulated in a way that they first suggest, what *should* be part of the quality assurance in the individual country and then ask, what is the local situation. Therefore the individual country is for the first time supposed to report against certain criteria rather than just describe its current state.

The report also directly asks for a description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the BP in Czech Republic. Here the first traces for attempts to identify responsibility structure may be identified. The report outlines that the National Bologna Group including 12 academic experts has been established and is coordinated by the Czech Representative in the BFUG, which is the director of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry. Nevertheless, it is admitted that many of the academics are in parallel members of the Council of HEIs, the CRC or AC (National Report, 2005).

National Report 2007

The National Report prepared for the ministerial conference in 2007 illustrates further efforts towards more detailed and structured reporting. The report itself has 33 pages and is composed of 3 main sections, which outline background information on the HE system, main stocktaking questions including scorecard elements, and current issues in HE. The directive formulations of the questions are increasingly apparent with questions including bullet points of what areas should be covered in the answers. Therefore the questions suggest, what should be included in the answers and request monitoring, whether this is so. There is also a stress on quantification in the second part of the report, which includes scorecard elements. The respondents are supposed to present percentages where possible or enumerate measures taken.

The background information on the HE system directly asks for any developments and changes introduced since Bergen 2005. On the Czech side these include the introduction of Development Programmes, which the MEYS publishes annually and through which the HEIs can apply for funding, which is related to the priorities derived from the state strategy as expressed in the Long-term plan of the MEYS. The MEYS is therefore strengthening its motivation of the HEIs to implement the instruments of the BP through financial incentives.

The National Report prepared for the ministerial conference of 2007 includes a whole section on recognition of degrees and study periods. It illustrates progress in the

CR in this field in terms of the DS being issued according to the law to everyone free of charge since 2006 with the format being up to the HEIs. The ECTS remains not stipulated in the legislation, but public HEIs have it in place. How effectively do they use the potential of the ECTS, however, is emphasized as a question. The report also outlines a great issue within the recognition process related to the application of the Lisbon Convention.

The preconditions for the fulfillment of the goals exist; legislative obstacles have been removed. Despite this, the permeability of the system is still one of its most serious issues, even in the higher education sector. Generally speaking, the basic principles of recognition which “is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the study or period of study completed in another institution“ (Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997) have not been put into common practice. Contrary to this, at Czech HEIs the recognition has still been mostly acknowledged on the basis of equivalence. (National Report, 2007, p.20)

This emphasizes the formal implementation versus the practical application of the instruments of the BP in the area of recognition. Even seven years after the ratification of the Lisbon Convention the practices remain in many HEIs similar to those before the Convention was adopted.

National Report 2009

The National Report prepared for the ministerial conference in 2009 takes the structured monitoring even further. The report has 43 pages and is divided into two main sections: Bologna Process Template for National Reports: 2007-2009 and Template for National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process. This illustrates that the agenda of the BP is widening covering social dimension as a separate sphere of the strategy. The Bologna Process Template for National Reports is further broken down into 22 areas, which are examined in detail. Newly, there is a high percentage of closed questions, which are asking yes/no and then for explanation. The topic under greatest investigation was Recognition of degrees and study periods and here the closed questions seem to illustrate a progress. The positive answers to development in various areas within this topic are, however, often accompanied by

comments, which illustrate that such optimism is associated with only a part of the implementation, but there are still other issues to be considered. The closed questions, one may argue, therefore lead to too optimistic picture of where the Czech Republic has developed, since they allow only for positive or no progress answers.

What can be emphasized is the Diploma Supplement being issued in the UNESCO format and the use of ECTS to be spreading further between the HEIs. However, the key issue identified in the previous report related to the practical application of the Lisbon Convention seems to be ignored in the National Report of 2009. The recognition area of the report is divided between application of the Convention in the legal framework, which according to the previous reports has already been achieved, and the practical application. Here the key information is missing. There is an answer that yes, that the principle of recognition if no substantial differences can be proven is applied in practice. The explanation, how this is ensured at national and institutional level, however, is: *“Recognition is ensured by the relevant provisions of the Higher Education Act and internal regulations of HEIs.”* (National Report, 2009) Therefore the application in practice is basically ensured by the legal framework, which does not address the main issue identified in the previous report. Therefore the National Report of 2009 does not provide any information on whether there has been a progress on the HEIs level from the “equivalence“ towards “recognition“.

Legislation

The process of recognizing foreign diplomas is included in the Czech legislation in the **Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on Higher Education**. The key articles for the recognition of diplomas are Art. 89 and 90. Article 89 outlines, who is responsible for the recognition of the diploma in specific cases. Article 90 outlines who issues the decision within a HEI and what documents the holder of the foreign diploma must present. The section 4 of the Art. 90 states, that in case the HEI or the MEYS come to the conclusion that there are substantial differences between the subject areas, they should reject the diploma recognition.

The Act No. 111/1998 Coll. also includes Art. no. 57, in which the section 7 contains a statement that the Diploma Supplement should be issued to graduates upon request. This was amended by the Act No. 552/2005 Coll., which included in Art. no.

47b, section 6 that the Diploma Supplement is to be issued to every graduate automatically.

The legislation underpinning the recognition of foreign diplomas is therefore very brief and general. The only methodological directive, which one may find, is the instruction to reject recognition on the basis of substantial differences between the subject area of the diploma under investigation and those accredited within the Czech Republic. This, however, does not specify, what is actually meant by these “substantial differences”.

Also, the responsibility structure set by the Act No. 111/1998 Coll., Art. 89 and 90 is not very clear. The section 2, Art. no. 89 states that in case of uncertainties, the MEYS decides, which HEI should assess the diploma or decide upon the recognition itself. However, these “uncertainties” are not specified and therefore allow multiple interpretations.

Strategic documents of the MEYS

National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper 2001) was conceived as “*a systematic project formulating intellectual basis, general goals and development programmes of the education system in the medium term*” (White Paper, 2001, p.7). It sets out strategies and governmental goals in the time frame extending to 2005 and in some parts even 2010 (White Paper, 2001, p.8). Therefore it was underpinning the implementation of the BP instruments in the first half of the process. The White Paper includes many references to the BP and, together with the Lisbon Convention, its Declarations are included as key supranational documents steering the HE in the Czech Republic. There is a significant tendency towards illustrating how the strategies included in the White Paper relate to the BP and especially to its emphasis on mobility, life-long learning, focus on learning outcomes and two-cycle structure (White Paper, 2001, p.75). It also stresses the Lisbon Convention and its importance for introducing a new approach to the signatory countries, which outlines

the recognition of a higher education degree or a part of studies based primarily on the completed study load (gaining of credits), the general concept of study content and the quality of a given higher education institution, not on the basis of

the actual equivalence of completed study, as was the case in the past. (White Paper, 2001, p.75-76)

Therefore the White Paper of 2001 included broad national goals, which reflected priorities of the BP.

The next document, which was analyzed, was **The Long-Term Plan for Educational, Scientific, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2006-2010**, which was published by the MEYS in 2005. The main objectives of the plan include the transferability and recognition of qualifications, which is conditional upon the development of the relevant qualifications framework (The Long-Term Plan for 2006-2010, 2005, p. 5). For this purpose, the MEYS commits to developing a national qualification framework compatible with the FQ-EHEA and EQF, which will be based on outputs and the ECTS. The development of the national framework is to begin by 2007. The use of ECTS and DS is also encouraged through the promotion of DS and ECTS labels, which is emphasized in the internationalization section of the plan.

The Long-Term Plan for 2006-2010 specifies how individual aims will translate onto the broader objectives and how they will be funded. The funding section also includes essential description of the role of the Development Programmes, which are funded through the Higher Education Institutions Development Fund, and which “*have become an important instrument for indirect steering of higher education institutions by means of targeted institutional funding*” (The Long-Term plan for 2006-2010, 2005, p. 27).

The following key strategic document of the MEYS is the **White Paper on Tertiary Education**, which was published by the MEYS in 2009. It was to serve as a conceptual strategic document stating the direction in which tertiary education in the CR should develop in the next ten to twenty years and provide conceptual basis on what general steps will be needed to achieve such developments (White Paper on Tertiary Education, 2009, p.7). Its aim was, however, not to provide technical description of the necessary procedures and changes. The goals of the paper include structuring the HE system in the CR so that the HEIs would possess greater autonomy for their internal decision-making regarding their internal governance, human resources and quality

control, but at the same time gain more responsibility for fulfilling the expectations of the public and the students (White Paper on Tertiary Education, 2009, p.16).

The most recent strategic plan of the MEYS is **The Strategic Plan for the Scholarly, Scientific, Research, Development, Innovation, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2011-2015**, which sets out to evaluate the implementation of the priorities and objectives of the previous strategic plan of the MEYS (The Long-Term Plan for 2006-2010), to forecast key trends affecting the Czech HE system, set strategic objectives for HE in upcoming years and identify major instruments for attaining these (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p. 2). The plan is significantly more specific and structured. It is divided into individual objectives, for which there are tasks prescribed for the MEYS and recommended for the HEIs. The plan also outlines, what instruments are available for implementation of the set objectives. On the part of the MEYS these mainly include funding, national projects, new laws, coordination of operational programmes and innovation of already existing instruments. On the part of the HEIs the instruments for attaining the objectives include a comprehensive analysis of the HEIs' strengths and weaknesses and setting individual objectives based on these (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p. 4).

One of the objectives is "Developing and implementing the National Qualifications Framework for Tertiary Education", which sets the MEYS the task of designing it, supporting its implementation and self-certification against the overarching QF-EHEA and EQF. For the HEIs this means designing profiles of their study programmes and their translation into the expected competences (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p.16). Under the internationalization section, the first objective is "Implementing the Bologna process in the Czech Republic so that Czech higher education institutions become full members of the European Higher Education Area and enhance their competitiveness in the international arena" (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p.19). Under this objective, the MEYS commits to ensuring participation of the CR in international programmes and promoting mobility. It is also to ensure financial advantages for HEIs with Diploma Supplement or ECTS Labels (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p.20). Recommendations for the HEIs include providing appropriate and consistent recognition of studies undertaken abroad and addressing of this matter in the HEIs' internal regulations (The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, 2010, p.20).

The MEYS also annually publishes the **announcement of topics of Development Programmes for public HEIs**, which have become one of the steering instruments, how MEYS projects its objectives and long-term strategies onto the activities of the HEIs. In the last years the programmes have included support for international cooperation of HEIs in developing joint or double degrees, support for implementation and preparation for the ECTS and DS Labels, support for developing quality assurance mechanisms or students and staff mobility. For 2012 the programmes also include Institutional Development Programme, within which the HEIs can apply for funding of their institutional development plans relating to the Strategic Plan of the MEYS for 2011-2015.

Information published by the HEIs

The public HEIs, which are in many cases responsible for the recognition of the diplomas, generally include mentioning of the adoption of the BP instruments in their strategic plans, but this does not necessarily need to relate to the objectives of the BP themselves. Many instruments, such as the DS or the ECTS, are being implemented because of EU mobility programmes and as means of ensuring, that the Czech HEI will be an attractive destination for international students. The recognition of foreign diplomas is perceived the same way, since it tends to be presented as necessary means of attracting foreign students to continue their studies on the Czech HEI.

The strategic documents of the HEIs therefore generally include broader objectives, which themselves do not mention diploma recognition and their approach to this process, but it is implicitly included as means of reaching internationalization objectives. This is illustrated by the fact that majority of HEIs have a special section on their website dedicated to the recognition of foreign diplomas. In majority of cases this section includes the same general information outlining the procedure, what documents need to be presented to the HEI and what are the contact details of the responsible staff member.

However, there are certain differences in the information published, which illustrate that there are some uncertainties and variation in approaches of the HEIs to the recognition process: Some HEIs (such as the ČZU or VUT Brno) continue to call the process “nostrification”, which implies the past practices of finding an equivalent study programme offered by the HEI. Nevertheless, under the “nostrification” section these

HEIs include information, which relates to the process of “recognition” and this raises the question, to what degree do the HEIs distinguish between the two procedures? Some universities (TU Liberec, ČVUT) have also put a fee on the recognition process, while majority keep the procedure free of charge. Another variation considers, whether the recognition of the foreign diploma by the Czech HEI authorizes the holder to use academic titles. While majority of the HEIs inform the holders that it does, for example VFU Brno explicitly emphasizes that the holders of the diploma cannot use any of its academic titles before name following the diploma recognition. Some universities, such as the UJEP, also do not provide any information about the recognition of full degrees but provide information only about recognition of periods of study, which is intended for their enrolled students.

5.2 Analysis of data collected from the questionnaires distributed among the HEIs

In this stage of the study a questionnaire was sent to all the public higher education institutions to obtain representative data from the bodies responsible for the recognition of the foreign diplomas in practice. A high return rate of the questionnaires was achieved by distributing it through the MEYS. The questionnaire was sent to 26 public HEIs and only 3 have not submitted the answers. The English translation of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix no. 2. The gathered data have then been retyped into a spreadsheet, where they have been sorted and where possible quantified.

To analyze the first questions, in which the HEIs were to evaluate, how useful are the individual instruments for diploma recognition, the following table has been produced.

Overview of answers to question number 1 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

How useful are according to your opinion the following instruments when recognizing foreign diplomas? (1 not useful - 10 very useful)

	Diploma Supplement	ECTS	Qualification Frameworks	Quality Assurance
AMU	10	10	10	10
AVU	5	8	10	9
ČZU	10	10	8	7
ČVUT	10	8	7	7
JAMU	10	9	6	6
JČU	8	8	5	5
MU	10	9	5	2
OSU	10	8	8	10
SLU	10	8	6	3
TUL	10	8	8	7
UHK	10	10	10	Do not know
UJEP	10	9	8	6
UK	9	5	5	4
UPOL	10	10	5	1
UPCE	10	5	5	5
UTB	10	8	7	-
VFU	10	7	Not evaluated	Not evaluated
VŠE	5	7	7	5
VČHT	10	3	0	0
VŠB	8	8	10	-
VŠPJ	-	-	-	-
VUT	10	8	2	5
ZČU	10	5	1	1
Average	9,32	7,77	6,33	5,17

The table above illustrates that on average the highest points were given to Diploma Supplement as the most useful instrument for recognizing diplomas. 17 out of 22 respondents evaluated the Diploma Supplement with the highest score – 10. The ECTS were evaluated as the second most useful, although the average score is substantially lower. Only 4 out of 22 respondents gave the ECTS the highest score and the most usual evaluation was 8 points. The Qualification Frameworks were evaluated on average with lower marks. One HEI even evaluated their usefulness by 0 and one by

1, which means not useful. The lowest average score was given to the Quality Assurance.

Although these simple averages illustrate the tendency towards appreciating the Diploma Supplement the most out of the instruments available for recognizing diplomas, they do not say much about the number of cases, on which the administrators based their opinion. Therefore to fully understand, what instruments are perceived as useful and in what number of cases, weights are given according to the number of requests received by the HEI in 2009 and 2010. All marks are multiplied by a sum of requests received in the 2009 and 2010 by the HEI and these points are then again summarized in a table on page 89.

The points received by each instrument are then added up and this total number represents how useful the instrument was found in relation to individual requests. Also a maximum number of points a category could achieve was counted and this equals to the sum of all requests in 2009 and 2010 multiplied by ten (the highest possible score). The final percentage score achieved by each instrument was then calculated. It equals to the weighted sum of points achieved divided by the maximum points, which could be achieved in a category. This percentage is shown at the bottom of the table above. It illustrates that within all the requests received by the HEIs in 2009 and 2010, the Diploma Supplement was perceived as useful for 86,6%. On the contrary, the Quality Assurance was evaluated only as useful for 40,5%. These are better indicators of how the usefulness was perceived by the HEIs, because they take into account the number of requests that these HEIs were processing. Therefore this not only reflects the experience of the HEIs with the process, but also the practice – what instruments were used the most when processing the total of 5 037 requests, which were placed in the responding HEIs. Those HEIs, which have not processed any requests, have been excluded from the final percentage score of each instrument, because their opinion has not influenced any practice in the years 2009 and 2010.

Overview of weighted answers to question number 1 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

How useful are according to your opinion the following instruments when recognizing foreign diplomas? (1 not useful - 10 very useful)

Higher Education Institution	Diploma Supplement	ECTS	Qualification Frameworks	Quality Assurance	Total number of requests in 2009 and 2010
AMU	450	450	450	450	45
AVU	10	16	20	18	2
ČZU	1350	1350	1080	945	135
ČVUT	5700	4560	3990	3990	570
JAMU	220	198	132	132	22
JČU	360	360	225	225	45
MU	7640	6876	3820	1528	764
OSU	470	376	376	470	47
SLU	350	280	210	105	35
TUL	1100	880	880	770	110
UHK	370	370	370		37
UJEP	420	378	336	252	42
UK	10008	5560	5560	4448	1112
UPOL	1250	1250	625	125	125
UPCE	350	175	175	175	35
UTB	1050	840	735		105
VFU	420	294			42
VŠE	5355	7497	7497	5355	1071
VČHT	570	171	0	0	57
VŠB	816	816	1020		102
VŠPJ					0
VUT	2230	1784	446	1115	223
ZČU	3110	1555	311	311	311

Sum of weighted marks:

43599 36036 28258 20414 50370

Percentage score achieved:

86,6% 71,5% 56,1% 40,5%

The percentage scores therefore illustrate that the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS are the key instruments, which have been perceived as useful by the HEIs when processing requests for foreign diploma recognition in the years 2009 and 2010. The

Qualification Frameworks and Quality Assurance are perceived as significantly less useful and some, for example the VŠCHT or ZČU, do not find these two useful at all.

These findings are confirmed in the second question, in which were the respondents asked to outline, how the implementation of the listed instruments changed the process of diploma recognition. Out of 23 respondents, 3 have not included any answer and therefore the data were collected from 20 HEIs. Out of these, 15 thought the instruments substantially simplified the diploma recognition process or eased the administration. Explicitly, only Diploma Supplement and the ECTS were mentioned as instruments with significant impact on the diploma recognition process. The Diploma Supplement has been mentioned 11 times as a useful tool for comparing the basic content of the study programmes. The ECTS was mentioned 7 times for clarifying the focus of the study programme by quantifying the time and work spent on each subject.

5 respondents, however, noted that there has been no substantial change when these instruments were introduced. Some reasons mentioned were that not all the foreign HEIs issue Diploma Supplements and the quality of the issued documents varies.

In the third question the respondents were asked to list the institutions, from which they gather information necessary for diploma recognition. Out of 22 respondents, 12 mentioned the MEYS and the Czech ENIC/NARIC center (CSVŠ). Other sources of information, which the HEIs use, include the universities, which issue the diploma, or seminars organized by the MEYS. There was also a number of websites cited, which include databases of educational programmes and their level of accreditation. The responses are summarized in the table on page 91.

Overview of answers to question number 3 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

Source of information	Frequency
Czech MEYS	12
Czech ENIC/NARIC	12
Graduated HEI	9
Seminars organized by the MEYS	4
Own experience - HEIs cooperating on exchange programmes	2
Documents from the requesting graduates usually suffice	2
Ministry of education of the relevant country	1
Academic staff of the Czech HEI	1
Czech consulate in the relevant country	1
IAU website	1
CD World Higher Education Database	1
enic-naric.net	1
anabin.de	1
hochschulkompass.de	1
Magistrate of Prague	1
Specific law agencies	1

The fourth question focused on the main reasons for refusing a recognition of a foreign diploma. Here the data revealed that in majority of cases (19 out of 22) the main reasons for rejecting the recognition relate to the content incompatibility with the programmes offered at the recognizing HEI. Therefore one may argue that the tendency towards “equivalence“ with offered programme rather than recognition seems to persist. The respondents differed on whether the subject area (“studijní program”) or the degree programme (“studijní obor”) should be compatible with the recognized diploma. 8 have emphasized the compatibility with the specific degree programme while 5 have answered that it is incompatibility with the broader subject area, which is often the barrier to recognition. The responses are summarized in the table on page 92 and illustrate that among the Czech HEIs there is a level of uncertainty regarding the recognition process.

Overview of answers to question number 4 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

Main reasons for refusing a recognition of a diploma	Frequency
Content incompatibility with the programmes offered at the recognizing HEI	19
Different structure of the programme	11
Incomplete documentation	3
No final thesis included in the programme	2
Programme not accredited at the Czech HEI	2
No final state exam included in the programme	1
Not fulfilling criteria for recognition of HE diploma, which stem from the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council	1
Foreign HEIs not included in the list of the local NARIC	1
Doubts about the quality of the HEI, which issued the diploma	1

In the fifth questions, the HEIs were asked for their suggestions on how the process of recognizing foreign diplomas can be made more effective or simplified. The table on page 93 summarizes the answers and illustrates that the most frequent suggestion is a development of a common updated database, which would include information about recognized diplomas, the HEI and the study programme. In other words, the HEIs suggest a form of sharing of their experiences and information gathered.

Overview of answers to question number 5 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

How to make the recognition process more effective?	Frequency
Database with recognized diplomas - the HEI and study programme	7
Current process is sufficient	6
Methodology of diploma recognition - clear instructions on how to proceed	2
Recognizing diplomas from one central institution (MEYS)	2
Developing agreement regarding the recognition between the two countries (China)	1
Recognizing the level of achieved education for the purpose of further studies even though the programme structure and content is not exactly the same as a Czech programme - the MEYS should recognize the diploma quickly	1
Further simplification of the process could lead to non-objective conclusions	1
Continuously updated database of educational systems and universities (including structure of the educational system and its development over time)	1
Information on educational systems in specific countries: Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam	1
More stress on application of the qualification framework	1
Setting a fee on recognizing a diploma	1
Separating the recognition of diploma for purposes of further studies from for professional activity	1
Setting up an institution, which would offer opportunity to verify the genuinity of the diploma	1
Legislation, which would allow to complete missing parts of study programme in the CR	1
Issuing Diploma Supplements as agreed	1
Change of the §89 and §90 of the Act No. 111/1998 Coll.	1
Using the general method art. 2 §89	1
Statement of the Accreditation Commission regarding the quality of the foreign HEI	1
Not proceeding according to the procession law - the procedure is overcomplicated and long	1

The following two questions concerned the statistics and are summarized in the table below. On average, 77% of requests for recognition of a foreign diploma were approved by the HEIs. This average has not changed significantly over the two-calendar-year period, in which the data were collected. This period, however, marks a significant increase in the number of requests – around 550 requests.

Overview of answers to questions number 6 and 7 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

Higher Education Institution	Number of requests for recognition obtained			Percentage of requests approved		
	2009	2010	Total	2009	2010	Total
AMU	25	20	45	92%	95%	93%
AVU	1	1	2	100%	100%	100%
ČZU	62	73	135	65%	81%	73%
ČVUT	220	350	570	92%	93%	92%
JAMU	15	7	22	100%	100%	100%
JČU	20	25	45	33%	33%	33%
MU	344	420	764	66%	70%	68%
OSU	37	10	47	46%	40%	45%
SLU	18	17	35	72%	82%	77%
TUL	33	77	110	88%	69%	75%
UHK	13	24	37	54%	83%	73%
UJEP	22	20	42	86%	65%	76%
UK	502	610	1112	71%	74%	73%
UPOL	50	75	125	40%	41%	41%
UPCE	17	18	35	59%	61%	60%
UTB	32	73	105	75%	88%	84%
VFU	22	20	42	86%	85%	86%
VŠE	472	599	1071	98%	96%	97%
VČHT	23	34	57	91%	71%	79%
VŠB	59	43	102	58%	65%	61%
VŠPJ	0	0	0	-	-	-
VUT	92	131	223	80%	89%	85%
ZČU	160	151	311	64%	36%	50%
Total	2239	2798	5037	77%	78%	77%

The last question focused on countries, in which the foreign diplomas are issued. The respondents listed first 5 countries and these were given points – 5 points for first place to 1 point for the fifth. The scores of individual countries are summarized by the table below and illustrate, that the vast majority of requests for recognition concern diplomas issued in Russia and Ukraine.

Overview of answers to question number 8 of the questionnaire distributed among the HEIs

Country where diploma was issued	Score
Russia	99
Ukraine	69
Belarus	19
U.K.	17
Kazakhstan	11
U.S.A.	10
Poland	9
Vietnam	9
Germany	7
France	5
Uzbekistan	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5
Syria	4
Mongolia	4
Croatia	4
Armenia	3
Ethiopia	3
Japan	3
Republic of South Africa	2
Republic of Moldova	2
Sri Lanka	2
Spain	2
Montenegro	1
Ghana	1
Austria	1
Serbia	1

5.3 Analysis of conducted interviews

For the purpose of this study 6 interviews were conducted with a number of experts in the area of either Bologna Process or diploma recognition. The list of the conducted interviews is attached as appendix no. 3.

The first interview (Respondent no. 1) was conducted with RNDr. Věra Šťastná, who is the Czech representative of the Bologna Follow Up Group. She provides essential information about the formal and informal structure of the implementation of the Bologna Process policies and instruments in the Czech Republic. As a representative of the BFUG, she is able to outline, what process is linking the supranational level of the Bologna Process with the national implementation. In other words, what happens on the national level once a supranational communiqué has been published. Her role lies in communicating the implications of the supranational decisions and strategies to the MEYS and discussing, how these can be incorporated into the national policies and what progress has been made towards achieving already set goals.

The next two interviews were conducted with representatives of the MEYS, the Higher Education Department. During the first one (Respondent no. 2), JuDr. Zdeňka Pastorová is interviewed about the every-day practice of the diploma recognition by the MEYS. As a lawyer, she is responsible for handling diploma recognitions, which for various reasons have not been sorted at a level of the HEI. Therefore she provides insight into a the national level of the diploma recognition, what formal issues arise and is also able to suggest a number of measures, which could improve the process of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic. Since she is not primarily concerned with the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments, she provides important information about the general key issues within the field of recognition of diplomas. The usefulness and priority of the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments can then be assessed in relation to the general context of the recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic.

The second representative of the MEYS, which was interviewed, was Mgr. Karolína Gondková (Respondent no. 3). She was asked about the cooperation of the Bologna Experts and what are their commitments to the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments. She outlines that the Bologna Experts are largely a group of voluntary participants, who are generally not very active and are primarily members of

other institutions. She therefore adds key information about the implementation structure of the Bologna Process instruments.

Another major institution involved in the recognition of the foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic is the CSVŠ. Therefore a semi-structured interview was conducted with the leader of the Centre for Recognition of Qualifications: Ing. Štěpánka Skuhrová (Respondent. No. 4). As a member of the ENIC/NARIC network, she helps to gain understanding of the international cooperation within these networks and how the centers are developed in the other Bologna countries. She also raises an important question: to what extent have the practical procedures of recognition of foreign diplomas really changed following the Lisbon Convention? She points to a number of similarities with the former process of “nostrification“, which meant finding an equivalent Czech degree with the foreign qualification. For the purpose of this study she therefore provides information on a key issue of implementation: formal implementation of policies with persisting of the past practices.

The insight of the HEIs is largely gained from the questionnaire survey, however, the interviews conducted with the HE experts provide new information, which the author confronts with the perceptions of a HEI in the last two interviews. The first was conducted with JuDr. Jana Hauptmannová (Respondent no. 5), who manages foreign diploma recognitions on the University of Economics, Prague within the Department of Education. During a telephone interview, she outlines in detail the procedure of recognizing a diploma from receiving the request to issuing a decision. She therefore provides information about the very practical level of the recognition process. She states that part of her role includes verifying the status of the foreign HEI and that in many ways she cooperates closely both with the MEYS (JuDr. Zdeňka Pastorová) or the CSVŠ (Ing. Štěpánka Skuhrová). She also emphasizes that on the level of the HEI, the key issue is the growing number of requests for recognition of a foreign diploma. At the University of Economics, Prague, this procedure is free of charge and therefore the assistant deans, who are assessing the diplomas, are devoting increasing amount of time to this activity with a relatively low benefit for the HEI.

The last interview was conducted with an assistant dean of the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Economics, Prague Ing. Jiří Zeman, Ph.D. (Respondent no. 6). He outlines what does exactly he considers when assessing a diploma and emphasizes that the quality of the documents presented by the foreign

graduate influences the effectiveness of the process. Also, he suggests a major inconsistency in the recognition process, which has not been identified by any other source of data. He questions, on what ground the MEYS can overrule the decision of a HEI to reject recognition of a foreign diploma. He further questions, what is the added value of recognitions made on the level of the HEIs, when negative decisions are in vast majority of cases overruled by the MEYS and the recognition is eventually granted? He therefore identifies another major issue within the recognition process, which relates to the distribution of responsibility and trust. His perception seems to point towards an imbalance in the level of trust and responsibility between the MEYS and the HEIs. This does not need to suggest that decisions made by the MEYS are ineffective, but rather that the communication, which would justify the decision to the HEI may be insufficient.

6. Key findings from the comparison of the sources of data

6.1 Supranational level

On the supranational level, the ministerial conferences produce communiqués, which initiate a strategy by outlining the key objectives for the next two years. RNDr. Věra Šťastná, the Czech representative of the BFUG (Respondent no. 1), states in the interview that

Bologna Process is not structured in a way, that you would be told in a directive manner, what to do. Bologna Process is a gentlemen's' agreement between the ministers, that they will somehow develop their education systems.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the documents has revealed that there is a gradual shift from this “gentlemen’s agreement” to more directive strategy. Although there is no doubt that the participation of the individual countries on the process is voluntary and the whole implementation follows the bottom-up approach of implementation, the study of the communiqués and other Bologna Process documents illustrates, that there are more specific objectives set in a more binding manner. This is further confirmed by RNDr. Věra Šťastná (Respondent no. 1) herself, when she also argues that

Ministerial conference is political board, therefore the documents, such as the communiqués, are political documents. At the same time, however, I would say that the communiqués, contrary to similar documents, are regulatory, which is a specific aspect of the Bologna Process. The communiqués contain aside from the rest also the basic “rules of the game”, which is quite uncommon for political documents.

6.1.1 Responsibilities and trust on the supranational level

From the initial Sorbonne Declaration and consequent Bologna Declaration the implementation of the set out objectives corresponds to Lane's cultural model of implementation as an organizational development of a programme, since the interpersonal relationships and trust play a key role in the implementation. The ministers agree to adhere to a specific direction without giving up their authority regarding the decision-making and emphasize the need for cultural sensitivity of the commonly accepted strategies. They also welcome the participation of other institutions on the process rather than developing a closed community, which would limit the decision-making power in the process to a smaller number of institutions. Therefore in this sense the initial Bologna Process documents illustrate the bottom-up approach to the process of developing the strategies and their implementation.

Since the Berlin Communiqué, more concrete policies are being accepted at the supranational level, such as the commitment to developing the quality assurance system by 2005 including specific aspects, which are listed in the communiqué. Therefore one can argue that since the Berlin Communiqué one can identify aspects of the implementation as a management of a programme system within the outcomes of the ministerial conferences. Looking back at Lane's description of this cultural model of implementation, in this conception the "top-management" has the most responsibility for fulfilling tasks, which are assigned to the lower-levels and are monitored (Lane in Winkler, 2002, p.93). Translating this onto the Bologna Process, its network (ministers, BFUG, EUA, EURASHE et al.) represents the "top-management", which when cooperating produces strategic documents on a supranational level, which are then to be followed by the lower level (the national level) and are monitored by the BFUG. Each minister of education is responsible for developments within his nation. However, there are other aspects of the implementation as management of programme system, which are not applicable at the stage of the Berlin Communiqué. These include detailed definitions of the goals, which illustrate the intentions of the strategy or delegating of responsibility and setting of standards, which are to be used when making decisions on the lower levels of implementation (Lane in Winkler, 2002, p.93).

The further communiqués illustrate the mix of the approaches to setting up the supranational strategies. The monitoring is becoming increasingly important as the

formal strategies are adopted but their implementation within individual nations is becoming the focus of the process.

By the end of the first decade of the Bologna Process one can identify aspects of the two models of the implementation. The aspects of the implementation as a an organizational development of a programme persist with the participation of a large number of nations and supranational institutions, which unite local participants at lower levels. As Lane points out, under such perception the key issue is whether the implementation process leads to a consensus regarding the objectives, individual autonomy and participation of those, who are carrying out the procedures (Lane in Winkler, 2002, p.97). With even the Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué emphasizing the integration of the Bologna strategies into the national programmes, this model is prevailing even at the end of the decade. Nevertheless, with the increasing stress on the monitoring this model is accompanied by minor aspects of the perception of the implementation as a management of a programme system.

6.1.2 Formal implementation or practical application?

One of the key issues underpinning the implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition is the contrast between the formal implementation and practical application. The Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué (2009) summarizes this concern, since it includes, that by the end of the decade, formal strategies are in place. What is further needed is their establishment in the structures of the participant countries. (Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué of 2009). This concern is further supported also by the Trends reports. For examples the Trends III (2003) concludes, that the formal adoption of policies and instruments may not be translated into the practice of the individual signatory countries that easily. It reflects this by investigating, what various interpretations are given by institutional actors to the Bologna goals and how useful is making the EHEA a reality for them (Trends III, 2003, p.16). In other words, the Trends III (2003) admits that the lower levels of the implementation administrators may have different perception to the Bologna Process, which may result in formal implementation with insufficient practical impact.

6.1.3 Monitoring of the Bologna Process progress

Returning back to the stages of the implementation process by Paterová et.al (2007, p. 322), which were presented in the chapter 3 Theoretical background, the on-going evaluation, controlling and solution of problems is an essential part of implementation. Monitoring is therefore a key instrument for evaluation. Within the Bologna Process, this study identifies major issues in the way the implementation of the BP instruments is monitored on the supranational level.

The key issue is identified on the formulation of questions in the National Reports. The National Report of 2007 includes more open questions and within the area of diploma recognition, the Czech National Report identified that application of the Lisbon Convention in practice is a long-term problem. The National Report of 2009, however, contains closed questions allowing primarily “yes” or “no” answers to whether the instruments have been implemented. Since the Lisbon Convention was ratified formally and implemented in the Czech Republic, the logic answer was “yes, the implementation was achieved”. The report contains no information on what is the progress on the practical application, which was identified as a long-term problem and therefore one does not gain any further information, whether this is still persisting. The closed questions may result in overoptimistic picture of the implementation, which is resulting from the lack of options the officials filling out the report have. The deeper issues therefore may become lost in quantifying and categorizing the answers.

Another issue identified within the monitoring of the BP progress on the supranational level is the frequency of the reports. Monitoring every two years results in tendency towards declaring some progress, but certain institutional issues cannot be resolved that quickly and the reports may become overoptimistic and not monitor the progress of implementation in reality, but rather become a political document, since the results of individual countries are compared to each other.

A third issue identified in relation to this level of monitoring concerns the respondents – who are we asking for the information about the progress? The self-evaluation conducted by the MEYS, which is responsible for the implementation, does not necessarily have to provide objective information. This is supported by the reaction of the methodology of the Trends reports. The Trends III of 2003 for the first time uses data from other sources than from the relevant ministries and the results illustrate that there may be a significant difference between the formal implementation and the

declaration of what has been achieved and the perception of those, who are supposed to reap the benefits. The Trends III (2003) is based on survey, which included questionnaires sent to ministries, rectors' conferences, heads of HEIs, national European student association and national employer's associations. The sources of data were compared to gain external insight. The Trends reports continue with the methodology of gaining data from number of sources and effectively become an alternative source of data compared to the National Reports. The issue therefore is, to what extent National reports serve their purpose, when the data need to be verified from other sources.

6.1.4 Supranational strategy and coordinated implementation

The proposition no. 3 of this study states, that efficient implementation consists of reaching a stability of the performance of officials and administration and at the same time allowing flexibility of the organizational system. The coordinated implementation ensures the stability of the outcomes, but as Trends V (2007, p.47) outlines, in the case of the ECTS the implementation and understanding is still yet to be fully coordinated. The interviews with the representatives of the MEYS also support this argument when stating, that the various quality, different formats of documents, lack of practical implementation of the instruments in other countries and various interpretations of how these should be used are among the key issues of the recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic (interview with K. Gondková, Z. Pastorová). In other words, the uncoordinated implementation across the Bologna countries has a negative impact on the process of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic.

6.2 National level

6.2.1 Responsibilities and trust on the national level

Much of what was to become the instruments of the BP had already been formally adopted in the Czech Republic even before the BP. This includes the two-cycle structure or the Diploma Supplement. The ECTS have also been developed in relation to European mobility programmes and therefore this illustrates, that the BP was in accordance with the developments within the Czech Republic.

The National Report of 2003 outlines the strategy concerning the recognition of foreign diplomas, which is based on the application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The information is passed via seminars and workshops, which are organized by the MEYS for the HEIs representatives. Since 2005, the MEYS publishes the Development Programmes, through which the HEIs can apply for funding related to the priorities derived from the strategy expressed in the Long-term plan of the MEYS.

Therefore on the national level, the instruments of the BP for the recognition of foreign diplomas are implemented via a bottom-up approach. The Diploma Supplement and the three-cycle structure are embedded in law, but the remaining instruments are implemented largely through motivation. The HEIs are provided with support and guidance, but it is their decision to implement the instruments.

Throughout the decade, however, one may observe that the MEYS is shifting from a consultative towards relatively more directive role in the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments. The Development Programmes motivate the HEIs to activity in areas, which are aligned with the MEYS priorities. Therefore we can identify aspects of a changing balance between the responsibility and trust, as outlined by Lane (Lane in Winkler, 2002, p. 80). The MEYS is stepping up with a long-term strategy, which is not enforced through authority, but rather includes stronger motivation of HEIs through funding. Although the cultural model of implementation as an organizational development of a programme persists, the role of the MEYS is strengthening. However, since decisions regarding funding are discussed with representatives of the HEIs as well as other implementators, the changing role of the MEYS may be seen as in accordance with the HEIs interests. Greater attractiveness of the Czech HE system, which is the ultimate goal of the implementation of the BP principles in the CR, requires collective strategy, to which individual HEIs would adhere out of their individual interests. Development Programmes therefore strengthen the role of the MEYS as the coordinator without decreasing the autonomy of the HEIs.

So where is the shift in the responsibility-trust balance? The main changing element is the level of responsibility of the MEYS, which is imposed by the supranational level. In other words, the changing structure of the National Reports requests greater impact of the strategic goals of the BP on the national systems. For the MEYS this means that it needs to become more involved in the ways of promoting the long-term priorities among the HEIs. In the implementation from the supranational to

the national level, there is a shift towards the top-down end of the continuum of the implementation approach. These leads to a greater emphasis placed on the national implementation, which results in the local ministries need to get more involved in the local implementation occurring in the individual HEIs. For this reason the Development Programmes mark first traces of the cultural model of implementation as management of a programme system in the implementation of the BP instruments. The MEYS is setting, which areas need development for achieving the goals specified in the long-term plans. The HEIs then make decisions on the lower levels, but are motivated to adhere to the priorities of the MEYS.

6.2.2 Ambiguous legislation

On the national level, this study identifies that the legislation underpinning the recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR is in certain aspects ambiguous, which results in instability of the outcomes.

The Act No. 111/1998 Coll., Art. 90 section 5 states that in case the HEI or the MEYS find substantial differences between the study programmes, the recognition should be rejected. The question however is, what are the “substantial differences”? The interviews with the representatives of the MEYS, the questionnaires and the interview with the vice dean processing the requests reveal, that these “substantial differences” actually allow number of interpretations. The representative of the MEYS, JuDr. Zdeňka Pastorová, suggests that in many cases the HEIs may be too strict when recognizing foreign diplomas for the purpose of continuing studies. The MEYS then often serves as the instance of appeal and in vast majority of cases recognizes those diplomas, which have been rejected by the HEI. According to the vice dean of the VŠE, Jiří Zeman, the diplomas he rejects are ones where the compulsory subjects are missing and therefore the graduates do not possess the basic competences, which the graduates of the VŠE need. He further questions, on what ground the MEYS recognizes diplomas, which his faculty has rejected. Therefore there may be a difference between the HEIs’ and the MEYS’s interpretation of the law.

Furthermore, the law is also unclear regarding the responsibility structure of the recognition process. The Act No. 111/1998 Coll., Art. 89 section 2 outlines, that in case of uncertainties, the MEYS decides, which HEI should assess the diploma or decide upon the recognition itself. These “uncertainties” are, however, not defined and

therefore it is not clear, in what cases can the MEYS take over the role of the HEIs. Furthermore, the law does not include any information about the appeal process and how should the MEYS's decision be justified.

6.2.3 Unclear responsibility structure

The implementation of the Bologna Process instruments on the national level has to a large extent unclear responsibility structure, which was illustrated by the conducted semi-structured interviews. The Czech BFUG representative (Respondent no. 1) was asked who is primarily responsible for the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments. She answered that the process is not directed in such way and instead, it is a "gentlemen's' agreement". On the contrary, the representative of the MEYS (Respondent. No. 3) replies to the same question that the most responsible individual is the BFUG representative. For example the National Report of 2003 supports this by outlining, the National Bologna Group is coordinated by the Czech representative of the BFUG (at that time the director of Higher Education Department of the Ministry), but this "co-ordination" does not necessarily imply responsibility for the outcomes.

The unclear responsibility structure is also arising from the ambiguous legislation, which translates into the every-day practice within the diploma recognition. In cases, when there are no bilateral agreements between the country issuing the diploma and the CR, the HEIs are the primary institutions making the decision regarding the recognition. However, their rejections to recognize a diploma in majority of cases end up being overruled by the MEYS. The resulting unclear responsibility structure is illustrated during the interview with the assistant dean of the University of Economics, Prague (Respondent. No. 6). He questioned the purpose of the HEIs making the assessment, when majority of the cases are recognized by the MEYS even against the decision of the HEI. The responsibility/trust balance is therefore due to the ambiguous legislation disrupted. The MEYS and the HEIs tend to interpret the legislation differently, which results in their loss of mutual trust. MEYS in many cases overtakes the responsibility of the HEIs for the decision-making, which illustrates, that under the current formal rules, the HEIs do not receive sufficient trust from the MEYS for making the appropriate decision.

6.2.4 Weak implementation structure

The implementation structure of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition is significantly weak. As Karolína Gondková outlines, the representative of the MEYS, outlined during the interview, the primarily responsible person for the implementation of the Bologna Process principles is currently RNDr. Věra Šťastná, who is the Czech BFUG representative. She is employed at the MEYS on a 0.2 part-time basis, which she is fully devoting to the Bologna Process agenda. The implementation structure also contains the Bologna Experts. As Mgr. Karolína Gondková (Respondent no.3) further describes, the Bologna Experts do not have a set time, which they should spend fulfilling Bologna objectives. They have contracts with the MEYS for 150 hours of work per year, but usually do not use all of this time. Primarily, they are members of other institutions and they devote only a minimum of their time to the Bologna Process. If we refer to the implementation and organization structure outlined by Hjern and Porter (2002, p. 216), we can clearly see that the implementation structure of the BP collides with a number of organizational structures and is subordinate to these. Their participation in the implementation structure is largely voluntary and in many cases only minimal. The BP objectives and their promotion are nobody's key responsibility and therefore in general, the implementation structure of the Bologna Process within the Czech Republic is weak.

6.3 Local level

6.3.1 Responsibilities and trust on the local level

On the local level, the HEIs process the individual requests. In majority of cases, the rector's office of the HEI processes the requests by checking the formal requirements and accreditation of the foreign HEI. The request is then forwarded to the relevant department, where the vice dean assesses the diploma and sends his statement to the rector, who issues the decision.

The questionnaires reveal that the HEIs gain information about the foreign HEIs primarily from the MEYS, the CSVŠ or the graduated HEIs. The interactions are occurring on personal basis and interpersonal relationships are crucial. This was

confirmed during the interview with Ing. Štěpánka Skuhrová (Respondent no. 4), the head of CSVŠ.

6.3.2 Stability of outcomes

A key issue on the local level concerns the stability of outcomes. The ambiguous legislation influences the local level of the implementation in such a way, that individual HEIs themselves may possess various interpretation of when should they reject the recognition of the diploma. The questionnaire survey of this study reveals that most cited reason for rejecting the diploma by the HEIs is content incompatibility with the programmes offered at the recognizing HEI, but to what extent the programmes must be incompatible remains a question.

Furthermore, the representative of the MEYS, JuDr. Zdeňka Pastorová, outlines during the interview that one graduate may send his request to more HEIs and receive various decisions regarding his recognition. Since each HEI is having own criteria and assessing the diplomas with respect to their accredited study programmes, the result may be attributing the foreign diploma to different Czech study programmes.

The questionnaire survey also reveals, that on the local level, the general structure of the recognition process is questioned. The HEIs suggest as means of improving the process either more transparent information about the foreign institutions or establishing a central institution within the CR, which would recognize the foreign diplomas centrally. Therefore they may question their own capabilities to effectively assess the diplomas or the effectiveness of the current organization of the process. With the number of requests growing every year, addressing this issue may become increasingly urgent.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are based on the following proposition:

Efficient implementation consists of reaching a stability of the performance of officials and administration based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allowing a flexibility of the organizational system, which includes individuals reacting to specific characteristics of cases under investigation.

Therefore the key issues, which are outlined in the previous chapter, are investigated here in terms of how they can be resolved in order to achieve stability of outcomes underpinned by the institutional rules of the Bologna Process and at the same time allow flexibility of responses to specific characteristics of individual cases under investigation.

7.1 Recommendations for measures on supranational level

The key recommendations for the implementation of the BP instruments on the supranational level relate to achieving coordinated application across the signatory countries. This can be advanced through third-party monitoring focusing on deeper understanding of practical application of the implemented instruments. The National Reports therefore need to be structured in a way to avoid reporting of formal implementation only, which is another issue identified by this study. Quantitative data should be accompanied with qualitative explanations and rather than outlining, what actions have been taken, the effect on the target groups should be monitored.

The methodology of the Trends reports may be considered for the National reports as well. Alternatively, cooperation of the BFUG monitoring with the Trends reports may provide deeper understanding of the progress made on the practical as well as formal level of implementation.

7.2 Recommendations for measures on national level

The key issues, concerning the national level of the implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition, include insufficient stability of performance. The main recommendation under the current recognition structure stresses

updating the legislation. The law should include more specific definition of cases, when the recognition should be rejected, which would provide guidance to the HEIs and narrow down the scope for various interpretations of the law.

The HEIs also require further information about the recognized institutions and therefore central information storage should be established. This database would also contribute to increasing the stability of the output, since it may record the past decisions and allow mutual sharing of experience between the HEIs.

Alternatively, the change of the recognition structure may be considered. The recognition may be conducted from a central institution, which would ensure enough stability of outcomes and flexibility to individual cases. The institution would also be able to quickly reflect on new policies and ensure that work is not duplicated. Furthermore, the institution would accumulate know-how and experience with foreign HE systems, which is essential for assessing, whether the foreign HEI is recognized within its homeland. Such institution would also solve a problem of monitoring, since it would be able to keep all records at one place, track statistics and report on any trends in the implementation process.

The implementation structure of the Bologna Process also requires strengthening. The Bologna Experts, which consist of a number of relatively inactive members, may be compounded into a smaller group of dedicated academics. Their activity needs to be encouraged by the MEYS. This may be achieved through a change of their contract from maximum dedicated hours to the BP objectives to setting rather the minimum.

7.3 Recommendations for measures on local level

The local level, the HEIs, may benefit from measures adopted at the national level, such as clearer legislation or database of information about the foreign HE systems and qualifications available to those processing recognitions. Furthermore, the HEIs should continue to be actively involved in the process of implementing the BP instruments through seminars, workshops and active discussions with the representatives of the MEYS and other relevant institutions. Incorporating the HEIs into the implementation structure of the BP instruments is essential for the application of the measures in practice and therefore there should be strong communication channels within the implementation structure, which would ensure that the perceptions of the HEIs are considered when formulating policies on the national level. In other words, the balance between responsibility and trust needs to be achieved through effective communication and management of expectations of the individual agents of the implementation structure.

8. Conclusions and Generalizations

8.1 Towards implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the CR

The implementation of the BP instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR is progressing slowly from formal adoption of policies to their practical application. In many cases the instruments associated with the BP have been formally in place already in the CR at the beginning of the BP. In the CR the significance of the BP therefore largely relates to their promotion, encouraging of their use and coordinated application. In these areas this study illustrates, that the implementation of the BP instruments in the area of diploma recognition stresses the activity of the HEIs themselves, which may lead to uncoordinated implementation and various interpretations of the policies.

This study identifies, that the implementation approach selected can be associated with Lane's model of implementation as an organizational development of a programme (Lane in Winkler, 2002, p.93). The resulting implementation structure is, however, significantly weakened by the organizational rationale, which the implementing institutions and administrators adhere to. In other words, any members of the implementation structure of the BP instruments in the CR primarily consider the interests and priorities of their organizations. The Czech implementation structure of the BP instruments does not include members, which would be fully devoted to the BP objectives. The implementation is therefore largely based on voluntary action of the HEIs, which is stimulated by the Development Programmes published by the MEYS.

8.2 Lessons in implementing a policy

This section will return to the main research question, which states: What can we learn about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the CR? Studying a specific implementation process enables the author to develop suggestions

for generalizations regarding the implementation of a policy, which are presented as possible outcomes of the application of the conceptual framework. These, however, are suggested for further empirical research and confirmation.

The key issues within the implementation process identified by this study relate to coordinated implementation on both the formal and practical levels. While formal implementation appears to be reachable in relatively short period of time, practical application of the adopted policy may reflect former procedures even a decade after adoption of the new policy. Furthermore, formal adoption may contribute towards uncoordinated implementation on the practical level, which results from ambiguous formulation of the policy allowing various interpretations.

This study suggests that the conceptual framework essentially focusing on the responsibilities and trust allowing for both the top-down and bottom-up approaches underpins the key issue of any implementation design. How to achieve formal implementation together with practical application in a coordinated manner within a reasonable period of time? Considering the individual BP instruments, one may argue that for example the Diploma Supplement was implemented with a top-down approach. Its adoption was included in the legislation and its format was set. Within a short period of time the reports illustrate that the Diploma Supplement was issued by all the Czech HEIs. Furthermore, the sources of data used in this study reveal that the Diploma Supplement is considered as the most useful tool in the area of foreign diploma recognition. Therefore the use of the top-down approach was efficient when applied in an area with relatively low potential for conflict and high consensus regarding the policy. However, the other BP instruments do not have a similar technical character, but rather seem to require long-term developments and adjusting of mind sets. For example the use of the ECTS is based on evaluation done by individual HEIs. Its implementation is conducted through seminars and motivations via Development Programmes (ECTS Labels). The approach is therefore rather bottom-up with the stress on the voluntary activity of the HEIs. The implementation of the ECTS appears to be relatively more susceptible to uncoordinated application. The ECTS and its calculations are relatively more influenced by individual judgments and accordingly may result in conflicts. The implementation is therefore focusing on cooperation and gradual “learning” of the HEIs to use the system. This, however, results in significantly slower developments, since the process of implementing the ECTS is influenced by the other priorities of the HEIs.

This study therefore suggests that in order to implement a policy effectively, the level of consensus regarding the adopted policy needs to be considered. Implementing a controversial policy via a top-down approach may result in fast formal adoption with lack of practical impact on the lower levels of the administration. The bottom-up approach focuses on the lower level of the implementation and its perception of the adopted policy. Therefore, in cases with low consensus regarding the policy, the bottom-up approach may serve as means of negotiating the practical adoption. As this study however illustrates, the bottom-up approach yields results in relatively longer periods of time. It also requires a reasonable implementation structure, which would ensure that the policy rationale does not become postponed due to being subjected to the organizational priorities.

8.3 The applicability of the conceptual framework

As was outlined in the chapter 4 on the Conceptual and Research Framework, in this study the social constructions of phenomena are perceived as constantly changing. Therefore any theory must be applicable in various changing contexts and organizational cultures. Furthermore, the theory should possess a certain level of explanatory and predictive power to help the researcher understand, what implementation structure may be effective in a given context.

8.3.1 Responsibility and trust as tools for studying implementation

Returning to the propositions presented on page 67 the first two relate to the applicability of the conceptual framework as means of studying the implementation. The first proposition states:

The top-down and bottom-up approaches may be considered in many cases as two ends of a spectrum. For the analysis of the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition, a synthesis focusing on responsibility and trust allows an investigation of the strength of directive instruments and the autonomy of individual actors on the lower levels of the implementation.

This proposition was confirmed during the study, since the conceptual framework adopted helps to clearly structure the implementation into sections, which the researcher then further examines. The researcher focuses on the institutionalized commonly shared rules and organizational procedures (the cultural models of implementation) as well as the specific programme situations and interactions (the social organization). This allows the researcher to analyze both the formal rules and their practical application related to individual cases. The key contribution of the conceptual framework as a tool for analyzing the implementation therefore lies in keeping the researcher alert to the fact that there may be differences between the formal commonly shared rules and their practical application in specific situations. This approach further encourages the researcher to employ various sources of data and develop a complex picture of the implementation structure by analyzing the strength of the directive instruments and the extent, to which the lower-level implementators possess autonomy in interpreting the formal rules in specific situations.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework does not presuppose a greater strength of neither the bottom-up nor the top-down approach and therefore is applicable in various contexts. It rather stresses that every policy implemented in a specific context needs to be considered individually and the researcher should search for the right balance between the responsibility and trust, which would ensure efficient implementation within the specific policy area.

The second proposition states that:

The recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic is influenced by the instruments of the Bologna Process, which affect the institutionalized rules and social interactions within specific situations.

This proposition initially specifies which instruments of the BP should be considered during this study. Nevertheless, it proves to be rather an extension of the first proposition, because the researcher essentially has to consider the general institutionalized rules and social interactions within the recognition of the foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic. Therefore this proposition is confirmed since it naturally flows from the basis of the conceptual framework used.

8.3.2 Explanatory and predictive power of the focus on responsibility and trust when analyzing implementation

The third proposition presented in chapter 4 on page 67 states that:

Efficient implementation consists of reaching a stability of the performance of officials and administration based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allowing a flexibility of the organizational system, which includes individuals reacting to specific characteristics of cases under investigation.

This proposition suggests possible definition of “efficient implementation”, on which the evaluation and recommendations could be based. The proposition proves useful for evaluating, whether the current state of implementation of the BP instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition is reaching favorable outcomes. In other words, the proposition helps the researcher to base the evaluation on two factors: the stability of the outcomes and the flexibility of the organizational system reacting to individual situations.

Nevertheless, the conceptual framework and associated propositions employed in this study do not provide much explanatory and predictive power. Its flexibility and applicability in various contexts is accompanied by a lack of normative aspects. In other words, the framework is a useful research tool but at the moment does not provide basis for deeper understanding of mechanisms, which would be common in the various contexts under investigation. This study, however, suggests that the conceptual framework essentially focusing on the distribution of responsibilities and trust needs to be verified further by empirical research and that it possesses potential for future development of its explanatory and predictive power. This study suggests possible means of developing its explanatory power by emphasizing that any implementation should be planned in relation to the level of consensus within the specific policy area and to the time frame, in which the policy ought to be implemented. To fully develop the explanatory power, and eventually even the predictive power of the conception, the author suggests that a comprehensive research focused on finding the patterns between the responsibility/trust balance and characteristics of the policy should be conducted.

Summary

In this study, implementation is perceived as a stage of the policy cycle, which may influence, whether the adopted policy has the intended effects. The topic of this study is inspired by the author's experience with the foreign diploma recognition. Her aim is to analyze, how the instruments of the Bologna Process are implemented in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic and how may these findings enrich the general knowledge about policy implementation.

She begins by outlining the general context of the Bologna Process and the diploma recognition in the Czech Republic, which is included in the Chapter 2. She describes the development of the Bologna Process, which over a decade progressed into an organized strategy with comprehensive monitoring. Within the Czech Republic, the process of the foreign diploma recognition remained relatively stable over the decade of the Bologna Process since many instruments of the Bologna Process have formally already been in place at the launch of the strategy.

In order to link the specific study of the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition to the general knowledge about policy implementation a comprehensive conceptual and research framework based on theoretical background needs to be adopted. For this reason the author explores in Chapter 3 theoretical approaches to the policy implementation. These have developed from a top-down and bottom-up approaches to a number of syntheses. The author considers the applicability of the various approaches to the specific policy area under investigation and concludes that the one adopted by Lane and Winkler focusing on achieving a balance between responsibility and trust when developing an implementation structure provides this study with the appropriate analytical tools.

In the next chapter the author operationalizes the theoretical approach adopted into a conceptual and research framework. Here the author presents her knowledge claims, strategies of enquiry and methods employed in this study. The author adopts a social constructivist approach and maintains that any systemic research should be contextualized, since meanings of social phenomena are constantly changing and negotiated socially and historically. For the purpose of analysis the author focuses on two key areas of the organizational culture: cultural models of interaction and social

organization. These reflect the institutionalized commonly shared rules and the social interactions in individual situations. The author therefore essentially focuses on the formal and informal shared rules and the extent to which these allow various interpretations in individual cases of the policy implementation. This arrangement is then assessed in relation to whether it leads to a stability of the output of the administrators based on institutionalized rules and at the same time allows for a flexibility of the organizational system, which would enable individualized reactions of the administrator to various conditions of specific cases. To gain information about this implementation structure, the data are gathered from a questionnaire survey, analysis of documents and semi/structured interviews.

In the chapter named Analytical Part, the analysis of the various sources of data is presented. The author begins with analyzing documents of the Bologna process and the national documents including legislation and strategic plans. She continues by presenting the outcomes of the questionnaire survey, which included 22 Czech public higher education institutions. In the third part she outlines 6 semi-structured interviews, which she conducted with the representatives of the MEYS, the CSVŠ and the higher education institutions.

The key findings from the comparison of the sources of data are presented in the chapter 6, where they are structured according to whether they relate to supranational, national (Czech) or local (higher education institutional) level. On the supranational level she identifies as a key issue practical application of the adopted instruments, which have been implemented formally. This is associated also with the potential shortcomings of the monitoring process, which may not effectively reveal the impact of the instruments on the every-day practice. Furthermore, the practical impact may also differ across the Bologna countries and therefore coordinated implementation is another key issue, which is emphasized. On the national level the author identifies ambiguous aspects of the legislation, which results in various interpretations in specific situations. She also points to unclear responsibility structure, in which accountability is difficult to identify. This is also related to a weak implementation structure of the Bologna objectives, which are promoted as long-term strategic goals and by a team of experts with commitments in other organizations.

The recommendations included in the chapter 7 are accordingly divided into a supranational, national and local level and outline, how the identified issues may be

resolved. On the supranational level a third-party monitoring adopting a multi-method approach is suggested as means of gaining information about the practical application of the implemented instruments and achieving coordinated effects across the region. On the national level the author suggests clarifying the legislation or providing the higher education institutions with greater guidance in order to synchronize the methods of the foreign diploma recognition. The strengthening of the implementation structure by employing experts solely devoted to the Bologna objective is also suggested. Alternatively, changing the recognition procedure to include decision being issued from a central institution is included as a possible long-term solution, which was suggested by representatives of both the MEYS and the higher education institutions. On the local level the author stresses the communication of the administrators with the MEYS and the other bodies to ensure the implemented instruments are efficiently applied in practice.

The last chapter on Conclusions and Generalizations the author evaluates the progress towards achieving the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of foreign diploma recognition in the Czech Republic. She concludes that the selected approach results in a weak implementation structure and adopting the instruments in practice is largely based on voluntary action of the higher education institutions. In the next section the author answers the key research question related to the lessons learnt about the implementation of a policy when studying the implementation of the Bologna Process instruments in the area of recognition of foreign diplomas in the Czech Republic. Here a pattern is suggested for further empirical verification. The author argues that this study seems to illustrate the effect of consensus within a policy on the efficient method of its implementation. Policies associated with a high level of consensus may be efficiently implemented via a top-down method and in a relatively short period of time. Policies associated with a greater divergence of interests, however, need a significant participation of the lower-level implementors on the implementation process and therefore aspects of the bottom-up approach should be included. The adoption of the policy will accordingly be achieved in a longer period of time, since the process of implementation requires negotiations and learning. The conclusions also consider the usefulness of the conceptual and research framework used. Here the author outlines that it proves as a useful analytical tool but it has a limited capacity for explaining and predicting phenomena. In this regard, more

empirical research is needed to identify patterns, which would provide the analysis of the implementation in relation to the distribution of responsibility and trust with explanatory and predictive power.

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