

To: Ian McKenna, Chairman of the Bologna Board and Follow-up Group, Ireland

Cc: Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-Up Group, Norway

From: Christian Thune, Chair of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Topic: Actions undertaken to fulfil recommendations of the Berlin Communiqué

2 March 2004
Copenhagen

A PROGRESS REPORT BY ENQA ON WORK ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE BERLIN MANDATE DELEGATED TO IT BY THE MINISTERS

Meeting of the Bologna Follow-Up Group
9 March 2004, Dublin, Ireland

In accordance with the mandate received from ministers in Berlin the cooperation of ENQA with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB (=Quadripartite Group) has continued through an exchange of views and positions in three meetings so far (9 October 2003, 18 December 2003, 19 February 2004). An outline of this ENQA report to the Bologna Follow-Up Group was submitted to the Quadripartite Group on 19 February 2004 by ENQA, and it has subsequently been completed on the basis of a detailed discussion that took place on that date.

The basis of this report are the discussions and conclusions in the Quadripartite Group on the one hand and the work by the working groups of the respective organisations, with a more detailed introduction to the activities of the two ENQA-established working groups, on the other.

QUADRIPARTITE GROUP

Cooperation inside the Quadripartite Group has intensified in the first half of 2004. Three additional meetings (19 February, 10 May, 22 June) have been scheduled for the first half of 2004. The four organisations will of course each focus on their own written contributions to the Ministers, but at the same time all four are committed to a serious attempt at achieving an agreed statement for Bergen. The Quadripartite Group will function as a consultation framework for the input from the groups established separately by the four organisations.

The meeting of the Quadripartite Group on 19 February 2004 concluded that the four organisations would report regularly on a general level to their members about the

discussions, as the support of the respective memberships is necessary to the successful conduct of and dedication to the joint effort toward Bergen.

The Quadripartite Group recognised the need for a joint understanding on widely recognised European quality assurance practices for agencies. The presentations of its members on 19 February clearly showed that there were many substantive areas where common objectives and structural ideas already existed.

Among the points raised at the 19 February meeting were future themes for consultation in the formulation of an agreed quadripartite position toward Bergen. Themes such as standards, evaluation and accreditation targets, peer review of agencies and "fitness for purpose" were among those agreed upon. The contents and detailed identifications of these and other themes will be discussed in future meetings.

Through the work of the Quadripartite Group and its two working groups ENQA will during the coming process take account of the expertise of other quality assurance and accreditation associations and networks. ENQA are inviting the leadership of the regional and thematic European networks, most members of which are also member agencies of ENQA, as well as the ENIC and the NARIC networks to a joint meeting in May 2004 to discuss common grounds.

The recent activities in each of the four organisations are outlined in the following section . As before, I have further outlined in an annex below the summary of the forthcoming activities of the Quadripartite Group.

WORK WITHIN EACH OF THE FOUR ORGANISATIONS IN THE QUADRIPARTITE GROUP

ENQA:

In terms of the specific tasks of ENQA's two working groups, the recommendations of Berlin provide clear encouragement for ENQA to develop its **membership criteria** further as they are not yet detailed or operational enough to serve as a basis for the desired peer reviews of agencies. Accordingly, the focus of ENQA's working group includes matters such as criteria of legal basis, independence, organisation, evaluation methods and public access to evaluation and accreditation results.

ENQA believes that its initial proposals for the **internal quality assurance mechanisms** to be developed for national and regional quality assurance agencies are in accordance with the views of, and supported by, the three other organisations in the Quadripartite Group. In order for an agency to have an adequate internal quality assurance mechanism, it must have in place internal feedback processes that include procedures for reflection on, and revision of, processes and methods. The agency will also be expected to publish a quality policy, available on its website.

A **mandatory cyclical review of agencies**, the third concrete task for this working group, has solid backing in principle from the ENQA steering group, even though the steering group fully realises that it will in practice be a demanding task to introduce as a part of the

regular activities of the agencies. Among the issues to be solved here are who should initiate the review of an agency, and on what authority; the review process; methodology; and follow-up. These discussions will be continued in the next meeting of the working group on 1 March 2004, also in the light of the results of the meeting of the Quadripartite Group on 19 February 2004. Recent discussions in the working group suggests that there are grounds for optimism that an agreement can be reached, to be presented for discussion at the ENQA General Assembly in June 2004.

The second ENQA working group on the agreed set of standards, procedures and criteria on quality assurance met for the second time on 26 February 2004 when excellent progress was made. The working group reached agreement on the principles, purposes, definitions, scope, and format to be used in the project. It also agreed on the method of working, the appointment of a project officer to undertake the detailed drafting and the timetable that would be followed to ensure that the project was completed by January 2005. The working group will make use of EUA's quality assurance principles, as well as the contributions from EURASHE and ESIB which were discussed at the Quadripartite Group meeting on 19 February. The working group endorsed proposals for wide consultation with stakeholders. A preliminary draft will be prepared during March.

If the proposed approach is successful and there is agreement on the value of the outcome and of further development, then work on more specific standards might continue beyond Bergen. In any case, the group considers that the task in hand should be seen as evolutionary and a project that will, of necessity, extend well beyond the immediate deadline. As signatory states develop their higher education systems at different speeds, so progress in the acceptance and implementation of European standards, procedures and guidelines will vary amongst them. A staged approach to development is more likely to be successful in the longer term.

EUA:

EUA has formed a Quality Working Group to assist in the creation of a Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) for Europe whose main function will be to serve as a promoter and monitor for implementing the code of principles agreed upon at the Graz Convention in May 2003 and to promote and further develop the QA action objectives of the Berlin Communiqué. These functions are being carried out through the following activities:

- 1) Implementing the QA action line of the Berlin Communiqué, i.e., developing policy positions on the guidelines, standards and peer-review process, to feed into the EUA/ENQA/ESIB/EURASHE joint working group.
- 2) Two meetings with EUA members and stakeholders to strengthen the consensus within EUA regarding the Association's policy positions that are being developed in the context of the Berlin Communiqué.
- 3) Surveillance of QA trends in Europe and taking policy positions regarding QA as well as any issue that might have implications for QA.

The Quality Working Group has met twice since the Berlin meeting. It has approved a draft paper on "Standards, Guidelines and Procedures": the EUA Council is currently engaged in commenting on this paper. It held a meeting on 26 February 2004 to discuss this paper with EUA members and other interested partners and to begin a discussion on the "Peer

review" process of QA agencies. The outcomes of these consultations will feed into the planned discussions with ENQA, ESIB and EURASHE.

In October 2004, the quality working group will evaluate the activities to date and consider further steps, which may include a monitoring role for the future HEQC. It is expected that functions 1, 2 and 3 will continue to be carried out annually.

EURASHE:

In order to take up the Berlin mandate in the Quadripartite group EURASHE installed an international working group on quality assurance and accreditation. It investigated its Bologna mandate and prepared EURASHE's first coherent policy statement centred on QA and accreditation (PowerPoint presentation: EURASHE Position Paper on Quality Assurance and Accreditation, related to the Berlin Communiqué), which was adopted by the Executive Council on January 16, 2004.

EURASHE's position stresses:

- internal, external QA and accreditation as 3 distinctive steps in the quality assurance, linked by a self-assessment report, a public evaluation report and a public, motivated accreditation decision;
- the belief that institutional as well as programme items can be joint in these steps, evaluated by independent expert panels, consisting of not only peers but representatives of all stakeholders;
- the belief that generic standards and a general code of principles should and can be reached on a European level, for the external QA as well as for the expert reviewing of quality and/or accreditation agencies.

EURASHE's policy statement will be debated and refined on its conference in Nicosia on May 6-7, 2004.

ESIB:

ESIB discussed and passed a new policy paper on "Quality Assurance and Accreditation - improving quality and promoting mobility" following the Berlin Ministerial Summit at our Board Meeting in Porto Santo last November. This paper gave a general overview of ESIB's positions towards the mandate given to the four organisations by the Ministers and on quality assurance more widely. ESIB has committed itself to the Quadripartite forum and working through the group to develop a joint report towards the Bergen Ministerial Summit.

In line with this ESIB has formed an informal working group on Quality Assurance to discuss the issues relating to the mandate and preparing documents for both the Quadripartite meeting and also for our members. The working group decided on a strategy of a series of papers to be presented to the Quadripartite forum, two general papers - one on each mandate (peer review of QA&A Agencies and standards, procedures and guidelines) which ESIB presented prior to the meeting of the 19 February. We will now be working on two more detailed papers putting more details on the previous papers. These papers will be based on statements that will be discussed during our policy making Board Meeting that will be held in Banja Luka in mid-April in time for the next Quadripartite meeting on the 10 May.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Let me finally state that in spite of the extensive tasks delegated to it by the Ministers, the Quadripartite Group is confident that a credible report with realistic, though not necessarily final, results will be submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group in early 2005. An important waymark will be the 2004 General Assembly of ENQA on 3-4 June 2004, which will provide an ideal opportunity for close consultation with ENQA member agencies. On behalf of ENQA I also look forward to the additional funding from the Commission that will make possible a much needed strengthening of the resource base, on which ENQA fulfils its Berlin obligation.

Please consider this report as being in accordance with the discussion that took place in the Quadripartite Group on 19 February 2004.

Yours sincerely,

signed
Christian Thune,
ENQA Chairman



ANNEX: UPCOMING ACTIVITIES BY ENQA, EUA, ESIB AND EURASHE IN RELATION TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE BY THE BERLIN COMMUNIQUÉ

First half of 2004:

Groups set up by ENQA, EUA, ESIB and EURASHE respectively work out the details of the two tasks in the Communiqué and report back to the Quadripartite Group, followed by a hearing of other interested parties and a subsequent ENQA report to and feedback from the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

9 March 2004:

ENQA report to the Bologna Follow-Up Group in Dublin on the current developments.

1 April 2004:

Meeting of EUA Quality Working Group

7 April 2004:

Meeting of ENQA working group 2

20 April 2004:

Meeting of ENQA working group 1

30 April 2004:

Meeting of ENQA working group 2

10 May 2004:

ENQA-EUA-ESIB-EURASHE workshop on identification of joint positions.

25 May 2004:

An ENQA-convened meeting with other European quality assurance and accreditation networks.

3 June 2004:

Meeting of EUA Quality Working Group

3-4 June 2004:

ENQA General Assembly

22 June 2004:

ENQA-EUA-ESIB-EURASHE workshop on identification of joint positions.

1 or 2 July 2004:

Meeting of ENQA working group 2

Second half of 2004:

The meetings of the Quadripartite Group will continue to work on and to finalise the joint position for the meeting of ministers in Bergen.

Work on the two tasks continues, followed by an ENQA report to and feedback from the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

28 October 2004:

Meeting of EUA Quality Working Group

15 January 2005:

Final deadline for the two ENQA working groups.

January-February 2005:

Finalisation of the ENQA report.

March 2005:

Bologna Follow-Up Group draws conclusions for the Bergen ministerial conference.