



EUA

European University Association

Reform in European Higher Education: QA, Credit Transfer and Recognition

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I. Building a European Higher Education Areain a global context

■ Objectives

- ✓ Facilitate mobility & develop cooperation, increasingly also in a global context
- ✓ Increase the compatibility between systems
- ✓ Enhance the attractiveness & improve the competitiveness of European HE

■ Key Actions

- ✓ Introduction of a 3 cycle degree system
- ✓ Enhancement of internal quality processes & strengthening of external QA procedures
- ✓ Improving transparency and the recognition of study periods & degrees

II. The process of implementation

- A variety of instruments
 - ✓ Building on existing instruments – ECTS , Diploma Supplement (DS), Lisbon Recognition Convention etc
- National/institutional implementation & commonly agreed European frameworks
 - ✓ A European Qualifications Framework – describing the three cycles, integrating credits & the DS etc.
 - ✓ European Standards & Guidelines for Quality (ESG) to guarantee quality in the EHEA
 - ✓ European Register of Quality Agencies
 - ✓ All these contribute to increasing transparency, trust & improving recognition – inside Europe and beyond

II.2 An Overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA (2005)

- A way of ensuring quality in the implementation of the three cycle degree structure:
 - ✓ Comprises the three cycles
 - ✓ Includes generic descriptors for each level
 - ✓ Based upon Learning Outcomes & competences
 - ✓ Includes credit ranges for the first two cycles
- Being followed by the development of national frameworks compatible with the European framework

II.3 - The debate on quality - increasingly at the heart of the Bologna reforms -

- A growing commitment & a shared responsibility
- The core responsibility for quality lies with HEIs – building a quality culture
- Development of a European framework - devolved to the stakeholders: agencies (ENQA), universities (EUA) other HEIs (Eurashe) and students (ESU)
- 2005 – European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality in the EHEA
- 2007 – The European Register of QA agencies endorsed by 46 Bologna Ministers

II.4 The example of the European Standards & Guidelines for Quality in the EHEA

Standards and guidelines apply to:

- Internal quality processes in institutions
 - External quality processes of institutions
 - External quality processes of QA agencies
- Risk: viewing these as a checklist – rigidity/standardisation

III.1 Evaluating the instruments > Trends V: Credit Systems and Diploma Supplement

- ECTS clearly gaining ground both as accumulation & a transfer system
- But little improvement in recognising credits: students still have problems in many cases
- Double assessment of learning outcomes (credits + traditional exams)
- Often incorrect use of ECTS (misunderstanding of student workload) & diverse concepts of «modules»
- Diploma Supplement: 47% of HEIs say they issue it to all students

III.2 - Evaluating the instruments (cont): Qualifications Frameworks

- Work in progress – still a lack of awareness at the level of institutions
- Institutions don't (yet) understand well the purpose or practical value of qualifications frameworks
- Many do not know whether there is a NQF in their country: Ireland the only country where institutions know they have an NQF (and find it helpful)

II.3 Evaluating the instruments: Internal Quality

- Regular programme evaluation 70%
- Obligatory staff assessment 67%
- Voluntary staff assessment 17%
- Student Services (regular) 43%
- Research (regular) 48%
- Quantitative data on research 65%

- Effective quality linked to autonomy.
- Over-intrusive, & over-bureaucratic systems perceived as counter-productive to mission of HEIs

IV. External quality: a new initiative - European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

- A web based list, voluntary, providing information on trustworthy QA agencies working in Europe, i.e. those agencies that fulfill the QA standards adopted in Bergen, based on national or ENQA reviews.
- A service to students, employers, HEIs, governments and QA agencies.
- Will be the responsibility of the stakeholders: HEIs, students, QA agencies and social partners.

IV.2. Benefits of the Register

- An instrument for enhancing trust & giving European level legitimacy to QA agencies via a process based on stakeholder partnership
- Gives HEIs (& governments) the possibility of selecting a QA agency that uses methods most suited to their specific goals/institutional strategies and missions
- Facilitate the evaluations of joint degrees
- Enhances the attractiveness of the EHEA to international partners

V.1 Future needs and challenges

- Rely on a multiplicity of instruments: A single instrument is not the panacea
- Improve understanding & usage of Bologna tools
- Continue to build trust, on the basis of institutional 'quality culture' & processes
- Make sure that external QA is improvement oriented
- Consider how the Bologna instruments can be used in promoting inter-regional cooperation

V.2 Priorities for inter-regional cooperation: (TRENDS V, 2007)

In which areas would your institution most like to enhance its attractiveness?

■ EU	86%	(T3 91%)	-
■ Eastern Europe	62%	(T3 62%)	
■ Asia	58%	(T3 40%)	+
■ US/Canada	50%	(T3 57%)	-
■ Latin America	32%	(T3 32%)	
■ Africa	26%	(T3 24%)	+
■ Arab world	21%	(T3 16%)	+
■ Australia	20%	(T3 23%)	-