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From: Christian Thune
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Copenhagen

ENQA Application for Consultative Membership in the Bologna Follow-Up Group

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) wishes to apply for consultative membership of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). As documented below, ENQA meets the criteria for consultative members listed in the document "New Consultative Members and BFUG Partners" of 30 March 2005.

Added value to the Bologna Process

Since the Prague meeting of European Ministers of Education in 2001 ENQA has been encouraged to develop, in cooperation with other key European stakeholders, a European quality assurance framework as part of the creation of the European Higher Education Area in 2010. In Berlin in 2003 the Ministers decided to give ENQA a mandate to develop in consultation with the EUA, ESIB and EURASHE "an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance" and to "explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Bologna Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005".

ENQA fulfilled this mandate by submitting the report "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" to the Bologna Follow-Up Group on 21 February 2005. The Bologna Follow-Up Group has subsequently endorsed and approved the report for recommendation to the Ministers in Bergen that the proposals of the report be implemented nationally. Accordingly, ENQA has clearly brought added value to the work of the Bologna Follow-Up Group which could not have been covered by other organisations nor at another level, as the Ministers stated by mentioning ENQA by name in their communiqués of 2001 and 2003.

Relevance of the stakeholder group

ENQA has 38 European quality assurance agencies as members which makes ENQA highly relevant as a leading stakeholder group in higher education and enables the organisation to develop the exchange of information and experience, in particular on methodological developments and examples of good practice in higher education quality assurance.

Moreover, ENQA functions as a policy forum developing and proposing standards, procedures, and guidelines for quality assurance; fulfils requests for expertise and advice from European Ministers of Education and

national and regional public authorities; and facilitates quality assurance activities in the area of transnational European higher education.

Finally, ENQA promotes the development and implementation of adequate peer-review systems for quality assurance agencies; maintains and develops co-operation with other appropriate European stakeholder organisations; and contributes to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area.

Representativeness

ENQA is an independent organisation and is thus not a sub-organisation of any member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. ENQA's revised constitution as an association was confirmed at an extraordinary General Assembly of the organisation on 4 November 2004. The General Assembly decided among other things to abolish the membership of the European ministries in ENQA and to change the membership criteria of ENQA so as to accept quality assurance agencies from all the signatory states of the Bologna Declaration as full members.

Today, ENQA has members from 20 countries of the Bologna Process representing half of the Bologna countries, and the percentage is likely soon to increase due to the number of applications pending from additional Bologna countries.

Organisational form

ENQA is a non-governmental organisation with a clear mandate from its members to give an opinion on their behalf on matters relating to the Bologna Process. The members of ENQA have mandated ENQA to develop European quality assurance standards, procedures and guidelines within the framework of the European Higher Education Area according to the wishes of the European Ministers.

Some evident examples of this have been the report "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group earlier this year; regular updates by the president of ENQA to the Bologna Follow-Up Group and its Board; and an ENQA statement to the Conferences of European Education Ministers in Berlin and Prague.

Thus, as the above makes evident, ENQA does add significant value to the Bologna Follow-Up Group as a leading participant in higher education and expects to be granted consultative membership of the BFUG as the organisation fulfils all the requirements for such a membership.

Christian Thune
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