



CEENQA

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK
OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Newsletter

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CEENQA News

CEENQA's **Mila Zarkh** continues actively in managing several **international projects**:

- **BIHTEK**: Benchmarking as a tool for improvement of higher education performance (Partner country: Bosnia and Herzegovina) involved a Study trip to Vigo, July 6-10 and a conference in Mostar, September 17-19, as well as a Seminar and Project Board meeting in Bonn (instead of Düsseldorf), October 7-10. CEENQA will visit all B&H institutions in order to see and check the project progress on site; talks with all involved stakeholders are planned.
- **ALIGN** ("Achieving and checking the Alignment between Academic Programmes and Qualifications frameworks"; partner countries are Armenia, Ukraine, Russia) included a training in Gent from 28 September to 3 October, and a training in Dublin, with a focus on External Quality Assurance, is planned for 8-11 December.
- **BHQFHE**: Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework for Higher Education involved a training of Expert Groups responsible for drafting sectoral statements in Split, 25-29 August and 8-13 September, focusing on sectoral and professional bodies in relevant study fields, the TUNING project, and subject-



specific standards in accreditation. A meeting in Limerick is foreseen for 3-5 December.

- **QUALITAS**, the European Social Fund Project led by ARACIS, where CEENQA contributes to selection and nomination of international experts for 20 accreditation procedures in Romania.

Since early October, Mila has assistance from a student intern, **Maria Velikopolskaya**. With her help, the CEENQA website will soon present the projects and their progress.

CEENQA Board held a **telephone conference** on 17 September, where the new Board discussed the individual activities and responsibilities. The focus, in addition to the ongoing projects, is to recruit additional members from the CEE region into the network, and to begin preparing for the **next annual meeting in Ljubljana in May 2015**.

Several CEENQA members participated in the annual **general assembly of ENQA**. **Daisuke Motoki**, Co-Director of FIBAA, Germany, continues on the ENQA Board and to represent CEENQA there. The possibility of co-opting another Board member from the CEE region will be decided at the upcoming ENQA Board meeting in November.

Message from the President

**Dear Members of CEENQA,
Dear Colleagues,**

The year 2014 is slowly but surely coming to an end, preparations for an eventful 2015 are under way. CEENQA is currently engaged in **3 interesting EU projects**, with an update on current project activities being contributed by CEENQA project manager **Mila Zarkh** in this edition. The **QUALITAS** project, which has started under the auspices of CEENQA member **ARACIS** in Romania is the first instance **where CEENQA peers from all member agencies are called upon to become a part of international review teams** evaluating Romanian Higher Education Institutions; we envisage this exiting exercise to jumpstart the long standing idea of an international data base of CEENQA experts which can be used for similar exercises in other CEENQA member constitutions and beyond in the future.

It is also important to note that the long awaited new **ERASMUS Plus – KA2 – Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) call has finally been published**. Looking at the target regions and the associated budget allocation per region it becomes clear that a strong emphasis for capacity building lies at the core or bordering CEENQA



territories. As a matter of fact three to four identified funding areas (out of a total ten) are **within the realm of CEENQA region**, namely Region 1 the Western Balkans with Albania, Bosnia&Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia (here 11 selected projects with an indicative funding budget of 12,67 Mio. EUR are envisaged), Region 2 **Eastern Partnership Countries** with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and the Ukraine (12 selected projects with 13.66 Mio. EUR), Region 4 **Russia** (8 proposed project slots with a funding sum of 6.72 Mio. EUR) and finally even Region 7 **Central Asia** (Kazakhstan, Krgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (11 projects with 8.68 Mio. EUR funding), since CEENQA has also a member in Kazakhstan and has proposed a partnership agreement with the Central Asian Quality Assurance Network (CANQA).

I am **encouraging CEENQA to look into the manifold cooperation possibilities** of the various regional and national priorities for joint and structural projects along the various categories listed (such a Curriculum Development, Improving quality of education and education and teaching, improving management and operation of higher education institutions as well as strengthening of relations between higher education and the wider economic and social environment) and to use the vast CEENQA network including its headquarter personnel to liaise in the application process for the ERASMUS Plus Call. The **deadline for most project lines is in the beginning of February, so time is of essence** here.

In as far as region 2 is concerned, **CEENQA continues to monitor closely the developments in countries like the Ukraine** (with CEENQA project manager **Mila Zarkh** participating in a meeting of the Ukrainian Higher Education Establishment in the quest for developing an independent Ukrainian QA system), **Moldova** as well as **Belarus**, which constitute the few remaining countries in the CEENQA territory where external quality assurance systems still need to be developed.

Finally I am very pleased to announce that a new CEENQA membership brochure is planned, intended to document the variety and richness of the Central and East-European quality assurance landscape.

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Upcoming Events

5-6 November QACHE European Expert Forum, 5-6 November, London, United Kingdom Waterloo, London, United Kingdom

13-15 November 9th European Quality Assurance Forum, 2014, Barcelona, Spain

3-5 December BHQFHE meeting in Limerick

8-11 December ALIGN training in Dublin

Calendar

November 2014

MO	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2014

MO	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	30	31				

January 2015

MO	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	26
27	28	29	30	31		

News from Members and Partners



Croatian ASHE hosted the ENQA General Assembly

The 2014 European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (**ENQA**) **General Assembly**, hosted by the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education, took place on **October 16th and 17th in Zagreb**.

The event was opened by the Croatian **minister of science, education and sports**, prof. dr. sc. **Vedran Mornar**, by the **ASHE Director**, prof. dr. sc. **Jasmina Havranek**, via a videolink, and **ENQA president**, dr. **Paidrag Walsh**. The first day saw a discussion of the draft ENQA 2016-20 Strategy and the presentation of the [SEQUENT](#) project dealing with the quality assurance of ICT-supported learning. The second day saw the election of the new Board members - **Christoph Grolimund** from Swiss **OAQ** and **Teresa Sanchez** from French **CTI**, with



dr. **Grolimund** elected for the **vice-president**, and **Padraig Walsh** and **Helka Kekäläinen** re-elected for the **president** and **vice-president**. The presentations from the event are available [here](#).

EQArep project completed with a final publication and conference

The EU-funded project [EQArep](#) (**Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports**), led by ENQA and with participation of two CEENQA members – **Croatian ASHE** and **Estonian EKKA** – was completed with a [final conference](#) in Brussels on September 23rd. The aim of the project was to introduce more transparency and standardisation to the reports produced by external quality assurance agencies in the EHEA. The project produced an analysis of the current state of the reports' production and reception as well as common European guidelines for reports and summary reports collected in the [final project publication](#).



Current developments in Quality Assurance in Albania

An **essential reform** in higher education in Albania is under way **since October 2013**. The main pillar and objective of this reform is quality improvement and enhancement in higher education. Long term actions are on the way such as the **Platform for Reforming Higher Education** and a **new Higher Education Law** which is in the final phase of consultancy with main stakeholders.

As an essential part of this reform, Ministry of Education and Sport with the Public Agency of Higher Education **PAAHE** undertook a few processes to guarantee that all higher education institutions fulfill the legal requirements and are substantially compliant with minimal academic and operating standards as Higher Education Institutions in Albania. Taking into consideration the need for certification, verification and evaluation actions, during March-August 2014 to make sure that all HEI-s meet the legal requirements, MES in coordination with PAAHE and National Inspectorate of Education (NIE), started a process of **Verification of Legal Requirements and Minimal Standards** (VLRMS).

During this process all public and private HEI-s were verified based on both legal criteria and minimal standards to national Higher Education Law and normative acts. This process included documentation based evaluation and onsite inspections according to 36 selected legal and academic criteria including licensing and accreditation criteria, academic and management standards, minimal requirements for institutional operation and study programme delivery, organisational structure and unit functioning staff



recruitment and qualification, students admission and graduation, as well infrastructure, logistics and facilities.

Representatives from MES, PAAHE and NIE, established joint evaluation and inspection teams, with aim of controlling, inspecting, evaluating and data gathering of all information based on up mention criteria and requirements. The process ended up with consultations and discussions with HEIs and preparation of final individual reports with the major outcomes, problems and facts and recommendations for further actions, improvement and/or decisions. PAAHE played a key role in the process taking part in all 59 teams and **using the process as a preliminary institutional audit/assessment** for all HEIs in play.

The results and recommendations of the reports served as basis for further decisions of Albanian government. Among **59 Public and Private HEIs, 18 out of 44 Private HEI-s were closed** and their license revoked; **13 private HEI-s were suspended for up to 2 years and recommendation for improvement were set the rest 13 private and 15 public HEI-s**. Even, for those HEIs (15 Public and 13 Private) who managed to successfully pass this process and continue to operate as Higher Education Institutions, we provide recommendation with scope of improvement as a necessary tool of including them in the process of external institutional evaluation.

This process was useful as an **overview of the entire higher education system in the country**, which apparently had a lot of gaps, serious problems and needs for improvement. It **helped also to identify HEI-s with possible potential of improvement**, in order to be prepared for institutional review for accreditation purpose, which will follow next.

The information, facts and data gathered during VLRMS is a valuable database for the further institutional review process. This database is managed by PAAHE, and it will be very helpful during institutional review for accreditation purposes.

During the next semester, starting from November 2014, MES and PAAHE in collaboration with British Embassy and British Council will start a new process for the institutional review of all HEIs in Albania. The **Quality Assurance Agency in UK**, as a member of ENQA and EQAR **will be engaged to conduct the external evaluation in close partnership with the national agency PAAHE**. This process will be guided by both National and European Standards and Guidelines in EHEA.

All HEIs operating in Albania, with the exception of suspended institutions, will undergo this process, the results and recommendation of which will serve for the institutional **accreditation decision**, which will be taken **by the Accreditation Council**, a national body.



Meanwhile, a newly composed Accreditation Council is under establishment with a remarkable and sound **foreign representation**.

The process is very challenging, especially for those public HEIs that never underwent external evaluation process and accreditation, even though it was a legal requirement and mandatory since year 2007. Before involvement and as a precondition, PAAHE, based on the results of VLRMN and measures taken by the institutions as a response, shall prepare individual reports for each HEI, to assess the rate of compliance with the minimal standards.

For more information for this process, please refer to PAAHE official website: <http://www.aal.edu.al/en/>.



NCPA at KU Leuven University, Gent, Belgium

NCPA representatives **Galina Motova**, deputy head of NCPA and **Anna Tarasova**, deputy head of International Relations Office participated in **TEMPUS_ALIGN**, EU project for aligning and checking the alignment of intended programme learning outcomes with National Qualifications Frameworks. The **first training event**, held from September 28 to October 3, was organized by the Lead partner – **IADT**. The focus of the training was on capacity building within Armenian, Russian and Ukrainian HEIs and QAAs representatives of PLOs, assessments tools, and quality assurance procedures. Both NCPA representatives took an active part in the group work, also Galina Motova made a presentation about the history and current changes in the system of QA in Russia. The theory on mechanisms of ensuring the alignment of PLOs was well-balanced with practice on proper programme design, which will enable the project partners to draft **Guidelines for Aligning and Checking the Alignment of a Higher Education Study Programme's Learning Outcomes** with a National Qualifications Framework before the second event in Dublin, Ireland.



FIBAA is listed in the Kazakh National Register of Accreditation Institutions

In June 2014, the **Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan** followed the recommendation of the Republican Accreditation Council and decided to include **FIBAA to the National Register of Accreditation Agencies**. FIBAA's decisions on accreditation of study programmes at Kazakh Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are thus recognised by the Ministry.



The listing of foreign accreditation agencies in the Kazakh national register is valid for five years. FIBAA is qualified to conduct programme accreditation procedures in Kazakhstan until June 2019. At the end of this period the Kazakh Ministry decides on the basis of the reapplication of the agency on the prolongation of its registration.

Kazakhstan is not only a strategic commercial partner for Europe and Germany, but also an interesting higher education area for FIBAA. National higher education providers are state and private universities, colleges as well as schools. Over the past years, the Kazakh government undertook **important reforms in order to modernise the higher education** sector and to align it with international standards. In 2010, *Kazakhstan* joined the *Bologna process* and was welcomed as the 47th participating country of the European Higher Education Area. After that, new types of HEIs have been introduced (i.e. National Research Universities, National Higher Education Institutions, and Research Universities) as well as private HEIs. Consequently, the implementation of a national as well as international **transparent quality assurance system** becomes very important – a system to which FIBAA will henceforward contribute with its work.



PKA and NEAA signed bilateral agreement

On 12 September 2014 the Secretary General of the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA) and the President of the **National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency of Republic of Bulgaria** (NEAA) concluded an agreement for cooperation between two agencies.

For the purposes of this Agreement parties provide for mutual cooperation in the area of quality assurance, including a. o. exchange of experts serving in the accreditation procedures at the national level, development of common projects, exchange of information about higher education systems, sharing of information on development of procedures and quality assurance systems as well as promotion of publications, conferences and events organised by parties of the memorandum. Agreement will be binding for 5 years and may be continued.



PKA successfully submitted Erasmus Plus project

The proposal coordinated by the Polish Accreditation Committee – **EIQAS (Enhancing Internal Quality Assurance Systems)** was approved and listed on third place of the Erasmus Plus competition proposals submitted within the Action 2 of the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education. The project consortium consists of accreditation agencies, conferences of rectors and higher education institutions from **Poland, Bulgaria, Portugal and Slovenia**.



Besides individual experts from **UK, Spain, Norway, Germany** will be engaged in the project activities.

The main task of EIQAS is to increase the capacity of higher education institutions in the participating countries to **develop internal quality assurance** by enhancing their awareness and understanding of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and identifying, developing and disseminating good innovative practice in internal quality assurance. As a result of the project, a significant increase in capacity of the participating QA agencies in external quality assurance by way of **comparing their methodologies for the assessment of internal quality assurance** and exchanging and developing good practice in IQA assessment is also expected.



4th Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education on the Implementation of the European Higher Education Area

By invitation of **Council of Europe** (CoE), and nominated by **ENQA**, on 22-23 October, 2014, **Aurelija Valeikiene, Deputy Director of SKVC Lithuania** and **former President of CEENQA**, took part in the 4th Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education on the Implementation of the European Higher Education Area in Baku. The event was jointly organized by the CoE and Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan.

Ministers of **Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia** have been meeting on a yearly basis to discuss questions related to the implementation of the European Higher Education Area starting September 2011. In addition to this, in November 2012 the **Ministers decided to set up the regional network of correspondents for national qualifications frameworks**. This network held its first meeting last year and this year it was their second gathering.

Ministers of Education from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine have been invited to Baku. From stakeholder organizations, there was a representative from **European Students Union**.

At the event, the general implementation of Bologna process in Europe and Azerbaijan in particular was discussed. From specific topics, **three themes** were scrutinized, namely, **National Qualifications Frameworks, Quality Assurance**, and **Ethics and Integrity** in higher education.

Initially, the challenges of development of national qualification frameworks towards their self-certification was analysed by Prof **Stephen Adam**, Higher Education Expert.



Afterwards, he led a more detailed discussion of national correspondents for NQF, facilitated by Mr. **Arjen Deij**, expert from **European Training Foundation**. The level of implementation of national qualification frameworks among the countries of the region is rather uneven, but in general, completion of self-certification is expected in two to three years at the earliest. Meantime, reforming qualification structures and implementing of the learning outcomes approach are central issues to address.

Ms. Valeikiene gave a presentation on the topic "The place and role of the national quality assurance system in advancing higher education reforms in a society" and joined the panel discussion, led by Mr. **Sjur Bergan** from **CoE**, and in the company of vice ministers for education of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. Notably, there is no "one size fits all" solution, however, there is a certain coherence of understanding in concepts and the European quality assurance model, as defined in European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (**ESG**). It was underlined, that quality assurance is not a panacea, but rather a tool to achieve certain goals. At the same time, effective **internal quality management coupled with external quality assurance** constitute conditions sine qua non for modern higher education management. Discussion on quality assurance received particular attention within the audience. Apparently, knowledge of ESG principles and their concrete application needs to be further promoted, as well as student participation and wider involvement as consultative partners and active members in all matters, from higher education governance to quality assurance.

Prof. **Ian Smith**, **University of the West of Scotland** and Mr **Tom Hamilton**, **General Teaching Council for Scotland** made a joint contribution on the topic of ethics and integrity in higher education. Wider literature and research on the issue were presented. Some suggested solutions include measures at the individual and institutional level, but on more general level, the link with overall quality assurance and enhancement at system level needs to be established. One of specific cures seems to be **strong, independent national agencies** for quality assurance and enhancement, including reviews. However, effective solutions are, only those that **address cultures, as well as structures and policies**.

At the end of event, in the joint session, countries discussed and adopted a formal declaration.

Ministers confirmed that the implementation of the European Higher Education Area remained a high priority for education policy and practice in our countries in the coming years. It was further encouraged the dissemination of the goals and principles of the Bologna Process to countries that are not members of the EHEA. The importance of internal



and external quality assurance in higher education was underlined, together with willingness to establish closer **co-operation with existing networks** of professionals in the field (such as **ENQA** and **CEENQA**) and among the countries on regional and bilateral basis. Inclusion of a quality assurance perspective in the work of the regional network of correspondents for national qualifications frameworks and vice versa – development of national quality assurance systems in line with development of national qualification frameworks was stressed. Ministers also committed to promoting ethics and integrity in our education systems in order to ensure quality education.

Regular exchanges of information and good practice at Ministerial level on the progress of higher education structural reforms in the region are meant to continue, as well as work to strengthen transparency by providing information on higher education systems, qualifications and policies among the states involved and to other members of the EHEA. The Council of Europe as well as the European Union and other international institutions were called upon to **support and contribute to the promotion and implementation of bilateral and regional co-operation** in the field of the higher education structural reform process.

Ex board member of CEENQA Professor Bicak became a consultant at NCAAA of Saudi Arabia

Ex Board Member of CEENQA and Previous President of YODAK of North Cyprus Prof. Dr.



Hasan Ali Bicak accepted the offer made by the Secretary General of **National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) of Saudi Arabia, Prof. Abdullah Almusallam** and became a consultant to NCAAA. Prof. Bicak starting at NCAAA as of 1st September, within the framework of his consultancy, will be providing advice to the Secretary General of the NCAAA on the implementation of quality assurance and accreditation, providing training for staff in higher education institutions, assisting with the identification of persons from other countries who could serve on external review panels, reviewing and assisting with the finalisation of reports by external review panels, assisting in the



identification of experts who could provide advice and recommendations, and monitoring standards and processes used by NCAAA and assisting with planning for further developments.

In recent years Prof. Bicak had **reviewed 3 Universities in Kosovo, 4 Universities in Bahrain and 3 Universities in Saudi Arabia.** His work at the review of the **Business Programs of King Saud University** and **institutional**



review of Umm Al-Qura University gave the opportunity to NCAAA to follow and know him better before the offer is made.

Prof. Bicak, during his one year Board Membership, represented CEENQA at the Regional Quality Assurance Agencies' Networks Meeting during the GA Meeting of **INQAAHE in Taiwan, last year**, and attended the **Kick-off Meeting of ALIGN Project** on behalf of CEENQA.

With his new appointment, Prof. Bicak is more than happy to provide assistance in the cooperation of CEENQA with NCAAA, **Quality Assurance Agencies in Islamic World (QAIIW)** and Arab Network of **Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (ANQAHE).**
