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NARIC NETWORK (EUROPEAN COMMISSION)**

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University of Malta - Foundation for International Studies

**THE GLOBALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS**

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education - Higher Education and Research Division) of the Council of Europe, UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) and Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission

**ITEM 8**

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

**GLOBAL FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE, ACCREDITATION AND THE  
RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS : INFORMATION NOTE**

## **GLOBAL FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE, ACCREDITATION AND THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS : INFORMATION NOTE**

### **Context**

As recommended by the Expert Meeting on the Impact of Globalization on Higher Education (UNESCO, Paris, 10 -11 September 2001) a Task Force was set up to further develop the proposed Action Plan. This Task Force met for the first time in Lisbon, Portugal on 13 April 2002.

The Task Force was made up of experts from Canada, Belgium, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Portugal and the United Kingdom as well as the Co-Secretaries of the Regional Committees in charge of the application of the Regional Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Europe. The Secretariat of the Task Force was assured by UNESCO, Paris (Annex I: List of Participants).

### **Outcomes**

The meeting, co-chaired, consecutively, by Mr. Pedro Lourtie, former Secretary of State for Higher Education of Portugal, Mr. Dirk Van Damme, Professor of Education and Secretary-General of VLIR, the Flemish Inter-University Council, and Ms. Robin Middlehurst, Professor at the School of Education Studies at the University of Surrey, came to the following conclusions.

Agreement was reached that the Global Forum, under the auspices of UNESCO, is unique in its coverage of the wider higher education community<sup>1</sup>. It provides an inclusive space as a platform for dialogue on global issues in a global context, drawing on regional and national needs, concerns and perspectives.

The Task Force also confirmed the scope of the Global Forum as reflecting UNESCO's functions as set out in UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy : as an "information-broker, capacity builder and standard-setter". In view of these important functions, it was agreed that UNESCO can offer a forum for debate about the global quality assurance implications of topical issues such as the growing and diversifying, international market in higher education and the role of higher education as a public good especially in developing countries and countries in transition.<sup>2</sup>

It also reasserted UNESCO's leading role in advising member states on policy issues related to quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications as they are affected by globalization, trade in educational services and other aspects of the growth of 'borderless higher education'.

The Task Force members suggested follow-up activities by the UNESCO Secretariat in Headquarters and by Field Offices/Units (subject to the resources available in each location):

1. Regional offices will provide additional information, as appropriate and feasible on the Impact of private/for profit providers on higher education developments in their respective regions (if possible on the basis of the Questionnaire already circulated so as to collect comparable information). Some specific comments were made by some regional offices e.g.:

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<sup>1</sup> Other forums, e.g. OECD that bring together Education Ministers, are restricted to a more limited number of industrialized countries.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Introductory address of Sir John Daniel, Assistant Director-General at the September 2001 meeting

- a) the survey for Asia and the Pacific will include some case-studies rather than a comprehensive survey;
  - b) CEPES is likely to be able to contribute best by drawing on existing work or work in progress on TNE and by possible input by the ENIC-NARIC centres.
2. Further develop the concept of a Worldwide Quality Register or Directory of Trustworthy Accrediting Agencies, in cooperation with INQAAHE, IAU and other relevant NGOs and regional associations active in the field.
  3. Develop information activities, best suited to sustain the agenda of the Global Forum, in cooperation with IAU, in the framework of in particular the IAU/UNESCO Information Centre on Higher Education.
  4. Prepare a Position Paper on Higher Education, Globalization and Trade for discussion/debate at the Global Forum meeting in October 2002;
  5. Prepare Concept Paper on a Code of Good/Ethical Practice on QA, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications in the light of the impact of developments in 'borderless' higher education, trans-national education and trade in education services. Existing Codes and Conventions can provide guidance in this area.
  6. Consider commissioning 1-2 analytical case studies, on suggested topics relating to the agenda of the Global Forum.

The majority of the follow-up activities listed above would be done in preparation of the 1st Global Forum meeting with assistance from smaller working groups as needed and circulated to the Task Force in advance.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Global Forum Meeting**

The Task Force agreed that the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Forum Meeting will be held 21-22 October 2002 at UNESCO Paris. The draft agenda of this Global Forum Meeting will concentrate on:

- Higher education, globalization and trade in educational services
- Feasibility of a code of good/ethical practice on quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications
- Information sharing

Participants will be enlarged from those of the September 2001 Expert Meeting to include other stakeholders. The first announcement of the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Forum Meeting will be sent out officially in early June 2002.