**Independent** **Bologna Committee**

**WHITE BOOK**

**Reforming of Higher School in Belarus in Accordance with Objectives, Values and Policies of European Higher Education Area**

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**Foreword**

Release of White Books – subject collections, devoted to the state of education in post-soviet states has already become a regular event in our neighbors. This is our first such attempt in Belarus. In our White Book we tried to present detailed analysis of the state and prospects of accession of Belarusian Higher School to European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process). In 2012 the attempt of Belarus to join EHEA ended with a failure. The Summit of Ministers of Education of EHEA member-states did not consider the application of the Belarusian Ministry of Education because our higher school does not yet meet the requirements to the candidates to join the Bologna process. The reply of the Bologna Secretariat noted that the main obstacle on the way to the EHEA is the conflict of Belarusian and European academic values. First of all, this concerns the cases of academic freedom, level of institutional autonomy and participation of students in higher education management. As recognition of fundamental values, objectives and policies of EHEA is the term of entering of the country into the Bologna process, it was decided to give Belarus some time to modernize the high school and to get back to the Belarusian issue during the Summit for Ministers of Education in 2015.

This White Book is the result of collective work of experts of the Independent Bologna Committee, representing a space for communication and coordination of efforts of various NGOs and independent experts, aimed at assistance to reform Belarusian higher education system.

The Independent Bologna Committee holds monitoring of the state and changes in the higher education system of our country and develops suggestions to reform the higher school to approach the objectives, values and policies of the European Higher Education Area. We intend to internationalize at maximum the expertise, for that we attract specialists from the “Eastern Partnership” member-states to estimate our suggestions.

The authors of this paper are united with the assurance that it is quite natural to share European academic values for all those who belonged or belong to the academic community. On the ground of such values, as academic freedom and university autonomy, we can achieve real improvement of quality and internationalization of Belarusian higher education.

Although Belarus does not exercise internationally recognized methods of quality assessment of its higher education, there are enough proofs that our higher education system needs serious reforms. Recently published report of the World Bank has demonstrated that employers in Belarus consider more than any other neighbor country the skills of employees to be the main or quite significant limiting factor of economic development. These studies prove also greater growth rate of dissatisfaction with the quality of specialists training and therefore quality of human capital than in neighbor states.

These trends of reduction of quality do not compensate with the growth of higher education availability.

The mass character of higher education conflicts more evidently with traditional model of higher school of industrial epoch. Belarusian higher education system in recent past suggested as the reply for this challenge not decisive reformation of anachronous model, but nostalgic return to the Soviet past.

The decision of the authorities to join the European Higher Education Area could be considered as an important turn in educational policy, if that would be accompanied by a decisive withdrawal from an old architecture, objectives, and, which is important, values of the higher school. Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to estimate the results of this work unambiguously.

During the last year the Ministry of Education has managed to make a number of steps in the necessary direction. They have managed to draw together a bit Belarusian and European architectures of education. The so-called practice-oriented master’s program has been recovered, the first grade education duration has been reduced. However, the first cycle programs represent mainly only adaptation of old programs for specialists training with reduced humanities-social block. Master’s programs in Belarus are often developed with a very narrow focus on preceding I cycle program. The third cycle programs (doctoral studies and doctoral studies level 2) at all remain out of the limits of the higher education architecture.

Used by the Belarusian higher education system concepts (module, credit, competency approach, training outcome, etc.) only in appearance resemble the Bologna glossary, and in the essence do not correspond the content of the terms, adopted in the Bologna Process. Belarusian higher school still does not implement the existing in EHEA tools, assisting transparency and mutual recognition of a student’s studies between different institutions and national education systems, and have a core significance for the accomplishment of Bologna reforms, - such as European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Diploma Supplement (DS). Also does not assure to the full extent the accomplishment of competence-based approach in the development and accomplishment of educational programs.

Hard regulation of educational programs at legislative level (educational standards) up to the structure and content of curricula does not allow to create flexible trajectories of studies, and, therefore, does not assist improvement of compatibility of Belarusian universities at European and international labor market.

Often conventional educational practice is simply transformed into the terns of the Bologna Glossary not touching upon the core of the processes. If the problem was only about misinterpretation of the Bologna tools, this would be adjustable in the process of learning events. It is worse that in many cases distortion of the sense is related to a fundamental conflict of the system of values – European and Belarusian. In our country external motivation of academic conduct considered not just more significant, than internal one, but is observed as the only possible one. That is why often conceptual shifts are motivated with the desire to preserve authoritarian management system for higher education.

The whole legislative-regulatory basis of higher education is saturated with distrust to students, academic personnel, employers. It is oriented at the use of only the tools of external higher school management.

However our objective is not a simple statement of multiple problems of Belarusian high school. We intend to outline a clear and substantiated action plan which would allow our country decisive promotion on the way of modernization of higher education system.

The Independent Bologna Committee has prepared recommendations to the Code on Education that shall allow at regulatory-legislative level not only to remove the claims on three key issues, impeding entry of Belarus into EHEA, but also to provide prerequisites of significant quality improvement of specialists training and, hence, human capital quality.

**1. Belarusian higher education in interstate perspective**

* 1. **Introduction**

Release in 2010 of the Education Index in 182 countries[[1]](#footnote-1) formally placed Belarus at the level of the world leaders in this sphere. The twenty sixth position in the international rating become for the authorities and official experts a ground once again to state that there was no need to change anything in Belarusian educational policy. Education Index is a part of a general index – Human Development Index (HDI), the procedure of calculation of which was developed by the UNO specialists. Education Index measures relative achievements of the country in the sphere of enhancement of literacy among adult population, as well as enhancement of the general index of those entered primary, secondary and higher educational institutions of a country. The weight of two thirds is for the index of adult population literacy and weight of one third – for the index of general index of those entered educational institutions.

At first sight, not only the UNO indicators for the evaluation of how general primary education in developing countries is, but also the data of the last population census in Belarus demonstrate positive statistics of the education level growth among the population of the country. Already 90% of Belarusians of 15 years old and older have higher, secondary or basic education certificates , and the share of those having the lowest level of literacy for the period after the last census in 1999 reduced in 2.3 times. The number of those having higher education diploma has grown expressly. For 10 years it has increased for 5%: from 14% to 19%. Although Belarus falls behind the leaders in the level of higher education coverage, it has graded up to Spain, Hungary, Poland and outran a number of developed countries, such as France, Italy, Japan. Higher education demand in Belarus has already reached the level when the number of students, accepted for the first year to the universities, exceeds the number of graduates of secondary schools of the same year.

However a real estimation of Belarusian higher education can be given by comparing it with the higher school development indexes of the most developed countries of the world, and first of all with the statistics of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, uniting 34 states, covering 60% of the world GDP. OECD as UNESCO is one of the most powerful organizations, presenting educational statistics in the countries of the organization and a number of the Great Twenty countries, which are not OECD members.

Unfortunately, correct comparison of higher education indexes in Belarus and the OECD countries is of significant difficulty. Indicators that are used by Belstat (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus), on the one hand and OECD statisticians on the other, differ expressly. Some relevant information about Belarusian education, collected under internationally acknowledged procedures is contained in UNESCO reports. However Belarus does not always presents complete and reliable information for such reports. UNESCO reports comprise pretty limited set of indicators, which can be used to compare the state of Belarusian education with higher school development index in OECD countries. Nevertheless, we can try to compare the recent trends in Belarusian higher education and in the education of developed countries.

The basis of the analysis consists of educational statistics data, grouped under system-forming international parameters. The sources of such information include:

* annual global education digests of UNESCO Institute for Statistics (*Global Education Digest*);
* materials of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, annual education reports on OECD member-states and partners *(Education at a Glance − OECD Indicators*);
* data of Belstat and Ministry of Education of Belarus.

To compare data of educational statistics of different countries it is used International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997. The scheme ISCED-1997 suggests the procedure of transfer of national educational programs into internally comparable set of categories to define the levels of education. Description of ISCED levels and corresponding equivalents of Belarusian education are presented below.

*ISCED levels description*

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| Name of the level under ISCED of 1997  | Equivalent in Belarusian educational system |
| ISCED 0 – pre-primary educationInitial stage of organized instruction primarily for early childhood education to prepare children for education in terms of school. | Pre-school education |
| ISCED 1 – primary educationUsually provides for pupils basic knowledge in reading, writing and math. | I stage — primary education (I – IV grades) |
| ISCED 2 – lower secondary educationIn general continues the basic programs of the primary level. Education mainly is subject-focus and suggests teaching staff of greater qualification.  |  II stage — basic education (V – IX grades) |
| ISCED 3 – upper secondary educationFinal stage of secondary education in most OECD member-states. Teachers usually have greater subject-focused qualification, than at the level 2. | III stage — secondary education (X – XI grades, in evening schools –X – XII grades, evening classes – X – XII grades). |
| ISCED 4 – post-secondary non-tertiary education. From the point of view of international comparisons these programs are between upper level of secondary and post-secondary education. Usually these programs serve to broaden the knowledge of ISCED level 3 graduates. Students are usually older than at the ISCED level 3. | Vocational education and training |
| ISCED 5 – tertiary education (first stage).Programs of this level are deeper in comparison with ISCED 3 and 4 and are divided into two types: 5В and 5А. Programs ISCED 5В are more practice/technically/vocation-focused than the programs ISCED 5А. The programs ISCED 5А are mainly of theory and prepare the students for the next educational level or for a occupation, requiring high professional skills.  | Secondary vocational trainingHigher vocational training  |
| ISCED 6 – tertiary education (second stage) (extended research programs).The programs prepare for scholastic degree and focus deeply on study of individual subjects and independent researches.  | Post-graduate education, doctoral studies, doctoral studies level 2 (Habilitation) |

Educational policy of any country follows the objective to balance three main parameters of the educational system: availability, quality and costs. Availability of education reveals most evidently in the level of education of the population.

**1.2. Education level parameters**

In OECD countries stable growth of the education level was observed. The number of students with tertiary education diplomas (levels 5 and 6) grew between 1997 and 2010 within the group of 25-64 years old from 21% to 31%. This dynamics is especially notable when comparing the level of education in age groups, divided by thirty-years interval: among youth of 25-34 years old there are 38% of those with tertiary level education, and in the group 55-64 years old – 23%. Grounding on the statistics of entering universities (level 5А), in the OECD states it is forecasted that 62% of current youth in course of their life shall obtain higher education. By this 49% shall enter universities in the age till 25 years. Expected level of starting higher educational programs among women is 25% higher than among men. And 2.8% of youth shall choose the programs of the level 6 (postgraduate studies, doctoral studies). And although doctoral programs are relatively few (only 2% of all programs of tertiary level), in last ten years there has been observed their stable annual growth by 5 %. If in 2000 1% of youth completed their doctoral studies, then in 2010 it was 1.6%[[2]](#footnote-2).

Comparison of the education level of the OECD states with Belarusian statistics is complicated by the fact that Belarus does not calculate important forecast indicators, grounded on the analysis of synthetic cohort: such as expected index of entering or expected index of graduation. For example, the index of entering is a share of the age cohort which as expected shall enter a university during a lifetime. Similarly the index of graduation is calculated. Except for that, Belstat presents information about education level in the age intervals which differs from the OECD reports. These and other reasons make the comparison of these OECD reports with Belarusian statistics not always an easy task. However, this does not exclude the possibilities to compare trends.

In Belarus we observe the same trends of population education level as in the OECD states. According to UNESCO in the period between 1999 – 2009 the so-called Gross enrolment ratio GER ( the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless

of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education; for the tertiary level, the population used is the 5-year age group following the official secondary school graduation age) in Belarus grew from 51% to 77%. By this, the same as in OECD, the process of feminization of tertiary education went fast. GPT parity index grew from 1.30 to 1.44 during those years. I.e. if in 1999 the share of male with level 5 and 6 education comprised 44%, and 58% of women, than in 2009 the difference between the level of education grew even more in favor of women – 63% and 91%[[3]](#footnote-3).

Distribution in education levels demonstrates the common for Belarus and OECD states trend of faster growth of the share of persons with level 5A education and stabilization or reduction of the share of individuals with level 5B. According to UNESCO, in Belarus the distribution in levels in 2009 was as follows: 5А – 72%, 5В – 27%, 6 –1%. This ratio maintains also at the moment[[4]](#footnote-4). Comparison of population census data of 1999 and 2009 demonstrates the trend of relative stabilization of the share of individuals with vocational secondary education (5В) among working-age population of Belarus: in 1999 – 27.0%, in 2009 – 31.1% at faster growth of the share of individuals with higher education (16.4% and 21.1% respectively).This trend, coinciding the direction of the processes of enhancement of education levels in OECD, is especially clear in conversion of census data under the procedure of comparison of age intervals, adopted in OECD reports. If in the age group 55-64 of those having level 5 education the share of persons with higher education comprises about one third (14.4% with 5А education by 43.15%, of those having level 5 education), then in the age group 25-34 the share of individuals with higher education reaches almost half of those having 5 level education (29.81% of 60,65%)[[5]](#footnote-5). It’s noteworthy that the indication of education level of the population of Belarus looks even more impressive, than on the average in OECD. The share of individuals with higher education in a comparable age range 25-64 in Belarus reaches 23.82% (21.33% – in men and 25.0% – in women). Although, naturally, by pretty high indexes Belarus is still evidently behind such leaders as the USA, Norway or Israel. The share of persons with higher education in these countries exceeds 30%.

Distribution of university students by fields of education is in general the same as in the higher education in OECD states. UNESCO data allow presenting Belarusian situation in terms of international classification of fields of education . 41% graduates of the programs of education level 5 and 6 in 2009 had their training in “social sciences, business law”, 26% - “science and technology”, 12% - “education”, 5% - “humanitarian sciences and arts”, 8% - “agriculture”, 4% - “health care and social protection”, 4% - “services”.

Just as in the countries of OECD Belarusian education faces the task to overcome deficit of engineering stuff and absence of sufficient motivation among young people to choose the specialties of this field. One of the reasons in the OECD, as well as in Belarus is slow growth of share of women in engineering education programs, despite general feminization of higher education. This share in the universities of OECD states comprised in 2010 27% almost coinciding the percent of women, studied during this period on this line in the universities of Belarus – 28%[[6]](#footnote-6).

However, there are pretty significant parameters of Belarusian education system which point out its deep differences from the higher school of OECD states. First of all this concerns the architecture of higher education. Many new phenomena in higher education of OECD states are related with the Bologna Process.

Although the Bologna Declaration was signed by only a part of OECD states, the influence of the Bologna Process is evident also outside the borders of the European Higher Education Area.

According to the report *Education at a Glance* of 2012, 39% of students shall attain the first academic degree frequently called Bachelor. In different OECD countries the duration of studies under such programs vary. In some countries they cover 3 years, in others – 4. But there is a trend of fast reduction of the number of programs, oriented at long educational cycles like five-years programs of training specialists, which was the heritage of the universities of XIX century. Belarus has also started reducing the programs of specialists training to 4 years. This reduction has already covered more than one fourth of the programs. And from 2012–2013 it has gained the character of totality. Such harmonization of higher education architecture, probably, could be welcomed provided it would be accompanied by the development of full-value programs of the second cycle (Master). However if in the OECD states, grounding on data of 2010, 15% of students shall attain Master’s degree, than in Belarus, according to the information of the Ministry of Education, only 1.15% of students do their programs of the second cycle[[7]](#footnote-7). With reduced first cycle of education absence of a real prospect of attainment of the second academic degree can mean serious reduction of the quality of vocational training in the higher educational system of the Republic of Belarus.

Another difference of Belarusian higher education from the higher school in OECD states is insufficient development of the third cycle programs (doctoral studies, level 2 doctoral studies). The Bologna Process’s agenda for the current decade suggests enhancement of investment of higher education into the process of formation of Europe of knowledge, which demands significant extension of human resources training with research competencies. The third cycle programs in OECD-states currently assure 2% of education level 5-6 graduates. On the ground of the 2010 graduate model it can be expected that in OECD-states 1.6% of youth shall complete level 6 programs. In Belarus only 1% of the high school students do doctoral studies. According to the Ministry of education in 119 institutions with doctoral studies programs 4725 people studied: 2730 (57.8%) – full-time education, 1995 (42.2%) – correspondence learning. In 37 institutions of Belarus with level 2 doctoral programs studied 98 doctoral students[[8]](#footnote-8). The share of doctoral and level 2 doctoral students in Belarus is two times lower than on the average in OECD-states. In our country low efficiency of doctoral studies even more reduces significance of this programs. Only 3.2% of students of this level complete them successfully.

One of the trends noted in OECD-states is the growth of the number of students of the higher educational institutions for the account of older applicants. This trend is related to new philosophy of higher education – lifelong learning. One of the aspects of this new approach is creation of conditions for high-quality higher education attainment by all population groups without exclusions. The “Agenda 2020” defining the strategy of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Process) development provides working out in each country of special measures to support the most vulnerable population categories, assuring availability and completion of education at all its stages. This strategy not only includes into the process of education those who earlier have not used the option to get higher education, but, which is important, changes attitude towards the value of work experience, accumulated before entering a university. In OECD-states, according to *Education at a Glance* report of 2012 20% of students, who entered universities in 2010 were above 26 years old[[9]](#footnote-9). Belarus, reducing the scales of correspondence learning with the excuse of its low quality, does not relief availability of higher education for older people. According to the Belarusian Ministry of Education, in the same 2010 only 13% of students were above 26[[10]](#footnote-10).

But till 2012 in Belarusian universities we observed the process of some growth of this age group among students. Although it was enough slow and was not perceived as a priority of the system of education. Reduction of correspondence learning programs can negatively affect the availability of higher education for older people, as this group quantity grew mainly at the cost of part time learning.

If increase of the share of tertiary programs graduates proves enhancement of human capital quality, this for sure influences the amount of per capita income. In any case it should. Belarusian social scientists eagerly quote the founders of human capital theory, who proved its key role in post-industrial development of economies, GDP per capita growth and enhancement of the level and quality of life. They willingly refer to the results of the World Bank studies, proving that 64% of growth in the countries with transition economy are conditioned by the human capital quality, that 40% of Gross National Product is manufactured due to the development of efficient educational system and that 1 USD of expenses for education gives 3-6 USD profit. But in this case it remains not clear why can’t the country with such educated population yet meet Botswana in GDP per capita? Why Belarus standing in the top of world leaders in education level, takes the eighty fourth place in the rating of countries in GDP per capita, falling behind nine times the world leader under this parameter?[[11]](#footnote-11) Naturally, we can reason this underdevelopment of Belarus with the absence of economic liberty and unfavorable business-environment, but also in those post-soviet countries with more favorable entrepreneurial situation, economic feedback from education does not correspond formal development parameters. Russian and Ukrainian researchers note that in interstate perspective the societies of these countries demonstrate atypical cases of economic inefficiency of human capital: unusual combination of high indexes of education level of human resources with relatively low per capita income. The things which assured amazing successes in production modernization and national wealth growth in Sweden, Finland, Ireland and many other states, does not give results in post-soviet states. Should we think that the laws of economy do not work in these territories? Or does the reason root in anachronous education system, which is not able to respond the challenges of modern time? We can not use standard indicators used in OECD reports to estimate quality of education and its efficiency. In Belarus there are no researches under the PISA procedure, there is no estimation of efficiency from investments into education on the ground of NPV calculations. These calculations are performed in OECD reports for individual and social efficiency from investments into education, for monetary and non-monetary efficiency. Belarus does not provide enough information to estimate the contribution of higher education into the growth of GDP and social consequences of attained education. The procedures of calculations of such indexes constantly improve in OECD studies, and they could assist to clarify the situation with the reasons of economic inefficiency of higher education in Belarus. Yet we can judge about the quality of education only indirectly on two available parameters: costs for education and international attractiveness of Belarusian higher education institutions.

**1.3. Educational costs**

Educational costs in international statistics are observed as one of the main indicators of development level of national educational systems. Educational quality mainly depends on costs to support it. To define the level of correspondence of Belarusian claims for a high status in the educational systems rating, it’s worth to compare the dynamics of indicators of costs of Belarusian higher school financing with main development trends of this branch in OECD-states.

The report *Education at a Glance* of 2012 demonstrates the growth of investments into education of all levels in OECD-states on the average for 36% during the period between 2000 and 2009. In these countries about one fourth of funds for educational institution financing, or 1.6% of OECD states GDP is spent for the needs of education levels 5 and 6. Some states, as the USA, Canada, Korea spend between 2.4% and 2.6% of GDP for the needs of education. In the European Union there is a task set to assure financing of higher education at the level of 2% of GDP. About 30% of funds is coming from private sources. On the average 13728 USD or 42% of per capita income is spent per student in OECD-countries[[12]](#footnote-12).

Belarusian education becomes a greater victim of educational policy, oriented on minimization of states expenses on education. Article 53 of the Law on Education, acted till September 2011, provided granting for the needs of this branch no less than 10% of GDP. Real budget financing has never reached this level. Moreover, GDP share for education for the past decade has expressly reduced. In 2002 it comprised – 6.6%, 2003 – 6.4%, 2004 – 6.1%, 2005 – 6.4%, 2006 – 6.1%, 2007 – 5.8%, 2008 – 5.1% of GDP[[13]](#footnote-13). Costs for education in the crisis year of 2009 were cut by 21%. In 2010 according to the Ministry of Education, contrary to Election promises, the costs rose only to 5.1%, and in 2011 comprised 5.2%[[14]](#footnote-14).

Thus, in comparison with the OECD states, where financing of educational sphere is increasing, in the past decade in Belarus we have observed an opposite trend – reduction of budget support of education by more than 20%. And if during the third All-Belarusian People’s Assembly of 2006 Aleksandr Lukashenko yet promised to get financing to the norm of 10%, than in 2011 simply withdrew this norm itself from the Code on Education. The Ministry of Finances does not hide that it plans further reduction of expenses in social sphere, motivating this by the need to enhance efficiency of expenses on education and health care. Indeed, for example, out-dated system of long cycles in higher education without bias impedes optimizations of costs. However simple shortening of study duration, which is undertaken by the Ministry of Education, can result only into the reduction of quality of human resources training if it shall not be accompanied by deep restructuring of the content of educational programs. Similar effect on the quality of specialists training can have mechanical increase of the ratio “professor – student” from the current 1:10 to 1:15 or 1:20, which is in practice in European universities. Without reformation of the structure of teaching load and teaching methods economic effect of this measure shall be devaluated by significant reduction of educational quality and social problems, related to the shortening of teaching corps. Till now reduction of state financing has not been accompanied by the reform of education, and meant shifting financial load to the shoulders of population.

In the higher school this strategy bears open character. To a significant extent at the cost of fee-based education they managed to raise by 2.3 times the number of students in Belarus: from 189 thousand in 1989-1990 academic year to 430 thousand in 2011-2012 academic year. More than two thirds of students of Belarusian universities at the moment pay for their education. In OECD states there are significant differences in approaches to the participation of students and their families in payment for education. In eight countries this level education is free at all. In others this payment varies greatly depending from the country, specialty or the type of educational institution. This complicates comparison of Belarusian practice with the situation in OECD states. However some picture about the level of education fee gives the available statistics on one third of OECD-states, represented for the report *Education at a Glance* 2012. According to this research, mean annual fee in these countries is 1500 USD. To compare: according to the National Statistical Committee of Belarus as per the beginning of 2012–2013 academic year a mean cost of education in the higher educational institution per month around the country comprised 487.4 thousand rubles[[15]](#footnote-15) or about 600 USD a year. By this we should consider that meanwhile in OECD states on the average 13728 USD is spent per student, in Belarus this index is only 1957 USD[[16]](#footnote-16). This indicator is calculated under *purchasing-power parity* that is why it is possible to compare its values pretty correctly. Evidently that the gap is too big not to affect the quality of education. Belarusian higher school assured impressive quantitative values of coverage of population by higher education by the mean of not less impressive erosion of academic standards and reduction of quality of training of specialists. World ratings of universities convincingly prove that achievements of leaders are unbreakably connected with the level of expenses per student. Cheap education can not be of high quality. The falling behind of Belarus is also proved by another available in international reports index: state expenses per student as percent share from GDP per capita. In Belarus it is 15%[[17]](#footnote-17), meanwhile along OECD it is 42%[[18]](#footnote-18).

For recent years in Belarus the GDP share which is spent to support higher education has been inevitably reducing. Judging by the data presented by the Ministry of Education for UNESCO reports, this share has reduced from 1.1% in 2007 to 0.7% in 2009.[[19]](#footnote-19). This trend is opposite to the main trends of GDP share accumulation to finance education levels 5 and 6 in OECD-states.

**1.4. Internationalization of higher education**

In December 2006 the Ministry of Education adopted the action plan to develop export of educational services for 2007–2010. This program’s objective was to accumulate the scope of educational services for foreign students up to 20 mln. USD by 2010. This index should have been reached at the cost of annual increase by 20% of the number of foreign students in Belarusian universities. These plans were not related with reforming of Belarusian higher education. It was supposed to get the results exclusively due to intensification of Belarusian higher school promotion abroad. In 2005–2006 academic year 6391 foreign students studies in our country; in 2006–2007- their number reduced to 5778 people. In following years we observed the trend of increasing of the number of foreigners in Belarusian universities: 2008–2009 – 5939, 2009–2010 -7543, 2010–2011 – 8705, 2011–2012 – 10700[[20]](#footnote-20). In international statistics of higher education students’ mobility is an important indicator of the national higher school quality. OECD states admit, as a rule, more students than they forward to study abroad. In 2010 these countries admitted 2.9 times more foreign students than forwarded to study in foreign educational institutions. By this 93% of students-residents of EHEA states study abroad, choosing educational institutions of other OECD states. The balance of students’ mobility in different OECD countries differs, but a positive Net Flow of Mobile Students Ratio (Total number of tertiary students from abroad (inbound students) studying in a given country minus the number of students at the same level of education from that country studying abroad (outbound students), expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country) is observed the index of higher school successes. Another indicator of a high quality education in OECD states in faster growth of attractiveness for foreign students of the level 6 programs (doctoral studies) in comparison with a lower level of higher education. Attraction of students to this level of education assists strengthening of research potential of the host-country and future recruiting of highly-qualified migrants[[21]](#footnote-21). To evaluate the level of internationalization of Belarusian higher education we should specify the base for comparison. Belarus inherited from the USSR a developed system of students’ mobility. In the middle of ХХ century import of foreign students was an important tool of the Cold War and the policy of Soviet expansion in the countries of the third world. For the first time Soviet Russia admitted students from Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and Mongolia in the beginning of 20-s. In 1921 a special educational institution was established – Communistic University of the Toilers of the East, where the representatives of 44 nationalities studies. However, only starting from 1950-s the number of foreign students in Soviet higher educational institutions started growing fast. By the time of the USSR collapse the number of foreign student more than 20 times exceeded the level of 1950. According to official statistics, the number of foreign student increased from 5.9 thousand people in 1950 to 126.5 thousand people in 1990[[22]](#footnote-22). It was considered that their share among students reached 10.8%. But according to the estimation of some experts a real number of foreign students (not considering the military students) by that time reached 180 thousand or 15% of total student’s contingency[[23]](#footnote-23). This is an extremely high value of inbound mobility even for the most developed countries.

The universities of BSSR were not of special attraction for foreigners and the level of their internationalization was also expressly lower of the general soviet one. It was the greatest in 1988–1989 academic year, when the number of foreign students according to official data reached 6.8 thousand. This comprised only 3.8 % of the total quantity of the republic’s students[[24]](#footnote-24). A real level of internationalization probably was higher, especially considering military students. Except for that the number of foreign students did not include young people from other union republics, which after the USSR collapse became foreigners. By 2006 the level of inbound mobility in Belarusian universities fell to negligible quantity 1.4%. Further intensive attempts to accumulate the share of inbound mobility yet did not allow even getting closer to the level of internationalization of Soviet period. At the moment this index comprises 2.4%. But even definite growth of the number of foreign students in Belarusian universities does not prove increase of quality higher education and its attractiveness for foreigners. In recent years Turkmen have taken the first place in the number of foreign students. In 2011–2012 academic years among 10700 foreign students the citizens of Turkmenistan comprised 47% or 5055 people[[25]](#footnote-25). It’s typical that graduation of Turkmen students in 2011–2012 academic year comprised only 5 people. Such explosive growth of mobility from this central Asian country has evident political reasons. After the visit of A. Lukashenko in Ashkhabad in 2010 Belarus obtained a big quota for the admission of Turkmen students. From 4 thousand Turkmen, annually forwarded to study abroad, more than one and half thousand of them enter Belarusian universities. In the country, in which by the President Saparmurat Niyazov, secondary as well as higher education was eliminated till it is possible to assure minimal necessary quality of enrollees training. The situation in many cases can not be managed to improve during study in Belarus, and universities do not risk expelling low students under political as well as economic reasons. Belarusian higher school not of high quality even more loses from such Turkmen internationalization. Among foreign students, except Turkmen, the most numerous groups are Russians (1858) and Chinese (1285).

State program of higher education development for 2011–2015 provides increase of inbound mobility by three times. At the cost of the thing which is called in the program as educational services export it is planned to earn 186.71 mln. USD for five years. Such growth of the number of foreign students still does not suppose serious modernization of higher education and shall base on conventional marketing strategies.

Within estimation of the quality of national high school a significantly more important role than inbound mobility have the balances of inbound and outbound mobility. In comparison with OECD states, this value in Belarus is negative. Although there are definite complications in the interpretation of UNESCO statistics in the issues of mobility regarding Belarus, these indexes are those few which it presents for international reports. As there is disagreement in the classification of education grades, the data of international researches of education level 5 are out of the limits of the phenomenon called in Belarus higher education. International statistics includes into this category university education as well as the phenomenon called in Belarus as secondary vocational education. In some cases in the reports of international organization they draw difference between level 5А (higher education) and 5В (vocational secondary education). However mobility statistics does not suggest such differentiation. Together with that, we should recognize that in terms of Belarus the contribution of vocational secondary education into students’ mobility is minimal. That is why UNESCO data on students’ mobility can be interpreted as the index of international attractiveness and quality of Belarusian higher school.

UNESCO report of 2011 contains information about the flows of mobility for 2009. International statistics shows that in 2009 the programs of level 5 included 30396 citizens of Belarus (Russia – 21972, Poland – 2074, Lithuania – 1948, Germany – 1755, France – 514). According to the procedure of UNESCO it comprises 5.2% of the total number of Belarusian students of level 5 or 4% of youth of the give age cohort. The Net Flow of Mobile Students Ratio is not in favor of Belarusian education. As of 2009, according to UNESCO, import mobility fell noticeably behind the export one: 24334 people or - 4.2%. This is quite a disturbing sign for Belarusian high school claiming the high evaluation of education quality. In different countries with attractive system of education, as a rule, the balance is positive.

Even more disturbing this indicator looks when being compared with the same indicator of 2004. According to UNESCO in 2004 it was - 1,6%. For five years this Net Flow of Mobile Students Ratio reduced by more than 2.5 times[[26]](#footnote-26).

Analysis of information presented by the Ministry of Education of Belarus for the international report, demonstrates that in reality the situation is even worse than it is imagined according to UNESCO. The numbers presented by Belarus characterize not all education level 5. But only the system of Belarusian higher education. And considering that statistics of import mobility also characterizes mainly the sphere of higher education then the balance of these two types of mobility can look even more tragic. By conversion of UNESCO data considering specifics of Belarusian data we can obtain the index at the level of - 5.7%.

This seems like the situation of a mass escape of Belarusian students from national higher school, claiming a place in the top of the best educational systems of the world. It is typical that growth of outbound mobility coincided with the turn of the state educational policy to the direction of self-isolation of Belarusian higher education and recover of the soviet high school model. This policy had the objective to create a barrier on the way of students’ mobility, but generated an opposite effect of mass escape of youth abroad. Except for that, the system of barriers developed by the authorities (refusal of harmonization of higher education architecture in accordance with the Bologna model, non-acknowledgment of the results of study in foreign universities under exchange programs) only enforced the motivation of Belarusians, studying abroad, not to return home.

Legal regulation of this sphere also does not promote civilized forms of students’ exchange. In accordance with the Instruction of the Ministry of Education of December 27th 2005 No. 125 in order to leave even for a couple of days a student should get the permission of the Minister of Education. In December 2011 in relation with the changes, introduced into the Law *On counteraction to human trafficking* (Art. 17.2) the right to issue such permission was given to rectors of universities. The very fact that academic rights are regulated by the Law *On counteraction to human trafficking* demonstratively gets closer academic mobility to criminal offence. As such permissions for a trip are politically motivated, and the procedure is very complicated, young people deliberately prefer to avoid legal registration of a trip abroad and this significant part of export students’ mobility at all escapes from the sight of the Ministry of Education. The National Report presented in November 2011 by the Ministry of Education to the Bologna Secretariat notes only about 119 students from Belarus who officially had obtained higher education abroad[[27]](#footnote-27).

Instead of following the example of other states and use export mobility within the interests of enhancement of the quality of human capital, Belarusian authorities preferred not to notice the escape of youth from the country for a long time. Till recently in Belarus there has been no state program of mobility for Belarusian students willing to study abroad. In 2011 the Government declared that starting from 2012 it shall support up to 50 students annually within the frameworks of the state program of mobility in accordance with the decree of the Council of Minister (No. 1617) of November 30th 2011. This was evidently not enough to influence significantly mobility processes. Except for that this program is mainly oriented at postgraduate students and does not focus on the most representative group of students of 2-4 years. In comparison with the given state program, international mobility programs focus exactly on the students of the 2-3 year (by 4-year cycle of study at the first grade), outlining Master’s and postgraduate students into individual groups where the approach can differ from the one used in the programs of mobility of students of the first cycle of education. Belarusian state program of exchange does not provide support of complete educational cycles, which in many CIS countries are especially popular. Absence of real interest of authorities in real internationalization of higher education is well observed in comparison with foreign programs of Belarusian students’ mobility support. For example, in 2010–2011 academic year 149 students went to study via only one scholarship program of Polish Government of Kastus Kalinowski. This number is three times higher than the one which Belarusian Government is ready to support. That is why it is absolutely logically that half-measures and delayed attempts of the Ministry of Education to restore control over the situation has not yet resulted in noticeable successes.

Formally the situation with attraction of foreigners into Belarusian programs of education level 6 (postgraduate studies) looks more positively. Advanced popularity of such programs in comparison with the programs of level 5 corresponds the dominating trend in OECD states. According to Belstat in 2001 in the country there were 4968 postgraduate students of all form of education. Among them 230 people or 4.6% came from abroad. For the last five years this index has increased from 2.7% to 4.6%[[28]](#footnote-28). The most numerous groups of postgraduate students are the citizens of China, Iran, Iraq, Libya.

*The number of postgraduate students – foreign citizens following the countries of origin*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country of origin | Number of postgraduate students | % |
| China | 56 | 24.3 |
| Iran | 49 | 21.3 |
| Iraq | 45 | 19.6 |
| Libya | 27 | 11.7 |
| Nigeria | 8 | 3.5 |
| Lebanon | 5 | 2.2 |
| Vietnam | 5 | 2.2 |
| Sudan | 3 | 1.3 |
| Syria  | 5 | 2.2 |
| Turkey | 3 | 1.3 |
| Venezuela | 3 | 1.3 |
| Yemen | 5 | 2.2 |
| Other | 16 | 7.0 |

Of course we should not overestimate attractiveness of Belarusian programs of this level. First of all the index of inbound mobility at the 6 level of 4.6% is far distant from the level of attractiveness of such programs in developed countries. It is considered that it should be no less than 10%. And among the leaders in this sphere it does not exceed 20%. Secondly, sectoral structure of demand of postgraduate programs by foreigner proves that preference is given to the training in humanitarian and social sciences (56.5% of all foreigners). This is not that sphere of research, in which Belarus can show some achievements. Respectively, the quality of training under such programs can not be high. Analysis of the processes of students’ mobility does not prove any international recognition of the quality of Belarusian higher education. Moreover, export mobility demonstrates progressing falling of prestige of Belarusian high school inside of the country.

**1.5. Conclusions**

The glance at Belarusian system of higher education in interstate perspective allows estimating efficiency of educational policy in country better than national statistics does.

On the ground of indirect characteristics of the quality of Belarusian higher education, available in the international statistics, we can suggest that Belarusian high school has assure impressive quantitative indexes of coverage of population with higher education at the cost of not less impressive erosion of academic standard and reduction of the quality of specialists’ training.

Belarus keeps on implementing the outdated strategies to solve modern issues. Mass availability of tertiary education has not yet resulted in restructuring of educational architecture and technologies, or in real multi-channel financing, based of equal-social partnership.

Belarusian high school is a victim of unbalanced state educational policy. Authorities for a long time have set impossible task to assure the quality of higher education in terms of simultaneous growth of its availability and reduction of state costs.

Worsening of demographic situation introduces significant corrections into this strategy, as it leaves no hope for continuing intensive accumulation of the number of fee-based students, which allowed reimbursing the lack of budget resources for a long time. By this higher education system modernization does not take place and its restructuring is delayed strongly.

In interstate perspective it is well seen that such strategy contradicts the main trends of higher education development in developed countries, where we observe transition to mass tertiary education of a new type on the background of stable growth of costs for higher education.

Facing the problem of lack of internal resources to finance higher education, the authorities are trying to recover this deficit with education internationalization. But education internationalization without its modernization is not able to get Belarusian high school from the dead-end.

Without solving the problem of education quality it is impossible to assure the flow of foreign students.

**2. Belarusian and Bologna Models of Higher Education. Harmonization of Frameworks and Instruments**

**2.1. Higher education framework**

The following Main documents of the pre-Bologna period and the Bologna Process (1997-2009) have served as a reference material for the analysis of the higher education system condition in Belarus: The Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998), the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Joint Communiqués of the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education (the Prague Communiqué (2001), the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the London Communiqué (2007), the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009)), the Declaration on the European Higher Education Area (Budapest-Vienna, March 12, 2010), the Documents of the 8th Bologna Ministerial Conference and the 3rd Bologna Policy Forum (April 26-27, 2012, Bucharest), the materials of the official Bologna seminars and conferences (<http://www.ehea.info>), the materials of the TUNING project (<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu>), the European University Association research of the 8 tendencies of higher education development (TRENDS; <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=87>), as well as the legislative acts, other regulatory legal acts, documents and materials of the Belarusian educational system.

It is commonly known that the Bologna Process is a free-will cooperation of the educational systems of the European countries, aimed at creating the common European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the main objectives of which had been basically reached by 2010.

The Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System (the Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998; <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/declarations_communiques.htm>)signed by the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy, has become a prerequisite for the initialization of the Bologna Process. This document described the necessity to create the Europe of Knowledge in addition to the Europe of Economy and Euro, as well as pointed out several basic moments, such as improving the international transparency of educational programmes, recognition of qualifications through a gradual alignment of learning cycles, encouragement of mobility of students, teachers and academics, development of a common system of higher education levels.

These decisions about the standardization/unification of higher education were formalized and officially documented in the so-called Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 in Bologna (Italy) by the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries (The European Higher Education Area Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education (The Bologna Declaration of June 19, 1999); <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf>). It defined the main goals leading to the comparability and eventually to the harmonization of the national educational systems of the European countries. According to this document, a common system of higher education should have been built in Europe during the course of 10 years.

The basic ideas of the Bologna Declaration originated from the Magna Charta Universitatum (Bologna, 1988; <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/880918_Magna_Charta_Universitatum.pdf> ), the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon, April 19, 1997;<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/LRC/Lisbon_Recognition_Convention.pdf>) and the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (Paris, 1998). The Magna Charta Universitatum was signed by the Rectors of the leading European universities and remains open for signing (hundreds of universities have already joined the Charta). The l**ist of the universities that joined the Magna Charta**Universitatum**can be found here:**[http://www.magna-charta.org/cms/cmspage.aspx?pageUid={8e9114fe-86db-4d26-b9d7-167c03d479aa}](http://www.magna-charta.org/cms/cmspage.aspx?pageUid=%7b8e9114fe-86db-4d26-b9d7-167c03d479aa%7d)).

The Magna Charta Universitatum declares only four fundamental principles of university essence: 1) autonomy, moral and scientific independence from any political or economical authority; 2) inseparability of teaching and research; 3) inner freedom in training, research and studying; 4) universalism *(“A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.”)*.

Unfortunately, the list of universities that signed the Magna Charta Universitatum, does not include a single Belarusian universitiy. The initiative for the Belarusian universities to join the **МаgnаСhаrtаUnіvеrsitatumcame in sight only in 2011 (**<http://edubelarus.info/index.php?do=static&page=ehea>). That is why the values of the European universities are not quite inherent to the Belarusian higher school yet.

As is well-known, one of the central objectives of the Bologna Declaration is the establishment of a multi-level system of higher education that presupposes adoption of a system based on two main cycles -*undergraduate and graduate,* and provides the possibility of access to the second cycle: “*Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first-cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years”;* The Bologna Declaration of June 19, 1999.

In the Berlin Communiqué (Realising the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education; Berlin, September 19, 2003; <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/Berlin_Communique1.pdf>), an important conclusion was made that a comprehensive restructuring of the European landscape of higher education was under way. The Ministers committed themselves to having started the implementation of the two-cycle system by 2005. Also, taking into account the importance of research as an integral part of higher education all over Europe, it was considered necessary to exceed the scope of the two main cycles of higher education and to include the doctoral level as the third cycle.

The two-cycle model of education was taken as a basis for the level structure, and included the doctoral level in 2005 (1st cycle - undergraduate, Bachelor – 3-4 years; 2nd cycle – graduate, Master + 2-1 year; 3rd cycle - PhD – 3 years; total 3(4)-5(6)-8(9) years).

The Berlin Communiqué (2003) determined 2010 as the final year for the adoption of the above mentioned system.

As is well-known, the Bologna Declaration does not impose any unconditioned obligations, apart from making the national systems of education transparent and comparable.

Adoption of the system of easily readable and comparable academic degrees in order to promote European citizens’ employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system is one of the fundamental principles of the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna Process has changed the face of the European higher education. Despite the vast diversity of the European systems of higher education (Trends I, EUA, 1999), all the countries participants of the Bologna Process have made significant changes in their systems of higher education (adjustment of the cycles structure, development of the quality control systems and the mechanisms of mobility facilitation, strengthening of the social dimension of higher education); these changes had made it possible to announce the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010. Formally, the launch of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) dates back to July 1, 2010, which was announced in March 2010 during the Bologna Ministerial Conference (Budapest-Vienna).

The challenge of implementation of the two-cycle model in the European Higher Education Area is being quite successfully decided, despite all the diversity of the existing models defining the content and the duration of training in terms of ECTS (The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/138EN.pdf>).

In just over half of the countries, the share of students studying in programmes corresponding to the Bologna two-cycle system is more than 90 %. In another quarter of the countries the share of the students studying in two-cycle programmes is between 70 and 89 %.

There is no single model of first cycle programmes in the European Higher Education Area. Most countries have a combination of180 ECTSand 240ECTS (the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). A unique first cycle 180 ECTS Bachelor model exists only in the Flemish Community of Belgium, in France, Italy, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. The 180 ECTS model also dominates - with more than 75 % of programmes - in 14 more higher education systems. A unique 240 ECTS model is found in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Ukraine and Cyprus and is prevailing in more than 75 % of programmes in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain and Latvia. In the Netherlands, the share of programmes of 240 ECTS programmes is around 45 %, the share of students in this model is 70 %.

Thus, despite all the diversity, the most prevailing models of the first cycle are the 180 ECTS and the 240 ECTS models.

In the second cycle, the 120 ECTS model is by far the most widespread today. It is present in 42 higher education systems (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Turkey and others). It is used in more than 75 % of the programmes in a further 18 systems. The 90 ECTS model is less widespread. It is present in 21systems of higher education, in only six of them(Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Moldova, Spain and the United Kingdom(Scotland)) does it represent at least50 % of programmes.

It is worth noting that nearly all countries still have integrated long programmes in those fields that prepare professionals in the regulated professions. These are the professions for which the EU directive 2005/36/EC and/or the national legislation requires 5-6 years of studies: medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture and veterinary medicine, and to a lesser extent engineering, law, theology and teacher training. The typical length of such integrated programmes is 300-360 ECTS. Despite the fact that the integrated long programmes are still maintained, the influence of the Bologna Process has its impact even here. Such programmes are mostly described in terms of the Bologna Process (learning outcomes, competences) and use such tools as the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement.

Thus, in the European Higher Education Area, the two-cycle structure of higher education prevails. In the first cycle, most countries have a combination of 180 ECTS and 240 ECTS. In the second cycle, the most common model is 120 ECTS. The 180+120 ECTS credits ("3+2") model is therefore the most widespread, but a number of other combinations are also present in the European Higher Education Area.

What is the actual situation with the implementation of the two Bologna cycles in the higher education system of Belarus?

It is not the first time that Belarus refers to the idea of joining the Bologna Process. In 2002, Belarus ratified the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Republic of Belarus Presidential Decree No.5 of January 4, 2002, the National Index of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2002, No.5, 1/3370). The hope appeared that the educational system of the Republic Belarus would naturally join the Bologna Process. The development of the corresponding regulatory and legal framework contributed to this. The Law of the Republic of Belarus on Education of October 29, 1991, chapter 8, article 32 (the name of the Law of the Republic of Belarus as amended on March 19, 2002 No.95-Z) on Education in the Republic of Belarus with changes and additions adopted from 1995 till 2007, the Bulletin of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus, 1991, No.33, article 598; the National Index of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2002, No.37, 2/844) established that "The structure of the higher education includes two levels, such as the Bachelor level (undergraduate) and the Master level (postgraduate). The Regulations on the Bachelor and Master Degrees of Higher Education are adopted in accordance with the procedures established by the Government of the Republic of Belarus".

The following regulatory acts were adopted in Belarus in furtherance of this article: the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of October 14, 2002 No.1419 on Adoption of Regulation on Levels of Higher Education (the National Index of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2002, No.118, 5/11303) and the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of May 24, 2004 No.605 on Adoption of Concept of Implementation of Two-level System of Training of Specialists with Higher Education in the Republic of Belarus (the National Index of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2004, No.87, 5/14301).

The Regulation on the Levels of Higher Education says: "The first level of higher education has the duration of not less than 4 years (not less than 120 academic weeks). The total duration of training on the first and the second levels of higher education should not be less than 5 years (150 academic weeks) or 6 years (180 academic weeks) depending on the training profile, taking into account the master thesis defence". It was assumed that at the initial stage it was necessary to keep the transitional level of "Specialist" to facilitate the adoption of the two-level system of training at the higher education institutions.

During the period from 1994 till 2007, different models of the two-level system functioned simultaneously. Both a student who at the final (fifth) year additionally mastered a complex of educational subjects (300 academic hours), and a student who basically received a four-year theoretical training, were considered to be Bachelors.

At the beginning of the 21st century, only two Belarusian universities started the experiment with the two-level learning system - The European Humanities University (EHU) and the Belarusian State University (BSU). At the European Humanities University, the training was conducted according to the Bachelor-Master model (Regulation on Conduction of Experiment on Training of Specialists with Higher Education at the European Humanities University, in consent with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus in 2003). The Belarusian State University chose the Bachelor-Specialist-Master model. At the Belarusian State University, according to this model, the students received basic education during 2 or 3 years (depending on the specialist field). Taking into account the academic achievements and the shown disposition to research work, a competitive selection was carried out to continue education at the three professional programmes - a four-year Bachelor programme, a five-year Specialist programme and a six-year Master programme. Regardless of the programme, all the students gained the Diploma of the first level of higher education (Bachelor), provided they complied with the demands of the Bachelor standard (Materials of the International Research and Practice Conference "Higher Education Quality Management in Conditions of Transfer to the Two-level Training, Minsk, BSU, 2007, p.136;<http://www.bsu.by/ru/bsu.by/main.aspx?guid=1111&detail=24683>).

It wasn't yet a classic Bachelor-Master model and this stage could be considered as transitional. At that time, transition to the two-level higher education was thought on the basis of a serious procedural framework and progressive education technologies, and in compliance with the 12-year school training. However, in 2009, the 11-year secondary school was restored obeying the impulsive decision of the country’s authorities; the universities did not manage to switch to the two-level higher education and the Bologna model of higher education (Bachelor-Master) had no further development in the Republic of Belarus.

Starting with 2004, the renewal of the Soviet higher education system was started in Belarus. The Law of the Republic of Belarus of July 11, 2007 No.252-Z on Higher Education (the National Index of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2007, No.171, 2/1349) drew a final line under the idea of implementation of the two-level Bologna model of higher education. Article 6. Higher Education Structure. Duration of Training at Higher Education Institution of this Law read:

"1. Higher education is divided into two levels:

1.1. the first level of higher education provides the training of Specialists with higher education, who possess fundamental and special knowledge and skills, and is completed by the award of a qualification and gaining the Diploma of higher education… The duration of training at this level is four to five years.

1.2. the second level of higher education (Master course) provides the formation of knowledge and skills of educational and research work and is completed by the award of the Master's Degree... The duration of training at this level is one to two years".

This article of Law was further developed in the Regulation on the First Level of Higher Education and the Regulation on the Second Level of Higher Education, adopted by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of January 18, 2008, No.68 on Some Higher Education Questions (<http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=C20800068>).

The Code of the Republic of Belarus of January 13, 2011 No.243-Z on Education (<http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=hk1100243>) codified this structure of higher education degrees in Belarus.

The main reason brought forward by the Belarusian authorities against the Bachelor-Master model was the small demand for the Bachelor graduates.

However, this was chiefly explained by the fact that the employers were obliged to follow the Classifying Code of Occupation Titles which did not cover any job titles for Bachelors and Masters. At the same time, the international students who studied at the first level of higher education were interested in receiving documents about higher education of the Republic of Belarus containing the notes about the Bachelor Degree award.

A very serious obstacle for the acceptance of Bachelors by the Belarusian labour market was the incapacity of the Government and other public authorities to set a clear example of Bachelor recruitment into the public sector, including the government services. A corresponding adjustment of the qualification criteria and a clear career and financial perspectives of the Bachelor graduates could have become such an example.

Along with this, taking into account the desire of Belarus to expand the practice of attracting international applicants to the country and to establish joint and international companies (organizations), a return of the Bachelor level into the national system of education, as well as the introduction of meaningfully new Bachelor educational programmes, popular both among the international and the Belarusian students, will be required.

It is worth noting, that so far the Belarusian model of higher education disaccords radically with the objectives, values and main directions of the European Higher Education Area policy.

The Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education, that has a prescriptive character in all educational spheres, is unfortunately not aimed at the achievement of the principles of the Bologna Process (the European Higher Education Area). The formally introduced two-level higher education does not have much in common with the Bologna structure.

According to the Code (article 202, chapter 37), the higher education is divided into two levels.

However, **the first level of higher education** provides the training of Specialists, not Bachelors. They are ready for independent career, awarded the qualification of a Specialist and have access to the Master level of studies. The duration of training at the first level is 4 to 5 years (6 years for the most complicated professions) of full-time education.

The term Bachelor is one of the basic terms of the Bologna Process, it brings a certain sense. Whereas the term Specialist does not have any clear definition (apart from the description of the requirements for concrete professions/qualifications in the educational standards) and it has a vague meaning.

At the Bologna Seminar in Helsinki (The Bologna Process. Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees. Helsinki, Finland. February, 16–17, 2001; <http://www.bmwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/europa/bologna/seminar_bachelor_degrees.pdf>), the common criteria of the Bachelor level were formulated. In 2004, in St. Petersburg, a Bologna seminar took place (The Official Bologna Seminar on “Bachelor’s Degree: What Is It?”.St. Petersburg, November 25–26, 2004; <http://www.bolognabergen2005.no/EN/Bol_sem/Seminars/041125-26St-Petersburg/041125-26_Recommendations.pdf>). It was pointed out there that Bachelor programmes should provide broad competences based on the existing descriptors. The Bachelor Degree should be flexible enough, should consider national interests and correspond to the requirements of transparency, comparability and compatibility.

The educational programmes of the European Higher Education Area that lead to the Bachelor Degree, are designed to have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. The following types of Bachelors are distinguished according to profiles (orientation): a professional Bachelor; a Bachelor with a general base level, for a wide range of professional careers; a Bachelor as a universal degree with introduction to the labour market, but with sufficient qualifications for further training; a Bachelor of a transition type, i.e. a stage towards learning Master programmes with a solid scientific base (A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks. Copenhagen, 2005; <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf> ).

In Belarus, the level that during a long period of time had been the only one, despite all the attempts to selectively cut back on the duration of training (from 5 to 4 and 4.5 years), was called the first level of higher education. Referring to "the all-European ideas of distinction between the mass and the elite higher education with the purpose to comply with the market economy demands and to liquidate the artificial extension of the duration of training", a differentiation of training terms for a variety of professions was carried out in 2008 in Belarus. The duration of training comprised 4 years for 14 % of the professions within higher education, 4.5 years for 7 % of the professions, 5 years for 76 % of the professions, 5.5 and 6 years for 3 % of the professions.

At present, the work in this direction continues: the task has been set to reduce the duration of training at higher school by 25% (the Order of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus of May 28, 2012 No.389 on Adoption of Differentiated Terms of Higher Education of the First Stage; <http://www.nihe.bsu.by/info.php>). However, the reduction in the duration of training, without changing the content of education, cannot bring about the return to the Bachelor educational programmes.

The so-called optimization of the social humanitarian component of training of Specialists with higher education has been carried out so far. The Concept of Optimization of Content, Structure and Range of Social Humanitarian Disciplines at Higher Education Institutions was adopted by the Order of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus of March 22, 2012 No.194 (<http://www.nihe.bsu.by/info.php>). This Concept presupposes the reduction of the total number of hours allocated for the cycle of social humanitarian disciplines (Social Humanitarian Disciplines 2008), as well as the introduction of integrated modules, consisting of several compulsory and optional (chosen from the list of obligatory disciplines) subjects. The above listed changes will be formalized as an educational standard named Higher Education. First level. Cycle of Social Humanitarian Disciplines. Its validity applies to all professions (specialities, specializations) of higher education of the first level while organizing the educational process for the students enrolled in 2012. These changes are by no means linked to the competences and learning outcomes of the first level, which in an obvious way stands in contrast to the Bologna approach principles of developing educational programmes.

One can say that the reform (or modernization) in Belarus is so far of cosmetic nature and remains at the initial stage, since the old educational programmes of the first level (Specialist programmes) are simply being adapted to the new duration of training, and new programmes are being developed without regard to what should be taught and achieved at the Master level.

**Individual Educational Paths.** At the first level of higher education, the educational programme of first-level higher education is implemented, which provides gaining the qualification of a Specialist with higher education It is integrated with the educational programmes of the specialized secondary education. Training at these educational programmes is interpreted by the Belarusian higher school as a possibility of flexible individual educational pathways (Recommendations on Reforming of Belarusian Higher Education System according to Bologna Process; <http://edubelarus.info/index.php?do=static&page=ehea&news_page=6>), which absolutely does not correspond to the content of this concept in the Bologna Process.

According to the Code, **the second level of higher education (Master level)** is aimed at training scientific and teaching stuff, as well as the advanced Specialist training, and is completed by a Master Degree award. The duration of training at this level of higher education is 1 to 2 years of full-time studies.

West-European society constantly carries out the improvement of the conceptual apparatus and makes organizational arrangements related to further development of the Bachelor-Master paradigm. The Recommendations of the Conferences dedicated to Master level Degrees, held in Helsinki (The Bologna Process Conference on Master-level Degrees, Helsinki, Finland; March 14-15, 2003; <http://www.bolognaberlin2003.de/pdf/Results.pdf>) and in Copenhagen (The Bologna Seminar on Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe Copenhagen, March 27-28, 2003; <http://www.bolognaberlin2003.de/pdf/Results_copenhagen.pdf>) state that Bachelor and Master programmes should be described in terms of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only in terms of duration of programmes or other formal characteristics. They also point out that since the length and the content of Bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have a similar flexibility at the Master level. So far it remains hardly achievable for the second level of Belarusian higher education because of the strict regulation of academic programmes at the national level.

Professions and Degrees of Masters of the second level of higher education (Master's programme) are described in the National Classification Code of Professions and Qualifications of the Republic of Belarus in the following profession groups: “80 Scientific and Educational Activities” – for the purpose of implementation of educational programmes of higher education of the second level, that form knowledge and skills of scientific educational and research work; “81 Innovative Activities (with advanced Specialist training)” – for the implementation of educational programmes of higher education of the second level with an advanced Specialist training (Methodical Recommendations on Forming the Subsystem of Professions of Higher Education of the Second Level with Advanced Training according to the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education adopted by the First Deputy Education Minister of the Republic of Belarus in 2011 ; <http://www.nihe.bsu.by/info/11/Met-magistratura.pdf> ). However, the qualifications awarded at this level of higher education are not defined. It remains unclear, how the Master level with advanced Specialist training (practice oriented) shall be built into the existing educational structure.

Belarusian Master programmes are often developed with a very narrow focus on the preceding programme of the first level for the same students, i.e. a Specialist and a Master are considered to be a single successive object. In practice, the existing system of educational levels in Belarus only technically reminds of the European structure. Moreover, the Belarusian version hardly takes into account the differentiation of learning outcomes and competences provided by the Dublin Descriptors. Some higher educational institutions realize the inappropriateness and the negative consequences of this approach, and yet they cannot develop their Master programmes without corresponding directives from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus regarding the framework, contents and status of the Master-level programmes. The implemented reforms apply only to the technical issues. For example, a new draft of the Master Degree Course Scheme has been approved, where a reallocation of class hours in favour of higher education institutions took place: 30 % of the class hours are now allocated to the state component, and 70 % remain at the discretion of the higher education institutions. Within the framework of the latter, the so-called Master's component is allowed to the extent of 50 % of the higher education institution component, which eventually comprises the variable part of the whole Master programme (Methodological Recommendations, 2011;<http://www.nihe.bsu.by/info/11/Met-magistratura.pdf>).

However, such a generosity of the Ministry of Education may be explained by the fact that in many cases, in view of the paucity of the Master programmes, the higher education institutions are unable to provide a high level of their structuredness. Implicitly, such a flexibility of curriculum reflects the imperfection and the instability of the second-level programmes.

**Third Cycle of Higher Education.** Doctoral studies (Doctorate, Doctoral**/**Research school) is an organizational structure at the European universities, that provides the implementation of the Doctoral programmes, the programmes of the third cycle of training according to the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, leading to a Doctoral Degree.

The Berlin Conference (2003) came to the decision to undertake efforts in order to establish the European Research Area (ERA) and its synergy with the European Higher Education Area as a new line of development for the Bologna Process. This underlined the key role of the doctoral programmes and research training.

In the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the Doctoral level was included as the third cycle into the Bologna Process. It emphasized the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. At the Bergen Conference (2005), the importance of interdisciplinary training of doctoral students on the basis of framework doctoral programmes was highlighted.

Doctoral schools have become widespread over the entire European Higher Education Area and at this stage they exist in 30higher education systems. In many cases, doctoral schools provide doctoral training within the limits of one discipline or a group of interrelated disciplines. Thus, some doctoral specializations are accompanied by an interdisciplinary academic programme that is aimed at developing general competences. In a number of countries, programmes of the third cycle may lead to the industrial or business-oriented Doctoral Degrees (Denmark), to the professional Doctoral Degrees (Ireland,Romania and Great Britain) or to the Degrees of the Doctor of Arts (Sweden) (The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/138EN.pdf>).

In nine countries, all or the majority of doctoral programmes are framework programmes, while in14 countries they are made as a combination of framework programmes and a traditional control (by the authorities) based on independent research. The traditional model dominates in 11 more systems. In the French community in Belgium doctoral studies include training to the extent of 60 ECTS with certificating in addition to the controlled research, in Lithuania – 30 ECTS.

There is a significant concordance between the notions of a "framework programme" and a "doctoral school". The data provided by the European University Association (EUA) points out the existence of a common understanding of the fact that educational institutions should actively participate in the development of the framework programmes that go beyond the scope of the traditional model "supervisor (expert) – student". Certainly, the concepts may change, but the common goal to increase the institutional responsibility for the doctoral education is peculiar to the whole continent.

According to the data provided by The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, all the countries that have developed qualification frameworks, included doctoral studies into them. The information provided in this report also shows that the application of ECTS at the doctoral level grows. At present, 18 higher education systems apply ECTS at their doctoral level. The systems of 10 more countries apply ECTS only at the taught courses.

The Bologna Seminar on Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society (Salzburg, February 3–5, 2005) became an arena for discussion of some problems and challenges connected with the Doctoral courses. One of the important conclusions reached at the seminar was the understanding that participants in the doctoral programmes are not simply students. They are researchers as well, even if at the early stage of their career. It should be acknowledged that they contribute to the creation of new knowledge.

It was underlined that there is a need to improve the synergy between the higher education sector and other research sectors throughout the participating countries, and between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. To achieve these objectives, doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA Overarching Framework for Qualifications using the outcomes-based approach.

Peculiarities of the majority of the reforms on Doctoral studies in the European Higher Education Area can be expressed as follows: promotion of orientation, controllability, integratedness; more professional skills-on-demand training, as well as more institutional structures providing a wide range of interdisciplinary exchange and sufficient education offer. These notions meet the requirements of the Bologna Process in the best way possible.

In practice, **the third cycle of higher education,** as it is seen by the Bologna Process, is missing in Belarus, since according to the Code on Education (article 218, chapter 42), training of personnel of higher academic qualification fall into the postgraduate studies.

The training is conducted in accordance with the Regulations on Training of Academic Personnel of Higher Qualification in the Republic of Belarus, adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus of December 1, 2011 No.561 (<http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=P31100561>) and with the academic professions specified in the Classification of Professions of Academic Personnel in the Republic of Belarus, adopted by the Resolution of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Belarus of June 8, 2009 No.4 (<http://www.vak.org.by/index.php?go=Pages&in=view&id=102>).

The Classification of Professions of Academic Personnel is a separate document that is in many ways not comparable to the national classification Code of Professions and Qualifications of Belarus, which once again affirms the detachment of academic personnel training from the first two cycles (levels) of higher education in Belarus.

Professional passports of academic specialities and the minimum programmes for qualifying examinations for the Candidate degree (http://www.vak.org.by/index.php?go=Box) do not have interdisciplinary nature, and do not correspond to the Dublin Descriptors in the part of developing learning outcomes in terms of competences.

In the system of postgraduate studies, the old soviet two-level model is preserved. However, now it is interpreted as follows: the first level - postgraduate programme (duration of training is 3 to 4 years) and the second level - doctoral programme (the duration of training is 3 years). Truth be told, a qualification for postgraduate (military) programme finalists called Researcher has been introduced. It presupposes the Researcher Diploma award upon finishing a postgraduate educational programme (first level of postgraduate education). Upon the completion of a postgraduate (military) programme and the defense of a Candidate's dissertation, a Candidate of Sciences Degree is awarded; upon the completion of a doctoral programme - a Doctor of Sciences Degree. A national characteristic, that according to the authorities is partially coordinated with the European practice, is that applicants for a Candidate Degree may upon request be awarded a PhD Degree instead of the traditional Candidate of Sciences Degree (Doctor of Phіlosophy Degree (Ph.D)) (article 12 of the Regulations on Academic Degree Award and Academic Title Conferment in the Republic of Belarus, adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus of November 17, 2004 No.560, as amended on December 1, 2011, No.561; (<http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=P31100561>). However, the weak structuredness of the training programmes of this level and their traditional nature remain the principle distinction from the European model.

Progress towards more convergent degree structures has been facilitated by a number of pre-existing "tools" that were introduced to the Bologna process to foster transparency and mutual recognition. Notably, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement (DS) have been central to the implementation of the Bologna reforms since the beginning of the process. Later, the national qualification frameworks have been added as a third tool to promote the development of greater transparency in the European Higher Education Area.

**2.2. Implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)is the credit system for higher education used in the European Higher Education Area, involving all countries engaged in the Bologna Process. Most Bologna countries have adopted ECTS by law for their higher education systems.

ECTS is a tool aimed to plan, describe and implement programmes and to award higher education qualifications. ECTS credits are a key element of the Bologna Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005), A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area; <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf>), compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/rec08_en.pdf>, 2008).

The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications.

ECTS was originally set up in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the framework of the Erasmus programme in order to facilitate the recognition of study periods undertaken abroad by mobile students.

Later, ECTS was mentioned in the Bologna Declaration in 1999 within the context of credit transfer "as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility" with a view to assign credits to foreign students (The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999). Nevertheless, this process exceeded the habitual scope and in the Prague Communiqué (Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Prague, 19 May 2001), ECTS was already introduced not only as a system providing transferability, but also as the one having accumulation functions. It can be applied to other lifelong learning activities provided they are recognized by the higher education institutions. In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) it was once again highlighted that ECTS should not only be used as a transfer system, but also as an accumulation system; and in Bergen in 2005, it was already decided upon the approximate credit ranges in the first and second cycles (The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005.)

In recent years, the credit systems have undergone some serious changes. If previously credits were awarded only on the basis of contact hours (i.e. hours spent by students on activities guided by teaching staff) and the estimated workload, then at present, a tendency can be traced to award credits both on the basis of student's workload and the learning outcomes (ECTS Users’ Guide. 2009; <http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ectsguide_en.pdf>).

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes (ECTS Users’ Guide. 2009; <http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ectsguide_en.pdf>). ECTS helps institutions to shift the emphasis in programme design and delivery from the traditional teacher-centered approaches to the approaches that accommodate for learners’ needs and expectations.

In the traditional teacher-centred approaches, subject requirements, knowledge and the teaching process itself were considered to be the main elements of educational programmes.

The learner-centred learning puts learning at the heart of curriculum design and delivery, and gives learners more choice in content, mode, pace and place of learning. By using learning outcomes and learners’ workload in curriculum design and delivery, ECTS helps to place the learner at the centre of the educational process. By allocating credits to educational components it facilitates the creation of flexible learning pathways.

This new approach means that credits are awarded under the condition that a student has fulfilled certain amount of workload and can demonstrate the expected learning outcomes. The results of a survey show (Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area, 12 March 2010) that in most systems of higher education of Europe credits are awarded on the basis of combination of the workload and learning outcomes. However, in some countries credits are awarded either only on the basis of learning outcomes (Azerbaijan, Malta and Great Britain (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland), or on the basis of student's workload (Austria, Andorra, Flemish community in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Liechtenstein, Slovakia and Switzerland).

Correct implementation of ECTS is crucial for the achievement of the Bologna Process goals.

At present, in the European Higher Education Area, the efforts are focused on resolving the issue of binding all program components to the learning outcomes.

ECTS operates such terms as credit, workload and learning outcomes. ECTS credits are based on the student's workload needed to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Workload in the ECTS system is the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

The ECTS system does not make use of the terms "academic hour" and "astronomic hour". Workload in the ECTS system is the practical time needed for students to complete all learning activities.

ECTS employs also the notion "contact hours". A contact hour duration is in the range between 45 and 60 minutes. It is also underlined that there is no direct connection between credits and contact hours (hours spent by students on activities guided by teaching staff). Not a single country awards credits on the basis of contact hours *(One wrong way: linking credits to contact hours*). ECTS is based on the principle that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year. The student workload of a full-time study programme in Europe amounts in most cases to around 1500-1800 hours per year (including the time spent on independent work, compulsory work placements, preparation for assessment and the time necessary for the assessment, etc.) and in those cases one credit stands for around 25 to 30 working hours (1. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Key Features. 2004; <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ects/en.pdf>; 2. ECTS Users’ Guide. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and Diploma Supplement 2005; <http://pps.teithe.gr/ECTS_DS.pdf>; 3. ECTS Users’ Guide. 2009; <http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ectsguide_en.pdf>).In most EHEA countries, one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of student workload.

Judging by the range and the form of its application in Belarus, ECTS is still perceived as a tool of translating the national system into some kind of common European language, but not as a fundamental attribute of the program framework.

At the higher education institutions of Belarus, as is seen from the analysis of the standards and other educational planning documents of the higher education system, no full-scale transition from student workload estimation in academic (incl. classroom-based) hours to the workload estimation according to the modern ECTS model took place (2009).

The range of one credit is also interpreted in a very particular way by the Belarusian higher school.

The first attempt to introduce credits as an element of a credit and module system into the national system of higher education of Belarus was made in 2003. However, it never gained due development and application. Educational standards of higher education of the second generation in the Republic of Belarus (adopted on September 1, 2008) already contain assignment of each academic discipline with the common load in academic hours and in credits. The Directions on Academic Programs Workload Assessment and on Educational Standards Execution were developed with the use of the credit system and adopted on January 28, 2008. These Directions made an attempt to adopt the national educational standards to the European requirement. In these Directions, one credit corresponded to 28 academic hours, including: 17 hours of class work and from 9 to 13 academic hours of independent work (depending on the complexity of the discipline). Duration of one academic hour is 45 minutes. However, later (2008-2009) a conclusion was made that there was a necessity to realign the demands of the Directions due to the fact that a number of Bologna Process requirements to this system of credits were not met. And yet, instead of organizing (reforming, optimizing) the contents of the academic programmes on the basis of the Bologna model (180-240 ECTS - the first (Bachelor) level of education, 90-120 ECTS - the second (Master) level of education), a "jugglery" with the notions of "academic hour" and "astronomic hour" began. Academic hours were converted into astronomic hours in an effort to keep the former total education scope expressed in hours and years. As a result, the following conclusion was made: "Taking into consideration that student workload in ECTS is estimated not in academic hours, but in hours of work, we presume that 25-30 hours of workload correspond to 33-40 academic hours of 45 minutes' length and, accordingly, 37,5-40 academic hours of 40 minutes' length. One credit is now corresponding to 34-36 academic hours of 45 minutes' length of workload (25,5-27 astronomic hours) or 38-39 academic hours of 40 minutes' length of workload (25.5-26 astronomic hours)." (Information on implementation of Bologna Declaration principles in the higher school of Belarus: Review as of 2011; pp. 21-26;; <http://edubelarus.info/uploads/ehea/Belarus_rewie_2011.pdf> ). On the basis thereof, it is proposed to introduce a credit equal to 36-40 academic hours into the new generation of standards for 2013 (Draft of the Academic Standard of Higher Education of the First Level, 2013; <http://nihe.bsu.by/info/standart.php>).

In ECTS credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placements and laboratory work).

The Belarusian model of higher education has introduced such a notion as module, and announced the implementation in 2011-2013 of the "... module rating system of higher education... with the purpose to raise the standard of Specialist training, in consideration to the requirements of the Bologna Declaration" (Arrangements of the State Programme of Higher Education Development for 2011-2015, paragraph 14; <http://edu.gov.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=14681>). However, the interpretation of modules in the Belarusian higher school does not correspond with the one of the Bologna Process.

The term "Module" is widely used within the Main Documents of the Bologna Process. It is closely connected with the terms "Learning Outcomes", "Competences", "ECTS", etc. Within the framework of the Bologna Process, the correlation of modules and competences is common. A clear and measurable objective is set for each module. A module is formed from the classes of one, but as a rule, of several disciplines. According to TUNING project classification (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report, Phase 2, University of Deusto, University of Groningen, 2005), the following types of modules are distinguished: core modules, support modules, organization- and communication skills modules, specialization modules and transferable skills modules, as well as compulsory modules, optional modules, course-specific modules, semi-optional models, completely free choice modules.

Core modules and specialization modules are defined as a set of modules, aimed at building-up, widening and deepening knowledge; support models are aimed at the development of methodological competences; organization- and communication skills modules are aimed at self-education and self-organization; and transferable skills modules are aimed at developing capacity for applying knowledge in practice.

Core modules are groups of subjects which make up the backbone of the respective science. For example, in Business and Management (BM) they are Business in Context, Business Functions, Business Environment, etc. Support modules in Business and Management are, for example, Mathematics, Statistics, Information Technology; organization- and communication skills modules in BM are Learning Skills, Working in Groups, Time Management, Rhetorics, Foreign Language(s); specialization modules are not compulsory, but widening and deepening competences in the selected area; transferable skills modules are needed to close the gap between theory and reality, e.g. work experience/placement, projects, dissertation, business games. In the framework of educational programme, workload allocation to modules is estimated in ECTS. As a rule, one module has the value of 5 ECTS or multiples of it (e.g. 5, 10, 15) (1. ECTS Users' Guide. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement. Brussels, Education and Culture DG of the European Commission, 2005. 2. Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report, Phase 2, University of Deusto, University of Groningen, 2005.).

Regulatory and procedural documents of the Republic of Belarus provide for another perspective for Module. Thus, for example, the Draft of Typical Academic Programme of Social Humanitarian Cycle of First-level Higher Education (Methodological Recommendations for Typical Academic Programme Developers, 2007; <http://nihe.bsu.by/info/standart.php>) reads that a Module approach may be used to structure the subject content, in this case the educational material is divided into relatively independent parts - modules. The following modules constitute the content of any discipline: "zero modules" are the modules of introduction to the subject where its relevance, goals and objectives are defined; "educational (training) modules" are the modules of the subject's theoretical content, the name and the number of them match up the key problem and the keynote (concept) of the subject. The number of modules also depends on the scope of teaching material. The list of training module names is defined in the subject's editorial calendar: "summary modules" generalize the subject content and define the system of subject and inter-subject concepts and communications; "monitor modules" provide final control of knowledge and skill acquisition (work methods). Such an interpretation of the concept of Module does not at all correspond to the terminology and the contents of the Bologna Process documents.

It is worth noting that in the Concept on Optimization of Content, Structure and Scope of Social Humanitarian Disciplines at Higher Education Institutions**,** adopted by the Decree of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus of March 22, 2012 No.194 (<http://www.nihe.bsu.by/info.php>), a notion of "integrated modules" is introduced, i.e. formations that consist of several subjects of the social humanitarian unit, with allocation of compulsory for each integrated module disciplines (state component).

In general, the concept of modules and credit module system in Belarus does not correspond to the requirements of the Bologna Process.

European higher education presupposes accumulation of credits by students in order to be awarded the entire qualification. If students have achieved learning outcomes in other learning contexts or timeframes (formal, non formal or informal/spontaneous), the associated credits may be awarded after successful assessment, validation or recognition of these learning outcomes.

In Belarus, the regulatory documents of higher education system presuppose neither the possibility of different timeframes for achieving the entire qualification (non formal and informal/spontaneous learning) nor the recognition of credits obtained in these contexts. The laws and regulations of the Belarusian higher education provide only for formal learning, which does not match the principle of lifelong learning.

Credit transfer and accumulation are facilitated by the use of the ECTS key documents (Course Catalogue, Student Application Form, Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records) as well as the Diploma Supplement.

In the Belarusian higher school, ECTS is still not a learner-centred system, since the emphasis in programme design and delivery has not been shifted from the traditional teacher-centered approaches to approaches that accommodate for learners’ needs and expectations.

**2.3. Competence-Based Approach and Learning Outcomes**

Competence-based (student-centred) approach is an approach to defining learning outcomes in terms of competences. It is the key methodological tool of the Bologna Process implementation.

The term "competence-based approach" is based on the term "competences" and is closely connected to the terms "learning outcomes", "learner-centred education", "ECTS", "modularization", etc. (Bologna Seminar on Development of a Common Understanding of Learning Outcomes and ECTS. Porto. 2008;<http://portobologna.up.pt/documents.php>; Trend IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna, 2005; <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/EUA%20Trends/EUA_TrendsIV-April2005.pdf>).

According to the Bologna glossary, Competence is a dynamic combination of characteristics (relating to knowledge, its implementation, skills, abilities, values and personal qualities), that describes educational programme learning outcomes, i.e. what a graduate needs for effective professional life, social activities and personal development, which he/she has to develop and demonstrate.

Within the framework of the Bologna Process, competences serve as:

* a characteristic of individual ability to implement knowledge and skills into successful activities, with a high degree of self regulation, self-evaluation, prompt, flexible and adaptive response to the dynamics of circumstances and environment;
* one of the distinctive features of qualifications (degrees, stages, levels);
* a correspondence to competence requirements with due regard to regional needs and labour market demands;
* a skill to perform specific types of activity or work depending on the task in hand, problem situations, etc.

In the **Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**, learning outcomes (including qualifications) are considered as general learning outcomes. This Framework is based on the Dublin Descriptors, which have been developed by an international group of experts under the umbrella of the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI). They offer generic statements of typical expectations, or competence levels, of achievements and abilities associated with awards that represent the end of each of a Bologna cycle. The word ‘competence’ is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills (<http://www.bolognabergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf>).

**The European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning** separates knowledge, skills and competences. It applies the following definitions: "Competence" means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy." In this case the term Competence is used in a narrower meaning, as an ability to apply knowledge practically (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/rec08_en.pdf>).

The document Tuning Educational Structures in Europe ("TUNING") makes a clear distinction between learning outcomes and competences in order to distinguish the different roles of the most relevant players in the learning process: the academic staff and students/learners. In the Tuning Project competences represent a dynamic combination of attributes —with respect to knowledge and its application, to attitudes and responsibilities. Competence development is a target of the learning process and educational programme. According to TUNING, learning outcomes demonstrate the level of competences a student has developed (<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu>).

Learning Outcomes is a combination of Competences expressing what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. competences "may, by all means, extend beyond the specified learning outcomes..." (Bologna Seminar on ‘Development of a Common Understanding of Learning Outcomes and ECTS’. Final Report and Recommendations. Porto, Portugal, 19-20 June 2008; <http://portobologna.up.pt/documents.php>; ECTS Users' Guide European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement. 2005; ECTS Users' Guide, 2009; <http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ectsguide_en.pdf>).

The term "Learning outcomes" is one of the key terms of the Bologna Process.

Learning outcomes are extremely important, thanks to them the system of easily understandable and comparable levels in Europe is based on one and the same classification of levels.

Learning outcomes may refer to a period of learning, e.g. first- or second- cycle programmes, or to a certain course unit or module. In the process of Bologna reforming, they are used as a tool for designing learning programmes. The use of learning outcomes makes the objectives of learning programmes clearer and more easily understood for students, employers and other stakeholders. They also make it easier to compare qualifications and facilitate the recognition of achievements.

The role of learning outcomes is a key to the recognition of higher education and lifelong learning, which determines the necessity of strategy development.

A tendency of structuring educational programmes in terms of learning outcomes and competences is characteristic of the European Higher Education Area. This tendency allows guaranteeing that academic quality and commitment to long-term employability comprise compatible goals of higher education.

Most of the countries follow the above mentioned two non-antagonistic models of learning outcomes definition, one of them originates from the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area: what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do (Adam,2006) (e.g., Azerbaijan, Andorra, the French Communities of Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Finland, Malta, Turkey and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), and the other is taken from EQF for LLL "knowledge, skills and competences" (e.g. Denmark, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway and Slovenia). Steering or encouraging the use of learning outcomes is stipulated in legislation in 25 higher education systems, while 21 encourage learning outcomes through guidelines or recommendations.

From the point of view of the Bologna reforms, designing educational programmes in the context of competence-based (learner-centred) approach means:

* Reflection learning outcomes in terms of consistence and integrity;
* Definition of learning outcomes at higher education institutions as a sign of student's/graduate's readiness to demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills and values;
* Identification of the framework of competences that should be acquired and demonstrated by the students (therewith a classification of general and subject specific competences, corresponding to each level of training and compatible with the learning objectives, should be taken as a basis).

A Competence-based approach means a shift of the emphasis to the learner-centred character of training process with compulsory application of ECTS as a measure of students academic success, and module structure of learning process.

Belarusian system of higher professional education has not yet accomplished the transition to competences that give a possibility to measure employee's conformance to the requirements of the work position. Recognition of competences secures the flexibility of educational pathways and the possibility of a more appropriate and economically effective continuation of learning or retraining of employees when moving from one place of work to another.

Western systems of professional training are arranged in a different way. In European countries, there is also primary professional training that is aimed at acquiring basic qualifications which allows citizens to enter into the labour market. The next subsystem comprises continuous professional education that covers all the segments of postgraduate training, including personnel development (supplementary education or upgrade qualifications in our understanding), adult education and training, training of unemployed. They are united by the integrated qualification framework that is nowadays more and more competence-based, and are not aimed at acquisition of one specific educational programme.

This provides the means of securing the flexibility of educational pathways and the possibility of horizontal mobility, namely securing the recognition of previously acquired competences necessary for a new profession regardless of where and when they have been acquired. That is why Western praxis applies the term "professional education and training", not only "professional education" as in Belarus. This approach enabled the EU countries to come closely to the issue of compatibility, transparency and mutual recognition of qualifications.

Such learning outcomes-based approaches also allow the assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in different from the formal higher education contexts (non formal and informal/ spontaneous learning), award of credits for them, and consequently, their recognition for the purpose of the award of a qualification. However, in all the cases they refer to what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after completion of a process of learning. Such understanding is a part of the shift in paradigm that places the learner at the centre of the higher education experience. This shift is the foundation of the European Higher Education Area.

In terms of the Bologna reforms, the National and the European Qualification Frameworks are based the level descriptors, each of them correlates with the learning outcomes and ECTS. These Dublin Descriptors offer generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of each Bologna cycle. The descriptors seek to identify the nature of the whole qualification (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005), A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, p. 65; <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf>).

Alongside this, a balanced perception of the role of the Dublin Descriptors should be demonstrated. On the one hand, they are not meant to be prescriptive. On the other hand, nowadays they appear to be the best of all possible consensuses in terms of learning outcomes for each cycle (level) of training.

In the TUNING project, learning outcomes were defined for subject disciplines in terms of competences, which increase transparency and effectiveness while comparing the levels of attainment. In the TUNING project, competences are understood as knowing and understanding (theoretical knowledge of an academic field, the capacity to know and understand), knowing how to act (practical and operational application of knowledge to certain situations), knowing how to be (values as an integral element of the way of perceiving and living with others and in a social context) (1. Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Phases I-V, 2003-2008; 2. Bologna Seminar: 3rd Cycle Degrees: Competences and Researcher Career. Helsinki, 30 September-1 October 2008).

While describing learning outcomes we should take into account the four main purposes of higher education:

• preparation for the labour market;

• preparation for life as an active citizen;

• personal development;

• development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base (“Improving the Recognition System of Degreesand Study Credit Points in the European Higher Education Area”. Bologna Seminar on Recognition,University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, December 3–4, 2004;[http://www.bolognabergen2005.no/EN/Bol\_sem/Seminars/041203-04Riga/041203-04\_Riga\_ Recommendations.pdf](http://www.bolognabergen2005.no/EN/Bol_sem/Seminars/041203-04Riga/041203-04_Riga_%20Recommendations.pdf)).

It is generally thought that competence-based approach was implemented in Belarus in 2006-2008, when the following documents were legislated: the Model of the Academic Standard of Higher Education of the First Level (approved by the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus on April 27, 2006), Educational Standard. Higher Education. First level, Cycle of Social Humanitarian Disciplines, Governing Document of the Republic of Belarus 02100.50227-2006 (approved by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of September 1, 2006 No.89), the Model of the Academic Standard of Higher Education of the Second Level (Proposal, 2006). As of September 1, 2008, these educational standards of new generation were implemented into the educational process of higher school. It is pointed out the in the developed drafts of higher education standards of new generation, the competence-based approach is presented at the terminological level, as well as in terms of common parametric characteristics and requirements. It is claimed that the Dublin Descriptors were taken as a basis for the competence-based specialist model, the Descriptors which set the framework requirement for learning outcomes in the three cycles of higher education (<http://edubelarus.info/uploads/ehea/Belarus_rewie_2011.pdf>).

Despite this, the level and the description style of the learning outcomes remains a sore spot of the Belarusian educational standards. In European praxis, a more accurate use of action verbs (i.e. verbs indicating the way students/graduates may prove acquired competences) is recommended for defining learning outcomes. For example, students/graduates should demonstrate, may apply, possess skills, may pass, have developed skills, etc. In the Belarusian standards, despite of their commitment to the Dublin descriptors, imperative verbs still encounter: must know, must be able to and others, which was commonly found in the Soviet practice of requirements description.

The Belarusian educational standards set plenty of regulatory requirements with regard to the groups of prescribed learning disciplines, their hour and percent distribution within the framework of the curriculum, the range of mandatory state component and many other things, and only the competence section remains on the descriptive level. Educational objectives are not properly embodied either, at least in broad strokes correlated with the learning outcomes, i.e. with what a programme guarantees to students as regards their competences, what students/graduates will have to convincingly demonstrate through different means, technologies and tools of assessment. The Master Standard Model (2013; <http://nihe.bsu.by/info/standart.php>) does not in any way stipulate for any educational objectives, despite the fact that the European model of educational programme presupposes an objective and the means of its achievement.

However, the Belarusian educational standards describe competences, represented by three groups: academic competences, social and personal competences and professional competences. Yet, competence-based approach is not secured by them. The reason is that they emphasize the parameters set "at the entry" (content, hours, process of teaching), and to a lesser extent - the expected learning outcomes "at the output". Thus, the main strategy of higher school modernization of the European Higher Education Area which is build on education development "based on the results", is not yet implemented in Belarus. A shift from the traditional orientation of the educational process to its commitment to a student can only be achieved if already at the planning stage, the "triad" of teaching, learning and assessment on the one side, will be harmonized with the objectives, learning outcomes and competences on the other side.

A competence-based approach also consists in the development of key competences which define a successful social adaptation of students and raise their competitive advantage on the labour market. Each competence should be secured by a certain set of disciplines and practices consolidated into corresponding modules, and module content should fully comply with the level of acquired competences. As a matter of fact, in the Belarusian educational standards, competences exist independently, since they do not reflect what disciplines, groups of disciplines (modules) are aimed at developing certain competences.

Master's competences, according to the European interpretation are seen as widening and deepening of Bachelor's competences. For Bachelors, skills are almost always connected to knowledge, and most of Master's competences are characterized by readiness.

As the analysis of the drafts of the educational standards of the first and the second level of education shows (<http://nihe.bsu.by/info/standart.php>), Belarusian higher school has not yet made a clear distinction between these levels of education as regards learning outcomes and competences, as well as no correct application of the terminology has been used while formulating them, despite the use of the Dublin Descriptors. So far, the level differentiation has not been assured to the full extent in correspondence with the Dublin Descriptors. It consists of five fields with prescribed distinctions:

- in the context of *"knowledge and understanding:* from "a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks" (Bachelor) to the "knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context" (Master);

- in the context of *application of knowledge and understanding*: from "devising and sustaining arguments" (Bachelor) to "problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts" (Master);

- in the context of *ability to make judgments*: from the ability " to identify and use data/ to gather and interpret relevant data" (Bachelor) to the ability "to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete data or limited information " (Master);

- in the context of *communication*: from the ability "to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions" (Bachelor) to the ability "to communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously" (Master);

- in the context of *learning skills*: from "those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy" (Bachelor) to "the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous" (Master). (<http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/GeneralDocs/FilesFeb09/STATEofPLAY.pdf>; <http://logosbook.ru/VOS/buydenko.pdf> )

This system of standard development is not at all used while designing the minimum requirements for a Candidate's degree on the third level of education (post graduate).

It is worth emphasizing that in order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability the Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content.

However, the so-called "European dimension" is not quite inherent to the Belarusian higher school. This dimension embraces, apart from the set of "Europeanization" attributes (*student mobility, cooperation among the European Higher Education Institutions, the Europe of Knowledge, role of languages, recognition of degrees and periods of studies, international role of higher education, information about policy and strategy in the sphere of higher education* ), also availability of competences that a European university graduate should acquire described in the educational programmes.

The European Commission defined eight key competences (2005). They are: 1) communication in the mother tongue; 2) communication in foreign languages; 3) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) digital competence; 5) learning to learn; 6) social and civic competences; 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; 8) cultural awareness and expression, as well as the competences necessary in all spheres of life, such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and constructive management of feelings. All of them serve for personal development, active interaction and increasing employability (1. Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. 2005. 2. Realizing the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education. Berlin, 2003.). However, these competences have not been properly developed in the educational programmes of the Belarusian higher school.

**2.4. Diploma Supplement**

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is an annex to the official degree/qualification designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the holder of the degree/qualification. The Diploma Supplement is one of the key tools of the Bologna Process implementation.

It is based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES in 1998. (<http://www.cepes.ro>; <http://europe.eu.int/comm/education/recognition/index.html>).

The Berlin Communiqué points out that the objective of the Diploma Supplement is the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies. The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international ‘transparency’ and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.) and to foster employability.

Basic principles and common rules of the Diploma Supplement design were developed and the structure for the supplement was approved (1. Structure for the Diploma Supplement.2009; <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/rec_qual/recognition/ds_en.pdf>; 2. ECTS Users' Guide European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement). 2005; 3. ECTS Users' Guide. Final Version. 2009; 4. Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna. 2005; <http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/TrendsIV_FINAL.1117012084971.pdf>; 5. Realizing the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education. Berlin, 2003).

The Berlin Communiqué set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge.

In Belarus, the praxis of issuance of documents concerning higher education is until now based on the praxis that was applied in the USSR. It has been and until present is being regulated by the normative legal acts specified by the Council of Ministers and/or the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.

The valid Regulations on Procedures for Filling in Documents Confirming Education and Supplements to them; Documents confirming Training; Record Keeping and Issuance of Documents concerning Education, and Supplements to them, Golden and Silver Medals; Sample Documents concerning Education and Supplements to them, approved by the Resolution of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of July 27, 2011 No.194 as revised in 2012 (Resolution of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of August 1, 2012 No.92 <http://www.bsu.by/Cache/pdf/51593.pdf>)do not provide for the issuance of the Diploma Supplement of European standard to the graduates of higher education institutions.

The Transcript of Academic Records presented in the prescribed form (article 35 of the Regulations) still serves as a Diploma Supplement. It is worth noting that the structuring and the content of this form do not correspond to the modern European requirements, since it is notable for its low information value, exposure to falsification, absence of unified approach to the description of the obtained education, levels, qualifications, etc. This kind of Transcript can neither be used as international documents securing adequate recognition of obtained education and qualification (level), nor guarantee the mobility of Belarusian citizens.

In its attempt to join the Bologna Process, Belarus has recently made an effort to develop a Diploma Supplement corresponding to the European standards. Two possible variants were under consideration. The first one was a full-scale Diploma Supplement (DS), printed on the European blank form as a European educational document issued by the higher educational institutions of the countries that have already joined the Bologna Process, and made in strict adherence to the requirements of UNESCO/CEPES, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Issuance of this kind of supplement will require considerable financial placements. European registration of the Diploma Supplement is expected when employing it. The second variant is the variant of development of a national Supplement to Higher Education Diploma, which would be comparable with the Diploma Supplement (DS) and corresponding to it in its content and other standards. Such a variant of this documents will not be a fully valid Diploma Supplement (DS), but can to an adequate degree fulfil the functions of the latter. This would first of all make Belarusian Diploma more comprehensible for international employers and international partner universities.

In 2010, the Panel of the Council of Rectors of Belarusian higher education institutions considered it expedient to develop a project of a national Supplement to Higher Education Diploma which would correspond to the structure and the content of the European Diploma Supplement (DS) (<http://edubelarus.info/uploads/ehea/ssrb_2010_10_29.pdf> ).

The following measures were supposed to serve as key actions on the implementation of the national Diploma Supplement in 2011: development of a unified system of classification of educational programmes in the Republic of Belarus, which would be comparable with the European educational standards; development of instructional guidelines on filling in the diploma supplement, personnel training; translation of discipline names of the components of educational standards of higher education into English (<http://edubelarus.info/uploads/ehea/Belarus_rewie_2011.pdf>).

It was planned that the new Supplement will not replace the document confirming education, but will only complement it. The document will be filled in the national language and in English by means of a specially designed computer programme on the blank forms with several security features.

Looking back at the history of the Bologna Process, one must admit that not all members of the Bologna Process introduced a full-scale Diploma Supplement (DS) into their educational systems. A number of countries chose to develop and use their national supplements, developed on the basis of the European model (Russian Federation, Ukraine, Lithuania, etc.).

It was supposed that Belarus would start issuing national diploma supplements starting from 2010-2011, and later from 2011-2012 academic year, first upon request and on a paying basis, and eventually later - to all. However, by now the fate of the adopted decisions remains uncertain.

While considering the possibility of implementation of a new national diploma supplement into the Belarusian higher education practice, a special attention has to be paid to the fact that Belarusian higher school will have to solve series of problems conditioned by its present situation and legislation.

First of all, it should be pointed out that according to the international rules, the right to develop and issue "own Diploma Supplements" belongs to the higher education institutions, and not to the state authorities (in case of Belarus - the Ministry of Education), since the Diploma Supplement is not a document of a national (state) level, but an international (European) educational document, designed by the supra-national regulatory bodies of the European Union and the International Organization UNESCO. The role of the Ministry of Education in this context should be limited to the formulation of common rules and recommendations on preparation and issuance of the Supplement to Higher Education Diploma comparable with the Diploma Supplement (DS).

Attention should be also paid to the fact that the European Diploma Supplement is a document with complex content and its filling in requires special personnel training. Taking into consideration the fact that Belarus has not developed and implemented the ECTS system, its main documents (including the Course Catalogue) has not been worked out, the Diploma Supplement implementation will not be such an easy task, as is claimed by the representatives of the official educational bodies.

**2.5. Main Conclusions**

1. The developed and legalized by the Code on Education model of higher education system in Belarus does not correspond in its structure and content to the structure, ideas and principles of the Bologna Process, despite the introduction of the two-level structure of education. A first-level graduate of higher education (Specialist) does not correspond to the European Bachelor. The place of the second level (Master's course) in the system of higher education remains unclear, just as the sphere of application of its graduates. The postgraduate education (Postgraduate course, Doctoral programme) is not included into the common higher education framework as the third level, according to its structure and in some degree content does not correspond to the standards of training at the European Doctoral Programme.

2. Belarusian higher school until the present time has not introduced a number of Bologna tools promoting transparency and mutual recognition of learning outcomes, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System(ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement(DS). Belarusian higher education system does not provide to the full extent formulation of learning outcomes in terms of competences and implementation of competence-based approach while developing and conducting educational programmes. It cannot but have an impact on the international recognition of the documents confirming education and qualifications gained in Belarus.

3. The conceptual framework used by the Belarusian system of higher education does not correspond to the terminology accepted by the Bologna Process (module, credit, competence-based approach, learning outcomes, etc.). There is a need of approximation of the meaning of these terms with their understanding in EHEA.

4. Tough legislative regulation of the educational programmes (educational standards) up to the framework and content of the curriculum, list and content of discipline programmes, order of their learning, does not allow to develop flexible educational pathways and consequently does not contribute to fostering of employability and competitiveness of the graduates at the international labour markets.

5. To change this situation, a radical change in the national learning policy, legislation, concept, framework and content of the Belarusian higher education is needed.

**3. Institutional autonomy of Belarusian higher education institutions**

**3.1. Introduction**

In 2012, the Bologna Secretariat criticism of the institutional autonomy of Belarusian universities resulted in denying it entry into the European Higher Education Area. As the Belarusian Ministry of Education called the decision politically motivated, it would be informative to attempt a closer analysis of the higher school in Belarus as if it participated in international studies of university autonomy.

The European University Association (EUA) has been monitoring institutional autonomy of universities of its member states for a number of years. In 2012 it published a regular report “University autonomy in Europe II.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

Although university autonomy is not a goal in itself, it is considered an essential precondition for European higher education institutions in their mission of forming an advanced society of knowledge. The study was undertaken in 28 education systems (some European countries have different higher education systems, e.g. Belgium and Germany). The methodology was based on developing four blocks of autonomy indicators and a weighting system to evaluate relative importance of individual indicators. Below is the full list of indicators grouped by blocks with their weightings.

***Organizational autonomy***

Selection procedure for the executive head (rector) (14%)

Selection criteria for the executive head (14%)

Dismissal of the executive head (12%)

Term of office of the executive head (9%)

Inclusion of external members into the governing body (12%)

Selection of external members of the governing body (12%)

Capacity to decide on academic structures (15%)

Capacity to create legal entities (12%)

***Financial autonomy***

Length of public funding period (14%)

Type of public funding (13%)

Ability to keep surplus (14%)

Ability to borrow money (9%)

Ability to own buildings (12%)

Ability to charge tuition fees for national students (17%)

Ability to charge tuition fees for foreign students (21%)

***Staffing autonomy***

Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior academic staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior administrative staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on salaries of senior academic staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on salaries of senior administrative staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior academic staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior administrative staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on promotions of senior academic staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on promotions of senior administrative staff (12%)

***Academic autonomy***

Capacity to decide on overall student numbers (14%)

Capacity to select students (14%)

Capacity to introduce and terminate programmes (16%)

Capacity to choose the language of instruction (13%)

Capacity to select quality assurance mechanisms (15%)

Capacity to select quality assurance providers (11%)

Capacity to design content of degree programmes (16%)

**3.2. Organizational autonomy**

Organizational autonomy of Belarusian higher education institutions can be assessed according to the criteria of the European University Association (EUA) only with reservations and with references to the specific management conditions of the Belarusian higher education system.

**3.2.1. Selection procedure for the executive head (rector)**

In European countries the rector is usually selected by the collegiate governing body (the senate, the academic council, the managing board, etc.). The external validation by an external authority, if at all required, is usually a mere formality. Half of educational systems in Europe require no such validation.

The Education Code (art. 208 “Management of the higher education institution”) stipulates that the head of the public higher education institution is appointed and dismissed in the order established by the President of Belarus (either the president or the executive authorities in consultation with the president).

Executive heads of private higher education institutions are appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Education on the founder’s proposal.

According to this criterion, Belarus has zero level of autonomy.

**3.2.2. Selection criteria for the executive head (rector)**

In European countries, provisions regarding the qualification requirements for the rector are specified by law in 16 countries or by the universities’ statutes in 12 systems.

In Belarus neither the selection procedure nor the requirements are specified by the university or by law. Neither the Education Code not the regulation *On the higher education institution* of resolution No.93 of the Ministry of Education of 1 August 2012 specify the qualifications required for the rector or for nomination procedures. In public institutions all decisions are made by the rector and are not regulated by any public instructions. There are no definite appointment procedures for rectors of private institutions. This approach precludes the smallest degree of university autonomy.

**3.2.3. Dismissal of the executive head of the university**

According to art.208 of the Code, dismissal of the executive head in Belarus lies outside the institutional powers of the university. The autonomy level in this aspect is zero.

**3.2.4. Term of office of the executive head**

In 21 European countries the rector’s term of office is established by law. In 7 educational systems the term is stated in the university’s statute.

The rector’s term of office in Belarus is established neither by the university nor by law. According to the Education Code, either the President or the Ministry of Education make a decision. Therefore, the level of autonomy is zero.

**3.2.5. Inclusion of external members into the university’s governing body**

Inclusion of external members into the university’s governing body (the Council) is regulated by the regulation *On the council of the education institution* of the resolution No.84 of the Ministry of Education of 18 July 2011. Paragraph 5: “The Council may include representatives of local executive and regulatory bodies, other state bodies, organizations that order specialists, public associations and other organizations.” On the face of it, this wording is a good reason to presume a certain level of university autonomy in this aspect. Formal criteria and the weighting of this parameter would give 12 points. Nevertheless, such assessment could be premature.

**3.2.6. Selection of external members of the governing body**

The regulation *On the council of the education institution* gives a vague description of the selection and inclusion procedure of external members into the governing body: “Representatives of local executive and regulatory bodies, other public bodies, organizations that order specialists, public associations and other organizations are included into the council at the suggestion of the executive heads of the listed bodies and organizations.” This definition does not specify who makes a decision on the inclusion: either the heads of external organization or a university body. Whereas the regulation provides details for selection procedure of council members from students, academic and administrative staff, it says little or nothing about the number and inclusion procedure of external members. Provided the inclusion of the external member is initiated by the external organization, it significantly limits the institutional autonomy. Moreover, it might lead to the situation when external members push back the academic and administrative staff because among the 75% of council members the share of each category is not determined by the regulation. On the other hand, if the decision-making procedure on external members would be different, there are no grounds to believe it would be democratic. The decision on external members is not regulated by the university’s statute either. This ambiguity may pave the way for administrative despotism that would both limit the institutional autonomy and discriminate the stakeholders. The risks and opportunities of the inclusion of external members into university councils can be assessed only after studying the practice of their formation. This task being new and no relevant information being available, it is impossible to assign any value to this parameter. But for the purposes of this study we could assign 50% of the maximal weighting factor for points 5 and 6 of the organizational autonomy (selection and inclusion of external members into the governing body) – 6.

**3.2.7. Capacity to decide on academic structures**

Neither the university council nor the rector or any other body of the higher education institution is empowered to decide on academic structures. Both in public and private institutions changes of academic structures are sanctioned by founders. The autonomy level in this aspect is 0.

**3.2.8. Capacity to create legal entities**

Belarusian higher education institutions are allowed to create or co-create departments and companies with legal entity status. Though it has to be sanctioned by founders.

Autonomy level – 12.

Therefore, for the organizational autonomy the Belarusian higher education system scores 24 points out of 100 possible. Only universities of Turkey have a comparable level of organizational autonomy (29). The majority of European universities enjoy a much wider institutional autonomy. Only universities in Greece, Luxembourg, Iceland and Slovakia have scores lower than 50.

**3.3. Financial autonomy**

In the majority of European countries there is a strong tendency to increase the level of institutional and financial autonomy. In some countries, such as Great Britain, Iceland or the Netherlands, financial autonomy has had a long history of decades and even centuries; others have developed financial independence in this sphere since mid-2000.

**3.3.1. Length of public funding period**

In Europe, more and more countries are moving toward long-term contracts on public funding between the ministries and universities. These long-term contracts raise financial autonomy of universities.

The funding period in Belarus is one year, which reduces the level of autonomy.

**3.3.2. Type of public funding**

In Europe, there remain few countries with line-item funding of higher education institutions. These are Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. Other countries moved to block grant funding. Block grants cover several kinds of expenditure, which universities are free to distribute internally.

Belarus has the line-item type of budget allocation. Institutions distribute their funds internally on items according to the budget classification of the Budget Code of Belarus. The effective management of the budget finances and the permitted use of public funds are secured by the centralized system of treasury bodies subordinate to the Ministry of Finance.

Educational institutions submit a budget application (an estimate of receipts and expenditures) for the upcoming financial year to the Ministry of Education and are entitled for expenditures and outgoings within the budget limits and the estimate strictly according to the types of expenditures of the budget classification. The control over the permitted use of funds is exercised through the monthly ‘Report on the execution of the estimate of expenditures of organizations financed from the state budget’ (Form No.2) that is submitted to the Ministry of Education and the local treasury.

The funding model of private institutions demonstrates more flexibility but not through larger autonomy but through the arbitrary rule of founders. According to the European University Association’s criteria this is a low level of autonomy.

**3.3.3. Ability to keep the surplus**

In European countries there are different models of utilizing a funding surplus. In 15 education systems universities are relatively free to use the surplus on public funding or adjust it for the following year. In some countries it requires the approval of a higher authority or is limited to a maximum percentage that can be adjusted for the next year. In 4 countries keeping the surplus is not allowed. It is obvious that universities that are free to use the surplus are more autonomous.

As Belarus applies the line-item type of budget allocation the surplus is fully reclaimed by the state. Therefore, by this criterion, Belarusian universities have zero autonomy.

**3.3.4. Ability to borrow money**

In Europe, the majority of countries entitle universities to borrow money on the financial markets. Only in 6 countries and in some federal states of Germany universities have no such possibilities. The state often applies a number of restrictions or requires an approval from the public authority.

In Belarus, apart from internal sources universities are allowed to use external funding in form of loans from banks, financial companies, or funds. Nevertheless, there is an expert opinion that Belarusian universities hardly ever use this type of funding.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**3.3.5. Ability to own buildings**

The capacity of universities to buy, sell and build facilities autonomously is closely linked to their freedom to determine their institutional strategy and academic profile. Studies of the European University Association show that autonomy of universities in this aspect to a large extent depends on cultural traditions. In 22 European countries universities have a right to own buildings. In other countries operations with real estate are restricted by authorities in various ways. In four countries universities cannot own buildings.

The Education Code (art.139 par.1) unambiguously states that facilities of education institutions are managed by the founder according to legal norms. Facilities of education institutions include land, buildings, equipment, transportation and other property (art.140 par.1 ‘Founders of education institutions are responsible for renovating and developing facilities of their education institutions’). In the law *On education*, substituted by the Education Code in 2011, property rights were even clearer formulated: “Education institutions exercise their ownership and operation rights within the framework set by the owner according to the law of the Republic of Belarus.”

Private universities usually use buildings owned by their founders. The regulation *On the higher education institution* of the Ministry of Education of 1 August 2012 (par. 9.4.) states that a university manages facilities on operative administration basis in compliance with the law.

By this parameter, Belarusian universities have no autonomy.

**3.3.6. Ability to charge tuition fees for national students**

According to the European University Association, European countries have four models of charging tuition fees for national students. The first group is countries where the decision is taken by the university only (Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Latvia). Another group is countries with a cooperative model of fee setting, where universities and public authorities cooperate (Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Great Britain, Switzerland, some federal states in Germany). A third model is countries where fees are set by law or by public authorities (Austria, Cyprus, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Turkey). In another large group of countries, the education for national students, at least the Bachelor’s level, is always free (Denmark, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, some federal states in Germany and others). Some countries have two models of fee setting: one for public and another for private universities.

In Belarus tuition fees are regulated by legislation that allows charging fees for extracurricular education not financed from the national and local budgets and charging students admitted beyond the state-funded intake numbers. The fee is determined by the university head according to the law. The amount of fee is regulated by the directive *On cost of paid education* of the resolution No.39 of the Ministry of Education of 20 April 2006 and is dependent on the base wage rate, changing electricity, heating and water tariffs, and inflation rate.[[31]](#footnote-31) The amount of fees is also regulated by the directive *On fees for paid education programmes of higher and professional education in public institutions* of resolution No.210 of the Ministry of Education of 29 July 2011.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Therefore, Belarus uses a variant of the second model of fee setting for national students. This can be evaluated as a medium level of autonomy.

**3.3.7. Ability to charge tuition fees for foreign students**

European universities have more freedom in setting tuition fees for non-EU students.

Similar to the fee system for national students, there are four models in this aspect. But the number of education systems where universities are free to decide themselves is by far larger. In 12 countries this is decided on the university level.

In Belarus, tuition fees are set by universities, unless regulated by international agreements. Regulations No.38 and No.210 practically exclude the issue of charging education fees for foreign students from the general order of pricing and tariff setting. The regulations (par.7) set that fees are established by agreements. According to this criterion, Belarusian universities have the highest level of autonomy.

If we applied the weighting factors of autonomy for these seven parameters according to the EUA procedure, the level of financial autonomy of Belarusian universities would be 26.5 points out of 100 possible. This is a low level of financial autonomy. Only universities of Cyprus and federal state Hesse of Germany have lower levels. Other European education systems have a higher level of financial autonomy.

**3.4. Staffing autonomy**

The overwhelming number of the European countries provides a high level of staffing autonomy to their higher education institution. One obvious exception is Greece that has essential restrictions concerning decision-making on personnel questions. Formally, procedures of hiring, dismissal and promotion of academic and administrative staff in Belarus do not differ greatly from the European models of the staffing autonomy. At the same time, the implementation of traditional university schemes of personnel questions is specific character in Belarus, which restricts the rights of higher education institution.

**3.4.1.Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior academic staff**

In Belarus, the order and procedure of hiring academic staff is established by the Council of Ministers regulation No.806 of 21 June 2011 *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus* (the national register of legal acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2011, No.72, 5/34007). Higher education institutions have no right to recruit academic staff on a long-term basis without an open competitive selection. Competitive selection is announced for vacant positions and for positions the term of selection/contract for which has run out. However, a more essential restriction of the autonomy is that the candidate has to meet the qualification requirements established by the regulation. In particular, candidates for the positions of the senior academic staff are to have corresponding academic degrees and titles awarded by the State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles. Without such a sanction the university can admit academic staff for no more than a year till the next vacancy announcement. Thus, the autonomy is significantly limited by such instructions. Holding a position of professor or associate professor depends on the assignment of the corresponding title by the external state authority.

**3.4.2. Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior administrative staff**

The procedure of recruitment of senior administrative staff in Belarus is established by the Education Code and regulation No. 93 of August 1, 2012 *On higher education institution*. The head of a public university is appointed by the President of Belarus in accordance with the order that he himself establishes. The head is not accountable to any self-government bodies of the university and reports to the founder and the President. The head of a private university is appointed by the Minister of Education on the proposal of the founder of the university. The regulation (Chapter 8) states that all senior administrative staff (vice rectors, deans, directors of laboratories, etc.) are appointed by the rector. The exception is the head of a department who is appointed by the rector after he/she is elected by the Council.

Formally, the appointment decision is made by the executive head and not by an external body, but, considering that the rector is only an element of the presidential vertical, it is difficult to consider such an order of recruiting senior administrative staff as a manifestation of institutional autonomy.

**3.4.3. Capacity to decide on salaries of senior academic staff**

 The salary rate of pedagogical workers is determined by par.1 of Appendix 1 to the Ministry of Labour resolution No.6 of 21 January 2000 ‘On measures for improving payment conditions for employees of the organizations financed from the budget and using state subsidies’.

This resolution applies both to budget and off-budget operations (par 1.1 of Appendix 1 of resolution No.6).

 Par. 1.2 of resolution No.6 sets tariff rates (base wage rates) of workers by multiplying the tariff rate of the 1st grade (set by the Council of Ministers) by tariff coefficients of the Unified rates scale of workers and adjusting and multiplying coefficients for complexity of performed work.

Private higher education institutions are managed by the same regulations, but the decision on salary is made by the founder.

Therefore, as for decisions on salaries of senior academic staff, universities of Belarus are not autonomous.

**3.4.4. Capacity to decide on salaries of senior administrative staff**

The salary of the senior administrative staff is also determined by resolution No.6.

**3.4.5. Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior academic staff**

The order of dismissal of academic staff is regulated by the regulation *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus*, approved by resolution No.806 of the Council of Ministers of 21 June 2011 (par. 7 and 34), and by other regulations.

Besides, there are some specific features of contract termination for pedagogical and other employee types in higher education institutions accountable directly to the Ministry of Education. These features were detailed in the agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Belarusian Trade Union of Workers of Education and Sciences for 2010-2012 (hereinafter Agreement). This Agreement was signed on 25 April 2010 and registered on 18 March 2010 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus No.43. According to the methodology of the European University Association, the over-university standard acts regulating dismissal of the academic staff are considered as restriction of institutional autonomy.

**3.4.6. Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior administrative staff**

 The order of dismissal of senior administrative staff is set by the regulation No.93 *On higher education institution* and the labour legislation. These questions are not regulated by the university statute.

**3.4.7. Capacity to decide on promotions of senior academic staff**

Promotion of senior academic staff is established by the regulation *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus*. Formally such promotion is possible only in case of a vacant position filled by open competitive selection and secret ballot of the university council. This procedure means that the higher education institution cannot simply promote a lecturer. Even being a mere formality, the competition procedure has to be observed. There is one more circumstance that depreciates this procedure. The regulation entitles the rector to randomly establish the term of contract, ignoring the decision of the council. This norm undermines the traditions of university democracy and limits the university autonomy both formally and practically because the rector in the actual system of the higher education in Belarus is a representative of the external power.

**3.4.8. Capacity to decide on promotions of senior administrative staff**

All questions connected with recruitment, dismissal and promotion of senior administrative staff of higher education institutions depend on the status of this category of workers as civil servants. The analysis of legislative acts that define the category “state official” shows that for Belarusian legislation these are persons executing organizational and executive or administrative-economic functions in state higher education institutions. Thus, not only the rector of the university but also vice rectors, deans, heads of chairs and laboratories have to be considered as state officials. Moreover, the law No.165 *On fight against corruption* (Art. 1) equates staff of private organizations that hold organizational, administrative, economic positions permanently, temporarily or by act of authority to state officials. The similar interpretation is found by experts in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (Art. 4). Thus, senior administrative staff of private higher education institution fit into the category of state officials. Considering that all decisions on recruitment, dismissal and promotion of administrative personnel are taken by the rector, who represents the presidential vertical in the university, staff decisions lie beyond the institutional autonomy scope.

If we follow the weightings of indicators of staffing autonomy and the above evaluation of Belarusian higher education system, Belarus could score 50% by indicators 1, 3, 7, and zero by the rest of them. Thus, the total level of staffing autonomy of the Belarusian universities is 25%. To compare: 11 European systems of the higher education have the score over 80%, 9 – over 60%, 7 – over 40%, and only Greece has the level of staffing autonomy lower than Belarus – 14%.

**3.5. Academic autonomy**

**3.5.1. Capacity to decide on overall student numbers**

In Europe there are four models of how the admission numbers are determined: 1) the university is free to establish the number of first-year students; 2) the state determines the intake number; 3) free admission; 4) the cooperative model that involves negotiations between the university and the public authorities in the context of programme accreditation or when public authorities decide on the number of state-funded study places and universities set the number of fee-paying students.

The Education Code (art. 57) establishes that target admission figures are set by founders of the educational institution on the basis of the demand for specialists. This demand is formed by the government bodies subordinate and (or) accountable to the President, the National Academy of Sciences, national state bodies, and other state organizations subordinate to the Government, Minsk City and Regional Executive Committees, and the forecasted demand for specialists on labour market determined by the Government. Target admission figures for the second level of higher education are set to ensure competition for people who want to receive postgraduate education of the Master’s level.

Target admission numbers for postgraduate studies are established by the State Committee on Science and Technologies of the Republic of Belarus according to the legislation on planning, financing and control over training of highly qualified research workers.

In Belarus the model is gradually shifting from the cooperative one to the establishment of the admission plan by public authorities. While determining the admission plan, higher education institutions have to follow target admission numbers of the Ministry of Education and their license (permission for educational activity). After the Ministry of Education approves the admission plan further modification of figures is forbidden. It applies both to state and private higher education institutions (since 2010 private higher education institutions have to coordinate admission plans with the Ministry of Education). The intake plan regulates the number of students who are admitted both on a state-funded and fee-paying basis. Target admission numbers for the specialities in the special permission (license) for educational activity have to be coordinated with the Ministry of Education, approved by the founder and brought to the notice of persons concerned till 1 April each year.

**3.5.2. Capacity to select students**

In the majority of European countries admission criteria are set either by university, or co-regulated between the university and the external authority. Only in 7 countries these criteria are formed without the participation of the higher education institutions.

Belarus has the latter model. Regardless of the form of ownership, all higher education institutions follow the Education Code (art. 213 “General admission requirements for persons to receive higher education”); by *Higher education institutions admission regulations* approved by decree No.80 of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 7 February 2006, with changes and amendments, the list of administrative procedures carried out by the governmental bodies and other organizations based on applications of citizens, approved by decree No.200 of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 26 April 2010, with changes and additions; the regulation *On submission of documents to exercise the right for the public social privileges, the rights and guarantees of certain categories of the citizens* approved by resolution No.1738 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 13 December 2007, with changes and additions; the regulation *On the admission committee of the higher educational institution* approved by resolution No.23 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 23 March 2006, with changes and additions; and other legal acts. After the introduction of the centralized testing and admission to universities according to its results Belarusian higher education institutions lost any independence in selection of students.

**3.5.3. Capacity to introduce and terminate degree programmes**

European universities practice several models of introducing new educational programs: programmes can be opened without preliminary accreditation, programmes need accreditation to receive public funding, programmes have to be presented for accreditation before they are introduced. In some countries universities face other types of restrictions, which nevertheless leave some room for academic autonomy.

In Belarus higher education institutions have no right to independently make decisions on introducing new educational programmes. If the prospective specialty is on the National qualifier “Specialties and Qualifications”, according to the instruction No.42 *On introduction and application of the National qualifier “Specialties and Qualifications”* approved by the Ministry of Education on 1 July 2009, changes must be introduced into the qualifier first. The decision is made by the Ministry of Education (Art. 18). If the specialty is registered in the qualifier, the decision is made by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the governmental bodies and organizations concerned according to the regulation *On opening of education profiles, education directions, specialties, directions of specialties, specializations* approved by the Council of Ministers on 27 June 2011 No.849. This procedure of opening new educational programmes applies to the educational institutions subordinate and (or) accountable to the President of the Republic of Belarus, National Academy of Sciences, the establishments of education that are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, and also private education institutions, including foreign ones, and their branches created according to international treaties of the Republic of Belarus.

Decisions on the opening education profiles “Art and design” and “Health care” are negotiated with the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Health respectively; in the education direction “Agriculture” decision is taken in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. However these procedures do not replace accreditation of educational programmes. The Education Code (art. 29) establishes terms of accreditation of educational programmes. In case the state accreditation is not confirmed, the decision of public authorities and organizations on opening new programmes has to be cancelled in accordance with legal procedures (regulation No.849, par. 8). Thus, according to this parameter of academic autonomy Belarusian higher education institutions have a very low level of independence.

**3.5.4. Capacity to choose the language of instruction**

In 21 European countries universities are free to choose the language of instruction at all levels of higher education. However, in Turkey, the higher education council must approve any course taught in a language other than Turkish. In seven countries various restrictions may apply: from the right to freely use a foreign language for training aimed at foreign students only to a ban on public funding for foreign-language programmes.

According to the Education Code (art. 90) “the language of instruction and education is established by the founder and preferences of the students (legal representatives of student minors).

In education establishments and organizations of postgraduate education, training and education can be done in a foreign language if conditions permit and in coordination with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.”

Thus, without the sanction of the founder the education institution cannot set the language of instruction.

**3.5.5. Capacity to select quality assurance mechanisms**

In the majority of the European countries universities are not free to choose quality assurance mechanisms. In 24 countries quality assurance mechanisms are built-in into regular accreditation programmes or institutional audits. Only in 4 countries universities are completely free to choose quality assurance mechanisms that meet their needs.

According to art.124 of the Education Code “Control of quality assurance of education is carried out by the authorized governmental bodies that inspect compliance of education activities with the educational standard, educational and programme documentation of the educational programmes, legislation.”

Resolution No.820 of the Council of Ministers of 22 June 2011 approved the regulation *On state accreditation of educational institutions, other organizations that are entitled to educational activities, and confirmation of state accreditation*. These procedures have no alternative, but can be slightly modified by the unified high school quality assurance systems.

Belarus gradually adapted the ISO 9001 quality management system and introduced the actual version of ISO/IWA 2:2007 – guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education.

Therefore, the situation in Belarusian higher education regarding the choice of quality assurance mechanisms is formally equal to the level of universities in the majority of the European countries.

**3.5.6. Capacity to select quality assurance providers**

In 20 European countries universities are not free to choose a specific quality assurance agency. In Austria, Switzerland, Estonia, Cyprus, Iceland, and some federal states of Germany universities can use a quality assurance agency of their choosing.

In Belarus the Education Code (art. 124) unambiguously specifies that the governmental bodies authorized to control the quality of education, its order and frequency are established by the President of Belarus. The decision on accreditation of the educational institution, other organization or on refusal of accreditation (following the results of accreditation) is taken by the Department of Quality Control of Education of the Ministry of Education. It is the only body authorized to conduct quality evaluation. Thus, Belarusian higher education institutions are not free to choose an agency.

**3.5.7. Capacity to design content of degree programmes**

In 24 European higher education systems universities freely design the contest of the educational degree programmes. Only in four countries there are specifications limiting the academic content: Poland, Italy, Lithuania, and Latvia.

In Belarus, according to the Education Code (art. 217), the curriculum of the specialty (direction of specialty, specialization) is developed on the basis of the standard specialty (specialty direction) curriculum and establishes the list, sequence and volume of obligatory subjects of the so-called “state component”, the number of academic hours for the component, the list of higher education institutions and specializations, sequence and terms of learning the subject, duration of practice, obligatory and maximal academic load in a week per one student, types of classes, forms and terms of assessment.

Standard specialty (specialty direction) curricula are developed by organizations that provide academic and methodical support for higher education, and by educational and methodical associations in higher education and are approved by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the governmental bodies concerned, subordinate and (or) accountable to the President of the Republic of Belarus, the National Academy of Sciences, national public authorities, other state organizations subordinate to the government of the Republic of Belarus.

Moreover, even the subject syllabus of the higher education institution is developed on the basis of the standard syllabus approved by the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, Belarusian higher education institutions have considerably limited rights to design the contest of educational programmes.

**3.5. Conclusion**

The EUA study points out that the most significant changes in academic autonomy regard quality assurance systems and procedures. Compared to the situation covered in the previous report a number of countries liberalized their legislation. In Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria and Estonia new laws allowed to choose quality assurance agencies from the European Quality Assurance Register list. Generally, in 23 countries academic autonomy of European higher education systems are over 50%. Only few countries have levels below this rate. The lowest one is in Greece – 34%. By total weightings of each indicator, academic autonomy of Belarusian universities is dispiritingly low. By no parameter can Belarus be assigned a high score. We can assume that Belarusian universities retain small independence in general student intake, but by all other indicators the levels are close to zero. The total academic autonomy of Belarusian universities is equal or under 10%.

The EUA methodology does not apply an integrated score for university autonomy from four blocks of indicators. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the Belarusian higher education system has a threateningly low level of institutional autonomy, which is a significant barrier for integration into the European Higher Education Area.

**4. Quality Assessment in Higher School of Belarus**

**4.1. . Introduction**

Gradual increase in the level of openness of the Belarusian society, intensification of migration of the population and specialists - these factors force the administrative authorities of the national educational system to pay more and more attention to the processes taking place abroad in order to reach mutual recognition of the documents concerning education (according to the Lisbon Convention - qualifications) and to raise the competitiveness of the Belarusian education in the world market of educational services. Apart from the various protacolary requirements, quality of education appears to be the key aspect.

The problem of education quality was raised at different stages of modern higher school development. Moreover, different countries and regions could apply fundamentally different approaches. Thus, in the USA in the 1950-1960s, the low level of physico-mathematical training turned out to be a problem; and later, the drawbacks of the practical training were also taken notice of. All this led to the fact that some universities introduced students' practical training at real positions for their profession, and after that it resulted in the recognition of practical work experience. At the end of the 1980s, education in the American secondary school lost its former academic wholeness due to the introduction of disciplines aimed at children’ adaptation for adulthood, which resulted in the decline in value of the fundamental and applied sciences, and as a result to the decrease in the number of university students studying at academic and professional programmes (according to the materials of the US National Commission on Excellence in Education[[33]](#footnote-33)). In the USSR, the post-war transformations in higher school were aimed at providing the economy with specialists of more flexible qualifications, which was supposed to be attained by means of widening the catalogue of professions and specializations on the one hand, and by providing the universities with more freedom on the other hand. Just as in case with the economy, these attempts were not crowned with success due to the retaining of the conservative party-administrative superstructure and, partially, due to the idealization of the problem of quality. This problem, however, could not be solved on the old basis which reminded of a German gymnasium of the end of the 19th century[[34]](#footnote-34). China in its turn totally withdrew from the traditional and later from the Soviet type of education and implemented a simplified variant of American university[[35]](#footnote-35). Europe was less apt to apply anybody's models and introduce international experiences. Its more weighted approach led to the creation of the system of mutual recognition of qualifications, which ended up with signing the Lisbon Convention in 1987 (the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region), and articulation of the basic values of the higher school in the Magna Charta Universitatum.

By that time, a conceptual distinction regarding the old and the new higher school had been completely formed. If up to the 1960s the universities remained to be some "ivory towers" to a certain extent, then later, due to the transformation of higher education into mass and accessible for all social groups on the one hand, and to the turning of diplomas into a popular commercial product on the other hand, a new university became more open for external influences, more sensitive to environment changes to put it more precisely. In this respect, the concept of education quality changed from the knowledge-oriented one to the competence-oriented, which resulted in the fact that the ability to apply knowledge became more important than the amount of knowledge by itself. In the countries of Western Europe and Northern America, where the universities were quicker to meet the challenges due to the self-administration and absence of conservative control from the state, the "massovization" went more or less painlessly, although it was often associated with the crises of the sector.

**4.2. European and Belarusian quality assurance mechanisms**

Apparently, the optimal solution for the quality of education under the condition of its high massiveness and the necessity to provide for the internal European integration processes, was found in the mechanism called the Bologna Process. The idea of the Process was quite simple, although it was not accepted right away and univocally. It consisted in dividing higher education into cycles. The first of them is often called the Bachelor cycle and represents a simplified unspecialized stage comprising quite a wide field of knowledge and sciences. However, the Bachelors, who undergo only 3 or 4 years of training, are basically ment for the labor market.

It is obvious, that the quality assessment of the training attained by the Bachelors required improvement. To achieve that, Europe followed the way of creating the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), as well as the implementation of such instruments as the Diploma Supplement (DS) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Implicitly, the quality was assured by the professors’ creativity and their desire for development, since they were working in the atmosphere of academic freedoms; and also by the high student motivation to attain high-quality (high-demand at the labor market) education; and by the mobility of students and teachers who got the possibility to gain the best experience; as well as by the raising of public awareness, first of all regarding the education possibilities in different countries and certain universities.

 Such aspects as the social dimension, lifelong learning and others were included into the Bologna system later. The appearance of the Dublin Descriptors, the national and European qualification frameworks, the quality manuals developed by the ENQA, were the most important factors from the point of view of quality issues.

 Simultaneously proceeding processes of reforming the higher education system of Belarus were based on the state programmes and concepts and took into account only that part of the Bologna reforms that was clear to the Belarusian education officials. However, de facto, they were not correlating with the European tendenses in this sphere (there were several such programmes and concepts). The first ones of them were described in the brochure[[36]](#footnote-36) and in the document presented at the UNESCO in 2000[[37]](#footnote-37). The State Programme of Higher Education Development for 2011-2015 was approved last by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No 893 of July 1, 2011. Not a single programme or concept was fully implemented due to the changes in the approach of the education authorities that were satisfied with the pseudoinnovative elements and did not undertake any further attempts for actual documentary integration with the European Higher Education Area. Moreover, the thesis about the superiority of the Soviet higher school, thanks to which the war was win, the first satellite and the first cosmonaut were launched, dominated (and is unfortunately still dominating). Furthermore, the fragmented regulatory acts of the 1990s were later replaced by the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Belarus (July 11, 2007, No 252-Z), which in its turn was replaced by the Code on Education (January 13, 2011, No 243-Z).

 According to these acts, the creation of a multi-level system of higher education was happening in the mode of an attic construction above the old building. This attic gave home to all free-lance artists who wanted to become Masters and did not pursue any other aim than possible further postgraduate studies. Two variants of the Master's programmes provided by the new Code led to different outcomes: the practice-oriented Master's programme was intended as a means of advanced specialist training; the scientific Master's programme was aimed at training for further PhD education. It is obvious that the first variant trespasses against the Bologna principle of successive training cycles in higher school, since it does not give the graduates a direct access to PhD studies (postgraduate studies). The graduates of the two alternative Master's programmes are also awarded different types of diplomas.

 The Code recognized the Diploma Supplement as acting and complying with the demands of the personnel departments of national enterprises. The Supplement was made equivalent to the Academic record transcript. Credits remained unclaimed, since all the universities across the country used the approved curriculum. The needs of the specialists leaving the country were not taken into consideration. It is true that Belarusian universities were provided with Internet web-sites, and their employees started using e-mails, but only a few of the sites were provided with current information, there was no possibility to file a request through them. The e-mails published on the web-sites and in the guides were seldom working, and were almost never used for communication with students. The Ministry of Education displayed a very scant normative information, hided the statistic data from the public (apart from that published by the National State Statistics Service), and only randomly mentioned the possibility of joining the Bologna Process.

 Two years ago the situation changed drastically. The intention to join the Bologna Process was officialy declared, and the following was offered as the essential steps towards rapprochement: 1) "differentiated study periods", which resulted in approximately a half-year reduction of the general duration of training at the first level, but did not change the essence and the workload of the cycle’s programmes[[38]](#footnote-38), 2) regulations on the Diploma Supplement of the European standard; their development started in 2010 (this was announced on November 11, 2010 by the first viceminister of education A.I. Zhuk in BELTA), but they were never implemented, since the Code on Education (paragraph 14 of the article 98) forcee only "supplements … in the form of the record extract of final marks (Transcript of Academic Record), 3) a credit system, distantly reminding that of the ECTS, but built solely on the basis of working hours (50-54 hours per week and 34-40 hours per accounting unit). The actual complexity of the discipline was not estimated. The above mentioned interview of BELTA concerning credits read: "Belarus has gone a long way towards harmonization of its education with the European one. There is nothing extra difficult in transition to the credit system". Further in the text of the article: "When the new educational standards were introduced, the initial stage of a new system of training courses had already been developed. It was made 17 training weeks-fold, i.e. training courses at the Belarusian universities equaled to 34 hours, 68 hours, etc. This was made with the purpose to afterwards re-count them into credits". In this manner, no difficulties could arise with the transition, just as there could be no transition.

 Furthermore, the famous national report on the achievements and the conformity to the Bologna recommendation was prepared. The report was good in every respect that did not refer to the disaccords with the Bologna principles. The disaccords were often silenced, consequently, the report did not contain any plan for their correction.

 During the same period, the Ministry of Labor proceeded to the formation of professional standards, which probably presupposed the development of a national qualification framework, maybe even with regard to the European best practices. This work is not displayed and its results are unknown to the public, not even to the producers and the consumers of the work force.

 The practicability of the development of such a framework in the absence of other Bologna instruments or their presence in a simplified form, is nevertheless unquestionable, since it would give Belarusian higher educational institutions a possibility to explain both the goals and the achieved quality indicators to their European partners in the mutually understandable terms. Supposedly, such a framework, being applied to the existing regulatory qualification documents, would result in their revision or revocation. In particular, a total revision of the Job Evaluation Catalogue and the Classifier of the Foreign Economic Activity will be necessary. A conceptually new edition will be needed for the classifier Professions and Qualifications. The consequences of these changes are obvious: the standards for higher education professions and the curricula based on them will also undergo transformations required by the new qualification framework.

 In summary, certain shifts in the understanding of the necessity to join the European Area of Higher Education can be noticed in Belarus. It is obvious that these shifts have not gone unnoticed for Europe. However, the national report was not accepted as the document sustaining the tangibility of the country's intentions to not only join the "Bologna club", but also to implement real reforms, which would allow to consider Belarus as a country participating in the Bologna Process as an equal partner. That is why the Belarusian question was not discussed at the regular meeting of the European Ministers responsible for Education in 2012.

 Such alienation was caused by the tenacious unwillingness of the competent authorities responsible for education in the country to study out where and why Europe moves, what is the principal difference between our approaches, and what we should do to reduce this difference to an acceptable level. As a result, the crucial disagreements are constantly ignored or not that skillfully disguised.

 We shall take as a basis the following: the provisions of the Bologna Process, the vision of the goals and the methods of their achievement by the European structures, which ultimately stand for all the important decisions in the region, and then show the disaccords of the Belarusian and the European positions regarding the development of higher education and its quality assurance. We shall first refer to the Lisbon Platform adopted by the European Union in 2000, which set out three main goals for education and the first of them was directly reffering to the quality of education.

 According to this goal, education was regarded as the foremost means of social cohesion and an effective economic investment, which allows to make Europe a more competitive and dynamic society. Attribution of this quality to education presupposes, first of all, raising the quality of the teaching staff training. Its qualifications should be renewed in order to always remain on track of the changes in the Society of Knowledge. The lines related to the study of mathematics and natural sciences (including the technical lines) should be supported and developed in order to guarantee the future competitive performance. Raising the quality of education means as well a better correlation between the resources and the needs, and the development of partnership relations on a new wider basis should contribute to this.

 Does Belarus follow this direction? There is a certain agreement and closeness of positions at some points. For example, Belarus declares the major support of technical education. Indeed, the enrollment to the technical professions with education conducted at the expense of the republican budget has lately been growing. The development of partnership relations with the organizations - consumers of work force is encouraged. The teaching personnel undergo obligatory further training.

 However, at large, the positions differ drastically. The existing system of the paid and the free higher education in no way stimulates the social cohesion, especially with the assumption that the training costs are extremely high compared to the existing salaries; and there are no actual effective mechanisms of supporting the low-income students (Article 26 of the Code on Education gives the rectors a possibility to reduce the tuition charge in reasoned cases). The transfer of students studying at their own expense to the training at the expense of the budget is not applied, which does not encourage learning motivation. University graduates who studied at their own expense are not even given the status of a "young specialist", even if they express their desire to take the postgraduate work assignment, just as all "budget students" do. The formation of social stratification is obvious.

 The raise in the enrollment on technical specializations is artificial; the analysis of the actual needs of the economy is not carried out. The physico-mathematical line at the classical universities, once the strongest one in the country, is in a deplorable state and in practice it is not in demand at the labor market; the specialists of the prospective lines of high technology developments are not popular due to the small amount of projects of such level carried out in the republic. Some applied lines in radioelectronics and programming constitute the positive exceptions. The laboratory facilities of the technical universities are modernized very slowly, which does not provide the students with any means of acquiring the skills of using modern technical and measuring equipment. Exceptionally few licensed programme packages of general and special purpose are bought.

 The development of partnership relations with the consumers of graduates is in a similar situation. These relations are usually built according to some artificial schemes and their efficiency is evaluated according to the equally artificial parameters, such as on paper created filial branches of university departments at enterprises, academical production enterprises or training bases (there are some actually operating exceptions among them, but their experience is replicated only for the form's sake, without any situation consideration, and for this reason this practice is inefficient).

 Further training of university teaching personnel is limited to two-week courses or equally short traineeship at the friendly organizations and are usually conducted quite formally.

 However, the most important disagreement in the positions lies in the fact that Belarus sees itself apart from Europe, does not share most of the European values and does not intend to build Europe for all Europeans. In particular, the Code on Education does not mention the European values or the commonness of historical development. This position of isolation apparently cannot serve as a basis for mutual understanding assuming that the European Union suggests the use of common instruments for further development and the common planning of the immediate and the long-term goals.

 Combating unemployment can be named as one of these goals. At present, Europe has 2 million vacancies for the persons with high qualifications in the most prospective directions, despite the post-crises context of tough budgetary economy and growth of unemployment in all the countries of the region. That is why the challenge of higher education development, actualization of its contents and quality assurance does not only remain actual, but also become even more topical. Thus, a member of the European Commission for Education Androulla Vassiliou, in her report at the Council of Europe 24th Standing Conference of Ministers of Education on April 26, 2013 in Helsinki, stated that the labor market faces the need of quality improvement of education and professional training, which requires modernization of higher school and its equipment. In the analysis of the education development strategy for the period up to 2020, the report shows that investments into education are needed now as never before in order to provide for sustainable development and further economic growth. The following key directions of higher education quality are pointed out among others: practice-oriented training, development of entrepreneurship skills, qualifications in the use of information resources, including the use of open educational resources.

 The report underlines also other moments crucial for the development, such as the necessity to continue working on the European qualification framework, unacceptability of abandoning the social fairness and human rights, involvement of all the stakeholders, including the civil society, into quality assurance and education administration[[39]](#footnote-39).

 Disaccord in the positions is striking. Administration in Belarus is only vertical, no civil society is allowed to it. "The main self-administration body" of any higher education institute – the University council - is formed and headed by the rector. "Competence, composition and organization of the Council of any educational institution is determined by the Regulations on Councils of Educational Institutions, approved by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus (Paragraph 4 of Article 25 of the Code). Its decisions come into force only after the approval of the rector. In Paragraph 6 of the Article 25, some additional possibilities are described: "By the decision of the President of the Republic of Belarus, other self-administration bodies may be created at educational institutions, they conduct their activities according to the order determined by the President". Apparently, the opinion of the academic community lies beyond the scope of taking such a decision.

 Higher education funding is cut down, particularly it refers to the scientific research. Information technologies are updated too slowly, qualification of a good many of the teachers in this sphere leaves much to be desired, and open educational resources are absent or made as fragmented pirate copies of learning materials.

 Undoubtedly, since Belarus is not a part of the European structures, it is not obliged to deliver work force to the European Union. However, the current demand may be used in order to make profit by training foreigners. This means that the European approach to higher school should be implemented, providing understandable prospects for foreign applicants and a clear idea for European employers concerning the contents and the level of training at Belarusian higher education institutions. Jointed programmes and diplomas could be of much help in this situation, but some single experiments in this sphere displayed exceptional difficulty of the implementation of this idea due to the fundamental differences in the structure of education and the mechanisms of learning outcomes recognition.

 Our readiness for the transition, or at least for the implementation of the most important approachas and instruments, to the modern European system of higher education may be estimated by means of a comparative analysis of the data contained in the two recently published (2012) analytical survey documents: The State of play of the Bologna Process in the Tempus countries (a Russian variant available)[[40]](#footnote-40) and The European Higher Eduction Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, prepared for the 2012 Bucharest Ministerial Conference and published by Eurydice agency[[41]](#footnote-41). Apparently, these two reports prepared according to the same methodology and resting upon the same factual base, have much in common, that is why they can be treated as a single combined document for our objectives.

 In this respect the understanding that "the Bologna Process is nowadays implemented in Belarus on a voluntary basis" is crucial for the development of relations with the European authorities. It underlines the acknowledgment of the official statements concerning the intention of Belarus to join the process, as well as the existing difficulties, since "in Eastern Europe... higher education reforms are a long process, which in many cases proceeds in unfavorable conditions determined by the former historical legacy and local political context". However, the latter means only tolerance concerning the terms for reform implementation, but not for their contents.

 These reports analyze the situation from the point of view of the main goals of the Bologna Process, the first if them being the "implementation of three successive cycles of higher education, namely, the first, the second and the third, which lead to gaining of the three degrees - Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral". In regard to Belarus, it is pointed out that neither one of the two models of the first cycle (180 or 240 ECTS credits and three or four years of training) accepted by most of the Bologna countries, nor the two-year model at the Master’s level, seem to have been implemented in Belarus. It is obvious that the transition to the so-called differentiated study periods and the introduction of the Master’s level with two pathways, one of which discriminates the graduates in point of the right to continue education on the next level, are unable to change the situation.

 Further, the reports determine ECTS as "a tool which enables students to collect credits for learning achieved through higher education. The system aims to... facilitate the recognition of periods of study. ...It is also an important tool of facilitating student mobility and studying abroad. In practice, 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning". Belarus is classified as a country with its "own national credit system". This system is not criticized, and yet it is not included into the number of systems complying with the Bologna approaches. The situation can neither be changed by the introduction of credits and the competences "to know - to can - to command" which do not have a proper methodological grounding and compatibility with the ECTS. However, Belarus is pointed out among the countries that accepted learning outcomes as an important criterion for the quality of education at its legislative level.

 As for the Bologna Diploma Supplement, Belarus is again classified as a country "using a national diploma supplement". The situation will hardly change in the near future, since it is required to pass on to the document consisting of 8 sections instead of one and it should be written in English. Who is able to fulfill this at our higher educational institutions remains beyond the scope of rational understanding. Probably, it could be necessary to start with a transitional variant of issuing such a Diploma Supplements upon request (as in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan), or at some charge (as in Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine), although both these variants violate the Bologna recommendations.

 Belarus is also behind in respect of the development of a national qualification framework. This document is conceptual for the international labor market and is being developed by our country. However, there is no reliable data concerning its principles or the degree of its readiness. Meanwhile, "within the context of the Bologna Process, in 2005 in Bergen, Ministers responsible for higher education adopted the Overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started to work on this by 2007 in all participating countries of the Bologna Process. These national qualification frameworks for higher education should comprise the three cycles and the generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and the second cycles. Obviously, the disaccord of the Belarusian three-cycle structure, where Bachelors are still seen only as half-educated persons, with the Bologna recommendations will not allow to adopt a correct national framework. As a result, a semi-product will be approved, which together with the differentiated study periods will rebound the graduates of the Belarusian higher educational institutions on the European labor market.

 An important place in the reports is allocated to the analysis of the conformance of the national quality assurance systems to the requirements of the Bologna recommendations. "Quality assurance refers to the process of evaluating, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of higher education systems, institutions and programmes. At the national level, this type of external evaluation should ideally be carried out by an independent body, which has autonomous responsibility for its operations and methods.

 Whereas the principle of independent quality assurance is becoming a world-wide trend... in most of the Tempus countries, quality assurance falls under the responsibility of either a government-dependent body or a Ministry". Obviously, the Belarusian system with its Quality Department, which is a subdivision of the Ministry of Education, is quite far from the suggested model.

 In the reports, a yet another meaning of quality assurance is applied: it is believed that "in higher education, quality assurance can be defined as policies, procedures and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance quality as it is understood in a specific national or local context. Internal quality assurance refers to the processes involved in assuring and/or improving the quality of defined areas of activity within higher education institutions. External quality assurance refers to the process of evaluation or audit of a higher education programme or institution undertaken by a specialised body outside the institution". In the Belarusian context, the assurance is carried out only concerning the internal quality assessment, whereas measures of the external agencies are not even subject to assurance or are evaluated by administrative means (there is no other way how a subdivision of the Ministry can report to the Ministry).

 In this respect, our European partners have a clear position concerning the status and the role of the agencies assessing the quality of higher education: "Corresponding structures should be established on the national and international levels in order to ensure the external quality assurance. Their fundamental goals and composition should be clearly specified. In order to ensure the objectivity of quality assurance, it is now commonly accepted that the body responsible for this task should be independent and have autonomous responsibility for its operations and methods. Its reports and findings should not be influenced by third parties. The independency of the body should be clearly stated in their statutes and organizational documents and guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. legislative acts or instruments of governance). Independence is also one of the criteria for acceptance as full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)". Disregard to this position leads to the growth of our isolation. The Belarusian higher education institutions and the outcomes of their activity are evaluated as those not having satisfactory assessment. Moreover, there is no reaction from the education authorities concerning the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area developed by the ENQA. Alignment of our assessment principles with these recommendations could be a serious step towards rapprochement.

 Participation of employers in the processes of quality assurance is allowed regulatory. However, the practice of accreditation commissions disregards this progressive element completely.

 The legislative framework of this direction is limitet to Article 29 of the Code on Education, which does not allow any other accreditation than the state one. Accreditation is carried out by means of matching "the contents and the quality of the provided education to the educational legislation, the requirements of educational standards, and the academic programme documentation of the educational programmes". The issues of development, institution's ability to overcome difficulties and see the goals are not taken into consideration. The reports on self-assessment state only positive results, while self-criticism is excluded. The Code does not develop the procedures and the process of accreditation, but leaves this for an authorized agency; namely, for the Ministry of Education itself - an administrative body responsible for the quality of education and controlling every higher education institution's step. Under these circumstances, the role of accreditation of state universities is totally unclear. In practice, the Ministry doublechecks the results of its own activity.

 One more direction named in the reports is connected to the recognition of foreign qualifications. Here, the ratification of the Lisbon Convention is accepted as a sufficient indicator of success achieved by the Republic of Belarus. However, the reports point out that the acceptance of common assessment and accreditation criteria in higher school, as well as the corresponding methods "enhance mutual recognition of Degrees and Diplomas between the countries". Obviously, Belarus applies only some elements of the European approach to assessment, which is one of the reasons leading to poor acceptance of the Belarusian Diplomas by European employers. Indeed, they have no idea of who and how assesses qualifications, and it is impossible to find out the official criteria on the web-pages of regulatory authorities. Inside of the country, many provisions of the Lisbon Convention are not operational, in particular, concerning those on recognition of periods of study: all inconformities with the curriculum (not with the standard one, but with the university’s working plan) should be repeated by the students who have been reckless enough to study at another university or, which makes it even more difficult, abroad.

**4.3. Prospects for the development of the National Qualifications Framework**

 One of the ways to bring the positions together resides, in our opinion, in the analysis and acceptance as a guideline of the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which is in point of fact a set of criteria for education quality assessment. Let's examine this framework with regard to its application to the Belarusian context (attached is the EQF structure translated by the Moscow TEMPUS office).

 The first substantial difference lies in the fact that the EQF, as distinct from ours, does not consider knowledge and skills as competences, but points out competences into a separate category. The second difference is less significant. If in Belarus the competence is defined as knowledge, skills and command, as in the higher eduction standards of new generation that are being developed at present (it is really necessary for the definition of learning outcomes for each discipline and is present in numerous Bologna documents), then in the EQF it is seen as ability to conduct certain activities with the help of an instructor and independently, to lead some activity, to analyze, to organize the activity of others and to find new types and spheres of activities. In addition, the EQF structure has eight levels, and our higher school trains in practice only for the first four of them (as a matter of fact, these are the levels of secondary school), although the elements of levels 5-7 are present in some programmes, for example, in the form of management courses, innovative activity courses, system analysis courses, as well as in the form of scientific practical training within the framework of the second (Master) and the third (Doctoral) cycles. Capacity for analysis and critical thinking is not developed. It is worth noting, that the learning outcomes of the Bachelor course should, according to the EQF, correspond to the 6th level, for the Master’s course - to the 7th level, and for the Doctoral studies - to the 8th.

 These differences demonstrate the inefficiency of the current reforming and the discordance of its goals with the Bologna recommendations: the programmes of the first cycle are overloaded with unnecessary disciplines, and the disciplines of the second and the third cycle are provided in excess volume, which does not reflect the purposefulness of the educational programmes, but demonstrates the possibilities of their providers. The Master’s level, which basically provides only the general disciplines, while the rest is left for individual studying, is an inferior level which discriminates some part of the graduates in respect to the possibility to continue studies. The Doctoral level with its limited number of disciplines, the content of which mainly repeats the previously studied materials, is still controlled by the Higher Attestation Commission. No development of academic freedoms or university autonomy is presupposed.

 It is obvious that without adopting the EQF, it will be impossible to proceed to the national qualification framework (NQF) and its goals, which are presently being developed in more than one hundred countries all over the world, including the countries outside the European Higher Education Area. The Russian and the Kazakhstani developments may be named as an example. These developments were carried out within the context close to the Belarusian one. Or we can name the documents of the Western European Countries, which started this work a little earlier.

 The recommendations of the Bologna Working Group on Qualification Frameworks (2005) could be of much help for understanding the EQF and the development of national qualification frameworks. This report analyses the whole complex of the Bologna system of higher education and its quality assurance (This document acknowledges that in some countries the NQF are built only for higher education without regard to the peculiarities of another levels. However, in our opinion, such approach may increase the difficulties of transition between the levels). This document shows why the NQF is needed. In particular, it states that the frameworks can achieve the following; they: a) make explicit the purposes and aims of qualifications - by their clear description through the articulation of the learning outcomes, and by clarifying any rights to professional practice and recognition associated with them; b) delineate points of integration and overlap between different qualifications and qualification types - thereby positioning qualifications in relation to one another and showing routes (and barriers) for progression; c) provide a nationally agreed framework that guides and reflects the agreement of stakeholders; d) provide a context for the design of new qualifications. A correctly composed framework based on these principles could even help to comprehend the system of qualifications with its strengths and weaknesses by the country's population, as well as would raise its attractiveness for the citizens of another countries seeking higher education in Belarus.

 The precondition for the framework's success is described by the Recommendations as its involvement into the national academic structure. Within this structure, autonomous higher education institutions can prosper and get support. The frameworks should facilitate the establishment of academic independence within the limits of the liability system and external control points. The framework should serve as an example of clear criteria for the implementation of own possibilities and development for the higher education institutions. However, higher education institutions will bear responsibility for their actions.

 The readiness of Belarusian higher education institutions for the implementation of such framework is seriously limited by the lack of autonomy on the one hand, and the absence of actual responsibility for the learning outcomes on the other hand. Unfortunately, the external control points do not fully correspond to the modern approach based on the analysis of the learning outcomes, since accreditation is presently carried out mainly by means of analyzing the conditions of the educational process performance and the quality of documentation.

 The absence of a national qualification framework does not allow to take the following important step - to develop professional standards that would describe a set of competences necessary for performance of a particular professional activity. The statements about such developments come up from time to time, but they do not offer an opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness and direction.

**4.4. Conclusion**

The analysis carried out on the conditions of the system of quality assurance in higher education of Belarus and the European Higher Education Area shows that the differences are both of the structural and the fundamental nature. They can be summarized in the form of the following theses:

1. A fairly limited autonomy and academic freedoms of Belarusian higher education establishments do not provide any possibility for their further development or the improvement of education quality. The following may be pointed out as the most negative aspects: the actual absence of academic society and student participation in higher education institutions' administration.

2. The outdated structure of higher school with the weighted and highly specialized first level, the undeveloped second level non-demanded at the labor market, the ineffective third level only recently legalized as such. Such a system does not take into account the mass character of modern higher education and the dynamically changing requirements for qualifications.

3. The ineffective quality assurance system which is totally controlled by the Ministry of Education and is not targeted at the learning outcomes. The absence of relation between the applied methods and criteria and the modern developments, including the ENQA (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EAHE).

4. Lack of communication between higher education institutions and employers of graduates. Lack of employers' participation in the development of syllabus and the administration of higher education institutions.

5. Lack of modern tools of quality assurance, including those recognized by the European Higher Education Area: the European Diploma Supplement, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, the system of recognition of study periods, the national qualification framework, and the professional standards subsequent upon it.

These problem fields demonstrate the major directions for actions aimed at the improvement of the situation and the rapprochement of the Belarusian system of higher education and the European Higher Education Area. Obviously, these actions will touch upon the Code on Education, the structure of the Ministry of Education, as well as the system of internal and external quality assessment.

**Attachment. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).** <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/90DBE647-5CB6-4846-B88F-101180D9E425/4889/TheEQFforlifelonglearning_brochure_EN.pdf>

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Knowledge | Skills | Competences |
| Level 1 | Basic general knowledge | Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks  | Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context |
| Level 2 | Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study | Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools | Work or study under supervision with some autonomy  |
| Level 3 | Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study  | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information | Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems  |
| Level 4 | Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study  | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study | Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities |
| Level 5 | Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge | A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems | Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change Review and develop performance of self and others |
| Level 6 | Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles | Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study | Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups |
| Level 7 | Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields  | Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields | Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams |
| Level 8 | Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields  | The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice  | Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research |

5. Social partnership in the system of higher education in Belarus

5.1. Introduction

The idea of social partnership appeared in Belarus in the end of 1992 in the Law “On Collective Agreements and Treaties”[[42]](#footnote-42), fixed by the Constitution of 19994 (Art. 14), and from July 15th 1995 – by the Decree of the president of the Republic of Belarus No. 278 “On Social Partnership Development in the Republic of Belarus”, where social partnership is proclaimed as one of the main tasks of the state.

Belarusian model is based on a tripartism principle, suggesting participation of three partners (employee, employer and state) in formation of norms and rules of regulation of social-labor relations. This principle is fixed in the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus (Art. 352), with the following definition: “social partnership is the form of interaction of state administration bodies, unions of employers, labor unions and other representative bodies of employees, authorized in accordance with the legislative acts to represent their (subjects of social partnership) interests in course of development and accomplishment of social-economic policy of the state, based on consideration of the interests of various layers and groups of a society in social-labor sphere with the use of negotiations, consultations, refuse of confrontation and social conflicts”.

In the world practice there are different models of social partnership. Depending from the *level of negotiations*, there are three models: 1) one-level by which collective agreements are mainly concluded at the level of enterprises (Japan, USA, Canada, etc.); 2) three-level model. Which is typical for conclusion of an agreement at all three levels: general national, brunch and individual enterprises. By this an important peculiarity of this model is a powerful role of the state (as a creator of frame conditions of negotiations and conflict resolution, guarantor of agreement accomplishment which cover all employed population (even not joined into labor unions) in the issues of labor relations regulation (countries of Northern Europe); 3) for this model typical is the main focus on brunch level: collective agreements, concluded at this level are typical for all companies of thebrunch and are used as a sample in individual enterprises, by at general national level the collective agreement is not concluded as a rule (countries of Central Europe). Analyzing Belarusian model in accordance with the specified criteria, it’s worth to note that it has its own specificity and at this stage does not feet in its net shape either of the specified models, but is most close to the second one: powerful role of the state, conclusion of the agreement at national level, developed legislative basis of labor Law, but by this the level of individual enterprises in practice almost levels out due to the relying on the creation of brunch agreements (as a rule, at the web-sites of brunch labor unions a sample of collective agreement can be found[[43]](#footnote-43)), which also gets it closer to the third model.

Another criterion to distinguish the models of social partnership is the *level of participation of employees in the negotiation process,* during which they present their interests within partner relations. Under this criterion there are models of labor union, net and combined representation. 1) The labor union model suggests that labor unions are legal representatives of the interests of employees, including those who are not the member of labor unions, by this there are two sub-types of this model depending from whether the labor union orient on cooperation or confrontation with the state power. 2) The model of net representation is based on the election of representatives of labor collectives into the council of an enterprise to hold negotiations with the employer on all issues regarding employees: here the council of an enterprise represents only the interests of employees, however, as a rule, bears advising character and possesses limited authorities, which are additionally specified in the collective agreement. 3) The model of combined representation provides that the council of the enterprise includes not only the employees, but also the representatives of the employer, which allows creating conditions to reach consensus, by this issues and problems, which they can and should negotiation, are regulated by the Law and/or the agreement. In this point Belarusian model is not less specific than in the previous one and combines the first and the third models, where combined representation is reached due to the inclusion into the council of an enterprise of the employees; representative person (by this the head of the council – the head of an enterprise, and his/her (appointed by him/her) deputies and mid-level managers are also included into the council).

Regulatory base on social partnership is contained in the Labor Code, and social partnership itself is fulfilled by agreements conclusion. At the moment at general national level it is represented by the General Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus, Republican Unions of Employers and Labor Unions for 2011-2013[[44]](#footnote-44), and in the sphere of education – by the Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Belarusian Labor Union of Employees of Education and Science for 2013-2016.

**5.2. Social partnership in higher education system**

The Code of Education completely lacks the notion of “social partnership” despite it has been declared as one of the priority tasks in the sphere of state policy. Now in Belarus the main form of social partnership accomplishment is a collective agreement between the Ministry of Education and Belarusian Labor Union of Education and Science Employees. This agreement regulates relations between the state (represented by the Ministry of Education) and its employees, but does not represent the interests of other social partners: parents, employers and students. Thus, in the collective agreement the Ministry of Education recognizes the Central Committee of labor union of education and science employees to be the an authorized representative of the interests of employees and students[[45]](#footnote-45). But the labor union protect the interests of students only partially as in the given case students do not act as autonomous unit, able to articulate their own interests and defend them. This format of relations with stakeholders does not allow fulfilling the potential social partnership in the sphere of education to the full extent.

To consider social partnership in the system of education in details it’s worth to specify the system of management and self-governing by the higher education institutions (specifying the role of professors, students and employers in self-governing). With this objective let us address the main regulatory documents: Code on Education, Regulation on Higher Education Institutions[[46]](#footnote-46) and Regulation of Education Institution Council.

The **Code on Education** sets main principles on which management system in the sphere of education should ground (Chapter 11 “Management in the Sphere of Education”, includes art. 105–117). Thus, art.105 outlines state-public character of management (p. 1) and proclaims the principles of “legitimacy, democracy, publicity, consideration of public opinion and consistency of education management” (p.2).

State management in the sphere of education is highlighted in art. 106–111, listing the bodies managing in the sphere of education, as well as their competencies, art. 112 – licensing, art. 113 – development forecasting, art. 114 – accounting, art. 115 – data support. Grounding on the listed content, it becomes evident that art. 112–115 can also be referred to state management.

Social part in the character of educational institution management gets art. 116 and 117, which due to their briefness and importance should be quoted fully.

Article 116 “Coordinating and Other Councils in the Sphere of Education”:

“1.To develop recommendations on the issues of higher education, improvement of educational and pedagogic processes, development of science and improvement of material-technical base of higher educational institutions the Republican Council of Rectors of Higher Educational Institutions is established. Competence, structure and order of the activity of the Republican Council of Rectors of Higher Educational Institutions are defined by the President of the Republic of Belarus.

2. The Government of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, other state bodies have the right to establish from the number of employees of state bodies, educational institutions, public associations and other organizations coordinating and other councils on different directions of activities in the sphere of education, the regulations of which to be approved by the Government of the Republic of Belarus or authorized body”.

Article 117. “Public Associations in the Sphere of Education”:

“Public associations in the sphere of education can be established with the objective of social formation, development and self-accomplishment of students and teaching personnel, protection and defense of their rights and legal interests in accordance with the Law”.

Thus, in the general part of the Code on Education public character of management is fixed in the mode of *possibility*: public association and councils in the sphere of education can be established, and can be not. Obligatory “public” body is the Republic Council of Rectors (art. 116), but by this first of all, rectors are appointed by the state management body in the order established by the president and the order of council’s activity itself is defined by the President, and secondly, the council only possesses the right to adopt decisions of advising character. Thereby this element of public administration, proclaimed in the Law, is completely under the state control. Let’s note that in the general part of the Code there is a chapter with challenging title: Chapter 8. Social relations, connected with educational relations. However it’s enough to look through the table of contents of this chapter to realize that social relations are interpreted in the given context as relations between one and other state organizations. Art. 81 specified wider definition of social relations: “Social relations, connected with educational relations, include relations in managing and control in education, financial, material-technical, scientific-procedural and information provision of education, provision of economy industries and social sphere with specialists, employees, officers, work assignment of graduates, their completion of the set term of obligatory work, establishment and provision of measures for social protection of students, implementation in relation to them of disciplinary penalties and other social relations, connected with the fulfillment by the citizens of their right for education”. But in the chapter itself the case is *only* about the system of postgraduate work assignment, work re-assignment, independent employment and recover into the budget of the funds spent on provision of their free education.

The Code on Education devotes to the system of higher education chapters 37–45. Art. 208 “Higher Educational Institution Management” sets that direct governing of a higher educational institution is performed by the Head appointed “in the order defined by the President of the Republic of Belarus”, and the main body of self-administration is the council, headed by the head of the higher educational institution. Here fixed is a possibility of the establishment of supervisory board and “under the decision of the President of the Republic of Belarus other self-administration bodies can be established”.

The Regulation on Educational Institution Council specifies competencies, structure and arrangement of the activity of the higher education institution council. In particularly, it sets the ration of the members of the council, where 25% is given to students or their legal representatives, and the rest 75% for the “representatives of the Heads of structural departments of the educational institution, pedagogic and other employees of the educational institution, local executive and regulatory authorities, other state bodies, organizations-employers of personnel, public associations, other organizations”. Let’s note that the top heads of departments (deputy rectors, deans, heads of laboratories and research groups) are appointed by the head of the higher educational institution and only the heads of academic departments are elected by voting at the session of the higher educational institution council. However, the candidates are introduced for the council under the proposition of the same appointed Heads. Thereby the members of the council are mainly the personnel appointed by the regulatory vertical. The same is about students: *de jure* they are elected, and *de facto* selected by the same regulatory vertical as “coordination of operation of the bodies of students’ self-administration in universities is performed by the divisions (controlling) educational pedagogic work with youth <…> and student groups’ supervisors”[[47]](#footnote-47). The main official body representing the interests of students is the Belarusian Republican Youth Union independence and autonomous operation of which is out of the issue at least because it is mainly sponsored by the state and is a pro-Governmental organization. Employers can be included into the council of the higher educational institution, however they are granted the role of assistants in developing material base and provision of the place for internship. Except for that, the procedure of selection into the council of the third party organizations representatives is not regulatory established (“local executive and regulatory bodies, other state bodies, employers, public associations, other organization”): at the moment application principle is fixes, i.e. any member of the corresponding organization the head of which wrote the application to join the council should be included even if the number of such applications exceeds the number of places in the council.

Thus formally, democratic procedure does not assure in practice public participation, as significant part of the Council members is under the control of the administration. The authorities of the Council are limited mainly by the recommendations and suggestions to administrative bodies of administration and have no obligatory decisions and final expertise.

This concerns also the function of the Council regarding education quality control, as the Council can not infringe the educational standards set from the top and is not able to influence formation of professional competencies, necessary to solve topical production tasks. By this situation the gap between what the students study and what they will have to face during their professional activity only rises each year. Obviously that the situation shall not change till the parties involved defend their right for autonomous associations of stakeholders (students, professors, employers and etc.), able to actualize its interests and possessing legal and institutional resources for their defense. Respectively, legal base of social partnership in higher education should be adjusted.

A real situation in the sphere of social partnership become especially obvious addressing the five-years educational institutions development plan (partially available free in the Internet), which obligatory have the section under the title “social partnership”. Here we should note first of all as a rule that this section is about several sentences, where the same wordings migrate from a document to a document, from a plan to a plan almost without changing[[48]](#footnote-48), and secondly, despite possible differenced in description, the real list of events of social partnership fulfillment resolve into 2 or 3 points of the list:

1. Conclusion of agreements on human resources training with customers of specialists;

2. Conclusion of agreements with employers on the arrangement of training and internship of students;

3. Conclusion of agreements on arrangement of training for tutors and masters of vocational training in the organizations.

Thus, in practice social partnership is interpreted by the administration exclusively as provision of social partners with trained and re-trained (according to the standards of the Ministry of Education) human resources and return provision of students with the places of internship accomplishment. This does not at all suggests a possibility of influence of social partners on decisions, adopted by the administration of the higher educational institution.

Meanwhile, the idea of social partnership suggests reconsideration of the role of the state I arrangement and managing of education and is inevitable related to decentralization of administration. Successful accomplishment of social partnership in education is possible only and exclusively when the role of state bodies in educational institutions management (to lesser or greater extent) is limited with legally fixed forms of participation in managing higher education of other social partners. It’s also worth to fix the right of social partners on participation in development of state policy in education at regulatory-legal level. Except for that clearly should be specified the rights and obligations of the parties, mechanisms of negotiations and effective conflict regulation. Evidently, that the content of regulatory-legal acts regulating involvement of social partners should be formulated with their active participation.

5.3. The role of social partnership in assurance of guarantees of employment of graduates of higher educational institutions

Strengthening of the role of social partnership in the sphere of education is one of the most important conditions of provision of quality of professional education. Education quality directly depends on involvement of social partners (and first of all employers) into the process of educational policy development which is able to respond timely on changes of labor market environment. For this urgent is participation of social partner in expertise of academic plans, programs and standards of vocational school for their conformity with the requirements of workplaces in these sectors. Respectively, at the moment the most topical is the task to develop mechanisms of strengthening of the role of social partners and attraction of employers to social dialogue in the sphere of vocational education which in reality has not yet started in Belarus.

Considering non-development of social partnership in Belarus and state-centric model of society, at the initial stage it would be appropriate to develop mechanisms of state attraction of social partners to the dialogue. By this the involvement itself should have no repressive-command but positively-motivational character by stimulating the interest of employers to participate, for example:

1. With the help of governmental granting to the employers, creating additional educational places for internship and training on work site.

2. With formation of educational funds, assets which can derive from the tax of wage fund or at the cost of state donations, which should be fixed in the frames of collective agreements.

3.With issuing of loans to arrange the courses for retraining of highly-qualified employers in order to overcome the lack of qualified human resources urgent for the development of highly technologic industry.

4. With state donations for training on work-site.

5. With preferences for the companies, participating in development of vocational education.

6. With legal provision of the participation of social partners in the Councils of higher educational institutions.

7.With involvement of social partners into the development and expertise of the programs meeting in the interests and companies profile as well as control of the quality of education under these programs.

Especially it’s worth to note that efficiency of reforms directly depends from preliminary coordination and discussion of their content with the parties involved, who shall be influenced by these reforms, i.e. social partners.

Postgraduate work assignment and re-assignment of graduates is one of the issues that the stakeholders (first of all students, parents and employers) need to discuss already now acutely. The representatives of the power ad officials defend the practice of postgraduate work assignment as the only possible (single option) form of interaction between the system of higher education and labor market. Meanwhile as demonstrated by the practice of other countries successfully accomplishing the programs of provision of graduates and youth with workplaces, there are such options. First of all, noteworthy is the program “Youth Guarantee” operating in the EU, according to which young people up to 25 should not be unemployed for more than 3-6 months (in each country this term is set individually). If a young man is not able to find a job for this period, he/she applies to the employment service to get assistance with employment or retraining. Additionally a dual education system is acting, suggesting studies simultaneously in two institutions: at production site (up to 80% of load) and in educational institution (vocational–theoretical part). This system allows young men obtaining first experience already in course of studies, and for the companies it allows training specialists with the focus on those knowledge and skills required directly by them. The dual system allows creating high motivation in students interested to gain knowledge as their successful digestion is directly related with the job to be performed at the worksite, as well as in an employer, interested in high-quality training its employee. This allows not only assuring the interconnection of theory and practice, but also reacting timely on the changes in the demands of production and market. This system has recommended itself well not only in the states of the European Union, but also within post-Soviet area (this model has been especially actively implemented by Kazakhstan). To introduce in practice the dual system in Belarus a corresponding legislative basis is required that would allow fixing the notion of “dual educational system”, determining main directions of interaction of employers and educational organizations within training of specialists and estimating of professional qualification of graduates. This is impossible to be performed without development of an article on social partnership in education and its inclusion into the Code on Education.

From the practice of Italy – the program “Generations Relay”: when an employee reaches pre-pension age his/her load is reduced by a half, salary is reduced, by this all social benefits remain and are compensated from state budget. The load relieved is passed to a young employee who is supervised by the older college. This program does not create new workplaces but can be useful to preserve highly-qualified young specialists who in case of a long period of unemployment lose their chances to find a job.

From the practice of Ukraine: they developed the Law on provision of young people with higher education or vocational training diploma with the first workplace with issuing of donation for an employer (of November 4th 2004 No. 2150-IV), in accordance to which the state employment service helps a graduate to find a suitable workplace by the specialty and registers a job referral. An employer gets the donations, which recovers annual wage payment to the graduate and the amounts of obligatory state insurance payments in case if it 1) admits the graduate for no less than 2 years (if the labor contract is terminated prior to the set term, the employer recovers the total amount of the donation considering also the indexation per inflation level); 2) during 6 months, prior the employment of a graduate, there has been no reduction of employees of corresponding specialty. However, in Ukraine validity of this Law was suspended despite that more than 500 thousand signatures of young people were collected, as executive bodies did not manage to work out an effective mechanism of its introduction. One can count on efficiency of such law only in case when it is developed together with social partners, which helps to work out the most acceptable mechanisms of its introduction.

From the practice of Russia: setting a quota for workplaces (independently from the form of proprietary of an enterprise) to employ graduates and issuing of donations to the employer. Non-accomplishment of the obligation to issue quota-fixed workplaces for youth results in administrative penalty in favor of municipal education within the territory of which the company situates (as an option, the amount of the fine can also be transfer to the account of the employment service of the corresponding municipal education department).

The experience of neighbor states demonstrated the need to use financial motivation for an employer with the objective to provide the graduates and youth with workplaces, as well as the need of employment services reforms.

The way to assure the right for the first workplace for the graduates of Belarus should be defined in the frames of social dialogue. The state in this case is acting as an organizer of the discussion, developer of coordinated regulations in the shape of norms and a guarantor of liabilities accomplishment.

By this we should focus on a complex approach: efficacy of the programs of youth employment assurance depends on complex measures adoption on creation of new workplaces for young people. The problem of youth employment should get its place of priority in the frameworks of the national strategy of policy and development of employment, where real action plans should be specified which should be reflected in the national youth policy and other policy branches. The greatest role in the development of corresponding plans and strategy is given to social dialogue – volunteer participation of social partners raises efficiency of plans accomplishment at national as well as brunch levels. Urgent is the support of private sector, small and medium business creating new workplaces for young people. With this objective measures should be undertaken to improve business environment and investment climate (investments into new workplaces) at the cost of elimination of obstacles for entrepreneurship, improvement of regulatory-legal basis (relaxation of the procedure of registration and licensing, availability of credit funds, etc.), study programs for vocational and entrepreneurial skills, proprietary right protection, assurance of independence of judicial system.

**6. Science and Innovations in Higher Education System. A Comparative Study**

**6.1.Trend for Amplification of Research Programs and University Science**

A modern trend for amplification of the research and innovative component within the European Higher Education Area is reflected in the Leuven Communiqué (Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April, 2009) and dates back to 2000, when the Council of Europe adopted the so-called European Union's Lisbon Strategy. This Strategy was designed to deepen cooperation between the universities and research centers in the European area on the model of North America and Japan.

The Strategy could be further developed owing to an important decision made in 2003 in Barcelona (Spain) (the so-called "Barcelona Dream"). This decision set quite an ambitious task before the united Europe - the amount of finance allocated to research and innovations should reach not less than 3% of the GDP by 2010. This task was aimed at facilitating the achievement of the main goal - to transform the united Europe into the world's largest economy based on knowledge by 2010. A simultaneously developed new concept of the European university cooperation (the Bologna Process) was aimed at supporting this goal and called upon to form a common educational and scientific European area by 2010. To reach these goals were created a new financial instrument (The Seventh Framework Program FP7[[49]](#footnote-49)) and new forms of inter-institutional cooperation (The League of European Research Universities[[50]](#footnote-50), The European Institute of Technology[[51]](#footnote-51)).

In the national higher educational systems of the EU countries one can observe the comparable all-European tendencies of strengthening the research and innovative components of higher education, however with some corresponding national specificity. For instance, in Germany, this tendency took the form of the federal program named The Excellence Initiative (Exzellenzinitiative), which was declared in the academical year 2005/2006 and involves three interrelated lines: 1) "Future Concepts" (Zukunftkonzepte), 2) "Clusters of Excellence" (Exellenzcluster), and 3) "Graduate Schools" (Graduiertenschule). The "Future Concepts" line is aimed at formulating concepts and ways of development for the so-called "Common (integrated) university" (Gesamtuniversität). Within the framework of this university, a contest is held among all German universities for the "University of Excellence" title (Exellenzuniversitäten).The title is given according to the following three main characteristics: postgraduate studies, scientific research complexes and plans for future development (the total prize fund in the first round amounted to €2.7 billion in 2007; the first 10 winning universities got €10-15 million a year each until 2017). The "Cluster of Excellence" (Exellenzcluster) line facilitates and stimulates the research of complex topics that consolidate up to 25 researchers from different fields of science (the annual budget is up to €6.5 million). The "Graduate Schools" (Graduiertenschule) line is aimed at supporting the elite doctoral schools in practically all science fields (the annual budget of one doctoral school is €1 million). The two latter lines are worked out at 18 universities that do not belong to the ten "excellent" universities and absorb about €1 million annually.

Similar tendencies are seen in the area of the post-Soviet countries that did not enter into the EU and are closest neighbors to Belarus (both geographically and according to the condition of their higher education system at the time of the USSR demise). In this context, the efforts of Ukraine and the Russian Federation made in the past 5 years are illustrative. In Ukraine, the question of ranking and differentiation of higher education establishments was put on the agenda at the end of January 2007. In February 2010, the Regulations on Research University went into effect and gave start to the first structural changes in the typology of the higher educational establishments. By the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine d/d February 4, 2010, six higher educational establishments received the status of self-managed (autonomic) research universities: the National Technical University of Ukraine "Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, the National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute", V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman and the National Aviation University. At the level of Master's Programs, a division into three types of Master's degree programs is suggested: 1) research programs (training of future researchers); 2) professional programs (development of professional and management competences) and 3) career programs (professional retraining of employees with Master's degree). In the Russian Federation, a contest for the status of the National Research University was announced July 31, 2009 by the contest committee led by Andrei Fursenko, the Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. According to the contest's results, six higher educational establishments of the two capitals acquired the status of the National Research University (the Higher School of Economics, Moscow Aviation Institute, the Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, G.V. Plekhanov Saint Petersburg State Mining Institute and St.Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics) this status was as well given to six higher educational establishments of Kazan, Nizhni Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Perm, Samara and Tomsk: Kazan State Technical University named after A.N. Tupolev, The Lobachevski State University of Nizhni Novgorod, Novosibirsk State University, Perm National Polytechnic University, Samara State Aerospace University named after S.P. Korolev, Tomsk Polytechnic University.

**6.2.Research in the Higher Educational Establishments of Belarus: between the Soviet Legacy and the European Perspective**

Belarus as well expresses the intention to fit into the all-European and regional trend (this is reflected in a number of programs aimed at innovative development in general[[52]](#footnote-52) and the development of scientific research component of higher education in particular[[53]](#footnote-53)). However, a number of problems and hindrances arises between the intentions (programs) and the reality of innovative development. They interfere, complicate and at times make the implementation of the plans impossible.

Belarus has inherited the Soviet organizational structure of science, in which the higher educational establishments, the field scientific research institutes and the Academy of Sciences served as the key institutions that accumulated the great majority of the scientific manpower and performed the lion's share of all the scientific research and development. Thus, in 1981 in BSSR, the scientists employed by the higher education institutions included (of their total number field-wise): 70% of the Candidates of Juridical Sciences, 60% of the Candidates in the field of architecture, 50% of the Candidates in physico-mathematical, technical, geographical and philosophical sciences, 30% of the Candidates in fine arts and psychological sciences.[[54]](#footnote-54) Despite the substantial decrease in the number of scientific manpower[[55]](#footnote-55) during the period from 1991 to 1995, in 1995, the larger share of the academic stuff working in R & D (research and development) was employed by the Ministry of Education (23,5%) and only secondarily and tertiary by the Ministry of Industry (16,9%) and the Academy of Sciences (15,0%).[[56]](#footnote-56)

However, already 10 years later (by 2005), the situation with scientific manpower allocation in organizations changed drastically: the Ministry of Education employed only 9.4% of the scientific personnel (the Ministry of Industry - 19.5%, the Academy of Sciences - 37.3%, the State Committee of Military Industry - 10.9%, the Ministry of Health - 4.5%, the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services - 2.1%, Belneftekhim Concern - 1.9%). Thus, at the beginning of 2006, the Academy of Sciences of Belarus was employer to 539 Doctors of Sciences or 69.1% of their total number, the Ministry of Health - to 86 (11.0%), the Ministry of Education - only to 77 (9.9%). A similar situation was with the allocation of the Candidates of Sciences: at the beginning of 2006, the Academy of Sciences of Belarus employed 1957 Candidates of Sciences or 60.1% of their total number, the Ministry of Education - 451 (13.9%), the Ministry of Health - 274 (8.4%).[[57]](#footnote-57) Thus, *already by 2005, a significant reallocation of the number of scientific personnel in the organizations took place. As a result of this reallocation, the Academy of Sciences of Belarus turned out to be the main employer for the vast majority of the scientific personnel.* According to the official experts[[58]](#footnote-58), this situation was largely determined by the structural transformations that mainly took place during the period from 2001 to 2005. Thus, only in 2002, the number of employees at the Academy of Sciences of Belarus increased by 1.5 times due to the affiliation of the Academy of Agrarian Sciences, two concerns and a number of other juridical persons. However, according to the same official experts, in 2002 the number of employees at the Ministry of Education increased by 1.7 times in connection to the fact that the Belarusian State University was made subordinate to the Ministry. Consequently, the factor of structural transformations is clearly not sufficient to explain such a significant reallocation of the scientific manpower in the organizations. In our opinion, a number of reasons is involved, the most significant of them are **a)** theconstant lack of financing of the higher education science and **b)** the refocusing of the higher education establishments on chargeable educational services as the main form of activity in the context of the state commercialization of educational services (ref.: "Financing of Science at Higher Educational Establishments and Outside").

As a result, by 2009, three organizations became leaders in the number of scientific employees: the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Ministry of Industry and the State Committee of Military Industry. Out of 33 516 of the employees[[59]](#footnote-59) performing scientific research and development in 2009, 10 496 persons (31.3%) were employed by the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, 8 682 persons (25.9%) - by the Ministry of Industry, and 3 757 persons (11.2%) - by the State Committee of Military Industry. They are followed the Ministry of Education - 2 737 persons (8.2%), the Ministry of Health - 1 353 persons (4.0%) and the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services - 989 persons (2.9%). The list of the leading organizations that concentrated the overwhelming majority of employees performing scientific research and development is closed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection with its 593 employees (1.8%) and Belneftekhim Concern with its 481 employee (1.4%).[[60]](#footnote-60) However, the situation with highly-qualified scientific personnel was somewhat different. Thus, the three leaders in the number of the Doctors of Sciences were the Academy of Sciences of Belarus (66.4%), the Ministry of Health (11.2%) and the Ministry of Education (11%). They were followed by the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services (2.2%), the Ministry of Industry (1.2%) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (1.0%). At the end of the list of the leading organizations in the number of the Doctors of Sciences were the State Committee of Military Industry and Belneftehim Concern (0.5% each). The three leaders in the number of the Candidates of Sciences were the Academy of Sciences of Belarus (58.1%), the Ministry of Education (13.3%) and the Ministry of Health (8.7%). They were followed by the State Committee of Military Industry (2.0%), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (1.9%) and the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services (1.8%). At the end of the list of the leading organizations in the number of the Candidates of Sciences were the Ministry of Industry (1.7%) and Belneftehim Concern (0.9%). Today (at the end of 2012) the allocation of the number of researchers in the seven above mentioned organizations remains basically the same.

The abundance dynamics of the professors and lecturers in the higher educational establishments, as well as the changes in their gender structure for the period from 1998 to 2009 can be traced in the Table 5. As we see, during the past ten years, the general increase of the number of the higher-education teaching personnel reached 28%, basically due to the female lecturers in all fields: professors - by 5.2%, assistant professors (docents) - by 9.6%, senior lecturers - by 10.4%, lecturers and assistants - by 6.4%. It is notable that the largest increase of the number of female lecturers is visible in the category of senior lecturers and assistant professors, i.e in a higher status group than before. However, in general the quantitative superiority of women is reached, as before, due to the female prevalence on the lowest career levels (lecturers and teaching assistants). The higher the status group is, the fewer females are represented in it. This is clearly shown by the gender analysis of the key scientific and administrative posts of the higher educational establishments management (as of 2009): among the Heads of Chairs the female employees make 31.7%, among the Deans and the Vice-deans - 34.1%, among the Vice-principals and the Filial branch principals - 21.5%, among the Principals - 7.1%.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Perhaps, the only indisputably strong contribution made by the higher education institutions into the national science is a relatively high (in comparison to the other scientific organizations in the country) publishing activity of Bearusian university scientists internationally.[[62]](#footnote-62) Thus, according to the multi-center studyof citations of Belarusian scientists in academic periodicals for the period from 2006 to 2010, which was carried out in 2011, the publishing activity of Belarusian scientists in the worldwide scientific flow increased by almost three times compared to the period from 1993 to 2006. If during the period from 1993 to 2006 the scientific papers of Belarusian scientists were cited 53 326 times (on the average 3 800 references annually), so during the period from 2006 to 2010 this figure reached 49 746 ([on the average 9 949,2 references annually](http://csl.bas-net.by)). The publication citations allocation by leading organizations remained unchanged (the Academy of Sciences, the Belarusian State University, the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, the Belarusian National Technical University). However, in general their contribution to the national science has slightly decreased. Thus, in the total amount of articles written by Belarusian authors and cited in the Web of Science, the share of articles written by the employees of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus has decreased by 3.4 percentage points (from 54.7% to 51.3%), by the employees of the Belarusian State University - by 4 percentage points (from 37.5% to 33.6%), by the employees of the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics - by 1.4 percentage points (from 4.6% to 3.2%), and the share of the Belarusian National Technical University remained unchanged (2.9-3%). However, this decrease did not play the determinative role in the citation allocation by the organizations - as before, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus remains the most efficient and visible to the international scientific community. On the basis of the submitted data, a conclusion can be made that the publication statistics is dominated by one university - the Belarusian State University; the share of all other higher education institutions and organizations is inappreciable. According to the data represented by the research group SCImago (Spain) in its report "SIR World Report 2011: Global Ranking",[[63]](#footnote-63) in the world publication activity ranking the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus ranks No.802 among 3 042 organizations from 104 countries of the world and No. 32 among 197 organizations of Eastern Europe. Furthermore, out of 70 higher education institutions and research establishments of the higher education sector of Belarus that perform scientific research and development, only two organizations except the National Academy of Sciences, are included into the rating: the Belarusian State University (ranks No. 1 310) and the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics (ranks No. 2 756).[[64]](#footnote-64)

*Hence, over the past 20 years (from 1991 to 2011), the role of the higher education institutions in the structure of science has not been considerably changed. By 2009, the leadership in the quantity and quality of the academic personnel had completely moved from the higher education institutions and industry research centers to the Academy of Sciences, which amalgamated 31.3% of the employees performing scientific research and development, 31.6% of the researchers, 66.4% of the Doctors of Sciences and 58.7% of the Candidates of Sciences. It is remarkable that at the same time Belarus experienced growth in the number of educational institutions, which was not proportionate to the growth in the number of academic personnel. Thus, if in 1989 in BSSR there were 33 higher education institutions, the number of administrative personnel in them amounted to 37% of the total number, then in 2011 the number of higher education institutions went up to 55 and the percentage of the scientific personnel employed there made up only 9.8% of the total number of the personnel engaged in scientific research and development.[[65]](#footnote-65)*

**6.3. Financing of Higher Education and Research Programs in the Countries of OECD, EU and in Belarus.**

According to the EAG 2012 data (Indicator B2), the countries of OECD spent at an average 6.5% of the GDP on education in 2009. The margin range country-wise varies from 7% in such countries as Denmark, Island, Israel, Korea, New Zealand and the USA to less than 5% in the following 7 OECD countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Slovakia, the Republic of South Africa. The analysis of the investment behavior in the sphere of education of all levels (in percentage of the GDP) shows that during the period from 2000 to 2009 the education expenses grew faster than the GDP for the same period in almost all the countries. Thus, during this period in Brazil, Denmark, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation and United Kingdom, this growth exceeded 1%. With a few exceptions (Israel, France, Canada, Poland, Japan), the education allowances (in percentage of the GDP) grew in all the OECD countries.

In addition, the percentage of the funds spent on the tertiary (higher) education equaled 1.6% of the GDP or 25.8% of all the funds allocated for the education system in the OECD countries (at average). The margin range in the OECD countries varies from 2.4-2.6% in such countries as Canada (2.4%), Chile (2.4%), Korea (2.6%) and the USA (2.6%) to 0.6-1.0% in such countries as the Republic of South Africa (0.6%), Brazil (0.8%), Indonesia (0.7%), the Czech Republic (0.9%) and Italy (1.0%).

The percentage of the funds spent on research and development in the sphere of tertiary education in the OECD countries varies from 0.2% in such countries as Brazil (0.04%), Chile (0.17%) and Slovakia (0.12%) to more than 0.6% in such countries as Australia (0.62%), Canada (0.61%), Finland (0.74%), Switzerland (0.72%) and Sweden (0.94%).[[66]](#footnote-66)

At the average, in 2009, the education expenditures in the OECD countries, including ancillary services and higher education institutions research activities, constituted 13 728 USD per 1 student. The margin rate on this criteria country-wise is quite radical: from 6-9 000 USD in such countries as Estonia (6 373), Slovakia (6 758), Chile (6 863), Poland (7 776), the Czech Republic (8 237), Hungary (8 518), Slovenia (9 311), Iceland (9 939), Italy (9 562), Korea (9 513) to 15-29 000 USD in such countries as Belgium (15 443), Germany (15 711), Japan (15 957), Australia (16 074), Great Britain (16 338), Denmark (18 556), Canada (20 932), Switzerland (21 577) and the USA (29 201). Correspondingly, the expenditures on research and development activities at the higher education institutions in the EOCD countries constituted at the average 4 202 USD per 1 student. The cross-country differences in this criterion are also large enough: from 432 to 839 USD in Chile and Slovakia to 10 497 and 12 113 USD in Sweden and Switzerland.

In 2009, in *the EU countries,* the training costs per student, including essential services, ancillary services and university research activities, constituted 12 967 USD, and scientific and research expenditures at the universities - 4 325 USD per one student.

*In the Russian Federation,* the same criteria constituted 7 749 USD and 380 USD correspondingly. [[67]](#footnote-67)

*Judging by the level of budgetary financing of higher education, as well as the research and development financing (at the higher educational establishments and outwith), Belarus* is lagging behind. According to the data presented by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat), in 2005, the percentage of education expenditures constituted 6.2%. During the subsequent years, it only decreased and reached 5% by 2011.[[68]](#footnote-68) At the same time, the annual average growth of the GDP during this period was not less than 6% (only in 2011 it equaled 5.3%). In 2012, the republican budget expenditures for higher education constituted 3 249 175 188 thousand rubles, which equals to 0.69% of the GDP, i.e. 2.3 times less than in the EOCD countries (at the average). At the same time, the percentage of expenditures for higher education and post-graduate education, according to the approved budget for 2012, should have reached 70% of all the education expenditures.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The percentage of the expenditures for the higher education sector in the internal expenditures for research and development has been decreasing during the past seven years. It reached 9.6% of the total volume of financing of the internal expenditures for research and development in 2011 against 17.0% in 2005. Thus, in 2011, financing of the scientific and research activities in the sector of higher education in Belarus constituted 0.06% of the GDP (sf. 0.05% in 2009) [[70]](#footnote-70), which corresponds to the lower level of the similar expenditures in the OECD countries (e.g. Brazil - 0.04% of the GDP). It is notable that in 2008, a similar criterion in Belarus constituted 0.1%.[[71]](#footnote-71)

In the structure of financing of the scientific and research activities, a larger part is comprised by the republican budget funds. The share of expenses from the innovation funds by the institutions of the Ministry of Education constitutes 0.04% of the total amount of expenses as of 2010.[[72]](#footnote-72)

In 2011, the actual republican budget expenses for scientific, technical and innovative activities in Belarus amounted to 0.28% of the GDP. This is not only essentially lower than in the EU countries (e.g. in Finland, the similar criterion amounted to 0.96%, in Germany and France – to 0.76%, in the Czech Republic – to 0.61%, in Estonia – to 0.51%, in Lithuania – to 0.34%), but also lower compared to the other former USSR countries that withdrew from it in approximately the same economic and scientific situation - Ukraine (0.35%) and Russia (0.36%).[[73]](#footnote-73) A similar situation is with the overall level of the expenses for scientific research and development (in % of the GDP). In 2009, this criterion in the EU countries was 1.88% (country-wise: in Finland - 3.96%, in Germany - 2.82%, in France - 2.21%, in the Czech Republic - 1.53%, in Estonia - 1.42%, in Lithuania - 0.84%), but in Belarus – only 0.64%, which is 2 times less than in Russia (1.25%) and one-third less than in Ukraine (0.9%). In general, among all the European countries, Belarus (0.64%) rates one of the bottom by the expenses for scientific research and development, along with Bulgaria (0.53%), Slovakia (0.48%), Romania (0.47%) and Latvia (0.46%).[[74]](#footnote-74)

**6.4.Integration of Higher Education Institutions into the Innovative System in Belarus.**

The infrastructure of the higher school is weakly integrated into the innovative system of Belarus. According to the official experts, "the percentage of the applications submitted by the higher education institutions, and the percentage of patents received by them comprises approximately 20-25% of the percentage nationwide. The universities hold about 18% of the valid invention patents in the Republic of Belarus. "[[75]](#footnote-75) The percentage of the innovative infrastructure bodies that are more or less affiliated to the higher education system in Belarus comprises 6.4% of the total number of the innovatively active organizations as of 2011.[[76]](#footnote-76) Furthermore, over 90% of the higher education institutions that host these organizations, are the institutions of Minsk, despite the fact that the industrial innovative organizations are quite evenly spread over the country's territory: 58 - in Brest region, 85 – in Vitebsk region, 58 – in Gomel region, 51- in Grodno region, 91 – in the city of Minsk, 67 – in Minsk region, 33 – in Mogilev region.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The overwhelming majority of research projects in the higher education institutions of Belarus are conducted as part of the so-called "payable extracurricular load". Its results are, as a rule, of crucial importance for the lecturer at the point of competence assessment and/or academic status confirmation at the university (once every five years). Taking into account the formalistic character of the data reporting (both in publications status and in the competence assessment procedure), this form of motivation is inefficient for the researcher and does not stimulate integration of the university scientific community into the country's innovative system in general (engagement of the out-of-university network, consideration of industrial demand, business initiatives, etc.).

A more efficient way would be to conduct research within the framework of the State Programs of Innovation Development (SPID). However, the percentage of financing of the Ministry of Education as a member organization of the SPID is miserly. Thus, during the four years of SPID from 2007 to 2010, the amount of financing of the Ministry of Education comprised 1.0 billion rubles or 0.016% of the total amount of financing, which on its scale can be compared to the financing of the Minsk Municipal Executive Committee (for the same period it comprised 0.8 billion rubles).[[78]](#footnote-78) The university science contribution to the output of products within the framework of state scientific and technical programs is unessential as well. As of 2010, the university science contribution to the output of products comprised 2.7% (for comparison: sectoral science - 79.8%, academical - 17.5%), into agricultural products - 0.01% (academical - 100%).[[79]](#footnote-79) The university science contribution into the modernization of the existing productions with the purpose of assimilation and release of new products, technologies and goods (in the period under review by order of SPID from 2006 to 2010) comprised 13.6% (of the total number of the modernized productions) and 4.7% (of the total number of new technologies).[[80]](#footnote-80) In 2007, the export of scientific and technological production by higher education institutions comprised about 3.5 million USD, while the export volume by companies resident in the Hi-Tech parks comprised 161 million USD in 2010, although the number of employees in them was 3 times less than the number of the higher-education teaching personnel.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**6.5.Research Program Students in the Sector of Tertiary Education in the Countries of OECD, EU, G20 and in Belarus.**

Building of the research component happens thanks to a number of factors, one of them is connected to the institute of research program students that study at higher educational establishments (Research Master's Courses and Postgraduate Courses) and form a personnel reserve of university science.

In 2010, the percentage of students that studied at the research programs (PhD) in the system of higher education in general in the OECD countries comprised 2% of the total number of students, which is 0.5% more than in 2000. Thus, the annual growth of this student group in the tertiary sector of the EOCD countries for the past 10 years has in average comprised 5%. The difference rate country-wise is quite large: from 0.2-0.9% in such countries as Mexico and Chile (0.2%), Turkey (0.4%), Poland (0.5%), Hungary and Iceland (0.8%), Estonia (0.9%) to 2.0-3.6% in such countries as Denmark (2.0%), Austria (2.2%), Finland and Great Britain (2.3%), Germany (2.6%), Sweden (2.8%), Slovakia (3.2%) and Switzerland (3.6%). A similar criterion in the 21 EU countries comprises 2.1%.[[82]](#footnote-82)

In 2011 in Belarus, the percentage of postgraduate students (of the total number of students at the higher education institutions) comprised 1.0% which is two times less than in the countries of OECD and EU.[[83]](#footnote-83) The percentage of the higher education establishments among all the organizations that arrange postgraduate student training comprised 37.8% in 2010. At the same time as of the end of 2011, 77.7% of all the postgraduate students studied in the system of higher education.[[84]](#footnote-84) According to the gender composition, the students that study at Belarusian postgraduate programs surpass the similar criterion of the OECD and EU countries. Thus, at the end of 2010, the percentage of female postgraduate students countrywide comprised 57.5% of the total number of postgraduate students, and the percentage of female doctoral students comprised 51.1% of the total number of doctorants.[[85]](#footnote-85) In general, for the past 10 years, a tendency of feminization of the Belarusian science at large and the university science in particular can be traced (including the level of the institution of postgraduate studies) (refer to Table 4).

During the past 20 years, a disproportion has been formed in the sectoral structure of postgraduate studies, which significantly complicates the formation and the development of the innovative economy. As of the end of 2011, the percentage of postgraduate students of social and humanitarian sciences comprised 45.8% of the total number of postgraduate students, the percentage of postgraduate students of technical sciences - 21.6%, of natural sciences - 12.5%, of medical sciences - 10.6%, of agricultural sciences - 6.2%.[[86]](#footnote-86)

One more factor that negatively effects the training of research program students is a permanent reduction, aging and degradation of the qualification structure of the scientific personnel in Belarus (refer to Tables 1-2). In 2008, at the state institutions, the percentage of higher-education teaching personnel aged up to 39 years constituted 23% for the Candidates of Sciences, 1% for the Doctors of Sciences. At the same time, the percentage of the Doctors of Sciences aged from 65 years and older comprised 36%, from 60 years and older - 54%, from 50 years and older - 88%. The percentage of the Candidates of Sciences aged from 65 years and older comprised 16%, from 60 years and older - 28%, from 50 years and older - 56%.[[87]](#footnote-87)

It is worth noting, that during the past two years a positive dynamics has appeared. It lies in the admission of students to postgraduate studies of the higher educational establishments of the country in almost all fields of science (with the exception of pharmaceutical sciences where the number of students remained the same, and veterinary sciences where the number of students has decreased compared to 2010).[[88]](#footnote-88) However, the efficiency of personnel training is still declining: if the percentage of postgraduate finalists in the system of higher education who defended their dissertations before graduation comprised 8% in 2004, this criterion comprised 4.5% already in 2008, and only 2.8% in 2011.[[89]](#footnote-89)

**6.6. Problems**

We will now make a short presentation of the problems that from our point of view are hampering the development of university science and are marginalazing the research component of higher education in Belarus.

1. The absence of graded (according to the international classifications) statistic information about the higher education expenditures. For example, there is no data available regarding the education expenses per one student. Due to the departmental division of a number of higher education institutions in Belarus, it is hard to determine the exact data for university science as a whole. Finally, due to the devaluation of the Belarusian ruble, the data regarding the financing growth is inevitably corrected, often to the extent of the opposite final estimations: the growth in rubles may actually mean a significant decrease on conversion to USD (which is especially noticeable through the example of finance sequestering in USD equivalent at 2011 year-end).
2. The university science occupies in general one tenth part by the institutional weight (12.6% of the total number of organizations that carried out scientific research and development in 2011), by the human resources (9.8% of the total number of employees who performed scientific research and development in 2011), by the volume of work (12.6% of the total volume of work performed in 2010), by the proportion of the innovatively active businesses at the universities' disposal (6.4% of their total number in 2011) and by the proportion of the valid invention patents (18% of their total number in 2009). At the same time the financing of research activities at the universities is within the limits of arithmetic tolerance - 0.06% of the GDP. In general, it is indicative of the marginal situation of university science in the system of scientific and innovative activities in Belarus.
3. The model of financing of university scientific activities is basically of budget (institutional) nature, which negatively affects the motivation of university researchers in general because of the lack of instruments and forms of encouragement of researcher's personal contribution.
4. The absence of self-administration and academic freedom in combination with the vertical power structure are reason for extremely bureaucratic and slow organization forms, which considerably complicates the realization of independent personnel policy, hampers a mobile and quick response to the changes in the information market conditions in general.
5. Belarus lacks an internationally relevant system of evaluation of scientific and market value of university performance results (rating), which makes competition as a natural mechanism of elimination of ineffective universities impossible, and only forwards stagnation, growth of clan system and corruption in the academic and scientific community.
6. The institute of postgraduate studies in Belarus falls short in amount of the average performance compared to the EOCD and EU countries, which testifies a small attractiveness of research programs for the country's university students.
7. The permanent downsizing, deformation of the age structure and decline of the qualification structure of the academic personnel have had negative effect on the quality of education at the research programs, as well as on the image of Belarusian university research programs in general. In addition, the percentage of the higher-education teaching personnel engaged in scientific research and development (as of 2009) comprises 13.8%.[[90]](#footnote-90) At the same time, the research program students (postgraduate students) at the universities that are subordinate to the Ministry of Education comprise 77.7% of the total number of the country's research program students. This means that in an ideal situation that presupposes scientific management by scientifically active representatives of the higher-education teaching personnel, one representative of the higher-education teaching personnel would fall on 7 to 8 postgraduate students . However, de facto, the total number of postgraduate students is divided by the general number of lecturers with a science degree, regardless of the level of their scientific activity, which aggregates the situation with the level of postgraduate students training.
8. The disproportion in the field structure of postgraduate studies complicates the integration of academic community representatives into the innovative system, the development of innovative economy in general.
9. The allocation of personnel and institutional resources in Belarus is characterized by a high level of centralization: 75.6% of the scientific personnel, 65.6% of the scientific organizations, 45% of the higher education institutions, 55% of the students and over 50% of the higher-education teaching personnel are allocated in Minsk. This is one of the factors that hamper an adequate engagement of human capital assets in the country's regions.
10. The fact that the innovatively active industrial organizations are territorially remote from the center (Minsk and Minsk region), in combination with a low innovative activity of the regional universities, is one of the fundamental barriers for the effective involvement of human and infrastructural resources of the scientific educational system of Belarus.
11. The increasing female dominance in the number of university researchers is, on the one hand, a positive factor of the overall potential development of Belarus in the sphere of educational science and innovations. However, on the other hand, it is obvious that the gender situation in education and science is not a result of the deliberate policy on gender equality establishment. Rather, the modern feminization of the higher education and science personnel speaks for the acute personnel shortage and the problem of scientific personnel depletion in practically all the fields of Belarusion education and science, as well as about the comedown of the social status of teachers and scientists in the Belarusian society, that is otherwise notable for its male dominance in the social status distribution.

**6.7. Recommendations**

In conclusion, we will present our considerations with regard to the possibilities of overcoming the above described problems, the ways of reforming and modernization of the higher education research programs in Belarus and Belarusian university science in general.

First of all, we should pay our attention to the fact that the success of higher education modernization today depends largely upon the success of research programs and university science modernization. According to the results of the analysis of 11most successful universities of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, which was carried out by the experts of the World Bank [[91]](#footnote-91), only those countries that placed their stake on research program development have been successful in creating a university of world-class. In its turn, a successful development of even a small number of research programs and at least one research university (i.e. promotion in the international ratings) makes a positive impact on the image of the national higher education system in general, i.e. raises the competitive performance of mass higher education organizations regionally and worldwide. Finally a successful development of research programs and effective implementation of scientific and educational potential of the higher education institutions is a key factor for the economic and social modernization of Belarusian society in the direction of innovative development.

International experts point out three groups of factors that have key importance for a successful modernization of research programs and a creation of research universities: 1) high concentration of talented scientists and students, 2) significant financial means and 3) strategic vision. Below we present our recommendations that could promote Belarusian university modernization in this direction, our recommendations are based on the world experience and the specific character of the higher education system in Belarus.

***1. Harmonization of methodology and methods of statistic analysis.*** First of all, it is necessary to carry though an adequate and relevant diagnosis of the situation with the research programs and institutes, human resources and financing of the research component of the higher education institutions in Belarus. For this purpose, it is necessary to bring the Belarusian statistic analysis into accordance with the international standards and methods of analysis, accepted by UNESCO, OECD and EUROSTAT. Taking into consideration the scale and complicity of the process of harmonization of the Belarusian and the international systems of statistic analysis, it would be rational to start with introducing the calculation methodology into the Belarusian system of statistic analysis, the calculation is done according to the following exponents: a) educational expenditures per one student of the sixth level; b) percentage of research program students (sixth level) in relation to the total number of university (higher education institutions) students; c) percentage of research program students (sixth level) in relation to the total number of university students according to age-gender groups (age-specific graduation rates or gross graduation rates); d) percentage of scientifically active representatives of the higher-education teaching personnel; e) expenses on financing of research programs (sixth level), scientific research and interrelated institutions; f) posision of the research programs (publication activity of the higher-education teaching personnel, image and other qualitative and quantitative indications of the development level of research programs). *Following the above described minimal demands is a necessary condition of validity of the sociological analysis correlation to reality and the raising of credibility of the collected statistic data. Without this any reform planning will be of Laputan nature and any financial means allocated to reforming will be spent in vain.*

***2. Reforms that promote research programs and university science development.*** On the basis of the performed analysis, it is necessary to carry out a number of reforms that will promote research programs and university science development. In our opinion, these reforms should be carried out in three directions and in three stages (the first two can be carried out simultaneously). *First*, it is necessary to introduce a *flexible system of two types of higher-education teaching personnel employment: a) those who are mostly engaged in teaching and b) those who are mostly engaged in research.* Flexibility in this case means possibility to freely overgo from one type of activity to the other depending on the choice of a representative of the higher-education teaching personnel. This system is applied for example at the universities of Lithuania, where a higher education teacher who has got a grant to perform a research gets a quota for his/her teaching load. A necessary condition for the implementation of this model is the allocation (in the education budget) of financial means specifically intended for carrying out research (through funds, grant programs, etc.). The means can be both under the authority of a university, and beyond its pale (Ministry grant programs and funds). Even if these financial means will not be of additional (to the budget) nature, but of the allocated (from the common budget) nature, this measure would be better than its absence: the principle of division of equally compensated types of activity (as a minimum) is important by itself. *Secondly*, it is necessary to announce an *open competition of master, postgraduate and doctoral programs, as well as research centers and institutions*. Its winners could count on the additional financing of programs, centers and institutions, which would be a good stimulus for research oriented educational programs and university science in general. *Finally*, a *state program of national research universities could be developed and a national competition for the status of a Research university* could be announced. On competition basis, it would be possible to choose the universities with a number of successful master, postgraduate and doctoral programs, as well as with the scientific achievements measurable according to the international standards. Best of the universities could be given the status of Research universities and additional target financing, as well as the reallocation of teaching and scientific load with the purpose to strengthen the research component. Judging by the calculations of the research programs costs, it will be possible to decide upon the appropriate number of research universities in Belarus. Taking into consideration the necessity of significant investments into the research universities and realistically evaluating the financial situation in Belarus, we could talk about maximum 2 research universities. *In these circumstances, the competition announcement by itself would make universities summon to get the prestigeous status and to contest for the investments.* The target program should spread both over the state and the private universities and initiatives, since, as practice shows, it turns out to be easier to create a research university from the ground up than to transform an existing university with its long-held traditions and social habits. *The reorganization, rating and differentiation of the higher education institutions and programs are of mandatory nature, since they allow differentiating of the educational establishments and programs according to their functional profile, target audiences and levels of state financial support.* University reorganization, rating and differentiation necessity is confirmed by the successful international practice and by the present actual inequality of Belarusian higher education establishments (according to the quality of higher-education teaching personnel and the level of financing). The differentiated approach will give the possibility to use the budget funds more efficiently and to build a rational development strategy of high-quality research, professional and career programs.

***3. Diversification of sources and models of financing.*** It is obvious that at the first stage, the greater part of financial burden will fall on the budget, due to the costliness of reforming and the state-centralized system of higher education in Belarus. At the same time, it is not less obvious that only diversification of sources and models of financing will allow the research programs and university science to be more resistant to the financial market changes, more consistent in modernization implementation and more successful in its results. That is why, from the very beginning, it pays to focus on the development of more effective differentiated models of financing with the following structure (in % according to the main financing sources): a) national budget (not more than 50%), b) regional budgets (not more than 10%), c) local budgets (not more than 5%), d) funds (not less than 5%), e) enterprises (not less than 5%), f) business corporations (not less than 5%), g) private individuals (including university graduates - 10%), h) students (not more than 10%). Endowment should be considered as a strategically important financing source that could serve as a financial "safety bag" and the warrantor of sustained development of the research universities. *For the diversification and optimization of the financing structure, it is necessary to:* a) gradually but consistently raise the percentage of financing from the regional and local budgets according to the model of "counterpart funds" (obligation to effect the regional and local co-financing, upon republican budget funds assignation); b) create national, regional, local and private funds to finance university research; c) promote the creation of target programs, grants and projects supported by private companies and private persons (by means of complete tax exemption or reduction of tax burden for the sponsors). Apart from solving the problem of financing, it is necessary to engage state productions, private companies and private persons. This will encourage the development of beneficial motivational and infrastructural conditions for the stakeholders in the system of higher education, as well as the integration of university science into the social life. The so-called "spin-off enterprises" that appeared in the 1990s are one of the authentic forms of such integration in the Belarusian context.[[92]](#footnote-92) *To raise the level of scientific research efficiency, it is recommended to introduce the system of financial encouragement based on the level of individual and collective contribution made by the researchers. This can be done by replacing the budget model by the grant (project) model of financing.* The grant (project) model based on targeted support and individual responsibility, has proved itself efficient not only in the developed countries, in the countries leading in the implementation of successful reforms in the sphere of higher education (the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America), but also in the closest neighbor countries of the former USSR (Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Kazakhstan). With the purpose of informing and mastering the new financing practices through funds and grants by the representatives of the scientific and academic community, it is worthwhile to create consultation centers on working with EU, Russian Federation and other countries' funds. *It is necessary to raise the financial motivation of the postgraduate students through the legislative setting of the postgraduate scholarship not less than 80%, the doctoral scholarship - not less than 100% of the average wage in the republic*. With the purpose of elimination of possible misuse of the scholarship fund, it is necessary to *introduce and legislatively set the ban on performing any kind of teaching or other payable activity for the postgraduate and doctoral students.* And finally, the grant model of financing will allow to eliminate the disproportion in the field structure of the postgraduate and doctoral studies and to *concentrate the basic state financial and human resources on the key directions of training of the Candidates and the Doctors of Sciences in the prioritized fields of science which have suffered most from the deregulation (technical, natural and medical sciences)*; as well as to increase the volume of targeted funding of the prioritized science fields and scientific research directions; to update the system of encouragement for the outstanding scientific results and the mechanism of recognition of prestigious scientist.

***4. Recognition of academic freedom, university autonomy and collegial meritocratic principle of administration.*** According to the experts of the World Bank, new universities may join the ranks of top-universities within two or three decades, provided they have autonomic administration and academic freedoms from the beginning.[[93]](#footnote-93) The necessity of these demands is obvious and crucial in the three key spheres: a) personnel policy, b) management of scientific communities and c) final evaluation of scientific research (scientific personnel evaluation). A high concentration of talented scientists and students in higher education institutions, as well as the atmosphere that inspires creative efforts, can only be reached if an *open competition* and *a collegial meritocratic principle of administration* are implemented. Open competition presupposes announcement of public competition for vacant academic, scientific and administrative positions. Furthermore, the higher the requirements are, the more chances it gives to build a highly professional, promising and competent team of researchers and teachers. Expert commissions consisting of representatives of the international academic, scientific and administrative (management) community, may become a worrantor of objectivity of the personnel selection. *Concentration of talented scientists and highly qualified employees should be increased both through the effective use of the national resources, and through the attracting foreign researchers and managers.* Among the methods of improvement of the use efficiency of the national scientific personnel, we can mention a consistent and systematic integration of the human, infrastructural and resource potential of the National Academy of Sciences into the higher education institutions. This kind of efforts have already taken place in the world and regional practice, and all the prerequisites for their implementation in Belarus have already appeared: this process can be started by, for example, the *national target program with the working title "Integration of the Higher School and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus: on the Way to Innovative Development of Belarus".* Another important resource could be the program of *repatriation of Belarusian scientists having internationally accepted PhDs or work experience at the well-known and successful universities*. A program of attractive financial and other support of young scientists from abroad could serve as a catalyst too. The program of professional development of the national higher-education teaching personnel with the involvement of international specialists ("teacher training" program) is no less important for solving the problem of concentration of professional higher-education teaching personnel. The attraction of competent international researchers and managers, as well as the creation of the international board of trustees would allow to overcome the secretiveness and corruption in the scientific and academic communities, as well as to adopt the values and principles of healthy academic and scientific competition which serves as an engine to all well-known successful research programs and universities. One more measure to overcome the intrauniversity corruption, to revive the corporate competition (among the universities) and to overcome the uneven territorial concentration of human and organization resources is the *legalization of the obligation of postgraduate and doctoral students to defend their candidate and doctoral dissertations in the institutions other than the institution were the candidate/doctorant was trained*. *Multilevel meritocratic principle of administration* implies a) the elective administration bodies from among the members of the university corporation whose weight is b) based on the international recognition of their scientific and academic merits and c) the participation of competent, non-affiliated stakeholders (teachers, representatives of businesses, international academic and scientific community, authorities, etc.) through the board of trustees, scientific and academic curatoriums and other bodies of *external* control. *Only a community that has independently chosen its dignified leaders that have weight and merits before the international scientific and academic community, may be proud and inspired by the example of its leaders, try to display its creative potential and take the responsibility before the university corporation and society. Only if there are several levels of established, competent and strictly specialized collegiate bodies of external administration, it will be possible to reverse the tendency of academic and scientific secretiveness and to form a highly professional academic community capable of reaching utterly ambitious goals*. With the purpose to prevent the academic gerontocracy and the disbalance of the age structure of the scientific personnel *it is necessary to legally establish the limiting age for the higher-education teaching personnel (65 years) and to introduce the position of Emeritus Professorship.* A *legally established university right to carry out selection of candidate and doctoral students throughout the academic year and to independently set the amount of candidate and doctoral scholarships would also attract students to the university research programs*. A grant system of support of scientific schools could be introduced to restore the structural and functional network between the scientists of different age groups within the scientific communities and to create the atmosphere of cooperative scientific searching. *The third (in order but not in essence) necessary condition for the successful modernization of the university scientific communities would be to authorize universities to conduct the final expertise of the candidate and doctoral dissertations.* It is also necessary to create international scientific councils consisting of minimum 50% of external (in relation to the university) experts with the purpose to prevent the risk of interuniversity voluntarism. This measure would allow the university and scientific communities in cooperation with the employers, businesses and other stakeholders to carry out an independent research policy and would promote the integration into the international scientific and academic community, as well as the development of the country's economy and society as a whole. A practiced in Austria model of the so-called "structured doctoral candidacy" (University of Vienna), which implies collegiate form of work (collegium) of several doctorants in the related topics could be an organizational form of strengthening the international inter- and trans-disciplinary research, as well as promoting the formation of scientific schools and the enhancement of efficiency of candidate and doctoral work. A consistent observance of academic freedom and the principle of university autonomy would also allow to remove the ideological censorship in social and humanitarian sciences, to rid their subject field, methodology and research methods of the ideological bias, to create social partnership between the representatives of authority, scientists and expert communities, to rehabilitate and to revive public sphere as an authentic environment for social and humanitarian sciences.

**Table 1. Qualification Structure Survey for the Period from 1990 to 2011.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Years** | **Percentage of researchers in the total number of personnel engaged into scientific research and development, %** | **Percentage of researchers having academic degree in the total number of researchers, %**  | **Of them: Candidates of Sciences, %**  | **Of them: Doctors of Sciences, %** | **Percentage of supporting personnel in the total number of personnel engaged into scientific research and development, %** | **Percentage of technicians in the total number of personnel engaged into scientific research and development, %** | **Others, %** |
| **1990** | 55.4 | 15  | 14 | 1 | 24.3 | 8.9 | 11.4 |
| **1998** | 59.0 | 14.7  | 12.4 | 2.3 | 20.5 | 8.1 | 12.4 |
| **2005** | 60.4 |  22  | 17.7 | 4.3 | 19.1 | 7.0 | 13.5 |
| **2009** | 63.3 | 19.1  | 15.5 | 3.6 | 29.5 (and others) | 7.1 |  |
| **2011** | 63.0 | 19.8  | 16.0 | 3.8 | 29.8 (and others) | 7.2 |  |

*Survey for the period from 1990 to 1997 is conducted on the basis of:*Science of the Republic of Belarus 1999. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2000. P. 39. Science of the Republic of Belarus 2001. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2002. P. 70.*Survey for the period from 2005 to 2011 is conducted on the basis of:*Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Minsk, 2012. P. 26.

**Table 2. Age Structure Dynamics of Researchers, Candidates of Sciences (CS) and Doctors of Sciences (DS) for the period from 1998 to 2009:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Years** | **Percentage of researchers aged up to 29 years, % of them:** | **Percentage of researchers aged 30-39 years, % of them:** | **Percentage of researchers aged 40-49 years, % of them:** | **Percentage of employees aged 50-59 years, % of them:** | **Percentage of employees aged over 60 years, % of them:** |
| **CS** | **DS** | **CS** | **DS** | **CS** | **DS** | **CS** | **DS** | **CS** | **DS** |
| **1988**[[94]](#footnote-94) | **12.2** | **37.6** | **29.2** | **16.9** | **4.1** |
| 1.6 | - | 28.5 | 1.5 | 38.6 | 20.8 | 25.4 | 41.9 | 5.9 | 35.8 |
| **1995** | **15.0** | **33.3** | **39.2** | **20.3** | **5.2** |
| 1.9 | - | 18.1 | 2.2 | 40.2 | 23.2 | 31.6 | 37.6 | 8.1 | 36.9 |
| **2000** | **16.8** | **18.6** | **30.8** | **23.0** | **10.8** |
| 2.0 | 0.2 | 12.2 | 1.3 | 31.6 | 16.9 | 33.8 | 31.3 | 20.4 | 50.3 |
| **2004** | **20.0** | **16.0** | **25.2** | **26.7** | **12.1** |
| 3.4 | - | 11.8 | 1.4 | 24.6 | 9.7 | 37.0 | 37.4 | 23.2 | 51.5 |
| **2009[[95]](#footnote-95)** | **24.2** | **13.7** | **20.4** | **30.8** | **10.9** |
| 20,7[[96]](#footnote-96) | 17.5 |  | 31.7 |  | 30.0 |  |

Estimated on the basis of: Science of the Republic of Belarus 1995. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 1996. Pp. 35, 39; Science of the Republic of Belarus 2000: Statistical Compendium. - Minsk: BelISA, 2000 P. 65; Science, Innovations and Technologies in the Republic of Belarus 2004: Statistical Compendium. - Minsk: State Institution "BelISA", 2005; P. 89. I.V. Sharyi. Politics in the Sphere of Reproduction of Belarusian Scientific Personnel Structure and Problems of its Efficiency Raising. // Social Knowledge and Belarusian Society. Minsk, 2009. Pp. 402 -403.

**Table 3. Researchers Qualification Structure According to Fields of Science for the Period from 1988 to 2011.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Years** | **Number of researchers in science field, pers./****Their percentage in total number of researchers, of them:** | **Percentage of researchers with academic degrees in the total number of researchers in given science field, of them:** | **Correlation between number of DS and CS** |
|  | **CS, pers. /****Their percentage in the total number of CS**  | **DS, pers. /****Their percentage in the total number of DS**  | **CS** | **DS** |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Natural sciences** |  |
| **1988** | 9282/22.1% | - |  |
| - | - | - | - |
| **1993** | 8683/28.5% | 39.7% | 1:6.8 |
| 3007/32.3% | 441/34.7% | 34.6% | 5% |
| **1998** | 4960/25.9% | 38.9% | 1:5.5 |
| 1633/40.7% | 295/39.5% | 32.9% | 6.0% |
| **2005** | 4089/22.4% | 37.2% | 1:4 |
| 1220/37.4% | 305/39.1% | 29.8% | 7.4% |
| **2009** | 3794/18.5% | 36.4% | 1:3.9 |
| 1100/34.9% | 282/38.1% | 29.0% | 7.4% |
| **2011** | 3596/18.3% | 36.9% | 1:3.8 |
| 1054/33.5% | 273/36.8% | 29.3% | 7.6% |
| **Technical sciences** |  |
| **1988** | 17304/41.3% | **-** |  |
| **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** |
| **1993** | 20401/40.7% | 14.5% | 1:8.7 |
| 2648/28.4% | 303/23.9% | 13% | 1.5% |
| **1998** | 10121/52.8% | 12.9% | 1:6.5 |
| 1133/28.5% | 174/23.3% | 11.2% | 1.7% |
| **2005** | 10380/56.8% | 10.7% | 1:4.7 |
| 923/28.3% | 196/25.1% | 8.9% | 1.8% |
| **2009** | 12620/61.4% | 8.9% | 1:4.8 |
| 926/28.6% | 192/25.9% | 7.3% | 1.6% |
| **2011** | 12051/61.3% | 9.0% | 1:4.6 |
| 887/28.1% | 192/25.9% | 7.4% | 1.6% |
| **Medical sciences** |  |
| **1988** | 2352/5.6% | - |  |
| - | - | - | - |
| **1993** | 1881/6.7% | 61.1% | 1:4.7 |
| 950/10.2% | 201/15.8% | 50.5% | 11.5% |
| **1998** | 1092/5.7% | 40.5% | 1:3.5 |
| 345/8.6% | 97/13% | 31.6% | 8.9% |
| **2005** | 836/4.6% | 43.8% | 1:3.0 |
| 275/8.4% | 91/11.7% | 32.9% | 10.9% |
| **2009** | 962/4.7% | 42.2% | 1:3.6 |
| 317/9.8% | 89/12.0% | 32.9% | 9.2% |
| **2011** | 1045/5.3% | 41.0% | 1:3.8 |
| 339/10.8% | 90/12.1% | 32.4% | 8.6% |
| **Agricultural sciences** |  |
| **1988** | 1638/3.9% | - |  |
| - | - | - | - |
| **1993** | 1873/6.1% | 32.9% | 1:8.8 |
| 555/5.9% | 63/5% | 29.6% | 3.3% |
| **1998** | 1261/6.6% | 39.5% | 1:6.2 |
| 429/10.7% | 69/9.2% | 34.0% | 5.5% |
| **2005** | 1255/6.9% | 37.1% | 1:5.2 |
| 392/12.0% | 74/9.5% | 31.2% | 5.9% |
| **2009** | 1208/5.9% | 38.2% | 1:5.6 |
| 392/12.1% | 70/9.5% | 32.4% | 5.7% |
| **2011** | 1179/6.0% | 39.7% | 1:5.6 |
| 397/12.6% | 71/9.6% | 33.7% | 6.0% |
| **Socioeconomic and social sciences** |  |
| **1988** | 4032/9.6% | - |  |
| - | - | - | - |
| **1993** | 2422/7.9% | 39.4% | 1:9.4 |
| 864/9.3% | 91/7.2% | 35.7% | 3.7% |
| **1998** | 1266/6.6% | 26.7% | 1:7.25 |
| 290/7.2% | 48/6.4% | 22.9% | 3.8% |
| **2005** | 1203/6.6% | 21.6% | 1:5.3 |
| 219/6.7% | 41/5.2% | 18.2% | 3.4% |
| **2009** | 1549/7.5% | 21.3% | 1:5.4 |
| 279/8.6% | 51/6.9% | 18.0% | 3.3% |
| **2011** | 1341/6.8% | 24.3% | 1:5.1 |
| 272/8.6% | 53/7.1% | 20.3% | 4.0% |
| **Humanities**  |  |
| **1988** | 6678/15.9% | - |  |
| - | - | - | - |
| **1993** | 3323/10.9% | 43% | 1:7.4 |
| 1262/13.5% | 170/1.3% | 38% | 5% |
| **1998** | 453/2.4% | 53.9% | 1:2.8 |
| 180/4.5% | 64/8.6% | 39.7% | 14.2% |
| **2005** | 504/2.8% | 54.8% | 1:2.7 |
| 203/6.2% | 73/9.3% | 40.3% | 14.5% |
| **2009** | 410/2 % | 54.4% | 1:3.2 |
| 170/5.2% | 53/7.2% | 41.5% | 12.9% |
| **2011** | 456/2.3% | 57.7% | 1:3.2 |
| 201/6.3% | 62/8.4% | 44.1% | 13.6% |

Estimated on the basis of: A.A. Slonimski. Regional Scientific Complex: Formation and Organization of Management. Minsk, 1990. P. 20; Science of the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 1995. P. 35-36; Science of the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 1999. P. 52; Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2011. P. 22-26; National Statistic Committee of the Republic of Belarus. Access mode: <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/indicators/science.php>; Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2012. Pp. 31 -33.

**Table 4. Number of Researchers According to Science Fields in Belarus (persons)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Total** | **Male** | **Female** |
| **1997** | **2003** | **2010** | **1997** | **2003** | **2010** | **1997** | **2003** | **2010** |
| **Total** | 19,598 | 17,702 | 19,879 | 10,368 | 9,917 | 11,487 | 9,230 | 7,785 | 8,392 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 52.9 | 56.0 | 57.8 | 47.1 | 44.0 | 42.2 |
| **Natural** | 5037 | 4295 | 3702 | 2570 | 2251 | 1834 | 2467 | 2044 | 1868 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 51.0 | 52.4 | 49.5 | 49.0 | 47.6 | 50.5 |
| **Technical** | 10,285 | 9391 | 12,257 | 6009 | 6031 | 8087 | 4276 | 3360 | 4170 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 58.4 | 64.2 | 66.0 | 41.6 | 35.8 | 34.0 |
| **Medical**  | 1145 | 1021 | 924 | 433 | 339 | 357 | 712 | 682 | 356 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 37.8 | 33.2 | 38.6 | 62.2 | 66.8 | 61.4 |
| **Agricultural**  | 1282 | 1087 | 1206 | 585 | 469 | 528 | 697 | 618 | 678 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 45.6 | 43.1 | 43.8 | 54.4 | 56.9 | 56.2 |
| **Social** | 1402 | 1360 | 1401 | 572 | 591 | 516 | 830 | 769 | 885 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 40.8 | 43.5 | 36.8 | 59.2 | 56.5 | 63.2 |
| **Humanities** | 447 | 548 | 389 | 199 | 236 | 165 | 248 | 312 | 224 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 44.5 | 43.1 | 42.4 | 55.5 | 56.9 | 57.6 |

Source: T.A. Antonova. Scientific Manpower of the Republic of Belarus: Gender Analysis Following the Results of 2010. // "Bulletin of Grodno State University named after Yanka Kupala. Edition 5. Economics. Sociology. Biology". No. 2 (131), 2012. P. 105.

**Table 5. Number of Higher-education Teaching Personnel at Higher Education Establishments of the Republic Belarus (persons)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1998** | **2003** | **2009** |
| **AB** | **%** | **AB** | **%** | **AB** | **%** |
| **Professors within Chairs, total** | 966 | 100 | 1189 | 100 | 1313 | 100 |
| **incl. female** | 141 | 14.6 | 201 | 16.9 | 260 | 19.8 |
| **Assistant professors within Chairs, total** | 5592 | 100 | 5529 | 100 | 6715 | 100 |
| **incl. female** | 2133 | 38.1 | 2388 | 43.2 | 3200 | 47.7 |
| **Senior lecturers, total** | 4159 | 100 | 4792 | 100 | 6258 | 100 |
| **incl. female** | 2236 | 53.8 | 2849 | 59.5 | 4019 | 64.2 |
| **Lecturers and assistants, total** | 4962 | 100 | 6458 | 100 | 7468 | 100 |
| **incl. female** | 3134 | 63.2 | 4425 | 68.5 | 5197 | 69.6 |

 Source: T.A. Antonova. Scientific Manpower of the Republic of Belarus: Gender Analysis Following the Results of 2010. // "Bulletin of Grodno State University named after Yanka Kupala. Edition 5. Economics. Sociology. Biology". No. 2 (131), 2012.. P. 109.

**7. Students participation in governing higher educational institutions in Belarus**

**7.1. Introduction**

Today in most European universities students are involved into governing of their educational institutions. University administration on the one hand is unloaded from many issues which can be quite easily solved by the students, and on the other finds in students participation an effective way to get information on the issues the students are concerned of. The last option gives the administration of the university a mobile and effective mechanism to hear the opinion of students, who as we should note are one of the main actors of educational process. Thus in the countries with developed system of students’ government (SSG) the students actively react on shutting down of some academic programs and present their attitude to the given step as primarily party involved. And this does not end only with outlining of the problem, and in case of non-resolving of a disputable moment, students defend their line actively. Fascinating example can be drawn from the practice of the university Tromsø (Norway), when the Administration attempted to close the program “Anthropology”. Students Parliament of this university, having studies the opinion of the parties involved, managed with the help of petitions to cancel the respective decision of the university Administration[[97]](#footnote-97). In general there is nothing surprising for them. Most often west European countries are differ with that the officials and managers of all institutions have to hear the opinion of people. That is why it’s natural that today students government has become an effective mechanism of representation and protection of students’ rights. The example of the above described issue resolution in the Tromsø University demonstrates only one of many authorities of students in practicing of their rights and interests, which are granted to them in educational institutions.

In Belarusian universities the first SSG organizations appeared yet in 1980-s which was related with the process of democratization of all spheres of the USSR public life, including higher education. But despite its active development in the beginning of 1990-s there is still an open issue about real successes in the formation of strong and developed students government in Belarus.

Today formal SSG bodies have been established almost in all higher educational institutions – that is why we can surely state technical existence of them. But we should analyze whether these bodies indeed accomplish the principles of real students representation in universities administration. This article is devoted to this problem.

**7.2. Legal options for development of student government and theoretical basis for analysis**

At the moment in Belarus there is a diverse system of SSG organizations. Depending from a university, the name of an organization also varies, as well as its structure and the set of declared authorities in the Regulations. Relatively uniform system of student government is valid only within the frameworks of dormitories in shape of “Students’ Councils”.

A pretty popular SSG model in Belarusian universities is “Students’ Council”. One of such examples is the Students’ Council of Gomel State University. It consists of two level of representation – departmental and university. Students’ Council acts also in Belarusian State Economic University, however there the university level is represented in the form of peculiar Coordination Council of Departmental Organizations’ Heads. Within the frameworks of the country there are the following variants of SSG organizations: Students’ rector/dean office in Grodno State University, Councils of student government in Brest and Mogilev State Universities, etc.

The network of student government is added by such other forms as Public Association “Student’s Union of BSU” (the only Belarusian SSG body with the status of a legal entity), Student’s Council on Education Quality (BSU), Councils of Monitors (group seniors), etc. Let’s note that the specificity of Belarus in SSG is also active involvement into students’ life of such organizations as labor union of students and BRSM (Belarusian Republican Youth Union). We’ll get back later to the issue of analysis whether to consider the last two organizations the structures of student government.

To talk about real situation regarding students’ representation in Belarusian universities, first of all it is necessary to analyze a legislative basis on this issue. However as it turns out there are definite complications. Thus of the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Higher Education” of July 11th 2007 (hereafter the Law on Higher Education) yet noted such notion as “student government”[[98]](#footnote-98), then the composers of the Code on Education adopted on January 13th 2011 and valid from September 1st 2011 (hereafter the Code) does not mention about student government at all[[99]](#footnote-99).

Let’s quote for comparison the articles of the old Law of Higher Education and the new Code about the **forms** of students’ participation in higher educational institution administration. Thus the Law of Higher Education declared among other the rights of the students on:

- participation in governing the higher educational institution in the order set by the Law of the Republic of Belarus and by the Charter of the higher educational institution;

- establishment and election of the bodies of **student government**, association into labor unions, youth and other public associations, the activity of which does not contradict the Law of the Republic of Belarus;

The Code on Education in its turn allows students only:

- participating in governing the educational institution;

- participating in labor unions, youth and other public associations, the activity of which does not contradict the Law.

Thus, we can draw a conclusion about insufficient correctness of the rights of students to participate in governing of their higher educational institution, as well as limitation of some activities. Carefully comparing the wordings, the students now have the right not to “unite into labor union, youth and other public associations”, but only the right to “participate in labor unions, youth and other public associations, the activity of which does not contradict the Law of the Republic of Belarus”. I.e. that the interpretation directly does not prohibit to arrange new organizations, however can vary in the law-enforcement practice depending from political environment. The second indicative moment of reduction of legal options to establish and run the organization of **student government** in universities is complete exclusion of such notion from the Code.

Thus, the rights of students on governing of higher educational institution in the acting Law are almost not regulated, and such mechanism as student government is not at all included. These facts significantly complicate the very operation of students’ organizations, as well as confuse our understanding of this Belarusian system. Absolute underdevelopment of this issue in specialized methodical and research literature also complicates further analysis.

Considering above-listed facts to perform detailed consideration of actual situation of students’ government in Belarus we’ll use the paper “Student Government. Methodical Guidelines”[[100]](#footnote-100), published in 2004 in Russia. This choice of theoretical basis for analysis is conditioned with the absence of works on this subject in Belarus and at the same time with close cultural-historic past of Belarus and Russia. The last factor defines also similarity of higher educational systems which can serve as additional factor in favor of such approach. At the same time it seems to us absolutely incorrect to make direct comparisons of SSG in Belarus with its analogues in such developed democracies as for example Germany and Norway. The example of Russia exactly is important also as of the country the example of which in many cases follows the government of the Republic of Belarus[[101]](#footnote-101).

Let’s outline with the help of methodical guidelines fundamental criteria of developed SSG:

* autonomy in decision-making, setting of objectives and tasks, operation methods;
* financial and legal independence;
* hierarchy as regulated activity of SSG organization, structural divisions of a university, public student associations, establishment of interrelation between them, division of authorities, level of responsibility, etc.;
* relations with outside environment as options of interaction to promote their decision, including, with the administration[[102]](#footnote-102).

These principles are quite logical and fair within fulfillment of students’ rights for participation in universities governing. They allow SSG not coalescing with administrative apparatus and at the same time give a possibility for comprehensive influence. Let’s analyze Belarusian student government in accordance with above described principles.

**7.3. Analysis of the state of system of student government in Belarus**

It’s worth to start the analysis from the issue of financial and legal independence of organizations. The issue of autonomy in decision-making and activity of SSG is closely connected with this principle. Unfortunately even minimal involvement into the study of SSG organizations operation demonstrates us at once multiple problems in accomplishment of these criteria.

In Belarus the organizations of student governments with rare exclusions have no legal entity stats, which means regarding the law they are dependent from the administrations of universities in which they operate. As for financial dependence it is also not provided with regulatory share of the university budget or a fixed amount, subjected for transfer into the disposal of student organizations by universities or by the state governmental bodies. At the same time absence of the right on attraction of other ways of financing due to already described absence of legal status, does not assist financial independence.

Exclusion is the OO “Students’ Union of BSU”. This organization was established in 1997 and operates at the moment in the status of a local public association at BSU[[103]](#footnote-103).

As for the principle of autonomy then the natural result of above described factors can be complementarity of criteria of financial and legal independence and autonomy in activities and decision-making. It’s worth recognizing as a fact the impossibility of existence one without the other. Regarding OO “Students’ Union of BSU” while its legal status is known, the principles of financing of this organization are not quite transparent. We can only suggest that the organization is financed at the cost of periodic donations of BSU, attraction of funds of sponsors, permitted commercial activity, etc.

Nevertheless it’s worth in more details to focus on the activity of this organization. Its unique example of special legal position deserves such approach. Moreover that formally the situation of relativity of independence and autonomy in this organization looks acceptable. However, let’s observe its activity in details.

Thus, according to the Charter, the Students’ Union declares quite extended tasks:

* practicing of student government in BSU;
* protection of students’ rights, assistance in employment;
* assistance to manifestation of creative initiative, enhancement of public activity, national self-identification, intellectual and cultural level of students;
* direct cooperation between rectors and students;
* active participation in life of the higher school, its reforming to increase the level of educational efficiency;
* participation in development and discussion of projects of local legal acts of university scale;
* solution of existing student problems and informing authorized bodies and institutions about them;
* creation of conditions for broad international contacts of the Students’ Union of BSU members, strengthening and promotion of contacts with students and administration of other universities, including the universities abroad, assisting in arrangement of BSU students studies abroad[[104]](#footnote-104).

But in practice judging by the information at the BSU web-site, we can notice the focus of activity of the Students’ Union on cultural and creative tasks[[105]](#footnote-105). On the ground of publicly available information we may conclude that other tasks declared in the Charter connected with protection of rights and interests of students are not in the list of priority. Maybe there is a significant contribution of the wish to distance from more conflict issues in relations with the administration of the university and authorities of other levels, threatening the position of the organization’s members, as well as financing of the organization. Thus only technical transition of all SSG organization into the status of legal entities shall not lead to their automatic autonomization. Here they need a wider set of mechanisms of counteraction to the wish of the administration to manipulate financial guarantees for student government to influence its decisions and actions.

Therefore we observe a low level of real autonomy in actions and decisions of even such organization which possess the status of legal entity. Even more evident lack of autonomy is typical for other organizations of student government. The fact that such organizations are “build-in” into administration of universities is revealed already at the level of Regulations of their operation. Thus, the member of the Students’ Council of the School of Foreign Languages of Baranovichi State University includes the vice-dean on education[[106]](#footnote-106); general control of the students’ government in BNTU is performed by the vice-rector on education, analysis and information, and direct managing is performed by the head of educational work with youth [[107]](#footnote-107); the administration of student government in the Minsk Institute of Management also “operates under the leadership of vice-rector on education”[[108]](#footnote-108) etc.

As for the principal of hierarchy of SSG organizations, it is fulfilled quite relatively. Let’s remind that this principle states about “regulated activity of SSG organizations, structural divisions of universities, public students associations, establishment interrelations between them, division of authorities, level of responsibility, etc.”. In Belarusian universities we observe disagreement and intercrossing of authorities between different SSG structures. For example, from 5 main students’ organizations of BSU, according to Charter provisions, the issues on education can be of the activity of all organizations[[109]](#footnote-109); cultural-popular and sport sphere – only three of them[[110]](#footnote-110).

Let’s note that in each university the situation on this issue may vary depending on its size and the number of acting SSG organizations in it. However, in general SSG organizations do act in Belarusian universities as whole entity and even often incite dispute among students. Naturally also in foreign variants of SSG organizations there are their groups, classes and clubs. But their representatives go through the principles of selection and already at the level of the general Students Parliament can represent the interests of their group. I.e. students meet in the frames of a common body of student government to work out common decisions. In Belarusian universities in best case coordinating councils are established. However the last ones often operate formally and do not solve the problems of disagreement and intercrossing of authorities.

But it’s worth to note that in the frameworks of the existing social-political system of Belarus, the issue of SSG organizations inconsistency is seemed to be not the biggest trouble. Often this even to some extent reduces the risk of subordination of all form of public life of students to administrative control.

To conclude this part of the analysis of the state of student government in Belarus it’s worth to remember also about personal factor in the functioning of SSG organizations. The system is developed in such a manner that collective governing in gotten to minimum and the personality of the head of the organization steps out to the first place. Unfortunately this fact can be used for the influence of administration on the activity of the whole organization by the mean of controlling only one person. Promotion to leading positions in SSG of the students loyal to the administration of a university and blocking of access of persona non-grata to govern the organization also are often and even established at the level of Regulations not talking already about other option of informal influence on the choice of students. This way in the Students’ Council of BSUIR in case of “improper accomplishment or non-accomplishment of liabilities under the initiative of the members of the Students’ Council of the university, **rectorate of the university**, or under personal wish re-election of the Students’ Council Chairman till the expiration of the term of his/her authorities validity”[[111]](#footnote-111); according to the Regulations of the Students’ Council of Gomel State University a “Chairmen of Students’ Council of the university can be **released from authorities under the initiative of the administration of the university**, under personal request or under a suggestion of one third of the total number of the Students’ Council of the university, if the majority of members of the Students’ Council of the university voted for that”[[112]](#footnote-112); in the Students’ Council of Education Quality of BSU it is allowed “**Early reelection of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman or the Secretary of the Council** on education quality of the school **in case of release them of their obligations in case of** improper accomplishment or non-accomplishment of their liabilities or under personal initiative, and (or) under the **initiative of the school’s Dean**, and (or) Chairman of the Council on Education Quality of BSU is performed by the decision of the majority of the members of the Council on Education Quality of the school[[113]](#footnote-113); the administration of the student government of Minsk Institute of Management is at all **formed** from the number of the most socially active, influencing students on the ground of consultations held in the deans offices of the schools with the participation of upper students who recommended themselves well in studies and public activity”, the same situation is also observed in other universities.

Additionally to the analysis of the student government as the activity of corresponding students organizations in universities we should observe another option of students participation in universities governing – connection with environment, which is outlines as one of the SSG principles. Let’s remind that this principle suggests “options for interaction to promote their decision, including with administration”.

As for the interaction of SGG organizations with universities’ administration we can conclude about weakness of the given mechanism as the form student representation. Naturally, there are known differences in efficiency of such interaction in difference universities, but in general it does not impose significant influence of the decisions of SSG administrations.

It is obvious at the example of participation of SSG representatives in work of universities councils. According to the Code on Education, councils of universities are “the main bodies of self-government of higher educational institutions”.

It’s worth to note right away that in Belarusian universities the councils to not face that wide range of government issues which are solved by the councils (senates) of European universities. The Council of any university in Belarus:

• does not perform governing of the university, but only is a collective deliberative body;

• is not authorized to adopt final decisions on the issues of academic, academic-methodical, research and information-analytical work, human resources training, establish and maintain international contacts;

• does not adopt decision about creation, reorganization or elimination of schools and divisions;

• does not develop own agenda – it is approved by the rector;

• does not solve any financial issues[[114]](#footnote-114).

However we shall still observe the level of involvement of students into the work of such councils, despite the limits of its authorities.

The information about councils’ membership and the order of inclusion is not available for all universities of Belarus. The fullest information can be found at the web-site of BSU that is why we shall focus on the analysis of the connection with outside environment of student government in this university.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Regulations of the Councils of educational institutions, approved by the Ministry of Education on June 18th 2011 established that 25 % of the Council’s members are the representatives of the students of educational institutions, their legal representatives[[116]](#footnote-116).

However, according to the information at the web-site of BSU of January 1st 2013, this demand is not fulfilled. Among 96 members of the Council there are only 10 students, which comprises only 9.6 %[[117]](#footnote-117). Even considering the Head of the Primary Labor Union Organization (PLUO) of BSU students, representation increases only up to 10.56%.

Mechanisms of recommendation of representatives of students community to the Council are not clear. The Regulation on the BSU Council states: “Other (note elected, but not in position) members of the BSU Council are elected by open or secret voting during the sessions of the Councils of divisions and meeting of labor collectives of divisions”[[118]](#footnote-118).

The norms of representation of students are set in the Regulation as follows: two representatives from each labor union organization, monitors’ council, students; council on education quality, primary organization BRSM of BSU, students’ union, coordinating council of the council of dormitories.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Thus considering the lists of representation of students in the Council we find there the heads of students’ organizations: the Chairman and Secretary of OO “Students’ Union of BSU”, First Secretary of the OO with the rights of District Committee of BRSM BSU and his Deputy, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the BSU Monitors’ Council, the Chairman of the Council on Education Quality of BSU and the member of the Central Committee of the Council of Education Quality of BSU, the Chairman of the Commission for Maternity and Childhood Protection of the Labor Union Committee of BSU and the Chairman of PLUO of the BSU students (not a student), a representative of the Coordinating Council of Students’ Campus (one student from the given body, but not two as specified in the Regulation)[[120]](#footnote-120).

Following the Regulating and logic, these students should have been elections into the members of the Council in their divisions (organizations). However the procedure of election in organization, even if it exists somewhere, is not open. Wide circles of students in general and active students in particular, especially at the level of schools, do not participate in promotion of their representatives into the Council.

These problems sound especially acute on the background of passiveness of the specified “representatives of students” in the Council. There is no effective communication between students’ community and Council’s members, which would allow passing propositions and remarks of the students on the issues of the university development. Grounding on this, we may conclude about dissatisfactory fulfillment of the principle of “communication with outside environment” in BSU. Considering that this university is the leading one in Belarus, such situation can be observed in all other higher educational institutions of the country. But the terms of limited information about the members and activity of universities’ Councils, detailed analysis is not possible.

Thus we see that specified in the beginning of this section principle of developed student government almost are not accomplished in Belarus.

**7.4. Role of Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) in the system of student government**

It would be absolutely incorrect to exclude from the sphere of students participation in governing universities such organization as the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM), primary organizations of which act in all higher educational institutions of the country.

It’s worth noting that according to the Charter, BRSM is a Republican public association (OO)[[121]](#footnote-121). The aim of OO BRSM is to “create conditions for overwhelming development of youth, revelation of their creative potential, assistance to the development of civil society in the Republic of Belarus, grounded on patriotic and spiritual-moral values of Belarusian people”[[122]](#footnote-122). BRSM declares the following tasks:

* assistance to development in the set order of legal and social-economic guarantees of the rights of youth, making its possibilities equal to the ones of other social groups;
* support of initiatives, directed at intellectual, spiritual, physical development of youth, as well as creation of terms for development of entrepreneurial activity;
* participation in set order in the development of youth programs;
* building in OO BRSM members the spirit of patriotism as the most important spiritual and social values[[123]](#footnote-123).

Thus, the objectives and tasks do not demonstrate the focus of the organization of development of student government. However in Belarusian universities BRSM frequently is pictured as the organization of student government[[124]](#footnote-124). I.e. there is evident disagreement between the activity declared in the Charter and the real work[[125]](#footnote-125).

It’s worth noting that BRSM is an example of state-public organization, i.e. on the one hand formally BRSM is a public association, and on the other, it is completely controlled and maintained by the state[[126]](#footnote-126). Unfortunately such support often bears discriminating character in relation to other youth organizations and initiatives. Double standards are expressed in the ban on registration[[127]](#footnote-127) or blocking the possibility to work freely for other youth organizations[[128]](#footnote-128). Moreover from the budget of Belarus till 2012 despite multiple declarations about transfer of BRSM to independent self-sufficiency, about 98% of funds were granted to BRSM for the accomplishment of youth policy in the country[[129]](#footnote-129). To imagine the real scale let’s note that these funds are much bigger that the budget of the National TV-channel or the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus[[130]](#footnote-130). It’s worth thinking over that only 2% from state funds are going to other youth public associations.

Direct support of BRSM by the authorities is fixed in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus of December 17th 2012, which was substituted by a similar Decree of January 13th 2003. Let’s quote this Decree:

“In order to promote youth movement in the Republic of Belarus, to assists the public association Belarusian Republican Youth Union”:

1.To establish, that the member of the public association Belarusian Republican Youth Union (hereafter OO BRSM), elected into its governing bodies, are included into the members of collegiums of the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Products, Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

2.In 2013 financing of the costs for:

paragraph two – for administrative use;

current expenses of territorial committees of OO BRSM operation to perform at the cost of funds of corresponding local budgets”[[131]](#footnote-131).

From this quote from the Decree we may conclude that the organization is build-in into state apparatus and can not express independent will of not only students, but of all the youth of the country. The budget of the organization is the issue under the category of for internal use only and now there is no available information about amounts and share of funds of the state budget which is used to finance BRSM[[132]](#footnote-132). The last fact allows hiding from the public discriminating approaches of the state within youth policy. However inequality can be traced also in other examples. Thus, according to the set of measures to accomplish youth policy in the Republic of Belarus as of 2012, youth public associations participated in arrangement of 45 events. Among them 19 were accomplished by BRSM, 4 by Belarusian Republican Organization of Pioneers (BPRO), which is a peculiar children division of BRSM, and 7 with the note “youth and children public associations”. This way, 15 more projects were accomplished by 7 organizations[[133]](#footnote-133). And this is considering the existence in Belarus registered 13 international you public associations, 1 international union of public associations, 62 national youth public association, 2 youth unions of public associations and about 150 local public associations[[134]](#footnote-134).

Regarding the members of the Central Committee of BRSM, than as of 2007 it included:

* Shpakovskiy Vladimir Konstantinovich – main advisor of the department for coordination of the work of the Main Ideological Department of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus;
* Brel Vitaliy Petrovich – head of the department on youth activities of Minsk Municipal Executive Committee;
* Buzovskiy Igor Ivanovich – advisor-consultant on coordination of ideological activities of the Main ideological Department of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus (from 2010 the first Secretary of the Central Committee of BRSM);
* Klimovich Valeriy Pavlovich – deputy Chairman of Grodno District Executive Committee;
* Pernach Yuriy Vladimirovich – deputy Head of the Department of Ideological work, the Head of the Department for coordination of ideological work of Brest regional Executive Committee;
* Shevchenko Valeriy Aleksandrovich – deputy Commander on ideological work of the fifth separate brigade of special purpose;
* Biletskiy Aleksander Vasilyevich – leading auditor of control-audit department of the Main Department of the Ministry of Finances of the Republic of Belarus for Brest region[[135]](#footnote-135).

Igor Buzovskiy in 2012 was elected into the Council of the Republic of National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus[[136]](#footnote-136).

At the moment the web-site of BRSM contains no information about personal members of the Central Committee.

These and many other factors allow drawing a conclusion that BRSM is not an **independent** public association and is build-in into the structure of state apparatus, and its cells in universities can not be considered as full-fledged bodies of student government. In practice, due to diverse preferences from states, BRSM universities is dealing mainly with mass cultural activities, arrangement of secondary employment of students and accomplishment of the state youth policy in higher educational institutions.

By this to maintain the number of its organization it uses the methods of forced recruitment of members[[137]](#footnote-137).

**7.5. Role of students’ trade unions in the system of student government**

The Trade union of students is included into the branch trade union of Workers in Education and Research of the Federation of the Trade Unions in Belarus. Its position in universities is dualistic. On the one hand, a trade union is not the body of student government and in its activity follows the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Trade Unions”[[138]](#footnote-138), on the other, thanks to the special legal status and material-technical basis formed at the cost of membership fees, It copes well with the issues of social support for students[[139]](#footnote-139). Moreover, even achieved relative autonomy of the organization in decision-making and action. This is largely due to management of trade union committees of departments of universities by regular professionals rather than students. This fact without bias reduces the level of influence of the administration of a specific educational institution on the activity of the trade union organization.

Considering that the trade union of students does not associate itself with student government, we shall not focus on the analysis of its activity as such type of the organization. However, it’s worth noting the role of the trade union as one of the form of students’ participation in governing universities of the country. Although this role lowers by the existence of extensive apparatus of supervisory trade union bodies of control, which consist not of students.

Individual problem is the level of independence of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus in the frameworks of the existing political system of Belarus, but this subject does not demands detailed analysis within the given study.

**7.6. Regional and national organizations of student government**

As the previous analysis showed the systems of students’ participation in governing universities in Belarus, student government as the mechanism is only in its embryo state. Additional factor, complicating the situation, is absence in Belarus of a common consolidating and coordinating center for SSG as the practice in other European countries excluding Greece.

Such coordination center would assist SGG organizations of Belarusian universities in mutual experience exchange, promotion of the level of regional structures development, training of leaders, their education, study of foreign experience, joint coordination of actions and development of strategy of SSG modernization in Belarus.

It would be incorrect to state that there are at all no SSG organizations of over-university level in Belarus. By the decision of the authorities they established Gomel regional students’ council and Students’ Council of Minsk. Unfortunately these organizations are only consultative bodies at Gomel Regional Executive Committee and Minsk Municipal Executive Committee respectively. The Regulations of their operation specify that they have no right to adopt any significant decision on the issues of students’ life[[140]](#footnote-140). By this in practice they do not differ from any other youth organization, focused only on cultural activity[[141]](#footnote-141).

The order of formation of these regional organizations is not really democratic. Such in the Regulation on Gomel Regional Students Council says the following: “the members of the Council include three full-time students from each higher educational institution of Gomel region recommended by the Rector on voluntary basis”[[142]](#footnote-142), by this “Members of the Board approved by the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee in charge of youth policy, for a period of one year”[[143]](#footnote-143). In this case the procedure of elections is not even mentioned. The composition of the Students’ Council of Minsk is formed in the following way: “one representative from each educational institution, elected from the student government and public organizations of a university in the amount of 33 people”[[144]](#footnote-144). However definite regulation of elections in universities is not established in this Regulation as well as in corresponding Regulations of individual universities. Not regulated procedure of representation of universities in the Council increases the opportunities for advancement in it most loyal students, but not the "opinion leaders."

Another example of assignment of over-university status to the organization is the attempt to declare Republican Students Council (RSC) at BRSM as National Students Union[[145]](#footnote-145). This structure Belarusian authorities used when applying for joining of the Bologna Process in 2011.[[146]](#footnote-146). But in the Alternative report of the Independent Bologna Committee convincingly demonstrated fictitious status of RSC which did not allow this organization claiming the role of the national students union.

This body is not independent, it was established at BRSM. As noted above, BRSM cannot be considered not only as the organization of student government but also independent public association, for which the interests of youth are of priority, but not state bodies.

Conclusions about inconsistency of claims of RSC for the role of Belarusian union of student government are proved also by the members of this Council which is presented in the corresponding Regulation on RSC[[147]](#footnote-147):

* First Secretary of the Central Committee of OO BRSM;
* Secretary of the Central Committee of OO BRSM, supervising the work with students and pupils;
* Representative of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus (under agreement);
* Council’s Chairman;
* Deputy Chairman of the Council (supervises of the work of primary organizations of OO BRSM regional institutions of higher education);
* Deputy Chairman of the Council (supervises the work of primary organizations of OO BRSM of the institutions of higher education of Minsk);
* Secretary of the Council;
* Winner of the Republican contest, holder of the title “the Best Student of the Year”;
* 5 members of the Council – secretaries of primary organizations of OO BRSM of regional institutions of higher education (1 representative from each region);
* 8 members of the Council – secretaries of primary organizations of OO BRSM – representatives of the institutions of higher education in Minsk[[148]](#footnote-148).

According to this composition, representation RSC is provided only for the secretaries of primary cells of BRSM at universities, and the representatives of other SSG organizations are not represented there at all. This breaks the rule of election, and the administration of RSC to significant extent consists from the representatives of state power bodies.

Thus, neither Gomel Regional Students' Council nor Students Council of Minsk nor the Republican Students Council can be effective assistants in solution of the total range of problems of Belarusian SSG outlined in course of our paper. Only democratic organization established from below can become the body of student government. At the moment due to peculiarity of Belarusian political model, the establishment of such independent organization is quite complicated. The attempt to consolidate students within the frameworks of the organization Union of Belarusian Students (UBS), unfortunately, was interrupted by deprivation of this organization of state registration and legal status in 2001[[149]](#footnote-149). UBS acting in Belarus illegally is still the member of the European Students Union. As for other examples of independent students’ organizations, neither Labor Union Group “Students’ Council” nor relatively recently established Center for Students Initiatives Development claim the role of the organizations consolidating the students’ community of Belarus.

A promising initiative with the objective to promote student government is the Brotherhood of Student Government Organizers (BOSS). BOSS unites the leaders of student government of Belarusian universities and has its activists in half of universities of the country. However due to the youth of this initiative it is yet early to draw any conclusion on its role[[150]](#footnote-150).

**7.7. Conclusions and recommendations**

Thus, having analyzed the system of student government in Belarusian universities, we can state evident weakness of Belarusian SSG. We observed limitation of actions and decision of existing organizations, as well as proved the unlawfulness of recognition of BRSM as the body of student government. As for over-university organizations, such are only fictitious associations, with absolutely no influence on the state of the students of the country. Unfortunately we observe absence at the moment also of an independent organization which is really able to become strong and representative students’ union.

However it was a big mistake to state about zero point in the development of students’ participation in the life of universities. This way existing SSG organizations, as a carrier of an individual status of trade unions of students, pretty well deal with their functions in the sphere of social support of students, assurance of their living, health care, as well as cultural life and entertainment. We agree that this is a significant part of work, which is made by the students for themselves. Existing forms of common activity of the students, acting already now, in favorable conditions can become the last stage to self-organization in more serious types of students’ activity. Thus, it is necessary to purposefully and systematically work with already existing SSG in the universities of Belarus to increase their level of influence on sites and formation of a corresponding tradition and succession.

Although in Belarus there is formally developed network of the organizations of student government, their role in the life of universities is significantly limited.

Let’s outline the most significant disadvantages of modern system of students’ participation in governing universities of Belarus, which impede its further development:

* Ignoring by the Law of the fact of student government existence.
* Lack of the status of legal entities in the absolute majority of SSG organizations;
* Lack of financing independence of SSG organizations;
* Lack of autonomy in decision-making, as well as accomplishment of tasks and objectives imposed to the SSG;
* Direct and indirect pressure of the universities’ administration on SGG organizations;
* Fictitious character of students representation and participation in the work of universities’ Councils;
* Lack of uniting and coordination body of SGG in Belarus, developed on democratic basis;
* Lack of motivation in students to participate in SSG, due to low efficacy and weak influence of SSG organizations on the solution of students’ problems.

Weakness of SSG is a serious barrier on the way of modernization of the system of higher education of the country, as well as impedes joining of Belarus to the Bologna Process.

Suggestions to overcome the disadvantages of students’ participation in governing universities:

1. Enshrined in the Education Code, the rights of students to create and participate in student government organizations, providing them with a wide range of powers in all spheres of students' interests, as well as mandatory contributions of a fixed percentage of the budget of the universities in favor of this organizations
2. Registration of SSG organizations as legal entities, which shall allow operating more freely, attract additional funds for their activity, concluding contracts independently and having administrative- economic life, independent from a university;
3. Exclusion from the Regulations and Charters of SSA provisions on the control by the administrative apparatus of universities
4. Creation of mechanisms to prevent direct and indirect pressure from the administrations of universities towards the SSG organizations’ leaders;
5. Implementation of standards of student representation in Councils of universities;
6. Enhancement of legal literacy of the representatives of students in SSG organizations and the Councils of universities with trainings, seminars, etc.;
7. Rebranding of existing organizations, introduction of elements of role play, as well as the initiative from below as the methods of raising of motivation of participation in SSG;
8. Support of the establishment and development of national association of SSG of Belarus.

Without accomplishment of the outlined suggestions the prospect of reaching for Belarusian universities of the level of European participation of students in governing their educational institutions is impossible.

**8.Recommendations for improving the legal framework of higher school in Belarus according to the requirements for Bologna club candidates**

The official reply 3/24.01.2012 of the Bologna Secretariat to the application of the Belarusian Ministry of Education to join the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) stated that Belarus does not meet the requirements for candidate countries. First of all, it concerns the situation with academic freedom, the level of institutional autonomy and participation of students in management of the higher education. As the acceptance of fundamental values, purposes and directions of the EHEA educational policy is a condition for a country to join the Bologna Process, the existing conflict between Belarusian and European academic values is a serious obstacle to integration of Belarus into the European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Secretariat suggested returning to the Belarusian question at the summit of EHEA Ministers of Education in 2015.

The Independent Bologna Committee devised amendments to the Education Code that would remove legal obstacles in three key directions to Belarus joining the EHEA.

**Safeguards for academic freedom**

In Belarus the law does not guarantee academic freedom neither for lecturers nor students. This notion is not mentioned at all. The article about academic freedom and institutional autonomy was removed from the draft law *On higher education* in 2007; in 2009 the House of Representatives (lower chamber of the parliament) removed the similar article from the law *On education* (art. 34). The Education Code that took effect in 2011 includes no such terminology.

We suggest adding **par.** *Autonomy of educational institutions and academic freedom* to **art.2 Fundamentals of state policy in education**.

**Art.31. Basic rights of students** should be amended with

*Right of respect for political, religious and national views*

*Right of respect for legal rights and academic freedom*

We suggest adding the following to **art.52. Rights of pedagogical workers:**

*Has a right for freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, association and assembly, as well as right for personal freedom, security and freedom of movement.*

This statement of academic freedom refers to Lima Declaration of 1990.

In the section **Higher education** in **art.207** there should be the definition of *a higher education institution as scientific and educational community with a high level of organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy and academic freedom*

Include the following definition **into art.208:**

*The faculty, research fellows and students of the higher education institution have a right for freedom of teaching and learning, free expressions of views, freedom of creative and research work, right to participate in associations, unions and other organizations, freedom of movement and professional communication, right to participate in university government. These rights are secured by law and in the statute of the education institution.*

To promote academic freedom in practice and not only as a declaration, the norms that impede the corresponding rights should be excluded from the Code.

Organizations that since 2008 have been monitoring the so-called “bans on profession” point out that most active lecturers and scientists are being ousted from the sphere of education for political, religious and ideological reasons.

The Education Code has a norm (**art.18**) that instructs teachers to educate in students civic virtue, patriotism, and national consciousness based on state ideology. This norm concerns academic rights of all academics and in practice is a requirement to show loyalty to the authorities as a condition to continue teaching. To secure academic freedom (exclude ungrounded restrictions) we suggests excluding the term “state ideology” from **par.2.1** and **3** of **art.18** and completely excluding **par.5.2**.

Freedom of teaching is limited by standard syllabuses. **Art. 217** of the Education Code states that a *standard syllabus* on a discipline is a technical normative legal act that sets aims and goals for the discipline, determines its content, time for studying separate topics, basic requirements for the students’ learning activity, forms and methods of teaching and education, the list of literature and training aids. These syllabuses are approved by the Ministry of Education and are to be used in all higher education institutions. Lecturers are liable to follow these ministerial regulations in teaching.

We suggest *excluding the concept “standard syllabus” from the Code*.

Academic freedom in the Code is limited by **par.9** of **art.94. Scientific and methodical support for education** that determines types of learning aids allowed for the educational process, namely textbooks, handbooks and other publications that are officially approved or permitted by the Ministry of Education of Belarus.

We suggest reformulating **par.8** as following: *In higher education institutions teachers are free to decide on textbooks, handbooks and other learning aids for the educational process.*

Freedom of movement of lecturers is restricted not only by slender finances of universities but also by cumbersome, often politically motivated procedures of receiving permissions for foreign travel. Obstacles are sometimes placed even when the travel expenses are not covered from the university budget. And trips initiated by lecturers and not connected with official cooperation programmes are regarded with great suspicion. Students that go abroad risk even more. Student mobility is regulated by the law *On counteraction to human trafficking* (art.17.2). The fact that academic rights are regulated by such a law demonstrates that academic mobility is ascribed the status of a criminal offence.

**Art.121 of the Education Code** restricts academic mobilitywithin exchange based on agreements between education institutions of Belarus and those other states. We suggest adding the following clarification to **par.2** of **art.121:** *academic mobility can be initiated by students, pedagogical workers, research fellows, and creative workers of the education institution*.

*The ground for individually initiated academic mobility is an official invitation from a foreign educational organization, research centre, or other organization or institution.*

*The administration of the institution creates favourable and equal conditions for academic mobility, encourages cultural, sports and other types of exchange of students and pedagogical workers.*

*Academic mobility is an inalienable right of pedagogical workers and students. Any ungrounded denial of participation in academic exchange programmes, prosecution for participation in such programmes or any other violation of lawful rights of pedagogical workers and students is not allowed.*

Although **art.52 of the Code** gives lecturers the right for professional unions and other associations whose activities do not violate legislation, only organization loyal to the ruling authorities operate freely in Belarusian education institutions. Independent organizations face registration problems, and members of non-registered organizations risk criminal liability under art193.1. of the Criminal Code (activities on behalf of a non-registered organization).

We suggest formulating **par.1.10** of **art.52** the following way: *free association into professional unions, other public associations that are allowed to operate in the educational institution without registering a legal entity.*

Taking into account the restrictions on academic freedom practised in the Belarusian higher education system we suggest amending **art.52 par 1.12** with *the right for free publication of results of personal research and works in books, journals, and data bases at one’s own discretion and under one’s own name on conditions of their author- or co-authorship*

**par.1.13** with*the right for protection of their intellectual property*

**par.1.14** with the*right for free expression of opinion about the institution or the system they work for or in, for freedom from censorship, including free access to international computer systems and data bases necessary for their professional activity*

**par.1.15** with*guaranteed employment in the profession including open-ended contracts*

**Increasing institutional autonomy**

Although university autonomy is not a goal in itself, it is considered an essential precondition for European higher education institutions in their mission of forming an advanced society of knowledge.

According to the methodology of the European University Association (<http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/University_Autonomy_in_Europe_II_-_The_Scorecard.sflb.ashx>) the level of independence of Belarusian higher education institutions was evaluated by 30 indicators grouped into four basic parameters.

The weighting system to evaluate relative importance of individual indicators was developed. Below is the full list of indicators grouped by blocks with their weightings.

 ***Organizational autonomy***

Selection procedure for the executive head (rector) (14%)

Selection criteria for the executive head (14%)

Dismissal of the executive head (12%)

Term of office of the executive head (9%)

Inclusion of external members into the university’s governing body (12%)

Selection of external members of the governing body (12%)

Capacity to decide on academic structures (15%)

Capacity to create legal entities (12%)

***Financial autonomy***

Length of public funding period (14%)

Type of public funding (13%)

Ability to keep surplus (14%)

Ability to borrow money (9%)

Ability to own buildings (12%)

Ability to charge tuition fees for national students (17%)

Ability to charge tuition fees for foreign students (21%)

***Staffing autonomy***

Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior academic staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior administrative staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on salaries of senior academic staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on salaries of senior administrative staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior academic staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior administrative staff (12%)

Capacity to decide on promotions of senior academic staff (13%)

Capacity to decide on promotions of senior administrative staff (12%)

***Academic autonomy***

Capacity to decide on overall student numbers (14%)

Capacity to select students (14%)

Capacity to introduce and terminate programmes (16%)

Capacity to choose the language of instruction (13%)

Capacity to select quality assurance mechanisms (15%)

Capacity to select quality assurance providers (11%)

Capacity to design content of degree programmes (16%)

The following recommendations on changes into the regulatory base of the Belarusian higher education are aimed at raising the level of organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy to the level of the leading education systems of Europe.

**Organizational autonomy**

Organizational autonomy of Belarusian higher education institutions can be assessed according to the criteria of the European University Association (EUA) only with reservations and with references to the specific management conditions of the Belarusian higher education system.

**1. Selection procedure for the executive head (rector).**

**2. Selection criteria for the executive head (rector).**

**3. Dismissal of the executive head of the university**.

By these parameters autonomy level of Belarusian universities is zero as rectors are appointed and dismissed by the President or other executive authority without participation of the academic community or social partners.

The suggested amendments to the Education Code concern the administration of the higher education institutions.

In particular, we suggest the following norm:

*Head (rector) of the higher education institution* (from Russianabbreviation UVO *uchrezhdenie vysshego obrazovaniya* ‘institution of higher education’, hereinafter referred to as HEI*) is appointed and dismissed by the collegial (elective) body through the procedure set by law and the statute of the HEI.*

*The powers of the rector of the HEI are set by the statue of the HEI.*

*The rector can be dismissed earlier for a serious misconduct, loss of confidence of the academic community, physical or mental incapacity and conviction of an offence.*

**4. Term of office of the executive head.**

The rector’s term of office in Belarus is established neither by the university nor by law. According to the Education Code, either the President or the Ministry of Education make a decision. Therefore, the level of autonomy is zero. We suggest the following amendments to the **Code**:

*The Rector is appointed for a five-year term and can serve no more than two periods.*

**5. Inclusion of external members into the governing body.**

**6. Selection of external members of the governing body.**

The regulation *On the council of the education institution* does not set a clear procedure of inclusion of external members into the governing body of the university. This ambiguity may pave the way for administrative despotism that would both limit the organizational autonomy and discriminate the stakeholders.

The suggested changes into **the Code** proceeding from the need for the stakeholders to practically participate in managing the university and for transparent procedures of their inclusion into the governing body. We suggest the following governing system.

*The main governing bodies of the HEI are: the council of the HEI (the senate), the* *governing board , the rectorate and the rector*

*1. The main functions of the governing board are:*

*Selection of the rector from 3 candidates suggested by the senate*

*Dismissal of the rector and vice-rectors nominated by the council of the HEI*

*Announcement of the rectoral election*

*Development of the election procedure*

*Election of vice-rectors nominated by the rector*

*Adoption or approval of establishing legal entities and ownership procedures*

*Adoption of the university development plan*

*Adoption of regulations of formation and work of the rectorate*

*Approval of the budget submitted by the rectorate*

*Appointment of the auditor and informing the stakeholders about misconducts of the university administration or threats of serious financial losses*

*Conclusion of the contract with the rector*

*The* governing board *consists of an uneven number of members (3,5,7,9), 1,2,3,4 of which are appointed evenly by the council of the HEI (the senate) and the founder, and one extra member is appointed by the coordinated decision. Board members cannot be civil servants of any kind, politicians or employees of this university. Any professional relations of the board members with the university require approval of the managing board. Members of the* governing board *should be authoritative and responsible representatives of academic, cultural or business circles, competent enough for performing duties on the board. Board members have full right to receive any information about the HEI.*

*Abuse of this right entails liability by law.*

*2. The council (the senate) of the higher education institution performs the following functions:*

*Approves the statute and amends it*

*Approves development plans and submits them to the governing board*

*Determines and changes the membership of the governing board and participates in its formation*

*Adopts the announcement of the rectoral election submitted by the governing board*

*Expresses opinion on vice-rector candidates for the governing board*

*Shortlists three candidates for the position of rector for the governing board*

*Participates in the dismissal of the rector, vice-rectors, members of the governing board*

*Holds elections of deans, directors of institutes and other research units, heads of departments, professors and associate professors, other positions of the faculty, determines regulations and procedures of elections and dismissals for collegial bodies of organization units of the higher education institution and appointment regulations for other positions.*

*Decides on structural changes of research and academic units*

*Approves plans for research and developments, creative works, etc.*

*Approves and changes curricula*

*Determines the intake number and admission rules*

*Awards academic degrees and titles, honourable academic degrees and titles*

*Considers appeals against administration decisions*

*Forms a committee for dispute settlement*

*Establishes and determines the agenda of commissions and working groups*

*Decides on opening new programmes (specialties)*

*The council (the senate) is formed of professors, including heads of academic and research units, other categories of the faculty and research fellows, students and non-academic staff.*

*The order of the council (the senate) formation is determined by the statute.*

*The rector is a member of the council (the senate) ex officio.*

*The chair of the governing board and the council (the senate) is elected form the membership of the corresponding governing body and dismissed by simple majority.*

*The rector has no right to chair the council (the senate).*

*3. The powers and functions of the rectorate are determined by the statute.*

*4. The powers of the rector are determined by the statute.*

**7. Capacity to decide on academic structures.**

Neither the university council nor the rector or any other body of the higher education institution is empowered to decide on academic structures. Both in public and private institutions changes of academic structures are sanctioned by the founder.

We suggest including into **the Code** the norm vesting the university council (the senate) with the right *to take this type of decisions.*

**8. Capacity to create legal entities.**

Belarusian higher education institutions are allowed to create or co-create departments and companies with legal entity status. It only has to be sanctioned by the founder

Suggestions into **the Code** are the following: *to entitle the governing board of the university to adoption or approval of establishment of legal entities and their ownership procedures*.

As a result, organizational autonomy can be raised from the existing 24 points to 91 points of 100 possible.

**Financial autonomy**

**1. Length of public funding period.**

**2. Type of public funding.**

**3. Ability to keep the surplus.**

**4. Ability to borrow money.**

The funding period of Belarusian higher education establishments is one year with the line-item type of budget allocation. At the end of the calendar year the surplus is fully reclaimed by the state. In Belarus, apart from internal sources, universities are allowed to use external funding in form of loans from banks, financial companies, or funds. Nevertheless, there is an expert opinion that Belarusian universities hardly ever use this type of funding.

As a result, except for p.4, Belarusian universities have a very low autonomy level.

To raise it, we suggest amending **the Code** in the following way:

*The education institution is financed by its founder according to a long-term agreement between them. The budget period cannot be less than three years. Under the contract between the founder and the education institution it can operate by self-financing.*

*Public education institutions are free to decide on directions and the order of allocation of budget and off-budget funds, including the part allocated for salaries and financial encouragement of workers of education institutions. Higher education institutions are free to use the surplus on public funding and adjust it for the following year. They are also allowed to use external funding in form of loans from banks, financial companies, or funds.*

**5. Ability to own buildings.**

The capacity of universities to buy, sell and build facilities autonomously is closely linked to their freedom to determine their institutional strategy and academic profile. Studies of the European University Association show that autonomy of universities in this aspect to a large extent depends on cultural traditions. The regulation *On the higher education institution* of the Ministry of Education of 1 August 2012 **par.9.4.** clarifies that the university disposes of its property on operative basis according to legal norms.

By this parameter, Belarusian universities have no autonomy.

We suggest the following changes into the **Education Code**:

*The higher education establishment has a right of ownership of funds, assets and other property items including buildings and other real estate objects passed to it by individuals and (or) legal entities in the form of a gift, donation, bequest, or other lawful means, a right of ownership of products of intellectual and creative work, which are the result of its activities, as well as of revenues from its own activities and objects of ownership purchased for those revenues.*

*Alienation of the property of the higher education institution is only possible to secure its statutory objectives and with the consent of the collegial management bodies of the HEI.*

*The education institution meets its commitments by its funds and other property at its disposal. The latter being insufficient, the owner of the property allotted to the institution takes the commitments according to legal procedures.*

*When the education institution is liquidated, the funds and other objects of property owned by it, after deduction of commitment coverage, are intended for development of education according to the statute of the education institution.*

**6. Ability to charge tuition fees for national students.**

In Belarus, tuition fees are regulated by legislation that allows charging fees for education programmes not financed from the national and local budgets and charging students admitted beyond the state-funded intake numbers. The fee is determined by the university head according to the law. The amount of fee is regulated by the directive No. 210 *On cost of paid education* of the Ministry of Education. This is a medium level of financial autonomy. It is possible to raise the autonomy level by *entitling the university governing board to set the fee for education services*.

**7. Ability to charge tuition fees for foreign students.**

In Belarus, tuition fees are set by universities, unless regulated by international agreements. Regulations No.38 and No.210 practically exclude the issue of charging education fees for foreign students from the general order of pricing and tariff setting. **Par.7** of these regulations set that fees for foreign students are established by agreements. According to this criterion, Belarusian universities have the highest level of autonomy.

If we applied the weighting factors of autonomy for these seven parameters according to the EUA procedure, the level of financial autonomy of Belarusian universities would be 26.5 points out of 100 possible. This is a low level of financial autonomy. The suggested amendments to the Education Code will raise financial autonomy of Belarusian universities almost to 100%.

**Staffing autonomy**

The legal framework for appointment, dismissal and promotion of academic and administrative staff in Belarus is not significantly different from the European model of staffing autonomy. At the same time, traditional university staffing schemes have a specific character in Belarus, which limits the rights of higher education institutions.

**1. Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior academic staff.**

In Belarus, the order of filling positions of academic staff is set by the regulation *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus* approved by resolution No.806 of the Council of Ministers (the national register of legal acts of the Republic of Belarus, 2011, No.72, 5/34007). Higher education institutions have no right to recruit academic staff on a long-term basis without an open competitive selection. Competitive selection is announced for vacant positions and for positions the term of selection/contract for which has run out. However, a more essential restriction of the autonomy is that the candidate has to meet the qualification requirements established by the regulation. In particular, candidates for the positions of the senior academic staff are to have corresponding academic degrees and titles awarded by the State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles. Without such a sanction the university can admit academic staff for no more than a year till the next vacancy announcement. Thus, the autonomy is significantly limited by such instructions. Holding a position of professor or associate professor depends on the assignment of the corresponding title by the external state authority.

We suggest adding the following statements into **the Code**:

*Positions of pedagogical workers (assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor, head of the department) in higher education institutions are filled on a competitive basis. The order of the competition is established by the council of the higher education institution. The person appointed to a pedagogical position through a competition is employed by the head of the institution on a fixed term contract basis for the whole term of the appointment.*

*The university council (the senate) is entitled to awarding academic degrees and titles, honourable academic degrees and titles.*

**2. Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior administrative staff.**

The procedure of recruitment of senior administrative staff in Belarus is established by the Education Code and regulation No. 93 *On higher education institution* of 1 August 2012. Chapter 8 states that all senior administrative staff (vice rectors, deans, directors of laboratories, etc.) are appointed by the rector. The exception is the head of a department who is appointed by the rector after he/she is elected by the council.

Formally, the appointment decision is made by the executive head and not by an external body, but, considering that the rector is only an element of the presidential vertical, it is difficult to consider such an order of recruiting senior administrative staff as a manifestation of institutional autonomy.

We suggest the following changes of **the Code**: *the university council (the senate) is entitled to elect deans, directors of institutes, other research units, heads of departments, and to establish regulations and procedures of replacement of these positions*

**3. Capacity to decide on salaries of senior academic staff.**

**4. Capacity to decide on salaries of senior administrative staff.**

The salary rate of pedagogical workers is determined by par.4 of Appendix 1 to the Ministry of Labour resolution No.6 of 21 January 2000 ‘On measures for improving remuneration for employees of the organizations financed from the budget and using state subsidies’.

This resolution applies both to budget and off-budget operations (par.1.1 of Appendix 1 of resolution No.6).

Par.1.2 of resolution No.6 sets tariff rates (base wage rates) of workers by multiplying the tariff rate of the 1st grade (set by the Council of Ministers) by tariff coefficients of the Unified rates scale of workers and adjusting and multiplying coefficients for complexity of performed work.

Private higher education institutions are managed by the same regulations, but the decision on salary is made by the founder.

The salary of senior administrative staff is also determined by resolution No.6.

Therefore, universities of Belarus are not autonomous to decide on salaries of senior academic staff.

To raise the level of staffing autonomy we suggest entitling the governing board of the university *to establish conditions and procedures of remuneration of the administrative, academic, research and support staff.*

**5. Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior academic staff.**

Dismissal of academic staff is regulated by the regulation *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus* approved by labour legislation, resolution No.806 of the Council of Ministers of 21 June 2011 (par. 7 and 34), and by other normative acts.

Moreover, pedagogical and other workers of education establishments subordinate directly to the Ministry of Education have special conditions for contract termination. These conditions were secured in the agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Belarusian Trade Union of Workers of Education and Sciences for 2010-2012. This agreement was signed on 25 April 2010 and registered on 18 March 2010 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus No.43. According to the methodology of the European University Association, the over-university standard acts regulating dismissal of academic staff are considered as restriction of institutional autonomy.

Therefore, we suggest *entitling the university council (the senate) to elaborate regulations and procedures of dismissal of senior academic staff*.

**-6. Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior administrative staff.**

Dismissal of senior administrative staff is set by regulation No.93 *On higher education institution* and labour legislation. These questions are not regulated by the university statute.

We suggest entitling the university governing boardto decide *on dismissal of senior administrative staff on proposal of the university council (the senate).*

**7. Capacity to decide on promotions of senior academic and administrative staff.**

Promotion of senior academic staff is established by the regulation *On positions to be filled through competitive selection for pedagogical workers out of the teaching staff at the higher education institution of the Republic of Belarus*. This regulation details conditions and procedures of promotion of academic staff. Formally such promotion is possible only in case of a vacant position filled by open competitive selection and secret ballot of the university council. This procedure means that the higher education institution cannot simply promote a lecturer. Even being a mere formality, the competition procedure has to be observed. There is one more circumstance that depreciates this procedure. The regulation entitles the rector to arbitrarily set the term of contract, ignoring the decision of the council. This norm undermines the traditions of university democracy and limits the university autonomy both formally and practically because the rector in the actual system of higher education in Belarus is a representative of the external power. We suggest including the following statement into **the Code** that will prevent the rector from arbitrarily establishing the term of contract: *The person appointed to a pedagogical position through a competition is employed by the head of the institution on a fixed term contract basis for the whole term of the appointment.*

We suggest *handing over the power to promote senior administrative staff to the university governing board.*

The amendments to the Education Code will increase staffing autonomy of Belarusian universities from 25% to 90-95%.

**Academic autonomy**

**1. Capacity to decide on overall student numbers.**

In Belarus, the model of determining the admission number is gradually shifting from the cooperative one (coordination between the university and the state) to the establishment of the admission plan by public authorities. Higher education institutions have to follow target admission numbers of the Ministry of Education and their license (permission for educational activity). After the Ministry of Education approves the admission plan, further modification of figures is forbidden. It applies both to state and private higher education institutions (since 2010 private higher education institutions have to coordinate admission plans with the Ministry of Education).

We suggest amendments to **the Code** that will *entitle the university council (the senate) to set the admission plan and the admission procedure*.

**2. Capacity to select students.**

In the majority of European countries admission criteria are set either by the university, or co-regulated between the university and the external authority. Only in 7 countries these criteria are formed without the participation of the higher education institutions.

Belarus has the latter model. Regardless of the form of ownership, all higher education institutions follow the Education Code (art.213 “General admission requirements for persons to receive higher education”); the *Higher education institutions admission regulations* approved by decree No.80 of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 7 February 2006, with changes and amendments; *the List of administrative procedures carried out by the governmental bodies and other organizations based on applications of citizens* approved by decree No.200 of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 26 April 2010, with changes and amendments; the regulation *On submission of documents to exercise the right for the public social privileges, the rights and guarantees of certain categories of citizens* approved by resolution No.1738 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 13 December 2007, with changes and amendments; the regulation *On the admission committee of the higher educational institution* approved by resolution No.23 of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 23 March 2006, with changes and amendments; and other legal acts. After the introduction of the centralized testing and admission to universities according to its results, Belarusian higher education institutions lost any independence in selection of students. *Entitling the university council (the senate) to decide on the procedure of student admission* will widen academic autonomy of Belarusian higher education institutions.

**3. Capacity to introduce and terminate degree programmes.**

European universities practice several models of introducing new educational programmes: programmes can be opened without preliminary accreditation, programmes need accreditation to receive public funding, and programmes have to be presented for accreditation before they are introduced. In some countries universities face other types of restrictions, which nevertheless leave some room for academic autonomy.

In Belarus, higher education institutions have no right to independently make decisions on introducing new educational programmes. If the prospective specialty is not included into the National qualifier “Specialties and Qualifications,” according to instruction No.42 *On introduction and application of the National qualifier “Specialties and Qualifications”* approved by the Ministry of Education on 1 July 2009, changes are to be introduced into the qualifier first. The decision on this issue is taken by the Ministry of Education (art.18). If the specialty is already registered in the qualifier, the decision to introduce the programme is made by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the governmental bodies and organizations concerned according to the regulation *On opening of education profiles, education directions, specialties, directions of specialties, specializations* approved by the Council of Ministers on 27 June 2011 No.849.

We suggest *entitling the university council (the senate) to decide on opening new educational programmes.*

**4. Capacity to choose the language of instruction.**

According to **art.90** of the Education Code “the language of instruction and education is established by the founder and considering the preferences of the students (legal representatives of student minors).

In education establishments and organizations of postgraduate education, training and education can be done in a foreign language if conditions permit and in coordination with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.”

Therefore, without the sanction of the founder the education institution cannot set the language of instruction. We suggest the following changes **of art.90** of the **Education Code**: *higher education institutions are free to decide on the language of instruction for educational programmes of any level (degree level) of higher education*

**5. Capacity to select quality assurance mechanisms.**

In the majority of European countries universities are not free to choose quality assurance mechanisms. In 24 countries quality assurance mechanisms are built-in into regular accreditation programmes or institutional audits. Only in 4 countries universities are completely free to choose quality assurance mechanisms that meet their needs.

According to **art.124** of the Education Code “Control of quality assurance of education is carried out by the authorized governmental bodies that inspect compliance of education activities with the educational standard, educational and programme documentation of the educational programmes, and legislation.”

Resolution No.820 of the Council of Ministers of 22 June 2011 approved the regulation *On state accreditation of educational institutions, other organizations that are entitled to educational activities, and confirmation of state accreditation*. These procedures have no alternative, but can be slightly modified by the unified high school quality assurance systems.

Belarus gradually adapted the ISO 9001 quality management system and introduced the actual version of ISO/IWA 2:2007 – guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education.

Therefore, the situation in Belarusian higher education regarding the choice of quality assurance mechanisms is formally equal to the level of universities in the majority of European countries.

**6. Capacity to select quality assurance providers.**

In Belarus, the Education Code unambiguously states that the President of Belarus determines public bodies entitled to exercise control over the quality of education, its order and frequency. The decision on accreditation of an education institution, other organization or denial of accreditation (based on accreditation procedure) is taken by the Department on Quality Control of Education of the Ministry of Education. This is the only body entitled to control the quality. Therefore, Belarusian universities have no right to choose the agency.

We suggest including a provision that *entitles to selecting a quality assurance provider:* *The education institution is free to select an organization for external quality control from the list of organizations authorized in compliance with this Code.*

**7. Capacity to design content of degree programmes**

In Belarus, according to the Education Code (art.217), the curriculum of the specialty (direction of specialty, specialization) is developed on the basis of the standard specialty (specialty direction) curriculum and establishes the list, sequence and volume of obligatory subjects of the so-called “state component”, the number of academic hours for the component of the higher education institutions and the specialization, sequence and terms of learning the subject, duration of practice, obligatory and maximal academic load in a week per one student, types of classes, forms and terms of assessment.

Standard specialty (specialty direction) curriculum are developed by organizations that provide academic and methodical support for higher education, and by educational and methodical associations of higher education and are approved by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the governmental bodies concerned, subordinate and (or) accountable to the President of the Republic of Belarus, the National Academy of Sciences, national public authorities, other state organizations subordinate to the government of the Republic of Belarus.

Moreover, even the subject syllabus of the higher education institution is developed on the basis of the standard syllabus approved by the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, Belarusian higher education institutions have considerably limited rights to design content of educational programmes. We suggest the following changes into **the Code**: *the university council (the senate) is entitled to approve* *curricula.*

Belarusian universities have some degree of independence in setting the general student intake, but by all other indicators the levels are close to zero. The total academic autonomy of Belarusian universities is not higher than 10%. Our suggestions will permit to raise academic autonomy up to the maximal score.

**Student self-government and participation in university management**

The Belarusian Education Code does not include the term “student self-government” and does not secure its legal status, jurisdiction, formation procedure and activity arrangement.

The regulation *On the council of the education institution* requires 25% student representation in this self-governance body. But this body has no real power within the highly-centralized system of university management. Moreover, despite the declared democratic procedure of the council formation, the political control of the administration over the election leaves little hope for objective and honest competition among the nominees.

 Student self-governance in Belarusian higher education institutions cannot secure effective participation of students in managing the education institution. Firstly, the power of student self-government bodies is significantly limited. Secondly, they are controlled by departments (directorates) of educational work built-in into the vertical of state ideology.

The most apparent manifestation of political control over student self-government bodies is the fact that the only officially recognized national student representative body is the Republican Student Council of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM), a pro-government organization mimicking komsomol (Soviet youth organization). Since 2001, the authorities have been consistently closing independent student organizations. The Union of Belarusian Students (ZBS) representing Belarus in the European Students Union (ESU) was closed by legal decision in 2001 and since then has been operating illegally. Similar to other members of coercively closed student and youth organization, ZBS members risk criminal persecution for participating in a non-registered organization by art.193.1 of the Criminal Code.

We suggest adding a special *article 208 B* into the **Education Code**:

*Student self-government and participation in management of the HEI*

*1. In the HEI and its structural units students and PhD students have a right for self-governance and establishment of different self-government bodies.*

*All students and PhD students have equal rights for participation in self-government bodies that are elected by secret ballot.*

*2. Student self-government protects rights and interests of persons studying at the HEI and secures their participation in managing the HEI.*

*The higher body of student self-governance is a conference of persons studying at the HEI that adopts the statute, amends it, elects student self-government bodies, decides on the report of the executive student self-government bodies, and elects representatives in the council (the senate) of the HEI, other governing and self-government bodies of the HEI.*

*The interference of the HEI administration and other administrative bodies into the decision process of the conference and student self-government bodies is not allowed.*

*3. The powers of student self-government bodies in issues concerning rights and interests of students studying at the HEI are coordinated by the council (the senate) of the HEI and student self-government bodies and secured in the statute of the HEI.*

*The council of the HEI should include 25% or more of student self-government representatives elected by secret ballot at the conference of persons studying at the HEI.*

*4. Student self-government bodies can have a legal entity status, perform economic activities, and obtain sponsor funds for statutory activities.*

*Student self-government is funded on a yearly basis from the HEI budget according to the agreement between the student self-government bodies and the council (the senate) of the HEI.*

*The head of the HEI is obliged to secure appropriate conditions for student self-government bodies and provide rooms, furniture, office equipment, telecommunication and a separate page on the HEI web-site.*

*5. City, regional (oblast) and national student unions can be established in the Republic of Belarus.*

*6. Representatives of student self-governance of all HEIs of the Republic of Belarus elected at HEI conferences by secret ballot form the Council of the National Student Union. The Council adopts the statue, amends it, elects executive bodies of the National Student Union, decides on reports of the executive bodies, and elects representatives into the public council of the Ministry of Education.*

*7. Representatives of student self-governance of the city and region elected at corresponding HEI conferences by secret ballot form the Student Council of the city or region. The council adopts the statue, amends it, elects executive bodies, and decides on reports of the executive bodies.*

Recommendations on education policy, principles of higher education management, Bologna instruments and social safeguards in the higher school together with recommendation on raising institutional autonomy, securing safeguards of academic freedom and student representation will open for Belarus the gates into the European Higher Education Area.

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42. The Law became invalid by the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus of July 26th 1999 No. 296-З. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. At the web-site of the labor union of education and science employees it is the “Collective Agreement sample” See http://estu.by/ [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. According to the information at the web-site of the official Federation of Labor Union of Belarus “collective agreement regulation of labor relations covers 97.4% of employees of enterprises, institutions, organizations. In economy industries of the republic as of January 1st 2012 17424 have been concluded, which action covers 19419 enterprises, institutions, organizations. Guarantees and preferences via collective agreements cover 3.8 mln. Of employees, pensioners, students and pupils”. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. By this point 11 of the Agreement specifies “Considering that students are not the employees of the organizations of the system of the Ministry and can not be the subjects of collective agreements, the Parties recommend to protect the right and legal social-economic interests of students to conclude agreements between educational institutions and labor organizations of students as Annexes to the collective agreement of the corresponding organization of the system of the Ministry”. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The Decree of the Ministry of Education of the republic of Belarus of August 1st 2012 No. 93 (chapter 8 and 9: “On management of higher education institutions and self-administration bodies of the higher educational institutions). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The set of applying documents for official inclusion into the Bologna Process of November 29th 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Most frequently the following definition of tasks are met:

“● development of efficient system of social partnership, extension of the circle of organizations interested in cooperation;

	* Steady reproduction of qualified human resources for the organizations of all industries of economy and social spheres of the country;
	* Enhancement of efficiency of interaction with employers of human resources in development of material-technical basis, arrangement of vocational training
	* Promotion of efficiency of employment and vocational activity of graduates;
	* Creation of a real and efficient system of educational services, meeting the needs of existing and prospective labor market”. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The Seventh Framework Program (FP7) is the largest all-European program of scientific research funding (the total allocated budget for 2007-2013 equals to €50.5 billion) and international cooperation in all fields of science. Updated in 2007, the FP7 is now called upon to correct the European market failures in the field of research, to complement and to strengthen the national and the regional actions on the European level, as well as to minimize the fragmentation of scientific research for the purpose of resource consolidation towards the implementation of breakthrough research and innovations. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The League of European Research Universities (LERU) was created in 2002 and currently comprises 21 universities from 10 European countries with over 550 thousand students (of which 9% are Ph.D. students) and over 55 thousand professors and lecturers (of which 250 are Nobel Laureates and Fields Medalists). The LERU's total budget amounts to about €5 billion (of which the amount of grants comprises about €300 million). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The [European Institute of Technology](http://www.eit.europa.eu) was funded in March 2008 and represents an inter-institutional structure (a network) of the leading (research) universities of Europe, scientific centers and business organizations that set as their goal the achievement of sustainable growth and competitive recovery by means of strengthening the EU's innovative capacity. The EIT's budget for 2008-2013 amounts to over €309 million. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The State Program of Innovative Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2007-2010 (Decree of the President d/d May 26, 2007) and the State Program of Innovative Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2011-2015 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus d/d May 26, 2011 under No. 669). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The State Program of Higher Education Development for 2011-2015 (approved by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus d/d July 1, 2011 under No. 893). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. V.L. Tsyparkov, E.V. Gurina, J.I. Enin. Scientific Potential of Higher School of BSSR. Minsk, 1981. Pp. 8 -9. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. During the period from 1990 to 1997, the number of the academic personnel of the scientific organizations decreased by 3.2 times (from 107.3 thousand to 33.2 thousand people). Whereupon the fundamental loss took place in 1991-1994. 1992 was indicative in this context: in comparison to 1991, the number of the academic stuff of the scientific organizations decreased by 1.5 times. The larger part of the decrease took place at the expense of the Candidate of Sciences category: during the period from 1990 to 1995 their number decreased by 1.5 times. // Science of the Republic of Belarus 1995. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 1996; Science of the Republic of Belarus 2000: Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Science of the Republic of Belarus 1995. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 1996. P. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Science, Innovations and Technologies in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium 2005. Minsk, 2006. P. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Scientific Manpower in the Republic of Belarus. Sociological Analysis. Minsk, 2007. P. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Stuff Strength. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
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61. Quoted from: T.A. Antonova. Scientific Manpower of the Republic of Belarus: Gender Analysis Following the Results of 2010. // Bulletin of Grodno State University named after Yanka Kupala. Edition 5. Economics. Sociology. Biology. No. 2 (131), 2012. P. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. According to the data presented by the research group SCImago (Spain) in its report "SIR World Report 2011: Global Ranking", in the world publication activity ranking, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus ranks No.802 among 3 042 organizations from 104 countries of the world and No. 32 among 197 organizations of Eastern Europe. Furthermore, out of 70 higher education institutions and research establishments of the higher education sector of Belarus that perform scientific research and development, only two organizations except the National Academy of Sciences, are included into the rating: the Belarusian State University (ranks No. 1 310) and the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics (ranks No. 2 756). Not a single sectoral research organization in Belarus has been included into the rating. In general, according to the data provided by the Essential Science Indicators (Thomson Reuters), as of September 1, 2011, according to the number of citations in the recognized academic periodicals, Belarus was ranked No. 67 worldwide and No.3 in the Commonwealth of Independent States ([after Ukraine and Russia](http://news.tut.by/it/248962.html)). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. The data was attained by applying the Elsevier Scopus scientometric system. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. For comparison: the Russian Academy of Sciences was ranked No. 3, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine was ranked No. 89, the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia was ranked 2 144, the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia was ranked 2 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. The accounts are carried out according to: Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2012. P. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Education at a Glance 2012. OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing. P.240. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Education at a Glance 2012. OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing. P. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. Access mode: <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/indicators/pressrel/international-literacy-day%282012%29.php> Access date: 27.12.2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. About the Republican Budget for 2012. Access mode: <http://pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p2=2/1883> Access date: 26.12.2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. The accounts are carried out according to: Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2012. Pp. 66-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
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72. Overview of Innovation Activities in the Republic of Belarus. UN, New-York, Geneva. 2011. Pp. 121-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
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75. J.V. Zmeeva. Scientific Potential of Universities as a Source of Dynamic Development of Country's Innovative Economy. // Economics and Management. No. 3, 2011. P. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
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77. Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk: 2012. P. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
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79. About Situation and Perspectives of Science Development in Belarus at 2010 Year-end and for the period from 2006 to 2010. Analytical Report. Minsk, 2011. P. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. About Situation and Perspectives of Science Development in Belarus at 2010 year-end and for the period from 2006 till 2010. Analytical Report. Minsk, 2011. P. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. About Situation and Perspectives of Science Development in Belarus at 2010 year-end and for the period from 2006 till 2010. Analytical Report. Minsk, 2011. P. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Education at a Glance 2012. OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing. P. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2012. P. 47. Moreover, in 2010, 56.2% of all the postgraduate finalists in the country studied at the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of Education, which adjusts this criterion downwards - to 0.6%. Source: About Postgraduate Studies (Postgraduate Military Studies) and Doctoral Studies in the Republic of Belarus in 2010 / National Statistics Committee. Republic of Belarus. – Minsk, 2011. P. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
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90. Estimated on the basis of: T.A. Antonova. Scientific Manpower of the Republic of Belarus: Gender Analysis Following the Results of 2010. // "Bulletin of Grodno State University named after Yanka Kupala. Edition 5. Economics. Sociology. Biology". No. 2 (131), 2012. P. 109; Science and Innovative Activities in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. Minsk, 2012. Pp. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Philip G. Altbach and Jamil Salmi (Ed.) The Road to Academic Excellence. The Making of World-Class Research Universities. –The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Refer in this respect to: A.I. Gordienko, A.I. Pobol, L.I. Pobol. Spin-off Enterprises around Academic Institution as a Form of Innovative Network Development in Belarus. Relevant Aspects of Innovative Activity Development: Materials of VII International Research-to-practice Conference. / National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine; under the editorship of P.P. Tolochko, et al. - Simferopol, 2003. - Pp. 139-142. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
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94. The survey is conducted wrt scientific personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. The survey is conducted wrt scientific personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. In connection with the incomplete data for 2009, the survey is conducted only wrt Candidates of Science aged up to 39 years, 40-49 years, 50-59 years and over 60 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
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98. The Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Higher Education”: [http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=h10700252&p2={NRPA}](http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=h10700252&p2=%7bNRPA%7d) [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
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103. Charter of the Public Association “Students’ Union of BSU” <http://www.bsu.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=12861>. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
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108. Regulation on Student Government of Minsk Institute of Management.: <http://miu.by/rus/training/self_admin_students.php> [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
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111. Regulation on Students’ Council of BSUIR: <http://www.bsuir.by/online/showpage.jsp?PageID=90027&resID=100229&lang=ru&menuItemID=114399> [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Regulation of Students’ Council of Gomel State University. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Regulation on Students’ Council on education quality of BSU: <http://www.bsu.by/ru/ssko>. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Does self-governing exist in Belarusian universities?: <http://www.zautra.by/cont/print.php?sn_nid=12353>. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
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126. ###  [Lukashenko about BRSM: some people like it, others don’t, but the Union shall be supported by the state](http://dengi.onliner.by/2012/12/10/brsm-9/): <http://dengi.onliner.by/2012/12/10/brsm-9>.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
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 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
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133. Set of measures to accomplish state youth policy per 2012 , approved by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of January 12th 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
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135. Youth in Political Life of Belarus. BRSM: <http://3dway.org/node/6672> [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
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138. Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Labor Unions”: [http://pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=v19201605&p2={NRPA}](http://pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=v19201605&p2=%7bNRPA%7d) [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
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144. Regulation on Students’ Council of Minsk: <http://minsk.gov.by/ru/org/8637/attach/c041548/> [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Readiness of higher education of Belarus to be included into EHEA: eurobelarus.info/images/uploads/files/Alternative\_Report\_RU.doc‎ [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. *Ibid..* [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. *Ibid..* [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
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