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*****I REPORT**

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education

(COM(2004)0642 – C6-0142/2004 – 2004/0239(COD))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Ljudmila Novak

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
majority of the votes cast
- **I Cooperation procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- **II Cooperation procedure (second reading)
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend
the common position*
- *** Assent procedure
*majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases
covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and
Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
- ***I Codecision procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- ***II Codecision procedure (second reading)
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend
the common position*
- ***III Codecision procedure (third reading)
majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission.)

Amendments to a legislative text

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council
on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education
(COM(2004)0642 – C6-0142/2004 – 2004/0239(COD))

(Codecision procedure: first reading)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2004)0642)¹,
 - having regard to Article 251(2) and Articles 149(4) and 150(4) of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C6-0142/2004),
 - having regard to Rule 51 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0261/2005),
1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;
 2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it intends to amend the proposal substantially or replace it with another text;
 3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendments by Parliament

Amendment 1

Recital 1

(1) although the implementation of the Council recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education has been a marked success as demonstrated in the report of the Commission of 2004, there is still a need to improve the performance of European higher education for it to become more transparent and trustworthy for European citizens and for students and scholars from other continents.

(1) although the implementation of the Council recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education has been a marked success as demonstrated in the report of the Commission of **30 September 2004 (COM(2004)0620)**, there is still a need to improve the performance of European higher education, **particularly as regards quality**, for it to become more transparent and trustworthy for European citizens and for students and scholars from other continents.

¹ OJ C ... / Not yet published in OJ.

Justification

European cooperation on quality assurance in higher education must contribute in the first instance to enhancing the quality of higher education in the Member States. This should be mentioned straight away in the first recital.

Amendment 2 Recital 3

(3) the Council Recommendation called for quality assurance systems to be based on a series of essential features, including evaluation of programmes or institutions through internal assessment, external review, and involving the participation of students, publication of results and international participation.

(3) the Council Recommendation called for quality assurance systems to be based on a series of essential features, including evaluation of programmes or institutions through internal assessment, external review, and involving the participation of students, publication of results and international participation. ***These results should be systematically processed and used as a basis for the next round of assessments.***

Justification

The results of the internal and external quality assurance must form the foundation for the continuous improvement of institutions. They should serve as a basis for a systematic development of quality culture and adaptation to the changing needs of society.

Amendment 3 Recital 6

(6) Ministers of education, gathered in Berlin, in September 2003, “called upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, ***procedures*** and guidelines on quality assurances, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005”.

(6) Ministers of education, gathered in Berlin, in September 2003, called upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards and guidelines on quality assurances, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005. ***In the context of the Bologna process, Ministers of Education from 45 countries adopted the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as proposed by ENQA, during their meeting in Bergen on 20 May 2005. They also welcomed the principle of a European***

register of quality assurance agencies based on national review and asked that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA, in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. They furthermore underlined the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions.

Amendment 4
Recital 7

(7) It is desirable to draw up a **positive** list or register of independent and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in Europe, be they regional or national, general or specialised, public or private, **profit-making or not for profit**, to support transparency in higher education and help the recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.

(7) It is desirable to draw up a list or register of independent and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in Europe, be they regional or national, general or specialised, public or private, to support transparency in higher education and help the recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.

Justification

The expression 'positive list' suggests that the register has some legal value, which is not desirable.

Amendment 5
Section I, Recommendation A

A. require all higher education institutions active within their territory to introduce or develop rigorous internal quality assurance mechanisms.

A. require all higher education institutions active within their territory to introduce or develop rigorous internal quality assurance mechanisms, **in accordance with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area adopted in Bergen in the context of the Bologna Process.**

Amendment 6
Section I, Recommendation B

B. require all quality assurance or accreditation agencies active within their territory to be independent in their assessments, to apply the features of quality assurance laid down in the Council

B. require all quality assurance or accreditation agencies active within their territory to be independent in their assessments, to apply the features of quality assurance laid down in the Council

Recommendation of September 1998 and to apply a common set of standards, procedures and guidelines, for assessment purposes.

Recommendation of September 1998 and to apply *the* common set of *general* standards and guidelines *adopted in Bergen*, for assessment purposes. *These standards should be devised in cooperation with representatives of the higher education community. They should be applied in such a way as to protect and promote diversity and innovation, in particular by acknowledging universities' right to offer quality programmes that are different or more innovative than standard programmes. The results of external evaluations should be systematically processed and used as a basis for the next round of assessments.*

Amendment 7
Section I, Recommendation C

C. encourage quality assurance and accreditation agencies, *together with organisations representing higher education*, to set up a “European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies”, as described in the Annex, and to define the conditions for registration.

C. encourage *representatives of* quality assurance and accreditation agencies, *the* higher education *sector and national authorities* to set up a “European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies”, *based on the national assessment*, as described in the Annex, to define the conditions for registration *and the rules for the management of the register.*

Amendment 8
Section I, Recommendation D

D. enable higher education institutions active within their territory to choose *among quality assurance or accreditation agencies* in the European Register, *an agency* which meets their needs and profile.

D. enable higher education institutions active within their territory to choose ,*for licensing purposes, an agency* in the European Register *in their own country or –provided this is permitted in their own country by a set of rules or agreement to this effect with the relevant ministry– in another country*, which meets their needs and profile. *This should be the case particularly for joint / dual degree programmes.*

Amendment 9
Section I, Recommendation E

E. accept the assessments made by all quality assurance and accreditation agencies listed in the European Register as a basis for decisions on licensing or funding of higher education institutions, including as regards such matters as eligibility for student grants and loans. ***deleted***

Justification

Amendment aimed at consistency. The distinction drawn in the new points D and E between licensing and complementary assessment / accreditation makes the original text unnecessary.

Amendment 10
Section I, Recommendation E a (new)

Ea. encourage higher education institutions to work towards a complementary trans-national assessment or accreditation by an agency in the European register, with a view to boosting their international reputation.

Justification

It needs to be stressed that higher education establishments need to strive towards – and accordingly the Member States to promote – additional accreditation or assessment by an international agency on the European register.

Amendment 11
Section I, Recommendation E b (new)

Eb. promote cooperation between agencies in order to build up mutual trust and recognition among themselves, thus facilitating the recognition of their qualifications for the purpose of study or work in another country including in areas leading to regulated professions.

Amendment 12
Section I, Recommendation E c (new)

Ec. encourage publicity for, and ensure public access to, the assessments made by the quality assurance or accreditation agencies, listed in the European register.

Justification

Making public the results of the assessments of the quality assurance or accreditation agencies would contribute to better information and transparency for higher education institutions.

Amendment 13
Annex, Point 1

1. The list should be drawn up by representatives of quality assurance and accreditation agencies active in the Member States, together with representatives of the higher education sector (universities and non university higher education, students, university teachers and researchers) and social partners.

1. The list should be drawn up by representatives ***of the national authorities*** and quality assurance and accreditation agencies active in the Member States, together with representatives of the higher education sector (universities and non university higher education, students, university teachers and researchers) and social partners.

Amendment 14
Annex, Point 2, indent 3

- operation on the basis of the common set of standards, ***procedures*** and guidelines referred to in section **6** of this recommendation,

- operation on the basis of the common set of standards and guidelines referred to in section **B** of this recommendation,

Amendment 15
Annex, point 2 a (new)

2a. In the event of an initial refusal of registration, re-assessment is possible on the basis of improvements made.

Justification

It is important to set up a procedure whereby, in the event of refusal, agencies can submit themselves for reassessment after they have made the necessary improvements.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

The recommendation at issue here builds on the recommendation adopted in 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance (QA) in higher education¹.

Both recommendations seek to promote mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and quality assessments in Europe.

At the meeting in Bergen on 19-20 May 2005, the ministers responsible for higher education from 45 European states discussed the progress of the Bologna process and agreed on the conditions for further development of the European higher education area, including with regard to QA systems.

It was noted that many countries have already made significant progress in establishing QA systems and promoting cooperation. However, further measures are needed: in particular, higher education institutions need to continue their efforts to improve quality by the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms directly linked to external QA.

In this context the Commission proposes that the Council and the European Parliament adopt a new recommendation defining five steps on the way to mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and assessment.

A. Internal quality assurance mechanisms

The aim is to achieve further progress in the development and consolidation of internal QA mechanisms at higher education institutions in Europe. Internal quality management is also intended to serve as the basis for the external assessment of European higher education institutions, in order to optimise their comparability, transparency and performance.

B. A common set of standards, procedures and guidelines

By developing and applying a uniform system for QA standards, procedures and guidelines, the aim is to create uniform rules for highlighting similarities and differences between study programmes, without harmonising them.

C. A European Register of QA and accreditation agencies

Here the aim is to set up a register of reliable QA agencies.

The agencies should be regularly checked by an appropriate peer review process.

D. University autonomy in choice of agency

Higher education institutions should be free to choose a QA agency as they see fit, provided the agency selected is listed in the register and is recognised as independent and trustworthy in its own country.

¹ Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (98/561/EC) OJ. L 270, 07.10.1998, p. 56.

E. Member State competence to accept assessments and draw consequences

The Commission further proposes that the Member States, in making decisions on the licensing and financing of higher education institutions, should accept the decisions of the agencies listed in the European Register.

RAPPORTEUR'S COMMENTS AND AMENDMENTS

Your rapporteur supports the Commission proposal, which makes a positive contribution to the mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and assessment in Europe. In particular, she welcomes the fact that concrete measures have been proposed in order to improve the performance of the European higher education system, to make it more transparent and more attractive for students and academics.

Another positive element is the fact that high quality in educational establishments requires greater mobility of students and workers, which is important in the context of the Lisbon strategy.

Positive, too, is the fact that systematic application of the uniform QA system, as an instrument for continuous quality improvement in higher education institutions, is an important prerequisite for achieving the desired mutual recognition of qualifications and degrees in Europe. Only by systematically applying QA mechanisms in this way can we guarantee a high-quality academic education in the EU, promoting teaching in higher education institutions and facilitating comparability between national education systems.

A. Internal QA mechanisms

Your rapporteur stresses the need for the continuous use of internal and external assessment results from programmes and institutions as the basis for the next cyclical assessment. This is fundamental to the systematic improvement of performance in higher education institutions, and for the constant development of quality culture.

B. A common set of standards, procedures and guidelines

Your rapporteur welcomes the working out of a common set of standards, procedures and guidelines for QA in accordance with the Berlin Mandate (September 2003), in which the European Ministers for Education called on the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to develop such a system and to examine the possibilities for guaranteeing an appropriate peer review process for QA and/or accreditation agencies and establishments.

Your rapporteur also stresses that these standards, procedures and guidelines for the assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and agencies will promote diversity in higher education and will aid universities in adapting to the needs of modern society.

But QA systems must not be imposed from above. They must be adopted voluntarily by all those concerned. For this reason it is desirable for the common system to be developed both by the agencies and by representatives of the higher education community, to enable the higher education community to gradually identify with these standards.

C. A European Register of QA and accreditation agencies

Your rapporteur welcomes the establishment of the register, which may lead to the acceptance of assessment and accreditation systems and peer review in the European context and thus also facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications inside and outside Europe.

The mechanisms for the management of this register and the requirements for inclusion must be further developed and specified. They should ensure continuous assessment and warranted quality of the agencies, in order to promote mutual acceptance and a high standard of independence and professionalism. On the principle of involving all those concerned, a practical framework for implementation should continue to be developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB.

Your rapporteur also stresses the important of cooperation between the nationally recognised agencies which is of crucial importance in increasing mutual acceptance of accreditation and of QA decisions.

She stresses furthermore that procedure ought to be established whereby agencies, if rejected, could submit themselves for consideration a second time after having carried out the necessary improvements.

D. Licensing

It is important to distinguish between the two processes of licensing (point D) and assessment/accreditation (cf. point E).

Licensing is the power to award academic degrees. It usually takes place on the basis of minimum standards and should continue to be the prerogative of the Member States, to the extent that funding is carried out by the Member States.

Assessment/accreditation procedures are introduced in order to enhance transparency for the public and raise trust in the higher education establishments.

To that end, international accreditation/assessment should not replace but complement the national procedures. Each national ministry should in principle, in line with subsidiarity, act as the competent authority for licensing higher education establishments.

Your rapporteur therefore prefers a wording which gives the Member States scope to decide to what extent it wants to leave this door open to agencies from other European countries.

Accordingly the Member States should give the higher education institutions operating on their territory the opportunity to choose an agency in their own country or a foreign agency on the European register, provided this is permitted in their own country by rules or an agreement to this effect with the competent minister.

E. Complementary assessment / assessment abroad

The distinction is drawn between licensing and complementary assessment/accreditation. (see Point D).

Regarding the latter, your rapporteur stresses that efforts should be made towards this type of complementary accreditation or assessment by an international agency listed on the European

register, which should accordingly be promoted by the Member States.

F. European dimension

The European added value of QA/accreditation will emerge only from closer cooperation between the Member States and their agencies.

Your rapporteur therefore supports cooperation on QA/accreditation, which represents an important step on the way to mutual recognition of educational and training qualifications. At the same time she stresses the need for the national QA and accreditation systems to mesh in with the corresponding European accreditation mechanisms.

The objective of mutual recognition of QA systems and QA and accreditation assessments can only be achieved in the long term if the necessary trust is created between the competent agencies.

The cooperation objectives of the EU Member States should be set as clearly and as ambitiously as in the Bologna process, not least with regard to dual diplomas and access to the European labour market.

PROCEDURE

Title	Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education		
References	(COM(2004)0642 – C6 0142/2004 – 2004/0239(COD))		
Legal basis	Articles 251(2) and 149(4) and 150(4) EC		
Basis in Rules of Procedure	Rule 51		
Date submitted to Parliament	12.10.2004		
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	CULT 26.01.2004		
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary			
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision			
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary			
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Ljudmila Novak 25.11.2004		
Previous rapporteur(s)			
Discussed in committee	31.1.2005	11.7.2005	30.8.2005
Date adopted	30.08.2005		
Result of final vote	for: 24 against: 1 abstentions: 1		
Members present for the final vote	María Badía i Cutchet, Giovanni Berlinguer, Guy Bono, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Milan Gaľa, Claire Gibault, Vasco Graça Moura, Lissy Gröner, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, , Luis Herrero-Tejedor, Ruth Hieronymi, Manolis Mavrommatis, Ljudmila Novak, Doris Pack, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański, Christa Prets, Karin Resetarits, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Hannu Takkula, Helga Trüpel, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal		
Substitutes present for the final vote	Adamos Adamou, András Gyürk, Gyula Hegyi, Jaroslav Zvěřina,		
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote			
Date tabled – A6	1.9.2005	A6-0261/2005	