



The European Consortium for
Accreditation in Higher Education

ECA NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 ECA Editorial
- 2-6 News from ECA
- 7-8 News from ECA Members

ECA EDITORIAL:

Dear members and observers,

Let us first thank you for the trust you have shown in electing us as ECA Chair and Vice-Chair. We are really honoured to be part of this amazing Board team with Klemen Šubic (SQAA), Ronny Heintze (AQAS), Luut Kroes (NVAO) and Sebastian Steele from ÜKA. We are truly a team that has been working together for the past years and is now strengthened by the addition of a new member. Together we will continue to work towards ECA's goals. As we could see in the speeches at ECA's 20th anniversary, we still have many challenges to solve and we will continue to do so in the coming years as part of the development of the new ECA strategy with the invaluable help of the contributions made during the 20th anniversary event. As you know we have been reshaping ECA's activities to meet the challenges ahead. After the merge of the working groups we just need to make the working group on joint programmes, recognition and innovation a real

space for reflection and debate in which to share both the needs and expectations of the agencies and the solutions and good practices. As you know, the expectations and needs of the members are the starting point of any new activity as the trainings on new topics (Cultural Competence for Quality Assurance Professionals and more to come) or the new training formats like the development of videos for the CeQuint certificate which will be available in the following months. Last but not least, a warm welcome to our new observer the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. Looking forward to engaging discussions with all of you!



Eva Fernández de Labastida
ECA Chair



Solange Pisarz
ECA Vice-Chair

NEWS FROM ECA

Celebrating 20 years of ECA in Mallorca

By ECA

Established in 2003, ECA was founded with the vision of fostering collaboration and harmonization of quality assurance in higher education in Europe. Our consortium brings together recognised QA agencies, creating a dynamic network that shares knowledge, best practices, and valuable insights.

The **Members Seminar and 20 years Anniversary Celebration in Mallorca (22-23 June 2023)** featured a series of insightful keynote speeches, panel discussions, and interactive workshops, together with the General meeting and Working groups meeting.

Esteemed speakers shared their knowledge and expertise, shedding light on emerging trends, challenges, and innovative practices in quality assurance in higher education:

- **Francois Pernot**, Professor, former ENQA Vice-president, president of EUTOPIA quality council;
- **Maciej Markowski**, Senior Training Standards and Quality Officer, European Union Agency for Asylum, former Chair of ECA;
- **Sandra Marcos**, Quality Director of the Pontifical University of Salamanca, former ECA coordinator;
- **Rafael Llavori**, Deputy Director of International Quality Project at the International University of La Rioja (UNIR);
- **Colin Tueck**, higher education policy expert, former EQAR director.



The ECA Board Elections: Eva Fernandez de Labastida becomes ECA Chair, Solange Pizarz Vice-Chair

By ECA

We are pleased to announce the successful conclusion of the **ECA Board elections**, which took place during the General Meeting held as part of the Members Seminar and 20 years Anniversary Celebration in Mallorca.

We are delighted to introduce **Eva Fernandez de Labastida from Unibasq** as the newly elected ECA Chair for the next two years. With her vast experience and expertise Eva will – together with the Board – lead ECA towards its mission of enhancing quality assurance in higher education and fostering international cooperation.

Additionally, we are pleased to announce **Solange Pizarz from Cti** as the Vice-Chair of ECA. Solange's expertise and dedication make her an invaluable member of the Board.

Last year, our members have elected **Klemen Subic from SQAA, Ronny Heintze from AQAS e.V., and Luut Kroes from NVAO** to the ECA Board for another two-year term. Their expertise and commitment to quality assurance in higher education remain instrumental in shaping the direction of ECA.

Last but not least, we warmly congratulate **Sebastian Steele from UKA** on joining the ECA Board as a new member. Sebastian's diverse background and extensive knowledge will undoubtedly enrich our organisation. Together with our respected members and observers we will continue to implement our shared vision and contribute to development of quality assurance in higher education across Europe.

Members re-elect **Luis Velon (ACSUG) and Chris Thompson (THE-ICE)** as truly valuable representatives of the Financial Committee.



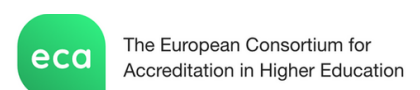
Welcome MFHEA, the new ECA observer!

By ECA

The ECA community warmly welcomes the new observer, the **Malta Further and Higher Education Authority**.



The MFHEA is an independent and international authority, which is responsible for setting the strategic direction for further and higher education in Malta and works to ensure that further and higher education institutions working in and from Malta provide quality education in accordance with all local, European and International standards and guidelines.



Members Seminar in the Hague combined with the Cultural Competence training

By ECA

In the last week of March the **ECA member NVAO** hosted **ECA Members Seminar and Training in The Hague**. This year's winter seminar focussed on the European Universities and the European Degree. **Barend vd Molen** of CHEPS, **Veronique Eurlings and Liesbeth Opdenacker** representing YUFE, and NVAO's **Tinka Thede and Lineke van Bruggen** each provided thought-provoking presentations and interactive sessions. This intellectually stimulating programme was complemented with a guided tour of the Mauritshuis museum later in the day.

The following two days were devoted to a new ECA training on intercultural competences. **Trainers Joanna Domagala and Yvonne Overdeest** welcomed a very diverse group of participants to discuss and share some basic theory, personal perspectives and experiences, and suggestions for dealing with complex intercultural situations. The trainers were greatly impressed with the participants, all of whom had diligently prepared for the training, and who all contributed enthusiastically to the discussions and activities in an open and curious manner.

Joanna and Yvonne look back on two lively and rewarding days. They would like to thank everyone who invested time and energy and hope that this basic introduction to the fascinating field of Intercultural Communication stimulates the participants to discover more about this and to apply it in their professional practice.



CeQuint Certificate Update

By ECA

Certification group members **Ronny Heintze (AQAS)**, **Eva Fernandez de Labastida (Unibasq)** and **Dagmar Provijn (NVAO)**, together with **Joanna Domagala**, are working on some new material for future trainings and promotion of the CeQuint certificate for quality in internationalisation, including some videos and updating the available information on the CeQuint webpage. The outcomes will be available in the next months, so stay tuned!



European Approach Training in Cologne

By ECA

On **27 and 28 June 2023** ECA Member **AQAS** hosted a training on the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

The participants had the opportunity to learn more about joint programmes and how they are assessed following the European Approach, focusing on the specific standards and procedure. The training held lively discussions and addressed the challenges of assessing joint programmes from the perspectives of institutions and quality assurance agencies.



Qual-AI-ty Engagement project meeting in Brussels

By ECA

Fostering Student Engagement through Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices (Qual-AI-ty Engagement) is an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships project lead by Riga Technical University and co-lead by ACEEU. Other partners include the University of Twente, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the ECA.

On **April 5th 2023**, the Qual-AI-ty Engagement project successfully hosted a groundbreaking event in Brussels titled "Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Innovate Higher Education: Opportunities and Threats."

With over 100 participants, this event brought together leading voices in the field of higher education to discuss the impact of AI in European higher education and explore the potential of artificial intelligence to transform the landscape of education.

One of the highlights of the event was the presentation of QUALIA, an artificial intelligence-powered tool developed as part of the EU-funded project Qual-AI-ty Engagement. QUALIA collects and analyses large samples of quantitative data, providing higher education institutions (HEIs) with mechanisms to enhance their quality assurance evidence and indicators. This innovative tool has the potential to revolutionise the way HEIs approach quality assurance and the continuous improvement of the overall quality of higher education.



UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.



The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education

NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

Insights on “Mutual permeability: Shaping flexible learning pathways together” [1]

By ZEvA, Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur Hannover

This May 2023, a conference on mutual permeability in the education system took place in the city of Essen, Germany. Participants discussed how to increase permeability, especially between vocational and academic pathways, how to remove barriers to these pathways and how to facilitate the recognition of prior learning. Closer exchange and networking between the educational sectors were identified as a necessity in order to avoid the development of multiple, isolated solutions.

For 20 years, ZEvA has been dealing with the recognition of prior learning[1] as a requirement in accreditation procedures. Whereas HEIs have now widely implemented adequate formal regulations for recognition, these are still not always applied in the students' best interest. Further investigations will be necessary in order to understand the factors that lead HEIs to adequately operationalise the formal requirements. ZEvA would be happy to be part of further discussions and exchange on this topic at European level.

[1] <https://www.hrk-modus.de/angebote/veranstaltungen/tagungsdokumentationen/konferenz-beidseitige-durchlaessigkeit/> (only in German)

[2] (recognition of prior learning) Anrechnung von außerhalb des Hochschulwesens erworbenen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten auf ein Hochschulstudium (I)(Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 28.06.2002) (Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany)



NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

Associate Professor Danijela Horvatek Tomić, PhD appointed new Director of Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education

By AZVO, Agency for Science and Higher Education, Croatia

Management Board of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) appointed Associate Professor Danijela Horvatek Tomić, PhD a new ASHE Director.

Danijela Horvatek Tomić who has been elected on 7 March 2023 for a four – year term, obtained her PhD in 2009 at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Zagreb, where she was awarded the title of Assistant Professor in 2013 and subsequently promoted to Associate Professor in 2019. Owing to extensive education, professional development and work-related opportunities, she has many years of experience in the area of quality assurance. In 2014 she was appointed Head of the Office for Quality and in 2016 president of the Committee for Quality Management of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. From 2018 to 2022 she was Vice-Dean for Quality Control. She has taken part in numerous scientific and professional projects at both national and international level.



agency for science and higher education



The European Consortium for
Accreditation in Higher Education