

ECA Work Plan 2008-2009

Approved by the ECA Management Group on 27 October 2008

1. Introduction

As described in the Agreement of Cooperation there will be annual work plans. These annual work plans should include (cf. section 1 of the Agreement):

- the activities undertaken by the Working groups
- the dissemination of the work of the Consortium (including the annual ECA Workshop and the annual ECA conference or seminar)
- the exchange of information with other bodies, both in Europe (ENQA and CEEN) and outside of Europe (e.g. the regional networks APQN and RIACES that are working on mutual recognition, and the global network INQAAHE).

2. Working groups: activities and planning

The following names were chosen in Kraków for the four Working groups that were mentioned in the Explanatory note to the Agreement of Cooperation:

- Working group 1 “Mutual recognition”
- Working group 2 “Institutional accreditation and audits”
- Working group 3 “Crossroads and information strategies”
- Working group 4 “Mutual learning and best practices”.

On 5th June there were parallel sessions in which the activities and planning of the Working groups were discussed. The participants in the parallel sessions were asked to:

- appoint a chairperson
- to discuss and to prioritise the activities
- to establish what should be reached before the next Workshop in June 2009
- to agree on who will work on what
- to plan some meetings or e-mail discussions of the progress made.

The plenary feedback of these discussions in the parallel sessions have further shaped the Work plan 2008-2009. Each ECA member organisation has the opportunity to nominate one person for each Working group. The chairs take responsibility for monitoring the progress and reporting to the Management Group. It was decided in Kraków that it would be desirable if the chairs of the Working groups were also members of the Management group.

The activities of the Working groups will be discussed plenary at the ECA Workshop in 2009. The end-of-year seminars can be used for discussing themes brought forward by one of the ECA Working groups. For 2008

NVAO offered to organise the end-of-year seminar with themes put forward by Working group 2.

The Working group and plenary discussions in Kraków led to the following work plan for each of the Working groups.

2.1. Working Group 1 "Mutual recognition"

Composition:

- Elisabeth Fiorioli (Chair)
- Marianne Cox (expert) / Christoph Demand (expert)
- Mark Frederiks (ECA coordinator)
- Nick Harris (expert)
- Achim Hopbach (GAC)
- Leendert Klaassen (NVAO)
- Rafael Llavori (ANECA)
- René-Paul Martin (CTI)
- Stephanie Maurer (OAQ)
- Stephanie Zwiessler (AAC)

A Joint Programmes

Joint programmes are one of the most relevant areas for implementing mutual recognition agreements. Based on the results of WG 2 presented in Barcelona, WG 1 will explore how mutual recognition agreements can be applied in this context and try to develop an appropriate methodology for accreditation of joint programmes.

Planned activities:

- finding projects for pilot procedures
- inviting Nick Harris to participate in WG 1
- contacting Staffan Wahlén to get results from the Nordic Network

Report:

October Meeting

B Support ECA members to sign new bilateral recognition agreements ('Fast Track')

WG 1 will try to identify steps of the mutual recognition process which have turned out to be the most relevant for reaching bilateral agreements and which can be considered as useful and efficient tools to reach evidence based mutual trust between ECA members. Based on these findings an effective 'fast track'- strategy should be developed that enables ECA members to reach new bilateral recognition agreements without detours.

Planned activities:

- Short questionnaire for ECA members who have already signed bilateral recognition agreements.
- Proposal for 'fast track' - methodology

Time Schedule:
Questionnaire presented in the October meeting.

C Monitoring the implementation of mutual recognition agreements

WG 1 has identified two main action lines for monitoring the implementation of mutual recognition agreements:

1. Which activities among those ECA members having already signed recognition agreements will be useful/necessary to provide sufficient evidence that the preconditions for the agreements are still fulfilled and which activities can contribute to a further enhancement of mutual trust?

Planned activities:

- Analysis of activities in the 'league table'
- How to deal with outcomes of review reports ?
- How to inform about changes in national systems?

Time Schedule:
End of 2008

2. Establish a report system to collect experiences from ECA members regarding the implementation of the mutual recognition agreements.

Planned activities:

- Template for reporting

Time Schedule:
Template presented in the October meeting.

D Co-operation with ENIC/NARICs

The fruitful co-operation with the ENIC/NARIC in WG 1 should be continued. Special focus should be on the implementation of the 'automatic recognition' of qualifications (ref. Vienna Sententia) and the relevance of the mutual recognition agreements in this respect.

Planned Activities:

- Contacting ENIC/NARIC representatives and inviting them to the next meeting

Time Schedule:
Marianne Cox (NL) and Christoph Demand (A) take part in the October meeting.

E Applicability of mutual recognition agreements to other QA systems

This issue will be developed at a later stage.

2.2. Working Group 2 "Institutional accreditation and audits"

Composition:

- Karl Dittrich (Chair)
- Tove Blytt Holmen (NOKUT)
- Tine Holm (EVA)
- Eduardo Garcia (ANECA)
- Rolf Heusser (OAQ)
- Hermann Reuke (ZEvA)
- Heinz-Ulrich Schmidt (FIBAA)
- Maria Weber (FHR)
- Hannelore Weck-Hannemann (AAC)
- Anna Zielinska – Glebocka (PKA)
- Mark Frederiks (ECA coordinator)

A. Goals:

- Mutual learning
- Improving own Systems
- Common Core in different systems to reach trust and mutual recognition
- "European State of the Art"

Goals will be in the interest of stakeholders.

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TWO TOPICS (B and C)
For 2008 and June 2009

B. Mapping of systems in use

- Topics of/in "Assessments"
- Consequences/sanctions
- Purposes + Legal Frameworks
 - Methodology
(Standards, criteria, indicators)
(Institutional level only or combination with programmes as well?)
- Impacts/Effects
For Accreditation Organization or/and Stakeholders

C. Proposal for ECA training programme and pool of experts

Working group 2 will meet on October 30 and discuss both topics (survey and training programme/pool of experts) which will be the main input for the ECA seminar on 15 December.

2.3. Working group 3 “Crossroads and information strategies”

Composition:

- Mark Frederiks (Chair)
- Axel Aerden (Crossroads Supervisor and NVAO)
- Franz Börsch (GAC) and Roger Wurm (HRK)
- Nina Fjelde (NOKUT)
- Marta Reguero (ANECA)
- Monika Risse (OAQ)
- Wojciech Wrona (PKA)
- Stephanie Zwiessler (AAC)
- ? (FHR)
- ? (CTI)
- ? (EVA)

WG 3 considered the following activities to be the most important for the next year:

1. All ECA member agencies to be included with data in Crossroads.
2. A promotion plan for communicating and promoting Crossroads both on a European level and nationally.
3. Feedback possibilities for users; users statistics, on line surveys.
4. Defining the content of the accreditation statement.

The TEAM II project will create a Crossroads Administrators group consisting of the Crossroads Supervisor (Axel Aerden) and the local Crossroads Administrators. In practice these are mostly the same people as in WG 3.

The Management Group has decided that in addition to Crossroads WG 3 should focus also on other information strategies, like publications, papers and different ways of promoting ECA. The composition of WG 3 can be modified so that it reflects both competencies (Crossroads and information strategies) depending on the topic to be discussed.

Time line:

- February 2009: meeting of WG 3 in The Hague. Topics: inclusion of data; feedback possibilities; accreditation statement; extension of Crossroads (TEAM II project); promotion plan; information strategies.
- May 2009: inclusion of data of all current ECA member agencies in Crossroads
- June 2009 (ECA Workshop): update on Crossroads; presentation of promotion plan and information strategies.

2.4. Working Group 4 "Mutual learning and best practices"

Composition:

- Gemma Rauret (chair)
- Guy Aelterman (NVAO)
- Laura Beccari (OAQ)
- Inge Enroth (EVA)
- Herwig Patscheider (FHR)
- Mieczyslaw Socha (PKA)

Issues covered:

1. Appointment of the chairperson: the group followed the proposal of the plenary to appoint a member of the Management Group as chairperson of the WG. Therefore, the members of WG 4 appointed Gemma Rauret.
2. Agreed Focus of WG 4: after the analysis of the information for WG 4 included in ECA's Work Plan for 2008-2011, it was decided that the main focus of WG 4 should be the integration of learning outcomes assessment into accreditation.

Steps proposed to reach this goal:

1. Prepare a document of the state-of-the-art on learning outcomes assessment.
2. Submit a brief report on principles for integrating learning outcomes assessment into accreditation practices.

Methodology proposed:

1. The group agreed that the methodology would be a step by step approach.
2. The chair will be the responsible for requesting information to the participants, gathering information and documents on the topic and issuing them to the rest of the members.

Working plan suggested:

July- Oct. 2008	Work on the document of the state-of-the-art on learning outcomes assessment: The document should be finished by October 15th, 2008.
October 29th, NVAO offices (Brussels)	2nd meeting of the WG-4 organized by Guy Alterman: Each member will prepare a short presentation of the work done by his/her organisation on integrating learning outcomes in accreditation. After the discussion of the presentations the group will identify the key issue to be developed by the group and the agenda for 2009 will be established.
November 08 – May 09	Work on the report on principles for integrating learning outcomes assessment into accreditation practices
June 2009	The report will be presented to the plenary in the ECA Workshop

3. Dissemination of the work of the Consortium

Dissemination of the findings of ECA to stakeholders (institutions, recognition bodies, students, governments, employers) can occur through different means, e.g.:

- The annual ECA conference/seminar (focusing on a particular relevant topic) which may include stakeholders both as speakers and as audience.
- The presence of observers, experts and stakeholders (including ENIC/NARICs) at ECA Workshops and in ECA Working groups.
- Specific cooperation projects or meetings with stakeholders.

- Publications on the work of ECA.

NVAO has offered to organise the ECA seminar on Institutional accreditation and audits on 15 December in The Hague, and to combine it with a seminar on international benchmarking on 16 December.

4. Exchange of information with other bodies

ECA has an affiliated membership with ENQA. The Consortium could deliver its annual work plans to ENQA and present its findings on a regular basis.

Although some mutual participation in meetings has taken place, more could be done with regard to the cooperation with CEEN. The cooperation agreement between ECA and CEEN mentions the following activities:

- Exchange of expertise, information and communication.
- Development of common tools and guidelines in order to ensure the quality of procedures.
- Invitation of representatives of CEEN and ECA to the respective meetings and working groups.
- Promotion of collaboration between the respective member agencies (e.g. mutual invitation to quality assessments, cooperation projects).

With regard to bodies outside of Europe a meeting of ECA representatives with American and Canadian accreditors took place in 2007 (at the INQAAHE Conference in Toronto). The meeting was useful but no follow-up meeting was planned. Integrating learning outcomes in accreditation and recognition problems were identified as worthwhile discussion points. This means that it could be mutually beneficial to discuss the work of WG 4 with the North-American agencies, and possibly also with other networks.

Mutual participation in meetings of the Asian-Pacific network APQN and the Latin-American network RIACES (which are both working on mutual recognition) also occurred. The presentations of the Presidents of INQAAHE, RIACES, and APQN at the Barcelona conference were appreciated by participants. It would be beneficial for all to keep informing each other of developments. There is some interest (e.g. from Australia and India) to reach mutual recognition agreements across regions. Although at the moment this seems to be a long term perspective for ECA, it would be worthwhile to establish linkages, e.g. by agreeing with INQAAHE on a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC). INQAAHE has now signed MoCs with four networks, including ENQA. A fifth one with CEEN (which is affiliated with ENQA just like ECA) is forthcoming.