

**University of Tampere**

***The Experience of Albanian Universities in Managing Student and Staff  
Mobility***

**Department of Management Studies**

**Master in Higher Education  
Pro gradu Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

**Key words: Student mobility, Staff mobility, Barriers, Bologna Agreement, Albania**

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Mobility of students and staff is a well-known process, which has been present since the Middle Ages, when students and academics traveled from one part of the world to the other to obtain education. During the last century, the concept of mobility has changed. It is especially after the Second World War that Europe decided to contribute to the mobility of students and staff through different mobility programs. Consequently, the aim of mobility has changed from mobility that brought only individual advantages to a more complex form of mobility, which initiated changes in the curriculum, institutional change and at the same time has helped to launch a European identity.

This thesis focuses on the change of the concept of mobility. This study emphasizes the role of the mobility process in Albanian higher education during the years 1992-1999, and it attempts to analyze this process and the nature mobility had.

The second part of this study, the thesis focuses on the Bologna Agreement and on the importance mobility has in the Bologna process. Besides, the advantages that the Bologna process gives to mobility of students and staff by overcoming legal barriers, I tried to point out also the obstacles that universities in Albania face in implementing mobility within the Bologna framework. The conclusion of this thesis is that the Bologna agreement represents an opportunity for Albanian universities, because the mobility process will be both ways and this fact influences universities on different levels, such as curriculum, management etc. However, for the success of this process, support from legislation, policies, and funding sources is necessary.

In this regard, it is important that all the actors, for instance, the government, higher education institutions, the community, student organizations etc have to be involved in promoting and sustaining mobility, because this process will provide important feedback to the institutions on different levels in the long run.

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## 1. Introduction

*Universities are central to the development of the European Society. They create, safeguard and transmit knowledge vital for the economic welfare, locally, regionally and globally. They cultivate European values and culture.*

*(Graz Declaration, 2003)*

Universities have already entered in a relationship with new institutions that sometime is supportive and sometimes critical. In the new century, universities are required to adapt and to respond to the changing needs of society.

According to Brennan (2002, 75) the examination of the role of universities in a social transformation can be conducted on different levels, *first* - on a global level, where universities are pressured to respond to global changes, and to the knowledge economy. On the other hand, universities are faced with *second*- national demands, because universities face challenges arising out of social, political and economical changes. Some examples of the challenges arising out of political and economical changes are those in South Africa and post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.

Consequently, there is no doubt that universities find themselves in a complicated and difficult situation. Universities are institutions that in all societies have performed an ideological, socio-economic and educational role. Nowadays it is clear that universities are literally involved in all kinds of social and economical activities. Moreover, there is no more a single society to which universities are expected to respond, but together with the government, academia and students, the labor market and industries, there are communities and localities and dis-localities of the “global” (Enders & Fulton 2002, 12)

One of the most important changes, which universities are facing in the beginning of this century, is the Bologna Declaration. In the first half of 1998, four Ministers of education from France, Italy, Germany and The United Kingdom signed a joint declaration which

had as an aim, the improvement of external recognition and the facilitation of student mobility, as well as, employability. This declaration offered at that time an opportunity to create a European area of higher education. The next year, twenty-nine ministers from Europe signed the Bologna declaration, which had as an objective the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a system with two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate), the establishment of a system of credits such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), the promotion of mobility by overcoming legal recognition and administrative obstacles, the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance and the promotion of a European dimension in higher education (Bologna Declaration 1999). In this conference, was mentioned the opportunity for a follow up meeting every second year, in order to assess the progress achieved and new steps to be taken. Other meetings followed this initiative, for instance the Prague, Berlin and the last one the Bergen conference. In every conference new objectives were added to the declaration and new countries joined this initiative. An important event was also the Lisbon Strategy, the aim of which was 'to deliver stronger, lasting growth and create more and better jobs'.

To achieve this ambitious goal heads of state agreed that substantial modernization of Europe's education and training systems was necessary, particularly in the light of their renewed aim, two years later, to make Europe a world leader in the quality of education and training. However, any transformation necessary in each of the member states will be carried out by the states themselves and taken forward on a European level through cooperation, sharing of experiences and the setting of common goals. This is known as the 'open method of coordination' (as expressed in the Lisbon document). The goals of the Lisbon Strategy and their implications for higher education are linked also with the objectives of the Bologna Process, and the drive to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010 (Lisbon Strategy 2000)

All the objectives concerning the improvement of education and training in Europe present challenges to the national states, and especially to the institutions that have to implement and realize the above objectives. In this regard the Lisbon Strategy, together with the Bologna Declaration represent an opportunity for countries in Europe for

contributing in transforming Europe in to one of the leading economies in the world. However, barriers have to be considered especially in regard to higher education, which according to the Lisbon Strategy has a crucial role to play in this development, by investing in infrastructure and human resources.

One of the countries that joined the Bologna initiative, signing the declaration in the Berlin conference in 2003, was Albania. Considering the political and economic past of Albania, it is not difficult to conclude that this was a big step. Especially this initiative is very challenging for universities, which are facing at the present great difficulties in adjusting to the new socio-economic and political environment. However, on the other hand, the Bologna Agreement represents a good possibility for Albanian higher education to be integrated in the European Higher Education Area.

It is the aim of this thesis to closely analyze the experience of the Albanian universities in implementing the Bologna Declaration. My main focus in this thesis will be the process of mobility of student and staff, within the Bologna framework. I will present here also the historical context in which universities worked in the past. How was mobility influenced during the period of 1992-1999 in Albania (before the Bologna Agreement was mentioned in the higher education arena)? What Bologna agreement gave to mobility of students and staff in Albanian universities? Then again, one of the main points in this thesis will be an analysis of the barriers that Albanian universities are facing in encouraging mobility.

## **1.1 Rationale**

Higher education in Albania has been for a long time a closed system. When the first universities were created, they followed the example of Soviet system of higher education. Higher education institutions in Albania were created years after the Second World War. The first university was established only in 1957. As mentioned above, they relied very much on the Soviet (now Russian) experience of higher education and academic structure. Consequently, as the Soviet system of higher education was

influenced by the Humboldtian university<sup>1</sup> (Ben- David 1992), the Albanian universities reflected the same structure with emphasis on the unity of research and teaching. Moreover, universities were seen by the ruling party as centers of development and production of knowledge and specialist, who would work in developing the country, which had been destroyed by the Second World War.

In this line, there was strong emphasis on the higher education and training. Therefore there were mobility programs, especially in the natural and technical sciences, which were influenced and initiated by the government, in order for the academic staff to gain experience from the older universities in the East and to bring that experience to Albania.

However, after the collaboration with the Soviet government ended, due to political reasons, the higher education system in Albania mostly relied on itself (meaning that there was less mobility among academics, hardly any project of collaboration between universities, etc). Consequently, the Bologna Agreement at the present represents an opportunity for Albanian higher education to be integrated, and to establish a relationship with other European higher education systems. In line with the Bologna agreement, changes took place in the higher education legislation of 1999. In July of 2003, the law on higher education nr 8461 was adapted to the objectives of the Bologna agreement. The changes aimed at the creation of higher education in Albania with two study circles (3 years bachelor, 2 years master) (Theodhori 2004).

In the academic year of 2005-2006, nearly every faculty has implemented the two cycle structure (except for the law, medicine and informatics faculties). Along with these developments, changes to the curriculum are taking place. However, some of the most important actors in this process are higher education institutions, which are expected to implement the process, being at the same time in the middle of important changes. For instance, higher education institutions are experiencing a massification process. Universities are also challenged by the new national policies concerning the autonomy of

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<sup>1</sup> However Ben- Davis emphasized in his analysis that in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the unity of research and teaching was in need of revision. Nevertheless the idea of a Humboldtian university, with unity of teaching and research, remained unchanged until the Second World War.



the higher education institutions, as well as, the decrease of governmental funds to higher education. Knowing this, it is my goal in this thesis to analyze some of the barriers that universities are experiencing in implementing the Bologna Agreement.

The Focus of this thesis will be an analysis of mobility of student and staff within the Bologna framework, from an institutional perspective. I have chosen mobility for three reasons a) mobility is one of the main objectives of the Bologna Agreement. It was since the Bologna meeting where the twenty nine ministers of education all over Europe agreed that mobility should help students and staff to gain access to study and training opportunities, as well as, recognition and valorization of periods spend in Europe, in research, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.(Bologna Declaration 1999), b) mobility of students and staff has always been a very controversial topic in Albanian higher education, due to the socialist past of the country. Consequently, mobility at the present is considered as a very important instrument for the integration of Albanian higher education among European higher education systems, and a tool for inducing institutional change, as well as, a result of changing conditions within higher education. The last of the motives c) is to take a close look at the attempt of universities in implementing a process, which was agreed internationally. My aim here is to point out some of the “local” barriers, which arise in the process of implementing one of the objectives of the Bologna Agreement, that of mobility.

### *1.1.1 Research Questions*

The aim of this thesis is to answer the following question:

*What is the experience of Albanian universities in implementing the Bologna Agreement?*

Mobility of students and staff is the main element on which this thesis is going to be based. The following sub questions are related to the analyses of student and staff mobility in Albania during 1992-1999, before Bologna Agreement was mentioned in the higher education arena.

In line with the research question are the following sub questions:

1. What were the barriers regarding the mobility of students and staff in the beginning of 1990s?
2. How the government influenced the mobility of students and staff in the 90s? (What are some of the policies developed at that time, which aimed at facilitating mobility?)
3. What was the nature of mobility in Albania during 1992-1999?

With the aim of understanding the Bologna Process in Albania, and the obstacles that universities encounter in implementing this process, the exploration of the next questions is required.

4. To what extent will the Bologna Agreement help the mobility of students and staff in Albania?
5. What are some of the obstacles that higher education institutions face in implementing one of the objectives of the Bologna Agreement, that of mobility?

## **1.2 Methodology**

The aim of this thesis is to better understand the obstacles that Albanian higher education institutions are experiencing in implementing one of the most challenging processes in higher education, that of the Bologna Agreement. As mentioned above, the main focus (which is one of the objectives of the Bologna Agreement) on which, this thesis is going to be based is that of mobility of students and staff. For answering the questions stated above, internationalization of European higher education will be an important tool to better understand the process of mobility. I will also refer to the perception of Teichler to take a close look at some of the mobility programs initiated by the European Union. Following, the review of the documents from the Bologna conferences will be a valuable resource in understanding some of the objectives of this process.

In line with the above theoretical materials, articles published about higher education in Albania during the period between 1992-1999 will be important material to better understand what the situation was regarding mobility during that period. Another source of information, will be the two higher education laws, that of 1994 and 1999. The review of the higher education laws will have as an aim at understanding the attempt of the Albanian government in encouraging mobility during these years. In addition, joint agreements, regarding mobility of students and staff in 1992-1999, between the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science, and the other foreign Ministries of Education will be analyzed.

In the last part of this thesis, there will be the results of qualitative interviews ( as complementary materials) conducted with the persons in charge of the departments of international relations in two of the biggest universities in Albania. The main focus of these interviews is answering to the last question of the obstacles that universities face in implementing the Bologna Agreement.

### *1.2.1 Case Study*

My thesis is based on qualitative research and it is focused on two case studies, in two universities in Tirana, Albania. According to Kvale (1996), qualitative research interviews are “attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. Indeed, qualitative research is subjective and may lead to mistakes and subjective outcomes without the use of other sources of information. In this respect, I used in this part of my thesis other sources of information, which are library research, document analyses (of the Bologna Agreement), report analyses from the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania.

The library research consisted of literature that is focused on internationalization, policy implementation and mobility in higher education in Europe. In addition, I had the opportunity to see other work and reports written on the Bologna Agreement and the

feedback that this process has received on institutional level. Besides the materials gathered from two interviews that I did with the persons in charge of the departments of international relations in Tirana University and in the international office at the Polytechnic University in Tirana gave me valuable information to support my research.

In constructing my interviews, especially in using qualitative method in higher education I relied on the work of Patton (1987). Referring to interviews Patton says,

The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view about the program. (1987: 44)

The two interviews with the persons responsible for the international departments in the respective universities were about the same length. In both interviews I focused on some of the issues which derive from the research questions, and I tried to find answers to the research questions. Both of the interviews were very interesting and they add to my thesis valuable information which has not been gathered before.

The two persons in charge of the international departments supported their interviews also with written material, which will be presented in the last chapter of this thesis. The persons interviewed agreed upon the use of their names in the research.

### **1.3 Validity**

My main sources of information in this master thesis were documents from the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania during the period of 1992-1999 and the Bologna documents. This fact may bias the study to some extent, as the analysis, will be based only on two sources of information. Moreover, these documents tend to emphasize a positive aspect of the mobility during 1992-1999. In addition to that, the Bologna

documents only state the objectives that the countries agree to fulfill, but do not give critical information of how these objectives are to be fulfilled.

However, in order to have a bigger picture, and to maintain a critical distance from my sources, I have also used articles published in the daily journals and education newspapers in Albania during 1992-1999. Those articles will help the reader to understand some of the trends regarding the mobility of students and staff at that time. Other elements that can make the study biased, are the qualitative interviews conducted with the university staff in charge of the foreign departments in the two universities. At this point, the analysis of the institutional barriers concerning the mobility of students and staff will generally be based only on the evaluation of these interviews.

Nevertheless, to overcome this difficulty I have used in this study a research, which was conducted some months ago by the Albanian Institute for International Studies, on the perception that the academic community has on the Bologna process in Albania. The findings of this study are valuable information to my thesis, and give to the analysis a more critical perspective.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

This study was restricted in some aspects. The fact that I have not examined all the agreements during 1992-1999 between the Albanian government and other foreign governments regarding the mobility of students and staff, limits to some extents the possibility for generalizing the findings of the first part of this thesis.

The aim of analyzing the agreements between 1992-1999, is closely related to the fact that most of the mobility programs in Albania started during 1992 and 1993 when the political system in Albania changed. On the other hand the Bologna agreement was mentioned for the first time in the higher education arena during the year 1999, and the implementation of a pilot project according to the Bologna Agreement in the Polytechnic

university in Tirana (which is also one of the universities where one of the interviews was conducted) was made possible in 2000. Keeping in mind the reasons mentioned above, I decided to divide my thesis and focus on two periods 1992-1999 when we had mobility programs in Albania, and 1999 – 2006 when the Bologna agreement came into the scene. I have tried to gather and to examine a considerable number of joint agreements in the Ministry of Education and Science. Consequently, the materials gathered will help the reader to understand the mobility of students and staff in 1992-1999 in Albania.

This study would have been broader, and the findings would have been more representative, if I had included in the qualitative interviews all the universities and all the faculties in Albania. Yet, due to the lack of time and physical resources, the study will be based only on the data gathered in the biggest and most representative higher education institutions in Albania. Nevertheless, the information that I have accessed covers the research questions, which this study attempts to answer.

I am aware of the fact, that this is a very broad area of study. Moreover, I could have chosen to analyze the mobility of students and staff in relation with the quality issues (in order to have mobility, universities have to be aware of the quality factor that must be accomplished). However, this study would require a different approach.

The purpose of this thesis was to give a broad picture of the way the Bologna agreement is implemented on the institutional level. As well as, the obstacles that the Albanian institution face in implementing this process, focusing on the mobility of students and staff in Albania. Despite, the limitations mentioned above, I hope I have made a modest contribution with this work to the, universities in Albania, Albanian higher education and the field of higher education in general.

## 1.5 Overview

The thesis is composed of six chapters

*In chapter one* is the introduction of this thesis, where the rationale, research questions, methodology, validity and limitations are introduced.

*Chapter two* describes the conceptual framework and the literature review that will be used to answer the research questions stated in the first chapter. This chapter also includes a historic overview of the process of mobility in Europe. As well as, a short description of European cooperation programs. In addition, in this chapter we can find, based on the conceptual framework, also an analysis of the expectations deriving from the mobility programs in Europe,

*In chapter three*, Albanian higher education is described, as well as the condition on which higher education institutions work after the development in the beginning of the 90s. This chapter provides the reader with a background on the changes that occurred in the higher education institutions, such as student admission, university management, financial issues etc.

*In chapter four*, mobility of students and staff during 1992-1999 in Albania is described. In this chapter the reader will find some of the mobility programs aiming at the mobility of students and staff in Albania. In addition, this chapter tries to answer some of the research questions mentioned in the first chapter, by addressing some of the barriers of student and staff mobility. Besides, at the end of this chapter is an examination of the nature and aim of the staff and student mobility in Albania during 1992-1999. This analysis is based on the concept of mobility stated in the framework section.

*In chapter five*, The analysis of some of the institutional barriers in implementing the Bologna agreement in Albania will be provided. This evaluation is based on the framework of the concepts of bottom –up and top- down by Gornitzka, Stensaker & Kyvik

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*In chapter six* This thesis will conclude by giving a summary of the study, as well as, some suggestions for future developments.



## **2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

If we look at the meaning of the word mobility, we will find different interpretations. However, one explanation, which gives a clear idea about this concept, is mobility as the movement of people in a population, from place to place, from job to job, or from one social class, or level to another. (Info Place Dictionary 2005)

In this study I will look at a student and staff mobility, focusing on the mobility between universities from one institution in one country to another institution in another country. For this purpose, a number of theoretical concepts from the theories of internationalization of higher education and policy implementation will be useful for answering the research questions stated at the first chapter of this study.

*First*, a historic overview of the mobility of students and staff in Europe will be presented in this chapter. This part will aim to establish a background, by mentioning some of the mobility programs in Europe, which will facilitate the understanding of the developments in mobility programs in Europe. *Secondly*, European cooperation programs, which influenced the mobility of students and staff, will be examined. *Thirdly*, an analysis of the expectations deriving from the mobility programs in our days in Europe will be emphasized.

As this study focuses on the mobility of students and staff in the framework of the Bologna agreement, it is useful to explain and give a definition of the concept of mobility, which is going to be used in this study. According to Baumgratz-Ganlg (1996, 104), there are two concepts that people attribute to mobility.

*The first one* is the geographical one. This definition applies to students and academics, as well as researchers in higher education who move from one institution in one country to another institution abroad for a fixed or indeterminate period. This geographical approach to mobility is supposed to produce intellectual effects on individuals, which

enlarge their general and social qualifications in addition to their disciplinary and/ or professional ones. Consequently, mobility here is seen as a means of achieving them.

*The second* prospective is from a political approach. In the European Community, mobility is regarded as means of inducing institutional change, as well as, causing change in conditions within higher education institutions. According to Baumgratz-Ganlg, the reason for change is to qualify the work force for the single market and western European Integration.

From the two perspectives mentioned above, the second concept of mobility is more appropriate for the analyzes in this study. However, I have to add that mobility in higher education in nowadays is not expected to reinforce the concept of the Western European integration, but to reinforce the concept of the European integration<sup>2</sup> in general, as the political order in Europe has changed.

The second theoretical concept on which the last chapter of this study is going to be based is the *Implementation Analysis in Higher Education* (Gornitzka, Stensaker & Kyvik 2002). As emphasized above, the Bologna Agreement is a process which was agreed internationally. However, as stated in the Bologna Declaration, universities are expected to respond promptly and positively and contribute actively to the success of the endeavor (1999:4).

Consequently, on the national level the main actors for the success of this process are higher education institutions (universities in our case)<sup>3</sup>. From this perspective, the Bologna Agreement seems to have a top-down approach. Nevertheless, as it is emphasized by Jurgen, Jeliaskova and Maassen, the combination of top- down and bottom- up approaches is most appropriate for making sense of the complex world of policy practices (Enders, Jeliaskova, Aims & Maassen 2003, 13).

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<sup>2</sup> I use the concept European Integration instead of Western European integration, because a lot has changed in Europe ( specially in the political situation), since the year when the book was written in 1996

<sup>3</sup> I include universities and not all higher education institutions, as the Bologna agreement is implemented by a large extend in the universities, specially this is the case in Albanian higher education institutions

We will see these two perspectives in the last chapter of this study, when I will analyze the way universities have approached the Bologna Declaration, and what this means in relation with the barriers that they experience in implementing this process.

Based on the experience presented above, the fifth chapter of this thesis will analyze the implementation of the Bologna agreement in the Albanian universities having as a starting point the top-down and the bottom-up approaches. However, it is important to mention here the fact that this study does not attempt to find the successes or the failures of the implementation of the Bologna agreement in Albanian universities for two main reasons; *first* because this is not the aim of this thesis and *second* because mobility is still not a reality in the Albanian universities.

Nevertheless, what will be analyzed in the last chapter of this study, is the experience of the Albanian universities in implementing one of the objectives of the Bologna agreement, that of mobility.

## **2.1 A Historic Overview on Mobility**

The historic overview on mobility described below, will give to the reader a solid background of the concept, and will help them understand the changes in mobility in Europe over the years.

Mobility in Europe has always been in the heart of universities and higher education since the Middle Ages. In the twelfth and thirteen centuries, where there were not many universities and they were not widely distributed over Europe, the “happy few” who aspired to higher education had to live home and travel long distances (Ruegg 1994) Later on, renaissance teachers look upon study abroad as the culmination of humanistic education of young members of the elite (Ruegg 1996) Toward 1500 the number of students, especially foreign students, in European universities increased. The geographic mobility of teachers and students reached its peak in the later half of the sixteenth century

and the first half of the seventeenth century. In this period the migration of prosperous students was encouraged by the new humanistic ideas on teaching, which helped the nobility to cope with the new cultural and intellectual demands of the fast changing society. (1996:417) Referring to the history of universities in Europe, we can say that the first decades of the sixteenth century were the golden ages of wandering scholars. Intellectuals and humanists traveled all over Europe from east to west and north to south, attracted by the famous professors. Some of the universities that attracted foreign students were those of Louvain, Valence and Bourges.

This pattern of student mobility decreased towards the mid-sixteenth century, by the reformation of the universities. The argument was that foreign universities were a source of religious and political contamination, as well as, that emigration brought great economic and financial losses on the University city. However, at the root of these reforms, was the ambition of each ruler to have his own university controlled, in which his officers and clergy could be trained in particular religious and political ideas. The following decades, were characterized by a flow of foreign students to those universities which were more opened to accept students from different religious and social classes.

Nevertheless, the mobility of students and staff up to the 1700 was an important and essential part of the university history. Even the roads were bad and unsafe and the transport primitive, thousands and thousands of young people traveled around Europe in search of knowledge, culture and adventure. On the other hand, it was in the nineteenth century, in 1812, when Wilhelm von Humboldt pleaded the King of Prussia to restore freedom to study abroad, by removing the prohibiting rules of previous regimes. It can easily be noticed that with Humboldt begins a new area in university history.

## **2.2 European Cooperation Programs**

*2.2.1 The Beginning of Mobility through Institutional Cooperation in Europe*

In the nineteenth century, European national states played a very important role in the development and the building of the modern university. According to Scott (1998), the modern university is a typical national institution; as a result with the development of the national state, universities were less international and not many scholars and students were attracted by the idea of studying abroad.

However, referring to Van der Wende & Middlehurst (2003), in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a gradual change in the extend to which higher education policy was nationally determined and oriented. It is important to mention here that, geo-political factors played a crucial role in the change of university and government patterns related to mobility and internationalization of higher education. During the Second World War, the governments became conscious that, if peace were to be given a chance, this would mean engaging the minds of the citizens of all nations. As a result, UNESCO was launched to play an important role in the new world structures, particularly in the field of global cooperation in education and science. (Barblan 2002, 2).

Despite, the initiatives initiated by UNESCO after the Second World War at the end of 1940s, mobility in post-war Europe was not easy, because of the lack of transport infrastructure, as well as, the border and exchange controls everywhere. Moreover, many academic links in the tradition university life had been cut off by the world conflict. Recreating a European academic community was not certainly simple. In the 50s and 60s Europe was divided in two parts, the west and the east. The ideology and the political ideas of the east have very much influenced the academic mobility within European Universities. Referring to Barblan, the CRE (today the European University Association, which helped develop the European dimension of higher education) in the end of the 60s was more western than ever before. Its membership covered the countries that were members of the Council of Europe.

The rectors of individual institutions were in charge of academic cooperation and mobility. Consequently, in the fifties and early sixties, it was obvious that international relations were the task of the academic head. Well known scientist used their prestige in establishing external linkages, nationally or internationally. However, it must be added that universities were smaller and the collegial governance allowed their elective leaders to take detached views of the role of their institution.

In the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s there was a change in the management of higher education institutions (Barblan 2002, 11). Universities were facing a mass higher education, consequently, universities had to cope with changed teaching requirements while receiving less support per student. On the other hand there were new institutions growing, which were competing with the older universities. In the light of recent changes, the adjustment of universities within the new environment was translated from university to university collaboration, into collaboration on department level. Moving from the level of center management, universities were indeed entering the level of department collaboration. This shift of responsibility ensured the teaching of various disciplines, whose international and multilateral approach was being encouraged. According to Barblan (2002, 12), this was the prove, the main booster of academic cooperation in the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Europe was different, the communist east was changing. The events in Italy (the assassination of Aldo Moro in Bologna in 1980) and in France in 1979 were considered as too volatile in Europe to allow institutional cooperation between universities on the two sides of the continent. (Barblan 2002, 14).

Nevertheless, at the end of the 80s there was an attempt to bring together the East and the West. It was the conference in Warsaw from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1988 that discussed the role of the university as crucial to European culture. In this conference there were 90 participants, and 30 representing universities from non member EU countries (only Romania and Albania were missing). The countries that participated in this conference insisted on the idea to be part of a common European culture, “a culture” that will take in

to consideration ideological differences and make academic cooperation a necessity. The idea behind this conference was to launch a program for East/ West cooperation in environmental sciences, which later became the *Copernicus program*, attributed to the Polish hosts of the meeting. (Ibid, 19).

In the beginning of the 90s there were three new objectives that the European University Association had to face, a. to integrate in the association the universities from Eastern and Central Europe, b. to integrate the policies of the European academic cooperation, c. and to integrate the member institutions in the wider Atlantic context of collaboration with North and South America. (Ibid, 21) Referring again to Barblan, in the beginning of the 90s, the commitment to Europe needed, to become the commitment to “other Europeans”. Consequently, in August 1990, the General Assembly in Helsinki, discussed the need for cooperation among Eastern and Central European universities. A lot of ideas were exchanged about the adoption of the new context of community programs like ERASMUS, COMETT or LEONARDO. Collaboration in a structured network of institutions, focusing for a few years on the specific concerns seemed the only way to cope with many different problems and ambitions of former “socialist” universities. Different partners, that represented the university association in Europe, national agencies like DAAD (“*Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst*”, The German Academic Exchange Service), and the think tanks of European affairs, like the Institute for Education and Social Policy in Paris, decided to set up a consortium and proposed that the European Commission, manage what was being discussed as the new TEMPUS program. A fund for Tempus program was won in 1991. (Ibid, 21).

### 2.2.2 *European Mobility Programs*

Universities, in the nineties were overflowed with a growing number of exchange students, and this was particularly due to the success of the ERASMUS<sup>4</sup> program. The integration of ERASMUS was based on the commitment of the professors ready to

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<sup>4</sup> SOCRATES/ERASMUS is an exchange program of EU. The main purpose of it is to make it easier for exchange students to study abroad and to strengthen the cooperation between research institutions.

compare their courses with those of colleagues in other countries, and to adapt teaching, so that the home and the visiting students would develop a sense of common values, which was translated later into the European Transfer Credit System (ECTS). (Barblan 2002, 23).

According to Van der Wende & Middlehurst, it was since the early 80s that the interests in education cooperation increased in the context of the European Commission policies, aiming at the completion of a single market by 1992 and the development of the “European citizenship”(2003:4). In this line a generation of mobility programs was launched such as, COMET (a program for cooperation between higher education and industry in the field of technology in 1986) and ERASMUS in 1987, which was followed by a range of other programs such as, DELTA, PETRA, LINGUA<sup>5</sup> etc.

Referring to the data on the number of Erasmus students studying abroad, during the first year (1987/ 88) some 3200 students exchanges took place. During the years 2000/1 there were 111.100. Today there are more than a million students who have studied abroad under the sponsorship of the Erasmus program (Van der Wende & Middlehurst 2003, 4). According to Papatsiba the rationale underlying the Erasmus student mobility can be placed under two main headings. (Papatsiba 2005)

*Firstly*, - An economic and a professional rationale of student mobility. The latter is seen as a means to promote the European labor market, it would predispose individuals to cross borders during their professional career more easily.

*Secondly*- There is a civil rationale of students’ mobility in the view of creating European citizens. Student mobility would forge European consciousness and would be a means to reach international understanding. (Ibid, 4)

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<sup>5</sup> LINGUA program was a program for the promotion of foreign language competence in the European Community. PETRA action program was a program for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for life.



Nevertheless, the Erasmus program is not the only program that was incited in Europe with the aim of reaching international understanding and promoting a European labor market.

Nevertheless, some countries in Europe were not included in this program, and the main reason for not joining was the political situation at the end of the 80s where a number of East European countries were still under socialist empire. Albania was one of the countries which were not involved directly or indirectly in ERASMUS. However according to Dr. Aleksander Xhuvani, Director of the International Office in the Polytechnic University in Tirana, there is an attempt in the university sector, but also in the government to be involved in the ERASMUS network. However, this step will require strong collaboration among all actors to facilitate the mobility of students and academics. At the end of the millennium, in 1998, a great initiative, with the aim of reaching better convergence between higher education systems was taken by four European countries (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom). The four countries gathered, called upon other European countries in the Sorbonne Declaration to join them, in the effort to harmonize the architecture of the Higher Education system in Europe. In response, 29 European countries expressed their intent to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 by signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999. (Van der Wende & Middlehurst 2003, 8)

One of the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration is the incensement of international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. In the Bologna document it is stated clearly that the vitality and efficiency of any civilization can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions. (Bologna Declaration 1999, 2)

It was decided in the Bologna Declaration that, for realizing the ambition of establishing the European Area of Higher Education and for promoting the European system of higher education throughout the world, the following objectives must be considered:

1. The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. The adoption of a system with two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate)
3. The establishment of a system of credits (such as ECTS)
4. The promotion of mobility by overcoming legal recognition and administrative obstacles
5. The promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. The promotion of a European dimension in higher education

The Bologna Declaration is an agreement which represents a great change in the development of European higher education. By signing the Bologna Agreement, each country committed itself to reforming its higher education system. In the years that followed, the Bologna Agreement was discussed in the Bologna conferences in Prague, Berlin and Bergen. In each conference, new objectives were added to the agreement and new countries (but not only) from the European Union were joining the initiative. In the Berlin conference, an additional area of collaboration was emphasized, regarding a closer link between European Higher Education Area with the European Research Area. Consequently, a third cycle, the degree of PhD studies, was added to the system with two main cycles (3 years of bachelor and 2 years master)

It is obvious that behind the idea of the Bologna Agreement and the establishment of European Higher Education Area by 2010, is the philosophy of having a competitive European higher education, able to compete with North American higher education. In accordance with this philosophy, and being conscious about the challenges related to globalization and the knowledge- based –driven economy. The heads of states and governments of the EU countries decided to meet in Lisbon in March 2000.

In this meeting they agreed on the following strategic target for 2010. (Van der Wende & Middlehurst 2003, 11) “To become the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Lisbon Strategy 2000).

However, to reach this goal required not only economic changes but also changes in the social welfare and the education system of European countries. Consequently, the European Commission defined a new approach to the political co-ordination applicable in areas of education and training. This approach was the open method of coordination<sup>6</sup>, whose main purpose is to achieve greater convergence toward the main EU goals, by helping member states to develop their own policies. This method of open coordination, with the common objectives that will be translated in the national action plans and the implementation through a follow up and peer review showed a close relation with the Bologna Declaration. Consequently, the Lisbon Strategy together with the Bologna Declaration attempts to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010.

### **2.3 Expectations Deriving from Mobility Programs**

In reference to the mobility concept above, what can be noticed is that the concept of mobility has changed very much with time. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the first wondering students were those that were attracted by famous professors, or were looking for adventure in European countries. Referring again to Baumgratz-Ganlg (1996:104) there are two concepts of mobility, a) the geographical one. This is a definition, which applies to students and academics, as well as researchers in higher education who move from one institution in one country to another institution abroad for a fixed or indeterminate period. Consequently, this geographic mobility is supposed to produce intellectual effects on individuals, which enlarge their general and social qualifications in addition to their disciplinary and/ or professional ones. The second concept b) mobility is regarded as a means of inducing institutional change, as well as a result of changing conditions within higher education institutions.

Considering the above statements and referring to the historic overview of mobility explained above, what can be noticed is that mobility of students and staff in our days has changed in terms of the expectations and the outcomes of mobility. Especially, from the

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<sup>6</sup> This process of change that derives from the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy will be carried out in each country according to national contexts and traditions.

Second World War, when higher education and academic collaboration were considered as important tools for the shaping of the European culture and identity. This does not mean that there is no individual mobility today, or that there are no students and researchers who are mobile in search of professional qualifications.

Yet, what can be noticed is that with the beginning of mobility programs such as ERASMUS, LEONARDO, SOCRAES and TEMPUS in East European countries other expectations were associated to mobility of students and staff. For instance, as Papatsiba mentions in her article, promoting student mobility was not an act of limited ambition, but on the contrary, an initiative aiming at the foundation of a system of higher education institutions at a European level. ( Papatsiba 2006, 108).

Indeed we have to admit the fact that in the old days the mobility of students and researchers was from one direction, from the developing countries to the developed countries. Consequently, student and staff mobility was one-way rather than reciprocal (Teichler 1998, 90).

Nevertheless, the new mobility programs encouraged by the European Union and the Bologna Agreement, expect the process of mobility to have a different impact on different levels. For instance, increasing the competitiveness of the European higher education system, creating better chances for employment and more job opportunities, establishing and reinforcing European identity.

#### **2.4 The Change of the Concept of Mobility**

Mobility was a process which was present in universities since the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, as higher education institutions, this process has undergone important transformations. After the Second World War mobility, and academic collaboration were emphasized in higher education. Consequently, the aim of the mobility programs had changed from, mobility that brought individual advantages to a more complex form of

mobility, which was initiating institutional change, curriculum changes, changes in the organization of universities, the launching of European identity, etc.

The conceptual framework elaborated in this chapter will help understand better this process of mobility, the new expectations of this process, how it has developed and the advantages and challenges that this process brings to the higher education institutions.

The second prospective, the top-down and bottom-up approaches elaborated by Gornitzka Stensaker & Kyvik will help in analyzing one of the processes, which is very much discussed in higher education, the Bologna Declaration. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, for this process it was agreed internationally, however universities play a crucial role in the success or the failure of this process. Consequently, the bottom-up and top-down approaches will lead us in understanding some of the barriers that institutions in Albania face in implementing this ambitious process.

Considering, the expectations mentioned above, which derive from mobility programs it is understandable that higher education in European countries is under pressure to fulfill the objectives, of these programs. I decided to focus on these two approaches the top-down and bottom-up as these prospective offers a more valuable understanding of the way universities approached the Bologna Process. For this reason, in the next chapters the way higher education institutions in Albania (as the main actors in the success of these initiatives) face these challenges will be analyzed.

However, to have a clearer picture of the way higher education institutions are organized and work in Albania, chapter three will give background information on higher education in Albania, and on the way higher education institutions are organized.

### **3. Albanian Higher Education**

Higher education in Albania has experienced in the last years important transformation on all levels. The transformations were rapid, and they involved changes in the quality and quantity of higher education. These transformations were the result of changes that happened in the Albanian society after the fall of socialism<sup>7</sup> in the beginning of 90s (Theodhori 2004, 49).

In the beginning of the 90s Albanian higher education institutions were required to adapt to the new political and economic circumstances and at the same time change the conditions on which, higher education institutions work, such as, university management, financial situation, criteria for student admission, research, etc. On the other hand, on the government level new reforms were developed for improving the services in higher education such as, research and teaching. New forms of collaboration were visible in higher education institutions, aiming at the training of staff and inducing curriculum change almost in all disciplines.

To give a cleared background on higher education in Albania, it is important to present a historic overview of higher education in Albania, and the way higher education institutions have developed. Consequently, this chapter provides some historic background on higher education in Albania, as well as, a review of some of the government agreements and higher education laws.

#### **3.1 Albanian Higher Education System**

In a paper written in 2001 Hagelund (2001) wrote that the beginning of 1990s there were peaceful changes taking place in the economic and political system.

Albania started a process of reform from one of the most Stalinist and totalitarian communist regimes towards a more democratic form of government. The road towards the type of society that Albanians would like to have, with material goods, human rights

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term *socialism* because the political system during 1946- 1990s in Albania was called socialism, (and Albania was part of socialist camp), however in other literature the term *communism* is also used

and development possibilities for the individual, has not been easy. Economic development started out with impressive results, but unfortunately it later emerged that these good results were not really based on any thorough reform of the economic system. (Hagelund 2001, 4)

Higher education, as one of the main institutions which experienced important transformations during the beginning of 90s, is one of the examples of an institution that is still in the middle of important changes.

Yet, we have to admit that higher education in Albania is quite new. The first institutions were opened after the Second World War. The pioneer of higher education was the pedagogical institute which was a two year institution and its aim was to prepare high school teachers. Later, more higher education institutions were opened; however, it was only in September 1957 that the first university was established. As the University was established during the period when the socialist party was ruling, the main stakeholder of this institution was the state, and higher education in general was an invention of the socialist party. There was no higher education system before the Second World War. In the past students studied at foreign universities, mainly in Eastern Europe. Higher education in Albania was established not only to prepare students in different disciplines, but also to spread the philosophy of the ruling party, and in some way to serve as a tool, by preparing the coming generation with socialist philosophy.

### *3.1.1 Important Changes in the Higher Education System*

The change of the political system in 1992 after the students strike in 1990 was followed by radical changes in all institutions in Albania. Higher education institutions, as one of the important sources for the diffusion of the socialist philosophy to the new generation, was undergoing important transformations. The government and the donor community place a very high priority on education. However, many problems remain to be solved. The major problem concerns traditional teaching methods with rote learning and rigid state curricula which stand in the way of innovation and initiative. The lack of modern

teaching materials and acceptable physical framework also plague educational institutions (Hagelund 2001, 8).

### *3.1.2 University Management*

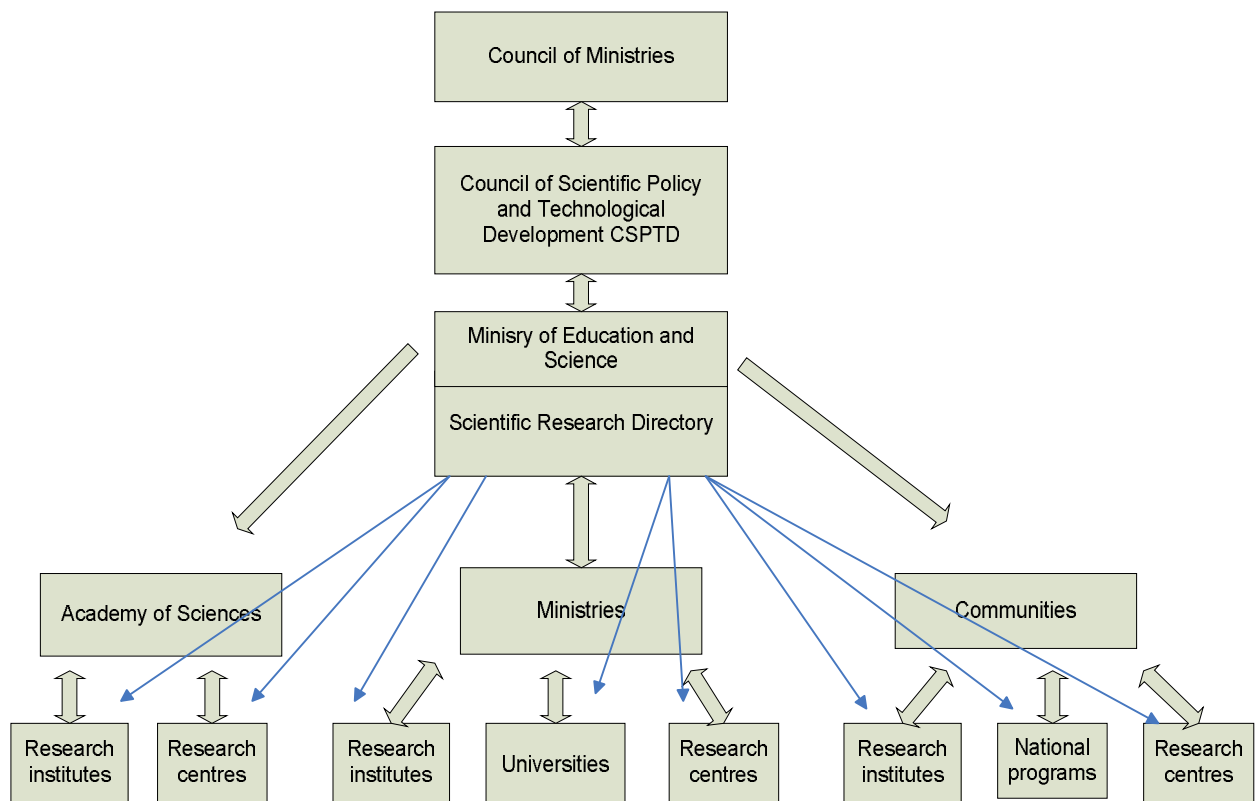
The first University Act entered into force in 1994 and in 1999 it was replaced by a new Act which, was developed following the recommendations of foreign experts. The Act defines the institutional landscape with the Ministry of Education, state and private educational institutions, the Rectors' Conference and the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Institute. There are rules concerning the election of leaders (Rector, Deputy Rector, Deans, Heads of Department), about governing bodies, budgets, personnel, students and studies and the division of competence between the Ministry of Education and the local leaders and bodies. Academic freedom and the autonomy of the institutions in certain areas receive explicit mention.

Yet, there is quite a distance from the letter of the law to reality. On the one hand, foreign expertise has also been used in drawing up a modern University Act. While there can be no doubt about the expertise and good intentions of these advisers, as there has been no real legislative process up to now with public hearings or incorporation of representatives of the interested parties, this Act, like so many others, seems abstract and remote from reality. Many questions of doubt arise when an Act is drawn up on the basis of foreign models, and these cannot be clarified by means of traditional methods of interpreting laws as there are no contributions to an interpretation such as responses from hearings, parliamentary debates, committee reports and the like (Ibid, 8).

On the other hand, referring to the university management, the former centralist top-management model is still firmly in the place and the superior authorities hold on to power, while it is difficult for the subordinate bodies to take the initiative to exploit possibilities for autonomy. The financial situation at the universities is a good example.



The actual landscape of higher education and research in Albania is shown in Fig 1. The scheme presented below is based on four documents on science and research in the Republic of Albania. The documents are; Law on Science and Technological Development, Law on Higher Education, Statute of the Academy of Sciences, Ministerial Decisions and Regulations.



*Fig 1. Structure of Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Albania*

(adopted from [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al))

The council of Ministries is the main body responsible for the “macro” policies concerning higher education and research in Albania. The Council of Ministers approves the Science and Technological Development Policy upon the proposal of the Council on Science Policy and Technological Development, makes decisions on establishment, closure or fusion of research institutions, and makes decision on the distribution of funds

for the National Development Programs upon the proposal of the Council on Scientific Policy and Technological Development.

The Council of Scientific Policy and Technology Development is responsible for identifying and conducting appropriate science and technology policy for the social and economic development of the country, it adopts the directions and priorities of science and technology policy, and approves the national research and development programs. The Council comments on law and decision drafts related to scientific and technological activities that are forwarded for adoption to Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The Council performs periodical assessment of science and technology policy developments and defines tasks for the state institutions concerning the development and utilization of scientific potentials. It sets up interim or permanent commissions or working groups on specific issues and makes decision on National Programs and proposes to the Council of Ministers the distribution of funds (Ministry of Education and Science in Albania 2005).

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main government body responsible for higher education and research in Albania, and national programs including financing. Ministry of Education and Science in Albania is also responsible for developing policy in higher education. The Ministry serves at the same time as main information source for the community, for the bilateral agreements, and for supporting the institutions in different activities and actions. (Ministry of Education and Science in Albania 2005).

The Academy of Sciences is the main body for research in higher education in different disciplines. This institution is also responsible for initiating different research projects in accordance with the needs of the country. The Academy of Science establishes a close link with the universities aiming at the integration of teaching and research (Ministry of Education and Science in Albania 2005).

The scientific research directory is a structure in the Ministry of Education and Science, which has a close link with the research centers and institutions as well as other Ministries. The main objective of this directory is the development of links with national and international programs, which enable at the same time the mobility of researchers

working in the research centers as well as that of administrative staff working in the different ministries.

Communities are groups consisting of scientists and researchers, organizations, group of organizations in different disciplines, which are not involved in the research conducted in the Academy of Science. However, these people or organizations may be involved in different research institutions and centers and work for the development of National Programs in different disciplines of science and technology. The actual number of higher education institutions is eleven of which nine are public universities (the last one will open only this academic year) and two are academies.

As it can be easily noticed from the fig.1 above, there is a large number of research institutes and research centers. The actual number of research institutes and centers under the Ministries is forty six. For this purpose, the actual government is undertaking different reforms in higher education with the aim of decreasing the number of research institutes and centers. The remaining will be part of the structure of universities. The rationale under this reform is that the actual structure of research is very expensive for the state budget.

### *3.1.3 Financial Situation*

The financial situation of universities in terms of the University Act is that all university budgetary units (the Rector' office, the faculties, the departments) are autonomous and can spend the funds allocated to them as needed. This provision is an innovation in relation to earlier practice, therefore it has not had any effect as yet. As in so many other countries, approximately 80% of the budget is for payroll while the remainder can be used for other purposes. Funds that have not been used up by the end of the year revert to the Treasury. However, by tradition no free funds are disbursed de-centrally; only funds for payroll are disbursed to the faculties which administer the paying of salaries (Ibid, 9). According to Cino & File, increase in the education and research budget is one of the objectives that the government needs to focus on.

Public higher education in Albania is financed by the government. However, with the increase in student numbers in universities other forms of financing are necessary. According to the authors, other sources of financing make only 2-3% of the whole budget for higher education (Cino & File 1997).

#### *3.1.4 Admission*

Admission at universities is the process which, as all other elements that characterize higher education in Albania, has lately undergone important transformations. Before the 90s the number of the candidates to be admitted in each discipline was planned in conformity with the needs of the economy. Priority was given to those who achieved the best results in their secondary education, because it was assumed that these candidates will be best able to fulfill the requirements for the training of specialists. Candidates were also judged according to their political and moral- ethical standing. (Misja, Teta & Kallulli 1986, 14)

Soon after, the changes in the political system in the 90s, to enter a program of study at an institution of higher education in Albania, one had to win a place at the admission exam. Each year the Ministry of Education laid down the number of places following negotiations with the institutions. However, it was difficult to win a place at popular fields of study such as law and economics, but applicants for less popular study programs also had to fulfill a certain minimum requirement in the competition (Hagelund 2001, 10).

Nevertheless, after trying the competition system for several years, analysts concluded that this form of competition is open to corruption. Consequently, the academic year 2006-2007 admission to universities will be changed. The new policy invites candidates to apply in March, and the criteria for applying are a) the average of the marks that the students get in secondary school, b) the performance in the two exams, which are obligatory for each student that finishes secondary school and c) the performance in the

two exams that the student takes (the discipline of these two exams varies according to the discipline that the students decides to apply for the university) (Alicka 2006). Although, the new scheme seems attractive and ambitious, there is a lot of skepticism among academics and students, for the way the process will be managed. For the students it is a new experience and all the documents and exams that they have to take make this process more complex for them. However, we have to wait until the next academic year to see the advantages and disadvantages of this new initiative, which according to the analysts tries to “reform” econdary school, as well. (Llambiri 2006)

### *3.1.5 Employment at Universities.*

The appointment procedure is one of the areas of competence that has now been decentralized to the faculties. There is no executive order on appointments as in other western universities, but the rules concerning public appointments<sup>8</sup> also apply to the universities. Positions are publicly advertised and the departments receive applications. The Department Board appoints an evaluation committee consisting of a number of permanent teachers who are supplemented by a representative of the Rector’s office and a representative of the Dean’s office. This committee does not see the applications before the day on which a decision is to be made. All applicants are called in for a certain time when they also get the opportunity to meet their fellow applicants and the evaluation committee. They are then called in, one by one, to a brief interview led by the Head of Department after which the committee makes a decision, which is immediately communicated orally. (Hagelund 2001, 7) However, due to economic and political instability that Albania has been experiencing many years now, working at the universities has been quite unattractive for academics. Consequently, a considerable number of professors and teachers have emigrated to foreign countries. Countries like Canada and Australia advertise for people with higher education but the USA and Western European countries are also attractive. Young post-graduates who have spent

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<sup>8</sup> Act no. 8549 of 11.11.1999 on the Status of the Civil Servant

some time as Master's students in another country often remain there when they have completed their studies (Ibid).

However, for the new government (which won the elections in July 2005) education is a priority. In collaboration with the European Commission, the government is launching a program called the "Brain Gain", which targets the academics and students who have finished their masters and PhDs abroad. The program aims at creating possibilities for this group of academics to come and contribute their knowledge in Albanian universities by giving lectures for a semester, or a shorter period. (UNDP 2006)

In addition, since the system changed in 1992 there were some efforts to train existing staff in Western European, and American universities, through involving them in different mobility programs. (Ministry of Education Report 1993)

### *3.1.6 Studies and Students*

During the academic year 2005-2006 most of the fields are trying to adapt to the 3 years bachelor and 2 years master cycles. As Tirana University together with other universities in Albania has started to adapt their curriculum to the Bologna structure (a more detailed explanation of this reform will be provided in the next chapter of this study). At present, the possibilities for further education to Master's or PhD level are very few and even though there is work in progress to introduce such courses, this will not be realized for some time yet in particular due to the lack of teachers who are qualified to conduct research. It is thus general practice that the best-qualified young teachers take a Master's degree abroad and this trend will most likely increase in scope. However, there is an unfortunate tendency for the Albanian Master's students to stay on in the country in which they have spent a long time during their Master's studies. Thus, they do not return to participate in capacity building in Albania. (Hagelund 2001)

Nevertheless, lately the number of students that attend master courses in Albania universities has increased. The situation is similar with the PhD students. The actual

numbers are 600 students in Master programme and 150 students in Doctoral programmes. Indeed, the number of students that study on the master level and PhD level is small, this is mainly because, higher education institutions have a limited number of places for such programmes. The most active areas for such programmes are engineering, natural sciences and education (Qano 2004, 1)

In spite of the fact that the study programs in particular have been improved on a number of elements, teaching at the universities is still characterized by old fashioned teaching methods with rote learning and factual information being prioritized over discussion and analysis. Teaching usually consists of lectures where the professor talks while the students listen or take notes. The material is later gone through once more at a seminar. Written work, group work and exercises are rare.(Hagelund 2001, 14)

In this chapter I had a closer look on Albanian higher education and the higher education institutions in Albania. The description above is based mostly on some of the new developments that are occurring in higher education institutions. I have decided to focus more on the recent trends for two main reasons, a) because this is going to help the reader to understand the mobility of student and staff in the next chapter, as well as the barriers that higher education institutions face in implementing the Bologna Agreement and b) because the literature that is written before the 90s on higher education is heavily influenced by the political regime at that time.

After describing some of the conditions on which higher education works, the next chapter focuses on the mobility of students and staff. In the fourth chapter, I am going to analyze the mobility of students and staff based on the framework of the concept of the mobility, analyzed in the second chapter of this study. In the next chapter we will also try to answer some of the research questions mentioned in the first chapter.

## **4. Mobility of Students and Staff in Albania**

In the previous chapter I have briefly described higher education in Albania, and the way higher education is organized in higher education institutions. In this chapter I will focus more on the mobility of students and staff in Albanian universities. For understanding the process of mobility in the beginning of the 90s in higher education institutions, and for describing some of the government initiatives, which aimed at influencing student and staff mobility, I will address some of the research questions mentioned in the first chapter of this study. For instance, what were the barriers regarding the mobility of students and staff in the beginning of 90s in Albania? How the government influenced the mobility of student and staff in the 90s? What are some of the policies developed at that time, which aimed at facilitating the mobility process? What kind of mobility was there in Albania during 92-99?

For answering the above questions an analysis of mobility programs such as TEMPUS, and joint agreements between the Ministry of Education and other Ministries of Education in the foreign countries. In the second part of this chapter an analysis of student and staff mobility in Albania, based on the data mentioned above, will be presented. The aim of this analysis will be to understand what kind of mobility we had in Albania during 1992-1999? And what was the aim of this mobility?

### **4.1 Barriers on Students and Staff Mobility**

The topic mentioned in the first chapter of this study and better developed in the third chapter, will be further elaborated in this chapter. Higher education institutions are quite young institutions. However, they have been a very important tool for the political and economical developments of the country.

Referring to, Misja, Teta & Kallulli (1986), higher education institutions in Albania used to rely only on themselves due to the political and ideological philosophy that Albania had chosen to follow.



However, when the political system changed, it was one of the objectives of the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with universities at that time, to establish new relations with partner universities in foreign countries. New challenges were presented to higher education, in terms of university management, student recruitment, curriculum development, teaching and research that resulted in promoting the mobility of students and staff in foreign universities

In short, higher education institutions were facing important changes. They had to invest in the curriculum change in almost all disciplines. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with higher education institutions had to open new branches, especially in the social sciences, as some social sciences faculties did not exist at all, and for instance sociology, philosophy, and others like law and economy were full of ideological literature. Consequently, these changes in the curriculum and structure of the programs did not need only foreign expertise, but also staff to be trained abroad and bring their experiences to the university.

However, in implementing the process of mobility for students and staff, barriers had to be considered. Referring to Prifti (1993), one of the difficulties was the level of teaching and research in higher education institutions at that time in Albania. The quality of research and teaching in Albanian universities was not able to meet the criteria of West European and North American higher education systems. Consequently, because of the different level of quality, an Albanian diploma could not be recognized abroad. This fact represented a barrier to the mobility of academics and students.

Therefore, there was a need to work on the recognition of degrees. For this reason, a center for the recognition of diplomas, like in other countries of the region, had to be established.

On the other hand, the legislation also presented problems. During the years 1992-1994, higher education institutions were basically working with the old law from the socialist regime. It was only in 1994, when with the help of foreign expertise higher education law entered in force. Yet, the legal framework is not complete even with the existing law,

especially concerning student mobility. An analyzes of the legislation concerning student mobility will be provided below

#### **4.2 The Government's Influence on Student and staff Mobility in the 90s.**

The process of mobility of students and staff has been very much discussed and prioritized in the higher education arena. Especially after the change of the political and economic system in Albania, the two higher education laws, that of 1994 and the last one in 1999, contributed to the mobility of students and staff. Nevertheless, mobility has to go through bureaucratic and difficult procedures.

It is clearly expressed in the two laws that academic staff has the possibility to be trained outside the country every seven years, or work in foreign universities for up to one year. On the other had, academic staff is allowed to attend full qualifications abroad, however these qualifications have to pass criteria, and the plans have to be accepted and recognized in advance. (Higher Education Law 1994, 1999)

For student's mobility, procedures are more difficult and time consuming. In the law of 1994, it is written that students form outside Albania can be accepted to attend studies in Albanian universities through criteria approved by the Council of Ministers proposed by the Council of Higher Education Institutions in Albania. In the law of 1999 the enrolment of foreign students was made possible through quotas approved again by the Council of Ministers, but this time proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania. However, every year from 1992 there were quotas for students outside Albanian borders. Nevertheless, these quotas were mainly for students from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro who were able to speak and communicate in Albanian language. All the disciplines offered in Albanian universities are in Albanian language.

Yet, due to the involvement of Albania in the Bologna process, changes were made to the higher education law of 1999 in the summer of 2003. However, what was added to the law was only the new organization of the studies in 8 years, 3 years bachelor, 2 years

master and 3 years doctorate studies according the Bologna process. In addition to study structures, the ECTS system was also introduced. In accordance with these changes, in the academic year 2005-2006 all the Albanian Universities are implementing the ECTS system for the first time.

In this respect, for student mobility it is important to emphasize an “*order*” approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania in July of 2004 (which, was not expressed in the law) (Theodhori 2004, 62). In this “*order*” it is stated that universities expected to organize the analysis and the evaluation of the documents for students who have studied abroad for a period of time, but have not completed their studies and want to transfer their studies to Albania. In this case, a committee is created in the faculty where the student is applying to continue his/her studies. After the analysis of the all documents, the committee sends to the dean the result of the evaluation. The dean presents the result to the rector of the university who has the final decision.

All these procedures make it very difficult for an Albanian student who has studied abroad to transfer his/her studies to a university in Albania. This procedure clearly shows that there is still centralization in higher education institutions in Albania.

#### *4.2.1 Mobility Agreements*

In this section it is useful to mention also the role that joint agreements between the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania and other foreign Ministries of Education played in the mobility of students and staff. Analyzing some of them, I can say that after the 90s the number of mobility programs coordinated by the Ministry of Education in Albania was increased. On the other hand, the number of countries with which the collaboration was established was getting larger, and they were from other parts of Europe, compared to the period before the 90s, for instance countries like Italy, Spain, Greece, Rumania, etc. The aims of these mobility programs were different; however most of them tried to establish cultural links between two countries. Consequently, motility was focused on disciplines like, art and languages and less on other disciplines like

sciences and social sciences. However, a considerable number of academics had the chance to attend specialization courses, a full degree in another country, or were enrolled in a master's program organized by the universities.

Each program was different and required the creation of a commission inside the Ministry of Education, which analyzed closely the modalities that were necessary for the recognition of the degrees in the respective countries. On the other hand, this commission was responsible for the selection of the applicants. (Ministry of Education and Science. 1993, 1999)<sup>9</sup>. Although the advantages that this collaboration brought to higher education institution and higher education in general, the procedures of selection are ambiguous and not advertised for students. Consequently, the process was open to corruption and nepotism.

### **4.3 Some of the Mobility Programs which Influenced Student and Staff Mobility.**

Since the political system in Albania changed in the 1992 when, the Democratic Party won the first democratic elections in the same year. There were a great number of foreign agencies and donor projects, which were very active in trying to help the Albanian institutions to adjust to the new environment. In the higher education arena some of the agencies which were very active in helping universities were Tempus Program, Open Society Foundation World Bank, DAAD (mainly for German speaking academics and students,) French Alliance (for French speaking people), British Council etc.

#### *4.3.1 Tempus Program*

Albania was given the opportunity to participate in Tempus projects already in 1992. From the beginning, in accordance with the general strategy, the priority was to work on study programs, training of teachers and administrators and restructuring of the physical

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<sup>9</sup> I use these two years, because in all the agreements during these years, signed by the Ministry the creation of the commission was mention.

facilities<sup>10</sup>, while a later priority has concerned more structural programs such as reform of the university administration, including financial administration, development of quality assurance programs etc.

By way of programs and the TEMPUS project professors have had further training and qualification in their own fields in other countries. The number of professors trained through TEMPUS has hit high numbers. This in turn has contributed to long-term sustainable relations among these institutions.

About 180 individual scholarships for Albanian study trips abroad were granted between 1990 and 1993. (Hagelund 2001, 15). In the latest data for the years 1992 – 2005, the number of professors who participated in the Tempus program was 1100.

Usually, the mobility of students and staff focused more on the Faculties of Agriculture, Natural Sciences and Engineering. The Universities, which were more active and collaborated with TEMPUS program were the Polytechnic University and the Agriculture University in Tirana. In the interview held in the Polytechnic University, Mr. Xhuvani (Director of International Office) explained that through the TEMPUS program a considerable number of students and academics were able to conduct part of their studies, for instance the research part, in Italy or France.

Nevertheless, for TEMPUS to be able to play a larger role in Albania, Albanian universities have to meet the requirement that at least three different countries must participate in the projects, two of which must be EU member states. Consequently, it is no easy matter to build up that kind of partnership between institutions with such widely divergent backgrounds and resource bases. In addition, bureaucratic systems within the EU can be difficult to deal with. This latter problem has also been acknowledged by the Tempus administration and efforts will be made to simplify application procedures in Tempus III program. (Ibid, 17)

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<sup>10</sup> In Sampson's opinion, to date the EU PHARE/TACIS program has been one of the most significant contributors of transitional development assistance in Eastern Europe (p.126).

Universities involved in the TEMPUS program, which cooperated with the Albanian Universities, are listed at the end of this chapter (p. 51) In addition, a list of the funds spread over the years in the TEMPUS Program is included at the end of this chapter.

#### *4.3.2 Other Mobility Programs*

Together with TEMPUS program in Albania, there are also foreign agencies, and embassies, which play an important role in the mobility of students and staff. For instance the Open Society Foundation has been very active in the field of higher education. Its aim in higher education is to;

- Create a youth elite by mitigating the effects of brain drain and establishing bridges of cooperation with the emigrated elite
- Increase access to information to enable young people to make informed choices on their future, in accordance with individual conditions and capabilities.
- Improvement of student activities in the universities. (Supplement Grants Program)

This program was created to assist citizens of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia who are pursuing advanced study within this region but outside their home countries. The goal is to support cross-cultural, intraregional student mobility as part of the Open Society Institute's overall efforts to strengthen the academic network within and among these countries.

In the line of the above objectives, from 1992 Open Society Foundation has made possible the mobility of a considerable number of students and university staff. The main fields where the mobility has focused are social sciences and arts.

Another agency which has been active in the field of student and staff mobility is the British Council. Scholarships, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and administered by the British Council, are prestigious awards which enable overseas students to study in the UK. The British Council office in Albania manages the

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Chevening program, which gives the opportunity to 7-8 postgraduates students to attend a full academic year in the UK.

One of the main aims of the scheme is to assist successful candidates in playing leading roles in the future of their country. Applicants are selected from those who wish to take courses in: economics, finance, banking, law, human rights, public administration, management, project planning, media, political science, international relations, diplomatic training and environmental studies, although applicants for other courses are considered, as well

An additional program is the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

This program is for young university graduates from all academic disciplines as well as from the fields of music and art (and, in exceptional cases, to advanced students). Support is also available for young academics and scientists, university teachers and groups completing study visits under the guidance of a university teacher (students and researchers have to be fluent in German language).

From overseas, the Fulbright program has also been very active in student and staff mobility from the US to Albania and vice versa. The Fulbright Scholar Program offers grants to Albanian scholars and professionals to lecture and/or conduct research in a wide variety of academic and professional fields for six months at an American university or research institute. Candidates must have a Ph.D., medical specialization degree, or equivalent professional training or experience. The Fulbright programs support students who have already finished their bachelor degree and have at least one year of work experience in the field where they want to continue their education. The Fulbright programs are usually 2 years. The master programs are offered in disciplines such as Natural and Social Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, Business, Public Administration, Health Administration, Literature and Languages, Psychology, Library Science, Educational Research, Law, Theater/Dance Besides Fulbright, there are other programs available for students who want to study overseas, for instance Ron Braun and Humphrey fellowship programs.

#### **4.4 The Aim and the Nature of Students and Staff Mobility during 1992-1999 in Albania**

Above I have mentioned some of the mobility programs that existed and still exist in Albania. In this section I will focus on the aim of student and staff mobility in Albania during 1992-1999.

All the organizations mentioned above have started to be active exactly in 1992 when the social and economic structure changed from the socialist to the democratic one. Consequently, their aim and the aim of the programs that they promoted were, to train the existing academic staff at universities, to establish links between universities in Albania and universities in Western Europe or the US, offering possibilities for students to attend a full degree or a training course in a foreign university. Doing so, the professors and students after returning to universities would invest their knowledge and skills gained in the development of disciplines, in research and training of the new generation.

Returning again to the two concepts of mobility elaborated by Baumgratz-Ganlg in the book, “Developments in the Internationalization of Higher Education”, the mobility of students and staff in Albania described above is more associated to the second concept, as mobility which aims at institutional change. This is in line with what I mentioned in the second chapter of this study that in the beginning of mobility programs such as ERASMUS, LEONARDO, SOCRATES, and TEMPUS other expectations were associated to mobility. In addition, referring again to Papatsiba (2006, 108), promoting student and staff mobility was not any more an act of limited ambition, but an initiative aiming at the founding of a system of higher education institutions at a European level.

Indeed, after the Easter European countries “opened” to the western world in the 90s, the challenges were obvious. In higher education, TEMPUS was one of the programs which would help the universities to adjust to the new environment and build a bridge of communication between east and west in higher education. In the long term Tempus



objectives were to integrate slowly the higher education system in the two parts of the world by encouraging mobility of students and staff.

However, what Ulrich points out in his article is the fact that although the Tempus program had as its aim to build a bridge between higher education institutions in the west and east, the student and staff mobility was one way rather than both ways. Consequently, it was from developing countries to developed countries and not vice versa (Teichler 1998, 90)

Since the political and economical reality in Albania changed at the beginning of the 90s, the mobility of students and staff in Albanian universities was an important issue. Above, I tried to look at some of the mobility programs like Tempus, and other foreign agencies that played an important role in the student and staff mobility. In addition, I looked at some of the agreements between the Ministry of Education in Albania and other foreign Education Ministries. The aim was to have a closer look at the attempt of the government during the years 1992-1999 to improve the mobility of students and staff.

Besides, I tried to analyze the two higher education laws that existed in Albania during 1992-1999, and the objective was to have a better idea of the legislation background regarding the student and staff mobility. In the end I tried to explore, based on the data and information mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the process of mobility trying to answer to some of the research questions stated in the first chapter of this study. From the above analyses of mobility in Albania I draw the conclusion that from the two concepts elaborated by Baumgratz-Ganlg mobility during the years 1992-1999 seemed to be associated more with the second concept, where mobility of students and staff is expected to bring institutional change. However as mentioned by Ulrich, this mobility was only in one direction from Albania to Western Europe or US, and not both ways.

In the next chapter I will look closer at the Bologna Process focusing on the institutional experience in implementing this process. The Bologna Declaration unlike the other mobility programs in Europe aims for having effect on different levels, such as

curriculum, European cooperation, and mobility. In the mobility process it is expected that the countries which are involved, try to create a European Area of Higher Education, where students and academics are free to move between universities for a short period or attend a full degree. In this context, the Bologna Process invites universities to establish mobility on both ways, not only from the developing countries to developed countries but also vice versa. Consequently, it is the aim of the last chapter of this thesis to take a closer look on the attempt of the universities in implementing this objective.

- ⊕ University of Siegen
- ⊕ University of Hohenheim
- ⊕ Iserlohn University of Applied Sciences
- ⊕ Humboldt University, Berlin
- ⊕ University of Hamburg
- ⊕ Hochschul Rektoren Konferenz, Bonn
- ⊕ Bayerisches Staatsministerium fuer Unterricht und Kultur, Muenchen
- ⊕ Ruhr University, Bochum
- ⊕ Christian-Albrechts-Universitaet zu Kiel
- ⊕ University of Karlsruhe
- ⊕ State Institute for Devel. of Agric. and Rural Areas, Schwaebisch Gmuend
- ⊕ Friedrich Schiller University, Jena
- ⊕ GTZ Eschboru

Fig 2. Universities involved in Tempus program with Albanian Universities (Albania Tempus Office)

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TEMPUS national fund in million Euro</b>
<b>1992 / 93</b>	<b>1,25</b>
<b>1993 / 94</b>	<b>2,5</b>
<b>1994 / 95</b>	<b>2,4</b>
<b>1995 / 96</b>	<b>3,5</b>
<b>1996 / 97</b>	<b>2,5</b>
<b>1997 / 98</b>	<b>2,5</b>
<b>1998 / 99</b>	<b>0,7</b>
<b>1999 / 00</b>	<b>1,6</b>
<b>2000 / 01</b>	<b>2,5</b>
<b>2001 / 02</b>	<b>1,5</b>
<b>2002 / 03</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2003 / 04</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2004 / 05</b>	<b>1</b>

Fig.3 . Tempus funds for Albanian higher education over the years (Albania Tempus Office)

## **5. The Bologna Declaration and Albanian Higher Education**

In chapter two I discussed some of the mobility programs in Europe in a chronological order. These programs played a very important role in the mobility process in Europe, and prepared a valuable background for other reforms like the Bologna Agreement or the later program Erasmus Mundus. In chapter three, I had a close look at the Albanian higher education, and the changes that occurred in politics and society after the fall of “socialism” and how these changes influenced some of the elements of higher education. In chapter four I tried to address and answer some of the research questions focusing on the mobility of students and staff in Albania.

In this chapter I will look at the Bologna Declaration and Albanian higher education. The aim is to present here some of the reasons why Albania decided to join this initiative and what this process represents for our higher education system. Through this chapter I will try to address the last research questions which are, To what extent will the Bologna agreement help the mobility of students and staff in Albania? What are some of the obstacles that higher education institutions face in implementing one of the objectives of the Bologna Agreement, that of mobility?

Albania officially signed the Bologna Agreement on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2003 in Berlin. In this way Albania, together with other countries that signed this agreement, is now in the middle of a process that has started 1999, with the aim of creating the EHEA (European Higher Education Area). This fact indicates that higher education in Albania has already entered in a reform in order to implement the objectives that are stated in the Bologna Agreement. Theodhori in her work on higher education in Albania and the Bologna process emphasized the role that all actors have in implementing this process. Referring to her findings, the Bologna Agreement in Albanian higher education aims at the creation of a diversified system of higher education with a modern configuration. She argues that after this process is implemented, there will be a change in the content of disciplines and programs that will be offered in Albanian universities. In this way there

will be a diversification of the degrees and as a result the approach to the labor market will change as well. (Theodhori 2004, 58)

## **5.1 Why Has Albania Signed the Bologna Agreement?**

For answering this question I have to consider again what was mentioned in the third chapter of this study. After the new political and economic developments in the beginning of 1992 in Albania, higher education sector, like other sectors found itself left a part from the developments that were accruing in the field in Europe. On the other hand a change in the national higher education sector was obvious. For disciplines like economics, engineering and informatics there was a immediate need to change the curriculum and adjust to the needs of the society, which was rapidly changing.

Joining the Bologna process will give Albanian higher education the quality and the prestige that they had before Then again, the Bologna agreement presents a good opportunity for Albanian students and academics to be mobile by promoting mobility, by overcoming legal recognition and administrative obstacles.

To summarize, in signing the Bologna Agreement in Berlin the Albanian government saw an opportunity to be part of the European Higher Education System and at the same time develop the quality of the disciplines and programs that higher education institutions offer.

### *5.1.1 Who is in Charge?*

The Bologna process involves many actors. In the case of Albanian Higher education a lot has been done and still needs to be done in order to meet in the future the aim of the process, that of creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. According to Qano and Theodhori, there are many elements that need to be changed for instance; the financial autonomy of universities, a change that will give better opportunities to institutions in managing their resources and investing in quality and students, academic

mobility, development of postgraduate courses designed for continuous education / life-long learning, harmonization of the curricula to comply within the EU directives for regulated professions, strengthening student associations and student services, including student career counseling, etc (Qano 2004).

For achieving the objectives mentioned above, different actors need to be involved in the process. The Albanian government in collaboration with foreign agencies operating in the field of education, and the European Commission has taken the initiative to contribute to the legislation of higher education and finalize this process in the summer of 2006 with a higher education law and a master plan, which will serve as a tool for further developments in higher education. On the other hand, universities are at the heart of this process, although the Bologna Agreement is an initiative which was agreed on the government level, universities represent the institutions which will implement this process. In addition, student government and student representation structures have to be active in safeguarding the process and work for the better representation of students in this process.

In a recent conference in Albania about the “Reform in Albanian Higher Education and the European Dimension, Developing the Master Plan for Higher Education” Bergan emphasized that the level of public responsibility in higher education should be increased, especially in this time when Albania is trying to implement the Bologna Agreement. Consequently, higher education institutions, staff, students, public authorities, non governmental organizations, international organizations, companies should be more active in supporting these processes. (Bergan 2006)

### *5.1.2 What Has Been Done since Berlin 2003?*

Albania signed the Bologna Agreement in September 2003 in Berlin, however in July 2003 changes were made to the higher education law of 1999 (Nr. 8461). These changes had as an aim to change the structure of studies in Albanian Universities to three study cycles. Consequently, the structure of the studies in Albanian universities changed

according to the Bologna structure, with 3 years bachelor, 2 years master and 3 year PhD studies. For the first time this structure was implemented during academic year 2004-2005, in the nursing school, and pedagogical institute. This academic year 2005-2006 the scheme with three study cycles is implemented in almost all universities in Albania (except for the medicine faculty, law and informatics). According to Theodhori, the new study cycle, will not only make possible and easier the integration of Albanian higher education with the European higher education system, but will help also to structure the study composition, which up to this moment had been complex and not transparent, (she refers here to the way PhD-s were obtained. This process she argues was very long and gave only a strict number of academics the opportunity to join).

One of the objectives of the Berlin meeting in 2003 was to emphasize the quality assurance on the institutional, national and European level, and the communiqué stressed the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies in quality assurance. (Berlin Communiqué 2003, 3). In line with the above objective, the accreditation agency in Albania, which was build as an institution in 1999, started the evaluation of the diplomas in the pedagogical institute, and the nursing school, which are one of the first institutes that approached the Bologna Agreement during the academic year 2004-2005. On the basis of the findings of these evaluations, the Council of Accreditation has taken the appropriate decisions, which have been passed over to the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as to the universities (Bologna National Report 2004-2005) The establishment of the Council of Accreditation in this accreditation agency represents an important step for the creation of and the respect for standards in higher education.

One of the priorities in meeting the Bologna objectives is the ECTS system. This system was introduced since the first conference of the Bologna Agreement as a mean of introducing and promoting student mobility. (Bologna Declaration 1999). In this context, Albanian universities are trying to implement and offer the ECTS system. At the moment, for the academic year 2005 – 2006, most of the faculties have started to work under the ECTS system and have already published a package of information, which is available for all students with valuable information about the number of credits that they

gain, as well as the objectives for each subject. The ECTS system will help the student to transfer his/her studies to other institutions in the country, or even abroad if there is collaboration between institutions.

Another objective of the Bologna Agreement is the recognition of the levels of study. Consequently, countries and higher education institutions use the diploma supplement to help the students and institutions facilitate the recognition procedures. All the technical elements of the diploma supplement are included in the information packages, which are analyzed and prepared by each faculty. The information package has two basic elements.

- a. Information about plans and study programs, as well as, grades according to the Albanian system of evaluation, which is from 1- to 10 (with 5 as the passing grade)
- b. The number of ECTS that the student has gained during his/her studies.

The diploma supplement is in use in all faculties from the academic year 2005-2006; this procedure was made possible by an order approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The model of the diploma supplement will vary in different faculties. However, all the documents will include grades for each subject, number of credits and the vocabulary of the terms used in the document (Theodhori 2004).

Higher education is much diversified in Europe, consequently the recognition of diplomas, which are earned in different countries have to go through a process of recognition.

In the case of Albania the Lisbon Convention has already been ratified. On the basis of the law on higher education, under a special decision of the Council of Ministers, starting from the academic year 2004 – 2005, the Department of Higher Education and Diploma Recognition at the Ministry of Education and Science, has initiated and instituted the process of recognizing diplomas and corresponding certificates obtained overseas.(Bologna National Report 2004-2005, 5)



The legal basis with reference to the Bologna process includes:

- a. Law for Higher Education in the Republic of Albania
- b. Decision of the Council of Ministers
- c. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science

From the process of recognition are excluded those degrees which are earned in countries such as Bulgaria, Macedonia and Russia, and lately Austria, with which Albania has a bilateral agreement for the co- recognition of the diplomas. The process of recognition gives to the applicant the possibility to work or continue further studies in the Republic of Albania.

Life long learning has long been considered a top priority of higher education. The legislation on higher education in 1999, Act No. 8461, dated 25.02.1999 "For Higher Education in the Republic of Albania" has been drafted to help all those with desire and possibilities to study at any given age in order for them to match up their skills to the need of market economy, by gaining further qualifications. In order to realize this, admission quotas have been awarded for second choice courses of study, which can be entered without any competition by paying a tuition fee set by the institution, which varies on the basis of the branch or the faculty chosen. What is more, a part-time system has been in effect since the academic year 2003-2004. This system operates in the following courses of study: teaching, economics and informatics and law. The part time system is attended by a considerable number of students. Furthermore, in the higher education system "Distance Learning" has been applied in the branches of mechanical engineering, electricity and electronics. (Ibid, 9)

When I refer to mobility within the Bologna framework it is important to consider that this process of mobility, especially for Albanian higher education, is not from one direction, from Albanian universities to other universities, but that it is both ways. In this regard, Albanian universities after implementing the Bologna Agreement have to be

prepared to welcome foreign students who want to include in their studies a part or a full year in Albanian universities.

In this way, the Bologna Process gives a new element to mobility, which was not considered and experienced before in Albanian universities (at least not in the form of a program, as individual mobility of foreign students was and will be always present). Considering, the developments that I mentioned above in Albanian higher education since the Berlin meeting, the objectives that were realized will help the mobility process in Albania to move forward. For instance, curriculum change and quality assurance will help the programs to establish a quality status, which can be compared with other programs abroad. In this way, a diploma or a study period attended in Albanian universities can be recognized even abroad. In addition, the diploma supplement helps the students and institutions facilitating the recognition procedures by giving a detailed description of all the programs together with the number of credits gained. On the other hand, the diploma recognition process, which is now done in Albania, will be another facility for the mobility of students and academics from abroad to Albania. By recognizing the diploma which was earned abroad, students have the possibility to continue further education or find a job in Albania.

Together with the above developments, the changes that occurred in the higher education law of 1999 No. 8461, which changed the study structure to 3 year bachelor +2 year master +3 year PhD , theoretically will make possible for other students, from countries which joined the Bologna Agreement, to come and to include a part or complete their studies in Albania.

All the improvements made to the recognition of the degrees and the enhancement of quality of programs in Albania, give to higher education, and universities especially better possibilities to be more attractive to foreign students and academics, as well as it gives to Albanian students and academics much more possibilities to be mobile or to be employed abroad.

## **5.2 Institutional Barriers to Mobility**

Above I mention the developments, which happened in the higher education system in Albania after signing the Bologna Agreement in Berlin in 2003. In addition, I point out some of the advantages that the Bologna Process will bring to the mobility of students and staff in Albania. However, at this point of my analysis it is important to focus on the institutional experience of promoting mobility within the Bologna framework. As it is mentioned during all the phases of this study, universities are one of the main stakeholders of the Bologna process, as they are the main actors, which are going to implement the process.

It is the aim of this study that during this last part I focus on the institutional barriers that universities experience in implementing the Bologna Agreement. Referring to chapter two in this thesis, at this point we will use the top-down and bottom-up approaches elaborated by Gornitzka, Stensaker & Kyvik (2002), in order to analyze some of the barriers that institutions face.

However, it is important to emphasize here that I am not going to look at the success or failure of the process of mobility within the Bologna framework, but rather I am going to analyze the way universities in Albania approached the Bologna Agreement and how their approaches to the process influenced the barriers that universities experience, in implementing the mobility of students and staff I decided to focus on the top-down and bottom-up approach, as the two perspectives will give a clearer view to the process of mobility in Albanian universities. Moreover, referring to Enders, Jeliaskova & Maassen., (2003, 13) the two perspectives offer something of value in understanding and explaining the implementation of the action.

The interviews in the two universities in Albania (part of my case study) will help the reader to see in practice the obstacles that exist in an institution, in implementing mobility. Nevertheless, it is important to give a brief description of each university which

was part of my case study. The nature and the specifics of each of these institutions, represent a big impact on the barriers that they encounter in this process.

### *5.2.1 Tirana and the Polytechnic University*

In 1957 the first university in Albania was established. The State University in Tirana was made up of four institutions, the pedagogical, polytechnic, economic, and medical institute. At the beginning, Tirana University had ten faculties, but later in 1991 the engineering faculties were grouped together and the polytechnic university established. At the moment, Tirana University has eight faculties which are; economic, law, medicine, social sciences, natural sciences, foreign languages, history- philology, and the nursing faculty. The number of students attending this university is over 14,000 and the number of academic staff is over 600. The Bologna Agreement started to be implemented in this university from the academic year 2004-2005 in the pedagogical and the nursing faculty.

However, since before Albania officially signed the Bologna Agreement in Berlin in 2003, arrangements were done in Tirana University, in order to transfer the study structure from 4 + 2 years of study to 3 +2 years of study. (Floresha 2002) Moreover, it was since 2002 that Tirana University had prepared a package of information containing useful materials and all the documents that an Albanian student needed for transferring his/her studies in another institution, or abroad, and the package included the same document in English. The English document was addressed to foreign students, who wanted to transferee their studies to Albania.

Mobility of students and academics in Tirana University was made possible by a number of bilateral agreements with universities in countries such as Greece, Italy, Russia, France, Germany etc. (Tirana University 2003). From 2005-2006 almost all the faculties of Tirana University have already implemented the Bologna Agreement and are working on the 3 +2 structure and using ECTS in their evaluations.

The Polytechnic University of Tirana is inherited from the Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1951. Later on, in 1957, some other faculties were established and the Polytechnic Institute was converted into the State University of Tirana. In 1991, the Polytechnic University of Tirana split from the University of Tirana, under the provisions of recent legislation and from there on it keeps the status of an independent chartered institution. (Polytechnic University 2005)

The Polytechnic University has four faculties, which are, faculty of electrical engineering, civil engineering faculty, mechanical engineering and geology-mining faculty. The number of students studying in this university is over 3000 and there are 251 academics working full time and part time in the university (Qano 2004, 3). Due to the support of the TEMPUS program in Albania, the polytechnic university had developed over the years many collaboration programs with partner universities such as, university of Bari in Italy, university of Torino, Ancona, university of Bordo in France etc. The collaboration with these universities consisted in sending students and academics to the partner universities for a short period of study that was from 1 month up to one year, for preparing their final thesis, or conducting research. According to Mr. Xhvani (director of international office), at the moment the Polytechnic University in Tirana is working to offer students also another chance. A joint degree in collaboration with the university of Bordo in France will be offered to the students. Consequently, the students who will attend a part of their studies in Bordo will receive at the end of their program a degree which is recognized in Albania and in France.

The polytechnic university joined the Bologna Agreement in 1999 through the CONIX project. Although, the Bologna Agreement was not still signed, the Bologna Process started to be realized in a form of a pilot project, in collaboration with two other universities, Ancona and Torino university. The pilot project had as an aim the change of the structure of the studies in three departments of this university, in the telecom, electronic and electric department. This academic year, the first students that studied under the 3 years bachelor and 2 years master, structure of study will graduate and receive a master diploma in the above fields.

### *5.2.2 Bologna in the Institutions "Experience"*

It is believed and generally agreed by the policy makers, government, academics and students, that the Bologna Agreement represents an important opportunity for Albanian higher education to be integrated in the European higher education system (Lagji, K. 2006). However, together with the advantages that this process brings, there are also obstacles in the institutional level to be considered.

Some of the barriers that institutions in Albania face are those regarding the curriculum and especially the quality of degrees offered. On the other hand, mobility of students and staff is considered to play a crucial role in the promotion of European higher education, which gives at the same time to the student access to study and training opportunities, and to academics, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorization of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.( Bologna Declaration 1999).

In this context, countries that have signed the agreement, have to take measures in facilitating this process. Institutions from their part have to take part in mobility programs and prepare the background for foreign students and academics to come and spend periods of their study in Albanian universities.

In practice the success of this process varies due to many factors, and actors involved in higher education. The Polytechnic University as mentioned above has started the Bologna process since 1999 and they have implemented for the first time the ECTS system since 2000. However, as expressed also by Mr. Xhuvani (director of international office in the polytechnic university), although there are initiatives for improving the mobility, little is done in this direction, especially in regard of foreign students coming to Albania. According to Xhuvani the obstacles are related to the financial autonomy that the university actually has. Although it is clearly stated in the higher education law of 1999 nr 8461, (Higher Education Law 1999) that higher education institutions are allowed to manage their own resources and the funds that they gain by the services that they offer (after returning to the state 10%). This act was never realized in practice. Consequently,

universities find it difficult to fund the mobility of students and academics, or staff in partner universities. According to Xhuvani, the Polytechnic University has annually for the international department only seven thousand euros, which he said is not enough to finance the mobility of Albanian students and staff abroad, and at the same time to use these financial means to build structures ( like courses offered in English) for foreign students to attend.

The same problem presented itself in Tirana University. The director of international department at Tirana University Mr. Karaja had the same concern about the mobility of students in Albania and abroad. He emphasized that at the moment Tirana University had no funds to support mobility initiatives. He added that there is no item in the university budget that has funds under the name of the international department. Therefore, according to his view it was difficult to arrange English courses in different subjects, and welcome foreign students to come and attend part or full period of their studies in Albania. Unlike, the Polytechnic University, Mr Karaja adds that in the Tirana university there is not enough information about mobility programs for students and academics. To support this idea I can mention here a study organized with the biggest universities of in Albania, in July 2005, about the perception that students and academics have concerning the Bologna Agreement. To the question, are you informed about mobility programs for students in Europe? The percentage of students that knew about these programs was only 15.1 % and 84.9% had not heard about mobility programs (Albanian Institute for International Studies 2006, 29)<sup>11</sup> .

To turn back to the top – down and bottom – up approach. Universities answered to the question. What was their opinion about the approach that their university had to the Bologna Agreement? The Polytechnic University had a different approach. In the Polytechnic University the approach was both ways. It was top- down approach, because in the 1999 through a government order and also through the CONIX project, to the polytechnic university was presented the chance to be part of the process. On the other

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<sup>11</sup> The above findings include a considerable number of universities. Consequently, the findings may be relevant, but they do not related only to Tirana University.

hand, it was bottom –up because the Polytechnic University was aware of the fact that there was an increase in the percentage of students that abandoned their studies. According to the data that the university had, in the years 1995-1996 the percentages reached 50%. Consequently, the university saw the Bologna Process as an opportunity to resolve the problem. They thought that if a student would get a bachelor degree in 3 years instead of 5 years, as it was before, the percentage of abandonment will be lower. In addition, he added, that because of the nature that the Polytechnic university has (that of technical disciplines, which are more sensible to economical, social and technical changes), the university considered it a necessity to be involved and gain from the European experience of higher education.

In the case of Tirana University, Mr. Karaja responded that the approach that Tirana University had was top – down approach. In difference from the Polytechnic University Tirana University, started the implementation because “it had to”. The Bologna Agreement was signed in Berlin 2003 and the implementation had to start the next academic year. In this sense it was not the need of the Tirana University to approach the process, but rather the process approached the university.

In this regard, based on the interview with Mr. Xhuvani and Mr. Karaja (responsible of the international office at the Polytechnic and Tirana University) and on the activities that the universities had undertaken to promote mobility over these years. It can be easily noticed that the approach that the two universities had on the process was different, in this way universities experience in different ways the implementation process of this agreement. Moreover, the structures and their preparation to the process were more established at the Polytechnic University which sees the Bologna Process as a tool to improve the quality of the degrees and to attract students not to abandon their studies.



## **6. Conclusions**

This study aimed to answer in six chapters the following research questions: What were the barriers regarding the mobility of students and staff in the beginning of 90s in Albania? How the government influenced the mobility of students and staff in the 90s? (Describing some of the policies developed at that time, which aimed at facilitating mobility). What was the nature of mobility in Albania during 1992-1999? To what extent will the Bologna Agreement help the mobility of students and staff in Albania? What are some of the obstacles that higher education institutions face in implementing one of the objectives of the Bologna agreement, that of mobility?

With answering the above questions I aimed at describing and analyzing the concept of students and staff mobility in European and Albanian universities in our days. The goal was to emphasize the advantages that Albanian institutions will get by being involved in mobility programs, but at the same time pointing out some of the “local” barriers that universities face in implementing mobility.

The mobility process has undergone different transformations during the history of higher education. The mobility of students and scholars who moved from one institution to another and from one country to another, by gaining in this way individual effects, such as intellectual effects, was considered geographical mobility. Additionally, individuals in this kind of mobility enlarge their general and social qualifications.

After the Second World War, attempts were made, to work on the internationalization of universities. Programs such as, ERASMUS, COMETT, LEONARDO, and LINGUA tried to enhance the quality of higher education, and at the same time reinforce the European dimension by promoting mobility of students and academics. Consequently, the mobility, which was developed after the Second World War is considered as a tool for inducing institutional change, as well as a result of changing conditions within higher education institutions. Besides, as Baumgratz-Ganlg (1996) pointed out, behind the

reason for change is the idea of qualifying the work force for the single market, and European integration.

In the end of the millennium the Bologna Declaration came into the scene of higher education. The Bologna Agreement was an attempt by some countries to reach a better convergence between higher education systems in Europe. This project involved 29 countries within one year, and in some years turned to be one of the most popular agreements in European higher education.

The aim of this initiative is to establish a European Area of Higher Education and to promote European system of higher education throughout the world. For reaching this aim, different objectives had to be considered. Among the objectives promotion of mobility by overcoming legal recognition and administrative obstacles was included. Considering, mobility as an important objective of this process, based also on the data in this thesis, it can be concluded that the Bologna process is now enabling (through ECTS as an important tool for transferring courses and programs attended in a different institution or country) the mobility of students and staff in all the countries that have signed this agreement.

Especially, for the countries that were not part of mobility programs, this experience gives them the opportunity to be involved and to contribute at the same time in the European Higher Education system. Mobility in Easter European countries thought TEMPUS program was more from one direction, from developing countries to developed countries (Teichler 1998). The Bologna agreement opens the possibility of now having mobility to both directions, which at the same time puts a pressure on the higher education institutions to meet this objective.

The quality of research and teaching in Albanian universities did not meet the criteria of West European and North American higher education systems in early 90s. Consequently, it was difficult for students and academics to transfer their studies abroad, as their diploma and qualifications obtained in Albania were not recognized. Beside the

recognition barriers the legal framework was not able to support the mobility of students and academics. As expressed in the higher education law of 1999, academic staff has the right to be involved in specialization courses only once in seven years. Regarding student mobility, foreign students in Albania can be enrolled in higher education institutions through a quota approved in advance by the Council of Ministers. However, due to the lack of courses in English, most of the students that attended higher education in Albania were (and still are) from Albanian speaking regions in the Balkans. Moreover, the ERASMUS scheme did not include Albania, in this sense it was difficult to have mobility of students and academics in Europe.

After the 90s, changes were made possible in the higher education law. Additionally, because there was an immediate need for trained and skilled academics in the new disciplines that were opened after the fall of socialism. The government and institutions on the other hand established connections with partner universities in Europe and abroad. Consequently, mobility of students and academics was possible through government agreements with countries such as Greece, Rumania, Italy and Spain. However, due to bureaucracy and lack of transparent criteria of selection, only a certain number of students and academics had the possibility to attend these programs.

Yet, programs such as Tempus and different mobility programs like those of DAAD, Open Society Foundation, British Council and Fulbright for mobility in United States, were very active in the beginning of the 90s in improving the mobility of students and academics in a variety of disciplines. The beginning of the 90s presented a different picture, where mobility of students and academic was not seen as an impossible mission, and there was an attempt by the government to increase and stimulate the mobility process.

Mobility in the beginning of the 90s in Albania had as a philosophy the training of the existing staff in the universities, and giving them possibilities to contribute in the future in the institution where they were working. Therefore, mobility was considered as an approach that will influence in institutional change. Tempus program was one (but not

the only one) of the examples, which helped the Albanian institutions through mobility programs to train and build a bridge of communication between the East and West of Europe. However, this kind of mobility was rather mobility from developing countries to developed countries, than both ways mobility.

The Bologna Agreement brings to the mobility of students and academics a new perspective. As mentioned above, with Tempus, but also other programs, Albania experienced one- way mobility. In this context the implementation of the Bologna Agreement in Albanian universities, will give to the last ones a possibility to welcome foreign students, for short or long periods of study. In addition, elements (which are changing due to the Bologna process in universities) such as the diploma supplement, curriculum change, diploma recognition will make possible the recognition of foreign degrees in Albania and vice versa. Besides, all the improvements on the quality of programs offered in universities give better possibilities to the institutions and Albanian higher education to be attractive to foreign students and academics. However this is a long process on which the universities are still working to achieve the goal of creating the European Area of Higher Education by 2010

Although the Bologna Agreement represents an opportunity for the mobility of academics and students in Albanian universities, there are also obstacles, which have to be considered. Referring to Lagji (Shekulli 2006) a process like the Bologna Agreement requires the establishment of a legal, administrative, infrastructure framework, which would be able to respond to the new developments. Based on the interviews in two Universities in Tirana, it can be concluded that in order for the process to be successful it must be supported by a number of elements. One of these is the higher education law and the financial autonomy that the faculties and institutions have. Without financial support by the government, the investments in the structures and new courses in English for foreign students are not realistic. Moreover, I discussed the way that the approach universities had toward Bologna Agreement effected the way institutions replied to the process. It was the example of the Polytechnic University in Tirana, which saw in approaching the Bologna process, a tool for improving the quality of their degrees. This

approach that they had to the Bologna Process influenced the way they were prepared for the process, by giving to this university more possibilities to be involved in mobility programs and better chances to welcome foreign students and academics.

I looked during this thesis at the mobility process in Europe and how the concept of mobility has changed during these decades. I tried to focus on some European programs, which played an important role in the mobility of students and staff in Europe. Later on in this study I emphasized the role of the Bologna agreement in the mobility process, and I brought as an example the Albanian higher education system, focusing on two universities in Albania. As analyzed in the above chapter of this study it is obvious that Bologna agreement represents a good opportunity for European higher education to be more integrated and more competitive. However, as higher education in Europe is so diverse and complex, and as higher education institutions are so different from each other, barriers have to be considered in the implementation of this agreement.

In the case of Albanian universities support from different stakeholders is required, in order to achieve and meet the criteria of including Albania in the European Higher Education area in the future. Support based on legislation, policies, and funding sources is necessary in order for the process of mobility to be successful and sustainable in the long run. In addition I emphasize the importance of mobility of the students and staff based on the argument elaborated, that mobility in Europe is seen as a tool for inducing institutional change. In this regard, it is important that all the actors are involved in promoting and sustaining mobility, as this process will have important feedback on the institutions on different levels in the long run.

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