

International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education

Projekt Südosteuropa

Beiträge zur Hochschulpolitik 1/2010

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Introduction

Over the past few years, many groups of quality assurance agencies have formed networks on the basis of geographical regions or other agency characteristics (see the list on the next page). In an effort to explore networking in quality assurance particularly relevant for European institutions, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) organised the conference "International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education" in cooperation with the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) Republic of Serbia in Belgrade, Serbia, from 29 to 30 October 2009.

During the conference the most important international networks in external quality assurance like ENQA, INQAAHE, ECA and others were examined. The information about their profiles, objectives and activities as well as focal points gave an orientation towards the more and more complex interaction of players.

Furthermore, topics like the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, the cooperation in elaborating measures for harmonising activities as well as the integration and active participation of the young accreditation agencies from South Eastern European Countries into the European quality assurance net were discussed.

This publication contains all conference contributions and discussions. I do hope that they will be useful for all organisations interested in external quality assurance policy and networking on the international level.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all speakers and to all other participants for their contributions in making the conference a success. Special thanks go to the Federal Foreign Office for the financial support.

Brankica Assenmacher

List of networks for external quality assurance

(in alphabetical order)

ANQAHE – Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

APQN – Asia-Pacific Quality Network

AQAN – ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

CANQATE – Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education

CEEN – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

DACH – German-Austrian-Swiss Accreditation Network

EAQAN – Eurasian Quality Assurance Network

ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation

ENQA – established as a Network, since 2004 transformed into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

IHEQN – Irish Higher Education Quality Network

INQAHE - International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

JQI – Joint Quality Initiative – Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in Europe (inactive)

NOQA – Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education

RIACES – Ibero-American Network for Quality Accreditation in Tertiary Education

Welcome address

Professor Dr. Zarko Obradovic

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have a great honour to open the Conference “International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education”, which is of great importance for the higher education reform process in Serbia.

For the last few years, widespread discussions on higher education have been going on. The goal of these discussions and proposed changes is to make higher education institutions more effective, to provide conditions for more qualitative studying and education of different profiles, to meet the needs for experts in modern technologies in the areas of economy, science, research, informatics, culture and arts. The second important issue is to make optimal aligning of the curricula and study levels among all university institutions in the European Higher Education Area, to provide their networking and mutual integration, and consequently, to enable students’ and professors’ mobility.

The goal of this conference is to explore the possibilities of creating a network of the institutions, which have been working on the quality assurance in higher education. Therefore, the most important international networks for external quality assurance will be discussed here. The information about their profiles, activities as well as interfaces should give an orientation towards further activities in mutual connection and interaction of participants, which is especially important for Serbian Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Education, being devoted to the higher education reform objectives, based on Bologna declaration, perform many steps in order to make the educational system in Serbia an integral part of European Higher Education Area.

The continued implementation of the Bologna process is a priority in the field of higher education, so the intensification of reforms is the main task of the Ministry of Education.

By signing Bologna Declaration in 2003, the Republic of Serbia joined the group of European countries committed to coordinate their higher education policies, so that by the year of 2010 European Higher Education Area will be formed, which will preserve cultural, linguistic and national characteristics of each country itself. Bologna process implementation has been formally conducted since the academic year of 2006/07.

The Act on Higher Education, passed in 2005, represents the beginning of harmonization process with Bologna declaration and the start of reform changes and processes in Serbia.

Higher education is realized through basic academic and professional studies according to the accredited study programmes in educational-scientific and educational-artistic fields: Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences and Humanities, Technology and Engineering Sciences, Medical Sciences and Arts.

Higher education system in Serbia is realized at three levels:

- basic academic and professional studies (duration: three to four years);
- graduate academic studies – master, specialist professional studies and specialist academic studies;
- PhD academic studies.

There are seven state and six private universities, five private faculties that are not part of universities, and 47 state and 25 private schools of professional studies. The status of state and private universities is equal.

There are about 184,000 students at the state universities, about 30,000 students at the private universities and about 54,000 students at schools of professional studies. Therefore, we have about 268,000 students in our higher education system.

The Act on Higher Education defines the higher education activity based on the following principles:

- academic freedoms;
- autonomy of university and other independent higher education institutions;
- unity of the educational and scientific-research/artistic work;
- openness to the public and citizens;
- respect of humanistic and democratic values;
- respect of human rights and citizen freedoms;
- harmonization with European higher educational systems and improvement of academic staff and students' mobility;
- student participation in management and decision-making;
- equality of higher education institutions.

Higher education objectives are:

- transfer of scientific, professional and artistic knowledge and skills;
- development of the science and improvement of artistic creativity;
- provision of equal conditions for everybody to gain higher education and to be a part of lifelong learning process;
- large increase of the population with higher education qualifications.

One of the key institutions in the field of higher education is the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance. The Commission is an executive body of the National Council of Higher Education which proposes the standards for work permits issuing, for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs, for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions; for conducting of accreditation procedure; for providing opinions on the procedure of work permits issuing.

Accreditation process has been going on since 2007. It means accreditation of higher education institutions themselves, as well as accreditation of all their study programmes. The functioning of the quality assurance system on the national level in Serbia means an internal and external quality assurance and accreditation.

Quality assurance in higher education institutions is one of the most important topics of Bologna process and it is being realized through an

accreditation process. In the process of accreditation it is being verified whether higher education institutions and study programs meet the standards defined by the National Council of Higher Education and whether, in accordance to the Law on Higher Education, higher education institution has the right of public papers issuance.

During the procedure of a higher education institution accreditation, it is checked out if the institution meets all the relevant conditions (curricular, staff, spacious and financial conditions). It is also verified whether the conditions for introducing a study program are met. Accreditation procedure is conducted on the request of a founder, i.e. of a higher education institution itself. Higher education institution can start its work and perform its activity upon obtaining work permit. The work permit is issued by the Ministry of Education.

The accreditation process is now being completed and by the end of this year, all the existing higher education institutions will be included in the process. Up to now, 7 universities and 102 faculties in Serbia were successfully accredited.

Now that the conditions for amending the Law on Higher Education are mature, the changes of the Law on Higher Education are being prepared.

Higher education institutions, in the period of higher education reforms, have started to adjust their curricula and study programmes with the Law on Higher Education and with the Regulation on Standards and Procedures for Accreditation, as defined by the National Council of Higher Education. Considering the obligations of the higher education institutions within the reform process, it was necessary to make a number of changes related to the curricula, teaching methods and textbooks. Accordingly, it was very important to give the students time to get acquainted with the new modes of studying, and to adjust to them.

Therefore, in the next period, we are planning to realize the following:

- With the aim of successful realization of this process, the obstacles should be overcome and the inclusion of all higher education institutions involved in quality assurance should be continued.

- The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance will complete the process of internal quality assessment in December 2009.
- National Council of Higher Education will publish a report on self-assurance in January 2010.
- External evaluation of institutions and study programs which is to be performed by the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, in accordance with the standards and guidelines for quality assessment in European higher education area, is planned to be performed in 2010.
- It is of great importance that the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Serbia become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

I would especially like to emphasize the active participation of students in the National Council of Higher Education and Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance. The main conclusions are included in the report of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, which has mandatory consultation with the students, during the internal evaluation process. Therefore, all higher education institutions have an obligation to form committees for quality improvement, which should be consisted of teachers, students and assistants.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Republic of Serbia makes great efforts to provide quality education for as many students as possible.

Thank you for your attention, with the belief that this seminar, by presenting the experiences of already established international networks of quality assurance in higher education, will actively contribute to the inclusion of Serbia into a network of accredited agencies for further improvement of the system of higher education in South Eastern Europe. I wish you successful work and I am sure that it will be full of constructive dialogue among all the participants.

Thank you for your attention!

Welcome address

Professor Dr. Srdjan Stankovic

Dear Minister Professor Obradovic,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you on behalf of the National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Serbia. My pleasure is even greater, because we are all here together: The Minister of Higher Education, the President of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance and the President of the National Council of Higher Education. This is the proof that we in fact have perfect harmony in the Higher Education Community in Serbia. This is very important, because our law consists of two main lines. One line is governmental. The other is independent, regulatory, and in fact consists of the National Council of Higher Education, the Commission for Accreditation and the Assembly, and the Conference of the Universities of Serbia. Together we have one main task to perform: to be a stable member of the scientific community, to be a stable member in the European Higher Education Area, to implement what is the main goal of this country these days.

What is the main goal of our country? Just to show that we are a part of Europe and that everything we do in the National Council for Higher Education these days is oriented towards this main task. As far as the strategy of higher education in Serbia is concerned, we started to realise this very important task together with the other Council for Education, for which we received a lot of government support. We have been trying to produce some kind of guidelines. What are the main steps in this procedure? The main step is to try to overcome some of the problems we already have, which could be summarized into two facts: Firstly, that we would very much like to make some changes to our system, namely change towards integrating our universities. This is something we inherited from our past, from the practice in the former Yugoslavia, and in many Eastern European countries, which we somehow we have to cope with and try to convince independent faculties to become university

members again, as entities. This is very important not only because of the aim to harmonize with the rest of Europe, but also because this is the way to organize our work better.

What is also very important these days is our work on organizing and establishing doctoral studies in this country. We really have a long tradition here, in Belgrade, Novi Sad, the main cities in this country, in which very distinguished dissertations have been defended over many years. Now we are introducing the new system with exams, we are introducing a new system that requires a different way of organizing everything, including the Ministry of Science and Technological Development and the Ministry of Education. We have to put all these aspects together in order to organize something that is essential for us, for the universities as well as for science and research in this country. We are thinking a lot about this and hope that we will produce a good plan for the coming steps in the future.

Coming back to this conference, I would like to emphasise that our real desire, the desire of the National Council for Higher Education which elected the Commission for Accreditation is to help them to become member of ENQA, because this is how we can move closer to achieving our main goal, which is to become a really stable member of the European Higher Education Area. Well, you will hear quite a lot of things over these few days. I do not want to continue, because this would push me into details not convenient for this moment. I would just like to repeat that I wish those who have come from Germany a pleasant stay in Belgrade, and that I would like to express our sincere thanks to the German Rectors' Conference, recalling the very interesting and fruitful meeting we had a couple of days ago. I hope we will meet next week and maybe the week after as well and so on, until we have finished what we started, just to become, how to say it, united together. And, of course I wish you and all of us a fruitful and productive conference and a successful one as well.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Welcome address

Rudolf Smolarczyk

Dear Minister Professor Obradovic,
 Dear Professor Stankovic,
 Dear Professor Vujcic,
 Distinguished Rectors, Vice-Rectors and Deans,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) I am very delighted to welcome you to our Conference on "International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education". This is the fourth meeting the German Rectors' Conference organises this year with focus on Western Balkan countries and related to the wide range of quality assurance in higher education. But this is our first meeting in Serbia and we are very happy about this.

The HRK is the association of higher education institutions in Germany dealing with political matters related to all questions in the field of higher education on national and international level. Already in the 90ies the HRK started to direct its attention to questions of quality assurance in higher education. Since 1998 the HRK is running a special project under the current name Quality Management Project, or short Q^m. The project activities are focused on our national German development, but as some of you know, there is also a very close cooperation with international actors in this field. The project is our national forum for discussion and exchange of experiences in quality assurance. My colleagues in charge of the Q^m Project are very active and productive, so I can recommend you very warmly the HRK website where you can find also the description of the project, the planned activities and the published results. Many of them are available in English language.

But, this conference and the involvement of HRK in the cooperation in South Eastern Europe is a part of HRK's international activities. Due to the German funds for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe we have the possibility to provide this kind of activities here. The HRK uses these

funds since the beginning of the Pact in 1999. Since 1999 until this year 2009, the HRK was able to gain nearly 8 Million euro from the German funds for the Stability Pact and from other different sources, national and international, private and public. In the past some of here represented universities have been beneficiaries of our activities.

Currently, due to the existing institutional responsibilities in Germany the HRK shifted its activities exclusively to the organisation of international meetings (seminars, workshops and conferences) dedicated to questions of higher education policy what de facto means to all aspects of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

The European Ministers responsible for Higher Education, who met at the last Bologna Conference this year in Leuven, defined in the final communiqué a huge list of activities still to do. Therefore there still also the need on exchange of experiences inside the community of the 46 Bologna member countries.

The Bologna Process initiated discussions on higher education reforms in Europe in a volume and extensiveness as we have not known before. International meetings have become a part of daily business. It is not possible to prepare a national strategy paper without a look outside what other stakeholders have already said or done.

Our conference today is a part of this international networking and we hope that this meeting will be a fruitful contribution to keep this international networking going.

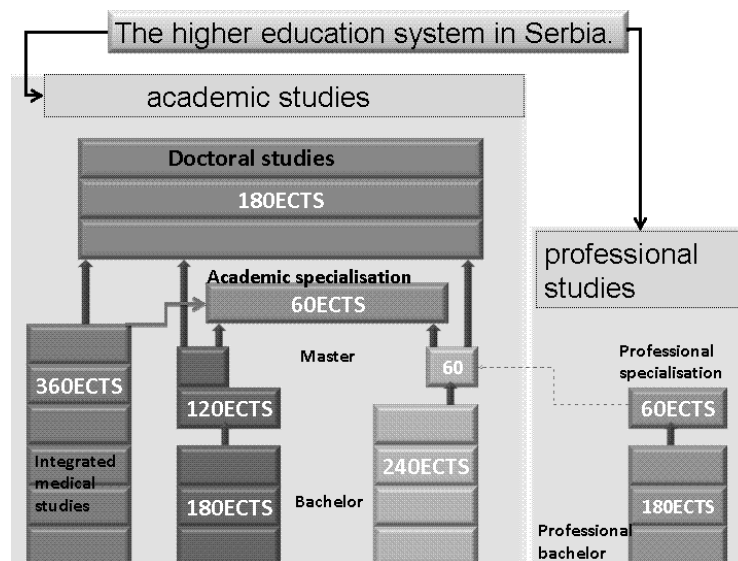
Quality assurance in higher education is one of the key issues not only of the Bologna Process. It is at the core of the reforms and changes inside the higher education institutions. Quality assurance is no longer merely one of the Bologna Process action lines aiming at more transparency and supporting the trust to the results of foreign higher education. Quality assurance is in this sense no more only the object of the changes. Quality assurance became subject of the reforms supplying the acting "reformers" with relevant references and data sources.

under working conditions? In the Accreditation Commission, we now know that some aspects should be improved, even in this scheme.

The National Council for Higher Education is made up 16 members, elected by the Parliament. It is the supreme decision-making body on final and strategic questions of higher education. The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance consists of 15 members and its main duty is to take care of quality, not only for the accreditation process. The Commission – called CAQA – is responsible for organizing and monitoring quality assurance in the whole area of higher education in Serbia.

Higher education system in Serbia

Serbia joined the Bologna Process in 2003 and the Higher Education Act alone provides a legal basis proceeding properly with the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Convention. The core of this act defines the degree structure, namely Bachelor, Master and Doctorates.



Many institutions in Serbia started with the ECTS system in the 2006/2007 academic year. So far, all higher education institutions in Serbia have implemented ECTS system in all programmes. The higher education system in Serbia looks like this: We have two main lines. One line is for academic studies and the other for professional studies. In academic studies we have as usual 3 or 4-year Bachelor's and 1 or 2-year Master's plus something that is a special feature in our education system, namely academic specialisation. In professional studies we have a professional Bachelor's programmes with only 3 years of study and professional specialisation programmes with only 1 year of study. As in other European countries, integrated medical studies are offered in our system. Doctoral studies in Serbia last only 3 years. There is an opportunity to choose 3 or 4 or even 5-year programmes, but usually institutions choose 3-year doctoral studies models.

We have something else, which is not unique. We have university studies and studies at non-university institutions. Universities usually offer all three types of studies in different fields. We have colleges of academic career studies and colleges of professional career studies. The difference is that colleges of professional studies only provide basic professional studies and specialisation studies, while colleges of academic studies can offer basic, specialist studies and graduate Master's studies. Out of the total number of 258,000 students in 2008/2009 only 17 % studied at colleges (42,000). 83 % of our students (216,000) are at universities, where they are engaged in academic studies.

Distribution of higher education institutions in the country

In the figure below the red dots show where towns are located with higher education institutions. If you just look at the red dots you can see that it is almost spread uniformly across Serbia, but if you look at the yellow rectangles, you can see that 73 higher education institutions are located in Belgrade, 23 in Novi Sad, 17 in Nis and so on. This is the number of the faculties, academies of arts and the colleges.

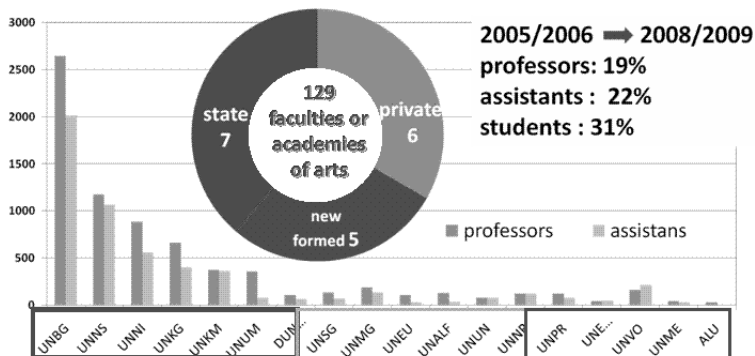
What about higher education at universities? If you compare this academic year and the previous year, you can see the numbers of professors, assistants and students increased.

Distribution of HEI's in the country



THE HIGHER EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITIES

2005/2006:	2008/2009:
Number of professors: 6200	Number of professors: 7407
Number of assistants : 4391	Number of assistants : 5411
Number of students : 164204	Number of students : 216342



If you compare the fact that the number of professors increased by 18 % and the number of students increased much more by 31 %, it is clear that this means Serbia needs more professors. From perspective of quality assurance, it is important not to extend the number of students without appropriate acceleration of professor's recruitment.

We have 7 state universities, 6 private universities and 5 new formed universities. You can see in the figure above that state universities are much bigger than the private universities, of course, and then the newly formed universities. The biggest universities are in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis and Kragujevac.

Development of quality assurance in Serbia

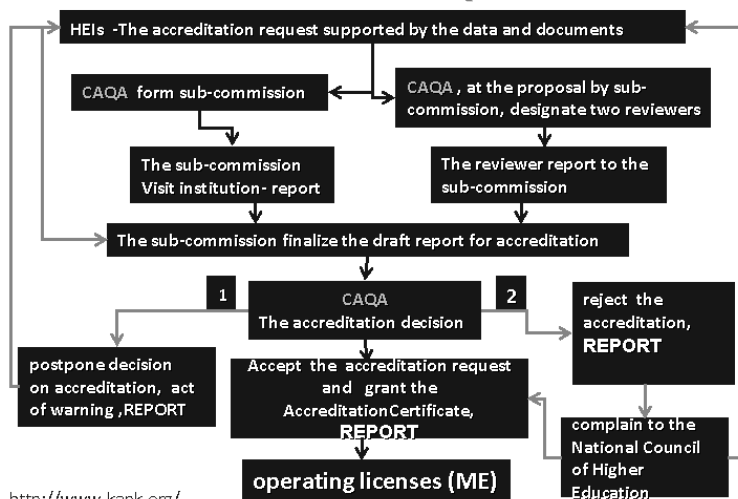
In my personal opinion, quality assurance in Serbia has been developed since 2005. We did not develop it so strong, but just some good nucleus started to grow in our academic community at that time. Accreditation in Serbia consists of self-evaluation, external evaluation and just accreditation. Accreditation became kind of a hot topic in Serbia and my question was "Why"? The first answer is that people do not really like to take accreditations, because they have to do something new, they have to check many things. At the same time, accreditation is a transparent process, and should be a very transparent, public process. We try to do that, but not always with good success.

First of all we prepared and set the standards. The Commission proposed the standards, the National Committee of Higher Education just checked it and we published it in 2006. The set of standards includes standards for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. We divided the programme accreditation standards in two main parts. One part is accreditation of degree programmes in the first and second cycle, and the third part is accreditation of doctoral studies.

Accreditation procedure

The first step is the accreditation request supported by the data and the documents (see the figure below). After that CAQA forms a sub-commission. The sub-commission proposes two reviewers to each degree programme and to each institution. The sub-commission visits the

The accreditation procedure



<http://www.kapik.org/>

institution and prepares the report. The report includes the interview with the students. The reviewers have a look at the documentation and also prepare a report. The sub-commission combines these two reports in one draft report and presents it to the Commission. The Commission then makes the decision.

If the decision is positive, the Commission awards an accreditation certificate to the institution and prepares a written document in accordance to the law, which I called in the figure report. But it is not a real report.

If institutions or degree programmes have, let us say, some weaknesses, but not too strong weakness in some standards, the Accreditation Commission postpones the accreditation decision and gives the programme and the institution an act of warning. In the report about the decision we try to define very clearly what a weakness is, what is positive aspect, what needs to be changed. The institutions start to improve the quality according to the report. After one, two, three or six months, the institution submits the documentation to the Accreditation Commission again.

If the weakness of the institution and the degree programmes is profound and if many standards are not fulfilled, we reject the

accreditation. In that case the institution can appeal to the National Council of Higher Education. The Council can award the accreditation certificate or reject the accreditation. If the decision of the Council is negative the institution can repeat the process after one year. What does one year mean? One year means that the institution is prohibited from admitting a new generation of students only in the present year.

The main activities of the Commission

After the public call, CAQA appoints reviewers. We have now approximately 700 active reviewers in the whole process, which is almost 10 % of all university professors. This means that 10 % of the professors are reviewers in the various organisations. We organise full-day seminars for the reviewers and prepare some documentations for them including instructions and guidelines. Our activities also concern trainings for the institutions, in order to support them to prepare the accreditation documentation and to participate in many different conferences, workshops and so on. Some 800 participants have attended 4 seminars.

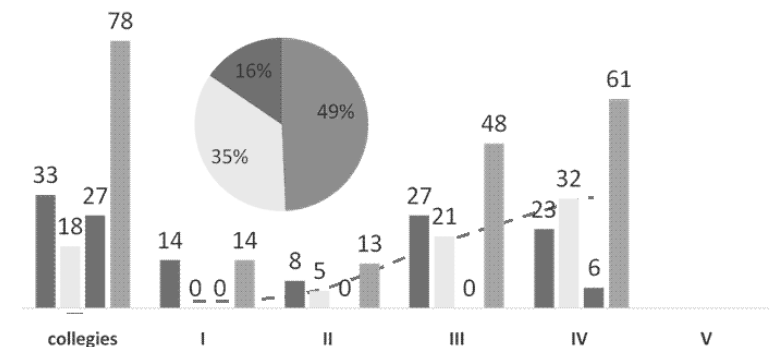
Accreditation results

The first accreditation process started in 2007, when we just scheduled the accreditation with the colleges. According to the law we should do it very quickly. The institutions were also forced to prepare the

ACCREDITATION - PRESENT RESULTS

accreditation of higher education institutions

■ accreditation □ act of warning ■ reject accreditation ■ total

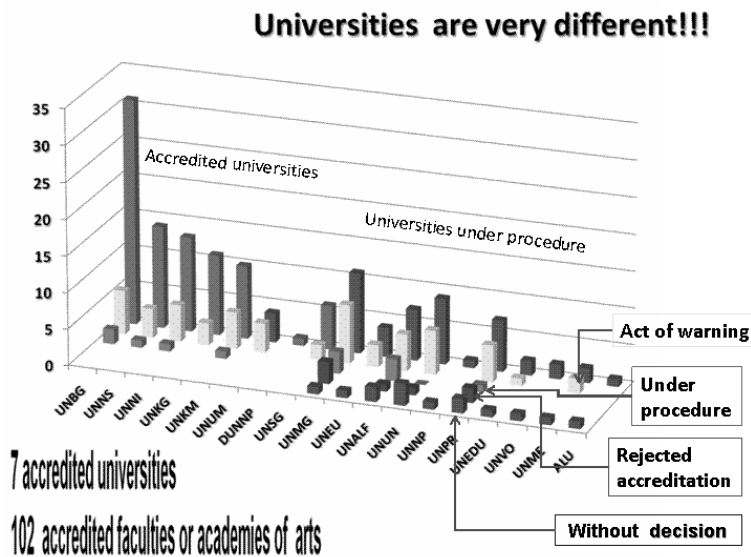


accreditation documentations very quickly. You can see the results in the figure above. Of the 78 institutions 33 received an accreditation, 18 an act of warning and 27 were rejected.

Then we started the accreditation of the faculties. We divided it in five cycles and we have completed four and are now in the fifth cycle on accreditation. As you can see in the figure above, we had just 14 applications in the first cycle, 13 in the second, 48 in the third and 61 in the fourth cycle. Furthermore, the number of acts of warning increased and we had six rejections in the fourth cycle.

How can we hold this line?

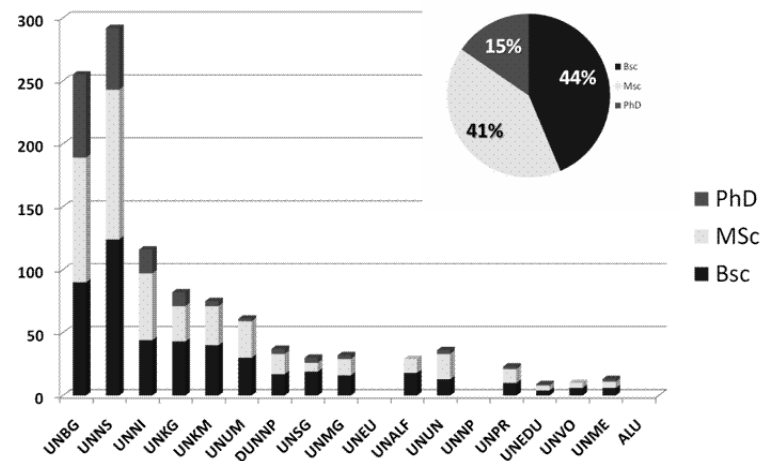
Institutions start to be nervous and to press the commission to finish the job. But, it is not so easy. Why is it not so easy? You see in the figure above also the percentage of accreditations, acts of warning and rejections. We have a very complicated situation, because the universities are very different.



Some institutions are very big and it is not easy to carry out the whole process. So far, we have accredited seven universities, as shown by these charts. Other universities are in the process. You can see that many of them got an initial act of warning. Some institutions improved the weaknesses in a very short period, especially when the act of warning concerned some less profound weaknesses. Few institutions got the rejection of accreditation. They complain now to the National Council of Higher Education. There is also a number of institutions which are on the waiting list. We still did not make the decision about these institutions.

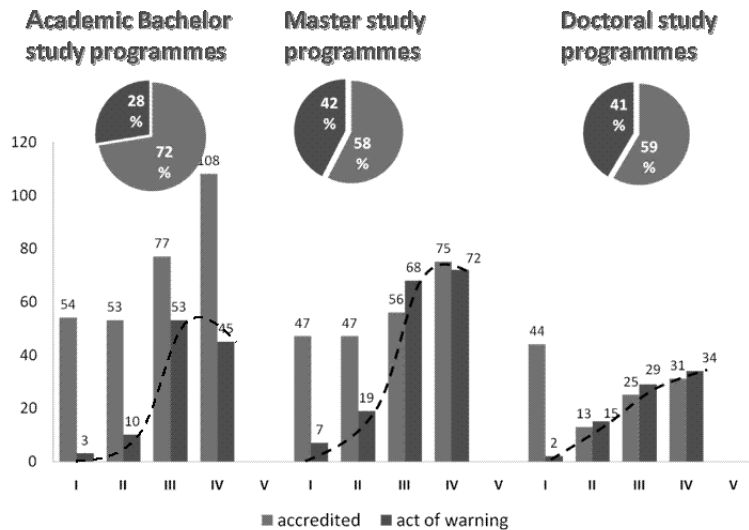
The number of university degree programmes: 44 % of degree programmes are BSc, Bachelor's programmes, 41 % are MSc, Master's programmes and 15 % are PhD programmes. In the figure below you can see the distribution within the universities. Significant is the huge discrepancy in the number of PhD programmes. By law, if an institution

ACCREDITED STUDY PROGRAMMES AT UNIVERSITIES



wants to become a university it must have three PhD programmes in different fields. That means combining natural sciences, mathematics, social sciences, humanities or medical science or another discipline.

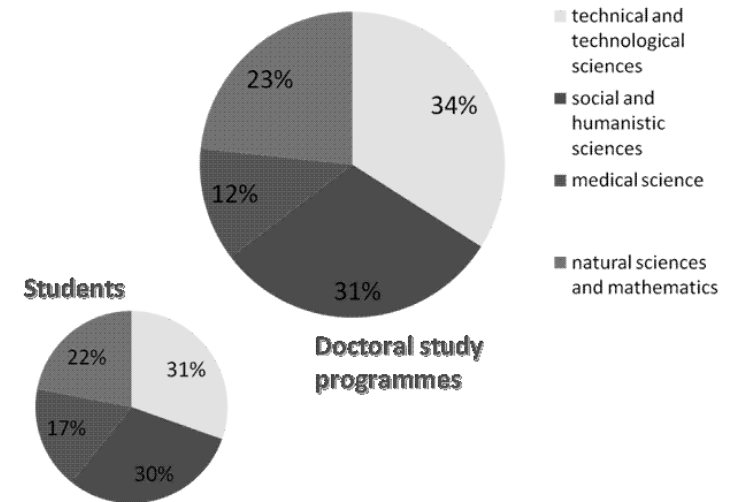
What do Bachelor's studies, Master's studies and doctoral programmes look like? According to the statistics below 72 % of Bachelor's studies, 58 % of Master's studies and 59 % of doctoral programmes got accreditation. We expect many of those degree programmes that were given an act of warning to start improving things and we will finally what happens.



If you have a look at the next figure below, 34 % of the doctoral studies are in technical and technological sciences (engineering), 31 % in social sciences and humanities, 12 % in medicine and 23 % in natural sciences and mathematics.

For our country it is very important to have good doctoral studies. In the previous system PhD candidates needed many years to make a good PhD. According to the new system doctoral studies last only three years and we are not sure at the moment, if that is enough to make a good PhD. Therefore, it is very important for us to check this issue closer in the next period of time.

Accredited doctoral study programmes in different fields:



Outlook

There are 230 institutional applications and a tremendous amount of applications for degree programmes. We still have to evaluate almost 428 applications. We should finish this process until the end of this year. We will see, whether it is possible or not. What are the next steps? We want to become a full member of ENQA. So, the next step will be to prepare documentation and action plan for the ENQA application.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Discussion

Professor Dr. Vesna Lopicic

Thank you very much Professor Dondur for this presentation. I find at least one piece of information that you gave us here, very pleasantly surprising and that is the large rise in the numbers of university teachers in the course of about two years that you talked about. So we are just curious about the whether the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance sees this as a positive trend. Does the large increase in the number of university teachers actually correspond to rising quality as well?

Professor Dr. Vera Dondur

We increased the number of the teachers to nearly 1,200 in three years. This is a development and maybe a problem we in the Commission for Accreditation and also the people in the academic community have to think about. The increasing is of course a positive fact if there are good teachers with good qualifications and references. But if you just increase the number without quality control it is not positive. We have to analyse this current development and learn from the results.

Dr. Ulrich Schmidt

I have a short question to your really interesting report regarding programme accreditation. Did you come across some typical crucial points in programme accreditation or the other way round what are the reasons for warning?

Professor Dr. Vera Dondur

According to our law university teachers should give active lectures to the students of about 20 hours per week. Some institutions do not give the data about this. Sometimes there are problems with teachers' references and sometimes there is a problem with curricula and so on. It is difficult to make general remarks. Sometimes it is just the teacher, sometimes it is the curriculum, sometimes just some formal reasons. When we finish these cycles, I hope we will do the final tuning process looking at what was really good, what was not so good. This is the first time that we are

doing something like this. Just in repeating the accreditation, we and the academic community we will see what is going on.

Professor Dr. Endre Pap

Back to the previous question about teachers. For sure, we have a very small number of teachers and a much smaller number of very good teachers, and this is the problem of Serbia. When we increase the number of universities and faculties, the good teachers move in many places. The commission has set this standard, namely that there is limitation to the related number of hours. But we have also another discussion now. The Accreditation Commission has experience as does the National Committee about changing the Higher Education Act. Namely, there is now a problem developing about an age limit for the teachers. According to our law, it is limited. Just now we have a problem in Novi Sad related to this, of taking some people who are going to be retired although they were good artists. Now the law states something about this. The question is how can we evaluate such issues? We really have to think about this: If we could have a Nobel Prize winner, who is older, we could not take him to be teacher. In my opinion the number of academics and not only emeritus professors is really limited. We need really good teachers, on the one hand, while we are somehow eliminating them, on the other. This is one of the questions that we have to think about changing maybe in education act.

Professor Dr. Milivojevic

I am Secretary General of the National Council of Higher Education in Serbia and I would like to help to explain the situation about the number of teachers. We have to be aware that many of our research institutes in Serbia closed. These institutes employed many scientific workers in the past, because of better financial conditions there than at the faculties. The situation changed in favour of the higher education institutions, where the financial conditions have become better. That is one of the causes why people just moved to higher education sector. On the other hand, the large state companies in the field of mechanical or electrical engineering, in Nis for example, closed their research and development departments. Also those people just moved to the other side. The third thing is that people decided to complete their PhD studies because of

improvement of their perspectives on the job market. The fourth development is that some people working in different academic fields abroad are moving back home now.

Concerning the age limit for employment mentioned by the representative from Novi Sad, I can just tell you that in Canada they decided to stop similar limitations because of more liberal conditions in the United States. The experience they made was that some persons did not accept job proposals in Canada because of the retirement within one or few years. Due to this, one researcher moved to the United States, to San Francisco and won the Nobel Prize three months later. The solution was that the Canadians changed their law. Anyway, to avoid similar effects in Serbia we have to continue the work on the best solution.

The relevance of international networking in quality assurance

Elisabeth Fiorioli

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to make some introducing comments to the topic of the conference. International networks, it makes sense, when searching for this term to enter this keyword in a highly complex network, the internet. And in less than a second Google finds more than 859,000,000 hits for "network". The term seems to have become a kind of mantra of our world.

Also virtual networks such as Facebook and MySpace are part of our every day world. The internet transforms the phenomenon network for more and more people, via simple mouse click, into a new form of social reality. Networks transform our behaviour and our daily life. When we live and work in networks, we can hypothesize that quality assurance is also embedded in such networking. But, let us go further and allow me to put forward the argument that quality assurance could actually only be such an important issue in a networked world. What is meant by this?

When we stick to the Kantian distinction of the good itself and the good in terms of what it is useful, we can deduce, to regard quality not as an absolute measurable quantity, but rather define it in terms of its purpose. Quality is when anything is good for something. And taking this a step further, we can ask: What is better in term of purpose?

The answer requires a broader frame of reference, namely a comparison with others, with similar purposes. A network world presents us with a myriad of possibilities for comparison. That means universities are exposed to an extremely high pressure comparison, too. The recognition of quality in such a highly complex arena is an important point of orientation for our decisions. In our case this is reflected in the decisions of stakeholders, university cooperation partners, students, parents, employers and also by the high level of attention that rankings receive today. We can conclude: Universities that are acting in a networked

world need quality assurance. They must be good and constantly strive to be better in comparison to others, and when competing for resources in order to be able to keep the best teachers and recruit the best students, universities have to make quality visible. But, networked systems are prone to confusion and it is quality assurance that should provide transparency through its clear criteria and testimony. Thus, universities need quality assurance in a networked world. But, obviously quality assurance itself on a meta-level needs networking. This brings us back to the subject: international networking in quality assurance. Networks are dynamic entities. Take a look at the founding dates of the main European networks in the field of quality assurance; it is clear that we would be talking about the period of just a decade. These networks were established through freedom of action, which happened at relatively short notice and took on roles that were not traditionally defined nor institutionally provided.

The European agenda

Let us have a look to the European agenda. The realisation of the European Higher Education Area has been and is still the overarching policy goal, accordingly a record 29 European ministers have committed to this by signing the Bologna Declaration in June 1999. The main reasons were the lack of competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education due to a confusing variety of study programmes and the associated difficulty of obtaining recognition for academic qualifications. They all were and still are major obstacles for the realisation of a cherished principle in the European Union which can be simultaneously viewed as a fundamental way of life in an area of global networking: namely mobility.

At this point at the latest quality assurance comes back into play with the task of removing obstacles to mobility. The education policy declarations of the ministerial conferences from Bologna to Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve therefore grant quality assurance an increasingly central role. I do not want to bother you now with the quotations of the different ministers' communiqués, but it is pretty clear that as a result of these communiqués there is a political mandate to quality assurance.

The political mandate

The political mandate for this process includes the following essential elements that are critical to the development of European networks of quality assurance and their work:

- the need of European cooperation of all protagonists,
- the development of comparable criteria, methods and standards,
- the establishment of a European register of recognized and reliable quality assurance agencies,
- the mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions and
- the establishment of transparency instruments.

How far is this mandate relevant for networks? The interaction of the protagonists of quality assurance has intensified itself mostly in order to achieve some specific predetermined even political objectives. And the role that will henceforth occupy networks in the political agenda is still very open and dynamic, but for the formation of the European Higher Education Area, the networks as well as their protagonists certainly will continue to play an important role.

Who is networking?

The protagonists

Quality assurance in higher education has both, an external component that is administrated by independent and legitimized national institutions as well as an internal one, the implementation of which is the responsibility of higher educational institutions themselves. This structure is also reflected in the networks: Organizing themselves on the one hand are quality assurance agencies, this means institutions, which are responsible for quality assurance of higher education institutions by means of the instruments of evaluation and accreditation. The organisers of our conference have already provided a list of the major networks in the conference flyer. Some of them will be presented in more detail during our conference. I just want to point out that this list is more or less limited to the networks of the agencies. But we should not hide the other side, namely that quality assurance is also an issue for all organisations in which representatives of higher education institutions and students are to be found. There are for example the European

Students' Union (ESU) and the European University Association (EUA) where universities and students are organising themselves in networks. There are some other initiatives such as the European Network for Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE), the Joint Quality Initiative, UNESCO, of course, and networks like the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) or the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAEE). I will come back to that later. I just want to demonstrate that this list can be extended.

Why are the protagonists networking?

Objectives and functions

The objectives and functions of the individual networks range from exchanging information and experience, fulfilling a specific policy or mandate, to implementing a concrete and time restricted project plan. This leads to different degrees of institutionalisation and variable network interaction density.

When one takes a look at the catalogue of planned activities in the funding documents of the networks of quality assurance agencies, one finds activities mostly referring to information exchange in the form of joint training seminars, workshops, newsletters, publications and so on. The motivation for these forms of cooperation on the one hand is a desire to learn from each other, on the other hand, the aim of building mutual confidence in the reliability of other partners and systems. From this first stage of cooperation, which requires a relatively low degree of institutionalisation and interaction and can also justify a very heterogeneous membership structure, it can be concluded that some networks with a higher degree of organisation emerged and therefore have been able to build up a greater degree of exclusivity. The reasons are varied and range from the entrustment of a political mandate, to the implementation of a concrete common objective based on regional proximity and/or content or methodological similarities. Let provide me some evidence for that:

ENQA is an example of adherence to a political mandate. Since 2003 despite the major regional and structural diversity of its members, in order to follow its mandate, ENQA has adhered to a new much more binding organisational structure. Although the brand name ENQA has

been retained, strictly speaking, it has not been a network since 2003 but rather an association with binding internal rules and clear decision making structures.

But, there are also regional initiatives, whose members themselves see as sharing a common cultural background. Due to the similarities of their higher education systems as well as historical-political realities they see themselves as facing similar problems and hence are able to define joint projects. CEEN is an example that will be presented tomorrow during the conference.

Networks also grow around common goals. Due to their specific mandate, namely accreditation, and associated content and methodological communalities European accreditation agencies finally came together to form the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) in 2003. ECA, in order to avoid having structures that are too formal, defines itself not as a network but as a project. From the very start it had a very clear project goal, namely mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. Not because of its organisational structure, but because of the high level of commitment of the members these goals should be achievable. You will get a presentation on that later during this conference.

Another recent development are thematic networks that emerge from subject-based initiatives. Some of them, as e.g. the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAEE), start developing a quality seal for academic programmes in a specific discipline that can be delivered together with the national accreditation. Some other, like e.g. the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) are active in projects to foster the European dimension of external quality assurance in a specific domain.

What are networks doing?

The activities of the networks

The most important element is that almost all networks set themselves goals for exchanging information and experience in regard to the sharing of good practice. This means that for a relatively low degree of

commitment the network members can receive high benefits which contribute to improving their own work as an agency. The range of possibilities of such an exchange is very wide. I want to give you here a few examples of good practice: developing internal quality assurance, self-assessment and external review of agencies, training of agencies' staff members, training of experts for review teams, internships in other agencies, participation as observers in external review teams, exchange of reviewers and organising study visits for higher education.

All these activities contribute to share good practice. The networks usually make these examples accessible to the network members. INQAAHE for instance provides a data base of good practice.

Common working principles, methods and standards for external quality assurance agencies also play a special role in the development of quality networks. They specify a kind of value catalogue for the procedures and working principles of the agencies. Different networks have created such principles in a form of a code of good practice like INQAAHE or ECA, with different and direction. They sometimes have only a recommendatory character, but in other cases they are more binding and regulate the admission criteria for membership. The network members are committed to implement this value catalogue but also to undergo an independent external review regarding its implementation. Basically speaking, the clearer the mandate of the project goal of a network is, the more uniform the profile of the member agency and the more precise, strict and binding the value catalogue is.

These initiatives were brought together when in 2003 the European Education Ministers mandated ENQA through its members in cooperation with the E4, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB [now ESU] to develop an agreed set of standard, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) were born. The rest is history and I think it is not necessary to go into the details in this forum. I am sure most of you are familiar with the ESG not only exactly, but also in the context of evaluations intensively. I would go so far to say that at the moment the ESG have now become a sort of "Ten Commandments" of quality assurance. A development that is both seen positively in so far as the enforcement of certain minimum standards has been reached, but

which also is not without problems, in case that they lend themselves to a kind of normative fossilisation. The ESG itself concluded that it is not the intention for these standards and guidelines to dictate practice, nor should they be interpreted prescriptive or unchangeable. The networks and the agencies represented through them, as well as academic institutions should keep in mind that it is their duty not only to further examine formal compliance with standards but further develop them from experiences gained and adapt them to new circumstances.

This leads us directly to another activity that also goes back to the initiative of the networks. This is the European quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). I already mentioned that the quality assurance agencies have started to prescribe their own remedies to evaluate themselves, with respect to compliance with the ESG. These evaluations, when linked to the membership criteria, as it is in the case of ENQA, are a form of self-monitoring within a network. But through the establishment of the EQAR which includes representatives of the E4, a higher level of commitment to the control mechanisms of the agencies has been secured. However, this control mechanism remains at the level of the self-organised networks. EQAR is, however, an association under Belgian law. But it is not transferred into a European meta-agency. It still runs without any state authority or appointed civil servants.

Another task of networks is mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. I can be very short on that. Mark Frederiks is going to present this issue in depth. But here I want to point out that this is also a task emerged from network activities. The same applies to the development of transparency instruments such as *grossroads*, which was also developed in the context of ECA.

Capacity building is another activity of networks and aims to support new quality assurance agencies in the development of expertise and in establishing new national structures for quality assurance. But even well established agencies are permanently faced with the task of improving their work and are actually required to grow through new tasks being assigned to them by national governments. For that they can rely on networks.

Last but not least, it is also about finding a common language. Although English is the lingua Franca of most networks, the meanings of the various technical terms to be used in the course of work within the network must first be negotiated. In this regard, networks can question on a systemic level, what could be meant by a term like quality assurance and try to draw up glossaries to define such terms. Thus, INQAAHE's initiative of the Analytic Quality Glossary was launched and brought to life. Other examples are "Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions" published firstly in 2004 by UNESCO or the glossary of RIACES that covers Spanish specific terminology for the area of quality assurance.

When networks get connected: The meta-level

The different networks are not independent entities or organisations. Often we find the same actors in different networks, overlapping memberships are characteristic and individual topic areas or regional priorities form sub-networks that also contribute to the work of higher-level networks. Accordingly, networks clearly have the tendency to continue to further networking, form new networks or promote their formation. It is therefore only logical that INQAAHE organises meetings for all the quality assurance networks that are presented in INQAAHE and develops itself into a kind of global platform that can operate across the networks and coordinate jointed projects. For instance, the INQAAHE website plans to make a sort of virtual meeting place available.

There is another interesting initiative that I want to mention: the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC). The initiative, a partnership of UNESCO and the World Bank, aims to improve the efforts of regional networks to build quality assurance capacity to serve as a worldwide focal point for knowledge sharing among regional networks and to support regional networks in the development of their work and to ensure their long-term sustainability.

It is interesting to observe that in these meta-level, networks are asking themselves the same old question regarding quality in terms of: What makes a good network?

Networks also have to answer for their activities in relation to their contribution paying members. Networks need to define for themselves the criteria on which they measure their work. I want to quote David Woodhouse, President of INQAAHE, who defined the success indicator of INQAAHE recently by the following formula: A successful network must provide services, which respond to its members demand and which will improve the work of the network members as a result of using those services." This allows a range of performance indicators to be defined, from the number of organised workshops and released publications up to the number of website hits.

It could therefore be speculated that in the future there will be a code of good practice for quality assurance networks and at the end a global register of networks, the quality assurance circle seems to have spun even further around. But of course we can ask: Is that all? I would rather not close with this somewhat disturbing picture of the dynamics of systems, but instead bring something else into view.

Networks are also and above all relations between people. Networking can take place only through personal contacts and ultimately networks live through the personality of their actors and their abilities, commitment and communication skills. Networks are entities that are highly dependent upon the constituents. That means they work especially well if the right people come together. Social networks are particularly well suited to generate knowledge and shape innovation. Why? When that works especially well, like in the case of international quality assurance networks, then it has a clear structural cause: The networking people come from similar areas of responsibility in their respective national systems and find themselves partners in the network with whom they can share their interests and problems, without coming into situation of national conflict or competition. This is an ideal environment to develop new ideas, and openly exchange advice and experience.

And this is my own experience: Nine years ago, I sent a cautious e-mail to a completely unknown organisation called ENQA asking about the possibility of membership for a newly formed Austrian Accreditation Council. Hiding behind this ENQA acronym was an unknown world of

other acronyms, the names of quality assurance agencies. Today after many, many meetings in various network contexts, instead of these anonymous abbreviations I find real faces of colleagues and friends, at least partners, with whom I venture into larger and long term exciting projects, because on a personal level, mutual trust has been established. This confidence of course is based on the exchange of factual information and knowledge and appreciation of the work of the partners, but also on sitting together after an official dinner in a bar with a glass of beer and being frustrated or ecstatic about football results.

When you ask me what are the benefits, the personal benefits of networking, I would say it is mostly about to know recent trends and developments, to get working experience in international projects, to share knowledge with competent partners and of course also to make friends. Networks will certainly continue to play an important role in the emergence of the European Higher Education Area. They are those flexible and innovative action spaces in which topics are being addressed and can be further developed. Networks are open structures that can adapt their operation and structure to the questions and not hinder us with cumbersome bureaucracy. When we move into networks, we leave limiting national perspective and geographic boundaries behind us and therefore, we are on a good track towards Europe.

Thank you for your attention.

INQAAHE – Sharing internationally expertise and experiences

Dr. Rolf Heusser

First of all I would like to thank the organisers for this very kind invitation to come to Belgrade. It is a pleasure for me to be here and to introduce to you the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – INQAAHE. Furthermore, I have a hidden agenda in my speech. The hidden agenda is to convince those of you, who are not yet member of INQAAHE to become a member. But of course, I am aware that this is only a dream, so a more realistic wish should be that you might consult the very interesting interactive website of INQAAHE after my speech, because this website (<http://www.inqaah.org>) can tell you much more about this association than I could ever do in the next 15 minutes.

Having said that, it is clear that I will have a very short input lecture. I will split my presentation into three parts. First, I will talk about the international dimension of quality assurance. In the second part, I will give you an inside into the structure and the aims and activities of INQAAHE and then I will spend more time for the third point, the services of INQAAHE, because I believe that you are mainly interested in that. If you are member, what do you get back as value for the money you give to INQAAHE. This will be about part number three.

International dimension of quality assurance

There is no doubt about the fact that we are facing an increasingly global higher education market today. There are big numbers of new providers gloaming up. These providers are in competition to each other. There are new forms of probation, a variety of forms of cross-border education, a need to enhance mobility of staff and students. All of these developments, together with the factor there is an increasing autonomy of higher education institutions especially in Europe, have led to a call for more transparency and more accountability and the corresponding tools. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see that quality assurance is today on the

top of the political agendas not only in European countries, but in countries around the globe. And yes, there is an international dimension of quality assurance. Quality assurance and accreditation is not only a key element for the steering of common higher education areas such as the Bologna Process, but it will also gain in importance, when it comes to the international recognition of qualifications. Furthermore, accreditation and quality assurance is an effective tool for the regulation of cross-border education and the resolving of questions around access to international labour markets. To sum that up, I would say higher education is going to be more international and quality assurance has to move with it. Quality assurance is getting more international, too. Therefore, it is vital for all of us to get information about quality assurance on a global scale and the best way to get such information and to share such information is INQAAHE.

Structure, aims and activities of INQAAHE

INQAAHE is the global network of quality assurance agencies. It has been established as an association in New Zealand in 1991. At this time only 8 members formed the core of INQAAHE. Today, we count more than 200 members coming from 6 continents and stretching over about 80 countries. The majority of members of INQAAHE are quality assurance agencies, but the entry to INQAAHE is also possible for organisations or higher education institutions or individuals. The overarching mission of INQAAHE is to act as a creator, a collector and a disseminator of information about quality assurance on a global scale. There is a mission statement of INQAAHE, which clearly says that INQAAHE wants to enable quality assurance agencies to share information and to compare to each other. INQAAHE also advises and assists existing and emerging quality assurance agencies. So there is a capacity building element and purpose of INQAAHE. INQAAHE also promotes standards and good practices in quality assurance and facilitates the collaboration between the regional networks, which have been perfectly mentioned by Elisabeth Fiorioli in her speech.

What ever is done in INQAAHE, it is underpinned by some core values. First of all, INQAAHE recognises the diversity of higher education and of quality assurance. It also recognises that there is a national element in

quality assurance. Second, INQAAHE respects the autonomy of higher education institutions and believes that the primary responsibility for quality and quality assurance should be within the institutions themselves. Finally, INQAAHE stresses the importance of independency of quality assurance agencies, because this is perceived to be a success factor and will increase the credibility of these bodies.

All what has been said about the mission of INQAAHE is then brought into a strategic plan and this strategic plan is published on the INQAAHE website. Thus, I kindly ask you to have a look on it. What you will find is that you have four different dimensions political, theoretical, developmental and informational dimensions and to each of these dimensions you will find specific goals, attached to these goals specific action plans and attached to these action planes performance indicators, which will enable us to see, whether our measures are successful or not in the future.

An output of these strategic plans is the creation of working groups. At the moment we have 20 working groups in INQAAHE. I cannot show you the whole list, please consult the website for that. I have only listed some examples like a working group on good practices in quality assurance, working group about capacity building, working group dealing with the clearing house, which is kind of a portal to all the websites of the member agencies. One working group is dealing with the needs for quality assurance of small states; one is about accreditation mills and another one about mutual recognition and so on and so forth. All members of INQAAHE are quarterly invited to actively participate in these working groups.

Services of INQAAHE

I perceived the information on INQAAHE services the most valuable for you, because I believe that you can profit from these services: The [Guidelines of Good Practices \(GGP\)](#) is the service mainly addressed to directors of quality assurance agencies. If you want to increase the visibility of your agency, if you want to increase competitiveness of your agency, then you might ask INQAAHE to perform a review of your work against the code of good practice of INQAAHE. If you are doing that,

then you will be kindly asked to provide self-study documentation, which is the basis for an external review and if you pass the test, the INQAAHE Board of Directors will officially recognize that you are in alignment with the GGP and this will be published on the INQAAHE website.

If you are interested in good practices of quality assurance and I am sure you are then I believe a very good service is a [data bank of good practices](#). Currently, INQAAHE is asking all its member organisations to submit information about their good practices. This information is now structured and published in the standardised format and made accessible to everybody, so that we can learn from each other. This data bank is equipped with a search machine, in order to make it really easy for you to find the desired information.

Have you ever been in the situation when you wanted to know something about quality assurance and now you could not get a quick answer to it because of the lack of resources? In such a situation you might use the next service of INQAAHE. All you have to do is to sit down, plug in your question to the [interactive website of INQAAHE](#) and at the other side of the internet 15 experts working for INQAAHE will wait for your question and give you a quick response.

Quite similarly you might use [consultant's data base](#). If you need people who are able to provide advice, if you need people who help you with your evaluations - the consultant's data base might be a valuable source as well.

Upcoming services

- [The developmental fund](#) actually already exists. It is the World Bank fund, which is mainly intended to support members of INQAAHE from economically less developed countries.
- [An online training programme](#) is the latest of all the services we have and of particular interest. It will be launched in about four weeks¹. If you want to know more about that, you will have to go to Copenhagen to attend the E4 meeting², where you will see the birth of this training programme. For today, I can only tell you that experts working for INQAAHE have put together materials for four modules,

¹ Ed. note: In the beginning of December 2009.

² Ed. note: The European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) took place in Copenhagen from 19 to 21 November 2009.

which are online available. This material is accessible to everybody, free of charge and will give you a good teaching on external and internal quality management.

- [The clearing house of practices and procedures](#) is under construction. It is not ready yet, but the clearing house will be a very fine tool. It will be a sort of repository. A structure that collects information and data as well as disseminates the information and data. It is kind of a portal, which gives access to the website information of all member agencies. The clearing house will be structured according to predefined terms, for example, mutual recognition. If you plug in mutual recognition, then the machine will navigate you automatically to the URLs of all the other agencies, who are active in that domain. That way you will have a very quick access to information with this clearing house. The clearing house will be launched in May 2010 at the INQAAHE conference in Namibia. It is a little bit early now, but I am already talking about conferences and publications and of course this is another form of services provided to members.
- INQAAHE holds the [annual conferences](#). One is a big meeting attracting not only members, but is also open to non members, usually attended by 400-500 participants. The last one was in Abu Dhabi, the next one will be in Madrid in 2011 and I hope that you can all attend this important event.
- In the years between we have smaller meetings so called "[fora](#)". A forum is mainly addressing the practitioners, because it is mainly dealing with developmental aspects in the praxis of quality assurance. The next meeting will be as I told you in Namibia in Windhoek at the beginning of May.
- If you are member of INQAAHE you will also get free of charge a [journal](#) which is called "[Quality in Higher Education](#)". This is a periodic journal of higher academic standards. It is published three times a year and gives you a good inside into current research in that domain.
- In addition to that there is a release of an [electronic bulletin](#). This electronic bulletin will summarise for you the recent developments in quality assurance, but will also give you information about upcoming events in quality assurance in all regions of the world.

I believe that you could see that there are a lot of services provided by this global network for quality assurance agencies. It is also a perfect place to meet interesting people. I really profited personally so much from this kind of personal relationships and if you want to be part of it, it is not costing you too much money. The membership fee at the moment is 420 Euro per year. At least to my perception it is quite of a good cost benefit ratio, a lot of good services you get for the money you spend.

Again, this membership is open not only to quality assurance agencies, but also to higher education institutions, to organisations or to individuals, who have a mature interest in questions about quality assurance. There are four membership categories, full members, associate members, affiliates and institutional members. If you want to apply just plug in the web address "www.inqaahe.org" and you will be navigated easily through the registration process. Maybe before you register you have some questions. Now it is the time to ask all of your questions. I am also here to get your wishes about INQAAHE, which I could report back to the Board of Directors. Also if you have other remarks or questions about quality assurance practices worldwide this would be the moment to ask it.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.

Discussion

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

How long does the procedure of external evaluation done by INQAAHE last, how complicate is it and how much does it cost?

Dr. Rolf Heusser

It will cost you nothing. The time you have to spend on is to put together the self-documentation. The basis for that are the Guidelines for Good Practices (GGP) of INQAAHE. These guidelines encompass 10 standards, and you have to respond to these 10 standards. They are quite similar to what you already know from the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Therefore, for all those, who already fulfil the ESG it is of course very easy to apply for this additional stamp, but you can also go the other way round and start with the global stamp of validity and then go to the ESG. But again, with regard to content, there are a lot of similarities in these codes of good practices around the world.

ECA and the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions

Dr. Mark Frederiks

Thank you very much to the organisers for inviting me to present our network – the European Consortium for Accreditation, ECA. I would like to tell you about what we have done on mutual recognition (the purpose, the rationale and the basis for mutual recognition), then about ECA as a consortium (the foundation, its aims, the organisation and the membership criteria), the methodology (trust building process, because mutual recognition is all about building trust; the roadmap that we designed) and then also some means to reach mutual recognition, like

- 1) a code of good practice,
- 2) principles for the selection of experts,
- 3) a joint declaration that has been signed with ENIC/NARICs,
- 4) the bilateral mutual recognition agreements, which have already been signed,
- 5) principles for the accreditation of joint programmes, because this is a very important part of our project right now and
- 6) *grossroad* – a website of accredited institutions and programmes, which has already been mentioned as a transparency instrument.

I will then finish with some lessons learnt and conclusions.

Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions

When it comes to the recognition of foreign qualifications there are still a lot of barriers. I am sure that ENIC/NARICs can tell you all about it. Of course, the Leuven Communiqué shows that a lot of focus is being given to increasing mobility, both academic and professional mobility, as well as to increasing transparency in higher education, which we try to do with the website *grossroads*. The ECA member agencies have an opportunity to learn from each other and to disseminate good practices – the whole process as far as mutual accreditation.

What is the rationale behind it? The Lisbon Recognition Convention deals with the recognition of foreign qualifications, but this does not always

have all the recognition problems that there are. Still, case by case decisions have to be made with regard to the recognition of qualifications. If you mutually recognise accreditation decisions, this can also facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications. Mutual recognition agreements will also simplify the accreditation and recognition of joint programmes, because joint programmes naturally have a component in many different countries, which in this case do not have to pass through accreditation procedures that are very time-consuming and costly. Therefore, if you have a mutual recognition agreement, it is much easier for the institutions concerned and it also contributes to the conversions of external quality assurance.

Political basis for mutual recognition initiatives in Europe

ECA activities are based on the following political mandates:

Bologna Ministers Conference, Bergen 2005:

“We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions.”

European Parliament, 2005:

“Hereby recommend that member states [...] promote cooperation between agencies in order to build up mutual trust and the recognition of QA/accreditation assessments, thus contributing to the recognition of qualifications for the purpose of study or work in another country.”

So, here you have both, academic and professional mobility. But, ECA was not founded top-down by the ministers saying that this has to be done. It was really an initiative of the accreditation agencies themselves - bottom-up.

ECA – Foundation and aims

The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) was founded in 2003. In June 2008 it was renewed and started the second phase. ECA is a consortium of national agencies, now consisting of 16 member organisations in 11 European countries: Austria, Belgium (Dutch speaking part of Belgium and Flanders), Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Slovenia. The ECA aims to achieve the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions as

well as the mutual learning and dissemination of best practices. It provides transparent information on the decisions we take and facilitates the internationalisation of institutions and students, too.

ECA – Organisation

ECA is not an association like ENQA or INQAAHE. It is a project organisation and an affiliate member of ENQA. It has also signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Central and Eastern European Network (CEEN) as well as with INQAAHE.

The organisations participating in ECA meet annually in a plenary workshop, where the consortium members make the main decisions. Furthermore, we organise regular ECA seminars and conferences. Another organisational element is the management group, which, by the way, is chaired by Rolf Heusser. The ECA consortium also set up four working groups:

1. The working group on mutual recognition, which is currently concentrating mainly on joint programmes. The chair of that working group is also here, Elisabeth Fiorioli.
2. The working group on institutional accreditation (we have seen a lot of combinations between institutions and programme accreditation in the last few years in Europe).
3. The working group on *grossroads* and information strategies.
4. The working group on mutual learning and best practices that is currently focusing on learning outcomes.

ECA – Membership criteria

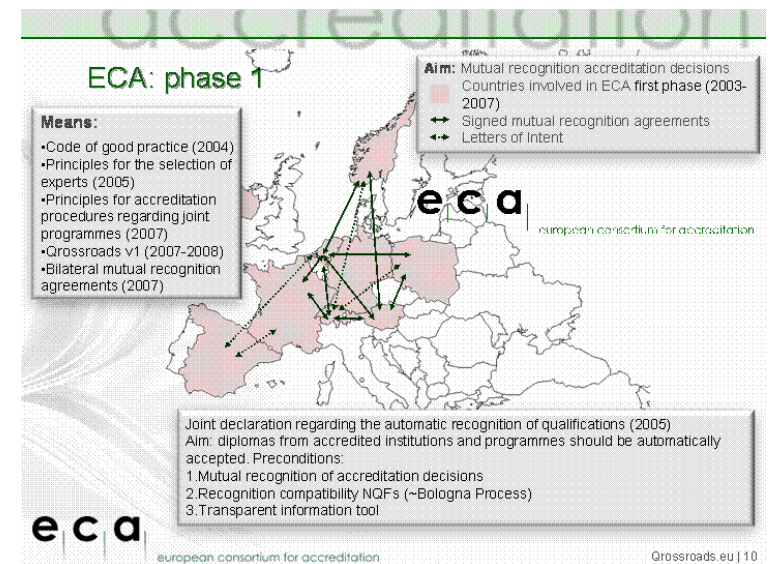
Membership of the consortium is open to organisations in the Bologna signatory countries:

- which have been established by law as corporate bodies or are based on national or regional regulations or agreements,
- which have accreditation or accreditation-like practices as one of their principal functions,
- which contribute actively to the aims of the consortium, and
- which fulfil the ECA Code of Good Practice and/or the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

It is assumed that an external review should really give the evidence that the last criterion has been fulfilled. The Management Group of the Consortium will act as membership review committee and will consider applications for membership of ECA. The Consortium decides about the membership. The annual membership fee amounts to 3,000 Euros.

The trust building process

For the trust building process we initially began to exchange information and then to develop common tools and instruments for cooperation. After that all the members were externally reviewed, and then this led to these bilateral mutual recognition agreements. As it is, you can say it is really a pyramid of trust that has been built up.



This figure shows the first phase of ECA. What you see here are the ECA members in the first phase of ECA, the mutual recognition agreements which have been reached between the countries. Then you see the broken arrows, which present the letters of intent. And then there are a number of means, of tools, of instruments that have been developed also to bring us closer to this goal of mutual recognition. One of these was the code of good practice.

Code of Good Practice

The Code of Good Practice has been developed and was adopted in 2004, so before the European Standards and Guidelines, which were adopted in 2005. It guarantees the comparability of the accreditation procedures. There are 17 standards, which have been signed by all ECA members. And there should also be an external evaluation to check fulfilment of the code, as already mentioned. The ENQA Board has also stated that the Code of Good Practice is equivalent or compatible to the European Standards and Guidelines. There are some changes, some differences, but they are not really that major. So, this means that an external evaluation by an agency can be done in such a way that it can prove both, the fulfilment of the European Standards and Guidelines and the ECA Code of Good Practice.³

ECA Code of Good Practice: the Standards

The accreditation organisation:

1. Has an explicit mission statement.
2. Is recognised as a national accreditation body by the competent public authorities.
3. Must be sufficiently independent from government, from higher education institutions as well as from business, industry and professional associations.
4. Must be rigorous, fair and consistent in decision-making.
5. Has adequate and credible resources, both human and financial.
6. Has its own internal quality assurance system that emphasises its quality improvement.
7. Has to be evaluated externally on a cyclical basis.
8. Can demonstrate public accountability, has public and officially available policies, procedures, guidelines and criteria.
9. Informs the public in an appropriate way about accreditation decisions.
10. A method for appeal against its decisions is provided.
11. Collaborates with other national, international and/or professional accreditation organisations.

³ The full document can be downloaded here:
<http://www.ecaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1>.

The accreditation procedures:

12. Accreditation procedures and methods must be defined by the accreditation organisation itself.
13. Must be undertaken at institutional and/or programme level on a regular basis.
14. Must include self-documentation/-evaluation by the higher education institution and external review (as a rule on site).
15. Must guarantee the independence and competence of the external panels or teams.
16. Must be geared at enhancement of quality.

The accreditation standards:

17. Must be made public and be compatible with European practices taking into account the development of agreed sets of quality standards.

Principles for selection of experts⁴

Convinced of the importance of agreed procedures and principles for the selection of experts and the composition of expert panels as a necessary step towards reaching the aim of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions the members of ECA agreed on the following principles for the selection of experts based on standard 15 of the ECA Code of Good Practice:

Procedures

- Any decision regarding the expert panel should be based on the policies, procedures and criteria of the accreditation organisation or on relevant legislation.
- Panel members must be independent and in a position to make unbiased judgments. Any possible conflict of interest must be disclosed.
- The selection criteria for expert panels must be established and published by the accreditation organisation.
- Applicants undergoing accreditation are given the opportunity to comment on the selection of panel members.

⁴ The full document can be downloaded here:
<http://www.ecaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1>.

- The accreditation decisions should be made by the relevant authority and not by the group of experts themselves.
- Panel members must be committed to treat all material and findings as strictly confidential.
- Panel members are briefed adequately by the accreditation organisation on the context within they are operating (national legislative environment, criteria, procedures and guidelines).

Composition

The number of panel members may vary depending on the range of competence of individual members. Gender balance should be taken into consideration when appointing a panel of experts. The expert panel should have the following mix of expertise appropriate to the objectives of the accreditation procedure.

Institutional Accreditation Panels

- experience in quality assurance in higher education
- appropriate academic qualifications and recognised expertise in the relevant area(s)
- expertise in institutional governance and management
- leadership experience in research/academic management
- relevant international experience that provides a basis for making international comparisons
- knowledge on teaching and learning methods
- expertise in development, design, provision and evaluation of higher education programmes
- knowledge of the country-specific system of higher education, institutions and applicable legislation

Depending on the national context it is commendable to include in the institutional accreditation panel:

- student representatives
- representatives from the labour market
- a significant proportion of panel members from outside the country

Programme Accreditation Panels

- experience in quality assurance in higher education
- appropriate academic qualifications and scientific or professional reputation in the relevant area(s)
- relevant international experience that provides a basis for making international comparisons
- knowledge on teaching and learning methods
- expertise in development, design, provision and evaluation of higher education programmes
- knowledge of the country-specific system of higher education, institutions and applicable legislation

Depending on the national context it is commendable to include in the programme accreditation panel:

- student representatives in the respective area(s)
- representatives from the labour market
- a significant proportion of panel members from outside the country

Joint declaration

The ECA members also cooperated and still do with ENIC/NARICs, with the recognition bodies. This has led to a joint declaration, which now applies to six countries. The ECA members and ENIC/NARICs in these six countries (Austria, Switzerland, Flanders, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland) have signed the joint declaration. The aspiration is to come to an automatic recognition of higher education qualifications from institutions and our programmes which are accredited by ECA members at a proper level in the overarching framework. This means, if it is accredited as a Bachelor or as a Master, then it should also be recognised in other countries as a Bachelor or Master. "Automatic recognition" is a technical explanation particularly for those who have to do with recognition. It means recognition without invoking the substantial differences provision under the Lisbon Recognition Convention regarding quality and the level of the qualification.

To achieve this aim a number of preconditions have been identified. The first is that there should be a mutual recognition agreement. The second is the so called self-certification of national qualification frameworks,

which shows that the national qualification framework is compatible with the European framework. And then also that the Lisbon Recognition Convention has entered into force.

There are now 12 mutual recognition agreements. The joint declaration applies to 9 of them, which means they relate to countries that have signed that joint declaration on letters of intent involving 8 ECA member countries, and other agencies may sign later.

What does this mutual recognition agreement say?

“[...] with the aim to achieve the confirmation of the ECA members that they recognise the results of each others accreditation procedures within their competences; [...] ECA members agree to regard each others accreditation tools and instruments as compatible and free of substantial differences; [...]”

What does “substantial differences” mean? This has been tested by agencies which have mutually observed each other’s procedures and have also carried out comparisons between their frameworks and through this have really received the insight and the trust that there are no significant differences.

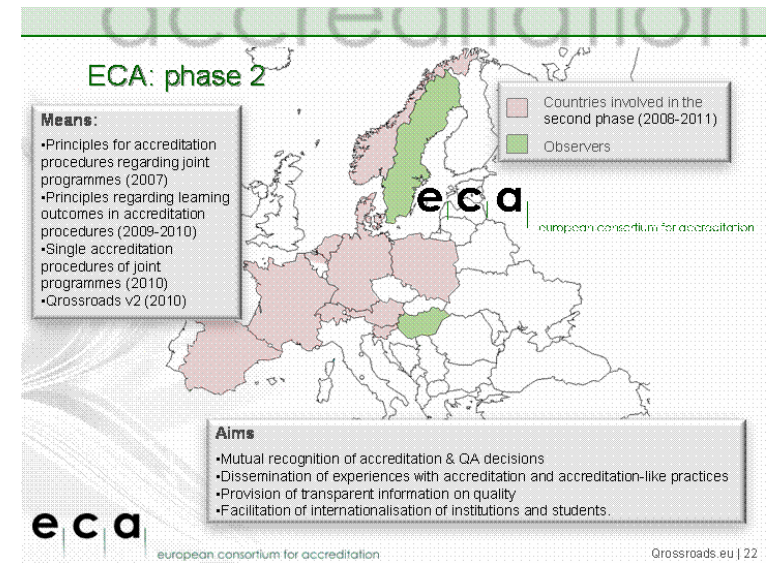
The condition is that there has to be a continuous information exchange. If there is a change in your accreditation system, you should inform the partner with whom you signed the agreement. And there should also be access to the relevant documents underlying the accreditation decisions. The agreement is valid for three years and then should be re-evaluated.

This was done in the first phase of ECA. We are now in the second phase.

In the figure below you can see the countries that are involved in the second phase as well as the green countries (Sweden and Hungary), where our agencies are at the moment (observers). These countries are looking into becoming an ECA member. They are also participating in some of the projects.

There are different means: principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes were already signed in 2007, but they are quite important for the phase that we are in now, which is very much focused on the mutual recognition of joint programmes as one of the key

goals. The work on principles regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures has been done and is still going on. Single accreditation procedures of joint programmes are being carried out as pilots at the moment. A new version of *grossroads* is also being developed.



The aims are not only mutual recognition of accreditation but also the dissemination of experiences and the provision of transparent information on quality and facilitation of internationalisation as I already mentioned.

Principles for the accreditation of joint programmes

1. Information sharing and transparency

- On receipt of a request for the accreditation of a joint programme the accreditation organisation informs the other relevant accreditation organisation(s) about the request;
- The other relevant accreditation organisation(s) provide(s) information on:
 - * Whether the programme is part of, has already undergone or is undergoing a quality assurance and/or an accreditation procedure;

- * Whether the relevant institutions can legally offer the joint programme (including the status of the degree involved).

2. The composition of the expert panel

There should be particular emphasis on the inclusion of experts with relevant international experience and knowledge.

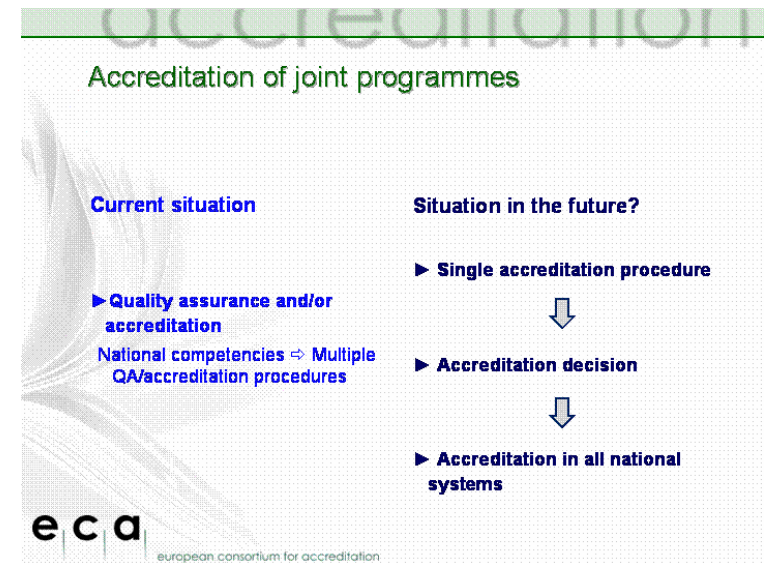
3. The assessment process

- The submitted documentation must include comprehensive information on the totality of the joint programme and not just the single contribution (national and/or institutional);
- The panel has to determine site visit(s) requirements;
- Any site visit(s) must include representatives of the programme who are able to present the totality of the joint programme across all sites (even if there are not representatives from all sites);
- The panel makes its assessment on the totality of the joint programme, including taking into account the learning outcomes aimed for by the joint programme irrespective of the individual study pathways;
- The assessment process should, where possible, include at least one observer from another relevant accreditation organisation.

4. The accreditation decision

- The accreditation decision is based on the assessment of the totality of the joint programme (even if the accreditation decision is only binding in the "jurisdiction" of the accreditation organisation that took the decision);
- The accreditation decision must be communicated to the relevant accreditation organisation(s).

Similar principles also imply if you do an institutional accreditation as well as that the accreditation organisations should inform accredited institutions that they are expected to quality assure any new joint programme(s) with a rigour equivalent to that which provided the basis of the institution's accreditation.



Concerning the accreditation of joint programmes at the moment, you see in the figure above on the left side the current situation. Currently, if there are national accreditation procedures then all of the institutions in the consortium that provides the joint programme have to go through their own national procedures. What we would like to achieve is that there will be one single accreditation procedure leading to one accreditation decision and that this can be accepted in all the other national systems. That is rather an ambitious aim, but we think we should try it.

Therefore, we are developing within the TEAM II project a European methodology for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes at the moment. We are doing that by having several pilot projects running with regard to this single accreditation procedure of joint programmes:

- ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTERS - Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective (close to realisation)
- European Teacher Education for Primary Schools (ETEPS)
- Joint European Master in Comparative Local Development (CoDe)
- Joint European Master in International Humanitarian Action (NOHA).

The pilot projects are coordinated by different ECA members: the first one by ZEvA, which is a German agency, the second one by NVAO that is my own agency, in the Netherlands and Flanders, the third one by the HEC of Hungary and the fourth one by ANECA of Spain. We are also in the process of having a fifth pilot project in the technical sciences.

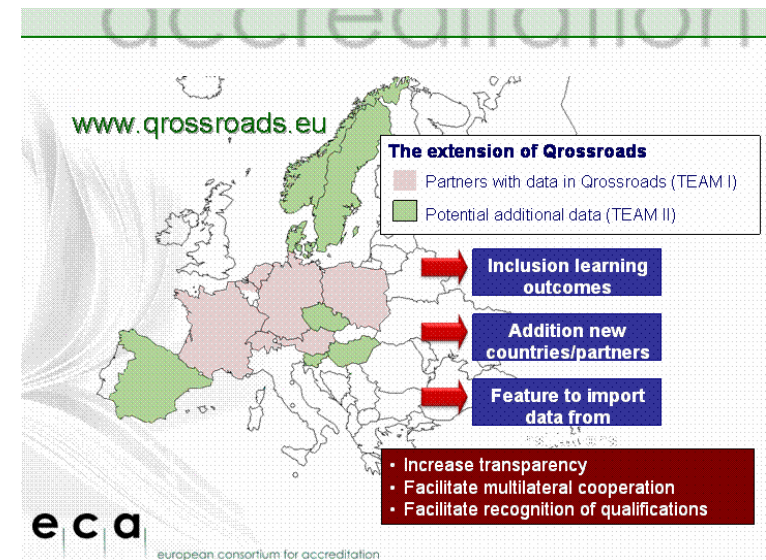
Grossroads

Another important project in this second phase of ECA is *grossroads* and its further development. They have already started thinking about a shared publication policy in the ECA Code of Good Practice. Standard 9 says “[...] the accreditation organisations inform the public in an appropriate way about accreditation decisions and the format of publication refers to standardised European templates.” We first thought of that as an accreditation report supplement, but then in 2005 together with the ENIC/NARICs, the joint declaration was signed. That was mentioned, because this was really needed by ENIC/NARICs, namely a transparent information tool should be implemented to make qualifications from accredited programmes and institutions visible. ECA also agreed that this would be a very good thing to do. So, we started working on this information tool.

The aims of this information tool are to present the qualifications of accredited programmes and institutions and to do that from the perspective of the higher education system, the national qualification framework, if there is one, the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, the accreditation organisation and the system of the country and the recognition of qualifications. The target audience is made up of recognition bodies, the students. For them it is of course very important to know: which institutions and programmes are accredited and by whom, what does this mean, for how long is this accreditation valid as well as that they can find all kinds of other information about the system, the programme and the institutions, if there are links provided to that. They can also find information on the qualification system. And then also for institutions, for instance, if they want to cooperate with other institutions they can see, is that institution accredited or is this programme accredited. For employers it could be useful, too.

The approach that we have taken is at first to look at what the agency is already publishing. And then from there we work and we find a solution in each case and the data can be forwarded to *grossroads*. To get a general idea about the project please check on the website <http://www.grossroads.eu> with a “q”. The “q” stands for quality and qualifications. This is the search engine with various profiles like students and starters, employers, higher accreditation institutions, recognition bodies. There are questions that are relevant for them that can be clicked on. If you go through the search engine you can see the programme, the qualification, the institution and the location and you can acquire more information about the accreditation and when it is valid, etc. There is information about the degrees through to actual recognition of qualifications and a lot of other information, as I already mentioned. It is about quality assurance and accreditation in Europe.

The phase that we are in now with *grossroads* is that we want to extend it. This project is being funded by the European Commission, which also enables us to put money into it for further development.



You see here the partners that already have data in *grossroads* and then also potential new countries. The aim is to have 13 countries included in *grossroads* by October 2010. Then, we would also like to include learning outcomes, to start with the learning outcomes of joint programmes as well as to make, I should say, institutions to also include important data from institutional databases.

The lessons learnt

- Mutual recognition is not a destiny, it is not an end in itself, but it is a journey which has resulted in innovative activities and projects and these can be as valuable as those mutual recognition agreements themselves.
- The trust building process has also led to increased mutual understanding among ECA members and was perceived to be a valuable learning experience. I already mentioned the observations and the comparisons that have been very valuable.
- It is important for agencies to acknowledge that there are different legal prerequisites for accreditation. You have to accept this to really achieve mutual recognition.
- The combination of formal agreements and practical co-operation projects (comparisons, observations) has been found to be particularly useful.

Conclusions

ECA has successfully tested a new methodology to come to mutual recognition agreements. This is based on a systematic trust building approach between agencies – a step by step process involving cooperation on all levels. We think that the methods and tools that we used might also be useful for other accreditation and quality assurance agencies.

Thank you for your kind attention!

Discussion

Professor Mariana Zaric

I just want to give a short comment not on this particular presentation, but on most of the presentations. I must say that this is a really huge step for this country to come among you today and a thank you for organising this goes to all the European Institutions present here today. We ourselves did a huge step by introducing accreditation in our academic institutions, thanks, of course, to the Commission of Accreditation, to our National Council and of course with the support of our Ministry of Education and of Minister Obradovic himself, who supported this process. We started as Professor Dondur said in 2007 and we are now at about the end of it. I really do hope that after this has ended the first criteria for distinguishing the higher education institutions among themselves will be quality, quality assurance, namely what we are talking about today and not is it a state or non state university or whatever else. I also see our future in all the institutions or networks that exist now in Europe and in the world. Thank you.

Professor Dr. Jelica Protic

I have to say that in accrediting classical study programmes we have gone far enough, I think. But, we are at the very beginning now of an accreditation process for distance learning programmes and also joint programmes, interdisciplinary programmes, multidisciplinary. Therefore, it is very interesting to know from our European friends, how do you treat these joint programmes? We have established some standards, but we have not had a lot of cases yet. One of the limits that we have in our standards proposal is that no more than three institutions should participate in joint programmes. In our standards it is also written, if we have institutions from abroad, these institutions should be accredited in their home countries. I think that this mutual process should be done in some way to know which accreditations we recognise in this process. We also have some limitations in the number of classes that teachers can perform. So, it is important to calculate. I have to say that because I was involved in making software for this process we should have data from the accreditation processes of other countries in order to do these

computations. My question is how do you deal with this process in the European Union?

Dr. Mark Frederiks

Joint programmes are very complex. We are now doing these pilot projects and are seeing that it really varies a lot in the way how this is being handled from country to country. You mention that you have specific regulations like that there should be no more than three institutions involved. I think, what we have to realise is that the more regulations there are, the more difficult it will become to accredit joint programmes and to establish joint programmes, because if each country has its own very specific regulations then it is almost impossible for a joint programme to fulfil all those specific regulations in all those countries. What we are doing now in these pilot projects is that we are trying an approach where we have one coordinating agency and we follow the procedure of that agency and then try whether the other agencies also accept the outcome of that procedure, accept that procedure and the outcomes of that. We do find that it is useful to look at specific criteria in countries involved, like the criteria you mentioned, but that one is of course a very different one. If you have a consortium with four institutions then it would already not be possible to accredit that in Serbia. For the future of accrediting joint programmes – I mean we are very much in this process, I cannot give any definite answers now, but we are developing a methodology – for the future it will be important that countries can look at joint programmes from a perspective of really making this possible, because this is what the Bologna Communiqué always says. Of course they are very much in favour of stimulating joint programmes, but then there should be as few legal obstacles in the countries as possible for that.

Professor Dr. Srdjan Stankovic

Let me just make a short comment on behalf of the National Council of Higher Education concerning general aspects directed to accreditation in Serbia. We had a very tough task to do, all this in a very short time. That was very ambitious, but the Commission succeeded in fulfilling all these tasks in time. We have two aspects of the story. One is to put some order into the system. This is what we wanted. We have never before had any

accreditation in this country. We had some permits, labour permits or work permits, whatever, issued by the Ministry this time. The academic communities through the Commission for Accreditation did something with respect to just obtaining a kind of insight into ourselves to see who we are, what we can do, where are we going, and that was important for us.

It is also very important that in fact we are preparing some changes to the Higher Education Act now, just to ensure the continuation of what we have started. By the end of 2009, we will hopefully finish accreditation and then the question is what to do in the next step? How to continue the work? How to continue preserving quality? This is not well formulated in our existing Higher Education Act and that is the reason why we are insisting on very, very soon changes to the Act. We are going to continue with quality assurance, with all the inspections. We will rename this probably as re-accreditation and then have a process in which we will convert something. Now after the first stage, after finishing the accreditation imposed by law I have to congratulate the Commission for doing an enormous, ambitious and important job. That is really very impressive. I want to speak about some small problems. There are problems everywhere, but the point is that we have to continue fighting for quality and please help us in just doing this.

We have our experience, we have our standards, now we have to continue with the fine-tuning, not in the literal sense of tuning, of course. I mean just to continue moving to a higher quality level. Why? On the one hand, we really have a large number of professors at the moment. On the other hand, we have more faculties, more universities too. Speaking generally about the main problem in quality assurance in this country, it is a shortage of teachers. That is crucial and this is kind of contradiction to what we mentioned at the very beginning. We have to bring this in line. We have an increased number of universities and we have to preserve quality in teaching. That is our main problem. By becoming members of networks we are going to be helped in this important task. Thank you.

How to get involved in ENQA?

Emmi Helle

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA – is an umbrella organisation for quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area. It started as a project network financed by the European Commission in 2000 under the Finnish Ministry of Education, after some competition between the latter and the Italian Ministry of Education. In 2004 the ENQA General Assembly decided that ENQA would become an association in Finland. The decision was then implemented during year 2005.

At the moment, ENQA has 43 full members and 5 candidate members. Full membership is for agencies that meet the ENQA membership criteria, which contain the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Candidate members are agencies that meet the major part of the criteria, but have still some work to do. In 2006 a new category for partnership with ENQA was founded – association and affiliation. It is not a membership category but rather a way of cooperation, which allows all those quality assurance bodies in Europe and beyond that are interested in the ENQA activities, to join it as associates.

The ENQA administrative structure consists of annually convening General Assembly (GA), which gathers all the members, associates and affiliates. The ENQA Board is composed of persons that are elected from among the members' representatives. The General Assembly elects the Board, which then deals with the daily running of the association. The third entity in the administrative structure of ENQA is the secretariat, which implements the Boards' decisions. It is an operational body located in Helsinki.

The biggest current project of ENQA is composed of the reviews of the member agencies. This exercise has taken a lot of time of the ENQA Board for the last couple of years. This round of external reviews will be completed by 2010, but then again a new round of reviews will start

already in 2011, because, as you know, the quality assurance agencies have to undergo a review each five years. It is thus a continuous process.

ENQA is cooperating intensively with the other stakeholders in the European Higher Education Area, namely with the European University Association (EUA), with the European Students' Union (ESU) and with the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) – the latter referring to universities of applied sciences. ENQA and these three associations form the so-called E4 Group, which discusses the quality assurance matters from four to five times a year. The E4, for example, organises the yearly European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), which will take place in Copenhagen this year. ENQA is involved in the yearly organisation of EQAF. The E4 Group also founded the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and is involved in the management of the register.

How to get involved in ENQA? In order to get a full membership an agency has to have undergone an external review according to the European Standards and Guidelines. Without such a review resulting in a sufficient review report it is not possible to get full membership. If an agency has not undergone a review, then it can apply for a candidate membership, which is given for two years. After these two years the ENQA Board is expecting that the agency undergoes a review. Only candidate membership is possible without a review.

When the quality assurance agency undergoes a review, the procedure is more or less the same as for the higher education institutions that are subject to an evaluation by a quality assurance body. The agency does the self-evaluation report according to the European Standards and Guidelines. Then, there is a team of independent experts including a student, which will assess the self-evaluation report of the agency and visit the agency. Consequently, the team will come up with the review report and recommendations. Following those recommendations the agency is expected to come up with the follow-up plan and procedure.

These reviews of agencies can be coordinated either at the national level or at the European level. At the national level the coordinator of the

review can be another national body, which is however independent from the agency in question. It can also be another quality assurance agency from the European Higher Education Area – preferably one that has itself undergone a review and is a full member of ENQA. The review can be coordinated by ENQA, as well, if there is no other possibility for the agency to have its review organised. But, I would like to clarify that the role of the coordinator is not to conduct the review, but to organise the practicalities for the review to happen. So, in the ENQA coordinated review, it is not ENQA which is actually doing the review. ENQA is only organising the practical elements for the review, while the most important element in the review is the team of the independent experts, which performs the assessment.

Yesterday, the speakers of this seminar already several times went through the requirements of an external review conducted according to the European Standards and Guidelines for an agency. To reiterate them, the review will firstly look at whether the agency has a legal basis and a responsibility for quality assurance, recognised by public authorities. It will also study whether an agency undertakes the quality assurance activities regularly. The agency should, as well, have appropriate resources to carry out its tasks and have a publicly available mission statement. It should also be independent, which poses sometimes a very tricky question. There have been many long and interesting discussions at the ENQA Board about what does the independence of an agency mean. In many cases the agencies are not totally independent financially, but financed by the Ministry of Education. Many times they are also physically located nearby or in the premises of the Ministry of Education. However, what matters in this context is that the agency makes the decisions independently, without any outside actor being able to influence its decisions. That is one of the most important things that the review is looking at.

The review also studies the processes and criteria of the agency, which have to be publicly available. The agencies' procedures should include a self-assessment, an external assessment by a group of experts, a publication of a report and its recommendations as well as a follow up procedure. This same procedure should also be followed for the

institutions. Often the reporting of an agency proves problematic. That is the case, for example, when the agency does not publish the full reports on the institutions it has assessed, but only summaries of them, or nothing at all (in cases of negative outcomes). It is a recommendation of good practice that the reports should be published in full, but if that is not possible at least a summary of the reports, including recommendations, should be published.

What comes to the accountability procedures of the agency itself the review will look at: Does it have mechanisms for its own quality assurance internally and externally? Does it collect internal feedback regularly on its own activities? Does it collect external feedback? Is there then a good mechanism to collect this feedback and consequently to improve those things that are not working properly? Of course, one of the tools of the accountability is the review of the agency each five years.

The ENQA membership review additionally looks at whether the agency has been in operation at least for two years – because if not, there is nothing much to review or to evaluate. The agency should also have an appeals procedure when the decisions have formal consequences. Finally, it is important that the agency applying for membership is willing to contribute to the aims and objectives of ENQA.

What is the procedure for full membership once the agency has undergone a review? The review report is usually sent by the review coordinator to the ENQA Board (through the secretariat). Then three members of the ENQA Board's Review Committee will study and scrutinise the review report using a template for presenting its conclusions. The Review Committee will come up with its recommendations, after which the ENQA Board will discuss the matter. The ENQA Board can follow the recommendations of the review panel and of the Review Committee or it can take its own, differing decision. The decision-making is not always so straightforward – ENQA Board is an independent body which can naturally come up with different conclusions, when, for example, the review report does not present enough evidence to support the views expressed by the panel.

However, usually the Board follows the recommendations of the panel and of the committee.

It is important for ENQA as a membership organisation to emphasise the enhancement-led approach: How can ENQA help its members to improve? How can ENQA understand and take into account the national specificities? Sometimes there are national laws which do not make it possible for the agency to meet some of the criteria and they are usually pretty difficult to change.

As stated before, there is another form of getting involved with ENQA: to become an associate or affiliate. This category is for agencies or quality assurance bodies that do not comply with the ENQA membership criteria for some reason or another. The affiliation is for quality assurance networks, and the association for quality assurance agencies or bodies, that wish to collaborate with ENQA more closely. In order to get an affiliate or associate status in ENQA it is enough to send an official letter to the ENQA Board requesting associate or affiliate status and explaining the reasons and motivations for this.

The ENQA members are all from the European Higher Education Area, but the associates and affiliates can also be from outside the European region. However, it has to be kept in mind that this status is not a membership category. There have been problems with agencies that, after receiving an associate status, have announced on their websites, in their original language – not in English – “This agency is a member of ENQA.” In those cases the ENQA Secretariat always sends a letter requesting the agency to correct the information. There was one case where an agency continuously misused its associate status in the described way, and this resulted in ENQA Board cancelling the associate status of the agency.

The ENQA services to its members and associates and affiliates are various. ENQA organises several events per year mainly for this target group. All the publications are sent to them, as well, but are of course accessible on ENQA website to everybody. Members and associates have an access to the restricted area of the website, where they can follow,

for example, what is happening in the Bologna Follow-up Group, what has been discussed in the E4 Group and so on, because the minutes of all these meetings are available in there. They can also participate in elaboration of policy papers and statements through a consultation process that is done through the website. An ENQA member can ask for an ENQA coordinated review. An ENQA full member can nominate experts to the ENQA pool of agency reviews. These experts then can participate in the trainings of the agency reviewers. And of course the members also participate in the ENQA projects. Only the ENQA full members can nominate candidates for the Board and vote and express their opinions at the General Assembly without an invitation by the President which is the case with other categories that have an observer status in the General Assembly.

Now, what is the difference between ENQA and the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR)? The Register was founded by the E4 members in March 2008. EQAR uses the same criteria for entry in the web-based list of agencies that is maintaining that ENQA does for its membership, but they naturally are two different organisations. ENQA and EQAR are different in their form and purpose. EQAR is an information tool, a list on the internet, on trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in the European Higher Education Area. The Register does not organise events for the agencies nor does it publish reports (other than its annual report).

ENQA is a membership organisation with services to its members and as such it also represents the interests of its members in the European Higher Education Area and internationally. In addition, ENQA can coordinate reviews, which is not the case with the Register. The common link between the two is provided by the European Standards and Guidelines.

In addition to different purposes ENQA and EQAR have two independent decision-making bodies – ENQA Board and the Register Committee, consecutively. Thereby it is possible that they could make differing decisions. This actually happened once in a case of an efficiently working and internationally qualified agency, in the review of which there had not

been students involved, but there was strong evidence on the fact that they had been widely consulted throughout the review process. The ENQA Board accepted this evidence while EQAR did not. But it is natural that different decisions between the two organisations – that differ in purpose – are possible. In ENQA there are at the moment 31 agencies that have reconfirmed (or have been guaranteed) a full membership. In the EQAR list there are presently 17 agencies.

To maintain the information tool – the Register of agencies – a whole association was created in Belgium. It has to be kept in mind that the agencies are only included in the list of the Register – they are not members of the Register. EQAR has the governments and the stakeholder organisations as members. For example, ENQA, EUA, ESU and EURASHE are founding members of the Register; Denmark is a governmental member of the Register, as are the Belgian Flemish and French speaking communities. The members gather together in a yearly General Assembly.

As it was said yesterday there are several networks operating in the European area. Establishment of networks is a world-wide trend – they are being founded, and many of them are already in full operation, all over the world. In his yesterday's presentation Rolf Heusser did not explicitly mention that the international quality assurance network INQAAHE provides to the regional networks a forum to meet and to exchange information on the developments in each region. In this framework of INQAAHE, ENQA meets all the regional networks regularly. It is very useful to know what is happening globally and there are lots of useful experiences being exchanged between the networks. For example, ENQA can share with them good practices on external and internal quality assurance of agencies. The other regional networks, for their part, have developed excellent approaches for the quality assurance of transnational education, undergone external reviews, and developed performance indicators – all these are new features from which ENQA can learn.

As Elisabeth Fiorioli already said yesterday, regional cooperation is very important in terms of having more information on each others' systems. This promotes the understanding of those systems, easier recognition of

results of the external quality assurance decisions, mutual trust and transparency.

One question, which has been posed several times in conferences and meetings, is the following: "Is the involvement in several parallel networks financially sustainable in the longer run?" For example, there is the Polish agency for quality assurance, PKA – State Accreditation Committee, which is a member of ENQA, a member of INQAAHE, a member of Central and Eastern European Network, a member of European Consortium for Accreditation and listed in the Register. It does cost a lot to be involved in so many networks and bodies, but, for example, many ENQA members say that it is very useful to be involved in all those networks, because they all have different regional or substance purposes. But, for some agencies it is just not possible, because of financial reasons. Then they might have to choose between ENQA and the Register, for example.

As for the future challenges, as a member of the E4 Group ENQA has to foresee that the Register will be evaluated. When the EQAR was founded, it was said that it should be evaluated after two years of operation. The evaluation of the Register will be completed by spring 2012. In parallel, the E4 Group should start thinking about the possible need for revision of the European Standards and Guidelines. There has been feedback from various stakeholders on the fact that the ESG should be revised, because some find them too general, while others find them too specific. The revision might prove problematic, especially in cases where some countries have included the current version in their higher education legislation.

Elisabeth Fiorioli mentioned in her yesterday's presentation that also the QA networks should be externally evaluated. Many of the regional networks, the Latin American network RIACES for example, and many others who have been receiving the World Bank funds have already been evaluated externally. That is also something that ENQA could think about – undergoing a review which would look at whether it is really fulfilling its stated purposes.

Continuing on the theme of future challenges, there will be a new round of external reviews of agencies starting in 2010. Another very urgent matter regards member agencies in transformation – agencies that have changed their structure, their statutes, and their approach. In some countries agencies are merging. What to do with the ENQA membership of those agencies? After how much time can you really evaluate that agency after it has renewed everything? Usually it requires at least two years. Those are questions with which the ENQA Board is working on all the time.

I thank you very much for your kind attention and invite questions and comments from the floor!

Discussion

Professor Dr. Jelica Protic

My question is about the involvement of students in the review process. I understand the process of electing professors as reviewers and I could imagine how we would choose reviewers from among the industry representatives. However, I am not sure how the student reviewers should be elected. Do you evaluate students on whether they are able to do such a complicated task? Who are usually the student members of the reviewing committees? Where are they coming from? Are they from the same scientific field? Can they be doctoral students and so on?

Emmi Helle

Each country and each agency has its own procedures on how to select students to the review committees. At the agency level, when the agency sends a review team to review a higher education institution, the agencies either do a recruitment process with an announcement or they are asking from the local Student Union for nominations. These are the two main ways of recruiting students for reviews.

Of course, once the students have been recruited, they will receive the same training as the other members of the team, the professors, the representatives of employer unions and so on. The challenge with the students is formed by time limitations: once you have selected them you cannot be sure that they will be also available, for example, in the coming years. The same happens at the European level. When ENQA coordinates a review of an agency it always asks for nominations of student representatives from the European Students' Union for the agency review team. It might be, however, that the student representative cannot be involved in further reviews anymore, because s/he is not anymore involved in the European Students' Union.

Usually students are bringing a lot to the reviews. They are very enthusiastic, very committed to the tasks and very good team members. There are many positive experiences from employing the students in review teams. One of the criteria of the European Standards and Guidelines at the national level is that the students should be included in

the teams evaluating the higher education institutions. It has not been easy or obvious for many countries, but this has been gradually implemented. For example, in Spain and Switzerland there had not been this tradition of involving students in the teams, but it has now changed with lot of positive experiences.

The agencies or the local students union can maintain a student pool, which can be regularly trained. Usually the student members receive the same training as the other members of the panel. Bologna Process speaks of student centred learning, so it is obvious that the students should be included in the evaluation processes, as well. I come from Finland, where students have been involved from 1970's in all university bodies at all levels. Therefore it is obvious for me that the students are involved in everything. In some other countries the situation has just recently changed and the experiences are mostly positive.

Boris Curkovic

I am from the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was established at the beginning of 2009. We are in the phase of preparation of our procedures and documents for accreditation. We are planning to run institutional and programme accreditation as two separate processes. Talking about students' involvement in accreditation we are planning to include students only in institutional accreditation, but not in programme accreditation. The reason is that there will be only three members in the panel for programme accreditation: one international representative, one national expert from that particular field of the programme and one representative from the labour market. Would that be acceptable for ENQA membership? I am asking this, because our ultimately goal is to become a member of ENQA and to be listed in the Register.

Emmi Helle

It is difficult to give you a straightforward answer right now on whether it would be acceptable or not. From my experience the students should be involved in all processes. A recommendation that follows the European good practise is that students should be involved in all teams and at all levels.

Professor Dr. Endre Pap

I am from the Serbian Accreditation Commission, which has been working for more than three years. We strongly wish to apply for ENQA membership. Could you please tell us, how to prepare the review procedure concretely? How do you measure the achievements? First of all we have our website. You will surely look at this website. But, we probably need some hard copies, some publications related to this. Is that necessary for the review? Furthermore, all our materials, which you would evaluate, are in Serbian language. Do we have to translate all the materials in English or would be only summaries in English sufficient?

Emmi Helle

As we learned from the yesterday's presentation by Professor Vera Dondur, you have already started to prepare yourself for the review. We saw the list of requirements for the agencies and she demonstrated clearly with which requirements your agency does or does not comply yet. That is a good exercise to do first, because that is what you are going to do then in the self-evaluation. As for the published material, generally speaking everything that your agency does, all the reports that it is publishing, should also be found on the website. But, of course it is enough that they are in your own language. We cannot require that they should be in English as well, because they are written in the national context. Anyway, it is good to have all the reports on the website in your own language. Then the main features – mission statement, main topics, contact details, etc. – of the website can be translated into an English version.

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

If an agency applies for ENQA membership, how long does this evaluation process last?

Emmi Helle

For the evaluation process you should schedule six to twelve months. When the report is sent on time to the ENQA Secretariat, it will be dealt at the next Board meeting. So you should reserve enough time for the whole process, while the last part – decision making process – is pretty quick.

Professor Dr. Vera Dondur

We in Serbia do not involve students in our accreditation procedure. The students are involved only in the process of writing self-evaluation reports prepared by institutions. It would be very difficult for us to involve the students in the whole accreditation process, because this is not included in the law. That would mean that we should change the law. And if we do so, we are just at the beginning of the process. We could, for example, just change our documents for self-evaluation of the Commission. Is it recommendable to do it that way? Otherwise, it seems to be not possible to apply for ENQA membership.

Emmi Helle

It is a question of national law of course, but you should aim to include students at all levels and also in the teams, if possible. It has happened several times that the ENQA decision letter has also been sent to the national authorities and has, in the longer run, contributed to a change in the law. This happened in Switzerland, for example: the education law was changed to include students in the review teams. It is important that your agency demonstrates, through an action plan, that it has a firm aim to include students at all levels. Remember to mention in that plan what your agency is going to do in order to have the law changed.

Professor Dr. Vera Dondur

We do not have panels as a method of working, which is again problematic. It is restricted by law that our reviewers have to be kept secret to institutions and they just prepare the review reports based on documentation. They also do not communicate with the institutions. Besides, just a part of the commission visits the institution. We do not know what to do now. We have gained a huge experience. As you saw yesterday in the presentation we have done a tremendous effort to arrive where we are now. We are a small community and it would be very difficult for us to reorganise the structure in order to have panels.

Emmi Helle

Also in this question I do not have a direct answer. In this case, I think, we have to see your system as a whole, how it is working if you do not

use the teams. We have to see how the integral situation is and make the decision on that basis.

Professor Dr. Endre Pap

When our Commission visit an institution, it always has contact with a group of students (10, 20). It is our rule to manage interviews with students at each institution. Could we then consider that students are involved?

Emmi Helle

The ideal situation would be that your Commission, the one visiting the institution, would include students. In addition, you can consult the students of the institution under evaluation.

Professor Dr. Oskar Kovac

I think we can consider the following: In the National Council of Higher Education we have regularly two students. They cannot vote about accreditation, but they can represent the students' opinions and they are really good. Thank you.

How to get integrated – FIBAA experience and recommendations

Dr. Heinz-Ulrich Schmidt

First of all I would like to thank the organisers, the German Rectors' Conference and our host for the invitation. I am glad and it is an honour and a pleasure for me to be here. After the very interesting presentation yesterday by Professor Dondur, I got the impression and the feeling that a little more international linkage might be helpful. Then we had the very impressive lecture by Elisabeth Fiorioli. It is a systematic approach about international networks, followed by Rolf Hausser's presentation of INQAAHE and its services for members, the presentation by Mark Frederiks on ECA and its activities, rather essential activities, and now, by Emmi Helle, this presentation on ENQA and EQAR. From my point of view to be honest, all that has to be said about the international quality assurance network has already been said. Do not be afraid, I will not repeat all this information. But as we were informed by the network speakers, if I may say so "top-down". I, as a representative of an agency, will add few remarks "bottom-up", because FIBAA is involved as a simple member in all the networks mentioned. So let me first give a short introduction to FIBAA - Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation.

FIBAA was founded in 1994 by economic associations in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. We are focused, but not limited to the fields of business administration, economics, law and social disciplines. We perform programme accreditations as well as institutional audits and evaluations. We have much more experience in programme accreditation than in so-called system accreditation as we call it in Germany or internationally institutional audits and evaluations. FIBAA is acknowledged by the German and Dutch Accreditation Council as well as by the respective national educational bodies of Switzerland.

Since 2002 until the end of this month we will have accredited more than 800 degree programmes by the end of this month. And more than 100 of

them have been accredited in foreign countries, all the German-speaking countries like Switzerland and Austria, of course, Northern and Eastern Europe, the Netherlands, Spain and also in Africa, Asia and the USA. It might be interesting for you to know that around 65 % of all accredited degree programmes in business administration or economics in Germany have been accredited by FIBAA, although there are now six competitors, but at the time I am referring to there were only three competitors. 65 % means that FIBAA is the market leader in this field.

And now about our memberships: we are member of ENQA, of ECA, of APQN, the Asia Pacific Quality Network with observer status and of CEE Network. FIBAA is included in the European Register and has two cooperation agreements: one with ARQAANE, the Arab Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network located in Amman, Jordan, and a cooperation agreement with AQA, the Russian Agency for Higher Education in Moscow (AKORK). Both these cooperation agreements were, from my point of view, the results of our international collaboration.

What are the reasons for membership? Well, have in mind that I am speaking from a German background, not all of my appraisals or my recommendations might be relevant to all of you, because there is a very different situation in my country than in Serbia, for instance. So please have in mind that I am speaking with a German background. I will differ between necessary memberships and useful memberships.

Necessary memberships or to be more precisely, memberships and listings from my point of view – ENQA membership is absolutely necessary as well as to be listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Why? Due to the internationally required recognition! If you are member of ENQA, people all over the world know that you are independent, that you are internationally recognised and that you apply the standards and procedures according to the ESG and the European Higher Education Area. Another reason is, to get involved in further developments of quality assurance within the Bologna Process! ENQA is one of the stakeholders, so there are some opportunities to influence the further development of the Bologna Process. And, of course, you can choose to get included in accreditation procedures in foreign countries if

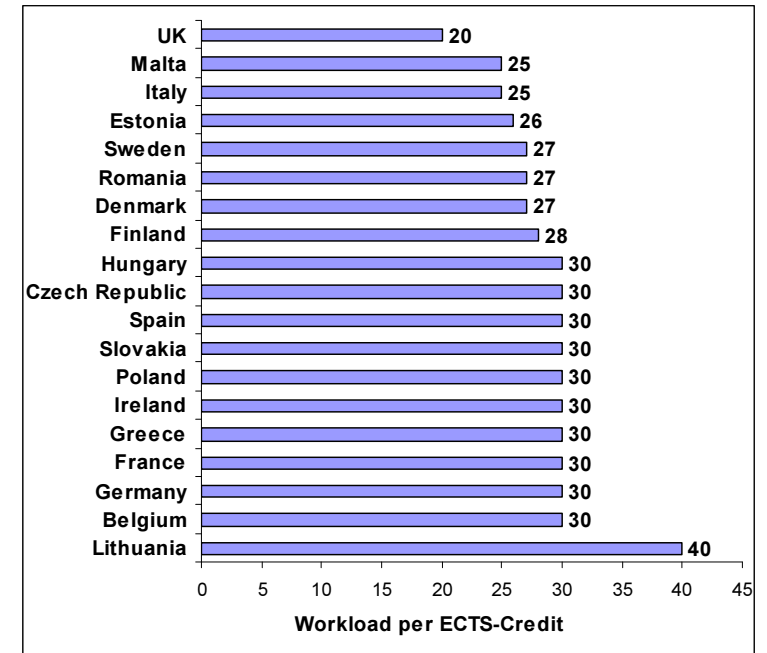
desired, for instance being listed in EQAR may lead to an involvement in a foreign country, as a foreign agency, as an internationally active agency, as FIBAA is in accreditation procedures, in programme accreditation as well as in institutional accreditation.

I do not want to mention all the international networks which might be useful, but, from my point of view, ECA, CEEN and INQAAHE, are organisations to be members of is really useful. Yesterday we heard about mutual recognition, mutual understanding, with regard to licensing, accreditation audit and evaluation, those with common interests can be discussed, can lead to joint-ventures within these CEE members and membership. And you have, of course, the opportunity to share experience. I have participated in some conferences which dealt with crucial challenges, like ECTS, learning outcomes, private higher education institutions. There might be different challenges and different treatments between state universities and private universities. As I learnt in your country, there are a lot of private institutions turning up everywhere and you have to look at the quality of their products. And you have the chance – I really appreciate – to engage in intercultural learning, to cooperate internationally in quality assurance. I mentioned our two cooperation agreements with the ARQAANE and the Russian Agency AKORK.

FIBAA has a pool of experts of around 400 people. Of course most of them are Germans or come from German speaking countries, but it is an internationally composed pool of experts. So we are very easily able to put together international panels. By the way, our peer teams use to be composed of four people, two from the scientific side, a professor from a university and a professor from a university of applied sciences, one peer from the employer side and one student.

Coming to the crucial point ECTS: Let me show you how the workloads for one ECTS point differ among European countries (see the figure below): in the UK it is only 20 hours for 1 ECTS point, while in Italy 25 hours are needed for 1 ECTS point, in Sweden and Denmark 27, in Germany 30 and in Lithuania even 40 hours. What does it mean? How to handle this? Does it mean that students in the UK are twice as intelligent

as students in Lithuania? No, it is a kind of international currency with a different buying power. But, how to handle that having the Bologna Process in mind, when one of the ideas was to facilitate mobility between students? There is sometimes a really big obstacle for the mobility.



And what about the learning outcomes? Yesterday, I was a little bit surprised to hear that in this country accreditation procedures focus on input indicators. From my point of view, quality assurance should be taken into account in the learning outcome, the qualifications and competences achieved within the programme. Of course, the input, let us say, resources, infrastructure and so on are necessary prerequisites for quality assurance – they are necessary, but not sufficient. To be sufficient, we have to look at the learning outcomes. Why? Learning outcomes are defined as the result of fitness for purpose. They are bound to a curriculum and should be linked to the relevant examination form, examination duration and examination content, which is directly linked to employability. The main paradigm shift from the time before Bologna

and now, from my point of view, is the shift from teaching oriented input to learning outcomes, student oriented outcomes.

I mentioned the necessary and the useful memberships from my perspective. The third one would be “nice to have memberships”. It depends upon the situation you are in; it may be a geographically organised network, global, or regional. Yesterday, we heard about INQAAHE, the world-wide association. As a member of internationally working networks you should have the opportunity to participate in global and/or regional further developments. For instance, the Asia Pacific Network, APQN, I mentioned they are developing parallel to European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), Asian Standards and Guidelines (ASG), which is a very interesting process. As a member of APQN, FIBAA may participate in the development in the other regions around the world. To be a member of internationally working networks also means you become perceptible, more perceptible than only at national level.

Last section, procedures. How? Of course application, formal application, I do not want to repeat it, but addressing the charming chairperson, you always asked “How long will it take to decide?” Our really surprising experience was after having applied for membership in INQAAHE. It takes a lot of time to prepare all these documents, but within less than 48 hours we got the decision. It was really impressive. 48 hours after delivering all the necessary documents you get the decision “Yes, you are in”. I cannot say that it uses to be this way, but it is our experience.

Talking about ENQA membership, as Emmi Helle has already mentioned, it is much easier for ENQA members to get listed in the European Register (EQAR) than for others. But, more important than membership is active membership. As membership is not the aim and the end – membership is the beginning. My topic was how to get integrated, not how to become a member. How to get integrated? With integration I mean active participation in the activities of all these networks. Membership means a permanent procedure, a permanent activity, for instance contributions to international conferences, participating in working groups (for example ECA has four working groups, as Mark Frederiks mentioned yesterday). Maybe there are some members of ECA who are not involved in any

working group. But in my opinion, integration in international networks means participating not only in the results, but contributing to the results, participating in assemblies, discussions, hosting workshops, and so on.

My final remarks: I think you have realized that I had already included recommendations and experience in my former words. But in addition, our experience is a remarkable flow of national feedback from the German Accreditation Council and also international feedback, invitations to conferences and workshops, collaborative accreditation procedures. Well, this is one of the results I really appreciate. When the assembly of the CEE Network took place in Tirana, I first time met the representatives of the Albanian agency and during the conference I was asked by a representative of the Faculty of Durres for programme accreditation by FIBAA. Well, I know it is not necessary to get accredited by FIBAA; it is useful to have FIBAA accreditation in addition. But, it is necessary to have state accreditation. So, Professor Dhurata Bozo and I, we discussed a common or at least synchronized procedure on programme accreditation within this Faculty of Durres in Albania. Another result: an increasing number of applications for quality assurance by FIBAA, programme accreditation as well as institutional audit/evaluation. I was really surprised that we got quicker applications for institutional audits from foreign countries than in Germany. Maybe the German universities are still trying to find the right way to be successfully accredited in system accreditation.

The summary and result of FIBAA’s integration in international networks is an increasing of know-how and of knowing why, of mutual understanding and of course of increasing the internationalisation of FIBAA’s pool of experts and expert panels. FIBAA is really an internationally acting agency.

I thank you very much for your attention and I am happy to answer any questions.

Discussion

Dr. Heinz-Ulrich Schmidt

If there are no questions, I would like to come back to a question which has been asked by Professor Dondur. She argued that it is not allowed by law to include students in accreditation procedures. No, it is not foreseen in the law. From my point of view there are two kinds of interpretation of the law. One kind is, well it is not foreseen in the law, therefore it is forbidden. The other is, it is not foreseen in the law, therefore it is not forbidden, it is allowed if it is not obviously crazy. If including of students in accreditation procedures is not foreseen in the law, from my point of view this does not mean it is forbidden.

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

We just found the message! Yes, in the law it is prescribed how the body is formed and it is composed of two anonymous referees and so on. It is quite precise in the law how this should be done, and that is what we have to follow. But of course, as my colleague said, we do have contacts with students from that respective institution and we have a set of questions that we ask them. Their comments are always part of the report about the institution. Therefore we do take care of the students' opinion. In addition, in several evaluation reports the institutions have to have the results of student surveys and so on. So, the students' voice is somehow inside, but they are not members of the team.

Dr. Heinz-Ulrich Schmidt

In my previous professional life, I was a civil servant working with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. There I learned to differ these to ways of interpretation the laws. Why don't you try to involve students facing reactions of the political side? I know, it is rather precisely described in the law, but precisely description does not mean there is no room for improvement or additional activities. To be honest, my recommendation would be to try to involve students because it makes your application for ENQA and later for EQAR much easier. My experience is that the involvement of students, involvements in panels as well as in the decision body, is a very crucial point for those applications.

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

Thank you for the suggestion.

Professor Dr. Jelica Protic

Just a short question: How should our involvement in ENQA help our students by the recognition of their degrees everywhere? What is the relation between the international membership of an agency that accredits our institutions and the degrees that these institutions issue? What is the function of ENIC/NARIC Centres in this respect?

Dr. Heinz-Ulrich Schmidt

It is helpful, but up to now it is not sufficient to be recognised everywhere. It is helpful with regard to the fact that all people know that your agency is listed in EQAR or at least is a member of ENQA, which means your accreditation procedures are in compliance with the ESG regulations. That means there is trust, mutual trust, on the level and the quality of the education in higher education in your country. From my point of view ENIC/NARICs should become superfluous as soon as the Bologna Process has reached not its final, but a better and stabilised status. ENIC/NARIC means the recognition of foreign degrees by national bodies. Within the Bologna Process activities of ENIC/NARIC Centres, as far as I know, are not foreseen but up to now they are still necessary because the situation in different countries is actually different. My vision is the abolition of ENIC/NARICs in future times substituted by mutual recognition on bilateral or multilateral agreements as Mark Frederiks mentioned yesterday. Emmi, would you like to add something?

Emmi Helle

Yes. We actually do not have such contracts as Mark Frederiks told us about yesterday, namely, that the European Consortium of Accreditation has within the different countries in order to recognise degrees. And also within the ECA, as well, the contracts were done on a bilateral basis. Yes of course, it is about mutual trust and transparency being in the register or member of ENQA, but it does not mean automatically that the degrees would be recognised.

The CEE Network - Harmonizing activities in quality assurance and playing an active role in shaping the European Higher Education Area

Christina Rozsnyai

I will give you a little bit of background on the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies – CEE Network, why it was formed and what it is. Then I am going to tell you the CEE Network objectives, who are the members, what are the membership criteria, what kind of activities we have and then I will go on with the contribution of the CEE Network to the European Higher Education Area and Quality Assurance in general. Finally, I am going to talk about the outcomes, which are mostly the workshops that we have had, but also some other issues and then just a quick look at difficulties and the perspective.

Main objectives

The main objectives of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies are what you have heard in the past two days several times about basically all the networks:

- to share experiences and foster cooperation,
- to exchange information on background, aims, procedures and outcomes of activities of member agencies,
- to recommend experts,
- to assist each other in elaborating measures for harmonising activities in quality assurance,
- to play an active role in shaping the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). So we are an active part of the EHEA as individual member agencies and we believe that as a network we can discuss issues together and put it to other forums in one voice.

Creation of CEE Network

The CEE Network was founded on 13 October 2001 in Krakow, Poland. Formally, it was established with regulations on 19 October 2002 in Vienna, Austria. But, CEE Network actually succeeds the regional sub-network of INQAAHE (International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), which was established on 19 November 2000 in Budapest, Hungary. The CEE Network was originally conceived in 2000 in Budapest. I should add that as a sub-network of INQAAHE we had a very informal structure, because we were looking for an author and we wanted to find some kind of formal framework for our existence. We do have a cooperation agreement with the INQAAHE, but we are not affiliated to INQAAHE at the moment. It is also important to know that we already had meetings of agencies in this region very early – actually since 1994.

What was the reason for establishing the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies? We all know that there was a regime change in 1989/1990 and this region had its whole set of very special problems that Western European agencies did not have. Some of these are related to the transition to democracy and you will realise that there are many, many thoughts and many, many issues just behind these few words. The consequences of autonomy granted to higher education institutions – and this means, very openly said, political autonomy –, relationship with governments, then the Academies of Sciences, which were very strong in our region of Europe after the Second World War. There was a complete separate entity of academic research institutions versus universities. Universities were actually not allowed to grant PhD degrees. In Hungary in the 1950s, universities were allowed to grant doctoral degrees, but they were called “little doctoral degrees” and the “big doctoral degrees” – the Candidate of Science degrees – were given by the Academy of Sciences. This continues to this day, except that when the PhD was introduced in 1993 with the first Higher Education Act then the so called “little doctoral degrees”, which were maybe more comparable to masters’ thesis level, and the “Candidate of Sciences” granted by the Academy, which were independent research degrees, were merged into the PhD degree. By this Act universities got the right to offer doctoral education, which is a three year education and to grant PhD titles and degrees.

Those people with the former “little doctoral degree” and those with Candidate of Science degrees got two years to apply for these degrees to be recognised as PhD degrees. I have to add, even if we did not continue to make a difference between the Candidates of Sciences and the PhD, even 18 years later, the Candidate of Sciences still connote a stronger doctoral degree than the PhD and many, many individuals with the Candidate of Science-degree still use the CSc abbreviation with their name to distinguish from the PhD, which they consider just as a continuation of studies. We of course know that this is completely not true but it has evolved over time. At the beginning, this was the idea to strengthen the universities.

We realised then fully well that in Western Europe everyone has economic constraints as well. I am sure Harvard has extreme economic constraints at the moment, because of the recession in the United States, but I do not think there is any university in our part of the world that has the funds that Harvard has. Our constraints are a little bit on a different level. The brain-drain is related to this as well. Although, I do not know exactly what the statistics is right now, I know it was very strong in the beginning and continues in some fields very strongly today. Because of the economic constraints we also had a need for more applicants to the academic profession. Academics were not paid very well, at least not in Hungary and in some other Central Eastern European Countries. Therefore, a big problem is that the average age among academic staff is very high. Low student and staff mobility still exists at least in Hungary, but this seems to be a problem if not for all, than just for many of the CEE countries. Furthermore, we have a large ethnic minority in Hungary, but also in Serbia, in Slovakia, in the Ukraine, in Austria, in Burgenland. Therefore, it was an idea to get these Hungarian-speaking people again into a group in the range of quality assurance in higher education. These were the reasons at the time, when the CEE Network was founded.

Currently we have 21 members (agencies) from 16 countries. We of course consider Central and Eastern Europe not cut off along the former Iron Curtain and we also have members from Austria and from Germany. FIBAA, as Dr. Schmidt said this morning, is a member but also ASIIN from Germany and from Austria actually all three agencies. Just to give you a

very impressive visual overview – the Central European Countries are almost all CEE Network members.

Membership criteria

Membership is open to agencies, committees, commissions, boards, whatever you want to call them, which are recognised as a national or regional higher education quality assurance organisation by the legal authorities in the respective country in Central and Eastern Europe and which operate on a non-profit, non-commercial basis. Therefore, you can see the membership is open also to the countries of the South Eastern European region. Just to say it very specifically, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Kosovo, I would be very, very happy, if you would join CEE Network and fill in this dark spot in our membership map as soon as possible. Maybe I should add this right now before I will forget it later – we have General Assembly meetings every two years and the General Assembly is the decision-making body. The next one will meet in May 2010. Therefore, it would be very good, if anyone is intending to join CEE Network to apply as quickly as possible. Otherwise you will have to wait two years for final confirmation.

The application process is very easy. You have to supply an application letter and data about your institution to the CEE Network coordinator. Acceptance of new members will be discussed in the Steering Committee and on its proposal the decision will be taken at the next General Assembly meeting. I urge everyone here, who is not yet a member to join the CEE Network. It costs 600 euros per year. We are an affiliate member of ENQA and we have to pay 50 % of the ENQA regular membership fee and we need also some funds to organise our activities.

Memberships, affiliations, agreements

The CEE Network is ENQA affiliate since 2006. We have cooperation agreements with the Spanish agency ANEQA (2003), with the European Consortium of Accreditation (ECA, 2008) and with INQAAHE (2008). The member agencies are all from Bologna signatories. Twelve agencies are members of ENQA, 16 agencies are members of INQAAHE and six of ECA.

Activities

We have a website (<http://www.ceenetwork.hu>), which is in need of a little bit updating, of refreshing, but this is one of the projects ahead. We do have an annual workshop on quality assurance issues as well as the Steering Committee meetings at least once a year. These two meetings are usually connected. As I mentioned, we have the General Assembly meetings every two years. As the word implies, the General Assembly is the decision-making body, so we have some issues on the agenda, like new member applications for example.

We have published a comparative survey "Mapping external quality assurance in Central and Eastern Europe" done by Stefanie Hofmann from ACQUIN, the German Accreditation Agency.⁵ The survey gives information about the CEE Network member agencies' practices in anticipation of the European Standards and Guidelines at that time. CEE Network has also produced some statements (for example to the Bologna Follow-up Group on the CEE Network fulfilling goals of the Berlin Communiqué) in order to put ourselves into the consciousness of the European players in 2003. We also made some statements to the European Standards and Guidelines and to the European Register as well.

Contribution to quality assurance in EHEA

Actually, I have to say, we were the first accreditation network in Europe. You see the distinction between quality assurance and accreditation. Our agencies conducted accreditation and therefore we can say that we were the first network of agencies conducting accreditation. Our contribution and this is a very big one as well, is the geographic range all the way from Germany to Russia and from Albania to the Baltic Countries. And this range of agencies we have brought into a form of information exchange on various issues on quality assurance in Europe but also on special issues that are of concern to our region.

- The first meeting of the members in the present form was in Budapest in 2000. Although, we did not have regulations yet, but the important contribution at that time was that INQAAHE was doing a survey of quality assurance agencies and their practices and all our

⁵ The publication can be downloaded from:
<http://www.enqa.eu/files/CEEN%20report%20final.pdf>.

member agencies were able to contribute to that survey. So, it was a very valuable contribution to European quality assurance in this sense.

- In Kraków in 2001 all agencies produced background reports, which are published on the website.
- Then, in Vienna in 2002, CEE Network was formally established, which means we produced regulations that we still use. Another important issue in 2002 was how to join ENQA. A big discussion and encouragement came from a Steering Committee member, who was an ENQA Board member at that time. There was a workshop on institutional and programme evaluation and shortly thereafter the book "Quality Assurance and Development of Course Programmes" was also published by UNESCO/CEPES, which I wrote together with Carolyn Campbell.⁶ That book contains reports of all Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies and tables about specific issues and their practices. This was the first comprehensive publication about these agencies.
- In 2003 we organised in Bucharest the workshop "After Berlin: The Bologna Process and Evaluation / Accreditation in Central Eastern Europe". I mentioned before that we sent a statement to the ministers, just to put ourselves onto the map.
- The next workshop was held in Prague in 2004 "Convergence and Divergence in Quality Assurance Systems. The CEE Contribution to the European Higher Education Area", when we produced a statement on new ENQA membership criteria (pre-ESG).
- The workshop in 2005 took place in Poznan, Poland, "Mapping External Quality Assurance in Central and Eastern Europe". That was the workshop preparing the survey I have already mentioned.

I took out a little part of the minutes of the meeting already from Poznan, because I think it is interesting to see what we said about the standards and guidelines at the time.

⁶ The publication can be downloaded from:
<http://www.cepes.ro/publications/pdf/Campbell&Rozsnyai.pdf>

"The main conclusions of the workshop were:

- resources remain a concern with CEE network agencies and are more crucial here than in Western Europe;
- resources are linked to independence;
- the implications in question "What is independence?" need to be explored and specified, also in view of the social-cultural-historical context in which an agency operates;
- national legislation has to follow the European developments;
- while complete independence cannot be guaranteed, independence in the sense that the conclusions of an accreditation decision should be free from outside influence;
- there is a need to build up trust, which requires time, but must also be ongoing;
- building up trust requires knowledge about the work and background of others, for which the CEE network survey has greatly contributed;
- the definition and scope of mutual recognition should be refined and specified;
- the implications and outcomes of mutual recognition should be agreed and clear;
- the CEE network agencies that participated in the survey meet many or most of the ENQA standards and are taking steps towards meeting all of them."

This was in 2005, which is by the way the year that the ESG came out.

- In 2006 in Graz we did a follow-up of Stefanie Hofmanns' survey "Mapping external quality assurance in Central and Eastern Europe". Here an excerpt from the meeting minutes:
"The main outcome of the discussions was that all participating agencies meet most of the European standards with the greatest deficits being in the area of foreign experts."
So few of our agencies were employing foreign experts and I think even though it is becoming more and more, we still have a deficit in this, which is of course related to cost, to language, but also to a perception by our own peers in our countries. The second deficit is student participation and in creating a quality culture in review teams. The third deficit is independence from the evaluated institution, but also from government and also financially (in the

- evaluation process and decisions). The understanding of independence needs to be clarified much more. Finally, the fourth deficit we identified was the external evaluation of agencies. At the time very few of our agencies had gone through an external review, actually the concept was quite new at the time.
- Again in 2006 we organised in cooperation with ENQA the workshop "Implementation of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA". So you can see the standards and guidelines are coming ever stronger into play among the agencies and we had various workshops, working groups on that.
- In 2007 we had a workshop in St. Petersburg "The European Standards and Guidelines in the Central and Eastern European Context after London".
- In 2008 we organised in Albania the workshop "Cooperation of accreditation agencies: towards mutual recognition of accreditation decisions". We had very good contributions from ENQA. Afterwards, our Albanian colleagues produced a "Directory", which lists the member agencies and gives basic information about them.
- Recently, we had the workshop in Vilnius on "External Reviews of Agencies: Lessons Learned".
- For the next year 2010 we have been planning the new workshop and the General Assembly, which will take place in Bulgaria. The working title is "10 years after Bologna". But, I realised just as I was writing notes for this presentation that the CEE Network actually exists for 10 years. So, we will celebrate our 10th anniversary next year as well and are going to have a big splash.

What is the advantage of being a member of the CEE Network?

Contacts are very important. As you have heard from Dr. Schmidt this morning, his connections to Albania have already involved him into a common project there. Some of us have been invited to be in each others' external Boards. I cannot emphasise enough how important information exchange is. Furthermore, there are some bilateral projects, for example the director and staff from the Albanian agency visited the Hungarian Accreditation Commission and we have been preparing the visit of the Polish Accreditation Commission to Hungary next month.

Difficulties

The main difficulty of the CEE Network itself is that the staff consists of myself as the Secretary General of the CEE Network. I only work part time; I have a 20 hours contract at the Hungarian Accreditation Commission, which could be enough, but at the moment I have been very busy and I feel constantly very bad about that, because there is a great potential in the CEE Network. I have also tried three times to register the CEE Network as a legal entity in Hungary and have failed each time. It has been very, very difficult. Our legal regulations are very intricate. But, maybe there is a possibility to register the network in Brussels for example or in Finland or somewhere else. I have heard about that possibility, but I am definitely not able to do that in my twenty hour/week capacity. So this is again something that is open in the future.

Future activities

The next General Assembly in Bulgaria will amend the regulations. For example observer membership will be included in the regulations. But, we have been considering also some other issues. The crucial point is, in my opinion, to enable the Steering Committee to become more active and be able to give much more input than it was the case in the past. I really wish that we can achieve this in Bulgaria next year.

Thank you very much.

Benefits of being involved from ASIIN perspective

Jana Möhren

This presentation will be focussing on yet another type of networks and those are the subject related networks that have been briefly mentioned in the very first presentation by Elisabeth Fiorioli such as ENAEE and the music network. You will see there are several other fields that have been creating their own networks.

But firstly, I will give you a very short introduction of my own agency ASIIN - Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

Secondly, I will give you an overview about ASIIN's international activities and memberships and will then present some of the networks ASIIN is involved in.

ASIIN is a membership organisation that is made up of four main member groups:

1. The coordination group of the German Technical Universities, which is the national body representing those universities.
2. The coordination group of German Universities of Applied Sciences, which is the national body representing the Universities of Applied Sciences.
3. The technical and scientific associations and professional organisations. There are 32 members in this group.
4. The industrial federations and unions.

The difference to some other agencies is that ASIIN is based not only in the scientific community, but also in the economy and in the professional community. That also explains ASIIN's fields of accreditation, which means programme accreditation mainly in the fields of informatics, engineering, architecture and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology, mathematics. As has been mentioned in the presentation from FIBAA, a new development in Germany is the so called

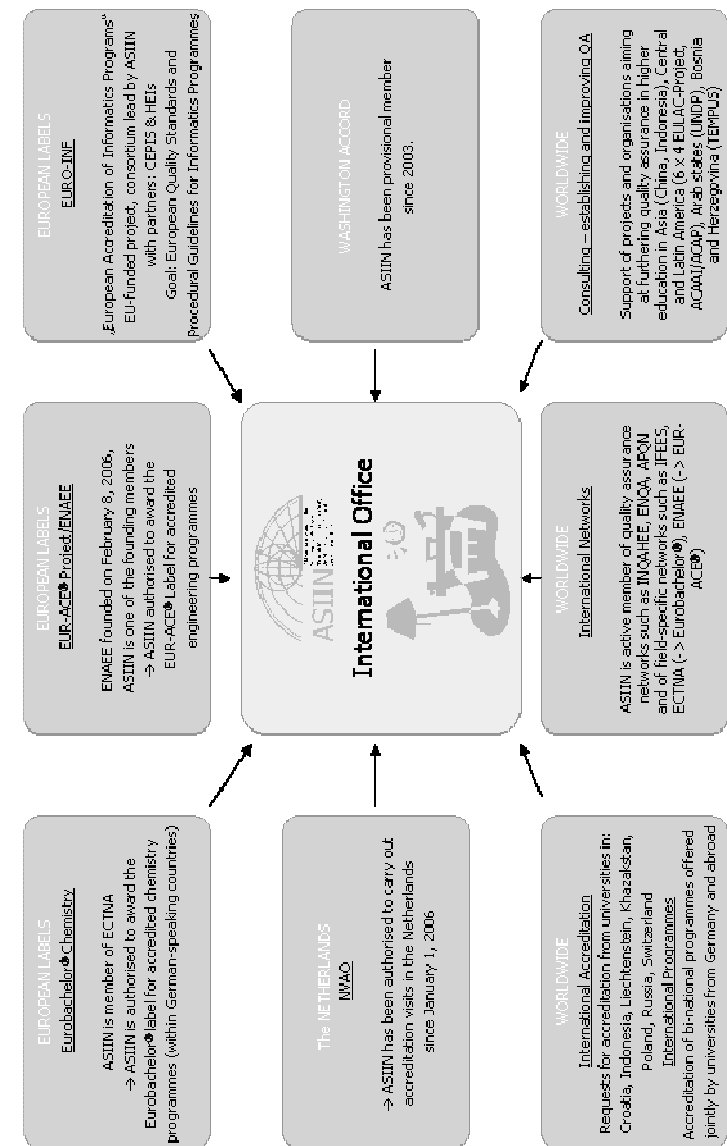
system accreditation, which is the accreditation of quality assurance management systems within higher education institutions.

ASIIN's activities on a European scale include participating in Tempus projects, for example here in Serbia, and another one in Bosnia, as well as in projects funded by the Life Long Learning initiative from the European Union. Furthermore, ASIIN has been participating in a United Nations' development project in the Arabic Union and is active in Central and Latin America, mainly working together with the Central American Accreditation Council – giving them support and counselling in the establishment of accreditation agencies. Like FIBAA, ASIIN has been authorised to carry out accreditations in the Netherlands and has also carried out accreditations around the world, most recently in Switzerland, Poland, Kazakhstan and Peru.

The figure below shows, among other, that ASIIN is an active member of international subject specific networks like ENAEE, ECTNA and others that will be detailed below. ASIIN is also member of ECA, ENQA about we have heard in the course of this conference. ASIIN has cooperation agreements with the following agencies: the CONEAU is the Argentinean Accreditation and Evaluation Agency, ACAAI is the Central American Accreditation Agency for Architecture and Engineering, AKAP is the Central American Agency for Postgraduate Programmes and ANQA is a newly established Armenian Agency. ASIIN has also been working together with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors' Conference, the UNDP and the CCA. In the field of engineering we are member of the World Foundation of Engineering Education Societies, the IFEES. Furthermore, ASIIN has been a provisional member of the Washington Accord since 2003 and has also been involved in AHELO and tuning projects.

The relevance of the subject networks has recently been recognised by the European Ministers in the Leuven Communiqué, when they stated that academics in close cooperation with students and employer representatives will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas.

International network of ASIIN



For most of these networks which have been operating for a few years this has been a confirmation that they are going to the right direction

The idea behind these networks is professional accreditation which works in more or less the same way as academic accreditation. Thus, accreditation of an education programme is understood to be the result of a process to ensure the suitability of a programme as the entry to the profession. It is done through periodic assessment, against accepted standards, through peer review of written and oral information by trained and independent panels and always focuses on the accreditation of programmes. It is never an accreditation of institutions or departments. It also focuses on an education and not of the whole formation which might continue after the end of the educational process.

This presentation will mostly focus on the engineering network.

Why did the initiators think it was necessary to build up this network?

There were two types of recognition in Europe. There is the continental European tradition, which means that after having successfully passed an engineering degree programme at an institution of higher education the graduate can automatically become an engineer while in the Anglo-Saxon tradition the graduate must have first a successfully completed an engineering degree programme and then has to prove a certain period of further training on the job, job experience and then can be formally interviewed and tested to become what is usually called a Chartered Engineer in the UK or in Ireland.

As an outcome of an EU sponsored project that ran from 2004 to 2006, the European Network for the Accreditation of Engineering Education, the ENAEE, was founded in early 2006. Of utmost importance for the network and for its acceptance is the membership of organisations such as FEANI, the European Federation of National Engineering Societies, and SEFI, the European Society for Engineering Education, but also EUROCADRES, the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff.

What were the objectives of ENAEE at its foundation? The first goal was to build confidence in systems of accreditation of engineering degree

programmes within Europe and to promote the implementation of accreditation practice for engineering education systems. How was this to be achieved? As we have heard before, the free exchange of information was an important factor, such as was providing an effective communication channel for the bodies and individuals concerned with educational and professional standards in engineering education and providing such information as already exist within each country on topics and issues connected with education and professional engineering standards.

The most important result of the project was the creation and administration of a European accreditation framework for engineering education programmes. This framework is the EUR-ACE framework for the accreditation of engineering programmes. Within the Framework Standards, ENAEE has defined learning outcomes in six categories at both, first and second cycle level. Among these six categories are, for example, knowledge and understanding, engineering analysis, engineering design, engineering practice. Then EUR-ACE accreditation system has been set up with standard and guidelines for accreditation agencies that want to become part of this system having been developed.

As a member organisation, ENAEE has a General Assembly and an Administrative Council, which is the policy-making body. The engineering accreditation agencies (currently are seven in the network) are authorized to award a so called EUR-ACE label. That means they carry out national accreditation processes and at the same time they verify whether the learning outcomes in the six categories which have been mentioned are fulfilled. So, in addition to the national accreditation those agencies are allowed to award the EUR-ACE label. The EUR-ACE system is a decentralised one, meaning that in order to receive this EUR-ACE label, a higher education institution does not have to go through an additional accreditation process, which would increase the bureaucratic burden. The procedure is carried by the national agencies during the normal national accreditation processes. The seven authorized accreditation agencies are: ASIIN from Germany, the Conseil des Titres from France, the Engineering Council UK, Engineers Ireland, Ordem dos Engenheiros in Portugal, the Russian Association for Engineering Education and the Turkish Association for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering

Programmes. The first EUR-ACE labels were awarded at the end of 2007 and by the end of 2009 little bit more than 400 EUR-ACE labels will have been awarded. Again, it is an additional certificate that the degree programmes receive to show that the programmes of the given higher education institution comply with the Europe-wide expected engineering standards.

What are the benefits and who are the beneficiaries? Firstly, the benefit for higher education institutions is that the learning outcomes of the EUR-ACE accredited programme are recognised to be satisfactory from both the academic and the professional viewpoint. Furthermore, employers would be guaranteed of the quality of graduates of EUR-ACE accredited programmes even if they do not have direct knowledge of the contents and outcomes of the single programme. Engineering and technology students would be guaranteed the quality and professional relevance of the programmes they want to follow. Finally, professional organisations can be satisfied about the educational requirements of the graduates entering into their registers, for example, FEANI has a national register of engineering programmes and all the EUR-ACE accredited programmes are automatically included in to that register. In the recent report from EU Commission EUR-ACE was cited as an example of good practice. Both ENAEE and ASIIN are also members of the worldwide international foundation of engineering education societies.

There is a similar network in the field of chemistry, which is called the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association, ECTNA. It is a non-profit association registered in Belgium. It has been developed out of project and network activities funded by the EU. Its members are higher education institutions, but also national chemical societies, chemical and software companies. There are more than 120 members from 30 countries and they produce expert work reports on a number of topics in the European Higher Education Area. They also have developed framework standards for first and second cycle qualifications in chemistry, which are called Eurobachelor framework and Euromaster framework respectively. The quality labels Eurobachelor® and Euromaster® are being awarded to programmes which these framework standards. Until now, 40 Eurobachelor® and 10 Euromaster® Labels

have been awarded. The framework standards specify outcome standards and requirements on curricula structure and contents, mobility requirements, methods of teaching, learning and assessment.

In the field of informatics and computer sciences, a similar project has been carried out which resulted in the foundation of the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education, EQANIE. The underlying project ran from 2006 to 2008. EQANIE itself was founded at the beginning of 2009. Members are, for example, the British Computer Society, Informatics Europe, the Association of German Informatics Professionals, the Italian Informatics Groups, and the French Society for Informatics Teachers and Researchers. The partners brought together ideas on how informatics education could be improved beyond minimum quality standards; how the higher education institutions could be invited to participate or about how to continuously improve. Another aim was to disseminate good practice, via framework. Therefore, Framework Standards and Accreditation Criteria for Informatics Programmes in terms of learning outcomes for first and second cycle degrees as well accreditation standards and criteria have been developed.

To realise these benefits for the higher education institutions means raising awareness for the importance of quality assurance, the encouragement for teamwork among teaching staff, identifying room for improvement within the study programmes or the faculties as well as training and preparation for the label application.

In the field of food-sciences, the so called ISEKI-Food Network is aiming at providing a framework for the quality assessment of food degree programmes at trans-national level through the implementation of a quality award certification system. ISEKI is also trying to develop a single assessment framework that is compatible to the EQF by using standardized procedures and evaluation criteria and at the same time also inaugurating national quality assurance and accreditation frameworks. Besides, ISEKI is in the process of defining the framework for full study programmes and considering a quality label, which would be awarded by ISEKI Food association.

Last but not least, the Euro-Ages project, which is a project in the field of geology, has very recently been started with ASIIN as a coordinating partner. It also includes stakeholders from the profession, like the European Federation of Geologists, the Spanish Society of Geologists, the Hungarian Geologist Society and an Association of Swedish Natural Scientists.

In a way of summing up, what are some of the overall benefits of being involved in these networks? The first benefit is that the participating agencies are able to offer additional quality labels to their customers, the higher education institutions. This means, for example, that a degree programme in engineering offered by a Germany higher education institution could get three labels from one accreditation process: the ASIIN label, the label of the German Accreditation Council and the EUR-ACE label. The professional relevance of the degree is highlighted because the underlying standards are accepted not only by the academic but by the professional community as well.

The international involvement has allowed ASIIN to be invited to carry out accreditation procedures outside of Germany.

Discussion

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

Since ASIIN is involved in these subject networks, did you succeed in developing common benchmarks for certain professions, like what percentage of mathematics and which subjects of mathematics should be taught within an engineering degree programme and then, what percentage of physics and what percentage of electrical engineering etc? Did you agree on these specific definitions for certain degrees?

Jana Möhren

Actually, there are no percentage requirements, because that would be an input standard. Having completely moved away from these input standards, there are no criteria saying a certain programme should include 30 % of mathematics. On the other hand, outcome criteria have been specified. In EUR-ACE, about 26 of them are mentioned in the six categories that have been mentioned, for both, first and second cycle degrees. Moreover, the idea behind the way of setting standards in terms of learning outcomes is that the universities or the higher education institutions themselves need to decide how they can fulfil the intended learning outcomes.

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

I am asking this, because there are, for example for informatics degrees in United States, recommendations, which are of that type. Usually, a degree should have that and that percentage of those and those subjects. It is very practical for an institution.

Jana Möhren

All the networks that have been mentioned are not working anymore with percentage-based, input-based requirements, but learning outcomes.

Boris Curkovic

We are a general type of agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We do not have separate agencies for accreditation in professional fields. But, we are very interested in using learning outcomes as well as accreditation

standards and criteria that have been developed by those six networks you mentioned. Are those learning outcomes and standards available also for non members?

Jana Möhren

Yes, for the ENAEE, for example, to become an authorized agency or to be authorized towards EUR-ACE label is not necessary to become a member of the ENAEE network itself. Currently, ENAEE has applications from agencies in Lithuania and Romania, which are also general agencies. During the authorization process, these agencies will need to prove how they ensure that degree programmes they accredit fulfil the outcome standards set by ENAEE. But of course, they can accredit other programmes in other subject areas which will not have any influence on the ENAEE process.

Professor Dr. Vera Vujcic

Are these framework standards publicly available?

Jana Möhren

Yes. All these networks have their own websites and the framework standards can be downloaded from there. Also, they could be emailed on request.

Professor Dr. Jelica Protic

We saw this cartoon where somebody tried to teach the lion how to whistle. Knowing that this animal knows how to whistle after that my question is how do you check it? Do you test this animal if it can whistle or do you test the programme if is good enough to make it happen? Or do you ask employers? What is crucial for modelling and checking learning outcomes?

Jana Möhren

This is not a subject specific question, but a question on how to verify learning outcomes in general. For example in the national accreditation procedures, the checking of evidence is considered as an important element of assessing the achieved learning outcomes. This evidence can be exams, final thesis, project work, reports, but also interviews with

graduates or interviews with employers. Also, in the different teaching modules themselves, accreditation agencies would check which methods of assessment are used by the higher education institution. If there are, for example, only written exams, this might not be the best way of checking whether soft skill intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Thus, the methods of assessment that the higher education institutions themselves use, are also a part of the accreditation criteria to check the learning outcomes.

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