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**JOINT DEGREES
AND DOUBLE DEGREES
The Italian experience**

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A 'joint degree' or a 'double degree' represent two possible outcomes to an 'integrated' course of study. An integrated study programme envisages a curriculum that has been jointly designed by two universities and is regulated by a specific negotiated agreement. Students who freely choose the programme undertake defined periods of study in both academic establishments in terms of duration and content. At the end of the courses and after the relevant joint examinations, the students are awarded either a single qualification jointly signed by the academic authorities of both institutions (joint degree) or the final national qualifications of both institutions (double degree).

The study presented herein documents the development of joint degrees in Italy with effect from the reform of 1980 which opened the doors to integrated study programmes for universities and stimulated international university cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. The study then concentrates on the reforms of 1999 and documents the potential for and actual developments in joint degrees with particular attention focused on the universities' internationalisation programmes. Finally, the study proposes a classification of the types of degrees awarded upon completion of integrated courses and formulates guidelines for the design of curricula and the organisation of joint courses. The study is completed by the summary data supplied by the Cimea database on double degrees and by numerous examples of experiences of joint courses and degrees.

The Origins: Integrated Study Programmes

A joint degree or double degree is always backed up by a collaboration agreement between two (or more) universities and an integrated curriculum which defines the study periods to be undertaken separately in the universities concerned. Integrated study programmes have become a feature of European universities only in very recent times. Indeed, they date back to the action plan and incentive measures adopted by the European Community in 1976¹. The Community granted financial aid to joint study programmes (jsp), whose objective was to strengthen collaboration among universities in different countries, thereby fostering direct contacts and agreements as well as exchanges among students and teachers. In order to benefit from the economic aid on offer, the cooperation agreements among the higher education institutions had to provide for student mobility (i.e. the possibility for students to follow part of their course abroad), teacher mobility or the drawing up of joint curricula. From 1976 to 1984 the European Community financed 409 jsp. Italian universities participated in 73 projects, accounting for 18% of the total.

Italy embraced this new European programme and in order to facilitate full participation by Italian universities national law was changed in 1980² thereby allowing "forms of

¹ Resolution of the European Council and the Education Council of 9 February 1976 for an action plan in the field of education; Resolution of the European Council and the Education Council of 13 December 1976 concerning measures aimed at improving the preparation of youth for work and at facilitating the transition from study to active life.

² Presidential Decree no. 382 of 11 July 1980 - "Reorganisation of University Teaching, Relative Training Band and Organisational and Teaching Experiments", article 91.

agreements - including consortia - between Italian and foreign universities for integrated learning activities and integrated study programmes for students as well as for experience in the use of particularly complex scientific and technical equipment".

European financial aid allied to the sums allocated by the Italian government in connection with the new legislation greatly stimulated the development of international university cooperation, as can be seen from the rapid growth in the number of international agreements signed by Italian universities, quantified in the table hereunder.

Cooperation Agreements Between Italian and Foreign Universities 1985-1994		
<u>Year</u>	Number of Agreements	<u>Growth Index (1985 = 100)</u>
1985	239	100
1988	540	226
1990	819	343
1991	1005	420
1993	1301	544
1994	1612	674

Sources³: *Fondazione Rui, Cimea, Icu, Conics*

Although the establishment of integrated study programmes was incentivised in this initial period, the awarding of joint academic qualifications was expressly prohibited⁴.

The University Cooperation Agreement between Italy and France of 1982

"Desirous of contributing to the development of cultural and scientific relations between the two countries", on 5 July 1992 in Paris the Italian and French governments signed a

³ Fondazione Rui and Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria, *La cooperazione universitaria internazionale. Bilancio degli accordi delle università italiane*, Rome, 1985;

Cimea, *Accordi bilaterali di cooperazione tra università italiane e straniere*, Doc Cimea 24, Rome, 1988;

Cimea, *Accordi di cooperazione tra università italiane e straniere nel 1990*, Doc Cimea 44, Rome, 1990;

Conics, *Le collaborazioni internazionali delle università italiane nell'anno accademico 1990-1991*;

Conics, *Le collaborazioni internazionali delle università italiane nell'anno accademico 1992-1993*;

Conics, *Le collaborazioni internazionali delle università italiane nell'anno accademico 1993-1994*.

⁴ Ministerial Circular (MPI-DGIU) no. 82 of 6 March 1981 ("It is as well to clarify that in any event inter-university agreements may not include clauses that envisage the award of joint academic qualifications or give validity to foreign academic grades unless recognition is for the purposes of allowing further studies"); Inter-Ministerial Decree on Inter-university Cooperation, issued pursuant to Article 91 of Presidential Decree no. 382/80 of 10 February 1988 (Article 5: "It is not permitted to include clauses that envisage the award of joint academic qualifications or give validity to foreign academic diplomas").

framework agreement on university cooperation. The agreement is important historically as it formally sanctions for the first time the establishment of a double degree. In fact, the agreement provides that "the universities of the two countries may conclude agreements with one another which envisage integrated study programmes leading to the joint award of an Italian academic qualification (*laurea*) and a French academic qualification (*maîtrise*) having the same value. Such programmes shall concern students who have successfully completed the first two years of study at either an Italian or French university". The agreement also specifies the matters that inter-university agreements should regulate: the organisation of studies, examinations, the method of awarding the academic qualifications, exchange of teachers, the duration of students' study periods abroad and joint commissions⁵.

Turin University and Savoy University: Franco-Italian *laurea* and *maîtrise*

Within the framework of the Franco-Italian agreement for university cooperation two universities with historical and cultural ties, Turin University and Savoy University in Chambéry, signed an agreement on 13 December 1985. The two universities have undertaken to jointly award their national academic qualifications (the Italian *laurea* and the French *licence* and *maîtrise*) to students who participate in a joint university study programme.

Each year around ten Turin students who have completed the second year of their degree course in modern languages and foreign literature have the chance to do their third year at Savoy University and be awarded the French *licence*; they may then remain for the fourth year and be awarded both the French *maîtrise* and the Italian *laurea*. In the same way French students in possession of the *Deug* (*Diplôme d'études universitaires générales*) may at the end of their second year attend Turin University to attend the third and fourth years of the course there, at the end of which they will be awarded both the Italian *laurea* and the French *maîtrise*. Together with the two final national academic qualifications the universities concerned also issue a joint certificate which mentions participation in the programme and the study period done abroad.

"Doctor Europæus"

The "European doctorate" is not a supranational academic qualification let alone one awarded by an international institution but a joint certificate attached to a national doctorate which qualifies for the European tag because it possesses certain internationalisation features.

The history of the European Community has some rather significant precedents in the matter of designing 'European' academic qualifications. For example, in 1959 plans were made for the establishment of a 'European University' on the basis of the

⁵ Law no. 761 of 18 October 1984. - Ratification and Implementation of the Framework Agreement for University Cooperation Between Italy and France, signed in Paris on 5 July 1982.

provisions of the Euratom Treaty. It was envisaged that the university in question would be able to award a European doctorate at the end of a two year course and thesis; however, it never came about due to French opposition.

Ten years later, principally on the initiative of Italy, plans were drawn up for the European University Institute, which would end up being located in Badia Fiesolana, not far from Florence. Likewise, in this case the European Council did not wish to create a "European" university in the sense of one established under Community law. The European University Institute of Florence came about on the basis of a simple intergovernmental agreement (1972 Convention) among the Member States of the Community and today issues its own doctorate degrees which each signatory to the Convention has undertaken to recognise in accordance with their respective national law.

Although the idea of a "European" doctorate has not yet come to fruition in concrete terms, it must be said that national doctorate degrees have witnessed a growing level of internationalisation. We are referring in particular to co-supervised doctorates or to the mobility of researchers incentivised by the Community framework programmes for research: thanks to the framework programmes it has been possible to finance research networks in which research groups from various countries collaborate on joint projects and train young researchers. This has led to a request for formal recognition of the "added value" of international doctorates. To take account of this impetus while at the same time creating a reference international standard, the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences (today EUA - *European University Association*) has drawn up a common "European doctorate" brand. This designation can be added to a national doctorate which was obtained fulfilling four conditions regarding co-supervision, assessment by an international jury, multilingualism and mobility of the graduate.

Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences

European Doctorate

The European Doctorate refers basically to a label attachable to the PhD degree to be conferred by European Universities, when the following four conditions (not qualitative) have been fulfilled:

- The PhD thesis defence will be accorded if at least two professors from two higher education institutions of two European countries, other than the one where the PhD thesis will be defended, have given their judgement concerning the manuscript;
- At least one member of the jury should come from a higher education institution in European countries, other than the one, where the PhD thesis will be defended;
- Part of the defence must take place in one of the official languages, other than the one(s) of the country, where the PhD thesis will be defended;
- The PhD thesis must partly have been prepared as a result of a period of research of at least one trimester spent in another European country.

The proposed logo is the title "Doctor Europæus" surrounded by a crown of twelve stars.

Socrates / Erasmus Programme: Double Degrees and Curricular Design

The Erasmus programme first and then the Socrates/Erasmus programme have been the principal tools used by the European Commission to foster cooperation among universities in the Member States and to support university student mobility and study periods abroad. The agreements among universities, signed within Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (IPC) and Institutional Contracts, have in some cases provided for such advanced forms of curricular integration as to justify the award of a double degree.

The TIME Programme

The "Top Industrial Managers for Europe" (TIME) is a programme whose scope is to produce managers with an effective scientific, technological and cultural experience obtained in two European countries allied to hands on experience in the business world of a country other than their own. The initiative got underway in 1988 when a group of the leading European universities in the field of engineering devised an Inter-University Cooperation Programme (IPC) in the ambit of Erasmus. 1997 witnessed the founding of the TIME Association (under French law), which now counts 37 European institutions among its members. The current president is the Rector of Milan Polytechnic, Professor Adriano De Maio.

TIME's principal activity is the promotion of bilateral agreements among members of the Association with the aim of creating double degree learning programmes, substituting in a student's curriculum a year at their home university with two in the host one. When students return to their home university after a successful two year study period abroad and complete their curriculum (generally in six years), they obtain their own national academic qualification (an Italian engineering degree in our case) and a final foreign degree. The double degree will reflect not only a profound knowledge of how engineering is viewed in the partner university but should also testify to a thorough understanding of the way of thinking and the culture of the host country. Many European companies which are particularly interested in the educational model and the type of engineer produced have already signed partnership agreements with the universities adhering to TIME.

The Italian university members (founders) of the Association are Milan Polytechnic (137 students who have already been awarded a TIME double degree) and Turin

Polytechnic (28 students who have already been awarded a TIME double degree). In May 2002 the one thousandth TIME double degree was awarded.

The TIME Association is now launching the TIME Masters, which are joint qualifications awarded by at least two institutions of the Association and which have passed a check by a commission for entitling them to use the TIME "label".

Other qualitative initiatives were realised during the initial stage of the Socrates programme under the heading of "curricular projects", which involved the joint development of university curricula:

- CDA - *Curriculum Development at Advanced level*;
- CDI - *Curriculum Development at Initial and intermediate level*.

Also in these cases agreements were signed for the award of joint degrees or double degrees.

The European University Diploma

Within the framework of the national curricula provided for in Law no. 341 of 1999, at the end of 1999⁶ the European University Diploma in Industrial Production (*Diploma universitario europeo in Produzione industriale*) was established. The general objective of this course - which can be organised by engineering faculties - is to produce technicians with a university level education in a European context who are also qualified to take on and manage innovation in the production sector, adapting to scientific change and technological evolution. In other words, the course seeks to create professionals who are competent not only in production technology but also in the management of enterprises with reference to economic issues and human resources.

Allied to the innovative nature of the professional created, the originality of this course lies also in its special educational model adopted: the studies must be planned and organised symmetrically in Italy and in another country. This means the signing of agreements between the universities concerned which detail the means of realising the integrated project, the study periods to be spent by students in their home university, and the foreign one and the reciprocal recognition of examinations and teaching modules. Also the obligatory internship is to be done in two periods, each one in a company in a different country. At the end of the three year study and training period, students are awarded two qualifications the Italian *Diploma universitario europeo in produzione industriale* and the corresponding foreign qualification from the partner university.

⁶ MURST Decree of 19 December 1996 - Changes to University Teaching Relative to the European University Diploma in Industrial Production, published in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic - no. 70 of 25.3.1997.

Turin Polytechnic. The School of Industrial Production and the Double Degree with Brighton

In 1986 Turin Polytechnic founded the School of Industrial Production with the aim of providing an interdisciplinary education in different countries and in different business contexts. Industrial support was guaranteed by a group of companies who set up the "Association for the Development of the School of Industrial Production of Turin Polytechnic". In collaboration with the Department of Business Management of Brighton University in England (formerly Brighton Polytechnic) a joint education programme was drawn up, which concludes with the award of a double qualification: a *Diploma di Esperto della produzione industriale* (later the *Diploma universitario europeo in produzione industriale*, after the transformation of the School into one for special purposes) from Turin Polytechnic and a *Bachelor of Science (Honours) in European Business with Technology* from the British university.

The School takes four years of students' time: a three year course in class followed by a year of applied training in industry of which six months in Italian companies and six in English ones. Students alternate between semesters in Italy and in Great Britain, with exams at the end of each such semesters. Lessons and examinations are in Italian at Turin and in English at Brighton. Scholarships are granted by the "Association of Friends of the School". European contributions for academic mobility are also available within the ambit of the Socrates programme.

Co-supervision of Doctoral Theses

A significant facet of bilateral university cooperation is the realisation of joint research doctorates by universities of two different countries which envisages co-supervision of theses. In such a case the doctoral student undertakes the research under the supervision of two teachers-tutors - one for each university involved - who agree to collaborate in a spirit of joint responsibility. The doctoral student spends time in both countries and defends the thesis before a mixed commission which in all cases counts the two supervisors among its members. A co-supervised thesis normally entails the award of a mutually recognised joint doctorate.

The most significant example of this type of collaboration is afforded by the bilateral Franco-Italian programme for co-supervised theses⁷ stemming from the framework agreement signed in Paris on 13 February 1998 by the Rectors' Conferences of the two countries concerned.

⁷ The text of the framework agreement, the competitions and the information on the programme are available on the web site of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (www.miur.it) and that of the Italian Universities' Rectors' Conference (www.crui.it).

Convention cadre sur les co-tutelles de thèse entre la Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) et la Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Italiennes (CRUI)

La Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) et La Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Italiennes (CRUI)

- considérant l'accord cadre du 18 janvier 1996;
- considérant que la procédure des co-tutelles de thèse représente une voie particulièrement prometteuse tant pour le développement de la mobilité intraeuropéenne des chercheurs que pour le renforcement de la coopération institutionnelle entre la France et l'Italie;

sont convenues de promouvoir des co-tutelles de thèse entre les deux pays au travers des dispositions suivantes:

1. Après accord du président de l'université française et du recteur de l'université italienne, le doctorant italien pourra être dispensé du DEA français, et réciproquement le doctorant français pourra être dispensé du concours national italien de sélection de doctorants italiens.
2. Pour chaque doctorant en co-tutelle, une convention sera signée par les autorités responsables des deux établissements d'enseignement supérieur: le recteur de l'université italienne et le président de l'université française. Cette convention précisera, en particulier, les conditions dans lesquelles une couverture sociale est assurée au doctorant.
3. Le doctorant s'inscrit obligatoirement dans un établissement d'enseignement supérieur français et dans un établissement d'enseignement supérieur italien. Le doctorant s'acquittera de ses droits d'inscription et de scolarité dans un seul des deux établissements partenaires.
4. Les candidats à une préparation de doctorat en co-tutelle effectuent leurs travaux sous le contrôle et la responsabilité d'un directeur de thèse dans chacun des deux pays intéressés. Les deux directeurs de thèse s'engagent à exercer pleinement la fonction de tuteur auprès du doctorant. La durée de préparation de la thèse se répartit entre les deux établissements intéressés par périodes alternatives dans chacun des deux pays. La durée de la mobilité sera précisée, impliquant des séjours alternés de durées approximativement équivalentes.
5. La thèse donne lieu à une soutenance au terme de laquelle est conféré au candidat le titre de docteur reconnu par les deux pays intéressés, cette disposition devant faire l'objet d'une clause inscrite dans la convention liant les deux établissements. Le jury de soutenance désigné par les deux universités partenaires est composé à parité par des représentants scientifiques des deux pays. Il comprend au moins quatre membres dont les deux directeurs de thèse.
6. La thèse, rédigée dans l'une des deux langues nationales, est complétée par un résumé écrit et oral dans l'autre langue.

7. La protection du sujet de thèse ainsi que la publication, l'exploitation et la protection des résultats de recherche issus des travaux du doctorant dans les deux établissements seront assujetties à la réglementation en vigueur et assurées conformément aux procédures spécifiques à chaque pays impliqué dans la co-tutelle. Lorsque requis, les dispositions relatives à la protection des droits de propriété intellectuelle pourront faire l'objet d'une annexe spécifique.

The Italo-French University

The Italo-French University⁸ arose out of the Italo-French summit in Florence on 6 October 1998. Its administrative headquarters are in Grenoble and Turin. It is an original experience of a virtual university, *sans murs*, which aims at co-ordinating the cooperation between the universities of the two countries and which is based largely on distance learning made possible by new technologies.

By means of this new university Italy and France wish "to promote the award of double degrees and joint degrees and participate in the design of common programmes"⁹. In addition to this commitment to double degrees, another five are specified:

- promote convergence between the respective university systems;
- invite the participation of higher education institutions of other European countries in that process;
- promote joint research programmes and life-long learning;
- provide assistance to the university institutions and bodies of both countries in the matter of inter-university cooperation;
- support the creation of databases and telematic links between the two university systems with a view to establishing a virtual network of information, teaching and life-long learning.

Florence University and University of Paris I "Panthéon-Sorbonne": Double Degree in Law

The integrated legal education programme drawn up by Florence and Paris I universities is a response to certain demands:

⁸ A presentation in Italian is available on the web at www.universita-italo-francese.org; the French version can be found at www.universite-franco-italienne.org.

⁹ Law no. 161 of 26 May 2001 - Ratification and Implementation of the Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Italy and the Government of the French Republic Establishing the Italo-French University, with relative Protocol, done in Florence on 6 October 1998 (published in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic - no. 141 of 9.6.2000).

- European integration needs jurists who are able to master the law in one or more jurisdictions and who can just as easily be admitted to practice in countries other than their home one;
- there is a growing demand by large European and US law firms for lawyers who are able to practice with ease in an international environment, a demand which so far has remained unsatisfied, thereby obliging universities to make a breakthrough in the organisation of *ad hoc* study programmes;
- it is crucial to produce graduates destined for careers in international and community organisations or the law departments of large multinational companies, where knowledge and linguistic competency by definition exceeds boundaries that traditionally define and segment the teaching of law.

The integrated Italo-French programme offers a selected group of students (ten French and ten Italian) the opportunity to obtain the two relevant national degrees in five years: the Italian *laurea in giurisprudenza* and the French *maîtrise en droit*. The Italians spend the first two years in Florence before moving to Paris for the following two years. The fifth year is divided between an internship in whatever country the student wishes and the writing of a thesis supervised by a faculty member from the partner university. This is a single programme which guarantees a complete education in each of the two legal systems. The subjects studied are those considered as fundamental by both universities. The student studies just once any subjects which do not have national connotations (for example, historical subjects and international law).

The University Reform of 1999: Joint Degrees

An important turning point for the development of joint degrees was the approval of the Regulation on University Autonomy¹⁰ which completed the process of university independence, also in view of the process of convergence of the national policies of the European countries proclaimed by education ministers in the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations. The reform was also motivated by the need for the universities to open up internationally. The modest international mobility of our students and free movement of our professionals bore witness to a more general phenomenon of the low level of internationalisation of our university system and its accentuated structural disharmony in comparison to the systems of other countries.

The new architecture of the system of university education tackles these aspects through the provision of new instruments aimed at promoting and supporting the initiatives of universities. There are numerous provisions in Regulation no. 509/99 which today allow universities to engage themselves more incisively in the international arena:

- the classification of qualifications into a three-year first degree (*laurea*) - second degree (*laurea specialistica*) - doctorate (*dottorato*), with the introduction of university masters;

¹⁰ Decree no. 509 of 3 November 1999 - Regulation Setting Out the Norms Concerning the Curricular Autonomy of Universities (published in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic - no. 2 of 4 January 2000).

- the possibility to award joint degrees with foreign universities;
- the recognition of foreign study periods, credits and qualifications for the purposes of permitting the further studies;
- the obligatory study of a another language of the European Union and the awarding of credits therefor;
- the possibility to sit the final course examination in a foreign language;
- the generalised introduction of the Diploma Supplement on the basis of proposals drawn up internationally.

Focusing our attention on inter-university cooperation and the award of joint degrees, it is Article 3 which provides that "further to agreements in this regard", Italian universities may award first and second degrees (as well as all of the other qualifications envisaged by the new rules) "also in conjunction with other Italian or foreign universities.". The rules governing the "the procedures for the award of the joint qualifications" are delegated (Article 11, paragraph 7, subparagraph n) to the general academic regulations of the university. To this end it has been suggested¹¹ that:

- in the case of joint degrees with Italian universities, the relevant certificate should list all the participating universities (while the agreement among the universities themselves should contain an indication of the Rector or Rectors empowered from time to time to award the qualification concerned);
- in the case of joint degrees with foreign universities, the procedures for the award of the qualification concerned should be expressly regulated in the inter-university agreements given the differences in the rules among various countries.

Joint Degrees Between Italian Universities

The chance to exploit synergies between universities to enrich the courses on offer has been grasped by many universities. Some initiatives which had been undertaken in past years have now been joined by others in the 2001-2002 academic year. The following are some examples, just to cite a few:

- the degree course in Computer engineering and biomedics in Catanzaro, offered jointly by the University of Catanzaro and Milan Polytechnic;
- the degree course in Primary education in Modena, offered jointly by the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and the University of Bologna;
- the degree course in Viticulture and oenology science and technology in Verona, offered jointly by the University of Verona and the University of Padua;
- the degree course in International commerce in Vicenza, offered jointly by the University of Verona and the University of Padua;
- the degree course in Logistical and production engineering in Bolzano, offered by Turin Polytechnic in collaboration with the Free University of Bolzano;

¹¹ See the Ministerial Note (MURST-Saus-Ufficio III), document record no. 822, of 25 May 2001 concerning "curricular autonomy - application problems".

- the degree course in Animal breeding science and technology in Catanzaro, offered jointly by the University of Catanzaro and the universities of Bologna, Bari and Messina.

Joint Degrees in Two "Internationalisation" Programmes

The objective of the reform is to give the Italian university system a marked international dimension and in this regard the development of joint qualifications is incentivised economically and through a support plan.¹² The three-year development plan for the Italian university system allocated ITL 20 billion (10.33 million euro) in 2000 to fund integrated study programmes which entail the joint participation of students and teachers from at least one other country, mutual recognition of qualifications and the award of double degrees.

It is generally recognised that, whereas until now internationalisation has developed in terms of programmes and activities fostering the mobility of students, researchers and teachers which in turn have been supported by the universities themselves, the Ministry and the European Commission, the time is now ripe for passing to a more advanced stage of internationalisation, placing the emphasis on the creation of a culture and climate in institutions capable of promoting and sustaining initiatives that are truly international and intercultural. This means stimulating and favouring the process of university self-assessment through comparison with the university educational systems of other countries but above all through integrating or infusing an international and intercultural dimension in ordinary teaching activities, learning, research and services by means of a combination of a wide range of activities, policies and procedures ingrained in the development of the new initiatives. In short, the emphasis is placed on planning, curricular, organisational, policy and procedural aspects of the creation of new international qualifications¹³.

The Ministry of Universities launched the "internationalisation" programme in December 1999, and issued a call for projects with respect to which all Italian universities could submit bids. The results of the call for projects as at the expiry date can be summarised as follows:

- universities and university institutes which submitted projects: 68 (out of 75);
- projects submitted: 477 (an average of 7 projects per university);
- overall cost of the projects submitted: ITL. 148 billion (equal to around 76 million euro);
- overall financing requested from MURST: ITL. 59.4 billion (equal to around 30.7 million euro) in comparison to the ITL 20 billion available;
- overall university co-financing: ITL. 68.4 billion (35.3 million euro);
- student mobility envisaged: 21,611;
- teacher mobility: 8398.

¹² Ministerial Decree of 21 June 1999, article 7.

¹³ See Antonello Masia, "Internazionalizzare l'università italiana", in *Universitas*, no. 79, April 2001.

The Ministry approved and financed 178 projects corresponding to an overall financial commitment of ITL. 52 billion of which ITL. 20 billion from MURST and 32 billion from the co-financing guaranteed by the universities on the basis of their own resources or finance coming from other sources¹⁴.

The International Degree Course and the Joint Degree in Biotechnology: the experience of the University of Perugia.

The University of Perugia successfully participated in the internationalisation project submitting a proposal for a first degree course in biotechnology co-ordinated by Professor Mariapia Viola Magni. The project was a spin off from the Biotechnology Thematic Network selected and approved by the European Union. The project, co-ordinated by the University of Perugia, comprises other Italian (Udine), Portuguese (Lisbon), Spanish (Valencia), German (Bonn), Finnish (Turku), Polish (Gdansk), Hungarian (Budapest), Czech (Prague) and Austrian (Vienna and Salzburg) universities. The universities formed a consortium governed by an agreement and by-laws.

The degree course lasts three years and is held in the English language as it caters for students from different nationalities. In the initial stage there are 40 students, equally representing the participating universities and chosen by them. The course is held in Perugia while the thesis is done in the university of another country or in a company. The course is very much oriented towards industry and seeks to educate graduates who can then directly find a job in industry or even set up a business themselves. Each semester comprises a total of 300 contact hours, of which a third are lectures with the balance dedicated to practicals. In the final semester the students concentrate on writing their thesis. At the end they receive a joint degree certificate which bears the signatures of all the universities in the consortium.

The first "internationalisation" programme of 1999 met with widespread approval as is witnessed by the number of projects submitted. The reason for the success can be ascribed to the correct structuring of the relationship between national policy and university autonomy as well as to the commitment of each single university to achieving a profile in the international arena. The success of the first programme led the Ministry to adopt a second round of initiatives for the years 2002-2003 with financing on a par with that granted previously¹⁵. The new call for projects envisaged three types of projects that could be co-financed by the Ministry:

- the joint design and organisation, on a reciprocal basis, of university courses (first degree, second degree, doctorate, master, specialisation courses), subject to the signing of agreements for such purposes which envisage the participation of teachers and students from institutions of at least one other country;

¹⁴ On 8 June 2001 at the Perugia University for Foreigners, the Rectors' Conference and the Ministry of Universities organised a national conference with the title "Internationalisation Strategies of the Italian University System" dedicated to comparing the experience in different disciplines and monitoring the problems that emerged in the start up phase.

¹⁵ Ministerial Decree no. 115 of 8 May 2001 - Planning of the University System for the Three Years 2001-2003, article 10 - Internationalisation.

- transnational educational initiatives, in collaboration with universities of other countries, aimed at the setting up in such countries of courses or teaching structures apt to value and promote Italian university education models abroad;
- inter-university cooperation initiatives for the study - comparative at international level and of a verification/prospective nature at national level - of themes connected to the process of the harmonisation of European university systems referred to in the Bologna Declaration (accreditation, credits, diploma supplement, assessment, quality, recognition of qualifications, etc.). Such initiatives must be aimed at improving the quality, from an international perspective, of university organisation and related administrative structures, must produce effects on the university system and structure and must detail the means by which the results achieved will be disseminated.

The University of Bari in Argentina. Courses and Joint Degrees with the University of Belgrano and the State University of Mar del Plata

An excellent example of transnational education has been realised in Argentina by the University of Bari. In November 1999, during a visit by a delegation of Bari faculty members in Argentina, the first framework agreement was concluded between the University of Bari and the Free University of Belgrano for scientific and teaching cooperation between the two universities concerned. Subsequently, also through the good offices of the Italian Embassy to Argentina, a framework agreement was signed on the basis of which an advanced course was organised in August-November 2000 with the title "Italy and Argentina Compared: Culture, Society, Law and Economics". A second advanced education initiative was done in 2001-2002: a course entitled "Law and Economics: Rules of the European Union and the Socio-economic Interests of Italy and Argentina".

The University of Bari has also entertained relations for many years with the State University of Mar del Plata, on foot of an agreement signed in 1992. In the 2000-2001 academic year two post graduate courses were organised on site in Argentina, each one lasting 2 years. The first, in the humanities, was dedicated to "Italo-Argentine Cultural Studies" while the second, in the economics field, dealt with "SMEs and Globalisation. The European Union and Mercosur Compared".

At the end of the course the graduates are awarded a joint qualification by the Italian and Argentine universities (pursuant to Ministerial Decree 509/1999). The parchment bears the logo, the name and the signature of the rectors of both universities and describes the two qualifications awarded (*Diploma di perfezionamento* from the University of Bari and *Diploma de Posgrado* from the University of Belgrano); the duration of the course is also stated as is the portion thereof that was spent at the University of Bari.

Joint Degrees in the "Bologna Process"

On 25 May 1998 the French, German, Italian and UK ministers of education signed a joint declaration at the Sorbonne in Paris on the "harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system". The four ministers expressly recognised that the strengthening of the experience of "joint courses" is a significant contribution to the "progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles".

A year later the ministers of about thirty European countries met in Bologna on 18 and 19 June and signed a declaration which delineated a "European higher education area" to be constructed within the first ten years of the new century. The Bologna Declaration provides six concrete objectives, among which "promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research".

The attention given to joint courses and degrees was confirmed at the European summit of education ministers held in Prague on 19 May 2001. The final communiqué expressly calls upon the higher education sector "to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree"¹⁶.

The Database on Joint Degrees in Italy

In 2002 and on an experimental basis Cimea has set up a national database on joint degrees and double degrees. A form containing the following information has been prepared to record the various agreements:

- Italian university
- Type of course (first degree, second degree, master, research doctorate, etc.)
- Name of the course
- Qualification awarded
- Discipline
- Foreign country
- Foreign university partner
- Network or inter-university network
- Contact
- Note.

112 agreements for which there was sufficient information were recorded. The reliability of the database is conditioned however by the presence therein of numerous projects which are still at the planning stage or are just being implemented now. Therefore, it is not yet possible to ascertain the effective success of these projects. In some cases the information available on the mechanism of the joint qualification is still

¹⁶ "Towards the European Higher Education Area" - Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education held in Prague on 19 May 2001.

subject to the outcome of subsequent negotiations between the parties concerned. Taking account of these limitations, the database does nonetheless show some evident trends, which are set out in the box hereunder.

Inter-university Agreements for the Award of Joint Degrees and Double Degrees		
<u>Sample:</u> 112 inter-university agreements		
<u>Distribution by type of course</u>		
	no.	%
- Degree courses (new and old classification)	47	42
- Research doctorates	34	30
- University master and advanced courses	27	24
- Other (schools of specialisation and university diplomas)	4	4
Totals	112	100
<u>Distribution of the agreements by discipline</u>		
	no.	%
- Health	10	9
- Sciences	18	16
- Humanities	18	16
- Engineering and Architecture	27	24
- Law, Economics, Political and Social Sciences	39	35
Totals	112	100
<u>Distribution of the agreements by foreign country (<i>top six</i>)</u>		
	no.	%
- France	39	35
- Spain	29	26
- Germany	28	25
- United Kingdom	21	19
- United States of America	17	14
- Sweden	10	9
<i>Source: Cimea 2002</i>		

With reference to the types of course envisaged by Italian university rules, joint degree courses (which include the basic degree course of the old system and the first and second degree courses of the new one) account for 42% of the sample. In second place are research doctorates with 30%, followed by masters with 24%. However, considered all together post-graduate courses account for more than half. Even taking account of the database limits referred to before, "double degrees" seem to be prevalent for first and second degree courses whereas a joint single qualification accompanied by various forms of joint certification seems to be more the norm for postgraduate courses (masters and doctorates).

With reference to the various discipline groups, joint qualifications tend to find greater consensus in the area of law, economics, political and social sciences (35% of the sample) and in engineering and architecture courses (24%).

With reference to the choice of foreign partner, Italian universities show a marked tendency to favour agreements with universities in the larger European countries, in particular ones from France (one agreement in three), Spain and Germany (one in four) as well as the United Kingdom (one in five). American universities occupy the fifth place with a 14 % share, which covers principally joint research doctorates.

Integrated Study Programmes and Common Degrees

The wide-ranging survey of the Italian experience we have conducted brings us to the final part of this paper where an attempt at providing a summary will be made. Cooperation between institutions of different countries in determined disciplines has generated common education and training activities, generally under the heading of integrated study programmes or integrated curricula, which are characterised by a common assumption of responsibility by the participating institutions as regards:

- the design of the curriculum;
- the organisation of the studies;
- the type of qualifications awarded.

Design of the Curriculum

Curricular integration based on design tends towards the identification of shared educational goals and the drawing up of a common study path, in some cases highly compatible with national standards and in other cases seen as a markedly "European" one. Some highly integrated programmes envisage a parallel and contemporary offer of the same educational activity and the complete sharing of teaching, learning and examination methods, thereby allowing participating students to follow the same course in different locations. Although mobility is seen as an essential element of the programme it does not introduce curricular variables in the study programme, which must consequently be completed within the same period at all participating locations. In other cases the participating institutions offer specific segments which complement the overall course designed, thus making it necessary for students to spend time at each of the participating universities.

Courses with a low level of design stage integration identify some components of each participating institutions' study programmes - be they basic parts of the curriculum or specialist areas - and then proceed to put together a programme which values those components to the maximum. Mobility is seen as an opportunity for integration that is important in itself but also a means of acquiring at partner institutions knowledge and skills not available at the home institution.

Organisation of the Studies

The organisation or management of the studies mainly concerns decisions on logistical and financial aspects of the programme, the selection of students and the choosing of the teaching staff. Organisation of the studies can be highly integrated in cases where students from various institutions converge on a single location, are subject to the same

selection procedures and participate in the same didactic activities contributed by teachers from different institutions. A lower level of integration occurs in cases where the periods of student mobility are limited in comparison to the overall duration of the studies, where the contribution of foreign teachers is marginal with respect to the general programme or where students are selected by each institution in accordance with different criteria.

Type of Qualifications Awarded

It would be reasonable to assume that the type of qualifications awarded by partners would depend on the characteristics of the programme in the other two phases of the cooperation project. A hypothesis of this kind would allow one to draw up a classification of the qualifications from common programmes on the basis of the level of integration reached in the design and implementation of the curriculum concerned. The objective of such a classification is to make currently used terminology more transparent and comprehensible, terminology which has come to be dominated by just two terms: joint degrees and double degrees.

The survey carried out indicates that there exist various types of agreement on the issue of awarding qualifications. The various formulae are set out in the box hereunder.

Case no. 1. Award of the national qualification with commitment for mutual recognition.

Each participating institution awards its own national degree to its own students and undertakes to recognise the qualification awarded by the partner without any additional burden for the students. The level of curricular integration required for this type of agreement is generally agreed at bilateral level.

Case no. 2. Award of the national qualification with a joint certificate.

Each participating institution awards its own national degree to its own students and at the same time issues a joint certificate testifying as to a determined level of curricular integration, whose requisites are agreed at bilateral or possibly network level.

Case no. 3. Award of the national qualification with attachment of a European label

Each participating institution awards its own national degree to its own students and at the same time issues a European label testifying as to a determined level of curricular integration, whose requisites are agreed at European level.

Case no. 4. Award of a joint qualification.

The participating institutions jointly award a joint degree on the basis of bilateral or network agreements which envisage the completion of an integrated curriculum whose duration is fixed by the partners.

Case no. 5. Subsequent acquisition of the second qualification.

The participating institutions award their own national degrees to students who have attained a qualification of the same level from a partner on the basis of agreements which envisage an additional period of study within the ambit of an integrated curriculum.

Case no. 6. Award of a double qualification (with a prolonging of the studies).

The participating institutions contemporaneously award the two respective national degrees to students involved in the programme on the basis of bilateral agreements which envisage the completion of an integrated curriculum longer than that provided for in each of the countries concerned.

Case no. 7. Award of the double qualification

The participating institutions contemporaneously award the two respective national qualifications to students involved in the programme on the basis of bilateral agreements which envisage the completion of an integrated curriculum of the same duration as that provided for in each of the countries concerned.

Greater transparency on the coherence among agreements for the award of qualifications and the level of programme integration in terms of design and organisation would be most welcome in order to permit:

- a better understanding of what is currently on offer;
- a better evaluation of the results achieved;
- the drawing up of a common methodology for the design of integrated curricula which provide an acceptable cost/benefit relationship.