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Bologna Follow-Up Group

Vienna, 6 April 2006

Report of E4 Group on Quality Assurance

1. This report from the E4 Group (ENQA, ESIB, EUA, and EURASHE) updates BFUG on progress on the Bologna Process action line on quality assurance since the previous meeting in Manchester in October 2005.

2. E4 is working to meet the request in the Bergen communiqué that 'the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group'.

3. Since October 2005, the E4 group has met twice, on 13 December 2005 and 9 February 2006.

The Register of European Quality Assurance Agencies

4. At the first meeting the group discussed at length the nature of the proposed Register of quality assurance agencies and agreed that there was a need for a single register and that its decision-making process should be through a committee (the European Register Committee). The details of the organisation of the register still needed further discussion in E4 before final recommendations could be made. The Group agreed that, in order to progress the project, an independent consultant should be contracted to produce specimen pages of the register to aid further planning by E4. This would incorporate the possibility of developing several alternative register models. A protocol was to be developed over the Christmas break.

5. In the light of this discussion, a protocol for the development project was agreed at the meeting on 9 February. Since then a search exercise has been undertaken for possible consultants. The intention is for the consultant to produce a report by June 2006 containing

- a description and analysis of the models envisaged thus far (and any others that might emerge in the course of the project), including discussion of
    - the potential use and value of each model
    - ownership
    - legal requirements and implications, including potential liabilities
    - the operational requirements of each model, including
        - administrative requirements
        - logistics
        - costs and funding requirements
        - implementation issues
        - a risk analysis for each model

- specimen pages (or other 'visualisations') of each Register model examined
- suggestions on how to develop a manageable scheme in a short timeframe

6. It is expected that the consultant will have discussions with

- E4 members who represent the views of individual HEIs, quality assurance agencies and students
- the European Commission, employers' bodies
- relevant professional experts
- relevant legal expert(s)

The report will not be required to make a recommendation on the model to be adopted.

7. The European Commission and the government of Switzerland have both made available €10,000 to fund the project.

Peer reviews of agencies

8. The group has discussed at length the cyclical peer reviews currently required by ENQA for its membership purposes and their relationship to the future register review procedure. The group recognises that agencies should not be subject to more than one peer review scheme and ENQA will communicate to its members the possibility that its membership reviews might, in due course, need to articulate formally with the register process.

For now, ENQA has invited representatives of ESIB, and EUA or EURASHE (as appropriate) to nominate members to its review teams, when an agency peer review is undertaken by ENQA.

Implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines

9. A recently conducted survey by ENQA has revealed that most of the ENQA members have begun the process of implementation of the ESG and are planning to undergo an external review within the next one to three years.

Quality assurance forum

10. ENQA, ESIB, EUA and EURASHE are co-organising a Forum entitled "Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education". The Forum will be hosted by the Technische Universität München, and will take place from 23-25 November 2006. The main objective of this event is to bring together the higher education and QA community to discuss – at European level – how internal QA procedures should be adapted to the changing higher education environment and the implications this development holds for external evaluation procedures. A call for paper was sent to members of all four organisations as well as European societies in HE research on 7 March 2006.

Chairmanship and membership of E4

11. At the suggestion of the President of ENQA, the chairmanship of the E4 group is being shared on a rotating basis. EUA chaired the meeting on 9 February and EURASHE will chair the forthcoming meeting on 18 April. ESIB will take the chair on 21 June.

12. E4 has agreed to invite the BFUG Secretariat to nominate an observer to attend E4 meetings.

Peter Williams
President, ENQA
19 March 2006