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Development of forest sciences curricula in Europe

Seven years experiences in Estonian higher forestry education according to Bologna Declaration

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Keywords:

Abstract: Estonia signed the Bologna declaration in 1999 and adopted the new bachelor-master degree system in 2002. The standard period of bachelor study is 3 years and for the master degree 2 years, the period of doctoral study is 4 years. This is also adopted for the forestry curricula. Forestry as a discipline is rooted in the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU). Since 2002 in EMU, in the Institute of Forestry and Rural Engineering (previously Faculty of Forestry) two bachelor level curricula were created. The first is the forestry curriculum on bachelor level, which then is divided into two branches on master level: forest management and forest industry. Another curriculum is natural resources management, which is now also divided into two branches on master level: natural resources management and renewable energy resources. In the last curriculum first master level students will be enrolled in September 2010 if there are at least 15 applicants. In March 2005 the new PhD curriculum for Forestry was approved by council of the EMU.

The university level forestry education was accredited by an international team in 2007. In spring 2010 the transitional accrediting of forestry curricula will take place. Then it will be decided: is the EMU right place where to teach foresters?

The system in Estonia is that government orders from universities the number of graduates from master level. In case of forestry that means 14 Masters of Science in both forest management and forest industry. To ensure graduates at master level the enrolment into bachelor's level has decided to be 1.5 times higher which is at least 46 students at bachelor's level whose study expenses are paid from the budget. Also there are a lot of students who pay their study expenses themselves. 75% of graduates on bachelor's level are expected to continue their studies at master level.

In 2002 111 students started at bachelor's level, 28.8% of them continued at master level and only 8 students graduated in 2007. In 2003 110 students started, 33.6% continued at master level and 13 graduated in 2008. In 2004 135 students started, 21.5% continued at master level and 17 graduated in 2009. These results are lower than average for Estonian universities.

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