



## **Transparent European Accreditation decisions and Mutual recognition agreements II (TEAM II)**

Final Report

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## Project information

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Beneficiary organisation: Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO)

Project coordinator: Mark Frederiks

Project coordinator organisation: Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO)

Project coordinator telephone number: +31 70 312 23 52

Project coordinator email address: [m.frederiks@nvaio.net](mailto:m.frederiks@nvaio.net)

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## Executive Summary

In the London Communiqué (2007) of European ministers responsible for higher education called for the mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions and a significant increase in the number of joint programmes.

The TEAM II project aimed to combine both objectives and to take away accreditation and recognition barriers for joint programmes. It has done so (1) by exploring single accreditation procedures for joint programmes, instead of the multiple procedures that currently have to be carried out separately in each country where the joint programme is provided; (2) by analysing current cross-border recognition practices and (3) by offering transparent information on the quality assessment and learning outcomes of joint programmes.

The partners in the project are quality assurance and accreditation agencies and ENIC-NARICs. The project encompasses 18 agencies from 13 countries. Additionally, the project has been able to reach out to 25 ENIC-NARICs and the most important European higher education stakeholders (EUA, EURASHE, ESU and ENIC-NARIC).

During autumn 2009 and spring 2010 the project partners carried out five pilot accreditation procedures of joint programmes in order to explore the European methodology for accreditation procedures of joint programmes. The pilot procedures involved 8 accreditation and quality assurance agencies and 27 higher education institutions. Different methods for carrying out single accreditation procedures were elaborated in the various pilot procedures. All the pilots were evaluated and presented and discussed at the TEAM II Dissemination conference in Graz, 10 and 11 June 2010. One of the main conclusions is that such procedures can work; the challenge is to agree upon the essential “national” elements needed in such a procedure and find ways within the national legal frameworks to implement single accreditation procedures. A proposed way forward is thus to carry out such procedures through a core model where all agencies involved in a procedure agree on a core for the assessment and add additional “nationally required” modules when needed. The details of the pilot procedures and the adhering discussions can be found in the report *How to assess and accredit joint programmes* which is available on the TEAM II website:

<http://www.eaconsortium.net/main/projects/team-ii/reports>.

What is the current status regarding ENIC-NARICs recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes? How can this be facilitated? In the winter of 2009, a Focus Group of ENIC/ NARICs was set up to explore these issues. The Focus Group therefore designed two online surveys: one for ENIC- NARIC’s and one for credential evaluators at HEIs. The outcomes of these surveys were discussed by the Focus Group and resulted in the report *The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes* <http://www.eaconsortium.net/main/projects/team-ii/reports>. The most striking conclusion in the report is that ENIC-NARIS are aware of the fact that some institutions use joint programmes to escape national legislation.

The result of the surveys and the then draft report was further discussed during an ENIC-NARIC Workshop. The workshop of course focused on current practices in the recognition of qualifications (degrees) awarded by joint programmes and ENIC-NARICs jointly worked on actual examples of degrees awarded by joint programmes. Two of the main conclusion from these discussions are that there are several barriers that needs to

be tackled in order for such degrees to be easily recognised. There is a need for a better incorporation of joint programmes and joint qualifications into the national higher education systems. Secondly, information regarding a joint programme must be provided in a transparent way, both on the degree and in the diploma supplement. Consequently, a common ground among ENIC-NARICs on how to assess these qualifications is needed.

The project has furthermore put in place a framework for offering transparent information regarding joint programmes and programme's learning outcomes. The project introduced a new information management system in which programmes can be linked to several institutions across borders. Additionally, it has developed a new approach to presenting learning outcomes via the decentralised database network. In order to sustain the further development of Qrossroads, the project developed a set of manuals and a database package. The manuals provide guidelines on either how to link national/institutional databases to the Qrossroads network, how to install the developed database template on a server, or how to manage the information. Additionally, during the lifespan of the TEAM II project, the Qrossroads network has been further extended so that it now presents information on institutional level for 13 countries and on programme level for 12 countries. Accompanying relevant information on national higher education and quality assurance systems, including the recognition of qualifications can now be found on the Qrossroads website: <http://www.qrossroads.eu>.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The first objective of the project was to develop a European methodology for quality assurance and accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes. Five joint programmes have been requested to apply for one single accreditation procedure replacing the different national procedures in the countries concerned. Each of the five project procedures has tested a different methodology but took into account the totality of the joint programme. The assessment specifically included the learning outcomes aimed for by the joint programme irrespective of the individual study pathways. By running pilot procedures and by publishing a methodological report, the project aimed to provide the aforementioned European methodology with a view to the cross-border recognition of accreditation decisions regarding joint programmes.

The second objective of the project was to explore the cross-border recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes. Recognition procedures regarding qualifications from joint programmes will be facilitated with the provision of transparent information on the quality and learning outcomes of these programmes. Quality assurance and accreditation agencies should provide this information to the ENIC-NARICs. By linking recognition to learning outcomes, through benchmarking efforts and by organising a dissemination conference with accreditation organisations and institutions, ENIC-NARICs of the countries concerned have been engaged in efforts to automatically recognise qualifications from joint programmes.

The third objective was the extension of an information tool, i.e. Crossroads. Crossroads has been further developed to include: the learning outcomes of programmes (at European and national level), the institutional and programme information from at least five other countries in Crossroads and a feature to import data from other databases (such as institutional databases).

In 2008, Crossroads was developed to present the qualifications awarded by quality assured and/or accredited programmes and/or institutions from seven countries. The extended version of Crossroads automatically links thirteen national databases to the European level Crossroads database. All these databases and linked websites will be able to include programme's learning outcomes and to import data from institutional databases.

## 2. Project Approach

The following approaches have been taken in order to explore the objectives of the project:

### 1. To develop a European methodology for quality assurance and accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes

Currently, joint programmes are confronted with several different national quality assurance and/or accreditation procedures. One programme therefore has to undergo several different, national procedures. The first objective of the TEAM II explored a European methodology for QA and accreditation of joint programmes. In order to explore such a methodology 5 single accreditation procedures of joint programmes were carried out during autumn 2009 and spring 2010. Each of the procedures was designed according to a predefined method, but adjusted according to the outline of each separate procedure. In this way the procedures could capture the diversity of joint programmes and at the same time be comparable. One quality assurance agency coordinated the procedure, while others participated either as observers or as co-organisers. The accreditation framework of the involved agencies were compared, and differences taken into account. The procedure captured the totality of the programme according to the ECA principles for accreditation of joint programmes. After the completion of each of the procedures questionnaires were sent out to the representatives from the QA-agencies, the coordinators of the joint programmes and the experts in the expert panels. The feedback was analysed and led to the report; *How to assess and accredit joint programmes?*

### 2. To explore the cross-border recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes

The project partners have convened a Focus Group consisting of representatives from recognition authorities/bodies (ENIC-NARICs). The project intended to bring together a small but representative part of the European community of authorities responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications. We were looking for a mix of people from inside and outside the countries represented in the project. Additionally, the project aimed to include the members of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee as much as possible. This goal has been fully met. The Focus Group drafted an extensive survey regarding the recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes. This survey went online in June 2009. The results were discussed during Focus Group meetings and led to the report *Recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes*. The Focus Group also developed a survey for credential evaluators at HEIs. The results of this were also discussed in the Focus Group. Additionally the Focus Group contributed to a workshop on recognition of qualifications of joint programmes in Warsaw, March 2010. New light was to be shed on the recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes through the discussions of the results of the surveys at an event with a substantial number of ENIC-NARICs present.

### 3. The extension of an information tool, i.e. Qrossroads

This objective concerns the extension of Qrossroads to include the perspective of joint programmes, including their learning outcomes. Additionally, the project worked on

adding further institutional and programme information from an additional five countries. All these developments needed to be laid down in manuals in order to support the further sustainability of the Crossroads network.

The project partners subcontracted the website and database development. The Crossroads administrators met several times throughout the project to express their opinions on the developments and to suggest improvements. There was also a training event organised in order to ensure the necessary level of understanding and commitment in all organisations.

A number of HEIs were asked to take part in a pilot feature and to test the communication of data from an institutional database to a national database. This led to feedback on the manuals which could then be adjusted accordingly. There were several issues and problems raised by the contacted institutions. Some of these issues, such as data integrity, were not anticipated by the project partners, while other issues, such as data ownership and security, had been dealt with extensively before.

All of the above activities have resulted in extensive discussions regarding the further development of Crossroads. It also led to extensive discussions with QA agencies outside the TEAM II partnership. Some of these (e.g. Sweden) have already committed to joining the Crossroads network after the end of the TEAM II project.

The TEAM II project has used various quality measures in order to make sure that the project developed as planned. The day to day coordination has been carried out by the project coordinator, who in turn reported to the TEAM II Steering group. On a more generic level the ECA management group has been monitoring the project. Additionally two overarching groups have been involved in the whole project and evaluated the project while running. These two groups are the TEAM II Focus Group and the TEAM II Stakeholders Group. The Stakeholders Group consisted of representatives of the main European stakeholder organisations while the Focus Group consisted of a representative sample of ENIC-NARICs.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The TEAM II project has aimed at exploring joint programmes from the perspectives of external quality assurance, recognition of the degrees and transparency. The major achievements of the project are thus linked to each of the three objectives of the project;

#### **1. To develop a European methodology for quality assurance and accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes**

In order to develop a European methodology for accreditation of joint programmes ECA member agencies coordinated five experimental single accreditation procedures of joint programmes during autumn 2009 and spring 2010. These would function as empirical material for discussions on how to carry out single accreditation procedures of joint programmes. After the completion of each of the procedures feedback from experts, coordinators of the joint programmes and representatives from the quality assurance agencies was gathered and analysed. The results were presented and discussed at the TEAM II dissemination conference on 10 and 11 June 2010 in Graz. Finally, a Methodological report showing all the findings was finalised in September 2010.

The five pilot accreditation procedures involved the following five joint programmes;

(1) Erasmus Mundus Masters -Journalism and Media within Globalisation (2) Bachelor European Teacher Education for Primary Schools (ETEPS); (3) Joint European Master in Comparative Local Development (CoDe); (4) Joint European Master in International Humanitarian Action (NOHA) and 5) Research Master Geosciences of Basins and Lithosphere (BASINS).

In practice all the procedures followed the normal steps of an accreditation procedure. On a more detailed level the procedures varied according to which institutions and agencies were involved in the procedures. In all the pilot procedures the scope of the submitted self-evaluations was the totality of the joint programme. However, in some pilots the self-evaluations were written according to only one set of criteria whilst in others the criteria of all the involved agencies were compared and assessed. In most cases existing criteria functioned as the scope of assessment, while in one a totally new set of criteria was developed. The expert panels were mostly composed jointly by the involved QA agencies, although it varied how this was organised in practice. In all the assessments discipline-specific expertise, quality-assurance and international expertise and a student were included. Additionally, an expert from the professional field was included in most of the procedures. The external assessment included in most cases only one site visit, but in one of the procedures there were two site visits. The pilots also varied concerning the actual accreditation decisions. In most of the cases separate (coordinated) accreditation decisions were taken based on the same assessment. In one case a decision taken by one agency was recognised by another agency, and in another case the pilot was a true pilot procedure where no formal decisions were taken.

The feedback showed that the participants were generally content with the work of the joint expert panels, how the site visits were carried out and the outline of the final reports. Especially jointly composed expert panels were viewed as a valuable asset when assessing a joint programme. Nonetheless, the feedback also showed that there are some areas which require special attention when carrying out single accreditation procedures of joint programmes. Firstly, when more than one set of criteria was used it

was reported to be challenging to agree on the level of details and information required in the assessment. Variations in national regulations result in a situation where quality assurance agencies to some extent have to focus on different aspects of a study programme. This influences the interpretations of criteria and the focus of the assessment. Secondly, in almost all the pilots comments were made regarding the self-evaluation reports. In most cases these reports were too descriptive, and with a misbalance regarding the information presented about each of the participating institutions and on the various criteria. This shows how important it is to give clear instructions on how to write a self-assessment report. Another potentially challenging area is the composition of the expert panel. The QA agencies have different practices regarding the composition of the expert panels. In some countries it is required to include an expert from the professional field in the panel, while in others it is not. When carrying out single accreditation procedures it is thus very important to monitor the composition of the expert panel closely. Finally, there were no unified ways in which the accreditation decisions could be taken. The decision making is affected by national regulations and needs to be taken into account when planning single accreditation procedures. The importance of making sure that the final report fulfills the requirements of all agencies involved in the procedure was emphasised as this will facilitate the decision-making process.

Thus, one of the main conclusions derived from the feedback is that it is indeed possible to assess whether a joint programme meets the requirements of several quality assurance agencies through one single accreditation procedure. The challenge is rather to agree upon the essentials needed in such a procedure, and find ways within the national legal frameworks to carry out single accreditation procedures. Following up on this, ECA is currently exploring how these findings can be implemented into practice.

For more detailed information on the TEAM II pilot procedures please see:

<http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/projects/team-ii-reports>

## **2. To explore the cross-border recognition of qualifications awarded by joint Programmes**

Even if there is a political will to support the development of joint programmes there are still significant hurdles to overcome before these programmes can easily be set up and lead to a degree that is effortlessly recognised in all other European countries. It is evident that when speaking of recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes there are still a number of legal issues at national levels that need to be addressed and solved. Recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes can be a challenge for credential evaluators who are mainly used to dealing with foreign national qualifications. A qualification awarded by a joint programme is not a national one and - if a home institution is involved in the joint programme – it is not entirely foreign as well. The Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee on 9 June 2004 encourages to recognise joint qualifications at least as favourable as foreign national ones but this is not always straightforward. The 2<sup>nd</sup> objective of the TEAM II project was therefore to explore the cross- border recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes.

The project set up a Focus Group in order to explore these issues. The Focus Group consisted of representatives of ENIC-NARICs and QA agencies. The Focus Group met five times during the project. This action line resulted in two separate online surveys;

one for ENIC- NARIC's and one for credential evaluators at HEIs, an ENIC-NARIC Workshop on the recognition of qualifications (degrees) awarded by joint programmes and a final report. This report is published as *The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes*.

The ENIC-NARIC workshop led to the following recommendations regarding joint programmes;

- All the higher education institutions involved in the joint programme should be appropriately recognised in the national regulatory framework;
- The joint programme needs to be recognised (as a higher education programme and as a joint programme) in all the relevant higher education systems;
- If a joint qualification/degree is awarded this should be done in accordance with all the national legal frameworks of the awarding institutions;
- The joint qualification/degree should be signed by the competent authorities of the awarding institutions;
- The Diploma Supplement should cover the totality of the joint programme.
- The Diploma Supplement should include one single contact person (e.g. admission officer) or contact details. This contact would preferably keep the joint programme's records and archives and can thus function as an easily reachable contact point for recognition questions.

The report "The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes" presents the outcomes of a survey among ENIC-NARICs. It presents information on ENIC-NARICs' current recognition procedures regarding qualifications (or degrees) awarded by joint programmes from the point of view of 25 ENIC-NARICs. It shows how they deal with such qualifications, the problems they encounter and the solutions they put forward. The most important result of the survey seems to be that legal aspects regarding both the organisation of joint programmes and the recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes are a serious obstacle towards recognition. Most ENIC-NARICs do not recognise qualifications awarded by a joint programme if that programme is not established or offered in accordance with the national legislation of one of the participating countries, if one of the involved institutions is not recognised or if one of the awarding institutions is not authorised to award that degree. In order for degrees awarded by joint programmes to be easily recognised by the ENIC-NARICs some obstacles remains to be solved. Firstly, the barriers regarding national legislation and recognition needs to be solved. There is a need for a better incorporation of joint programmes and joint qualifications into the national higher education systems. Programmes offered jointly with other institutions across borders need to be nationally recognised as joint programmes and the qualification these institutions award jointly need to be formally recognised as a joint qualification in all the countries concerned. The issue of recognition should be an issue to the HEIs even before the first student is admitted. A joint programme should therefore be established and the degree awarded in such a way that the qualification can be recognised. Secondly, information must be provided by the HEIs in a transparent way. The main source of information is of course the degree itself. This document needs to already clarify a lot of elements. The main elements seem to be the awarding institution(s) and - where appropriate- their status, the actual qualification in the different higher education systems and the legislation governing the award. A second important source of information is the Diploma Supplement. This document should be published in the agreed European format or contain all the information that this template puts forward. It is also very important that the issued Diploma Supplement covers the totality of the joint programme.

The report “The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes” can be found on <http://www.eaconsortium.net/main/projects/team-ii-/reports>.

### **3. The extension of an information tool, i.e. Crossroads**

The aim of Crossroads is to transparently publish the qualifications (“degrees”) of quality assured and/or accredited programmes and/or institutions with the intention to inform the recognition bodies (ENIC-NARICs) and other quality assurance and accreditation agencies about quality assured and accredited higher education. Crossroads therefore brings together information from the different databases of the quality assurance and accreditation agencies. Each of these agencies is responsible for the administration of their own database. In turn this means that the information on Crossroads is presented in the perspective of the higher education system of which it is part together with information on the relevant accreditation organisation and recognition authorities. Since the inception of Crossroads, ECA has expanded the target audience of Crossroads to (future) students, higher education institutions and employers.

The third objective of the TEAM II project was to extend Crossroads to include: transparent information on joint programmes, the programme’s learning outcomes, the institutional and programme information from an additional five countries and a feature to import data from other databases (such as institutional databases).

The extension of Crossroads has been carried out throughout the whole TEAM II project. First, the project has put in place a framework for presenting information regarding joint programmes by linking these programmes to several institutions across borders. Additionally, the project has introduced a new approach to presenting learning outcomes via the decentralised database network. All the databases in the Crossroads network and all the linked websites are now able to include programme’s learning outcomes and grant access to higher education institutions or import data from institutional databases. In order to sustain the further development of Crossroads, the project developed a set of manuals and a database server package. The Server package contains a database template and the local administration of the database via a website. The whole package can be installed on any QA agency’s server. The package includes the necessary tools to add information in an easy and efficient way and to start communicating information to Crossroads. The manuals cover the following topics:

- the XDB import of the XML files, guidance on the necessary XML-files that the Crossroads database is able to accept and how that information can be automatically published on Crossroads
- How to install the database server package,
- Local administration for Accreditation Organisations, an explanation of the overall management by a QA agency including how to can grant institutions access the add certain types of information
- Local administration for higher education institutions, an explanation of the specific management by a HE institution of the information a QA agency has allowed management of.

Additionally, the Crossroads network has been further extended. The website now includes information on institutional level of 20 European countries and programme details of 12 European countries. Accompanying relevant information on national higher education and quality assurance systems, including the recognition of qualifications have also been included.

For more information on quality assured and accredited HE in the countries included in Qrossroads, please see; <http://www.grossroads.eu/find-a-programme-or-institution>.

### **TEAM II Dissemination conference**

All the outcomes of the TEAM II project were presented and discussed at the TEAM II Dissemination conference; Too many cooks in the kitchen?- Challenges for Accreditation, Recognition and Transparency in Graz, 10 and 11 June 2010. Representatives from HEI's, QA agencies, ENIC-NARICs and the E4 group contributed to the conference. This led to the report; Joint programmes: Too many cooks in the kitchen? The Challenges for Accreditation, Recognition and Transparency of Joint Programmes - A Conference publication -. This publication can be found on <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/projects/team-ii-reports>. The programme and presentations at the conference can be found on; <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/pastevents/>.

## 4. Partnerships

TEAM II was carried out by the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher Education in cooperation with other organisations. The TEAM II project partners are: Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO, Netherlands and Flanders); Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság (HAC, Hungary); Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat (ÖAR, Austria); Commission des Titres d'Ingenieur (CTI, France); Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA, Spain); Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales (AHPGS, Germany); Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (EVA, DK); Fachhochschulrat (FHR, Austria); Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna (PKA, Poland); Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur Hannover (ZEVA, Germany); and, finally, Biuro Uznawalności Wykształcenia I Wymiany Międzynarodowej – polski ENIC/NARIC (Poland). Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ, Switzerland) is an associated partner.

Additionally the following organisations have been involved as much as possible in the action lines of the project: Akkreditierungsrat (GAC, Germany); Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA, Germany); Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen e.V. (AQAS, Germany); Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e. V. (ASIIN, Germany); Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen (NOKUT, Norway); Sveta RS za visoko šolstvo (SVS, Slovenia) and Högskoleverket (HSV, Sweden).

The consortium has been designed to join together organisations with expertise and experience in the accreditation of programmes. Moreover, each of the partners had the capacity to contribute to the tasks outlined in the submitted work plan. Each of the consortium partners had a role in making the project a success. A representative group of project partners made up the steering group of the project. They are the ones who decided in terms of planning and content of the project activities. It is however the collective of the project partners listed above that drove the project. The added value of working in such a partnerships is of course obvious when dealing with joint programmes. The start up meetings of the accreditation procedures were particularly useful as it brought together the main actors and immediately presented possible problems regarding the planned accreditation procedures (e.g. legal requirements). The partnership was also essential for Qrossroads. The information on Qrossroads is delivered by the individual partners. The preparatory meeting of the agencies and the Qrossroads training was instrumental in providing clarity for what is needed regarding the extension of Qrossroads.

The ENIC-NARIC representation in the project has build bridges that enabled the partnership to pick up the sense of urgency in the ENIC-NARIC network. ENIC-NARICs have been involved through the Focus Group and in the Steering Group. This new element in European co-operation might even have unplanned, but beneficial results.

The Stakeholders group has consisted of representatives of EUA, EURASHE, ESU and the ENIC-NARICs, and BusinessEurope was also invited for meetings. Their feedback has enabled us to take their perspectives into account when carrying out the project

activities. This is e.g. visible with regard to how Qrossroads is developed in a way that it is geared to the needs of stakeholders.

## 5. Plans for the Future

All of the planned project activities have taken place within the timeframe of the TEAM II project. This does not, however, mean that the outcomes of the project will not be explored further in the future.

ECA is planning to set up a European coordination point for external QA and accreditation of joint programmes where coordinators of joint programmes and QA agencies can turn to when seeking advice on external quality assurance of joint programmes and recognition of degrees awarded by the programmes. In this way the impact of the TEAM II project will be further disseminated. The idea is that this coordination point will provide information on internal and external quality assurance of joint programmes and information on recognition of degrees awarded from joint programmes. The results from the TEAM II project will be an important contribution to this. The coordination point will give coordinators of joint programmes the opportunity to consult this specialised information centre when they need to undergo external quality assurance and/or accreditation of their joint programme. The coordination point additionally provides agencies with assistance and specialised expertise on accreditation of joint programmes. The Coordination point will not carry out accreditation or QA procedures itself, but will bring agencies and institutions together, facilitate in planning the procedure and provide a specific methodology for carrying out single accreditation procedures. The coordination point can also give advice to agencies and institutions on how single cross-border QA and accreditation procedures of joint programmes can lead to formal results in the different countries. The specific methodology for carrying out single accreditation procedures stems from the exploration of such a methodology within the TEAM II project.

One of the main conclusions of the workshop on recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes in Warsaw was that the HEIs are not aware of current recognition developments and/or get lost in the jungle of joint programmes and their degrees. Following from this a call was put forward to develop national and European platforms of admission officers and credential evaluators and to bring them up to date by routinely organising dissemination meetings. The ENIC-NARICs also concluded that there is a need for further elaboration of guidelines for institutions regarding the award of degrees and Diploma Supplements. ECA and the ENIC-NARICs will further cooperate on this issue in order to facilitate recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes. Hopefully a common ground among ENIC-NARICs regarding the recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes can be established. During the workshop it also became clear that QA and accreditation of the joint programmes are of importance when recognising the awarded degrees. Thus, encouraging single accreditation procedures of joint programmes which focus on the totality of the programme is likely to aid the recognition of degrees awarded by the programmes, and in turn this will contribute to the facilitation of some of the overarching aims of the Bologna process related to transparency and enhanced mobility within Europe.

Qrossroads is a database which is continuously updated and upgraded. Each autumn the status for the new academic year is added. This ensures valid information on Qrossroads. However, the TEAM II partners are also seeking to upgrade Qrossroads in other ways. One development could be to expand Qrossroads to include new countries or provide more transparent information on joint programmes. A future aim for Qrossroads is to include all Erasmus Mundus programmes in Qrossroads. A special

search function for these programmes should be developed. Moreover, a number of HEIs outside of Europe have shown their interest in the Qrossroads system. ECA is currently working on a policy on how to disseminate Qrossroads further and to decide what the final scope of Qrossroads should be.

There were clear objectives and activities defined for the TEAM II project. However, project work is also about building up trust and exchange of knowledge. These elements are essential for ECA when developing a multilateral recognition agreement regarding QA and accreditation of joint programmes. So far only bilateral mutual recognition agreements between accreditation agencies have been signed. Since joint programmes have a wider scope and involve many different countries, multilateral mutual recognition agreements are necessary. In order for such agreements to be signed it is essential to build up a sufficient level of trust between agencies.

TEAM II has focussed on European HE. The TEAM II project partners believe that the impact of TEAM II can be transferred also globally. Recognition of degrees is indeed a global phenomena and through the extensive ENIC-NARICs networks the outcomes of TEAM II can be further disseminated. The same applies for the single accreditation procedure. The joint assessment methodology is also valid for countries outside of Europe. And, why should multilateral mutual recognition agreements be limited to Europe? The TEAM II partners are planning to continue disseminating the results of the TEAM II project in the future. This will take place both within and outside of Europe.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

### Bologna process

Joint programmes are on the top of the European higher education agenda. These programmes facilitate some of the core elements of the Bologna reforms related to cooperation and mobility of staff and students in Europe. In the Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009 from the European Commission it is stated that there are around 2,500 joint programmes in Europe, and that the number is still increasing. This development creates opportunities and challenges. The European Commission's report on progress in quality assurance in higher education (September 2009) states that *"National quality assurance agencies should be encouraged to develop activities beyond their borders and to seek the recognition of their decisions in other countries, e.g. through conventions of mutual recognition. [...] There may be a need to clarify the portability of national accreditation within the EHEA and also the issue of quality assurance for cross-border higher education within the EHEA. Given the growing importance of joint and double degree courses in Europe, clear principles might be useful to avoid the need for multiple accreditations."* Through the three objectives of the TEAM II project issues related to accreditation of joint programmes, recognition of qualifications by joint programmes and transparency have been addressed.

All these action lines contributed to the realisation of the EHEA.

### Lifelong learning programme

Our project has provided a platform for quality assurance and accreditation agencies in which they are able to cooperate regarding the quality assurance procedures of joint programmes offered in Europe. The project's development of a European approach to publishing the outcomes of quality assurance procedures also makes cross-border assessment procedures visible and transparent between quality assurance agencies.

In this respect the project contributed to the objective of the lifelong learning programme to promote co-operation in quality assurance in all sectors of education and training.

The project has first set up a co-operation between quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions. This co-operation is currently developing new methodologies in order to develop a straightforward approach to the quality assurance of cross-border joint programmes (e.g. Erasmus Mundus). This cooperation has offered the programmes involved a chance to reinforce their cooperation and the joint delivery of their joint programmes.

Secondly, the project has set up a co-operation between quality assurance agencies and recognition authorities (ENIC-NARICs). This co-operation has led to very useful information about the recognition of qualifications (degrees) awarded by international joint programmes. The results of an extensive survey have been discussed extensively and resulted in a survey report. A "benchmarking" workshop for ENIC-NARICs has been organised. Here ENIC-NARICs have been able (1) to discuss the issue of how to approach the recognition of qualifications from cross-border education and (2) to share good practices in this respect.

Thirdly, to increase the transparency of European higher education the project is

already providing an extended online information tool (Grossroads). Grossroads currently already publishes information about European higher education and quality assured programmes and/or institutions.

In this respect the project contributed to the specific objective of the lifelong learning programme to support the realisation of a European Higher Education Area.

#### Lisbon Education & Training Progress Indicators

The project intended to provide an incentive for European institutions to offer joint programmes by limiting the current burden of having to undergo several different national quality assurance procedures. Joint programmes are considered an excellent opportunity for institutions to increase the level of inward and outward mobility of teachers and trainers and to attract students, more specifically from outside the European Union. Grossroads provides students with easy accessible information about recognised and quality assured higher education in twelve countries.

In this respect the project contributed to the Lisbon Education & Training Progress Indicators by facilitating inward and outward mobility of teachers and trainers and by attracting foreign students to the EU.

#### Objective appraisal

Finally, the European Commission recently published a report on progress in quality assurance in higher education in September 2009. (Report on progress in quality assurance in higher education, Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 21 September 2009). In this report, the co-operation in this project by ECA and the development of Grossroads is mentioned as a good practice: *“Within the ECA consortium of accreditation agencies, trust-building based on intense cooperation has led to a first series of bilateral agreements for the recognition of accreditation decisions and to the first experiment of making these decisions publicly accessible on Internet through the European Commission funded database called Grossroads.”*

This report therefore seems to validate that our project contributed to key EU policies, objectives and priorities.

