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**The effects of the Bologna Process
on the European higher education systems.**

*An analysis regarding the status of the degree structure implementation in
the higher education systems from Romania and Germany*

(Essay)

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Structural Development of Higher Education System

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Introduction

As one of the biggest discussion topics in Europe, on all, institutional, national and European level, the Bologna Process is the reform process that brought many changes in each higher education system in Europe, irrespective from its economic, demographic or political status. These changes are seen by different actors as more or less good, some are accentuating the challenge the process provide us, some of them support it with all means, some of them criticise it, even if at the end the biggest aim is to create a Europe of knowledge through the European Higher Education Area in about 10 years.

Why do we need this European Higher Education Area? And why do we need to reform our higher education systems? Why do we tend to commonality and how are we going to turn to account cultural and individual differences of each country or of each higher education system?

In the Lisbon Convention from 1997, "The Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region" there were 4 big reasons for arguing this decision:

1. First we need more transparency; more transparency in decision making, more transparency in grading, more transparency of courses (with all, objectives, learning outcomes, activities), transparency of qualifications (see Diploma Supplement);
2. Second, qualification should be recognized all over Europe;
3. Third, mobility should be an important part of the study programme (In the Bologna Process nowadays we talk about the fact that each student should be mobile for at least one semester). Not only students should be mobile, but also teachers, researchers and administrative staff. Mobility is getting important also after graduation, mobility within the European labour market.
4. And competitiveness is one more need of the European region, competitiveness with other Higher Education systems (i.e. US, Japan, Australia).

Barloy (2004), has identified in his article "The Bologna Process: reasons and consequences" 2 major needs of the higher education reform in Europe: the university reasons and the political reasons. Among the university reasons he talks about "the universities nostalgia which had in past a classical mobility. This leads to the very big need of the recognition of studies and qualifications. The major considerations are the political one; mobility of students to the centre of Europe is very low. Then the competitiveness of Europe world-wide has lost his

speed in the last years. A Europe of knowledge has to be refunded. In this sense, there is more need of financial resources for students' mobility."

Motivation

There are a lot of debates and open question regarding this topic. Students and teachers are often unsatisfied with the new reform, but not really because of the reform, but because of the incomplete implementation. Nowadays we talk a lot about competitive higher education systems in Europe, comparison between the different higher education systems, and even regarding the implementation of the new higher education reform, we are looking always for 'good practice'.

This study wants to see to what extend reform tends to be implemented better in an economically advanced country than in eastern European countries, which are the advantages and disadvantages in each country and if the Bologna principles are implemented rather by heart or by word. An important aspect, mostly controversial in many countries, because it is the most visible one, and the most known one, is the new degree structure. In some countries the change to the new degree structure meant redesigning the whole previous structure, while some other countries, had to adjust only the number of years, respective ECTS points, since they had already a cycle structure.

The question is how higher education systems adapted to the new degree structure. The different background (i.e. economical, organisational) creates them more or less opportunities to switch from their initial structure to the new "European" study structure. The strategy is different: some just put together all courses offered before and split them into 3 years of bachelor study, some of them really revised the curricula from the beginning, as the Bologna principles propose.

Chosen countries:

Germany and Romania signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, although it is important to keep in mind that Germany was one of the initiators of the Bologna reform in 1998, in Sorbonne.

Our analysis stars from this common point and goes into the different strategic plans for implementation of the Bologna principles according to the status of the educational system at that time, taking in account the opportunities offered by the different educational systems, economical status, and the decision making bodies.

Structure of the paper

In order to make an idea about the starting point of Germany and Romania at the time of signing the Bologna Declaration, the first chapter will create an overview about the higher education systems in these 2 countries before starting the reform. Next, the aims and principles of the Bologna Process will be explained with accent on the new degree structure in order to create the basis for the next chapter, where we will analyze the implementation process in each country and their status now, respective in 2007, when the last Ministry report for the meeting in London was written.

The conclusion will discuss the reasons for adhering to the Bologna Process, will point out the strong and weak point of each implementing strategy in the 2 higher education systems and will bring suggestions for implications at both implementation strategy and research level.

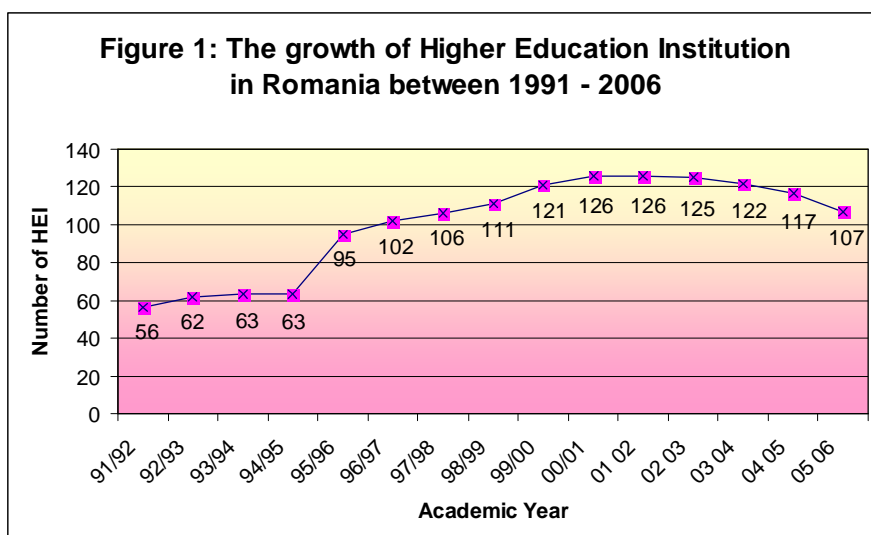
Documentation

The documentation used in the study, for sustaining the ideas and answering the questions we asked at the beginning of the paper are in the main part country reports, stocktaking reports, and legal acts of the countries, but also other articles showing the opinion of other higher education actors regarding the Bologna reform, as well as statistics showing the development of the new study structure and the raise of new programmes.

1. The description of the higher education systems before Bologna

1.1. The Romanian higher education system

In the year of signing the Bologna Declaration, we were talking in Romania about 111 higher education institutions (HEI's), both state and private institutions. In the meanwhile, they rise up to 126 from 2000-2003, but an important decrease took place after that, in the way that nowadays students can learn in 107 HEI (National Institute of Statistics, 2006). The figure below illustrates the evolution vs. involution in the number of higher education institutions from winter semester 1991/92 until 2005/06.



Note: Since 1995/ 1996 academic year, statistical data also include higher education from private institutions.

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2006

As mentioned before, there are 2 kinds of higher education institutions by criteria of financing: state institutions and private institutions. Another criterion for classification is the length of study (Eurydice, 2006). Following this we distinguish between:

- University Colleges ("Colegiu universitar")
- Universities (also Polytechnics), Institutes and Academies

The so called University Colleges were part of the universities and were training teachers and engineers: the teacher training college ("Colegiu de institutori") and the technical university college ("Colegiu universitar tehnic"). The length of study was 3 years and the course of study was more practical oriented. The awarded degrees were for teacher training: teacher for primary school, teacher for kindergarten and for engineers: college engineer. After finishing the college degree, graduates could go on with 2 more years at the university, in order to get a higher degree. Most of the teachers were doing this in order to get higher salaries.

The universities offered bachelor programmes with a length of at least 4 years (licenta), except the medical universities, where the first degree can be awarded after 6 years of study (both human and veterinary medicine).

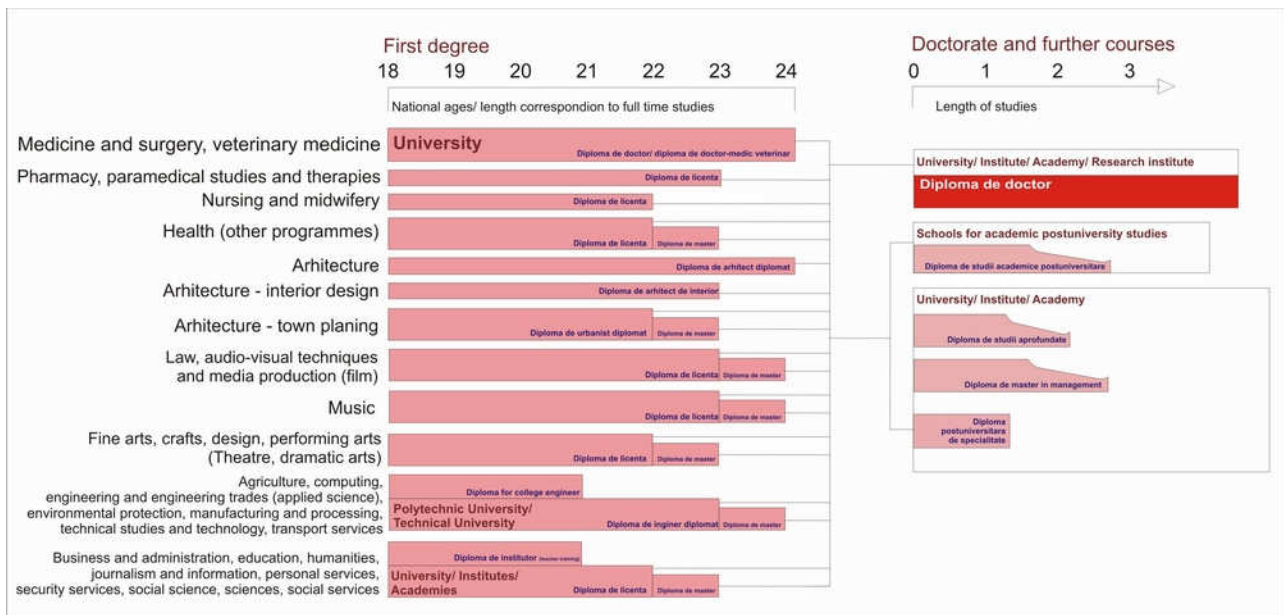
A special type of universities is the academic school, which is a higher education institution that prepares students in a certain domain, like economics, political science, and music. (National Report Romania, 2007)

The Polytechnics are technical oriented universities with study duration of 5 years for the first degree. The name of the awarded degree was 'diplomat engineer' ("inginer diplomat"). After the first degree, graduates could continue with the so called deepened studies ("studii

aprofundate") with a length of usually 2 semesters and doctoral studies for 4 years. (Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, 2007)

The regular age for entry at a higher education institution is all over the Romanian system the same, namely 18 years. The following graph will show the different degrees and extensions of study programmes in the Romanian higher education system before 2005.

Figure 2: The structure of the Romanian higher education system before 2005



Source: Eurydice, 2007

An important aspect to mention is that graduates from 4 years bachelor level, could choose to apply for a doctoral programme. That means that both bachelor and master graduates are eligible for a doctoral programme.

Decision making

At national level, the main decision maker in Romania is the Ministry of education, research and youth. In this case policies and reforms are implemented very often top-down. In some cases the professional associations do have an important role in deciding for instance about the competencies the students need to acquire after completing a cycle of study.

At institutional level, the main decision body is the university senate, built from deans, vice deans, researchers, university college directors, and students' representatives. Additional decision makers can be identified from institution to institution. For instance at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, an important council at managerial level is the Academic Council (*Consiliul Academic*), which is in charge to decide about issues regarding the

development strategies, policies, regulation projects and is organising the international evaluation on the university. Meanwhile the rectorate (rector, vice rectors, one general chancellor and one general administrative director) is the executive board of the university. (Babes-Bolyai University, 2007)

1.2. The German higher education system

The same as in the Romanian higher education system, we use the two criteria for describing the institutional structure, namely the type of institutions and the financing.

Therefore we distinguish between:

- Universities [including: Universities of Fine Arts (*Kunst- und Musikhochschulen*), Pedagogical Universities (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*), Theological Universities (*Theologische Hochschulen*)] and
- Universities of Applied Science (*Fachhochschulen*)

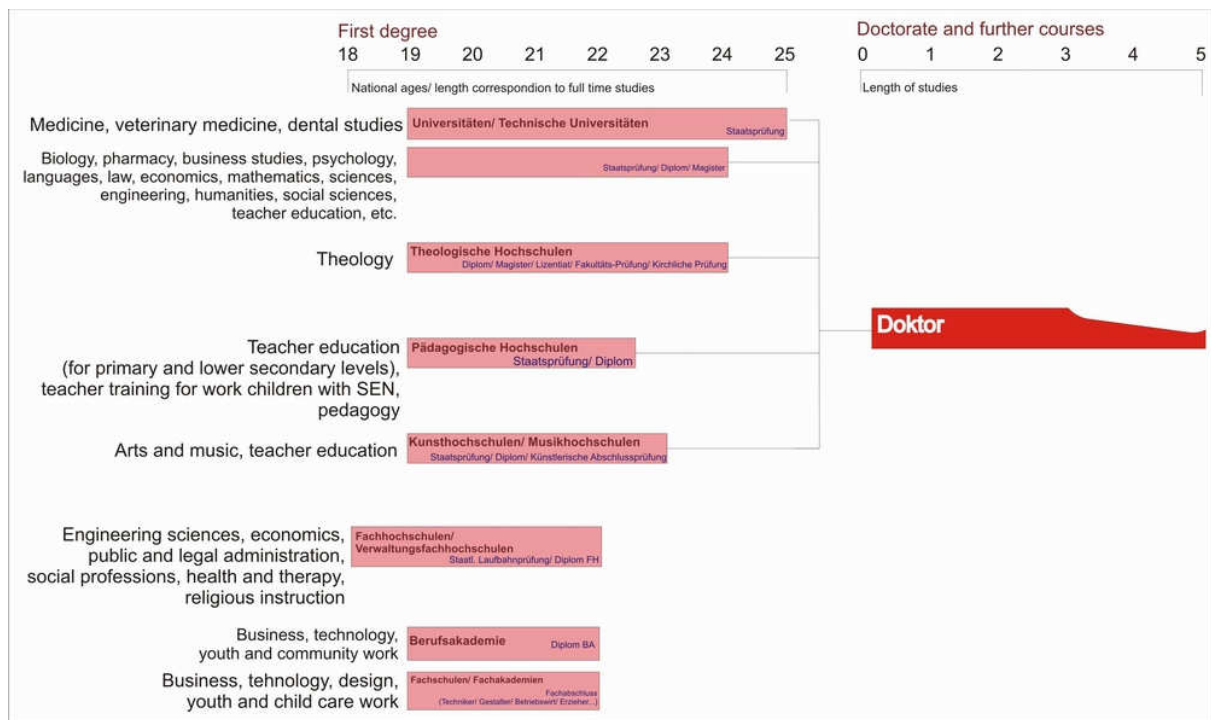
In many of the country statistics we can find these 5 types of institutions as taken separately, but actually the 2 biggest groups of institutions are the Universities and the *Fachhochschulen*, that makes the German higher education system become a binary system. What makes the *Fachhochschulen* so different from the universities are the access conditions, the course of study and the awarded degree. The *Fachhochschule* give students the possibility to apply with a '*Fachabitur*' degree, which can be achieved a year earlier than the normal "*Abitur*" degree, after highschool. The minimum age is 18 and the length of study is 4 years, whereas at university level the duration of studies was of 5 years and the age for access was 19. Within the *Fachhochschulen* students can not go on for a doctorate or "*Habilitation*" (necessary title for being a university or FH teacher) (Hartnagel, 2005)

An important aspect to mention is the access to a higher cycle and the main degree awarded. The so called German "*Diplom*", was the first degree which gave the students access to a doctorate, because it corresponds to the master degree, the same as *Magister* and *Staatsexamen*. As told before, the regular duration of study at university level was about 5 years. Usually students worked during their studies, a fact that leads to an extension of their study period, to 6,7 years at university and 4,8 at *Fachhochschule*. (Schomburg, 2000) In comparison with other educational systems (and the more with the Romanian higher education system, which was very strict in this sense) studies of students at German higher

education institution were very flexible in both the age of the students and the study course they were choosing. (Hanft & Teichler, 2007). The authors were also concluding that German students are more likely part time students and that the expansion of the study period or of the number of part time students is very popular.

Table no. 2 gives an overview about how the German higher education system was structured before 1999.

Figure 3. The structure of the German higher education system before 1999



Source: Eurydice, 2007

The *Berufsakademie* – offered by some Länder – forms part of the tertiary sector and combines academic training at a *Studienakademie* with practical in-company professional training in keeping with the principle of the dual system. (Eurydice, 2006)

Regarding the other criteria for differentiation of the German higher education institutions we can distinguish between:

- state institutions
- private institutions, state recognised
- church institutions, state recognised

Private Universities differ from the state universities in terms of financing. In the meanwhile there are about 63 private higher education institutions, which charge between 1800 to 2400

Euros per Semester including the following benefits: "small study groups, close link to the economic sector, close relation between theory and practice, highly international orientation, short study times, good employment chances". (DAAD, s.t.)

There are few church institutions offering study programmes in churchly professions as well as Social pedagogues, the so called medical pedagogues (*Heilpädagogen*) and religious pedagogues (*Religionspädagogen*), specialists in health care and church musicians. The access procedure is a bit different than in other higher education institutions, because applicants have to proof their closeness to the protestant or Catholic Church. Exceptions are only at the college for Jewish studies in Heidelberg, where all people from all persuasions are accepted. (DAAD, s.t.)

Decision making

"A major characteristic of the federal state is that both the Federation and its constituent states, known as '*Länder*', have the status of a state". (Eurydice, 2005, p. 15) The *Länder* have the responsibility for education, science and culture. In this sense, even if higher education institutions have the freedom to adopt their own statutes, this have to be approved by the German Ministry of Education and Research or the one of the '*Land*' in which they are situated.

Within one higher education institution there are various bodies deciding about the way how the institutions should "run".

1. One is the so called parliament of the institution, deciding about the elections of the governing board and the resolutions of the basic statutes.
2. The second is the senate responsible for "matters of basic relevance".

(Eurydice, 2005)

2. The European Higher Education Area.

We were discussing at the beginning, in the introduction, about the reason and the necessity of the Bologna reform and about the demands of a European Higher Education Reform. Next we will follow the development of the process from the beginning in 1998 until today emphasising the action line regarding the cycle structure proposed by the ministers in 1999.

The aim of the Bologna Process is to create until 2010 the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). For achieving this big goal, ministries of education from meanwhile 46 European countries agreed to set a couple of smaller objectives, in order to include many aspects of the Higher Education domain.

One of the starting points and one of the first the discussions about the "European Region" was in Lisbon in 1997, when the Convention stated the "recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region". At that time officials from different European countries were talking about the important role of higher education as a promoter of peace, understanding and tolerance, talking about the great diversity of the education systems in the European region as a reflection of its "cultural, social, political, philosophical, religious and economic diversity, an exceptional asset which should be fully respected", talking about recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees, about institutional autonomy and all this referring to the European Region. (Lisbon convention, 1997)

In 1998, ministries of higher education from 4 European countries (Germany, Italy, France and the UK) planed a European reform, by setting up a number of more general goals in the Sorbonne Declaration on *Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System*:

- Facilitating the mobility of students in the European area and their integration into the European labour market, as well as the mobility of teachers;
- Improving the international transparency of courses and the recognition of qualifications by means of gradual convergence towards a common framework of qualifications and cycles of study;
- Encouraging a return to studies or their continuation in the same or another institution, in a school or within arrangements for European mobility.

(Sorbonne Declaration, 1998)

One year later, the first 6 action lines were written down in the Bologna Declaration on "*The European Higher Education Area*"

- Facilitating the readability and comparability of qualifications;
- Implementing a system based essentially on two main cycles (undergraduate and graduate);
- Establishing a system of credits, such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer System. Now also European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System);

- Developing arrangements to support the mobility of students, teachers and researchers;
- Promoting European cooperation in quality assurance (birth of ENQA);
- Promoting the European dimension in higher education (in terms of curricular development and inter-institutional cooperation).

(Bologna Declaration, 1999)

After Bologna, the ministerial meetings took place every 2 years, on the one hand for evaluating the status of each participating country at the meeting time and on the other hand to set further goals in the reform or priorities for the next periods in order to achieve the existing goals.

Different organizations beside the ministries of education from the different countries had also an important role in shaping the European Higher Education Area. Their important role can be identified in the formulation of some of the goals. The European Commission, for instance, was stressing about creating the European dimension and the attractiveness of higher education, in terms of curricular development and inter-institutional cooperation. The students were accentuating the social dimension of higher education, starting from explaining this through equality of opportunities.

In the third Communiqué (the next papers published by the Ministries in the context of the Bologna Process, were called no more declarations, but communiqués, as an addition to the already existing Bologna Declaration) we can find the influence of students voice as well, by adding the goal of including higher education institutions and students as full partners in decision making. Furthermore the ministers accentuated:

- Lifelong learning (LLL);
- The need to enhance the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area. (Attractiveness for other higher education systems from USA, Japan, Australia for example).

(Prague Communiqué, 2001)

The next ministerial meetings haven't brought anymore further goals, but there were pointing out the priorities for the next period of implementation.

The 3 intermediate priorities established during the Berlin Conference (2003), which should be achieved by 2005, focus on:

- Having started the implementation of the two-cycle system;
- Automatic provision of the Diploma Supplement for all graduates free of charge in a widely spoken European language;
- Establishment of a national quality assurance system.

(Berlin Communiqué, 2003)

To make the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA) more tangible, the Bergen Communiqué (2005) also included the establishment of the doctoral cycle in the Bologna reforms.

In the London Communiqué “*Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world*”, in 2007, ministers stressed out some very important ideas of the role of Education and Higher Education within the society:

The 4 aims of education:

- o Preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society;
- o Preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development;
- o Creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and
- o Stimulating research and innovation.

Other important points of the London Communiqué:

- Move towards student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision
- Fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010.
- To concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines, including the ongoing priorities of the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods;

(London Communiqué, 2007)

The issue we want to analyse more in detail is the one regarding the second action line: "*Implementing a system based essentially on two main cycles*".

Two cycles vs. three cycles

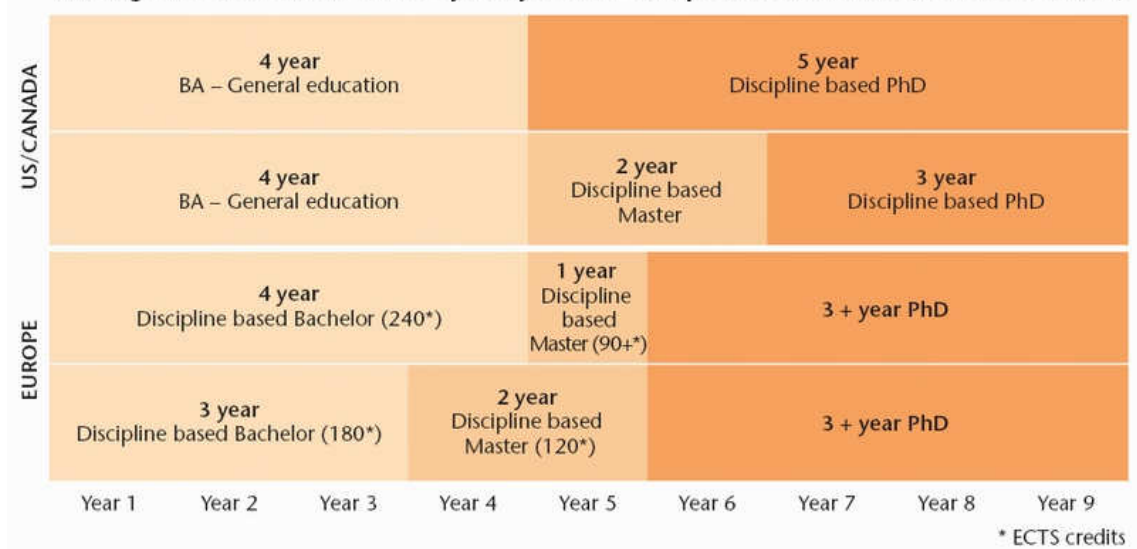
In different periods on the timeline of the Bologna Process we talk about 2 respectively 3 cycles. In the Bologna Declaration (1999) we were talking about 2 cycles, namely undergraduate and graduate. At that time, the doctoral studies were not yet included as an action line in the Bologna Process. We can continue using these terms and to include the bachelor level in the undergraduate cycle and the master and doctor levels in the graduate cycle. In the official declarations (see Prague 2001) we can find also the term '3rd cycle'. In this case we split the cycles in correlation with the study levels or degrees and have the following explanation:

- 1st cycle - bachelor level
- 2nd cycle - master level
- 3rd cycle - doctoral level

In this paper we will use the terms of the '3 cycle structure' and discuss more in detail the first 2 cycles, the bachelor and the master degree level.

The following table shows the cycle structure proposed by the Bologna Process in comparison with the US and Canadian model.

Figure 4: Average Timeline of the Three Cycle System in Europe vs. US/Canada (full-time student)



There is no discrimination between countries that have a different elementary and secondary school education length. Whether compulsory education lasts eleven, twelve or thirteen years, it is considered as providing the general education necessary to follow a university programme, which in Europe is discipline-based.

Source: EUA, 2007

"The access to the graduate cycle will require the successful completed studies in the previous cycle, which might have a length of at least 3 years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries." (Bologna Declaration, 1999)

The main reasons for introducing Bachelor and Master Programmes as a common study structure all over Europe is divers: first, as we said at the beginning, more transparency was needed in terms of study programmes and degrees in Europe in order to facilitate students', teachers' and researchers' mobility. Second international attractiveness and competitiveness of the European higher education institutions was hoped and expected. (Alesi, 2005)

In Prague (2001) ministers agreed to accelerate the process by putting deadlines for some objectives. One of them was for the cycle system and therefore all ministers engaged themselves to implement the cycle structure at least starting from 2005; it was one of the few action lines that got a deadline. This shows the importance of the structural homogeneity within the European higher education area, in order to implement successfully the other action lines and to maintain the cultural diversity of the countries.

In Bergen (2005), ministers observed that many participating countries developed new study programmes, corresponding to the new cycle structure and more than a half of the new enrolled students were studying in the new system.

Therefore, in London ministers agreed that in order to reduce the structural barriers between the cycles, which had been implemented in almost every participating country, there is a need of adequate implementation of the European Credit Transfer System, based on learning outcomes and students' workload. (London Communiqué, 2007)

It is difficult and it makes not much sense to talk about the cycle system and the new degree structure without referring to the other components of the Bologna Process and the other action lines, which in a good implementation strategy, should be taken together. Therefore, in order not to lose the thread and get also a good overall understanding, the appendix will provide a glossary which explains the different components.

Next, we will analyse the implementation strategy of the new degree structure in the German and the Romanian higher education system.

3. The higher education reform in Romania and Germany. The dynamics of the changing process

There are various modes and speeds of introducing the new systems. In this chapter we will analyse how the transition from the old study structure to the new cycle studied structure happened in the German and the Romanian higher education system, which obstacles they met in the transition process and which related components they took in account during the implementation.

3.1. The new cycle structure in the Romanian higher education system

"The Bologna Process in Romania is an opportunity for the higher education reform, which was a more conservative sector on the education system". (Marga, 2005, p. 13)

At the beginning of the academic year 2005/2006, the minister of education from that time, prof. Mircea Miclea published a report regarding the status of the higher education system in Romania. First he refers to the fact that Romania's higher education system should adhere to the European Higher Education Area. Therefore Romania engaged itself to adopt the Bologna principles and took on the following Bologna objectives, regarding:

- Quality assurance;
- Cycle system;
- Mobility;
- Credit system;
- Recognition of qualifications;
- Promoting the European dimension of higher education;
- Promoting the attractivity of the EHEA;
- Social dimension;
- Lifelong learning;
- EHEA and ERA as 2 pillons of the knowledge based society;

(Miclea, 2005)

The main implementation mechanism was the legislative without any implementation strategy at national level. Starting with the academic year 2005-2006 the Romanian higher education system switched to a the new structure: bachelor (also called "*licenta*") with a

duration of 3 years, master for 2 years and doctoral studies 3 years regulated by a law appeared one year ago. The same law refers also to the degrees awarded for each cycle and the number of credits. A new element was the organisation of bachelor programmes on study domains, which had as consequence condensing 369 specialisations available up to 2005, in 66 study domains at the time of implementation. Another new element was the definition of each cycle in terms of general competencies and abilities that suppose to be acquired. (Velea si Istrate, 2005)

There were 4 major Acts which represent the legislative framework regarding the restructure of higher education studies:

- The Law 288/ 26.04.2004 regarding the organisation of higher education studies;
- The governmental decision nr. 88/ 10.02.2005 regarding the organisation of bachelor studies;
- The Ministry order nr. 3235/ 10.02.2005 regarding the organisation of bachelor studies;
- The Ministry Order nr. 3545. 10.03.2005 regarding the general criteria of admission for bachelor study programmes, for the academic year 2005/ 2006;

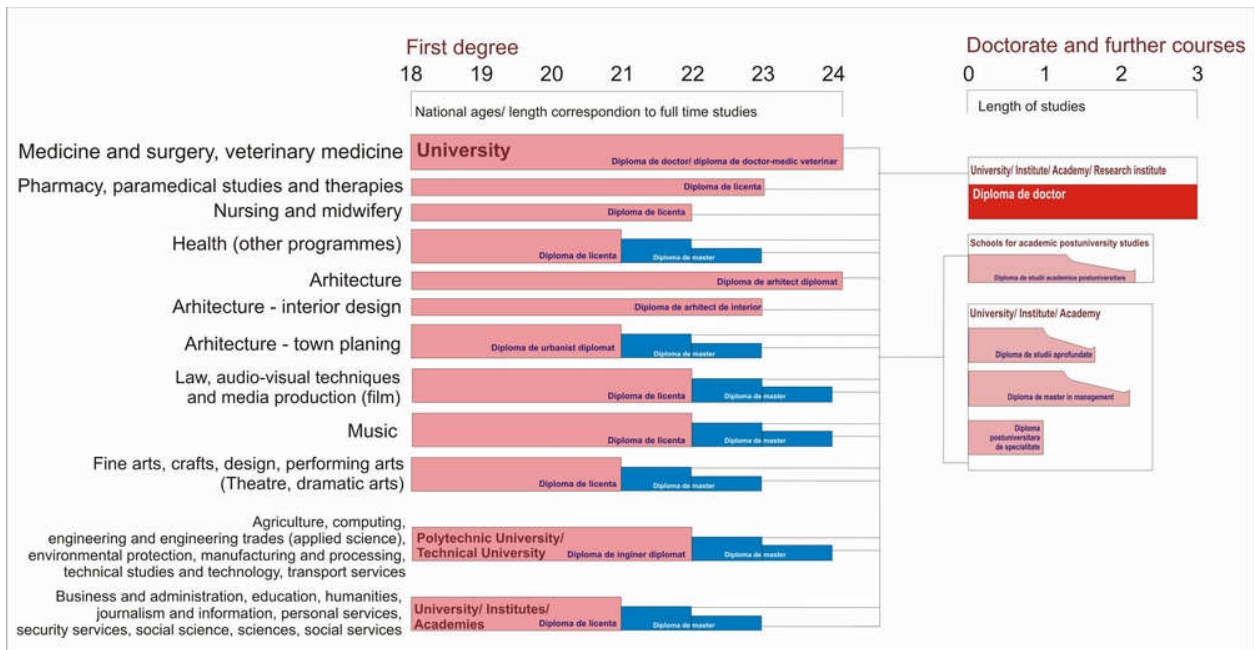
(Miclea, 2005)

Beside the legislative restructure, in 2005 a Bologna promoter national team was set up, organised on 3 fields of expertise: ECTS, Quality Assurance and the three cycle system. This team suppose to participate in European activities and to support the universities in implementation of the new reform. The various "think-tanks", involved in designing the new system, are: the National Rectors' Council, the National Council for Educational Reform, representatives of the students' bodies and of the trade unions active in the sectors of education. The main forum for discussing the structural changes in the Romanian higher education and the new legislative proposals is the National University Rectors Conference, with the participation of all HEIs' rectors and policy makers. (National report Romania, 2007)

The introduction of the new cycle system was a priority and a challenge for the old structure in order to increase the compatibility and competition with other European higher education systems. In this spirit the change was from one two cycle system to another two cycle system, namely from generally 4+1 to 3+2 in the universities and from 5+1 to 4+2 in the Polytechnics. The Colleges, with study duration of 3 years for the first degree were totally

restructures, but more than that, they were closed and the programmes were integrated in university programmes in the 3+2 structure. (Eurydice, 2007b)

Figure 5: The Romanian higher education system



Source: Eurydice, 2007

Durations of study cycles, corresponding to various fields and areas of specialization, have been established by the Ministry of Education and Research on the basis of proposals from the National Council of Rectors and have been approved by government decision.

The first (Bachelor's) cycle includes a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 transferable study credits, and lasts 3 to 4 years, depending on the field and area of specialization (i.e. it is known that law studies have a bachelor cycle of 8 semester, equivalent of 240 credits). The second (Master's) cycle includes a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 120 transferable study credits (in exceptional cases and depending on the length of the first cycle, the lower limit may be 60 transferable study credits), and lasts 1 to 2 years. Both cycles should enable the accumulation of at least 300 transferable study credits. (Eurydice, 2007b)

The National Institute of education in Romania showed in a study regarding the conditions and possibilities of implementing the Bologna Process in Romania that most of the universities are taking in account all other components of the Bologna Declaration linked to the new structure. Although there were some universities which changed the structure without taking in account the changes in the didactical process. (Velea & Istrate, 2005)

In the same study, the teachers say that a redesign of the study programmes is needed as well as the reconsideration of the evaluation process. Regarding the continuation of studies on the next cycle, 78% of the students plan to do it and also a big number of students have faith that the Diploma Supplement will increase the chances of employment on both the national and European labour market.

It is important to mention that this study was made in 2005, when the new structure just started, but had to be implemented in all the Romanian higher education institutions.

Criticisms are not excluded. In an interview taken to Prof. Andrei Marga, one former Minister of Education in Romania, he was talking about the fail of implementation of the new structure. He doesn't agree with the so called "domain-based bachelor degree", which is not used to exist in any other country, with the transition from specialisations to domains and with the unclear implementation of the structure. (Marga, 2006) The major criticisms were made regarding the top-down implementation of the Bologna principles, by laws and governmental decisions, because the practice shows us that in many cases the content of 4 years was compressed, without any other changes, to 3 years.

Unfortunately there are no available statistics regarding the percentage of current new bachelor and master programmes within the total numbers of degree programmes. The only issue we can keep in mind is that from 2005 all new enrolled students started their studies in the new bachelor programmes. Master programmes were also new developed, with study duration of 1 to 2 years. Graduates from the old system might continue their specialisation in new "short" master programmes without overreaching 5 years of studying (300 credits). There are still frustrations between these graduates, who want to take a master offered only with a length of 4 semesters and have to study all together up to 6 years. The first Bologna graduates are finishing their studies in summer 2008, which would mean that all the following master programmes should have a length of 4 semesters. If it would be like that is still an open question.

3.2. The cycle structure in the German higher education system

The German implementation strategy had a different course of action than the Romanian one. The legislative mechanism was starting very early, even before the Bologna Declaration was

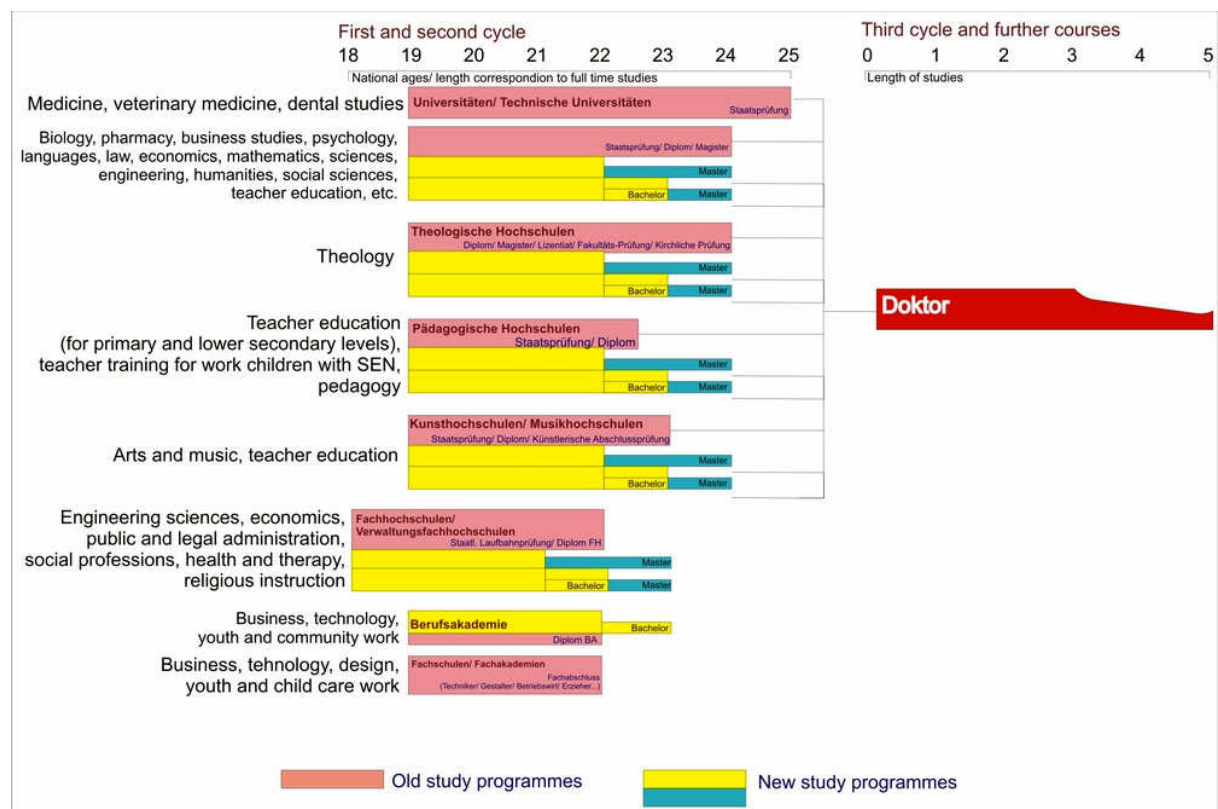
signed, namely in 1998. Following we can find some of the main acts, which decided about the structure of the higher education system in Germany:

- 3 December 1998 Introduction of an Accreditation Procedure for Bachelor's/ Bakkalaureus and Master's/Magister Study Courses (Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs)
- 14 April 2000 Resolution on access to the doctorate for graduates of Master's and Bachelor's study courses (Resolution of the Standing Conference)
- 22 October 2004 General Framework for the Introduction of Credit Systems and the Modularization of Degree Programmes (Resolution of the Standing Conference)
- 22 September 2005 Common Structure Guidelines of the *Länder* according to paragraph 9.2 HRG for the Accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's Study Courses (Resolution of the Standing Conference)

(Eurydice, 2007a)

Germany changed from a one cycle system to a two-cycle system, namely from 5 years "diplom" degree to the almost in each institution 3+2 study structure. The following figure shows the cycle structure in comparison with the old structure.

Figure 6: The German higher education system



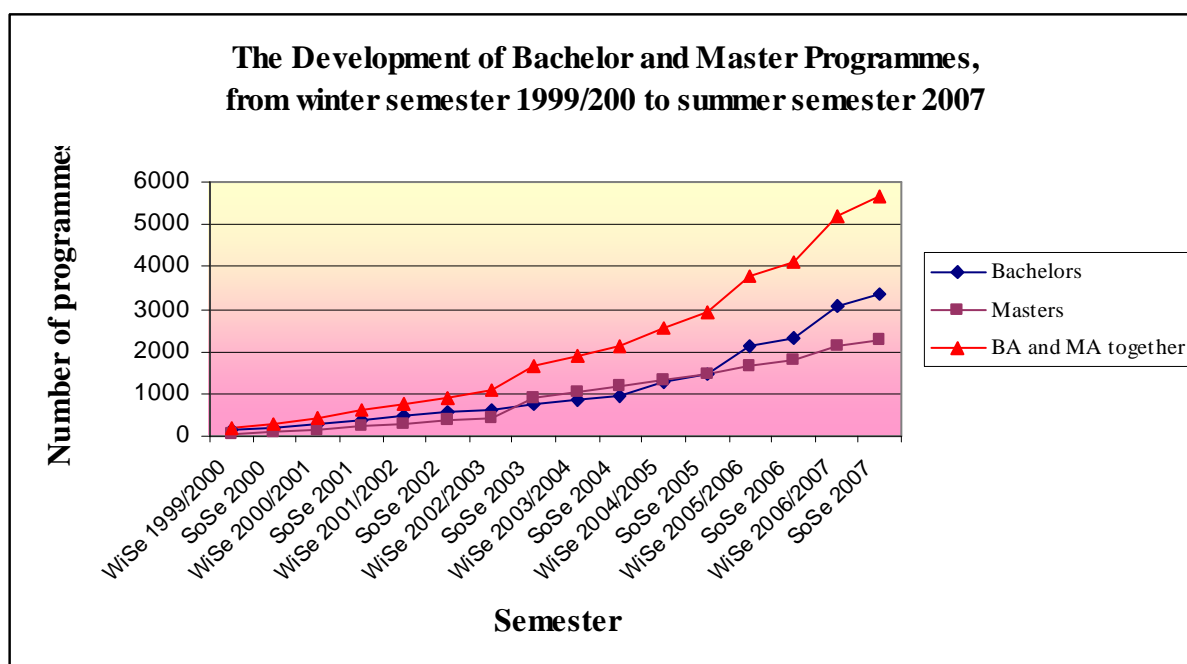
Source: Eurydice, 2007

The introduction of the new structure in Germany began with the academic year 1999/ 2000, when the first bachelor and master programmes were offered in the same time with the old long programmes. Medicine, veterinary medicine and dental studies are only offered as a long cycle.

In occupationally oriented ISCED 5B programmes (offered by *Berufsakademien*), students have to acquire a Bachelor's degree before having the opportunity to transfer to ISCED 5A Master's study courses in other higher education institutions (except in the *Land* of Baden-Württemberg). (Eurydice, 2007a)

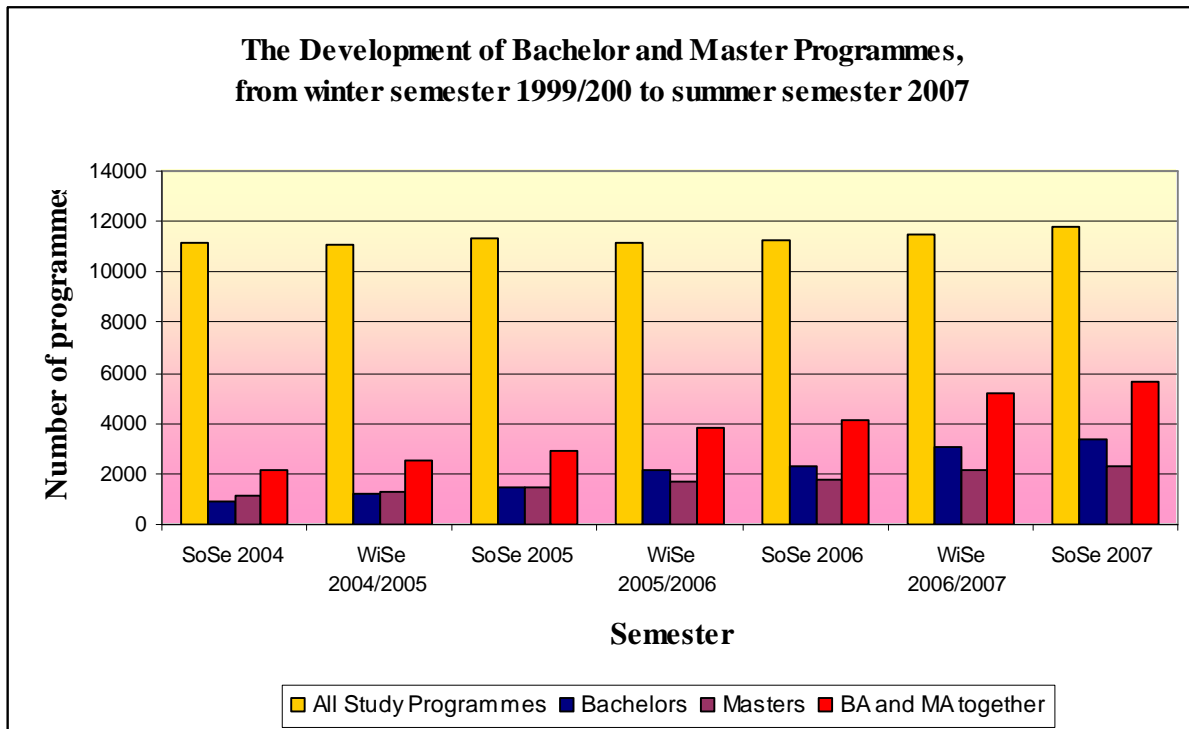
In the winter semester 2005/ 2006 more than 1/3 of all study programmes followed the new structure. The situation of Romania and Germany is different, because in Romania, students couldn't choose the system they want to study in, while in Germany, because the transition from the old system takes longer time (until 2010), in some cases, students still had the chance to choose for old or new study programmes for a couple of years. While in Germany, in the winter semester 2005/ 2006 33, 9% of the offered study programmes were following the new structure (HRK, 2007), in Romania 100% of the programmes are on the new bachelor level.

Figure 7: The development of Bachelor and Master Programmes offers, from winter semester 1999/ 2000 to summer semester 2007.



Source: HRK. (2007). URL: <http://www.hrk-bologna.de>

Figure 8: The development of Bachelor and Master Programmes offers, from summer semester 2004 to summer semester 2007



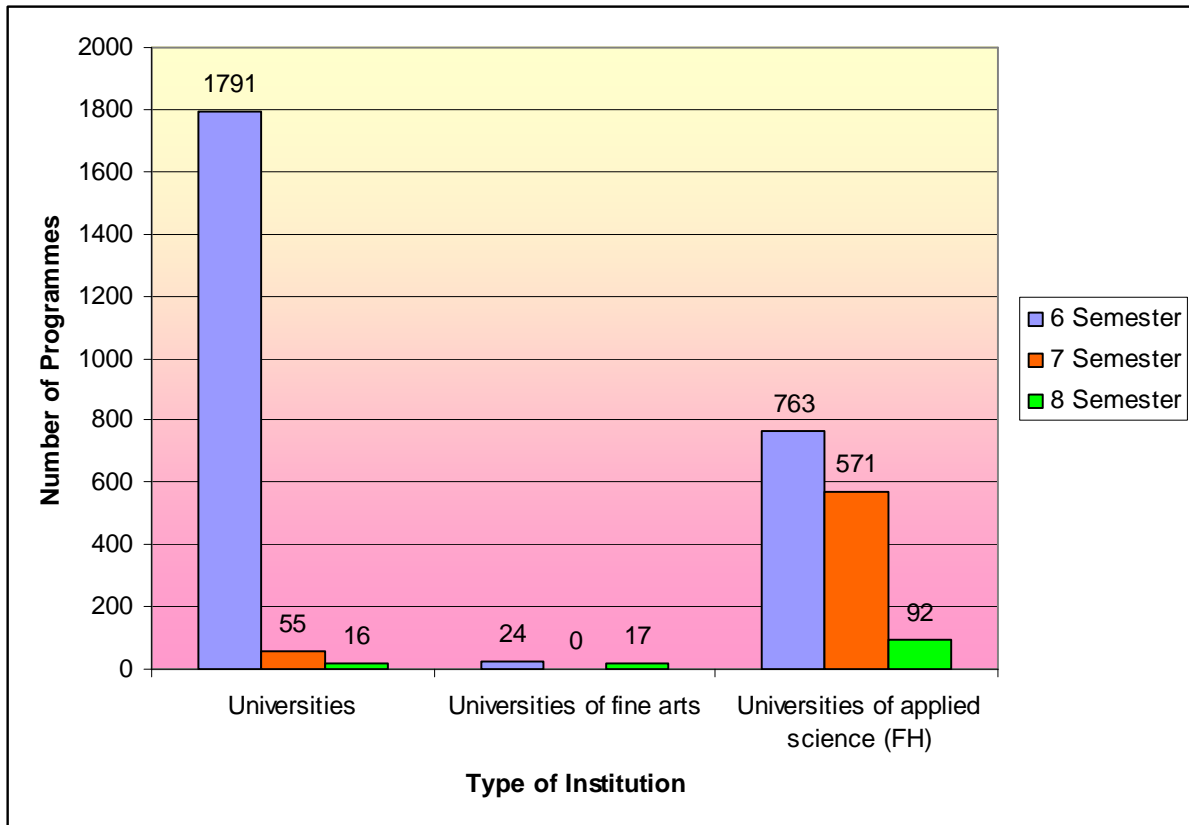
Source: HRK. (2007). URL: <http://www.hrk-bologna.de>

Both Universities and *Fachhochschulen* switched to the new structure. It is interesting to observe, that the status of *Fachhochschule* remains the same, that means that they offer master programmes which doesn't give the graduates the chance to go on for a PhD, because only university master degrees gives graduates access to doctoral programmes. (Hartnagel, 2005)

Because the educational system is in the responsibility of the federal *Länder*, and these have a certain autonomy in this sector, some of them enforce their higher education institutions to change to the new structure (as it is the case in Nordrhein-Westfalen) and some others didn't do this. There are also some institutions who didn't decide yet to change to the new structure, because they are waiting for a national regulation. (Hartnagel, 2005)

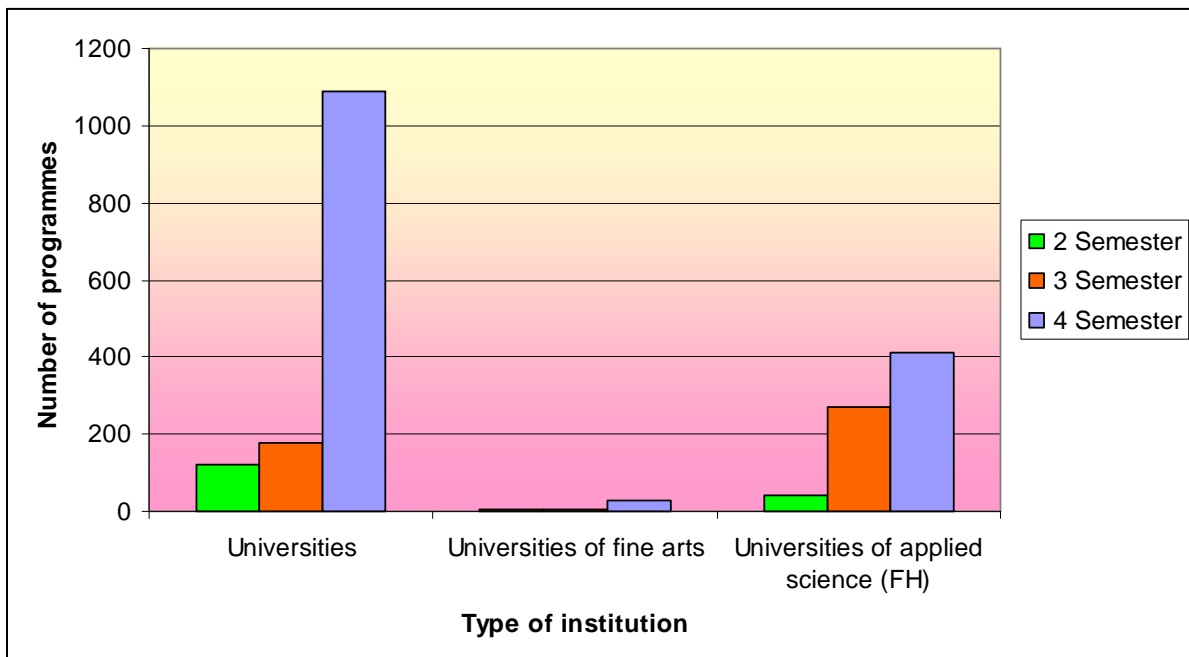
The figures below shows, that in Germany the most likely duration of the first cycle is 6 semesters in universities and 6 to 7 semesters in the *Fachhochschulen*. Therefore at Master's level students study for 4 semesters in universities and 3 to 4 semesters in the *Fachhochschulen*. That means that in the universities of applied science the basic knowledge is much more emphasised than the specialisation in a specific topic.

Figure 9: Duration of Bachelor Programmes by type of institution in the summer semester 2007



Source: HRK. (2007). URL: <http://www.hrk-bologna.de>

Figure 10: Duration of Master Programmes by type of institution in the summer semester 2007



Source: HRK. (2007). URL: <http://www.hrk-bologna.de>

Conclusions and implications

We could follow some common issues in the implementation of the study structure in the German and the Romanian higher education systems. Below, we summarise the main concepts in a comparative table, in order to create a clear overview about the differences and the similarities we found out in the 2 higher education systems:

Table 1: Change of the HES in terms of study structure in Romania and Germany

	Romania			Germany		
	<i>Old system</i>		<i>New system</i>	<i>Old system</i>		<i>New system</i>
Structure	Two-cycle		Two-cycle	One-cycle		Two-cycle
Length (in semesters)	8 BA+2 MA	Universities	6 BA+4 MA	> 10 Dipl.	Universities	6 BA+4 MA
	10 BA+2 MA	Polytechnics	8 BA +3-4 MA	8 FH- Abschluss	<i>Fachhochschulen</i>	6-7 BA + 3-4 MA
Start			2005/ 2006			1999/ 2000
End			2008/ 2009			2010
Name of degree	Licenta + Masterat		Licenta/ Bachelor + Master	Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen, FH-Abschluss		Bachelor + Master

The effects of the Romania strategy of implementation is shortly and clearly explained in the EUA's trends 4 report (2005): "too much reform in too little time". From this point of view, the German way of approach is more constructive, for several reasons: first, decisions have time to go through debates on institutional level. There is more time for information in advance, for awareness, for designing the new programmes' curricula and for offering all the benefits students and teachers should profit from.

If we take a wide look, the first general conclusion could be regarding the advanced implementation status in Romania in comparison with the implementation status in Germany, which is still trying to introduce new programmes in its higher education institution. Although the Romanian ministry of education built the legislative basis 4 years later than the German ministry, the Romanian authoritarian approach succeed in establishing the new cycle structure in short time.

From this point of view it is interesting for further studies to analyze to what extent the curriculum for the new study programmes was redesigned, taking in account the principles of the ECTS-system, the mobility possibilities of students and the importance of certain qualification on the labour market.

As a student in both systems (getting the bachelor degree in Romania and doing my Masters in Germany), I can feel the more calm approach of the German stakeholders in comparison with the authoritarian approach in Romania. Although during discussions with students from Romania as well as with students from Germany, the lack of information among them persists in both countries. In this sense another common problem observed is the idea that the bachelor studies oblige students to do a master, in order to get a good working place after graduation. In my point of view, the last 2 issues are strongly related and can be solved only together, by involving all higher education actors in the so called bottom-up implementation process.

While in Germany we talk about a too short period for the first degree, in Romania we talk about what to do with a master degree! There are no precise functions for a master graduate, there are no higher salaries for them, and the only benefit is the knowledge in a specific area they accumulate. (Panzaru, 2006)

One interesting topic to discuss is also the reason of signing the Bologna Declaration and engaging to take part to the European Higher Education Area. I think, for both countries, the political status had a great influence. Romania became part of the European Union in January 2007, a good reason to start adapting its national higher education system to European standards. The implementation of the new structure, which we showed before is in strong relation with the other action lines of the Bologna Process, is one point that can help to reach the other objectives, for instance improving mobility of students, researchers and even employees all over Europe. That means not only that Romanians will travel to other countries, but also foreigners will study, do research or work in Romania, a fact that brings big contribution to the economical development of the country. Also in this sense, a reason could be the expectation that the Process will bring Romania closer to the full EU membership and relieve its major public sector funding difficulties. (Tomusk, 2006):

For Germany, the reasons could be different. As one of the most economically developed countries, being part of the European Higher Education Area, will raise its prestige among the other countries. Also by being one of the first promoters of this, nowadays, biggest higher education reform will set the country on the top positions in terms of contribution to creating a Europe of knowledge.

Further implications

As mentioned before one interesting issue to analyse would be the changes in terms of curricular development related to the new study structure, among European countries.

Since the transition to the 3 years bachelor was argued by the Romanian universities by allocating 50% of the holding from the bachelors. (Law 288/2004) (Panzaru, 2006), it would be interesting to explore how many bachelor graduates (first degree holders) are going to continue with a master programme (second degree), in comparison with the number of graduates who continued with second degree in the old system.

Also in terms of mobility, a research analysing the reasons and numbers of mobile students, academics, administrative staff and employees would give many answers to the fulfilled "tasks and duties" of the reform with accent on the new study structure.

In the Romanian system it seems that decisions are made without taking a close look to the reality. There are few studies in this domain (we could see this, comparing with the waste studies available in Germany), which brings a big lack in the development of the educational system. In this sense, developing research in this area, by academics and students, might lead to an effective higher education reform.

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Appendix

Glossary with terms related to the cycle structure in the Bologna Process

Diploma Supplement

The European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES developed the Diploma Supplement in order to improve international transparency and facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates, etc.). The Supplement – attached to a higher education diploma – describes in widely spoken European language the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed. The Diploma Supplement provides additional information on the national higher education system, in order to fit the qualification into the relevant educational context.

The DS is composed of eight sections:

- information identifying the holder of the qualification,
- information identifying the qualification,
- information on the level of the qualification,
- information on the contents and results gained,
- information on the function of the qualification,
- additional information,
- certification of the Supplement,
- information on the national higher education system.

Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

(European Commission, 2006)

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

"The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives preferably specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences to be acquired. Credits are allocated to all educational components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires to achieve its specific objectives or learning outcomes in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study successfully." (European Commission, 2006)

Since the introduction of the Institutional Contract in the SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme in 1997/98 all European universities can take part in ECTS.

Transparency is created by providing detailed information on the curricula and their relevance towards a degree. The main tools used to make ECTS work and facilitate academic recognition are the information package, the learning agreement and the transcript of records.

Further information at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_en.html

Learning outcomes

Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning. Learning outcomes must be accompanied by appropriate assessment criteria which can be used to judge that the expected learning outcomes have been achieved. Learning outcomes statements are "typically characterised by the use of active verbs expressing knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, etc." (East-West-Scientific Centre, 2006) Credit accumulation and transfer is facilitated if clear learning outcomes are available to indicate with precision the achievements for which the credit will be awarded.

Workload

A quantitative measure of the learning activities that may feasibly be required for the achievement of the learning outcomes (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical work, private study, information retrieval, research, examinations). Workload is usually measured in working hours.