



**HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF
NATIONAL EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
MINISTER**

**Comments on Quality Assurance
by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs of Greece
Mrs. Marietta Giannakou**

Dear colleagues,

We all share the belief that Quality Assurance lies at the heart of the European Higher Education Area. Likewise, we have all agreed on the development of national and European standards, criteria, guidelines and methodologies for our quality assurance systems and conveyed our decisiveness to work towards upgrading higher education at both national and European level. However, this process should not be limited to the smallest common denominator. It should be a dynamic course of action, a starting point for progress and the renovation of our education systems which will provide the EHEA with added value. It is my firm belief that this value will be soon rendered into academic excellence, scientific leadership, innovation, attractiveness.

In Greece, a Quality Assurance system has recently been established. It consists of an independent Agency which is open to international experts, internal and external evaluations procedures, student participation, social partners participation, and publication of the results. Additionally, ECTS and Diploma Supplement will be used by law by all Greek higher institutions. Nevertheless, no matter how well-designed a quality assurance system may be, it is incumbent on higher education institutions to benefit from it. Periodical reviews, conducted by inter-departmental and inter-university bodies, together with student assessments and external evaluations provide rich tools for continuous internal discussions, in order to detect weaknesses and form feedback mechanisms for self-improvement. Thus, a 'culture of quality' will arise with many beneficiaries; the students who will enjoy the privilege of qualitative studies, student provision and reliable qualifications; the higher education institutions which will acquire prestige and visibility and participate in European and international co operations; the political authorities which will plan or redefine their policies on how to maintain or improve the quality of education.

Quality Assurance becomes even more imperative now, as higher education institutions have been assigned a wider role than that of educating young students for four or five years of their lives. Adults return to universities for further studies or training as "life long" learners; mobility of international students constantly increases; new forms of instruction, such as distance learning, set new challenges. Moreover, the increased need for research and innovation in Europe can be satisfied if our institutions can not only attract but also keep "talents" within their academic communities due to their high level of quality. Therefore, I strongly believe that the rise of quality assessment procedures will have a strong positive influence in every aspect of the academic, scientific, social and economic development at regional, national and European level.

Dear colleagues, the European Higher Education Area should stand as a point of reference for its quality and excellence worldwide. As higher education constitutes the key-factor for active citizenship, economic development, social cohesion and prosperity, for the European citizens, it is of pivotal importance that we ameliorate its standards by implementing and continuously reassessing Quality Assurance processes, so that the actual needs of our societies will be effectively satisfied.