

Recent Challenges for quality assurance in higher education

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Structure of the presentation

1. Introduction to the work of ENQA
2. Quality assurance in the Bologna process
3. Quality assurance of cross-border higher education (QACHE) project, preliminary results

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education –ENQA

- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- Umbrella NGO for European QA agencies
- Network in 2000; association in 2004
- Move from Finland to Belgium 2011
- Structure: Board, General Assembly, Secretariat
- 48 Full members in 26 countries
- 46 affiliates in 29 countries

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education –ENQA

- Membership criteria by large “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) – adopted by the ministers in 2005
- Cyclical reviews of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA
- PKA Full member since 2009, Full membership reconfirmed 19 February 2014
- Co-operation within E4 (European University Association, European Students Union, EURASHE)
- Consultative member in the Bologna Follow-up Group since 2005 (QA as one pillar of EHEA since the beginning in 1999)
- Founding member of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

Goals (2016-2020)

- ENQA is representative of the diversity of quality assurance agencies throughout Europe
- ENQA supports the continuous development of independent and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in line with agreed standards throughout Europe
- ENQA provides advice and represents the interests of its members in the policy-making process

Some focus areas for 2015

- Implementation of the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- Development of the ENQA reviews and their revision to ensure their usefulness for all agencies appropriate to their state of development (revision of the review process)
- Cross-border related quality assurance activities:
 - ENQA Quality procedures project on internationalisation
 - Guidelines of good practice for international reviews
 - QA and recognition
 - QACHE project

Quality Assurance in the Bologna process

ENQA's role:

- ENQA aims to have a stronger role in the development of QA ensuring that ENQA supports *internal quality assurance* and the development of *quality culture*
- ENQA aims to support the creation of a quality (assurance) culture, where the importance of quality assurance will be accepted as an important element in constantly improving the education provision (and not as an external “control” or useless bureaucracy!) while the primary responsibility of QA lies with the institutions

Expectations towards policy makers in Europe

- Governments need to look into why (if) they do not have an ESG compliant quality assurance agency at the moment, and what would be required to establish one.
- Every country should strive towards the establishment of an independent quality assurance agency, and to make sure that each agency's operations (including those already existing) are in line with the ESG.

Expectations towards policy makers in Europe

- The revised ESG may impose legal changes in some countries, and therefore their effective implementation depends not only on the quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions, but also on the policy makers
 - This could for example concern the publication of review reports, which is currently not possible in some countries - i.e. reports with negative review outcomes are not being published.

Quality Assurance in the Bologna process

Special attention needs to be paid to:

- Quality assurance of joint programmes, interdisciplinary programmes, e-learning (MOOCs), internationalisation...
- Recognition: Using quality assurance as a tool to facilitate recognition and to quality assure recognition practices
- Awareness raising and implementation of the revised ESG
- Quality assurance of cross border higher education

Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE)

- Co-Financing: Erasmus Mundus Programme of the European Union
- Oct 2013- Dec 2015

Outputs

- Survey of QA agencies in Europe (information on how the QA agencies address QA of cross-border education)
- Survey of QA agencies members of ANQAHE & APQN (information on the “host country” perspective)
- Country reports Australia, Germany, UK, Spain, France (national framework, laws, guidelines etc.) & case of good practice in the provider countries in Europe in QA of cross-border higher education
- Survey of cross-border education in Europe to assess the current situation (sample of institutions active in CBHE)
- Three regional events: London (Nov), Bahrain (Nov), Macao (Jan 2015)

Project aims

- Enhancing **policy dialogue** within Europe as well as between Europe and other world regions on QA of cross-border higher education → mutual understanding of different QA approaches
- Supporting the development of a **European dimension** in QA through common standards and shared principles by the European providers
- Facilitating and enhancing the **engagement of European higher education institutions** in cross-border higher education delivery → more presence, accessibility and attractiveness
- Contributing to the **protection of students** against poor quality higher education provision (recognition of CBHE)
- Supporting the implementation of **international** (OECD/UNESCO) **and European** (ESG) **standards and guidelines** on QA.

What did we learn so far?

- CBHE is a global phenomenon that can cover several aspects:
 - Double/joint programmes
 - Offshore campuses
 - Networks
 - Mergers
 - Virtual education
 - Many others (expansion and development)



What did we learn so far?

- CBHE is a widespread and expanding phenomenon in all three regions (Europe, Arab region, Asia-Pacific).
- 80% of the European QA agencies state that their national higher education providers are involved in some form of CBHE overseas
- 80 % of the respondents in the Asia-Pacific region and 65 % of the respondents in the Arab region indicate that their countries have different forms of in-bound CBHE
- However, it is apparent that both regulation of CBHE (in-bound or out-bound) and detailed information about CBHE is rather patchy and often lacking across the three regions.

(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation)

What did we learn so far?

Country reports:

- Some countries provide their own statistics (UK, Germany), while some don't (Spain, France)
- The reports highlighted the absence of a common approach to CBHE and its quality assurance in Europe
- There is absence of well developed and tested systems for the quality assurance of out-bound CBHE, with the exception of the UK and Australia.
- All agencies identified the absence of comprehensive **information** about out-bound CBHE as a challenge (although this was more important in some countries, such as France and Spain, than in others).

(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation)

What did we learn so far?

Regional views:

- In Europe, a minority of agencies (20%) have a specific QA system for out-bound CBHE (with the exception of joint/double degrees)
- This is reflected in the Gulf region: 86 % said not to have any specific quality assurance system in place for in-bound CBHE.
- In the Asia-Pacific, the majority of respondents (57%) indicated to have a regulatory framework for the QA of in-bound CBHE
- This still leaves out 32 % of respondents without a system in place to oversee the quality of in-bound CBHE.

(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation)

What did we learn so far?

Regional views:

- Main challenge in the QA of CBHE: Absence of coordination between the systems of sending and receiving countries' agencies across the three regions.
- Regional networks such as ENQA, APQN and ANQAHE were seen as potentially playing an important role in promoting policy dialogue and cooperation between their constituent agencies, and thus supporting the implementation of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines.

(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation)

What did we learn so far?

The project suggests

- **1st principle:** making information about national approaches to CBHE easily accessible.
- **2nd principle:** pro-active engagement in information sharing activities with counter-part agencies sharing CBHE provision.
- **3rd principle:** seeking to liaise with them whenever intending to quality assure CBHE provision.
- **4th principle:** seeking ways in which to cooperate in the actual quality assurance of CBHE provision.
- **5th principle:** is directed to regional networks of agencies, calling for them to play an enhanced role in the facilitation of information sharing and inter-agency cooperation.

(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation)

What did we learn so far?

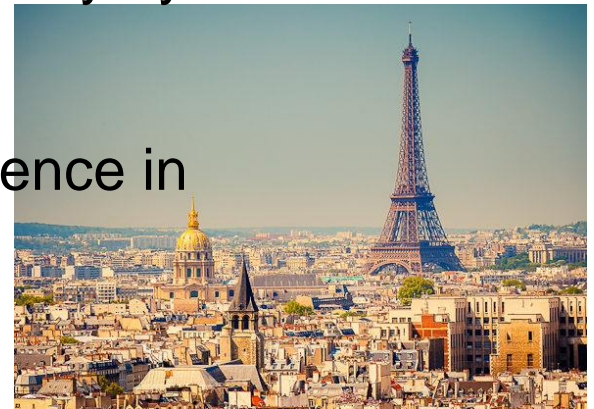
- CBHE does not only pose challenges, but it also creates great opportunities: it is widening access to higher education, addressing skills gaps and furthering global citizenship.
- It is essential to explore ways to work together to fully harness the opportunities posed by CBHE while avoiding its possible challenges and shortcomings, and in particular sub-standard education provision.
- The shared goal is to facilitate the provision of quality CBHE, avoid regulatory gaps, and unnecessary discrepancies and duplication, in the ultimate interest of higher education providers and students.

*(Trifiro, F. (2015): Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE)
– moving towards strengthened cooperation)*



What next?

- Toolkit on QA of cross-border higher education for QA agencies.
- Common criteria for QA of cross-border higher education for QA agencies.
- Format of pilot testing (of the principles and approaches suggested by the toolkit) to be applied voluntarily by identified cross-border higher education initiatives.
- Final project report and dissemination conference in **November 2015** in Paris.





Thank you!

