



International developments: **European Approach and Joint European Degree Label** Current Status and Next Steps?

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European Universities Alliances: Paving the way for the Joint European Degree?

- European Universities Initiative (2019-): 65 alliances across 35 countries, bringing together 570+ HEIs and 11 million+ students.
- Nordic participation: Finland (28), Sweden (26), Norway (12), Denmark (7), Iceland (4).
- Baltic participation: Lithuania (14), Latvia (8), Estonia (6).
- A key driver of joint programmes, micro-credentials, automatic recognition, and the European Degree agenda of the European Commission.
- The Joint European Degree Label (JEDL) builds on the alliances and aims to accelerate the development of joint educational provision.

Sources:

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

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/775909/EPRS_BRI%282025%29775909_EN.pdf

European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes (EA)

- Treats a joint programme as one integrated educational offering, rather than a collection of national programmes.
- Evaluates the quality of joint design, joint delivery, joint governance and joint quality assurance.
- Enables one coordinated external review for programmes offered across multiple countries. Reduces administrative burden?
- Uses a single European framework based on the ESG, QF-EHEA and ECTS, rather than combining multiple national requirements.
- Now closely linked to the Joint European Degree Label.

The European Approach: Growing momentum

- EA adopted in the Yerevan Ministerial meeting 2015.
- Only a handful of EA evaluations before 2019. 31 EA evaluations in DEQAR by 2023 and 218 today.
 - Finland: from 3 EA reviewed programmes (2019-2023) to 16 (2024-2026).
- 14 agencies have uploaded EA reports to DEQAR, although EQAR lists 60 agencies.
- So far, this EQA activity has concentrated among a few agencies. EA reports in DEQAR: NVAO (46), AQAS (24), AQU Catalunya (11), HCERES (9), AQ Austria (8).
 - No Nordic or Baltic agency yet among the agencies.
- Integration with the Joint European Degree Label (JEDL) will further accelerate uptake.

Source: DEQAR, EQAR presentation.

Joint European Degree Label



- Joint European Degree Label for joint bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes delivered through transnational cooperation between HEIs (at least two EU/EEA countries in the consortium).
- Established through the [Council Recommendation on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education \(May 2025\)](#).
- Serves as a branding tool, providing visibility, prestige, and recognition for labelled joint programmes.
- Awarded to programmes that demonstrate strong transnational integration, a high-quality student experience, and a clear European dimension.
- Builds on existing EHEA tools: the ESG, EA and the ECTS Users' Guide.
- Commission sees JEDL as a step towards a future Joint European Degree.

JEDL: Where are we at the moment?

- Final [Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label](#) published in June 2026.
- The Joint European Degree Label is being piloted in 2026–2028 and the Commission is hoping for the agencies to be active.
 - Two first two labels were awarded in July for the EU-CONEXUS and CHARM-EU University Alliances.
- Commission funding for Erasmus+ European Degree exploratory action projects (14) and European Degree pathway projects (9).
 - FINEEC is involved in the EQuAL-Doc project. Consortium led by AQU Catalunya, other partners include AQAS in Germany, SKVC in Lithuania, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Hungarian Accreditation Committee.
 - Objectives include, e.g., implementing, testing and validating a common framework for awarding the Joint European Degree Label at bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels.

Who carries out?

- EQAR-registered QA agency
- Validated self-accrediting HEI chosen by the consortium (needs to have an ex-ante validation by an EQAR-registered QA agency prior to the process)

Process

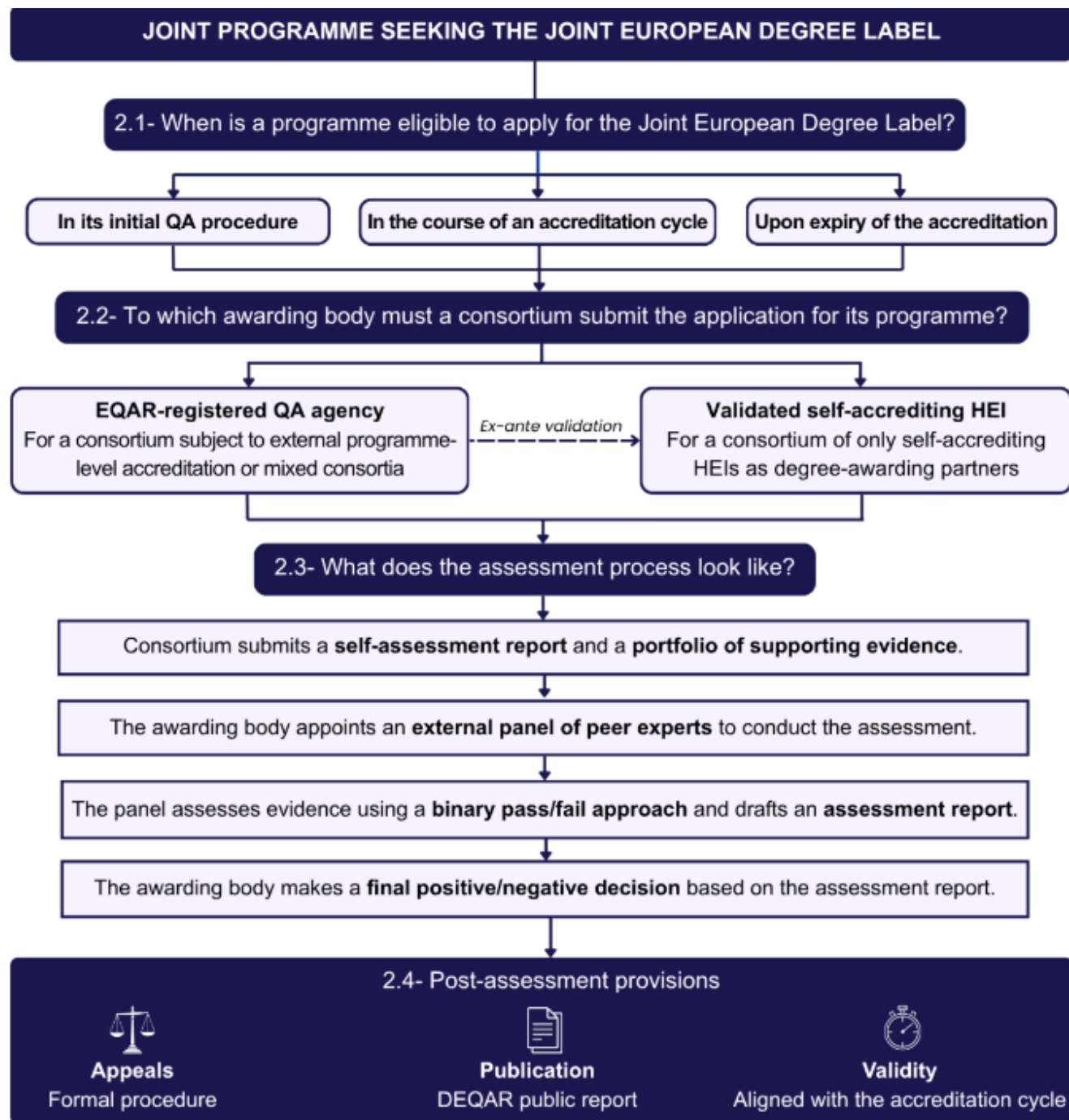
- If the programme has been assessed under the European Approach, majority of the criteria is already met
- Awarding the JEDL based on earlier EA accreditation
- EA accreditation and awarding the JEDL simultaneously
- Consortium of self-accrediting HEIs: the validated HEI coordinates the process

Criteria

- Dimension A: Programme organisation
- Dimension B: European dimension

Decision on the outcome

1. EQAR-registered QA agency
2. Consortium of self-accrediting HEIs



Strategic choices – Should we take an active role or not?

1. Piloting JEDL

- FINEEC participates in the pilot implementation of the JEDL and its criteria, but does not implement EA accreditations.
- Potentially some demand from joint programmes with prior EA accreditation.

2. Piloting JEDL + implementing EA

- FINEEC participates in the pilot implementation of the JEDL and starts to also implement EA accreditations.
- A larger demand as alliances might wish to have JEDL and EA at the same time

3. No JEDL nor EA

- FINEEC continues with its current activities and does not participate in the implementation of the European procedures.
- Might weaken Finland's role within the developments of the European higher education policy.

EQA development: Institutional vs. programme-accreditation

JEDL to some extent at odds with European Council Recommendation (2025) and broader development in EQA.

- Institutional EQA or programme accreditation?
- Quality enhancement or verification of compliance?
- Self-accreditation: accommodated or constrained?
- Added value, prestige and recognition?
- Reduced burden or additional bureaucracy?

Discussion

- What is the current discussion on the Joint European Degree Label and the European Approach in your countries?
- How is your agency preparing for their implementation?
- What opportunities and challenges do you foresee?