

Bologna Peer Support Group on Quality Assurance

2nd Meeting, 27-28 of June, Limassol- Cyprus

Welcome address by the president of the Cyprus Quality Assurance Agency, Professor Mary Koutselini

Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process

It is my pleasure to welcome the Bologna Peer Support Group on Quality Assurance. The programme of the second meeting is very promising and we are looking forward to the work and remarks of the meeting.

Nobody doubts that quality is a multidimensional concept. Quality has always had a cultural, social and personal meaning and usually it takes the meaning of a code of self- and others' esteem. Although quality is evaluated through specific criteria, the well-known ESG, which can unanimously be implemented, the real meaning of quality is closely linked with the opinion that people in general, employers and students specifically, have about higher education institutions' reputation; a reputation that is built on students' rewarding experiences, credible results, and the respect of the national and international society.

After 20 years of the Bologna process, what is still needed is the shift from external quality assurance into internal quality development, from detailed regulations into improvement action plans; from economic profits via an increase in student intake into education that cares for students' individual differences by differentiating teaching and provisions.

From that point of view, it is not surprising that the current emphasis in higher education is on Teaching and Learning Frameworks for Excellence; frameworks that promote synergies of research and teaching. These Frameworks for course design and delivery give priority to reflective teaching that employs scaffolded activities and new technologies for achieving the learning goals, for motivating students and for providing inclusive environments.

Four years after its establishment and the work made in implementing the ESG into the national and institutional legislation and practice, the CYQAA recognises the progress achieved, but also the fact that there is still a long way to go for the development of a quality assurance culture. That means that the main responsibility for quality must gradually rest within the higher education institutions and to be linked with their degree of academic responsibility towards their students and the society. Academic autonomy without quality benchmarking becomes an arbitrary

action that does not take into account the needs of the contemporary society: the need for new programmes and opportunities for evolving knowledge societies, for responding to the developmental aims of the European Higher Education Area, and for cultivating skillful and research oriented students-citizens.

The Bologna Process has been one of the fundamental factors for increasing the quality in higher education and the major step towards meeting these needs of the society. It is for this reason that we are sure that the Second Meeting of the Bologna Peer Support Group on Quality Assurance, starting today in Cyprus, will be full of ideas, suggestions for new actions and proposals that will contribute to quality development in the European Higher Education Area.

Welcome to Cyprus. I wish you a successful and fruitful meeting.