Conclusions of the Workshop
For the Constitution of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)

Cordoba 8-11 November 2003

The workshop for the Constitution of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) was held in Cordoba from 8-11 November 2003. Twelve Accreditation organisations from eight different countries were very hospitably received by the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) and the Universidad de Cordoba (for the list of participants see annex 1).

The workshop was closed by a formal signing session of the Agreement of Cooperation (see annex 2). All founding fathers of ECA signed and ECA now formally exists. The next ECA workshop will be held in Bergen (Norway) in June 2004.

1. The management group

At the meeting of ECA on Sunday, 9 November 2003, the participants agreed to sign the Agreement of Cooperation, at the end of the workshop on 11 November. It was agreed to establish a management group (November 2003 till December 2004). Members of the group to include:

- Loek Vredevoogd (NVAO i.o, the Netherlands) chair
- Oddvar Haugland (NOKUT, Norway)
- Lluis Ferrer (ANECA, Spain)
- Rolf Heusser (OAQ, Switzerland)
- Ton Vroeijenstijn (the Netherlands) coordinator ECA

2. Financial contribution

It was decided that the members of ECA would pay € 5000 for the year 2004. The members will receive an invoice with details for the payment in the coming weeks.

3. Output of the current working groups

Working Group 1: Mutual recognition

The working group received considerable support for its activities and the report. There was general agreement on the content. It was seen as a good start on the way to Mutual Recognition. Regarding the activity plan, the members expressed the view that steps 3 and 4 (analysis of the consequences and the analysis of the relations with the Lisbon Convention and Bologna and potential conflicts with national laws) should run parallel with steps 6 and 7 (development of common criteria and a common framework). The management group requested to prepare 2 documents for the next workshop as follows:

1. The analysis of the legal frameworks and the consequences;

2. A first proposal of a common framework[1] (shared toolkit) and the criteria for Mutual Recognition.

In the meantime, the working group will examine the possibilities of exchanging experience between organisations by participation in the accreditation process. The working group will develop a document about principles of good practice.

Working group 2: The European Qualification framework

There was a lively discussion based on the report of the group. Following discussions, the management group invited working group 2 to produce 2 documents for the next workshop:

1. A document with a proposal for a general, generic European Qualification Framework to be used by the members of the consortium as a reference point. The European framework should make use of existing national frameworks. What do they have already in common?
2. A document with a collection of output oriented goals/qualification at discipline/subject level.

Working group 3: the accreditation report supplement

In general, the proposal was accepted as a step forward in providing information about the accreditation decisions. The management group invites the group to further elaborate the content of the template, taking into account the comments made by the members. During the coming months, the template will be discussed via e-mail. The management group expects that a completed template should facilitate agreement with a view to implementation. This template should be considered at the next workshop.

4. New working groups

The management group is aware of the fact that the members already invest a lot of time in the current working groups. Notwithstanding this, it proposed to establish two new working groups on the last day of the workshop.

Working group 4: On the way to Bergen 2005

The task of the working group is to prepare a document about accreditation for the conference in Bergen 2005. The document should:

- sketch the specificity of accreditation as a method for ensuring the quality of higher education;
- describe the developments so far;
- describe the common framework;
- outline the results concerning mutual recognition of accreditation decisions.

All agreed upon the importance of the new working group. It is understood that DACH[2] is planning to invest time in a similar position paper. It is seen as important to combine efforts. There is also agreement that this group should take into account the outcomes of all other working groups. The working group should work in close

1 For a common framework: see also Vroeijenstijn, Ton, Similarities and differences, looking for a common framework; document prepared for the workshop European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) The Hague 12/13 June 2003.

[2] DACH is the group of the German speaking accreditation agencies (Germany, Austrai, Switzerland).

contact with the other groups. Also the management group should keep a close eye on the working group. It is important that the chair of the group is a person who has access to other groups such as the Bologna Follow-Up Group, EUA, Bergen preparatory group etc.

The final report should be ready by the end of 2004 for agreement at the 4th workshop.

Working group 5: alternative models for accreditation

Opinion about the need for a working group on alternative models for accreditation differed. Some participants saw it as too soon to discuss new ways. Others felt that time was already pressing and that action should be taken now. It was decided to establish a new working group. This working group will be asked to:

- analyse the different approaches of the ECA-members
- analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches
- analyse international developments and consequences for accreditation (GATTS, transnational education, virtual education)
- look for possible alternatives.

5. The next workshops

NOKUT (Norway) has offered to host the next workshop in Bergen in the first half of June 2004. The date will be published as soon as possible.

OAQ (Switzerland) has offered to host the 4th workshop in Zürich on 2 and 3 December 2004.

HETAC (Ireland) expressed interest in organising the 5th workshop in Dublin in the first half of 2005 (If the evaluation of 2004 is positive).

6. New members of ECA

It was agreed that the management group write a proposal concerning the admission of new members and the status of observers and associate members before the meeting in Bergen. Decisions about membership will be taken in connection with the above-mentioned proposal.

7. Relation with other organisations

ECA will actively contribute to the mandate on quality assurance defined by the Ministers in Berlin. The management group will contact ENQA for this purpose. ECA will invite ENQA to participate in the discussion about the Principles of good practice. ENQA could invite ECA to participate in the ENQA working group on good practice

ECA will contribute to the design of a European Qualifications Framework. The management group will contact the Presidency of the Bologna Follow-up Group for this purpose.

The management group will contact the European Universities Association (EUA) in order to ensure a dialogue.

The management group will inform ENIC/NARIC about the development of the template.

The management group will write an article about ECA for the ENQA newsletter.

8 The evaluation at the end of 2004

The management group will prepare the evaluation at the end of 2004 and develop a proposal for the workshop in Bergen.

ANNEX 1: Participants in the Cordoba meeting

Members of ECA

Agency	Participants
Geschäftsstelle des Österreichischen Akkreditierungsrates Teinfaltstr. 8 A-1010 Wien Österreich	• Dr. Helmut Konrad, chairman • Mag. Elisabeth Fiorioli, managing Director
Geschäftsstelle des Fachhochschulrates Liechtensteinstrasse 22 A-1090 Wien Österreich	• Dr. Kurt Sohm, managing Director
Geschäftsstelle des Akkreditierungsrates Postfach 2240 53012 Bonn Deutschland	• Prof. Dr. Hans-Uwe Erichsen, chairman • Dr. Angelika Schade, managing director
Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur Hannover Wilhelm-Busch-Str. 22 D-30167 Hannover Deutschland	• Prof. Rainer Künzel • Hermann Reuke, managing director
FIBAA-Geschäftsstelle Adenauerallee 73 53113 Bonn Deutschland	• Detlev Kran
ACQUIN Geschäftsstelle Süd c/o Universität Bayreuth 95440 Bayreuth Deutschland	• Dr. Stefanie Hofmann
AQAS Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen Am Hofgarten 4 53113 Bonn Deutschland	• Edna Habel,M.A, managing director • Prof. Herman-Josef C Buchkremer
The Higher Education and Training Awards Council 26 Mountjoy Square Dublin 1 Ireland	• Seamus Puirseil, Chief Executive • Ms. Karena Maguire, Head of Awards Management
Nederlands/Vlaams Accreditatie Organisatie (NVAO i.o.) Postbus 556 2501 CN Den Haag The Netherlands	*The Netherlands:* • Loek Vredevoogd, chairman • Olchert Brouwer *Flanders:* • Marc Luwel • Karl Dittrich
Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen Nokut Postboks 1708 Vika, 0121 Oslo Norway	• Oddvar Haugland, director • Tove Blytt Holmen, deputy director general
Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) C/ Orense 2, 2ª planta 28020 Madrid España	• Ismael Crespo, Director of ANECA • Dr. Pedro Garcia Moreno, Program Director ANECA • Prof.Dr.Luis Ferrer i Caubet (chairman National Accreditation Committee) • Mari Luz Peñacoba Directora de Relaciones Institucionales

Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ) Effingerstrasse 58 CH-3008 Bern Switserland	• Rolf Heusser, managing director • Karl Zbinden
QANU/VSNU Postbus 1920 3501 DG Utrecht The Netherlands	• Ton Vroeijenstijn, Coordinator ECA

Observers

European Commission	• Peter van der Hijden
QAA, UK	• Nick Harris (working group 2)
Polish State Committee for Accreditation	• Professor Jamiolkowski
CHEA	• Margaret Quiñones
ESOEPE	• Iring Wasser • Jean-Michel Siwak
Flanders (project leader NVAO i.o)	• Rudy Derdelinckx
NVAO i.o , the Netherlands	• Mark Frederiks (secretary working group 1)

ANNEX 2:

Agreement of Cooperation [1]

The following organisations:

- *Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat , Austria*
- *Fachhochschulrat, Austria*
- *Akkreditierungsrat, Germany*
- *Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur(ZEvA), Germany*
- *Foundation for International Businness Administration Accreditation (FIBAA), Germany*
- *Akkreditierungs-, Certifizierungs- und Qualitätssicherungs-Institut (ACQUIN), Germany*
- *Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen (AQAS), Germany*
- *The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), Ireland*
- *Nederlands/Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie i.o (N/VAO i.o), the Netherlands/Flanders*
- *Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen (NOKUT), Norway*
- *Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA), Spain*
- *Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ), Switzerland*

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- Convinced that collaboration in the field of accreditation is essential;
- convinced that the aims of accreditation are best achieved through international information exchange, discussion, coordination and mutual recognition;
- desiring to create a better understanding of other accreditation systems in Europe:
- recognising substantial similarities between the accreditation systems in Europe;
- having regard to the Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region (Lisbon Convention); the Sorbonne, Bologna, Prague and Berlin declarations and communiqués on the setting up of the European higher education area issued by the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education;
- desiring to contribute to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area;
- desiring to promote student mobility in the European Higher Education Area:

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[1] *For the purposes of this convention, the following terms shall have the following meaning:*
Mutual Recognition
A formal acknowledgement of accreditation decisions in one country by competent authorities in an other country
Accreditation
A formal and independent decision, indicating that an institution of Higher Education and/or programmes offered meet certain standards .
Accreditation organisation
An organisation that carries out accreditation procedures and contributes to the decision making process.
Accreditation committee
The committee in charge of making the accreditation decision

1. **The participants agree to establish a consortium for accreditation in Higher Education.**

2. The participants in this Consortium agree on the name **"European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)".**

3. **The ultimate aim** of the consortium is to achieve mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among the participating countries before the end of 2007.

4. **The intermediate objectives** of the consortium are:
   - the development of a set of good practice and a common framework for accreditation that not only serves national needs, but also those of the European Higher Education Area;
   - to exchange information, experience and good practice concerning accreditation, especially with regard to the European dimension;
   - to develop criteria and procedures for the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions in order to facilitate student mobility;
   - to contribute to the political developments concerning accreditation in the light of the Bologna process and the conference of Bergen 2005.

5. To achieve these aims, the following **activities** shall be developed:
   - to describe clearly the specificity of accreditation;
   - to set up working groups with a specific mandate from the ECA;
   - to organise twice a year a workshop aimed at agreeing on the outcomes of the working groups and promoting the use of the results;
   - to convene or participate in conferences with the aim to share accreditation experience with a wider audience;
   - to establish and take care of a website in order to share experience and to disseminate good practice:
   - to undertake comparative studies and to analyse accreditation and assessment procedures used by the members.

6. Membership of the Consortium is open to European organisations,
   - which have been established by law as corporate bodies or are based on national or regional regulations or agreements;
   - which have accreditation as one of their principal functions; whether accreditation of programmes of higher education, accreditation of institutions providing higher education or the accreditation of accreditation organisations
   - which contribute actively to the aims of the Consortium

The Management Group of the Consortium will act as a membership review committee and will consider applications for participation in ECA. The consortium decides about membership. The ECA has the possibility to invite observers or to offer an associate membership.

7. Provisions concerning the organisation of the ECA

7.1 The Consortium

- The consortium is a project organisation.
- The organisations participating in ECA will meet at least twice a year. The co-ordinator of ECA convenes the meeting with at least forty days notice.
- No more than two persons will represent each organisation.
- The participants in ECA :
  - appoint the members of the Management Group of ECA:
  - consider and approve the reports of the chairperson and the co-ordinator;
  - consider and approve the annual financial statements of ECA;
  - establish the level of the annual contribution to be paid by the members;
  - decide upon the activities of the consortium:
  - set up working groups with a specific mandate
- The decisions of the Consortium are based on consensus.

7.2. The Management Group

- In order to ensure the project management, a Management Group will be established
- The Management Group shall elect one of its members to act as chairperson and another member to act as co-ordinator and treasurer of the Management Group and ECA.
- The responsibilities of the Chairman and the Management Group are:
  - to prepare workshops and other activities;
  - to look after the working groups and their activities based on the mandate given by the consortium:
  - to prepare the annual report, including the financial statements, to be approved by the participants in ECA;
  - to make recommendations to the participants of ECA on the admission of new members.
- The coordinator/treasurer is responsible for
  - supporting the Management group, encouraging the working groups and stimulating members to contribute actively to ECA;
  - preparing the annual reports and any other publications of ECA;
  - convening the meetings of ECA:
  - preparing, organising and convening the meetings of the Management Group;
  - establishing the financial statements and submitting them to the Management Group and the participants of ECA once they have been audited:
  - preparing the annual budgets;
  - collecting the annual subscriptions;
  - collecting any other financial contributions to the activities of ECA.

- In order to carry out the above-mentioned tasks, the Coordinator is supported by a secretariat. The costs incurred by the co-coordinator and secretariat in carrying out its tasks of managing and administering ECA will be funded by the annual contribution of the members.

8. Financial provisions

- The participants in the Consortium decide each year on the annual contribution due by the members and approve the budget.
- The basic activities of the Consortium are funded from the contributions of its participants. In order to fund specific activities, ECA may apply and receive financial support from other parties.

9. Relations of ECA and other organisations

The consortium will collaborate actively with other organisations and initiatives, such as ENQA, CEE, the Joint Quality Initiative and the ENIC/ NARIC network.

10. Final provisions

- This Agreement of Cooperation shall enter into force with the signature of the representatives of the participating organisations.
- Any dispute over the interpretation of these agreements shall be resolved by the participants in the Consortium.
- Amendments to this Agreement of Cooperation must be adopted by the participants in ECA. It may only be modified with the approval of the majority of the countries represented by the members. Changes and additions have to be in written form.
- At the end of 2004 there will be an evaluation of the activities of the Consortium. On the basis of this evaluation the participants in ECA may decide to terminate the Agreement of Cooperation if progress is insufficient.
- Unless it is decided otherwise by consensus, this Agreement of Cooperation terminates on 31 December 2007 in case the achievement of the aim of mutual recognition (Point 3) is not satisfactory at that time.

SIGNATURES

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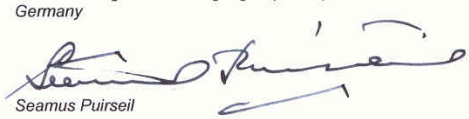

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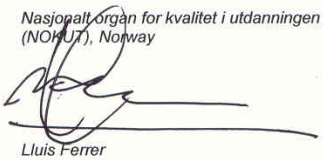

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