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|  <p>ERI SEE EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE</p> |  <p>Ministry of Science Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia</p> |  <p>Agency for Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia</p> |
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Regional events

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| <p>Accreditation in Higher Education in South Eastern Europe 28 – 29 June 2007, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia</p> | <p>The Bologna Process after London: the Challenges for Implementation 29-30 June 2007, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia</p> |
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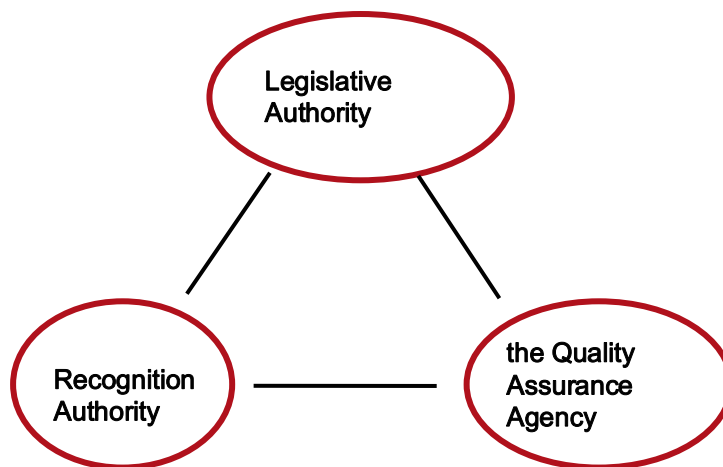
ERI SEE: Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe

ERI SEE er et av kjerneområdene under EUs Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Aktiviteten i ERI SEE er finansiert av Nederland, Norge, Sveits og Østerrike. Herved følger en presentasjon av Tove Blytt Holmen i forbindelse med en rundebordskonferanse: „Accreditation in Higher Education in South Eastern Europe”, 28. – 29. juni 2007, Zagreb, Kroatia

Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Decisions; ECA Code of Good Practise

Today ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation has 15 members from 10 countries. NOKUT is one of these members. Together with the other ECA members, NOKUT is working towards a common aim that is mutual recognition of each others accreditation decisions. This means an ambition to proceed beyond the general recognition of the study/degree to a situation where the recognition concerns recognition of qualifications for the purpose of study or work across borders. ECA was founded in 2003 and as a project it is planned to close up by the end of this year (2007). The aim of mutual recognition will, however, not be reached by then. Even so, the members have advanced through stages of information, defining common tools and instrument to the last phase that involves mutual co-operations and external reviews. Through these years we have gained more understanding and trust in each others. Some agencies will be ready to sign bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of each others accreditation decisions. However we are also aware that there are other parties in the field having a crucial role on the final result:

*The national legislative authorities and the national recognition authorities
(NARIC/ENIC)*



In the following I will give a brief overview about:

On the agenda:

- The NOKUT mandate and organization
- NOKUT and international networks: the regional network NOQA and the thematic based ECA
- Internationalisation and transparency, understanding and trust
- Internationalisation and impact on quality of Higher Education as such



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The NOKUT mandate and organization

In Norway, NOKUT is the only officially authorised quality assurance agency for higher education. NOKUT covers all universities and colleges, private institutions as well as the public which all are state owned.

In these following 20 minutes I will certainly not be able to give you a full understanding of what accreditation is like in Norway.

My ambition is though, to show that it is more to it than meets the eye – at least at first glance. Accreditation is not the mechanistic, one-dimensional activity as some opponents may see it. On the contrary: my experience is that when established in a fruitful combination with other measures of quality assurance, accreditation will contribute to a strengthened quality of higher education itself. Accreditation, as it is characterised by formal and well known standards, internationally accepted procedures and openly published results will also contribute to the mutual recognition of higher education across borders.

NOKUT's mandate is given in the act regulating higher education, and further specified in regulations laid down by the Ministry. One might call NOKUT an agency for control and monitoring with a mission to stimulate to the trust in quality of higher education.

NOKUT - Mandate

- Evaluation of institutional quality assurance systems (institutional audits)
- Initial accreditation of higher education institutions
- Initial accreditation of course provisions (HE)
- Revisions of accreditations
- Evaluations for enhancement purposes
- Approval of shorter, vocational education (tertiary, but not HE)
- Recognition of foreign education



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In Norway institutions giving higher education are systematised into four categories: University, Specialised university, Accredited university college and the last category, the Non-accredited HEIs which are all private. They are all integrated legal entities.

Institutional Autonomy

| | Universities | Specialised universities | Accredited university colleges | Non-accredited |
|----------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| PhD. | | | | |
| Master | | | | |
| Bachelor | | | | |

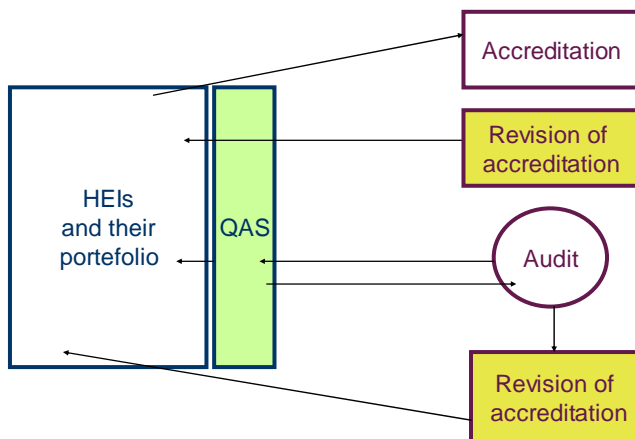
- Power to establish any study programme (BA, MA, PhD)
- Power is limited. The institution cannot offer study programmes in the field without accreditation and a final decision by The Ministry of Education.

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The University is characterised by having power to establish any study program at any of the three levels BA, MA and PhD. The Specialised university has the self-accrediting power within its specialisation and the university college may provide any BA by self – accreditation.

The Norwegian Model of Quality Assurance



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QAS: Quality Assurance System

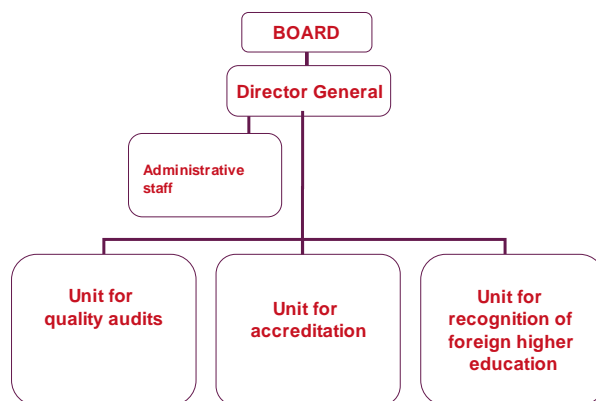
The picture above shows the complex situation of quality assurance in Norway. The basis for quality assurance in higher education is that every institution providing higher

education, has to operate with acceptable quality assurance systems. NOKUT evaluate (audit) these institutional quality assurance systems cyclical, every sixth year. However, as audit is not the direct measure of quality in higher education, the Norwegian model also includes accreditation of programmes and institutions.

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NOKUT is fully financed by the Ministry of education. The Ministry also appoints the Board and may instruct NOKUT to evaluate study programmes for enhancement purposes. The Ministry may not instruct NOKUT in methodological questions or dispute the decisions taken by NOKUT. This is our basis for independence or “arm-length distance” to the Ministry.

NOKUT's organization



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NOKUT is an organization with 50 employees, 8 board members and yearly we will appoint approximately 250 experts for the external, independent evaluations / accreditations.

International Networks

NOKUT is engaged in international networks for several reasons:

- Learn from others for our own improvement
- Contribute to the general development of quality assurance

- Inform about the Norwegian system to create trust in Norwegian higher education abroad
- To get information for our own recognition of foreign higher education

NOKUT is a full member of ENQA. Time and title of my speech does not allow me to elaborate on this membership.

However, I will dwell a little on the Nordic network: NOQA

Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) is a forum for information dissemination, exchanging experiences and pursuing projects of mutual interest. The main objective is to create a joint understanding of different Nordic viewpoints on issues related to higher education quality assurance. In order to maintain an active Nordic network, the members meet annually. Here the result of last years joint-project is discussed and approved, and the theme for coming years joint-project is decided.

From the NOQA home page you will find the reports of the Nordic project:

<http://www.noqa.no/>

- 2008 Consequences of national qualification framework and learning outcome on criteria for evaluation and accreditation of programmes
- 2007 Comparison of the different Nordic approaches to and results from their evaluation of institutional quality assurance systems (audit)
- 2005 European standards and guidelines in a nordic perspective
- 2004 Systematic quality work in nordic higher education institutions
- 2003 Student involvement in nordic quality assessments of higher education
- 2002 A method of mutual recognition of quality assurance agencies
- 2001 Quality assurance in the nordic higher education – accreditation-like practises



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This year, 2007 – 2008, NOKUT has the Chair of NOQA.

ECA

The aim of ECA is that the member organisations by implementing

ECA Code of good practice

ECA principles for selection of experts

ECA principles for the accreditation of joint-degrees

... having performed comparative analysis of systems and standards and mutual observations of each others procedures (I will tell more in details about the comparison between NOKUT and FHR after the break) will be comfortable to sign agreements for mutual recognition of each others accreditation decisions by the end of 2007.

The ECA objective of mutual recognition of each others accreditation decisions has created a lot of questions:

- Why is this work not carried out under the framework of ENQA?
- How can the ECA members make agreements on mutual recognition and still adhere to the principle of national sovereignty?
- What about national legislation and the mandate of NARIC/ENICS?
- .. and the simple question: What is the value added?

As far as I can see, the ECA project is not challenging ENQA. All ECA members are now members of ENQA. ECA is a consortium promoting accreditation as a model for quality assurance whilst ENQA members are more diverse in their use of models for quality assurance. ECA's Code of good practice departs from ENQA's by specifying *accreditation*. Other than that I can see no substantial differences.

For the other questions, there will be no simple answers. The answers and the practical consequence of ECA on mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, will depend on national context.

Accreditation, in combination with evaluation of institutional quality assurance systems, is the model that Norway has chosen for quality assurance in higher education. Other countries will, as you know, have decided for other systems. Around Europe we will find audit as the sole system, programme accreditation, different forms of programme and/or institutional evaluations – or combinations of these one way or the other. Agencies have different relations with their Governments/Ministries and the transparency of procedures and results are also varying. Taking into regard the Lisabon Convention, Diploma Supplement, Bologna process and European Qualification Framework - to my mind the following elements in ECA Code of Good Practise are of highly importance for mutual recognition:

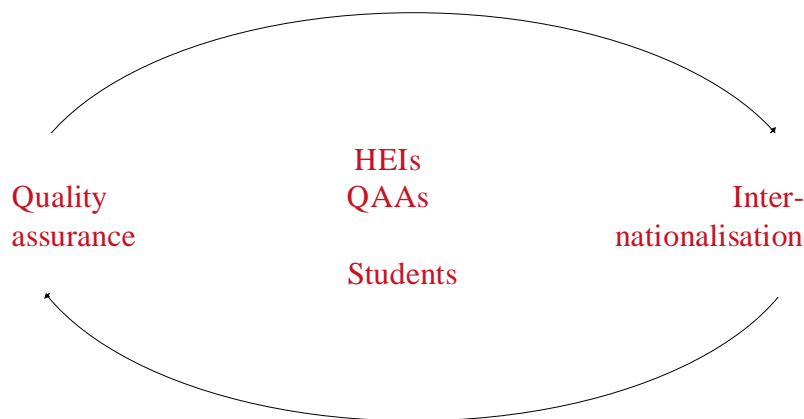
Some important elements in ECA Code of Good Practice

- Must be sufficiently independent from government, from higher education institutions as well as from business, industry and professional associations
- Accreditation Procedures and methods must be defined by the accreditation organisation itself
- Must guarantee the independence and competence of the external panels or teams
- Can demonstrate public accountability, has both public and officially available policies, procedures, guidelines and criteria
- Informs the public in appropriate way about accreditation decisions

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The ideal match



... how can we make it happen?

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The ECA project has showed that the accreditation agencies are willing to open up, to learn from each other, to be pragmatic, to trust more and control less. National specificities in accreditation procedures are increasingly being more tolerated and accepted as long as do not fundamentally influence the final accreditation decision. “Mutual recognition agreements are brought within reach”

Many of the quality assurance agencies are members of ENQA and/or regional networks like the Nordic, the Central- and Eastern Europe or the DACH. Has the work of ECA been a value added? I believe so. A broader context like ENQA would involve too many countries, too many cultures and expectations. At least for the coming five year period I believe that accreditation will play a decisive role in mutual trust and recognition across borders.