

EU Commission's Proposals on the European Degree Label and European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in Higher Education

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Workshop 10.30-11.10

- Introduction: European Commission's Resolution 12 May 2025 (5 min)
- European Degree Label: The three phases and UKÄ plans (7-8 min)
- Tour de table – one voice for each country (10 min)
- The European System for Recognition and Quality Assurance (7-8 min)
- Plenary discussion about what we should, could and might do (10 min)

Introduction – why European degree, why alliances – EU's vision

- Since 2017 (formally from 2021), the EU has been preparing a **European Degree** with the aim to:
 - enhance quality, attractiveness, and global competitiveness
 - respond to global challenges
 - foster innovative approaches in education and research
 - promote mobility of students, staff, and researchers
- **"Quality assurance is at the core of credibility** in the European Degree initiative."



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UKÄ
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Introduction – alliance member HEIs from the Nordic countries

- Through five Erasmus+ funding calls, **65 European University alliances** have been selected.
- These alliances bring together **over 570 higher education institutions from 35 countries.**
- **Nordic HEIs** have been active in joining the alliances; and as part of alliances, they have been successful in the funding calls
 - From *Denmark*: 7 HEIs are part of the European Alliances
 - From *Finland*: 23 HEIs
 - From *Iceland*: 4 HEIs
 - From *Norway*: 11 HEIs
 - From *Sweden*: 24 HEIs

Source: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/map>



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Introduction – EU's two resolutions

1. EU Council Resolution (2025) on a joint European degree label and the next steps towards a possible joint European degree
2. Recommendation (2025) on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education

What are we expected to do?

- **Member States:** enable and support the joint European Degree Label, simplify QA/recognition, and prepare ground for a full degree
- **QA Agencies:** apply European criteria to award the label, pilot alliance-wide QA, and foster trust/automatic recognition
- **Alliances:** integrate joint QA into programmes, ensure mobility and recognition, and test new alliance-level QA models.



European Degree and Label – why?



- **Why?** European identity. Also, commission's rationale is – create further momentum for Bologna process, implementation of European Approach and further the creation of a European Education Area (EEA).
- **For whom?** Strongly linked to EULs, 10% of HEIs, but how many joint programmes? How many students?

Three phases - When and how?

- PHASE 1: FINALISING THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE ROLLOUT OF THE JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL (2025-2026) **Policy lab**
- PHASE 2: ROLLOUT OF THE JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL, MONITORING ITS IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATING ITS USE AND CONDUCTING FEASIBILITY AND EXPLORATORY WORKS ON A JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE (2026-2028) **report end of 2028**
- PHASE 3: REFLECTING AND MAKING AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION ON NEXT STEPS TOWARDS A JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE (2029)

Criteria for label and degree

- Program organisation (9 criteria):

A1: At least 2 HEIs from at least 2 member states

A2: Transnational joint degree delivery

A3: Joint arrangements

A4: Quality Assurance (ESG and European Approach)

- European dimension (7 criteria)

B1: Interdisciplinary and research-based learning

B4: Values

B5: Multilingualism



ENQA:s briefing note – some practical challenges

- The **increased workload** for quality assurance agencies....and the need for peer-learning and exchange opportunities.
- The **limited remit** of quality assurance agencies to assess label criteria that fall outside their usual scope; for example, those related to values and democratic citizenship.
- The requirement for **significant national level concessions and legal changes** for such exemptions, which have already proved difficult to achieve for EHEA commitments such as the use of the European Approach.

Major challenges for UKÄ:

In proposal: Agencies that have *fully* implemented the European Approach will be able to either award the label or to grant self-awarding status to HEIs

Obstacles for UKÄ

- Cannot accept payment for transnational QA e.g. European Approach,
- Cannot act abroad or accept foreign bodies' assessments

Both hinder UKÄ and HEIs to be actors/pro-active in a more transnational system,

Also challenging: Who will grant the label UKÄ or HEIs – what is the process for this?

implementing EA or issuing degree label without creating extra burden,

- implementing EA without going against trend of allowing greater autonomy and having institutional review as base,

Change in UKÄ
instruction 2025?

TN project 3
and national
collaboration
project (UHR
et al) 2025

Tentative:
EA of a joint
programme
2026

Tentative:
Investigate
awarding a
EDL or
awarding
HEIs to award
them? (2026-
28)

?

?

?

Strategic intelligence/horizon scanning, education staff on EA,
networking, participate i working groups, and policy labs.

PHASE 1: Prepare
for roll-out of EDL
(2025-2026)

PHASE 2: Rollout of the
Joint EDL, monitoring
implementation and
evaluating use +
exploratory work on JED.
(2026-2028)

PHASE 3: reflecting
and making evidence-
based decision on next
steps to a JED (2029)



- What are the **key challenges** for you concerning the developments planned for a ED label and a European degree as outlined by the commission and approved by the ministers in the EHEA?
- How are you **addressing the coming challenges and opportunities?**
- Anything you would like to add or any comments on the survey and the responses in it by you or other agencies?

QA Solutions Proposed for Alliances

Internal QA systems: alliances (e.g. European Universities) to establish joint internal QA covering all shared educational provision.

“Once-only” principle: external review to be carried out only once per validity cycle, not repeated in each country.

Common standards: based on ESG and the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes.

Right to label & self-accreditation: positive review grants alliances the right to self-accredit joint programmes and use the joint European degree label.

Member State incentives: national authorities encouraged to remove redundant QA requirements once alliance QA is recognised.

Framework building blocks: Annex defines cooperation, autonomy, external evaluation, internal QA, and quality assurance mechanisms.



What Is Now Expected as regards to QA?

Alliances: build strong internal QA, apply the degree label criteria in joint programmes; consider external EA accreditation OR implement a self-accreditation of the programme; undergo (so far voluntary) alliance-level evaluation; apply EA to microcredentials.

QA Agencies: prepare to award the label/self-accreditation rights; consider conducting alliance-level external evaluations (e.g. EUniQ pilots).

Member States: enable the new QA framework (in legislation, if needed), reduce redundant/overlapping national reviews as regards to alliances.

Open issue: not yet clear whether the final QA model will focus - on the **alliance or programme/course/micro-credential level**. Legal requirements for QA vary in different countries.

In the long-term, the EU Commission seems to promote the institutional approach

Plenary discussion on next steps



Desired direction: Where do we want to go — and what to avoid?



Common ground: What perspectives can we share?



Next steps together: What opportunities can we explore?



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