



EUA

European University Association

Enhancing Quality in European Higher Education - the changing landscape -

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I. EUA

- Nearly 800 Members in 45 countries
 - ✓ Individual members: doctorate-granting institutions
 - ✓ Collective members: National rectors' conferences
 - ✓ Associate and affiliate members
- Goals:
 - ✓ Representing the sector: Shaping policy developments
 - ✓ Strengthening the sector: Institutional development activities

II. The changing landscape in Europe - 1. - The Bologna process

- The Bologna Process – 46 countries involved
- A vast reform agenda to enhance the quality of European HE – a shared responsibility between governments, HEIs, staff & students
- The 2010 deadline for creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is approaching
- Enormous progress since 1999: 82% of HEIs have the 3 cycles in place compared to 53% in 2003 (Trends V)
- Now the focus is on embedding a stronger student focus, employability, mobility, attractiveness & social inclusion as characteristics of the EHEA.

II. The changing landscape in Europe - 2. - The EC's Lisbon Strategy

- Lisbon Strategy – a European Union priority to increase the competitiveness of Europe – 27 countries
- Focus on improving research & innovation capacity as key to the creation of a knowledge society in Europe
 - ✓ Pushing for excellence in research and innovation, concentration of resources and global competitiveness
 - ✓ Improving employment and skills for the workforce
- Linking higher education & research is crucial for both the Bologna and Lisbon processes
- Universities are recognised as playing a key role, especially through their responsibility for doctoral programmes

III. The debate on quality - increasingly at the heart of the Bologna reforms -

- Since 1999 - a growing commitment & increasingly a shared responsibility
- Breakthrough for universities in the Berlin Communiqué (2003): acknowledgement that the core responsibility for quality lies with HEIs
- Developments at European level - increasingly devolved to the 'E4' group of stakeholders: agencies (ENQA), universities (EUA) other HEIs (Eurashe) and students (ESU)
- 2005 – European Standards and Guidelines for Quality in the EHEA adopted by 45 Bologna Ministers > E4
- May 2007 – The European Register of QA agencies endorsed by 46 Bologna Ministers >E4

III.2 European Standards & Guidelines for Quality in the EHEA

- Bergen Ministerial Communiqué, 2005: Ministers adopt the ESG proposed by the stakeholders

Standards and guidelines apply to:

- Internal quality processes in institutions
 - External quality processes of institutions
 - External quality processes of QA agencies
- Risk: viewing these as a checklist – rigidity/standardisation

2. **“Peer-review” of QA agencies**

3. **Register of QA agencies** operating in Europe

4. **European Quality Forum** – annual meeting of all partners

IV. Towards a European Register of QA Agencies

1 - the role of the European Commission

- Adoption of an EU Recommendation on Quality (15/2/2006)
- Encourages HEIs to develop internal quality processes
- Encourages QA agencies to apply the Bergen standards and guidelines
- Encourages the establishment of a register of QA agencies
- Enables HEIs to turn to any agency in the register, provided it is compatible with national legislation or permitted by national authorities.

IV. Towards a European Register of QA Agencies 2 - E4 proposals endorsed by Ministers àn 18 May 07

The register will

- provide information on QA agencies working in Europe that demonstrate substantial compliance with the QA standards adopted in Bergen
- In general applications should be based on national reviews
- be voluntary, self financing, independent & transparent
- be the responsibility of the main stakeholders: HEIs, students, QA agencies and social partners – the big task of the E4 for the next 2 years!
- Its main added-value is to provide an instrument for giving European level legitimacy to QA agencies via a process based on a ***system of checks and balances***.

Conclusions

- Quality is not a neutral concept, but closely related to questions of ideology and power (i.e., who defines quality, in which way, for what purposes)
- The work of EUA has been essential in framing the QA debate in Europe
- It requires constant attention and the capacity of being ahead of the game
- Future challenges –
 - ✓ implementing the register..
 - ✓ Considering the impact of rankings on QA
 - ✓ Responding to calls for a typology of HEIs in Europe...