



The European Consortium for
Accreditation in Higher Education

ECA NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 ECA Editorial
- 2-5 News from ECA
- 6 News from ECA Members

ECA EDITORIAL:

Dear Members and Observers,

As we head into the summer break, it's the perfect time to look back on the first half of the year for ECA. Our highlight was undoubtedly the successful conference *A Decade of European Approach: Reflections and Further Directions*, organised in collaboration with EQAR and hosted by AQAS in Cologne, where we celebrated ten years of the European Approach. The event brought together colleagues from across Europe to share insights, lessons learned, and ideas for the future. The high level of engagement and the lively discussions reminded us of the importance – and the power – of working together across borders.

This year also brought changes to our leadership team. We're delighted to welcome two new Board members: Prof. Danijela Hrovatek Tomic (AZVO) and Amelie Bensimon (HCERES). Their experience and fresh perspectives will be invaluable as we continue developing ECA's activities and strategy.

One exciting step forward is the development of the ECA Expert Exchange Platform. This initiative aims to foster connections between quality assurance professionals and institutions seeking expert reviewers for evaluations and projects, making it easier to tap into the rich expertise across our network. We believe this platform will strengthen collaboration and support capacity building – core values at the heart of ECA.

Thank you for your continued dedication and engagement. We wish you a restful summer and look forward to seeing at our future events.

Eva Fernández de Labastida
ECA Chair

Ronny Heintze
ECA Vice-Chair



NEWS FROM ECA

A Decade of European Approach Conference: Looking Back, Moving Forward

By ECA

On 17 June 2025, ECA in cooperation with EQAR marked a milestone – ten years of the European Approach (EA) for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Hosted by AQAS in Cologne, the event gathered representatives from QA agencies, higher education institutions, ministries, and the European Commission, to reflect on a decade of implementation and the road ahead.

A Joint Effort with Strong Foundations

In their welcome remarks, Eva Fernandez de Labastida, Chair of ECA, and Dorris Herrmann, Managing Director of AQAS recalled ECA's early commitment to jointness and mobility – core principles of the Bologna Process. From the first training on EA to the IMPEA project and ongoing expert trainings, ECA has been focusing on building capacity in the field of EA.

A Growing Story

Aleksandar Susnjar, Director of EQAR, described the EA as a tool designed to streamline quality assurance across borders. With an increasing number of procedures – 15 in 2024 compared to just 8 in 2019 – the EA is gaining traction. Yet, challenges remain. "EA needs to reach critical mass, to fully take off," Susnjar said, pointing to limited uptake and the need for better alignment between ambition and implementation. Differences in legal frameworks and funding mechanisms remain significant challenges.

National Realities: Flexibility and Constraints

Eva Fernandez de Labastida shared Spain's experience, where EA was initially adopted in the absence of regulation and later integrated into legislation, thanks largely to Erasmus Mundus programmes. France, meanwhile, allows EA evaluations but retains centralised programme accreditation.

Mathieu Musquin, Policy Officer from the French Ministry for Higher Education and Research, acknowledged progress but noted gaps – particularly the need to address links between research, education, and employability in the EA framework.



From the Front Lines of Joint Programme Management

Programme coordinators offered valuable insight into the lived experience of EA implementation. Cristina Churruca Muguruza, Coordinator of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree Programme in International Humanitarian Action (NOHA+), Universidad de Deusto, Spain emphasised the importance of early preparation and internal communication. Marjaana Mäkelä, Ulysseus European University, highlighted the administrative and curricular challenges of launching eight joint programmes. Prof. Viktor Gabor Mihucz, Programme Board Chair of the Global Challenges for Sustainability master's programme of CHARM-EU pointed out the complications of aligning self-accrediting systems with EA procedures.

Their key message? EA encourages meaningful collaboration, but success hinges on trust, clear roles, and realistic timelines.

The Road Ahead: European Degree and Structural Reform

Looking beyond the EA, Yann-Maël Bideau, Policy Officer, European Commission - DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, B1 – Higher Education outlined the path toward a Joint European Degree. With a new Council Resolution adopted in June, the first joint degree labels are expected by 2026, aiming to enhance recognition, agility, and cooperation in the EHEA. However, deeper legal reforms remain a long-term goal.

From Reflection to Action

In the final sessions, participants identified key gaps and proposed solutions including clearer guidance, expert exchange platforms, and better dissemination of EA within institutions. As the EA enters its second decade, the message is clear: progress is clear and the momentum must not slow. With renewed collaboration, stakeholder dialogue, and trust-building, the EA can remain a cornerstone of cross-border quality assurance in HE.



ECA Welcomes Two New Board Members

By ECA

At the recent General Meeting in Cologne, the ECA members elected two new Board members and confirmed key leadership roles for the coming term, ensuring both renewal and continuity in its governance.

We are pleased to welcome Prof. Danijela Hrovatek Tomić (AZVO) and Amélie Bensimon (HCERES) as newly elected members of the ECA Board. Their expertise and commitment to quality assurance will enrich ECA's strategic direction.

The General Assembly also confirmed several key appointments: Eva Fernandez de Labastida (UNIBASQ) was re-elected as ECA Chair, Ronny Heintze (AQAS) was elected for the first time as Vice-Chair, and Sebastian Steele (UKÄ) had his mandate as a Board member renewed.

We are also pleased to announce that Luut Kroes (NVAO) will continue to serve as Treasurer.

Furthermore, the Financial Committee members Luis Velon (ACSUG), Giacomo Annese (MFHEA), and Craig Thompson (The-ICE) were re-elected for another term, continuing their valuable work in overseeing ECA's financial integrity.

With this balanced mix of new and re-elected leadership, the Board is well-positioned to continue advancing ECA's mission – to foster mutual trust, support innovation in quality assurance, and promote effective international cooperation.

We warmly congratulate all elected and re-elected Board and Financial Committee Members and look forward to the continued collaboration in the year ahead.



Up next: European Approach Training in Bucharest

By ECA

We are pleased to invite you to ECA Training "European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes" which will take place on **16 and 17 September 2025 in Bucharest – Romania**, hosted by The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS).

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes is becoming the go-to method for ensuring cross border study programmes in Europe as more joint programmes emerge through the Erasmus Mundus and the European Universities Alliances initiatives and a shift towards internationalisation of study programmes in general. However, assessing joint programmes requires careful consideration of their unique features with which self-accrediting higher education institutions and HEI under programme accreditation seems to struggle. This includes factors like the roles within consortia, how teaching and learning are coordinated, converting grades across different countries, comparable quality assurance frameworks, and ensuring consistent learning outcomes across various locations. Additional challenges might arise due to the fact that different countries may have varying approaches and legal requirements for assessing joint programmes.

The training will primarily concentrate on the specifics of the European Approach, while also considering the national systems that shape the context in which quality assurance decisions are made within Higher Education Institutions offering joint programmes. Participants will be effectively equipped with an in-depth background knowledge of the EA, and the ability to interpret and substantiate the assessment criteria. Furthermore, practical insights will allow participants to understand different interpretations of (the use of) standards and underlying substantiations.

**REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED BY
18 AUGUST 2025 THROUGH
WRITING AN E-MAIL WITH
YOUR NAME AND
ORGANISATION TO
SECRETARIAT@ECAHE.EU.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT WWW.ECAHE.EU.**



NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

Evaluation tool co-creation workshop

By ACPUA, Aragon Agency for Quality Assurance and Strategic Foresight in Higher Education

ACPUA has launched a new evaluation system incorporating student participation in the design of its protocols. In this specific case and as a pilot project, two workshops have been held to co-create a tool to collect information from the student body, constituting an additional source of information for the evaluation of the renewal of the institutional accreditation of the centres.

The sessions were based on a collaborative debate, with participants being divided into different working groups of 3 or 4 people who always discussed 2 key questions.

As a record of this activity, we have jointly written the 13th issue of the ACPUA Learns series. In this publication we briefly explain, on the one hand, the objective of the renewal of the institutional accreditation of university centres and, on the other hand, the methodology and results of this new experience.

