

ENQA/UNESCO-GIQAC Project

Workshop on “Implementing the ESG in the Balkan Region”

Kick-off meeting - 16-17 June, Vienna, Austria

A series of horizontal lines in teal and white, with the teal line being the most prominent.

**ESTABLISHING A NEW AGENCY
AND ADOPTING THE ESG – THE
ROMANIAN EXPERIENCE**

Prof. Radu Mircea DAMIAN – ARACIS

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What the ministers decided to happen – Bergen 2005

- *We adopt the **standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area** as proposed by ENQA. We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria.*
- *We welcome the principle of a **European register of quality assurance agencies** based on national review. We ask that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by **ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB** with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group.*

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What the ministers decided to happen – London 2007

- *We welcome the **establishment of a register** (i.e. EQAR) by the E4 group (...) The register will be **voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent**.*
- *Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of **substantial compliance with the ESG**, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities.*

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What happened in Romania

- First effects of Bergen: Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on Quality in Education approved later by Law no. 87/2006:
 - **Covers pre-university AND higher education national system;**
 - **Establishes two new agencies: ARACIP (for pre-university, ministerial, state funded) and ARACIS (recognition of ESG's for higher education: independent, self funding).**

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- ARACIS had to take over from the former CNEAA (established by law in 1993 under the authority of the Parliament):
 - **Premises ;**
 - **Permanent Staff – by selection procedure;**
 - **Archive;**
 - **Experienced peer reviewers;**

but also:

- **A different paradigm of QA in higher education – centered on accreditation;**
- **Image – good and ... bad;**
- **Actions in court ... as defendant!**
- **Unfinished evaluation work.**

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The first year – 2005

- 1 st Provisional Council with hybrid structure: nominations by Senate (5) + Ministry of Education (5) + National Rectors Council (5);
- Missions:
 - **organize selection procedure for permanent staff;**
 - **organize selection procedure for the next composition of the Council (3 yrs. mandate);**
 - **finalize formalities to take over facilities and archive;**
 - **prepare the Government decision for the methodology.**
- Result – almost nil, no activity, no evaluations performed.

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The second year $\frac{3}{4}$ (Painful!) – 2006

New law, approving the GEO no. 75/2005 with some amendments;

- 2nd Provisional Council with hybrid structure: nominations by Senate (5) + Ministry of Education (5) + National Rectors Council (5):
 - **Taking over from CNEAA;**
 - **Election procedure of 5 members to continue as Council members;**
 - **Organize selection procedure for 10 new Council members.**

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The second year 3/4 (Difficult!) – 2006

- Both GEO no. 75/2005 and Law no. 87/2006 specify the obligation of ARACIS to become listed in the EQAR in one-year time (fortunately it was not mentioned when was the “zero moment”!);
- “What register” in 2005 and 2006?

Law: OK

Media and other friendly comments: why ARACIS was not listed in the EQAR?

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The second year 1/4 (Happier times!) – 2006

- The Methodology - Government Decision no. 1418/September 2006;
- The evaluation guides:
 - **Study programs (Bachelor's and Master's degrees) accreditation external evaluation;**
 - **Institutional authorization/accreditation external evaluation;**
 - **Academic quality external evaluation of accredited higher education institution;**
 - **External evaluation of Teaching staff training departments (TSTD);**
 - **External evaluation of distance learning study programs (DL);**
 - **External evaluation of part time study programs;**
- The pilot project (10 + 1 universities).

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The steady state: 2007 – 2011

- Study program evaluations:
 - **2368 master program evaluations (accreditation);**
 - **1734 bachelor program evaluations (provisional authorization, accreditation, periodical evaluation)**
 - **111 master program evaluations (accreditation – long distance and part time learning);**
 - **228 bachelor program evaluations (provisional authorization, accreditation – long distance and part time learning);**
- 64 universities were evaluated (out of which 46 in the ACADEMIS project managed by ARACIS);
- 11 universities are being currently evaluated (out of which 8 try to have the final judgment improved).

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External Evaluations of ARACIS:

- National level - performed by a Monitoring Committee in 2007;
- EUA and ESU evaluations in 2008;
- ENQA evaluation in 2008 – 2009: ENQA full membership granted in June 2009;
- Listed in EQAR in September 2009 (one year after the register was opened!).

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Independence

- Modifications of the law 87/2006:
 - **funding (2007): no state subsidy, only contracts with beneficiaries and projects**
 - **number of permanent staff, premises, inclusion of two students as full Council members (2011).**

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Where are we now:

- Sustainable funding – includes also EU funded projects
- Progress report submitted to ENQA before June 2, 2011
Internal QA procedures amended and improved; evaluators trained and “quizzed electronically”; new committee of employers; no proposal of ARACIS overturned yet by the MoERYS etc.
- Two students included as Council members
- System analyses 2008,2009,2010
- International activities: ENQA, CEEN, INQAAHE , other projects (i.e. QAHEQA etc.)
- ENQA GA in Bucharest, October 2011: organization in progress

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- Problems raised;
- Lessons learned:
 - **Political support needed - to continue as an independent agency under any Government (5 ministers of education from 2005 – present, from 4 political parties);**
 - **Need for evidence-based decisions - society dominated by lack of confidence, rumors (sorry, not only!) of corruption, interest of local authorities to support some universities, coexistence of state and private universities (not always in a fair and healthy competition).**

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- Quality culture difficult to build;
- Evaluation regarded as bureaucracy;
- Negative decisions always challenged;
- Judgments to be on a larger scale to provide room for differentiation;
- Note : ARACIS won in all court all cases in which decisions were taken! (Optimist's view: don't worry: other trials will come).

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- For the future: bright!, as always....but:
- **New law of education** (February 2011) – does not modify law 87/2006 but opens all evaluations to any agency listed in the EQAR;
- **New proposal for Methodology** to be presented for public debate soon – differentiation of universities, shift to benchmarking procedures and to more output/outcome criteria, ESGs as firm support;
- **New challenges, more pressure:** more complex mission, more co-operation needed to evaluate research and doctoral programs; classification of universities and ranking of study programs in the law: ARACIS will be involved in the future!;
- **Internationalization of QA in the EHEA** – competition BUT do not forget co-operation (EHEA is a space for co-operation, students and staff mobility !).

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Most important achievements

National: building confidence in ARACIS !

“Quality Barometers” as part of system
evaluation – 2009,2011 indicate it clearly!
and EQAR listing : condition of survival (by law!)

European: ENQA full membership

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Conclusion: no advice to give!

However:

- The local context extremely important!
- Work with universities to build quality culture and CONFIDENCE in the agency
- Do not forget the importance of political support but ... beware of local interests

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

