



Conclusions of the Fourteenth Workshop of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) Barcelona, 20-21 June 2011

1. Introduction

The fourteenth workshop of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) was held in Barcelona on 20-21 June 2011. ECA members enjoyed the hospitality of AQU Catalunya and Universitat Pompeu Fabra whose Director and Secretary General welcomed the participants and opened the Workshop. After an introduction by Rolf Heusser, the Chairperson of ECA, a guest lecture was given by Gero Federkeil from CHE (Germany) on the U-Multirank project. This generated a vibrant discussion with the audience on both the project and on rankings in general. After lunch Don Westerheijden from CHEPS (the Netherlands) gave a presentation on 'Elements of impact of quality assurance on cross-border higher education'. This feasibility study was part of an impact study on QA of cross-border HE that CHEPS is carrying out for INQAAHE and of which the outcomes are expected by the end of 2011.

2. ECA Business Meeting

The Chairperson welcomed the members and observers with special attention for those who attended a ECA Workshop for the first time. ACE Denmark has joined ECA at the start of 2011. Furthermore, a change in the composition of the Management Group was announced. Terje Mørland from NOKUT had resigned from the Management Group. In accordance with the Agreement of Cooperation the Management Group had co-opted Christian Moldt from EVA to fill this vacancy.

The budget for 2011 including the annual members fee of 3,000 euro and observers fee of 1,000 euro was approved by the Consortium. The annual accounts 2010 audited by KPMG were approved by the Management Group and received by the Consortium.

As the current ECA Agreement of Cooperation expires on 31 December 2011 a new agreement would have to be signed before the end of the year. The way forward for signing a new cooperation agreement between ECA members was discussed. It was argued that the content of the current agreement had served the Consortium well. This means that mutual recognition of accreditation and QA decisions would stay as primary aim together with the two other main aims (mutual learning and disseminating best practices in accreditation; providing transparent information on quality and supporting internationalisation of institutions and students). Members decided that the content would stay the same and that the new agreement would be circulated among the agencies to be signed before the end of 2011. It was also decided that in this transitional phase the current Management Group would stay until the Consortium would gather again at the next ECA Workshop in June 2012. At

that time a new Management Group should be appointed by the members of the renewed Consortium.

CTI confirmed its willingness to organise the fifteenth Workshop in June 2012 in Paris. Due to the busy conference schedules until the end of the year the ECA winter seminar would not take place in December 2011 but in January 2012. NVAO was willing to host this event at its offices in The Hague. The topic would be the impact of quality assurance and accreditation. Members were encouraged to participate (with ECA working group contributions) at events such as the EQAF on 16-19 November 2011 and the INQAAHE-ENQA seminar from 30 November until 2 December 2011.

At the end of the day two bilateral mutual recognition agreements between ECA members were renewed. Most bilateral agreements had now been renewed.

3. Working groups

The four Working groups (Mutual recognition and joint programmes; Institutional accreditation and audits; Crossroads and information strategies; Mutual learning and best practices) presented their new work plans including the priorities for the coming year. They also updated the participants on the work that had been carried out during the last year. These updates included two publications prepared for the experts trainings in the EU funded project E-TRAIN; a survey report and other work done on QA and recognition of joint programmes in JOQAR (also funded by the EU); the development of the Multilateral Recognition Agreement for Joint Programmes (MULTRA); the ongoing work on Crossroads, and the results on principles and recommendations for the inclusion of learning outcomes in quality assurance procedures.

All presentations and reports can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.eaconsortium.net/main/events/documents/eca-workshop-2011/15>