eca The European Consortium for
Accreditation in Higher Education

ECA NEWSLETTER

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

and an

inspiring New Year!

eca
20 years

NEWS FROM ECA

Navigating 2023 in Pictures

By ECA

ECA Members Seminar in Paris hosted by Hceres

By ECA

In the heart of Paris, on 18 of December 2023, the ECA community came together for a memorable and enriching **Winter Members Seminar**, hosted by our member **HCERES**.

The event was dedicated to fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange and once again provided a platform to explore new horizons and discuss pressing issues in the field.

The focal point of Winter Seminar was the dynamic interplay between **internationalization and quality assurance in the field of higher education**.

Participants engaged in thought-provoking discussions, sharing insights and strategies to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by globalizing education systems.

Special recognition goes to our distinguished pannelists, **Laurence Vignollet** from Université Savoie Mont Blanc, **Stephanie Beauchene** from Campus France, and **prof. dr. Ainhoa Uribe Otalora** from CEU San Pablo University, whose insights shed light on the inseparable link between quality assurance and internationalization.

The seminar wasn't just a platform for learning; it was also an opportunity for ECA members to connect and strengthen professional bonds. Attendees enjoyed fruitful networking sessions, exchanging ideas and establishing collaborations that will undoubtedly contribute to the continued development of the ECA.

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Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation training in Paris

By ECA

On December 19-20 2023, a **CeQuInt training session** took place equipping its participants with insights and tools to understand and assess the quality of internationalization in higher education.

The training emphasized the contextual nature of internationalization, highlighting its multidimensional aspects across diverse settings. Participants grasped the importance of considering where and how internationalization occurs.

Learning outcomes were diverse: understanding internationalization, recognizing trends and understanding the methodology behind the CeQuInt certificate. Practical insights were provided by the trainers: **Dr. Dagmar Provijn (NVAO Flanders), Dr. Eva Fernandez de Labastida (Unibasq), and Joanna Domagała (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland).**

The agenda covered CeQuInt fundamentals, procedures, standards, and intercultural communication. Case studies facilitated hands-on learning, ensuring participants could effectively assess internationalization.

The two-day program concluded with insightful reflections and the awarding of certificates, leaving participants with newfound knowledge and a deeper grasp for the complexities of international education.

CeQuInt.

Excellence in Internationalisation

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I-AR project successfully concluded

By ECA

The project Implementation of Automatic Recognition in the Networks (I-AR), which ran from 2020 to 2023, formed an important next step in the achievement of automatic recognition in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ECA was involved in the Steering Group.

The project aimed to implement fair automatic recognition by offering guidance in policy development on an European and national level. Furthermore, through capacity building, higher education institutions were encouraged to improve their expertise on automatic recognition.

Activities:
The activities of the I-AR project aimed to improve automatic recognition at the European, national and institutional level. The project produced various outcomes, including:

- a table with system-level comparisons of qualifications in EHEA that national authorities can use to enter into (non) legally binding AR agreements between countries, and as such supports efficient and consistent implementation;
- a 2nd updated edition of the EAR manual supporting fair and automatic recognition practices in the EU/EHEA;
- a paper analysing the implications of the Global Recognition Convention on the Lisbon Recognition Convention to support its implementation in the ENIC-NARIC Networks;
- an outcome report on a series of measures to improve fair and automatic recognition implemented by 11 participating ENIC-NARIC centres.

Publications:
- EAR Manual 2023 (2nd edition)
- The Global Recognition Convention going local?
- Automatic Recognition: ENIC-NARICs providing national guidance
- Automatic Recognition: Building institutional capacity in the ENIC-NARIC Networks
- EHEA qualifications table

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NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

SQAA Conference on quality – Designing a QA model for microcredentials

By SQAA, Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

On November 6 2023, the SQAA hosted a conference centred on the theme "**Designing a QA Model for Microcredentials**," marking an important step in addressing this current educational trend. This event was a gathering of both international and national experts in the domain of microcredentials, aiming to share experiences and establish transferable practices in this innovative field.

Microcredentials - these smaller, more focused learning units - are seen as vital components in the contemporary landscape of education and professional development. However, the rise of microcredentials brings with it unique challenges, particularly in the realm of quality assurance (QA). The conference aimed to tackle these challenges, striving to ensure that microcredentials are relevant, consistent, and valuable for learners.

The program was rich with insightful presentations. Notably, **Shizuka Kato and Roza Gyorfi from the OECD** presented the key findings from the OECD-EC Micro-credential Implementation Project. This presentation provided an overview of microcredentials, their rising importance, and key features. It also discussed policy levers used in OECD countries, including regulations, funding, quality assurance mechanisms, and information systems. **Anna Gover, the director of ENQA**, discussed the IMINQA project, focusing on the development of robust and adaptable quality assurance frameworks specifically for microcredentials.

Gover's presentation discussed the historical context and current status of microcredentials, noting their prominence and the applicability of ESGs to them.

Mark Brown from Dublin City University and the National Institute for Digital Learning delved into the potential and challenges of microcredentials in his talk, "The Future of Micro-credentials: Is Small Really Beautiful?" He also pointed out significant gaps in course quality rating, careers guidance, learner support information, QA processes, and outcomes data for microcredentials. From the presentation by SQAA, we learned about Slovenia's current activities in integrating microcredentials into their education system. SQAA is building an external QA system, with pilot evaluations planned for 2024.

The conference also featured a dynamic panel discussion, moderated by **Klemen Šubic** from SQAA. This discussion brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from public universities, the **Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and the Slovenian Student Union**. The panel provided a multifaceted perspective on quality assurance in microcredentials, underscoring the collaborative effort needed to shape a future where these educational units are effectively integrated, assessed, and valued.

You can find the detailed agenda, the presentations of all speakers and the recording of the whole event at SQAA website.

NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

Hcéres and CTI published a paper with AEQES and AAQ: "Capacity building in quality assurance through international cooperation"

By HCERES, High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education and Cti, Commission des titres d'ingenieur

Four experts from the founding agencies of the French-speaking network of quality agencies for higher education, FrAQ-Sup (AAQ, AEQES, CTI and Hcéres) have participated in consultancy visits and agency reviews of four Francophone African counterpart agencies as part of the HAQAA2 Initiative (Harmonisation of African Higher Education, Quality Assurance and Accreditation).

Although QA crosses borders, which facilitates dialogue between countries, each higher education system is unique. The four European experts involved in the consultancy visits and agency reviews were able to learn from such cultural differences shaping QA tools, the diversification of agencies' missions and the involvement of stakeholders using a "fitness for purpose" approach. They have summarised their key takeaways in a paper they presented at the last European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF). The paper includes a comparison between the ESG and the African Standards and Guidelines, among other things.

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NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance of Higher Education has conducted its first external review of an European universities alliance

By ARACIS, The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance of Higher Education

Earlier this year, ARACIS conducted an external review of the European universities alliance UNITA – Universitas Montium, following the European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities, developed within the EuNiQ project.

From the 4 evaluation criteria proposed by the methodology, the first 3 were considered (Strategy and Policies; Policy Implementation; Evaluation and Monitoring), given that the alliance is in its first three years of exisitance. The aim of the external evaluation consisted in exploring how UNITA managed to create the inter-university campus – as one of the alliances' main scopes highlighted by the European Commission -, through strategic planning, actions implementation, as well as ensuring homogenous internal procedures in terms of teaching and learning, research and internal quality assurance, in order to enhance transnational cooperation.

Furthermore, involvement of both internal and external stakeholders was of interest, given their variety and specific needs (from teaching and research staff, students, administrative staff, to local and regional authorities, labor market and overall society representatives).

NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

AHPGS awarded Recognition Status by WFME

By AHPGS

On 2 of October 2023 the **World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)** granted AHPGS recognition for a period of **10 years.**

WFME is satisfied that the accreditation process, post-accreditation monitoring and decision making by the AHPGS when it accredits these medical schools and faculties is to an appropriate and rigorous standard. The WFME Recognition Programme aims to raise the standards of medical education worldwide.

AHPGS is the first German accreditation agency to be awarded Recognition Status.

For more information please visit this link.