

Report to BFUG, 17-18 March 2011, Budapest

At its last General Assembly held in Helsinki on 23-24 September 2010, ENQA adopted a strategic plan for the 4 coming years and a work plan for 2010/2011. Both documents contribute significantly to the working agenda of the Bologna Process 2009-2012.

ENQA discussed the future challenges that are lying ahead of all actors in the field of quality assurance. To mention but two, it will be important (i) to take into account new areas of quality assurance in the frame of lifelong learning, and (ii) to contribute to the growing demands for transparent information about the quality of higher education in the EHEA.

Taking into account the new challenges, ENQA sharpened its mission and strategy for the near future. In essence, ENQA's mission is to contribute significantly to the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality in the EHEA at a high level, and to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna signatory countries.

In the coming years, ENQA will especially concentrate on the development of member agencies and fostering the foundation of new agencies in those Bologna countries where none exists at present. Current experiences have shown that ENQA should in particular draw attention to the independence of quality assurance agencies and to the sustainable funding which are, according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), two major preconditions for trustworthy and professional agencies.

To name only one major event which took place since the last BFUG meeting, ENQA jointly with its E4 partners organised the European Quality Forum on 18-20 November 2010 in Lyon. The number and background of attendees, as well as the outcome of the discussions demonstrated once more the importance of this event for taking stock of current developments in quality assurance and developing further the European dimension of quality assurance. The EQAF is the most important and future-looking event in European quality assurance and an outstanding example for stakeholder cooperation in the Bologna process. For these reasons, the E4 partners will organise this event in 2011 notwithstanding the fact that the European Commission decided to stop its financial support, which is disappointing and not understandable. ENQA hopes that the financial constraints will not make too many participants, especially students, refrain from attending the conference in 2011.

Future contribution to the BFUG working agenda 2010-2012

ENQA participates actively in the following BFUG working groups:

- Qualifications Frameworks
- International Openness



- Recognition
- Transparency mechanisms

and thus shares its stakeholder view on some of the most pertinent developments in the current term.

In particular, ENQA contributes to the development of quality assurance in the EHEA through the following current projects:

- **MAP-ESG**

In recent months a discussion developed whether the ESG may need to be revised or not. The E4 organisations (EUA, EURASHE, ESU and ENQA) which developed the ESG therefore decided to conduct a mapping exercise in order to analyse the implementation and application of the ESG, notably of all three parts of the ESG. This means that the application of the ESG in internal and external quality assurance of institutions, as well as by the agencies will be analysed.

ENQA coordinates this so-called MAP-ESG project which is funded by the European Commission and which will consist of intense consultation processes of institutions, students, stakeholders and agencies. The project started in December 2010. As a major outcome, the E4 organisations will submit a report to the Bologna ministerial meeting in Bucharest 2012. The report will contain the analysis and eventually recommendations as to the revision of the ESG.

- **Quality Procedures Project (QPP): Visions for the future**

ENQA, in the third QP project, will concentrate on good practice in external quality assurance. This QP project is a follow-up activity to two analytical reports on developments in the field of quality assurance issued in 2002 and 2008. A survey to the ENQA members will be conducted in order to explore the changes that are taking place in quality assurance due to the establishment of the EHEA, where new social demands and expectations have been laid for higher education. These changes have mainly derived from political and economic changes and due to rapid development of communication technologies. This survey will be carried out to explore what kind of activities and focus areas will take place in quality assurance agencies in the forthcoming years.

The project will identify good practices which are of benefit to the quality of HE as a whole. The wide collection of good practices in external quality assurance linked with the new priorities formulated by ENQA and following the Leuven/Louvain la Neuve and Budapest/Vienna ministerial communiqués will provide a basis from which to propose a vision of the future of QA agencies procedures. The final survey report will be delivered at the ministerial meeting of 2012.

- **Quality assurance of joint programmes**

Joint programmes turn out to be a major mean for developing further the European dimension in higher education. However, in terms of quality assurance, HEI face problems in implementing such programmes because of different national regulations to be applied. Experience in quality assurance of joint



programmes gathered in the last couple of years clearly shows that the quality assurance procedures based on the ESG provide enough flexibility to design adequate quality assurance procedures for joint programmes. The difficulties lie more with national regulations for curriculum design and other features in the context of national approval mechanisms. ENQA will thus organise a workshop in September 2011 in order to analyse the existing experience and draft recommendations for ministers to be submitted to the ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012.

- **Quality assurance in Lifelong Learning**

In widening the perspective on quality assurance by taking into account lifelong learning, ENQA accepts a challenge for external quality assurance which mainly results from the emergence of overarching qualifications frameworks and the increasing mobility across educational sectors. The emergence of the cross-sectoral qualifications frameworks and the ongoing diversification of the student population, educational biographies and subsequently the diversifying modes of provision of higher education, result in a closer relationship between higher education on the one hand side, and vocational education and training (VET) on the other. This may also have consequences for external quality assurance, especially when clear distinctions between these sectors vanish. Not the least the most recent adoption of the EQARF (The European Quality Assurance reference Framework for quality assurance under the EQF-LLL) by the European Commission has set the topic of quality assurance in HE and VET on top of the agenda. In order to take stock of the current developments and discuss the consequences for quality assurance procedures in HE, an ENQA workshop will be held on 16-17 May 2011 in Bonn, Germany.

- **Policy paper on transparency tools**

HEIs face a steadily growing interest amongst students and all stakeholders of higher education and the public at large in accessing detailed and reliable information on individual study programmes, faculties and higher education institutions, and especially on the quality at programme and institutional levels. Also in the political arena information on higher education has reached the top end of the agenda, not the least triggered by the debate about whether rankings contribute to the public call for reliable information. Even within the Bologna process the issue of rankings was taken up, although, the concept of "transparency tools" was introduced instead in order to avoid controversy.

ENQA, as the voice of quality assurance agencies, participates actively in the discussion about transparency in HE. At its Members' Forum on 4 March 2011, ENQA discusses a "position paper on transparency tools" which examines the nature and purpose of such transparency tools, and in particular the relationship to quality assurance.

- **Report for Bucharest 2012**

The core activities of ENQA especially as regards future developments will result in a report to be submitted to the Bologna ministerial conference in Bucharest 2012.

