QUALITY INTERNATIONAL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHEA INTERNATIONAL QUALITY GROUP

UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Interview with Ivanka Popović, Rector of the University of Belgrade

By Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

1. At a time when university autonomy is threatened in a number of countries around the world, the University of Belgrade has given it even greater emphasis in the last week of September 2019. To quote a Serbian weekly "It is rare that one institution and one person receive so much (media) attention as did Ivanka Popovic, Rector of the University of Belgrade." Could you tell us more about the events that led to this reaffirmation of university autonomy?

September 2019 was indeed a dynamic month for the University of Belgrade (UB) and for me personally. Although student protests have played a role in Serbian society in the past, I did not expect such media attention when a group of students took over and blocked the central administration building of the University. The students insisted on the resolution of several issues, the key one being the defini-

tion of a deadline for the ruling on an alleged plagiarism of the PhD thesis of a prominent Serbian politician. As the inquiry had dragged on, for various reasons, for more than five years, the students wanted the UB to commit to a deadline. As my own platform for running for the position of rector was based on, among others, the issue of academic integrity, the students were knocking on an open door. After 13 days of tough negotiations, we came to an agreement. Many members of the UB academic community participated in the process and I am indebted to them for contributing to end the blockade. These negotiations and the engagement of the academic community brought about a new energy and commitment to maintain university autonomy. On November 21, 2019, the University Committee on Professional Ethics ruled that the mentioned PhD thesis was indeed plagiarized. This ruling sends a strong message about the importance of university autonomy.

2. You were one of the keynote speakers at CHEA's International Quality Group 2019 Annual Meeting and addressed the issue of Sustaining Trust in Higher Education and the Role of the University. Do you believe that recent events related to the successful resolution is a step towards restoring this trust in the University as a public institution?

Yes, I believe that the joint efforts of the UB academic community in overcoming the various challenges occurring during the course of the siege and the recent ruling on the plagiarized PhD thesis have forged a new unity within that same community. These events have shown the University in a new light as a public institution that can be trusted and is willing and able to uphold its integrity. This renewed trust must be nurtured and maintained if the University is to perform its role of serving the public good.

3. When you became Rector of the University a year ago, promoting academic integrity and fighting corruption were among your priorities. Could you tell us more about the actions taken and some results already achieved?

We have been quite busy discussing these issues with both students and academic staff. The UB participated in a regional project focusing on strengthening integrity and anti-corruption measures within the "European Union – Council of Europe Horizontal Facility (2016-2019) for the Western Balkans and Turkey." In Serbia, the project has produced two online training videos on academic integrity that, starting from this academic year, will be mandatory for all our students. Our Student Parliament has organized a campaign on academic integrity featuring awareness-raising events at a number of faculties at the UB and has produced a series of effective posters that will serve as a constant reminder of this relevant issue.

4. On the international level, in 2019 the University of Belgrade has marked a number of successes. In October it became a member of the CESAER network of leading European universities of science and technology. It is also part of the ongoing preparations for a bid to the EU for an alliance coordinated by the University of Oslo which involves a number of prestigious European universities within the European Universities Initiative. How do you view the benefits of these developments for the future of the Serbian academic community?

We are very pleased that the University of Belgrade will join the esteemed CESAER network on January 1, 2020. We see this as an opportunity to expand our international cooperation and exchange best practices with other members. In addition, the University of Belgrade is one of seven research-intensive European universities that make up the European University Alliance "CircleU." The partners are the University of Oslo (Norway), Aarhus University (Denmark), Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), l'Université de Paris (France), Humboldt University (Germany) and Kings College London (UK). These universities intend

to jointly foster a new generation of creative Europeans who are able to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines to address the big challenges that Europe faces. We are very excited about this joint effort.

5. Finally, are these positive developments both at the local and international level perceived as signs of quality of the University by the quality assurance and accreditation competent authorities in Serbia? Are they not just as relevant, though less visible, than the institution's place on the Shanghai Jiao Tong Rankings?

I see these efforts by the University of Belgrade to fulfill all of its missions: to provide high-quality education, engage in excellent research and contribute to societal challenges at the national, regional and international level. We are especially committed to furthering cooperation in the region of Southeast Europe. I believe that the next higher education accreditation period that is just starting in Serbia will recognize the impact of universities on all walks of life.

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COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION ANNOUNCES ITS NATIONAL QUALITY DIALOGUE


The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has launched a National Quality Dialogue, an important opportunity to explore the current U.S. conversations about quality in higher education and provide leadership for future discussion and action. The Dialogue has been initiated with an invitational national meeting hosted by CHEA in July 2019 and release of a publication that provides the foundation for this work. The Dialogue is to include regional meetings, interviews and additional research, all aimed at future consideration and framing of quality throughout higher education and accreditation. It is a two-year project.

Key questions for the national dialogue include:

- Based on what we know about the current quality conversations, what are desirable future paths for leadership in addressing academic quality?
- Is what counts as "quality" changing and, if so, how?
- How is what we think about quality tied to the role that we want higher education to play in the future?
- What tools are available or might be developed to assist college and university leadership in addressing quality with higher education's many constituencies?
- How can the dialogue assist in vigorous reaffirmation of the leadership role of higher education in framing future expectations of quality?
- What role do we want accreditation, higher education's primary means of assuring quality, to play?

For more information, see an *overview* on the National Quality Dialogue – and read *Conversations About Quality in Higher Education*, recently published by CHEA. CHEA has also developed a Quality Toolkit intended to assist CEOs and CAOs in making the case for quality for their institutions: framing, affirming, advocating for quality (*click here* to read or download). And, *click here* to read a copy of the first Op-Ed that has been developed for the Dialogue, focused on quality and innovation in higher education.
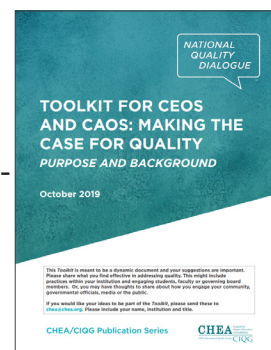
UNESCO QUALIFICATIONS PASSPORT FOR REFUGEES AND VULNERABLE MIGRANTS

One of the more significant developments at the 40th session of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization's (UNESCO) General Conference, accompanying the adoption of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, is the launch of the *UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants* (UQP), based on the methodology of the existing *European Qualifications Passport* initiative taken by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). According to UNESCO, there were 70.8 million forcibly displaced persons in the world in 2018 with only three percent of eligible refugees having equitable access to higher education studies.

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As stated by UNESCO, "…the *UNESCO Qualifications Passport* is for refugees or vulnerable migrants who claim to have completed or partially completed studies at the level of upper secondary school and above, even with insufficient or missing documentation. The goal of the assessments is to map, summarize and present available information on the refugee's educational level, work experience and language proficiency. This in order to provide credible and reliable information that can be relevant in connection with applications for employment, internships, qualification courses and admission to further studies. A *UNESCO Qualifications Passport* should be issued when the assessment results of the candidate match with relevant criteria and expectation of claimed relevant learning experiences."

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UNESCO has successfully tested its first pilot of the UQP in September 2019, in Zambia, in cooperation with the Zambia Qualifications Authority, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and the United Nations Refugee Agency. Thirty potential passport holders were tested and eleven were selected to receive the *UNESCO Qualifications Passport*. The UQP does not replace a missing qualification but does have a validity of five years which offers holders the opportunity to adapt to their new environments. One of the holders of the *European Qualifications Passport* from Syria, Ms. Anwar Horani, spoke at the launch event at UNESCO on 15 November 2019 and emphasized that the interviews for the Qualifications Passport held at a refugee camp in Greece restored her dignity as an individual.

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Several countries have now offered to host new pilots for the UQP and different donors are supporting the initiative. A signing ceremony of the certificates was anticipated at the 40th session of the General Conference.

Special thanks to Peter Wells, Chief of the Higher Education Section of UNESCO and member of the CHEA/CIQG's Advisory Council, for providing documents and photos related to the UNESCO Qualifications Passport.

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11TH ICQAHEA - A LEAP FORWARD IN CAPACITY-BUILDING TOWARDS HARMONIZATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Peter A. Okebukola, President, GUNi-Africa

The 11th in the series of International Conferences on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEAs) co-organized by the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi-Africa), African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), Association of African Universities (AAU), the National Universities Commission (NUC) and Okebukola Science Foundation, was held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 7th to 11th October 2019. The series, which is aimed at building capacities of quality assurance practitioners in Africa held its inaugural edition in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007 and has rotated venues across the region.

The 11th ICQAHEA conference was attended by 164 participants from 11 countries. These included Honourable Ministers of Education, Vice-Chancellors/Rectors of higher education institutions, heads of national quality assurance agencies, directors of quality assurance and academic planning of universities, civil society organizations and student representatives. Through eight capacity-building workshops, two symposia and two plenary sessions, participants were updated on the progress made in the implementation of the African Union harmonization agenda for higher education and trained on how to be institutional and national agents in its implementation. The workshops focused on the use of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) to improve quality; stemming academic corruption to improve quality in higher education; ranking of universities to stimulate quality; curriculum review; improvement in governance to assure quality delivery; and the modernization of accreditation instruments.

Participants saw harmonization as a boost to continental integration, noting that harmonization is not synonymous with uniformity and could still be maintained in the face of diversities in educational offerings.

Participants agreed to urge member-states to "build bridges" to improve collaboration and networking as well as be committed at the institutional and national levels to support governments to implement the various harmonisation initiatives. All higher education institutions were admonished to make quality assurance and continuous quality improvement matters of high priority.

Participants noted that harmonization of higher education in Africa is implemented mainly through the Tuning-Africa project and the Harmonization of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa initiative (HAQAA). These initiatives support (a) the implementation of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), (b) the African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, (c) the Addis Ababa Regional Convention on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Africa, (d) the development of a Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in Africa, (e) the Erasmus+ program, (f) the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Program, (g) the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the Jean Monnet projects and (h) the Continental Strategy for Education for Africa 2015-2025 (CESA).

Harmonization is closely related to quality assurance and recognition of qualifications. Harmonization facilitates transparency, recognition facilitates mobility and cooperation and quality assurance creates trust. Harmonization is also linked to the development of the African continental qualifications framework that will contribute to the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area launched in July 2019 in Niamey, Niger.

The continental harmonization initiative also builds on the efforts deployed at national and regional levels, particularly through the Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), the African and Malagasy Council for higher education (CAMES) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Challenges to harmonisation of higher education in Africa were observed to include the slow ratification of the Addis Convention by member states; divergent quality of higher education systems across the continent; disproportionate development of quality assurance agencies on the continent; and the barrier of language. In spite of the challenges, the conference rose on a note of optimism that slowly, but surely, the harmonization of quality assurance in higher education agenda of the African Union will meet with success in its implementation. Commitment by all stakeholders will be a critical success factor.

Are You a CIQG Member?

The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) plays an essential role in advancing international quality assurance, whether as a thought leader, as a convener of colleagues to address higher education quality or as a reliable partner committed to working with organizations and individuals from all parts of the world to respond to the many challenges we all face.

CIQG addresses critical quality assurance issues such as the challenge of combatting academic corruption, to further our shared understanding of quality. CIQG's focus is on strengthening international understanding and cooperation through sharing of international experiences.

If you are not already a CIQG member and supporting CIQG's important work, please complete and submit the CIQG membership application and join us in the international conversation on quality assurance.

CHEA Council for Higher Education Accreditation

CHEA International Quality Group CIQG

UNESCO ADOPTS THE GLOBAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS
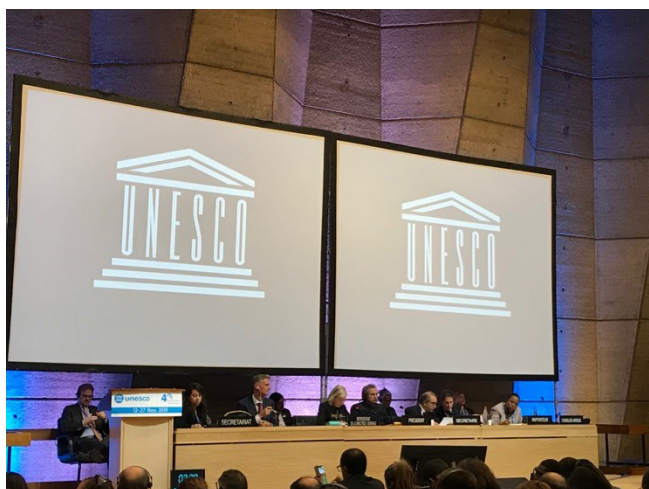
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the 40th session of its General Conference held in its headquarters in Paris (12-27 November, 2019), adopted the Global Convention by acclamation. The adoption of the Convention in its present form was the result of consultations that began eight years ago by a feasibility study followed by an expert drafting group which produced a text that was submitted to two intergovernmental meetings convened in December 2018 and March 2019. The amendments submitted by Member States at these two meetings were incorporated into the *final text* unanimously adopted on 22 March 2019, as reported by *Quality International*, (no. 16, July 8, 2019).

Although the journey that led to the adoption of the present document lasted almost a decade, the origins of the initiative go much further back in time, to the second session of UNESCO's General Conference held in Mexico in 1947 which launched the higher education program of UNESCO and requested the organization "to address problems of the difference in university degrees across the world." This resulted in regional conventions on the recognition of degrees in the seventies and eighties, an attempt to start the process for a Universal Convention on the Recognition of Degrees in 1992 and the elaboration and adoption of the joint Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in the European Region in 1997 that subsequently played a significant role in the Bologna Process. It also triggered the new generation of regional conventions more adapted to the changing higher education landscape in the 21st century.

The significance of the adoption of the Global Convention is manifold. According to UNESCO, the Convention will help an "estimated eight million students and faculty pursuing academic work away from their countries of origin to gain recognition for skills acquired and academic work accomplished in different countries." The only international treaty related to higher education, the Convention responds to the geopolitics of the present times, within the broader framework of the *2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), promoting quality, mobility and inclusion which are at the heart of Goal 4 on Education led by UNESCO. It addresses the needs of a vulnerable segment of the population, refugees and displaced persons, by offering them opportunities to continue their studies in countries which will accept them. In addition to achieving these objectives, as stated by the Assistant Director-General for Education, Ms. Stefania Giannini, quality assurance will constitute one of the pillars of the present instrument.

The next steps for the Global Convention after formal adoption by the General Conference will consist of circulating the certified copies of the Convention to Member States, beginning the ratification process and its entry into force once the twentieth ratification instrument is finalized at UNESCO. Until that time when the

implementation will begin, the strategic orientation of UNESCO in the period 2019-2023 will focus on outreach, cooperation and technical assistance. Interestingly, major receiving countries of international students such as Australia, Canada and a great number of European countries, among which Norway is the most vocal, have expressed their great enthusiasm about the Convention and its significance and are likely to speed up the ratification process.

The session that adopted the text of the Global Convention on 14 November 2019 was preceded by a Higher Education Ministerial Meeting the previous day titled Inclusion and Mobility in Higher Education. The meeting brought together some one hundred higher education ministers as well as representatives and leaders of higher education institutions. The interest for participation in the meeting was so great that the conference room could not provide seats for all present participants, confirming not only UNESCO's convening power but also a keen interest of Member States in higher education programs. The meeting ended with a Call for Action to higher education policymakers and institutional leaders to promote equity and inclusion, inter alia through skills development in a perspective of lifelong learning for all, through diverse modalities of access, including digitization.

(For more on this issue, see UNESCO's *article* on the meeting.)

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES HOSTS IT 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN PUEBLA, MEXICO

Social responsibility, inclusivity, access and value: These were dominant issues at the International Association of Universities Annual Conference held in Puebla, Mexico, November 13-15, 2019. The conference, built on the theme of transformation of higher education, included a diverse array of sessions on, e.g., technology, climate change, teaching and learning, digitization and qualifications, financing and research, all focused on change and the future. At the same time, social responsibility challenges and concerns emerged over and over, with one conference presenter reminding participants that the highest-quality education is part of our social responsibility.

The United Nations' *17 Sustainable Development Goals* were a frequent reference point throughout the conference and provided a framing of a number of the sessions, with colleagues focused on the activities in their individual countries and regions using the Goals to validate the various efforts. This was a reminder that higher education remains both a country-based and international activity, with the efforts at both levels enriching and reinforcing each other.

The conference was a valuable and informative forum to share ideas, exchange views and further engage colleagues from around the world. Of particular interest was a break-out discussion of a draft of a new version of the *1988 Magna Charta Universitatum* or MCU 2020. A driving factor here, too, was the emphasis on expanding the role of the Magna Charta Observatory's fundamental values and the social responsibility of universities.

Next year's IAU General Conference will be held in Ireland at University College Dublin.

RANKINGS UPDATE: WHERE DO THEY STAND TODAY?

Ellen Hazelkorn, Professor and Joint Managing Partner, BH Associates

When global rankings first appeared in 2003, rankings were little known despite the fact that collecting statistical information on individual academic institutions had begun in the late 19th century by the U.S. Bureau of Education. The emergence of *U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) College Rankings* in 1983 marked a turning point, transforming rankings from an individual-scholarly pursuit into a consumer product. The arrival of the Shanghai's Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU) set off an immediate chain-reaction that spoke to pent-up demand in the political system, and much wider, to an interest in comparative measure of quality and performance.

So are we there yet?

There are upwards of 20 global rankings but the rankings industry is still dominated by ARWU, *Times Higher Education* World Rankings and QS Top University Rankings. According to the IREG Observatory inventory (2014), only seven percent are prepared and published by government organisations. ARWU maintains its original methodology while the latter two have undergone various transformations including regular (small but meaningful) methodological revisions.

More significantly, rankings have expanded their business footprint by re-bundling their data and promoting worldwide; the original world rankings have been joined by subject/field, world region (Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, Emerging Europe and Central Asia, Asia and major emerging national economies), graduate employability, reputation, teaching, impact, *UN Sustainable Development Goals* and student cities. However, they are all essentially research rankings dressed up as something else.

Worth noting also is the launch of the *Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education College Rankings* which brings a non-U.S. organisation into the U.S. market. This affirms rankings are good business and suggests the U.S. is an untapped market. And, in the era of expansion, ARWU has "stuck to the knitting" is a sign of either its rigour or restrictions on its funding.

U-Multirank stands out as one of the few government (European Union), publicly-led rankings. For some observers, its positive attributes, ironically, contribute to its limited performance. It has a broader set of indicators which users can rank according to their own preference. But rankings-watchers and users, despite what they say, want simple answers to complex issues.

One of the biggest developments in ranking has been the growing influence of big data. Monetisation of higher education and scientific data has led to growing alignment between rankings and publishers. The academic publishing business is actively consolidating, given a spurt by the open science movement which is challenging their traditional business model. Ownership and governance of the data, however, is a big political issue. The absence of an international approach, with a common dataset and data definitions, has effectively outsourced assessment and comparison of performance, as well as shaping higher education policy and objectives, to the hands of commercial businesses.

Rankings remain important for many governments and for universities. Their publications are mauled by the media provoking predictable outcries. There have been calls for a national rankings strategy in Ireland, the launch of the International Visibility Project in Poland and similar actions in India, Malaysia and Russia.

Despite their expansion, rankings do not tell the United States anything meaningful about the quality of higher education. They do, however, highlight shifting geopolitical dynamics because doing well sends out messages about global competitiveness – which is why the growth of rankings is especially linked to emerging nations and regions. Readers usually focus on the top 100 in the rankings, but the real action is within the top 500. Today there is a more diverse set of universities and countries among the top rankings. And more importantly, there is a pipeline of universities coming through that points to an increasingly multipolar world at a time when the U.S. and UK are exiting the world stage with a widespread conviction of their own exceptionalism and isolationism. If the data is to be believed, the world is moving in a different direction.

MESSAGE FROM CRYSTAL CALARUSSE, CEO OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As the new CEO of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), I am thrilled to join an organization with a strong set of values and a history of responsiveness to the pressures facing higher education globally. Since 1991, INQAAHE has served as a forum for exchange and development in global accreditation and quality assurance. The network currently includes 300+ quality assurance agencies worldwide, along with academic institutions, individual affiliates and network partners. INQAAHE and the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) face many of the same challenges and, through each network's unique strengths, can accomplish much in tandem.

Growth projections for participation in global higher education over the next twenty years are notably high, especially in lower and middle-income countries, and all countries expect to see expansion of alternative credentials. And yet, despite past and projected growth, inequities in opportunity persist, threatening economic progress and individual human capability. One of INQAAHE's strategic pillars has been to address these global inequities by supporting quality assurance agencies in their efforts regarding Target 4.3 of UN Sustainable Development Goal 4: "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university." Additionally, INQAAHE is committed to supporting the recently approved UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Credentials, which supports the rights of students and graduates moving across borders.

To this end, in March 2020, INQAAHE will host an international forum in Moscow themed "Quality, Competencies, and Learning Outcomes: How to be Fit for Generation Z Capability." This will include a regional meeting to discuss global goals. In 2020, the organization will also launch an online learning platform as part of the Marjorie Peace Lenn Center, specifically aimed at enhancing capacity of quality assurance providers that may not have frequent access to international conferences. And very importantly, the network is embarking on a microcredentials and digitization project, in cooperation with its partners, to best explore how to share best practices and develop guidelines in the international space.

In accomplishing all these project and goals, INQAAHE values the connection with its partners. CIQG is highly-regarded for its excellent thought pieces on higher education trends and its efforts to pilot quality assurance projects that address emerging and pressing issues. INQAAHE looks forward to strengthening this international cooperation and conversation into the future.

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF CIQG'S EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS (BRUSSELS/PARIS, 6-8 NOVEMBER 2019)

Judith Eaton, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) President and Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, CHEA Senior Advisor for International Affairs, met with European and international Council for Higher Education International Quality Group (CIQG) partners in November 2019. The meetings took place in Brussels and Paris.

In *Brussels*, visits were organized with representatives of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, the Tuning and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe (CALOHEE) projects funded by Erasmus +. Update discussions were also held with the leadership of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Judith Eaton, Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, Peter Wells, Chief, Higher Education, UNESCO

The main objective of the meetings was to get an update of ongoing activities of these organizations with which CHEA/CIQG has long cooperated and to explore possible areas of further cooperation.

Of interest were discussions on academic freedom and university autonomy and, more generally, European values in higher education, including a shift of focus in quality assurance from teaching and learning to research in and a greater interaction between Europe and other regions, especially Africa (the new African Standards and Guidelines, ASG) and in Asia (the EU-Share program in support of QA in ASEAN countries). Another topic of common interest was the further development of a learning outcomes approach, both discipline-specific and generic skills which may gain greater traction in the European context as part of the Tuning-CALOHEE project. The growing database of EQAR includes access to a growing number of results of external quality assurance results which in turn will facilitate the recognition of qualifications.

One of the topics that dominated the discussions was the European Universities Initiative. The initiative was launched by French President Macron in 2017 and supported by the EU Commission (Erasmus+). The concept includes networking between selected university alliances supported by EU funding to promote European values and competitiveness. Some consider the implementation of this project as the main outcome of the Bologna Process. The first 17 Alliances were selected in 2019. Twenty-four more will be selected in 2020. Four alliances of the first cohort will take part in a pilot (led by the Dutch/Flemish QA agency NVAO) to test European accreditation at alliance level, which could replace, one day, the national accreditation. Different accreditation options are being discussed.

In Paris, meetings included representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Intenational Association of Universities (IAU) and UNESCO. Discussions focused on ongoing UNESCO activities in higher education, dominated by the global UN agenda of *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and more generally, inclusion. UNESCO has been assigned to be the leader of SDG 4 on Education. The particular points of interest were the draft Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications submitted for adoption at the meeting of UNESCO's highest decision-making body, the General Conference that was held from

November 12 to 27 and the proposal to hold a World Conference on Higher Education in 2021. *UNESCO's Qualifications Passport for Refugees*, recently piloted in Zambia (see article, page 5) is another significant activity undergoing further development.

The International Association of Universities was particularly focused on its upcoming International Conference titled Transforming Higher Education for the Future (Puebla, Mexico, 13-15 November 2019) which CHEA President Judith Eaton attended as a speaker (see article on page 9). In addition, the possibility of a joint CHEA/CIQG-IAU series of webinars on academic freedom and university autonomy was discussed as a possibility for 2020. These issues are very high on the European and broader international agendas as new threats are becoming alarmingly evident. (See also article on page 9.)

With OECD, the discussions mainly focused on broader issues such as the changing global higher education order, the discrepancy between qualifications and skills, digital credentialing and quality assurance, topics on which Dirk Van Damme of the OECD will speak at the upcoming 2020 CIQG Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. (29-30 January, 2020).

Special thanks to Peter van der Hijden, Independent Consultant, Former Head of Sector Higher Education Policy at the EU Commission, who organized and coordinated the program for CHEA in Brussels.

CHEA/CIQG Publication Series

- *Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: Perspectives from Accrediting Organizations (2019)*

- *Quality Assurance and Public Accountability (2019)*

- *Policy Brief #13: Is Free Tuition the Panacea to Improve Equity in Higher Education? (2019)*

- *Policies and Actions of Accreditation and Quality Assurance Bodies to Counter Corruption in Higher Education (2019)*

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- *New Approaches to Judging Quality in Higher Education: Profiles of Emerging Methods Apart from Traditional Accreditation (2018)*

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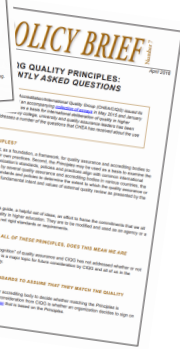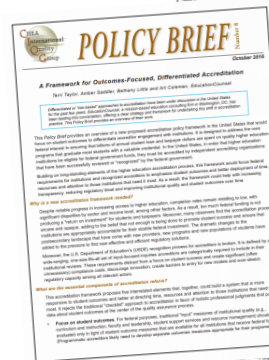*International Higher Education and International Quality Standards*
Policy Brief #3, June 1, 2014

Higher Education Outside Colleges and Universities: How Do We Assure Quality?
Policy Brief #2, January 1, 2014

A Government Official's Guide: Quality Assurance of Higher Education in an International Setting
Policy Brief #1, May 1, 2013

CHEA/CIQG QUALITY PLATFORM

What is the *Quality Platform*?

The *Quality Platform* is an innovative form of external quality review of the performance and effectiveness of non-institutional (alternative) providers of higher education offerings. It is focused on assuring quality as this emerging sector attracts students around the world.

What are innovative providers?

Innovative or non-institutional providers offer higher education experiences and include companies that provide Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), bootcamps and companies that provide online courses in a variety of areas, such as hospitality, engineering, nursing and general education.

Why is it important to be a *Quality Platform* Provider?

The emerging non-institutional sector is becoming an attractive option by which a growing number of students undertake education. Traditional colleges and universities are developing partnerships with non-institutional providers to offer continuing education offerings. As this trend is becoming part of an already diverse education system, the alternative provider will be required to show expected and actual learning outcomes.

The *Quality Platform* can prove beneficial to the provider, the student, and other stakeholders that seek quality and transparency.

CHEA Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CHEA International Quality Group **CIQG**

QUALITY PLATFORM PROVIDER

Who does the *Quality Platform* review?

The review is conducted by a team of experts, including professors and other persons with significant academic faculty or administrative experience or both in traditional and non-traditional higher education. Individuals from business, government, accreditors and employers who have significant experience or interest in higher education will serve as team members as well.

What is the process of becoming a *Quality Platform* Provider?

Providers complete a *Quality Platform* Application, supply and certify background information, submit evidence that the four *Quality Platform* standards are met (self-review) and engage with a *Quality Platform* Team for an external review. If the non-institutional provider meets the the *Platform* standards and expectations, it would achieve "*Quality Platform* Provider" status for a three-year period. The review typically takes three to six months from the date of receipt of an application.

Is the *Quality Platform* suited to meet your needs as an innovative provider that seeks public affirmation of quality?

Are you an innovative provider? Are you seeking to get ahead of your competition? Are your students expressing the need for these offerings to further education or employment? If you have answered "Yes" to any of these questions, then you may want to become a *Quality Platform* Provider.

To learn more about the *Quality Platform* and how your organization can benefit, please contact us at *CIQG@chea.org*.

CHEA

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