

ÖSTERREICHISCHER AKKREDITIERUNGSRAT



Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat

Fact Finding I The QA-Framework

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Rationale for the Survey

- European discussion on quality assurance → focus predominantly on public sector
- Private Higher Education sector: dynamic, market-driven and inhomogeneous



significant challenge for quality assurance

Methodology

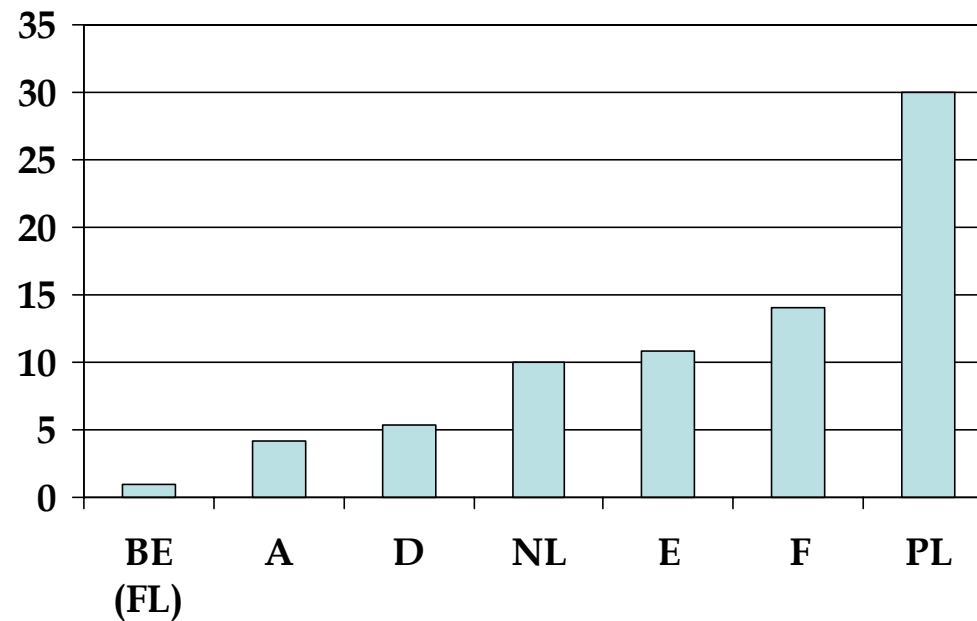
- **Aim**
 - » focus on quality assurance
 - » get a general idea of the character of PHE sector in Europe
- First Orientation (doesn't claim scientific accuracy)
- Questionnaire features 24 questions/3 major areas:
 1. Legislative Framework of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs)
 2. Accreditation and Quality Assurance of PHEIs
 3. Scope and size of PHE sector

Participating Countries

- 10 [ECA](#) member countries
- Questionnaire was sent to the QA Agencies and respective NARICs
- received answers from 9 countries
 - Austria
 - Belgium (Flanders)
 - Denmark
 - France
 - Germany
 - The Netherlands
 - Poland
 - Spain
 - Switzerland

Size of the private sector (1)

Percentage of PHEI students in relation to total student number



Size of the private sector (2)

Size with regard to number of enrolled students

- smallest institution: 17 students (PL)
- biggest institution: ca. 20,000 (NL)
- average size: ca. 1,000



tendency towards comparatively smaller institutions

Size of the private sector (3)

Field in which the majority of programmes are offered

- clear predominance of “Social Sciences, Business and Law”
- “Humanities and Arts” & “Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction” share second position

Types of Institutions and Ownership

Heterogeneous institutions: all types of institutions (parallel to the public sector)

- » Universities
- » Universities of applied sciences
- » Schools/Institutes
- » Programme providers

Heterogeneous ownership

- » (non-profit) association
- » private company
- » foundation
- » church
- » local government

Types of Programmes

- almost all types of PHEIs offer Bachelor/Master programmes and professional Master programmes
- stricter regulations for doctoral programmes: offered at Universities only (exception: Switzerland)

The meaning of 'private' in terms of ...

Financing

France
Netherlands
Spain
Switzerland

» solely private funding

Austria
Belgium (FL)
Germany
Poland

» hybrid financing possible
(public money)

The meaning of ‚private‘ in terms of ...

Student rights and access to public social support schemes

- strong tendency: as soon as a PHEI is recognised, students have same status/rights as public students
- exceptions:
 - » Spain no access at all
 - » Switzerland no regulations

Legal Regulations of PHE Sector

CH	A	D	E	F	BE (FL)	NL	PL	DK
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- » majority of ECA countries: legislation for PHEI in force
- » 2 “extreme” cases:
 - Switzerland no legal restrictions
 - Denmark total prohibition of private sector

Features of Legal Regulations (1)

Single versus Two-Phase Models

One single procedure leads to

- » formal recognition as a national HEI
- » national degree awarding power
- » right to use the name ,university'

Features of Legal Regulations (2)

Single versus **Two-Phase Models**

Initial procedure

- » leads to formal registration* without the right to award national degrees
- » is a pre-condition for applying for a

Follow-up procedure

- » leading to full recognition

*Welcome to Babylon: The terms Accreditation, Registration, Licensing, Recognition have different meanings related to the initial or follow-up phase depending on the national legal context

Features of Legal Regulations (3)

Institutional or Programme Level: Chicken or the Egg

Is institutional recognition a precondition for programme recognition or the other way round?

Examples:

NL, E: Only recognised institutions can apply for accreditation of programmes

BE (FL): Initial accreditation of programmes is the precondition for formal recognition of the provider

QA Procedures

Different QA procedures for public \leftrightarrow private HEIs?

- all procedures follow the ESG \rightarrow in general no major differences for the procedures as such but:
 - » Germany: institutional accreditation only for PHEIs
 - » France: same procedure, but PHEI *must* comply with recommendations, HEI *should* comply
 - » Switzerland: HEIs must undergo Quality Audits, accredited PHEIs don't have this obligation
 - » Austria: no national regulated external QA procedures in place for the public sector, for private universities accreditation is mandatory

QA Responsibility

- Agencies which are in charge of national public sector are responsible for QA procedures of private sector as well.
- Exceptions:
 - » Austria: Different agencies for public and private sector
 - » Germany: Additional agency for institutional accreditation of PHEIs

Main Challenges for Quality Assurance (2)

Institutional Level:

- Insufficient core staff (high fluctuation, flying faculty, double/multiple employment)
- Limited research activities
- Market-driven admission policy
- Academic freedom and independence

Main Challenges for Quality Assurance (1)

System Level:

- How to deal with providers offering programmes in a legal grey area?
- How to deal with franchise models?
- How to support the solid institutions and abandon institutions with insufficient quality?
- How to integrate the private sector in a fair and consistent manner in the national QA system?