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Current trends in European Quality Assurance

Education and Culture DG

International co-operation in
higher education and training

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Foreword

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were adopted by ministers of education in 2005 as a first step towards establishing a widely shared set of underpinning values, expectations and good practice in relation to quality and its assurance across the institutions and agencies of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In 2007, ENQA members came together in two seminars (one in Rome, the other in Sofia) to discuss the implementation of the ESG within their own national contexts, and to examine current trends in quality assurance across Europe.

This report presents expert articles about the divergent but also converging national experiences in Southern and South-Eastern Europe, for example in creating national systems of quality assurance in higher education and in adapting to common European standards. The regional seminars that gave rise to this report once again demonstrate the continued value of face-to-face discussion, and the importance of fostering mutual understanding and support.

I hope this report will provide an informative basis with which ENQA members and stakeholders can discuss the impact of the ESG since their adoption by ministers of education in Bergen in 2005. More importantly, I hope the identification of current trends will fuel debate on the future direction of quality assurance in the EHEA.

Bruno Curvale,
President
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Emmi Helle, Secretary General, ENQA

1.1 Common standards, specific challenges

This report is the result of two regional seminars on current trends in European Quality Assurance organised by ENQA in 2007. The seminars were held in Sofia, Bulgaria and The Holy See, Vatican City. The Sofia seminar was organised in cooperation with the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA). The Holy See seminar was organised in collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Faculties (AVEPRO) and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were meant by their authors to be generic principles that may broadly be applicable to higher education institutions (HEIs) and quality assurance (QA) agencies across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The presentations given at the seminars and the articles in this report underline the need to place the ESG in a specific national context. Indeed, the ESG are to be implemented in all signatory countries of the Bologna Process, which means an extensive diversity of political and higher education systems, cultures, traditions, languages, expectations, etc. Even though important efforts have been made towards convergence in European quality assurance, the conflict that may occur between the ESG and national legislation or culture still represents a challenge for some countries to introduce the ESG in their national contexts, especially if the ESG are seen as strict rules.[1] In countries where the ESG have been successfully introduced, their interpretation still needs to be adapted to the national context.

At the seminars, it was noted that regionalisation – i.e. networking with the other QA actors in the same region – was a way to increase credibility and understanding and to decrease costs of quality assurance exercises. Also, a common trend was seen in the increasing focus on learning outcomes rather than using just the output figures such as the number of graduates.

Among the presentations given at the seminars, there were overviews on current situation of the quality assurance in higher education in eight countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, the Vatican, Romania, Italy, France, and Spain. The main similarity between most countries was the impact of the Bologna Process that had led to agencies' structural change. In seven out of these eight countries, new laws had been passed (or existing laws amended) and new agencies, often assigned with additional tasks, had been set up to align with the ESG and to harmonise the higher education systems with the EHEA framework. Improvement of internal quality assurance of agencies, increased cooperation with stakeholders and involvement of foreign experts were among the agencies' current priorities in most countries. The presentations also showed that quality assurance does not apply to all levels or sectors of education. In Cyprus, for example, quality assurance is not yet applicable to public higher education. The

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1   The ENQA Board recommends a principle-based approach to the ESG, instead of a rule-based one.

newly established Holy See's agency AVEPRO, the scope of authority of which extends to academic centres all over the world, is an interesting case in addition to the various national examples presented.

Both seminars included the presentation entitled "European Quality Assurance after the London ministerial meeting: moving towards 2010", which gave an introduction to the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR), which has since then become operative, and reflected on the short and long term objectives of ENQA as an association.

In the working group sessions that addressed the theme "how to get a newly established agency up and running" practical issues in relation to the ESG that the agencies had faced in setting up operations were discussed. These issues are reflected in the articles of the present report, and in the PowerPoint presentations available on the ENQA website.[2] Finally, the working group sessions on the theme "how to prepare for an external review?" gave participants an opportunity to share experiences in relation to external reviews, practical methodological issues and to getting newly established agencies up and running.

1.2 How to prepare for external reviews?

Both seminars discussed, in the working group sessions, the preparation of external reviews for ENQA membership purposes. It was emphasised that a committed and representative self-evaluation committee was an important starting point for an external review of an agency. The self-evaluation process can be seen as a mapping exercise, which places the activities of the agency within the different sections of the ESG. Ideally, a carefully prepared, relevant, clear and short self-evaluation report should result from the self-evaluation exercise.

The review panel should be given sufficient time to study the self-evaluation report prior to the site-visit. Site-visits to quality assurance agencies are usually scheduled for two days, which is normally enough if preparations and communication between the team has been initiated well in advance. In preparation of the site visit, communication should be timely, adequate and effective both internally and externally within the panel and between the panel and the agency to be reviewed. An additional success factor is the in-depth briefing of the experts by the coordinating agency. When the panel has international members, at least one expert should have experience of the Higher Education system where the agency operates.

In practice, in ENQA coordinated reviews, the site visit constitutes usually the first and only occasion when the expert panel meets face-to-face, and the briefing is done through a written briefing pack and a telephone conference. After the first round of ENQA-coordinated reviews in 2007, the review panels provided some general feedback to ENQA:
- From a methodological point of view, the panels should first identify the lines of inquiry and subsequently draw up the programme of the site-visit;
- Interviews are one of the core points of the panel's activity. Having a framework for this analysis in the form of worksheets would be very helpful in order to identify crucial points and keep a track record of open questions;

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2   http://www.enqa.eu/eventitem.lasso?id=143&cont=pasteventDetail and
    http://www.enqa.eu/eventitem.lasso?id=166&cont=pasteventDetail

- There should be more exchange between the review teams and especially secretaries, in order to exchange opinions on the organisational tasks, on how to draw up the lines of inquiry, to use them efficiently during the site-visit and to translate them into concrete questions;
- In scheduling the site visit, the panels recommend to have panel reviews (e.g. 30 minutes after every second interview), as these were found to be critical for the panel's continuous analysis and possibility to explore and follow-up on new areas;
- Language is an issue, and ENQA should ensure that the panel has the right mix of language skills, especially when not all the evidence is provided in English. If a translator is used in the interviews, he/she should be certified and independent from the agency under review;
- ENQA in its procedures should stress that the agency under review cannot submit new information after the site visit;
- The secretary and chair of the review panel have a significant workload.

ENQA will take this feedback into consideration when coordinating the future external reviews.

Chapter 2:
Quality assurance in Austrian Higher Education – features and challenges

Alexander Kohler, Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA)

2.1 Some key features of the Austrian higher education system

The Austrian higher education system has undergone several reforms during the past two decades. The diversification of higher education, the increase of institutional responsibility and the Bologna Process have all influenced the development of quality assurance in the various sectors of higher education.

Around 262,000 students[3] are enrolled in higher education institutions, among them one-fifth of foreign students. The system is faced by an ever increasing number of first-year students and by a high proportion of students who leave university without graduating. Until 2007, as part of the Bologna Process, about half of all study programmes have been converted into the Bachelor's/Master's structure.

22 public universities represent the largest sector, enrolling 80% of all students in higher education. Since 2004 public universities have been granted full legal autonomy. Six of them are universities with a comprehensive faculty structure; the other universities are dedicated to specific areas (medicine, arts, economics, technical fields, life sciences, mining); one university offers postgraduate studies.

In 1993 the Austrian higher education system was expanded by the creation of universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen). At the present time, 20 institutions provide a well grounded scientific vocational education, primarily in the fields of engineering and business. The sector accounts for about 11% of higher education (according to the number of students). The establishment of Fachhochschulen is not a result of transformation of existing institutions, but of the creation of new entities of public or private law.

Private universities form the youngest sector. Since 1999 private universities can be established by entities of public or private law based in Austria with the restriction not to receive federal funds. Currently there are twelve private universities in Austria with about 4,000 students enrolled.

In 2007 nine public and five private teacher-training colleges have been transformed from existing colleges. They make up for about 8% of tertiary education in Austria.

Teacher-Training Colleges are subject to recognition by the relevant Ministry.

2.2 Certification and accreditation in Austrian higher education

In contrast to other European countries, there is no common legal framework for the sectors of higher education in Austria. Each sector is regulated by its own law, and specific provisions are laid down for quality assurance, accreditation and certification.

Public universities are not required to undergo accreditation of study programmes or institutional accreditation. They are established by law and enter into performance

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3   BMWF, Statistisches Taschenbuch 2007

agreements with the Ministry for Science and Research. Public universities agree to objectives and measures of institutional quality assurance, for which they are required to provide evidence of compliance after the performance agreement period of three years.

Evidence can be supplied by the certification of the quality management (QM) system. The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) offers certification on the basis of a quality audit procedure, which is formally recognised by the Ministry.

Similar to public universities, public teacher-training colleges are recognised by law. They are also legally obliged to implement a QM system and may prove its effectiveness through external certification.

Requirements for programme accreditation apply to the new and private higher education sectors: Study programmes provided by Fachhochschulen, private universities and private teacher-training colleges are subject to accreditation processes by national accreditation authorities, such as Austrian Fachhochschulen Council (FHR), Austrian Accreditation Council for private universities (AR), and Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK). In this respect, accreditation can be seen as a warranty of defined quality standards of study programmes in the new sectors. Accreditation decisions are valid for a limited and predefined period. Accreditation is carried out at programme level or – for the private universities – at institutional level. In the Fachhochschulen and private sectors, re-accreditation decisions are based on the results of external evaluations which are carried out by AQA or other internationally recognised quality assurance agencies.

2.3 The relevance of institutional quality management

The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) emphasise the responsibility of higher education institutions for quality assurance. It is a characteristic of the Austrian higher education system that the development of internal QM systems is explicitly laid down in the law for all sectors (public and private universities, Fachhochschulen and teacher-training colleges)[4]. Despite the legal obligation to implement QM systems, there are no specifications as regards their structure. It is up to each higher education institution to determine which instruments or procedures to apply, at which organisational levels the QM processes are implemented and which competencies the organisational units of the internal quality assurance have. This allows institutions to develop systems and processes in consistency with their own targets and requirements, and to use external support for this purpose when needed.

In practice, most higher education institutions have set up and expanded organisational units for quality assurance and evaluation. At present, these units are mostly assigned to the university management and perform co-ordination and the development of internal quality assurance procedures and evaluation.

In all universities, teaching is reviewed by students through course evaluations. It is to be noted that the frequency, comprehensiveness and consequences of such course evaluations vary widely. Universities increasingly involve graduates in the assessment of teaching, often in connection with the establishment of alumni associations.

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4   Cf § 14 Abs 1 UnivG; § 2 Abs 3 FHStG, § 4 Abs 4 UniAkkG; § 33 University Act;§ 4 Abs 2 Zi 5 DUK-Gesetz.

Several universities have subjected individual branches of study or faculties to international peer reviews and certification. These are either organised by the universities themselves or through external quality assurance agencies at the choice of the university. Research performance is generally assessed through internal reporting systems and, in some cases, through peer reviews.

Until now, the various procedures for external quality assurance as well as the formal accountability of universities have hardly referred to the institutions' internal quality management and quality development.

Public universities commit themselves to quality assurance and evaluation through performance agreements with the federal ministry. These commitments are referred to in the universities' reports which give account of the progress of quality assurance schemes set out in the performance agreement. It is to be expected that external evidence of institutional quality management will become more important.

As mentioned above, the (re)accreditation process for study programmes of Fachhochschulen and for private universities requires external evaluation, carried out by AQA or any other recognised non-Austrian QA agencies, which focuses primarily on teaching, research and organisation. The implementation of a QM system remains as one aspect of a broader spectrum of evaluation criteria and questions [5][6].

2.4 Austrian organisations for external quality assurance

The creation of new sectors of higher education as well as the increase of interest for quality assurance in a European higher education area, are significant factors for the establishment of the following three Austrian organisations for external quality assurance:

- The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) was founded in 2004 on the initiative of public and private universities, Fachhochschulen, the national student union and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research. AQA provides external evaluation, audit and certification for universities and Fachhochschulen in line with national legal requirements and international standards.
- The Austrian Fachhochschulen Council (FHR) was established in 1993 through the FH studies act which regulates the creation of FH study programmes. Its primary responsibility is to accredit FH study programmes.
- The Austrian Accreditation Council (AR) was founded in 1999 through the accreditation act for private universities. It is the responsible authority for the accreditation of private universities and their study programmes.

All three agencies are involved in international co-operation and networks. In 2007 they underwent external evaluations based on the ESG. The FHR and AR reviews were organised nationally, whereas the AQA review was coordinated by ENQA.

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5   Evaluation decree of the FH Council, EvalVO 5/2004 (current version).
6   Accreditation Council's guidelines for re-accreditation http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/files/PDF-Reakkreditierung.pdf

2.5 Challenges to the future development of quality assurance

2.5.1 INCREASING RELEVANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

The ESG emphasise the responsibility of higher education institutions for quality assurance and development. This claim goes together with an increase of self-governance and profile-building of universities. As a consequence, universities need to build up competences and mechanisms that allow for a continuous self-reflection of their performance and steering decisions which are based on evidence.

Although universities are by their nature striving for quality in teaching and research, they show increasing ambitions to assess their performance, and they are beginning to include some feedback into their strategic and operational processes.

Universities need internal commitment of faculties, staff and students to build up an institutional quality culture. The establishment of a QM system often requires a step-by-step approach, where initiatives are set in priority areas, which then radiate to other areas of action.

External assessments can only take place on the basis of real evidence, and on the performance of a QM system. Many universities have progressed in their organisational development, and evidence about the results of reforms can be given over a period of several years.

Given these conditions, AQA has developed and implemented a scheme offering support and expertise when the universities set up and document their quality management in specific areas of performance (e.g. studies, research, human resource development, etc). Independently of this initial support, AQA certifies an effective QM system either in a specific area of performance or for the whole institution. The performance of a QM system is assessed through an audit against six standards which describe a quality cycle and follow the ESG.

Quality audits are seen as an appropriate option for higher education institutions that have been performing for a longer time period (at least a decade) and have established internal processes for quality assurance. Austrian public universities formally welcome this type of quality assurance that limits the costs of external evaluations and respects an institution's own ability for handling quality assurance[7].

2.5.2 INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

European co-operation of universities and the mobility of students, staff and graduates are the main motive for quality assurance being a core objective of the Bologna process.

The Bologna process has been a stimulus for the creation of schemes for external quality assurance. Although quality assurance, certification and accreditation primarily take place in a national context, there is an increasing request for international visibility and recognition of good quality.

External quality assurance is expected to satisfy the need to protect interests of students, especially in new higher education sectors. It should support the self-responsibility of higher education institutions and contribute to quality development. The current practice of Austrian public universities proves the openness towards evaluation and certification following international standards. Public universities attach secondary importance to national accreditation schemes[8].

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7   Position of the Austrian public universities on quality assurance (Dec. 2007)
    http://www.uniko.ac.at/upload/Positionspapier_Qualitaetssicherung_Beschluss_031207_(2).pdf
8   Ibid.

Universities in Austria increasingly demand internationally recognised certificates or accreditation processes. Such certificates are expected to form a basis for mutual trust and to support universities in their international co-operation (e.g. through joint study programmes, joint research and mobility). Certification may be sought for study programmes or for the performance of an institution.

2.5.3 THE ESG SHOULD OPEN UP TO FURTHER AREAS OF PERFORMANCE OF A UNIVERSITY

The ESG have a strong impetus on the development of quality assurance in Austria. The Bologna process in general and the ESG in particular have made external quality assurance more dynamic and supported the exchange of experience with other European systems.

However, a strong focus on teaching and learning runs a risk that other performance areas of universities – such as research management – might be disregarded. Austrian universities commit themselves to set up institutional quality assurance systems. This includes an understanding of quality assurance as a transversal matter that integrates all functional areas of a university. From this perspective, the ESG should address research as well as the organisational development (e.g. human resources) of a university.

2.6 Conclusions

Quality assurance is a high priority in higher education development in Austria. All types of higher education devote considerable efforts to their organisational development and are open to external quality assurance with a formative character and – especially in the case of public universities – international relevance. Accreditation has an important role in the successful development of new higher education sectors.

Over the years different procedures for external quality assurance have been established for the various sectors. At the same time the higher education sectors have been called by law to take responsibility, and to develop internal quality assurance systems.

Within the upcoming years, a focus on the institutional governance and the convergence of the different approaches of external quality assurance towards a national framework of quality assurance can be expected.

Chapter 3:
ESG and the current QA trends in Spain: more than just a change

Gemma Rauret Dalmau, Director of ANECA
Cecilia de la Rosa González, Head of the Internal Quality Unit of ANECA

3.1 A decade of development

Ten years have passed since the Bologna Declaration. During this time, all the signatory countries to the Bologna process, including Spain, have worked ceaselessly to achieve the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area.

From 1995 to 2003, quality assurance in Spain was primarily based on the University Quality Plans. The National University Quality Assessment Plan (PNECU) was established by the Royal Decree 1947/95 and carried out between 1996 and 2000. This plan was the result of the first initiatives in the field of quality assurance arising from the experimental programmes (1992 – 1995), which aimed at validating a methodology of institutional assessment. This means that Spain, like the rest of Europe, began its assessment activities over a decade ago. The objectives of PNECU were the following: to foster institutional assessment, to provide a standard compatible methodology in the context of the European Union as well as to provide objective information that could be used as a basis for decision-making by the different bodies within their field of action.

Subsequently the second University Quality Plan was implemented through the Royal Decree 408/2001, in force from 2001 to 2003. Through this Plan, institutional assessment continued and, in keeping up with those already existing in the European Union, new methodologies were developed. The increased participation of the Autonomous Communities in the development and management of the Plan led to the creation of assessment agencies of the Autonomous Communities.

The University Coordination Board, through its Secretariat General, was the body responsible for the administration of the aforementioned quality plans.

The University Act 6/2001 of 21 December 2001 set up the National Quality Assessment and Accreditation Agency, which together with the autonomous agencies[9], would be responsible for carrying out the tasks of teaching, university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions. The General Conference on University Policy, established in 2007, regulates the conditions of cooperation and mutual recognition among agencies.

To give an example of these years of assessment, the total number of assessments, which were carried out within the institutional assessment programmes between 1995 and 2006, was 1,959; while the total number of degrees issued in Spain over this period[10] was 2,685.

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9   Currently there are autonomous agencies in the following Autonomous Communities: Andalusia, Aragón, Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Madrid, Valencia, Galicia, Basque Country and the Balearic Isles.

10 Data obtained from the publication 'Oferta Universitaria 2005'.

The Institutional Assessment Programme developed by ANECA, together with similar programmes of other autonomous agencies, evaluate university teaching activities intended for obtaining official titles that are valid nationwide.

	DEGREES /BRANCH OF KNOWLEDGE*	DEGREES ASSESSED BY ANECA 2003–2006	
		Nº	%
Social and Legal Sciences	1008	156	15%
Teaching Education	828	107	13%
Humanities	384	50	13%
Experimental Sciences	263	39	15%
Health Sciences	202	27	13%
Total Degrees	**2685***	**379**	**14%**

* This data has been derived from the publication 'University Supply 2005 ' published by the Council of Universities (Consejo de Universidades).

Chart 1. Number of degrees per branch of knowledge in relation with number of assessments carried out by ANECA between 2003–2006

Over the 2003–2006 period, the number of degrees assessed in Spain was 645; 59 percent of them were assessed by ANECA.

The path followed over these years has made it possible to create a culture of quality in Spanish universities, by virtue of which the governing bodies, teachers and also the students have assumed a concept that was previously regarded as revolutionary. Those involved have agreed – with few difficulties – to progress towards accreditation, which will bring important consequences for universities.

3.2 The present situation

At present, the task of constructing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is not proving easy. This is because the principle of subsidiarity has not been conducive to uniform progress being made in each country, given that each country has embarked upon the Bologna process in its own independent way. The Spanish system made considerable progress towards convergence by means of the successive adoption of specific regulations. However, it lacked an appropriate legal framework sustaining the EHEA construction.

The regulatory framework of Spain's higher education system is a set of National and Autonomous Community laws that reflect the spirit of the decisions taken in the field of the EHEA.

In 2007, the University Act 6/2001 of 21 December 2001 was amended, marking a further step in the process of adapting to the EHEA. With this amendment, the emphasis was made on harmonising Spanish higher education systems within the framework of the EHEA. To this end, far-reaching changes were required in the structure and organisation of teaching. Those changes are based on three cycles: bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees, and are meant to keep up with the reform established in all countries of the Bologna process. This new arrangement of teaching and official university titles enables a reorientation towards ECTS credits and adaptation to the European framework of qualifications. At the same time it is also focusing on quality assurance systems, which now are no longer voluntary but

compulsory. In order to work efficiently, and to establish confidence on which the qualification accreditation process is based, quality assurance systems have paved the way for the new organisation of teaching activities.

This presents the way forward as regards the process of verification or *ex-ante* accreditation (called VERIFICA) and *ex-post* accreditation (called ACREDITA) of teaching activities.

In a parallel fashion, ANECA has gradually strengthened its position in Europe by virtue of co-operation with other European quality assurance agencies. Proof of this consolidation is the external recognition granted to ANECA and AQU by ENQA, as well as by EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), following a process of international assessment. This recognition has been important for ANECA because it has provided the trigger: (1) to improve the methodology, with a focus on the stringent mechanisms for the development and design of the assessment programmes, (2) to harness efforts, so that the ANECA processes, including appeals procedures, are pre-defined and well-documented; and (3) to concentrate on a new way of working with the autonomous agencies, consisting of co-operation and promotion of good working practices in the institutions. These factors, combined with the desire to demonstrate that what has been done makes sense, are the ingredients that have proved to be essential in the process of obtaining this international recognition.

3.3 ANECA and its activities

The framework of ANECA's action is determined by Spanish laws, which set out the principles on which the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) are based. The Agency focuses its efforts on developing assessment programmes without discharging its duty of supporting universities, so that universities may comply with the requirements of these assessment programmes. This is done in order to meet the responsibilities arising from the legal mandate of assessing new study programmes leading to the *ex-ante* and *ex-post* accreditation of official degrees.

The **VERIFICA programme**[11] arises from compliance with the new regulatory framework set out by the Government. Through this programme, ANECA assesses the curriculum proposals for new degrees adapted to the new European qualifications framework. Accordingly, ANECA is responsible for establishing the verification and accreditation protocols (taking into account the new Royal Decree, the ESG and previous experiences), evaluating the study programmes drawn up by universities and preparing the assessment reports to be submitted to the university councils. The verification of new programmes is obligatory for all the official degrees in Spain. From the academic year 2008–2009 higher education institutions will already be offering study programmes harmonised with the Bologna declaration. Before providing study programmes, universities have to receive a positive evaluation report by ANECA.

The study programmes are assessed by committees consisting of renowned specialists in the academic and/or professional fields. The specialists have international experience in the assessment of degrees and students. Once the assessment is completed, the university may appeal against the verification decision. The appeal is heard by the Appeals Committee, composed of renowned specialists, who are not

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11   Programme for Verification of Degrees and Masters

members of the above-mentioned committees, and by a member of ANECA's Legal Guarantee Unit.

This assessment process seeks to assist universities in their transition towards European convergence and compliance. Accordingly, ANECA has established an intermediate step in this process, whereby the committees prepare a proposed assessment report, which is sent to the university in order for it to submit any clarifications needed, and which will be analysed and taken into account when drawing up the final assessment report.

Ten criteria and guidelines are set out in the VERIFICA programme. The three criteria *"Objectives", "Academic Staff"* and *"Quality Assurance System"* are particularly relevant because they lead to a change in teaching methodologies focused on the goal of teaching in the student's learning process. According to the third criterion, "Objectives", the objectives of the qualification must be pertinent. In addition, graduating students must have acquired the skills required for the qualification to be granted. The ninth criterion, *"Quality Assurance System",* stipulates that the qualification must be controlled, revised and continuously improved by a quality assurance system. The guideline referring to this criterion states that the centre or university in which the qualification is obtained, must operate with a set of procedures associated with quality assurance, as well as with the formal mechanisms for the approval, control, regular revision and improvement of the qualification.

In 2007, prior to the VERIFICA programme, ANECA, in cooperation with AQU Catalunya and the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG), developed the **AUDIT programme[12].** This programme supports and creates procedures for the development, implementation and recognition of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS) of higher education institutions. Two thirds of all Spanish universities signed up for the programme and thus, voluntarily, anticipated the mandatory criterion before beginning with the verification.

With the **DOCENTIA programme[13],** started by ANECA in 2007, the situation is similar. The goal of this programme is to provide a framework of reference, a model and a set of procedures allowing the assessment of teaching activity to be properly undertaken within the framework of internationally recognised practices. This voluntary assessment programme is related to the sixth criterion *"Academic staff"* of the VERIFICA programme. According to the criterion, there should be sufficient academic staff resources in order to deliver the course effectively. Also, academic staff should have an appropriate level of dedication, qualification and experience.

In synthesis, the AUDIT and DOCENTIA programmes have brought about a cultural change within ANECA. The agency has started to work in co-operation with Spanish regional agencies; and the ESG have been gradually included in the assessment standards and processes. Meanwhile, in order to make progress with verification and to meet the time frame for European convergence, the universities have been given support.

As well as the above, ANECA develops other assessment programmes in accordance with a long tradition in the Spanish higher education system: *the Quality Mention*

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12 Recognition Programme of University Institution Quality Assurance Systems
13 Programme of Teaching Performance Assessment and Training

Programme in Doctorate Studies (PDC), *the Teaching Staff Evaluation Programme prior to recruitment* (PEP) and *the State Employees Certification Programme* (ACADEMIA). In keeping up with the new demands of the Spanish regulatory framework, the philosophy of transparency and cooperation fostered by the Bologna declaration and by the ESG, ANECA draws up a series of reports, of which we may mention:

- *ANECA annual report to the Ministry of Education and Science,* providing information on the assessments performed by ANECA and the assessment bodies of the Autonomous Communities;
- The *Public information report on the quality of university degrees,* with the aim of informing the general public of the quality of university degrees on the basis of performance indicators. This is not a ranking, but simply a series of quality indicators which might allow readers to make decisions objectively in accordance with their needs;
- The *Graduate Employment Observatory,* which provides information on the insertion in the labour market of university graduates and the activities carried out by the universities' career offices.

3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the European Higher Education Area requires changes in national quality assurance systems. At the same time and, above all, an appropriate legal framework needs to be established in conjunction with decision-making and active efforts by the institutions that are responsible for leading and guiding higher education institutions throughout this transition process.

The new Spanish laws, and the principles set out in Bologna and the external assessments of ANECA, have all laid the foundations for a cultural change within the agency. Such change consists of collaborating effectively with regional assessment agencies, and of considering the ESG as a blueprint for the design and development of new verification and certification programmes.

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Ley por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 6/2001 de 21 de diciembre, de Universidades de 2007 (LOMLOU).

REAL DECRETO 1393/2007, de 29 de octubre, por el que se establece la ordenación de las enseñanzas universitarias oficiales.

Chapter 4: The Bologna Process in the Holy See: origins and implementation

Father Franco Imoda, President, Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO)

4.1 Background

Since joining the Bologna Process on 19 September 2003 in Berlin, the Holy See has been actively involved in its developments, especially through the Congregation for Catholic Education, which is the department of the Holy See responsible for governing and coordinating higher education within the Church. Since 2003, a Bologna Process Commission has been established within the Congregation for Catholic Education in order to determine the effect of the Bologna Process on ecclesiastical faculties, and to take part in seminars organised by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The Bologna Process Commission is composed of 10 members (from five European countries) having both administrative and academic competence, experience and knowledge. European ecclesiastical universities, faculties and institutes have been informed by the Congregation for Catholic Education on the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement and internal quality assurance procedures, and have been requested by the same Congregation to introduce them (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, internal quality assurance procedures). The students of Roman ecclesiastical universities have organised themselves into the Conference of the Representatives of Students of Pontifical Universities and elected their President. The Holy See has sent a delegation to the European ministerial summits of Berlin, Bergen and London, and has been represented in the BFUG since joining the Bologna Process. The seminar, co-organised with UNESCO-CEPES and the Council of Europe, on "The Cultural Heritage and Academic Values of the European University and Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area", held in Rome on 31 March – 1 April 2006, was an initiative of the Holy See. In 2007, a new step was taken with the establishment of the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Faculties (AVEPRO).

4.2 The specific features of the higher education system of the Holy See

The universities and faculties of which the Holy See bears the responsibility are classified into two types according to the goals and contents of the study programmes: ecclesiastical universities and faculties, and Catholic universities. Ecclesiastical faculties may stand alone (free-standing) within an ecclesiastical or a Catholic university, or within a state university.

With Christian faith as their basis, all Catholic universities teach and carry out research in the disciplines common to all universities. These universities and university-level colleges (over one thousand throughout the world) award civil degrees and therefore do not depend on the Holy See in the same manner as ecclesiastical universities and faculties. Consequently, the recognition of degrees issued by Catholic universities is the same as that of the degrees granted by state universities. Catholic universities follow the academic legislation and structure of the respective nations.

They are governed by Canon (Church) Law, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (and the ordinances for its local application) and their statutes.

Ecclesiastical universities, faculties and institutions are engaged in teaching and research in the religious sciences proper to the Church, namely those areas that deal especially with Christian revelation, along with various related disciplines. Therefore, through the content of this teaching and research activity, ecclesiastical institutions participate in the mission of evangelisation. They are governed by the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* of 1979.[14] They also confer degrees under the authority of the Holy See (cf. Can. 816–817 *Code of Canon Law* 1983). Only ecclesiastical faculties and their affiliated, aggregated or incorporated institutions[15] are affected by the Holy See's adherence to the Bologna Declaration.

The total number of ecclesiastical institutions is 651, of which 372 are in Europe. They are listed in the *Annuario Pontificio*, the official yearbook of the Holy See. Depending on national legislation, these institutions and the academic degrees they confer may or may not be recognised by the state in which they are located. Ecclesiastical institutions Ð both free-standing and belonging to catholic or civil universities Ð are governed by the jurisdiction of the Holy See through the Congregation for Catholic Education and are intended for both ecclesiastical and lay students.

The structure of ecclesiastical studies organised by the Apostolic Constitution is constituted by three cycles: Baccalaureate, License and Doctoral levels.

4.3 Quality Assurance and the Holy See's Agency AVEPRO

The safeguarding of quality constitutes a moral obligation of the Church, which is called upon to exercise its responsibility towards the resources that God has entrusted to it. Numerous initiatives in favour of the promotion of quality are constantly prompted by the concern and readiness of institutions themselves and their administrators, of local churches and religious congregations. The Holy See expresses a similar concern through the solicitous work and care of the Congregation for Catholic Education. The newly-established AVEPRO has received the approval of the Holy Father Benedict XVI and has been founded by the Secretariat of State in September 2007. AVEPRO is intended to reinforce awareness of quality assurance through the implementation of new tools and procedures that should be well adapted to present-day requirements and should meet the need embodied by the Bologna Process in Europe to progress towards unified standards.

In accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), AVEPRO, though being under the supreme authority of the Holy See, is autonomous in the development of its quality assurance processes and will not be influenced by stakeholders, ecclesiastical higher education institutions or by the ecclesiastical authorities responsible for them.

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14 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jpii_apc_15041979_sapientia-christiana_en.html

15 A number of institutions are affiliated, aggregated and incorporated to ecclesiastical faculties. They grant academic degrees under the authority of the ecclesiastical faculty, which with approval of the Holy See's Congregation for Catholic Education, is responsible for the academic quality and standard of the studies offered in these institutions. The "affiliating", "aggregating" or "incorporating" ecclesiastical faculty, which may be situated in the same country, or outside, oversees the courses and awards the degrees. An "affiliation" awards the baccalaureate degree concluding the first cycle ("baccalaureatus"); an "aggregation" offers both the first and second cycles, granting the licentiate ("licentia"); an "incorporation" may offer either the second cycle or the third (which concludes with the doctorate or "doctoratus"), or both.

In this early stage of its existence, the agency, under the Presidency of Father Franco Imoda S.J., former Rector of the Gregorian University, and with the support of the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Bologna Process Commission, is working at setting up its internal organisational structure, including a Board of Directors, a Board of Advisers, a pool of experts, and administrative staff. AVEPRO is also preparing the necessary tools for its activities, such as a handbook, references and benchmarks, a database and a website.

In the choice and development of its criteria and procedures, AVEPRO will have to take into account both the ESG and the specificity of ecclesiastical studies, keeping in mind the definition of quality given by the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*. The notion of quality can thus be understood as the capacity of ecclesiastical universities, faculties and institutes to meet the aims defined in the Apostolic Constitution as follows:

- Cultivate and promote their own disciplines through scientific research, and especially deepen knowledge of Christian revelation and of matters connected with it (Art. 3 § 1);
- Prepare students (both ecclesiastic and lay) for the priestly ministry, for teaching the sacred sciences and for the more arduous tasks of the apostolate and other activities of the Church (Intro III);
- Promote the continuing permanent education of the ministers of the Church (Art. 3 § 2);
- Present the truths of Christian revelation to the people of the present day in a manner adapted to various cultures and considering the new issues that arise (Art. 3 § 1);
- Collaborate, in accordance with their own nature and in close communion with the Hierarchy, with the local and the universal Church, in the work of evangelisation (Art. 3 § 3).

For the promotion and assessment of quality assurance in ecclesiastical academic institutions and within the limits of its competency and capacity, AVEPRO will carry out the following activities:

- Help ecclesiastical academic institutions to develop a quality culture and to make improvements in the attainment of their own ends through information, contacts and other support of the same kind;
- Develop, define and update procedures for internal and external quality assurance processes according to either ecclesiastical or civil requirements (judicial or practical) at regional, national and international levels;
- Plan and carry out external assessment of single institutions through the visits of experts, and to process the final corresponding reports;
- Elaborate and suggest convenient measures to be taken after external assessments and actuate follow-up procedures to ensure that these measures are implemented;
- Act as a source of reliable information from within and from without the field of academic institutions;
- Carefully choose experts for external assessment processes and offer them a basic as well as continued training;
- Promote the creation and distribution of means and adequate subsidies for the promotion of quality;
- Carry out other activities related with its own aims according to the requirements of time and place.

Chapter 5: National experiences and future challenges: Albania

Dhurata Bozo, Director, Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (PAAHE), Tirana, Albania

The quality assurance (QA) system of higher education (HE) in Albania was established in 2000, based on the Higher Education Act of 1999. The current legal basis for the operation of QA institutions in Albania is the new Higher Education Act which came into force on 1 July, 2007.

The QA institutions in HE in Albania are the Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (PAAHE) and the Accreditation Council (AC). The two institutions started operating respectively in 2001 and 2003. PAAHE and AC are the only legally recognised public, as well as national institutions, responsible for external quality assurance of public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) and programmes in Albania. PAAHE is the only public institution responsible for the evaluation of quality in HE. The AC is a collegial body, supported and technically assisted by PAAHE. The Higher Education Act requires that PAAHE and AC prepare and submit public annual reports.

The scope of the QA institutions are HE programmes and institutions operating in the country, including universities, academies and colleges, both public and private. There are 12 public HEIs in Albania, six of them are nationwide, located in the capital Tirana, and six are regional. The HEIs offer about 200 programmes of different levels; this number does not include the new programmes which are offered under the new dual system recently introduced as a consequence of the Bologna process. Since 2002, fifteen private HEIs have been operative in the country. They are all located in the capital, and two of them offer joint degrees with other European universities.

QA processes in Albanian HE comprise:
- The internal QA systems and mechanisms which are under the responsibility of the HEIs themselves, but harmonised with the external QA processes;
- External QA processes, including external evaluations, performed by PAAHE or any other agency that is a member of ENQA, as stated in the new law;
- Accreditation, which is the process of formal recognition of HEIs or HE programmes in the Albanian territory. The AC is the only responsible body for judgement of the review outcome. The AC, based on and coherent with the external peer review and outcomes, elaborates recommendations on the accreditation decision. The final accreditation decision is made by the government.

The external QA institutions are in charge of:
- Cyclical evaluation and accreditation of the existing institutions and programmes in public and private HEIs. According to the new Higher Education Act, the interval between two subsequent evaluations is six years. Until 2007 the interval had been four years;

- Evaluation and pre-accreditation (so-called *initial evaluation*) of new HE programmes in both public and private HEIs. Initial programme evaluation and institutional project evaluation are prerequisites for private HEIs to obtain the licence to open and operate. Before issuing degrees and before completion of a full study course, a previously licensed institution should undergo a full process of evaluation and accreditation both at institutional and programme levels (first accreditation). If the institution does not apply for such an accreditation or receives a negative accreditation decision, the institution and/or programme will not be formally recognised in Albanian territory;
- Analytical and system-wide analysis as a base for decision or policy making in the HE sector;
- Assisting HEIs in setting up and implementing internal QA systems, so that the latter are consistent with the external QA processes. Existing internal QA systems and/or procedures are thoroughly audited during the external review;
- Publishing information and data dealing with evaluation and accreditation processes and outcomes;
- Publishing information and data on HEIs and programmes for the public;
- Contributing to the decision-making and general policy of the HE system in the country.

PAAHE operates on publicly published criteria, requirements and procedures. The agency, in collaboration with HEIs, examines internal QA systems and assists HEIs in establishing such systems effectively. PAAHE is also responsible for announcing and publishing the evaluation outcome and reports, as well as other data concerning QA in HE. The agency has published and promoted the (1) procedures for self-evaluation and external evaluation; (2) criteria, indicators and aspects of evaluations; and (3) guidelines for internal and external evaluation in both Albanian and English. All information is public and transparent and can be found on the website of the agency, along with the annual report of the agency.

The agency publishes all data regarding the HE system and HEIs, the external evaluation reports and outcomes, as well as the accreditation decisions for each evaluation. In some evaluations of public HEIs, foreign experts have also been involved as peers. The evaluation procedure allows and assures objectivity, transparency and impartiality, and avoids conflicts of interest in the process and outcomes.

The Accreditation Council is composed of high profile members from various academic and scientific fields, as well as from the business and employment sectors. The AC makes judgment and issues recommendations for accreditation also where the external evaluation is carried out by an agency other than PAAHE.

In addition, the AC approves the evaluation criteria and procedures and, based on specific public criteria, the composition of external evaluation teams on a case-by-case basis. The AC is also responsible for the appeals lodged by HEIs. The recommendations of the Council may be positive, negative or conditional accreditation. If the AC recommends conditional accreditation, the HEI in question is informed of the conditions, time allowed and measures to be taken in order to obtain a positive accreditation. The agency that performed the evaluation is responsible for providing a follow-up procedure after each individual evaluation process.

The new Higher Education Act will lead to the establishment of permanent commissions. International experts will be invited to be members of these commissions. Both national and international members will be recruited through an open call and selected against public criteria. Student representatives, as required by the new law, will also be permanent members of the commissions.

A typical evaluation procedure consists of the steps and processes listed below:
- self-evaluation performed by the institution or unit under evaluation;
- external evaluation by an expert panel;
- training of the internal and external panels by the agency;
- external evaluation by the expert panel including a site visit;
- submission of the draft of external evaluation report;
- feedback from the HEI;
- submission of the evaluation report to the AC;
- recommendation for the accreditation decision by the AC;
- decision from the ministry or government;
- publication of evaluation reports and results and accreditation decisions;
- follow-up plan and actions to be followed by the HEI;
- appeal to the AC, if any.

PAAHE has had, in place, a system of self-evaluation since 2006. The system uses several self-evaluation indicators covering activities such as the number of evaluations performed. During 2001–2007, PAAHE has performed the following evaluations:
- institutional evaluation of around 50% of public HEIs. These include 59 faculties or departments out of 192 in 12 public universities. 90 evaluations are in process;
- 107 programme evaluations, out of 205. 107 are in progress;
- overall institutional evaluation of four private HEIs, out of 15 operating in the country;
- 23 programme evaluations in private HEIs, in parallel with institutional evaluation;
- system-wide analysis of staff and students in the HEIs for the years 2005 and 2006, based on a set of evaluation indicators.

In the figure below are shown the evaluations performed by the agency since 2000:
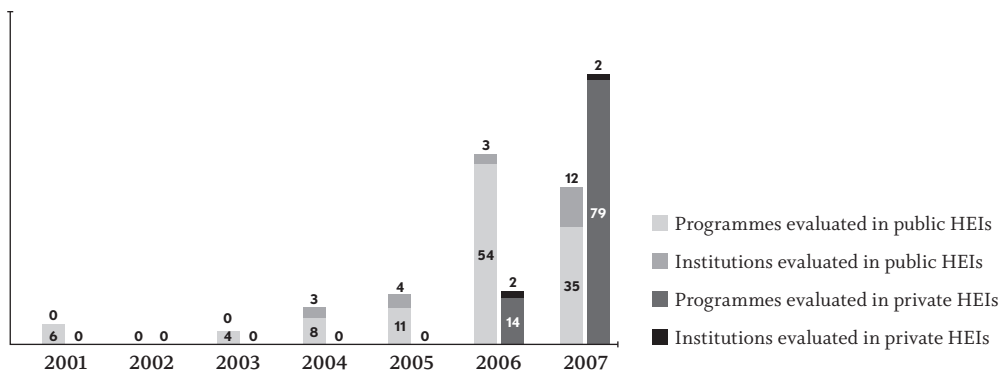

Figure 1: HE programmes and institutions evaluated by PAAHE

Networking, internationalisation, involvement of external experts as peers and the establishment of a permanent internal QA system are the main short term priorities of PAAHE. In the last 3–4 years, PAAHE has particularly increased its contacts and strengthened collaboration with important international organisations and networks operating the field of QA of HE.

The agency has established contacts with ENQA and started the self-evaluation process of its activities, drawing on international expertise during this process as well. After the self-evaluation, the agency will officially submit to ENQA a request to coordinate its external review.

The agency has been a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 2002 and of the Network of Eastern and Central Quality Assurance Agencies (CEE Network) since 2003. The Director of PAAHE is currently a co-opted member of the INQAAHE Board representing the CEE Network. PAAHE also collaborates with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other organisations operating in the Higher Education field.

As a contribution to the further networking of QA agencies in the region, PAAHE hosted the General Assembly of the CEE Network in Durres, Albania, on 23–24 May, 2008. This event occurred in conjunction with a workshop on regional cooperation. The support of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) assured the participation, as observers, of representatives from countries that do not have an established QA agency or agencies that are not members of regional networks. A sub-regional meeting with representatives from Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova and Kosovo, coordinated by ERI SEE, took place after the GA meeting.

Chapter 6: Quality assurance in Romanian higher education

Prof. R.M. DAMIAN, Director, Quality Evaluation Department, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ARACIS

6.1 The beginning: a short history (1993–2004)

After the popular uprising and political earthquake which took place in December 1989, leading to the fall of communism in Romania, higher education became one of the most dynamic driving forces of change in the social and cultural life. The process of change was a self-starting one, being triggered by the need for education of the young generation and by the high social status that university graduates had preserved even under 50 years of a communist regime. Practically overnight, new initiatives in higher education lead to the creation of private universities.

Establishing educational institutions took place in a legal vacuum. At the beginning of the post-communist period, a state decree allowed for the establishment of private commercial companies. Hence, a commercial company providing the demanded higher education "services" was considered by the new academic entrepreneurs as an acceptable market response. In fact, the demand for higher education far exceeded the enrolment capacities of the existing state universities, which were – at the beginning – slow in adapting to the newly emerging economic environment. Private institutions took advantage of this situation and relied heavily on academics of state universities who were confronted with the effects of high inflation rates and low public salaries.

However, most of the academics and the public at large were uneasy with educational institutions functioning as commercial companies. At that time, the key concern of the private educational entrepreneurs was to secure basic premises for providing teaching facilities and to charge enrolment fees which would yield a private profit. It was under such circumstances that public pressure increased for providing, assuring and improving the basic institutional infrastructure and teaching staff necessary for a higher education (HE) institution. These concerns also reflected on public HE institutions which tried to meet the demand for higher education with new study programmes as well as by increasing, rebranding and diversifying their traditional educational offer.

The academic world responded quickly to those challenges, identifying them as a strong signal for the impending reform of HE in Romania. In 1992, a team of university professors published a white paper on higher education which laid the backdrop for a consistent policy, which was followed, in its general terms, by all successive governments.

The Law for Quality Assurance no. 88/1993 on Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Recognition of Diplomas created the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEAA), and placed CNEAA in charge of procedures for evaluation and accreditation of institutions and study programmes. This law on QA in Higher Education has preceded two more comprehensive laws: the Law of Education no. 84/1995 and the Law of the Statute of

the Teaching Personnel no. 128/1997, which are still the major governing laws in the domain, with many subsequent amendments.

The PHARE and World Bank projects for HE (1996 – 2001) played an important role in further reforms. After extensive negotiations with the successive Romanian governments, the three-component project started in early 1996. The components of the projects were the reform of university (1) administration[16], (2) of programmes and (3) of research[17]. The main results related to quality assurance were:

- Improving administrative structures and training of leaders and staff in universities;
- Strengthening the position and extending the activities of the National Higher Education Funding Council and of the National Higher Education Research Council. These were created by law in 1995 to support the ministry of education in funding universities and evaluating research;
- Development of new and flexible study programmes (interdisciplinary studies and master and doctoral programmes) to meet the demands of the free-market economy in economics, communication, harmonisation with EU legislation, social sciences and environmental protection;
- Enhancement of laboratory research infrastructure, introducing competition for funding university research;
- Development of new procedures and structures for improving student services.

When the Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 (Romania was part of the signatory countries), the Romanian HE system was undergoing significant and much needed transformation, starting with its framework and secondary legislation (government decisions, ministerial orders). This dynamic process was not followed consistently and factually by the academic community. For instance, in 1996, the introduction of the ECTS system in some universities was not immediately made effective by the others, neither was the role of general administrative director in some universities always matching to the competences given to that position by law. Making the academic world understand the concepts, role and benefits of the Bologna process became a priority of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (MoERY), as well as drafting and approving preparatory secondary legislation. Thus, the holistic approach of QA in education was presented as a priority at a conference organised by the Ministry of Education and Research at the University of Bucharest in November 2003. Numerous other meetings with the National Council of Rectors, university leadership and students, were organised. In 2004, the Law 288 on the Structure of University Studies was approved by the Romanian parliament, introducing the three cycles and ECTS in all public and private universities.

6.2 The present days: ARACIS (2005–2009)

Assuming that both outcomes and expectations are context-dependent, a presentation of the developments in the Romanian system of quality assurance and accreditation, and of the system of higher education may help provide a clearer understanding of some

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16   PHARE programme – 8.6 million ECU
17   Working Budget – 50 million USD loan and 25 million USD contribution of the Romanian government

of the options and challenges facing ARACIS today, when performing its activities. Also, it might be useful for the reader to learn about what we consider good practice, but also on the shortcomings of the procedures and evaluation process itself.

6.2.1 LEGAL PROVISIONS

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)[18] began functioning in 2005, being instituted by the legal provisions of the Government Urgency Ordinance no. 75/2005 regarding quality assurance in education. In 2006, some provisions of the ordinance were amended by the parliament and the ordinance became the Law 87/2006. This law conforms to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)[19] and has provisions regarding quality assurance in education as a whole, while also referring specifically to quality assurance and accreditation in higher education.

ARACIS is an autonomous public institution of national interest, thus being a legal entity with its own income and expenditure budget. Besides being financially independent, the agency is independent of any political or other external influence.

The agency is lead by a Council of 15 members, with high academic and moral status. The composition of the Council is renewed every three years for ten of its members. The term of office is three years, renewable once. Rectors and other persons holding official positions within the presidency, government or parliament of Romania cannot become members of the Council. The operational management is assured by an Executive Board formed by five of the Council's members.

ARACIS has developed, through a transparent methodology, a dedicated database of external evaluators. The ARACIS Register of Evaluators contains more than 1300 persons, namely professors, senior lecturers or first degree researchers. External evaluators are trained to apply the methodology of the Council in order to carry out the external quality assessments. To ensure consistency and impartiality in evaluations, the Council set up 13 standing commissions formed by an odd number of members.

The operational activities of the agency are performed according to the "Methodology for external evaluation, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance" approved by the Romanian Government Decision No. 1418/2006.

The methodology was developed in the context of the present main features of Romanian HE system, which may be briefly described as follows:

- *Diversity* resulting from co-existence of state and private universities, existence of comprehensive, multidisciplinary universities and of universities "specialised" in individualised disciplinary fields (i.e. technical, medicine, performing arts, agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, economics etc.), continuing emergence of new study programmes, universities and organisations starting to run cross-border or joint study programmes;
- *Distributed learning*, based on multiplication of programme formulas such as establishment of territorial branches with or without quality evaluation and

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18 Agenţia Română pentru Asigurarea Calităţii în Învăţământul Superior
19 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (Helsinki 2009)

approval by the MoERY, distance learning, part-time learning or other learning programmes;

- *Promotion of good practice in academic performance* in Romanian universities in spite of prolonged under-funding, improvement of quality as the main objective of all HE institutions and the MoERY, which approved in 2001 the introduction of quality indicators, affecting in 2007 25% of the core funding of state universities;
- *Active participation to the European Higher Education Are*a of all accredited Romanian higher education institutions (HEIs), public and private, through ERASMUS-SOCRATES and other European programmes or via bi- or multilateral cooperation based on the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy.

The methodology takes into account the academic culture in Romanian universities and also the problems HE institutions had to face when confronted with a long-term transition period without adequate financial support for education and research, a situation which is now improving due to recent evolutions in the society and governmental policy.

The definitions and practical procedures are detailed in the "Guide of the Activities of Quality Evaluation of University Study Programs and Higher Education Institutions" developed and approved by the ARACIS Council. The guide is structured in five parts: (i) authorisation/accreditation of licence (bachelor) and master's programmes (Bologna "first" and "second" cycles); (ii) external quality evaluation for accreditation at institutional level (iii) external quality evaluation at institutional level of accredited institutions (iv) external evaluation of teachers' training departments in HE institutions; (v) external evaluation of distance learning departments and distance learning programmes offered by universities. All working documents, methodology and guides are made public on the agency's website at http://www.aracis.ro and published as brochures which are made available to all the stakeholders on request.

6.2.2 ACTIVITIES

ARACIS started its evaluation activities in the final quarter of 2006. The pilot programme of external evaluation of quality was done on contractual basis for 11 public and private accredited universities. The scope of the pilot project was to identify the areas of improvement at institutional level together with the universities, as well as to establish a more coherent image of the quality of HE in Romania. The process involved academic and non-academic staff and students. Following the evaluation, the universities involved drafted an action plan to improve internal quality assurance activities and results.

The agency has also performed the external evaluation of 283 first cycle (licence) and nine distance learning study programmes, at the request of the interested institutions. These evaluations aim at provisional authorisation, accreditation or periodic quality evaluation. ARACIS has also performed the external evaluation of 580 full-time and distance learning second cycle (master's) programmes, aiming at accreditation, at the request of the interested institutions.

After one year of activity ARACIS asked for feedback from the universities and evaluators about the functioning of the agency and the evaluation process. The feedback revealed the positive impact within the Romanian universities that were

evaluated. The universities considered that all ARACIS documentation was detailed and ready to use. The organisation, structure and staffing of the agency was considered as giving it full credibility.

The representatives of the universities that were evaluated appreciated that the methodology helps universities in assuring quality and strengthening their quality policies, as it covers all three complementary areas of quality assurance, namely institutional capacity, educational efficiency and quality management.

Concerning the evaluation process:
Strong points: the methodology and guide were well accepted by the academic community in Romania and were seen as realistic and insuring some continuity with previous experience with CNEAA. The documents used in the process and the process itself were clear and applicable, being effective at this new stage of thorough evaluation of quality in Romanian higher education institutions. The evaluation process and the pilot programme made clear the fact that only slight adjustments of the methodology were needed. The composition of the evaluation teams – comprising Romanian and foreign evaluators – contributes to transparency and may initiate better exchanges between Romanian and other European universities.

Weak points: it was found that there was a lack of consistency between the methodology and the guide as regards some details. A few parts of the guide were considered too extensive and a number of standards needed to be revised in order to become more relevant in aspects related to the scientific research. Some standards, mainly related to career tracking and the employment rate of graduates, were considered too "demanding" in relation to the present social and economic reality and development of Romania. Some standards were considered not detailed enough and some (even the same ones in a number of cases) too permissive. Some student evaluators, who were generally very active in the process, were not happy with some positive conclusions: they would have wanted the evaluation reports to be more critical. The need to move towards benchmarking was accepted by all universities involved but there were still only a few European references in this respect.

The strong points about the functioning of the agency were already presented, but also some critical points were raised. The agency concluded the following from the feedback: (1) The selection of evaluators should not only be based on the CVs but on their effective contribution within the academic community. (2) The evaluators should be given permanent re-training. (3) Stronger cooperation is needed with the MoERY in order to develop new standards for evaluation of doctoral programmes and doctoral schools, post-graduate studies and Life Long Learning. (4) The visibility in the press was lacking and it should be improved as only the negative aspects received publicity. (5) The agency would need a larger, more suitable location. (6) There is an urgent need to develop a new database and acquire new software.

6.2.3 SHORT SUMMARY OF OTHER ACTIVITIES
ARACIS wants to have a European dimension in its activities and bring in the experiences of other agencies. The most relevant international activities are:
- participation in several international meetings and continuing the international presence of the former CNEEA;

- conclusion of international cooperation agreements with similar agencies, such as the one signed on 22 August 2007 with the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA);
- participation in the PHARE programme[20] on quality assurance. This programme allowed the professional training of 40 internal evaluators from universities' quality departments, 40 external evaluators from ARACIS; 80 experts were initiated to the management of evaluation activities and student centred education;
- organisation of a colloquium on quality assurance, within the Academy of Economic Studies, to present the quality culture and the institutional development of the universities;
- participation in other international activities within the realm of quality assurance organised by INQAAHE, ENQA, AERES, etc.
- participation in an international project, involving seven European QA agencies, on quality of student assessment, including the first workshop in Amsterdam in March 2007 and organising the second workshop in Bucharest in October 2007. The outcome of this project was seen in January 2008 as a proposal of a set of quality indicators in assessment regulations and marking criteria that will be discussed with universities in an estimated number of 20 countries in Europe;
- The Matra Project – Network Education Quality (coordinated by ARACIS, partner Inspectorate for Higher Education, The Netherlands) aims at creating a functional network for communication among higher education institutions and between such institutions and ARACIS, in order to ease and facilitate the evaluation and quality assurance processes. The project will produce a guide of best practices in evaluation to serve as a handbook during the internal evaluations made by each department of the HEIs.

The most important international achievement dating to year 2007 is the acceptance of ARACIS as a Candidate member of ENQA.

6.3 Conclusions

At the moment, more external evaluations of higher education institutions in Romania are needed to have a clear and documented picture of the overall quality of the HE system. The process will continue as, according to the law, all accredited Romanian universities must be evaluated in two years time. This is by no means an easy task for the agency and universities. It requires adequate planning, more training of staff and external evaluators, more foreign experts and reacting quickly to new and unexpected challenges.

The agency itself is subject to permanent quality assurance improvement, in order to gain sustainable national and international credibility. Accordingly, the external evaluation report of the activity of the agency in the first year was completed by a team of Romanian experts. Based on the report, an action plan and improvement programme was approved by the Board and the Council of the agency. ARACIS engages in permanent dialogue with its stakeholders, viz. the parliament, MoERY, universities

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20 TVET/RO/2004/016-772.04.01.02.04.01.03

and organisations of employers. The process of external evaluation of the agency has been initiated, as a step to initiate the procedure for applying for full membership of ENQA and of the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR).

Chapter 7: The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and quality assurance (QA) in the South-Eastern Europe (SEE) region – Opportunities and Challenges:
the Situation in Bulgaria

Todor Shopov, Standing Commission on Education Science, National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA)

7.1 Introduction

This paper is intended to present general information about the implementation of the ESG in the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Bulgaria. There is one accrediting organisation in the country – the NEAA. It accredits all degrees in all fields of study or subject areas. NEAA is an independent organisation.

The following fundamental principles permeate the ESG[21] and are endorsed by NEAA:
- The ESG are to be considered as generic principles, not specific requirements;
- Interests of stakeholders are taken into account in the QA processes;
- Institutional autonomy and responsibility are of central importance;
- External QA secures institutional objectives;
- HEIs and external QA agencies should cooperate and be positively interrelated.

7.2 Quality assurance – the international perspective

Quality assurance across the EHEA is marked by diversity. For example, in 2004 the number of university students in Bulgaria was eight times smaller than in Poland while the population was five times smaller. There were 51 fields of study in Bulgaria compared to 106 in Poland.

In Bulgaria, benchmarking and study visits are practiced in order to avoid "paradigm blindness", or doing things as they have always been done. If the flow of good practices is not considered, only one's own experience is taken into account in the planning, execution and analysis of the review. Consequently, clear criteria and processes (written formulations and descriptions) are developed and published.

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21   Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Helsinki 2009

In December 2006, NEAA became a candidate member of ENQA, and in September 2008 a full member. The agency has signed agreements for cooperation with the French national Evaluation Agency (AERES) and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance of HE (ARACIS). NEAA is a co-founder of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network). The agency staff has also participated actively in the development and implementation of the ESG. In June 2006, NEAA organised an international conference entitled "Institutional evaluation in the EHEA".

7.3 Fundamental principles of accreditation for universities – the Bulgarian perspective

Quality assurance is a means, not an end. At national level, the notion is perceived differently by different stakeholders – teachers, researchers, students, employers (industry, institutions), communities, and society in general. Quality of teaching and research has always been the concern of the universities while employers have been concerned with the quality of graduates' professional skills. QA is a function of the interaction of all stakeholders in the area of HE, and thus the "concert of stakeholders" produces HE of good quality.

It is a controversial claim, but quality should be assured by those who are involved in the teaching and learning processes; the role of the other stakeholders is to offer observations, comments and/or judgments. This is a question which NEAA tries to solve in the evaluation and accreditation process it has adopted, and which is described below.

There is a need for a balance between traditional ideas of the European research universities and the pragmatic liberal approach often identified with the American HE practice. In addition, state control versus autonomy of HEIs should be clarified. The former is a function of the state as such, and the latter is a salient feature of a democratic society in general.

7.4 NEAA – structure and functions

Evaluation and accreditation carried out by NEAA is aimed at both maintaining and improving the level of education and research in HEIs.

The education system includes higher education institutions of three types: universities, specialised institutions (equivalent to universities) and colleges. In Bulgaria, there are 42 universities and other institutions of higher education of which 36 are public and six are private. There are also nine independent colleges and 29 colleges affiliated to universities. The education system is generally under-funded and less efficient than, for example, the Polish system; but, equal to the Romanian and Czech systems.

NEAA was established in 1966. The agency has a Chairman, an Accreditation Council, and nine Standing Committees including a committee on post-accreditation monitoring.

The Accreditation Council has ten members who represent all the major academic fields in the country. The Chairman's term of office is six years.

There are Standing Committees for Education Science, Human Sciences and Arts, Law, Economics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Technical Sciences, Healthcare

and Sports, Agrarian Sciences and Veterinary science. They consist of up to seven members with three-year terms of office; one of them is the Chairman.

The committees elect an ad hoc Commission on Voting, and nominate experts for the expert panels. The expert panels serve with the agency on short-term contracts.

The standing committees propose programme accreditation and educational capacity for one academic year in the respective fields of study. The Accreditation Council passes the decision and reports on to the Rector of the respective HEI and the Minister of Education.

The process of evaluation and accreditation has four steps: self-evaluation, peer review, report of the standing committee and decision-making. Written criteria are developed on the basis of the CIPP model (context, input, process and product evaluation). They are essentially compatible with the "Bergen descriptors" of quality. This set of criteria is based on the idea of equal weight of the three basic institutional activities: teaching, research and management. Evaluation is done by comparing the standards to actual performance. This process yields the relevant information for statements on consistency or discrepancy.

Expert panels are instructed by the standing committees. The success of the evaluation process depends on the selection (expertise) and the work (effort) of the members of the expert panel.

International experts sporadically participate in peer reviews. Students and employers are involved in the evaluation process, and both students and NEAA observers participate in the site visits.

7.5 Example of the work of the Standing Committee on Education Science

The recent programme accreditation in the field of Education Science illustrates the evaluation process and the standards set by NEAA. Information on this accreditation procedure is available and accessible on the NEAA website which also lists all accredited HEIs in Bulgaria.

The evaluation was carried out in 2006–2007 as part of the programme accreditation procedure in pedagogy (Education Science). The numerical assessment scale ranges from the failing grade (2) to the highest grade (5). There are only pass or fail decisions for new programmes. The term of accreditation is six years if a programme achieves grades 4–5, and three years for grade 3.

In this programme accreditation, 12 HEIs were evaluated, and the average grades were 4,24 for teaching, 4,08 for research and 4,07 for management. The overall average grade for the field of pedagogy in Bulgaria was thus 4,12.

7.6 Accreditation of doctoral programmes

Doctoral programmes are accredited at institutional and programme levels by NEAA. The academic requirements and the act of awarding the Doctor's Degree are also taken into consideration. Accordingly, doctoral dissertations should present significant, original scholarly work that contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the subject area.

The current *Law for Academic Degrees and Titles* dates from 1972 and represents a bygone socio-political system. The new *Law for HE* (1995) has introduced some changes, such as the degrees of Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's. New legislation is crucial for the modernisation of doctoral studies. At present, Bulgarian universities do not award

doctoral degrees. The central body responsible for awarding them is the Supreme Attestation Council, which is not directly accountable to the universities. Also, QA at doctoral level is impossible with the current archaic system of a national body controlling all doctoral degrees. Instead, HEIs need to have the right to award PhDs independently.

It is the authors' view that attitudes must change so that the classical humanistic paradigm of education in HE is modified on the basis of modern and constructivist teaching practices.

Cooperation among HEIs is supported in the evaluation and accreditation processes. For example, the University of Sofia has signed contracts with the International Business School of Botevgrad and the Catholic University of Portugal.

7.7 Future prospects

The *Strategic priorities and aims of NEAA for 2007–2010*[22] state that NEAA is a partner of HE institutions and aims to improve its methodology in order to enhance HE quality at national and international levels. NEAA strives to harmonise its activities with the practices of the other ENQA member agencies. Information and communication technologies will be essential in the QA process.

Communication, consultation (feedback) and active engagement of the public and stakeholders in NEAA's QA policies are three effective instruments to form and implement these policies. This democratic process enables trust, transparency, responsibility and accountability.

The process of accreditation should be streamlined and simplified by establishing only one level – either institutional or programme. The current two-level process causes unnecessary strain on the national HE system. Institutional accreditation seems more advantageous as it delegates responsibility to HE institutions, enhances innovation, and provides greater cost-effectiveness.

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22 NEAA 2007, http://www.neaa.government.bg/ (in Bulgarian) СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКИ ПРИОРИТЕТИ И ЦЕЛИ НА НАЦИОНАЛНАТА АГЕНЦИЯ ЗА ОЦЕНЯВАНЕ И КРЕДИТАЦИЯ (2007–2010 г.)

Chapter 8: Quality Assurance in Greek Higher Education Institutions: Introduction and Challenges

Prof. Vassilios J. Papazoglou, Member of the Board, Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA)

8.1 Introduction

In Greece, all higher education institutions (HEIs) are public since the Greek Constitution does not allow for the operation of either non-profit or private ones[23]. HEIs are of two kinds; universities and technological educational institutions (TEIs). There are currently 23 universities[24] and 16 TEIs[25] in Greece, offering degrees in a variety of disciplines. Universities operate programmes at both undergraduate (four-, five- or six-year curricula, depending on the discipline) and graduate (master's and doctoral) levels. TEIs operate programmes only at undergraduate level (four-year curricula, of which the last semester is spent for vocational training), while they can offer graduate programmes at the master's level only in cooperation with a Greek or European university, the latter being the institution that awards the degree.

There is no accreditation procedure for the degrees offered by HEIs. In certain disciplines, such as medicine, law and engineering, there are procedures (e.g. examinations, oral presentations) established and carried out by the relevant professional societies, aiming at providing professional licenses.

Greece is among the last countries in Europe that introduced quality assurance (QA) procedures in higher education, as discussed in the following paragraphs. The main objectives of such procedures are to establish a uniform approach for recording, understanding and systematically assessing the work of departments, schools and institutions, and to adopt all necessary measures in order to assure and improve the quality of work performed by HEIs, within the framework of their academic profile, objectives and mission.

In what follows, an attempt will be made to briefly present the history of QA in HEIs in Greece, followed by an explanation of the legal framework in force since 2005 and the steps taken since. Finally, the challenges facing the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA) as regards implementing the law and establishing a quality culture within the Greek higher education system will be discussed.

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23 Article 16, Section 5 of the Greek constitution states: "Education at university level shall be provided exclusively by institutions that are fully self-governed public law legal persons. These institutions shall operate under the supervision of the state and are entitled to financial assistance from it; they shall operate on the basis of statutorily enacted by-laws…". The present session of parliament is planning to discuss the change of this article, so as to allow the operation of non-public institutions of tertiary education. The forecast, though, is that such a change will not be supported by the necessary majority for a constitutional change.

24 The 23 universities are: Agricultural University of Athens, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens University of Economics and Business, Democritus University of Thrace, Harokopio University, Hellenic Open University, International Hellenic University, Ionion University, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, National Technical University of Athens, Panteion University, University of the Aegean, University of Central Greece, University of Crete, University of Ioannina, University of Macedonia, University of Patras, University of Peloponnese, University of Piraeus, University of Thessaly, University of West Macedonia and Technical University of Crete.

25 The 16 TEIs are: TEI of Athens, TEI of Chalkida, TEI of Crete, TEI of Epirus, TEI of the Ionian Islands, TEI of Kalamata, TEI of Kavala, TEI of Lamia, TEI of Larissa, TEI of Mesologgi, TEI of Patras, TEI of Piraeus, TEI of Serres, TEI of Thessalonica, TEI of West Macedonia and the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education.

8.2 Brief historical review

The first attempts at introducing a legal framework for QA in HEIs took place in the mid-1990s. Proposals by the Ministry of Education were sent to all HEIs. However, most of the proposals, through senate decisions, were either rejected as a whole or sent back to the ministry with substantial amendments. A final attempt took place in the period between 2002–2003 and the proposed legal framework was finally ratified as Law 3374/2005 by the Greek parliament during the summer of 2005[26].

During the same period, several HEIs underwent a QA exercise, at institutional level, either independently or under the auspices of the European Universities Association (EUA)[27].

8.3 The legal framework

The core provisions of the legal framework established by the Law 3374/2005 are:
- Teaching, research and all other services provided by HEIs are subject to continuous evaluation, aimed at assuring and improving the quality of research and teaching, curricula and all other services provided by them, within the framework of their mission;
- Accountability to society and the widest possible transparency are established as a means of reinforcing the autonomy of HEIs.

Through the same law, the basic evaluation criteria and indicators for the QA of HEIs are established, the evaluation process and the corresponding bodies are defined, and an independent administrative body is established. This body, the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA) is responsible for organising and overseeing the whole process.

In particular, HQAA (or ADIP from the Greek initials) was established as an independent agency, whose president is elected, as required, by the Greek parliament. HQAA's Board consists of 15 members: the President, six professors of Greek universities, four professors of Greek TEIs, one representative of the non-university research institutes, one representative of all professional bodies and two student members. The six university professors, each representing a specific general university discipline, are nominated by the rectors of all universities and the four TEI professors, each representing a specific general TEI discipline, are nominated by the presidents of all TEIs. At the present time (March 2008) the Board consists of 13 members only, since the student associations have not nominated any representatives.

Regarding the evaluation criteria and indicators, as applied to both academic units (e.g. departments and schools) and institutions as a whole, four general categories are set by law: quality of teaching, quality of research, quality of departmental curricula, and quality of other services. Although HQAA has the freedom to specify the particular number and kind of criteria and indicators, on the basis of geographical, scientific

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26 Law No 3374/2005 on "Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Credit Transfer and Accumulation System – Diploma Supplement", Official Gazette of the Hellenic Republic, Issue A, No 189, August 2, 2005. An official translation of the law in English can be found at http://www.hqaa.gr/news_en.html

27 The following universities went through the EUA process, in chronological order: Democritus University of Thrace (1996–97), University of Macedonia (1998–99), University of Patras (1998–99), University of Ioannina (1999–2000), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2000–01), University of Crete (2000–01), University of Thessaly (2003–04) and University of the Aegean (2004–05).

and other differences, the law requires for a few specific indicators for each of the above four categories. As an example, the indicators required by law for the quality of teaching include (1) the efficiency of the teaching staff, (2) the quality of the teaching process, (3) the organisation and implementation of the teaching tasks, (4) teaching aids, (5) means and infrastructures, (6) the use of new technologies, (7) the academic staff / student ratio and their cooperation (8) the level and quality of knowledge provided, (9) the interrelation between research and teaching, and (10) the mobility of teaching staff and students. It should be noted that in Greece the QA exercise includes research as well; hence it goes beyond the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area (ESG)[28].

The whole evaluation process is performed every four years and includes both the self-evaluation and the external evaluation processes. The self-evaluation process is performed on the basis of four annual reports, thus leading to the self-evaluation report, which should have the approval of the general assembly of the department or of the senate, depending on whether a department or a whole institution is evaluated, respectively. Students are actively involved in this process both by nominating representatives to the team preparing the reports, and by providing input to the teaching process through extensive questionnaires. The self-evaluation report is then sent to HQAA, thus initiating the external evaluation process. The external evaluation is carried out by a five-member external evaluation committee whose members are drawn from the register of independent experts. This register is compiled on the basis of recommendations made by the HEIs and HQAA and can be revised every four years. The necessary qualifications for inclusion in the register are scientific relevance, scientific excellence and experience in evaluation processes, whereas it is also desirable to have some management experience of academic units. According to the law, the external evaluation committee should include at least one person of non-Greek origin and one representative of the relevant professional body. One of the five members can be nominated by the academic unit under evaluation (from among the persons included in the register), whereas the remaining four members are selected by lot by HQAA. The external evaluation report, which is drawn up by the five-member committee after on-site visits – that include contacts with all stakeholders (faculty, students, laboratory technicians, administrative personnel, etc.), is consequently published in electronic form, in both Greek and English language, on the website of HQAA.

It should be noted that an HEI, as a whole, cannot be evaluated if all of its departments have not previously undergone the evaluation process.

The role of HQAA within the whole process consists of the following:
- To guarantee transparency;
- To plan, coordinate and support the evaluation procedures of HEIs;
- To formulate, review and specify evaluation standards and guidelines;
- To compile, keep and revise the register of independent experts;
- To perform studies and to carry out research on methodologies, techniques and applications of quality assurance and improvement in higher education.

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28 ENQA, "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area", Helsinki, 2009

The final step in the whole process is the annual reporting by HQAA to the Greek parliament on the results of the evaluation process and, more generally, on the situation of higher education in the country, accompanied by recommendations on actions that should be taken by the Greek state.

8.4 First steps taken

HQAA started operating on September 1, 2006. A meeting was held with all rectors of universities and presidents of TEIs in November 2006, where the general principles of QA in HEIs were explained and accompanied by a presentation by Peter Williams, Chief Executive of QAA, England and former-President of ENQA. Following this meeting, the HQAA Board developed and circulated the following documents to all HEIs:

- An informative document on QA in higher education;
- Guidelines for the internal evaluation process;
- Analysis of the criteria for the internal evaluation process;
- Model data sheets;
- Format of the self-evaluation report;
- Guidelines for the external evaluation process;

At the same time work is being carried out for the development of the register of external reviewers.

Out of the approximately 450 departments in the Greek HEIs, more than 100 have expressed interest in the process (data of February 2008), whereas 76 have already started work on the self-evaluation report. The current planning is that until the end of 2008 approximately 25 departments have completed the external evaluation process. This initial pilot application of the process will help HQAA to modify, if necessary, some of the procedures it established. The long-term plan is for all departments to have completed the first external review process within the next three to four years.

8.5 Challenges for HQAA

The biggest challenge for HQAA is to overcome resistance to change. The process of QA to HEIs has been formally introduced for the first time in Greece, and it is understandable that many of the stakeholders have not understood either its objectives or the possible outcomes very well. Thus, ignorance of the process and/or misinformation regarding QA has led mostly the students, but also a number of faculty members, to express their objections in many ways. In addition, there is a human tendency to try to preserve the status quo ante, the insecurity of stakeholders and other external factors, including political motives.

It is thus understood that HQAA has a very difficult and delicate role to play – aimed primarily at inspiring trust among the various stakeholders, at ensuring that the whole QA process will be objective, and above all at clarifying and putting emphasis on the many benefits of the process.

HQAA Board members have focused on introducing the concept of QA in HEIs on visits to departments and institutions. At these visits the Board members have held short presentations and answered questions from both faculty members and students. These visits and face-to-face meetings appear to be the best possible means for overcoming resistance, as most of the time these visits are followed by the commencement of the self-evaluation process by the departments.

Annex 1

ENQA seminar hosted by NEAA

"Current trends in the European Quality Assurance and the situation in the SEE region"

Friday, 9 November
University for National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

09:30   **Opening ceremony session**
        Chaired by Prof. Ivan Panaiotov, Dr. of Science,
        President of National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency NEAA
        Opening addresses by:
        Mr. Daniel Valtchev, Minister of Education, Vice-Premier of the
        Republic of Bulgaria
        Prof. Borislav Borissov, Dr. of Science, Rector of the University for
        National and World Economy

09:45   **European Quality Assurance after the London ministerial meeting:
        moving towards 2010**
        Emmi Helle, Secretary General, ENQA

11:00   **The European Standards and Guidelines and Quality Assurance
        in the SEE region – opportunities and challenges**
        Chaired by Assoc. Prof. Dinko Dinkov
        The examples of:
        Bulgaria by Prof. Todor Shopov, NEAA
        Cyprus by Elpida Heracleous, CEEA
        Greece by Prof. Vasileios Papazoglou, HQAA
        Romania by Prof. Radu Damian, Aracis

14:00 **External reviews of quality assurance agencies: experiences from the ENQA membership reviews**
Thierry Malan, Chair of the ENQA-coordinated review team of AQU Catalonia

15:15 **Two parallel workshops:**

1. How to get a newly established agency up and running?
Chaired by Dr. Dhurata Bozo, Albanian Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

2. How to prepare for an external review?
Chaired by Cecilia de la Rosa, National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA)

16:45 **Conclusions from the working groups** mediated by Prof. Todor Shopov

17:45 **Seminar ends**: conclusions from the day by Emmi Helle

Annex 2

ENQA seminar
hosted by the Holy See and organised in collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Faculties (AVEPRO) and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences

"Current trends in the European Quality Assurance and the Situation in Southern Europe"

Wednesday, 14 November 2007
Casina Pio IV, Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Vatican City

09:30   **Opening words**, Mons. A. Vincenzo Zani,
Under Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education

09:35   **European Quality Assurance after the London ministerial meeting: moving towards 2010**, Peter Williams, President of ENQA

10:30   **ESG and the current QA trends in Southern Europe – example of the Holy See's Agency**, P. Franco Imoda, AVEPRO

11:00   **Presentation of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences,**
Chancellor, Mons. Marcello Sánchez Sorondo

11:20   **ESG and the current QA trends in Southern Europe – examples from Italy**
(Prof. Muzio Gola, Turin Technical University), France
(Bruno Curvale, AERES) and Spain (Gemma Rauret, ANECA)

14:30   **External reviews of quality assurance agencies: experiences from the ENQA membership reviews**, Séamus Puirséil, HETAC, Ireland and
Javier Bará-Temes, AQU Catalunya, Spain

15:45   **Three parallel workshops:**
1. How to prepare for an external review?
Chaired by Kurt Sohm, Austrian FH Council

2. Practical problems: an opportunity to discuss methodological difficulties with knowledgeable colleagues, Chaired by Peter Williams

3. How to get a newly established agency up and running?
Chaired by Alexander Kohler, AQA, Austria

17:15   **Conclusions from the working groups,** Chair: Emmi Helle,
Secretary General of ENQA

18:00   **Seminar ends: conclusions from the day**, Peter Williams, President of ENQA

The present report is a product of two ENQA seminars, held in 2007, on current trends in European Quality Assurance. The first seminar, hosted by the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), examined the situation in South-Eastern Europe. The second seminar focused on the situation in Southern Europe. It was hosted by the Holy See and organised in collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Faculties (AVEPRO) and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The articles presented in this report, based on the two regional ENQA seminars, introduce the divergent but also converging national experiences and trends in quality assurance in Southern and South-Eastern Europe.