3. Quality Assurance and Recognition in a Global Perspective

Working language:	English
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Rapid growth and expanding technology in cross-border delivery of education services are widely seen to man-date new efforts in quality assurance and recognition. Inside Europe a common quality base may be described as a prerequisite for the European Higher Education Area. The institutional application of this shared understanding is making great progress, and quality networking is one of the more tangible results of the Bologna Process, building to a large extent on cooperation through ENQA and on the work of UNESCO and the Council of Europe with the ENIC/NARIC network and the Lisbon Convention.

Quality Assurance may be described as the ongoing process of monitoring and maintaining the quality and standards we want to apply. This makes it mostly a responsibility for the individual institutions. Quality assurance is the basis for both **recognition** and **accreditation**. Recognition refers to the acceptance of education qualifications from abroad as suitable to replace a domestic qualification in relation to particular further education or employment activities. In other words it deals with individuals and their need for portable qualifications. Accreditation is the process where institutions or the programmes they offer are accepted as adequate according to a common set of norms.

Beyond Europe similar efforts are gaining ground, but the difficulties faced in other regions are sometimes considerable. An important challenge within the global dimension of the Bologna Process would be to engage globally in efforts to expand and facilitate the mobility of learning. Some promising efforts are under way, such as the UNESCO/OECD *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Higher Education*, and regional quality assurance networks are forming global links with great potential.

The working group will be invited to examine and discuss the implications this may have for the future thrust and agenda of the Bologna Process. Possible topics are:

Standard-setting – Several important international documents attempt to address the need for a quality consensus among countries and stakeholders in cross-border higher education, such as the Council of Europe Code of Good Practice, the draft UNESCO/OECD *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Higher Education* and the statement on *Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders* by the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

1. The Bologna Process relies on coherent European standards, and this conference examines frameworks to secure that basis. But is it a suitable paradigm for other regions, too?

2. Obviously, solutions in all regions must reflect their unique needs and conditions. Still – could experience gained e.g. in Europe be of use for other regions and countries?

3. The Bologna Process has initiated a number of reforms in the degree structures of European countries with a view to making degrees more easily recognised across the European Higher Education Area. But how are the new European degrees perceived outside Europe? And how should Europe promote under- standing of the 'Bologna' degrees?

UNESCO Conventions – In the European region, the Lisbon Convention on recognition of qualifications has been very important. The regional conventions have met with varying success, and UNESCO is committed to a process of revision and revitalisation.

4. How well may the UNESCO conventions be suited as the framework for a global system of recognition?
   What could be the European contribution?

Capacity building – For many countries the challenges of managing and protecting national education policies and ensuring sustained quality in education are beyond current capacity. They risk an influx of commercial providers, some of whom may be reluctant to accept a responsibility for the education environment they inhabit, and all of whom are well equipped with legal and negotiating expertise.

5. What contributions can be made, and how should they be made, by the more established education sectors of Europe?
   Are European developments in the organisation of quality assurance in higher education transferable to other regions?

International trade – Globalised trade in higher education services already constitutes a significant segment of world trade in services. In the GATS context many are concerned that quality aspects of education will be ignored and marginalised.

6. In this perspective – how could the Bologna Process help safeguard the special quality aspects of education – specifically the interests of the weaker countries that are the potential victims of low-quality and/or for-profit education across borders?

The role of institutions and academic staff – While governments may regulate for quality and facilitate quality assurance, a culture of quality depends on the actions and attitudes of education practitioners.

7. How can we ensure the full contribution of educational staff and students in securing and developing quality in higher education?

8. What has to be done at the institutional level to fully implement the principles of the Lisbon Convention in the practice of recognition?

Summing up the discussion: How can the efforts to improve quality assurance and recognition in the European Higher Education Area best be linked to the UNESCO/OECD global approach?