JOINT-QA
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Erasmus+ Project Joint QA for Africa 2023-2026

Quality Assurance: CARTOGRAPHY OF JOINT ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION PROCESSES

Comparative Study

March 2024

INDEX

SUMMARY

This report, entitled "Mapping joint evaluation and accreditation processes", is the first documentary step in the Erasmus+ project entitled *Joint QA for Africa*, the overall aim of which is to "strengthen national and regional quality assurance mechanisms through a joint evaluation and accreditation process in Africa".

Answering the question "What is a joint evaluation approach?" was the common thread running through this study. The authors were quick to note the wide variety of situations illustrated in the available documentation: non-joint programmes evaluated jointly by two agencies, a joint programme evaluated by one agency (or via a single procedure), an institution evaluated by several agencies or by an agency other than the national agency, a group of institutions evaluated jointly (via a single procedure), mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, regional policy-building narratives (inter-state arrangements) aimed in particular at diploma recognition and student mobility.

This diversity also applies to the geographical areas concerned: Central America, Latin America, African regional areas: French-speaking West Africa and East Africa, the European Higher Education Area, Southeast Asia.
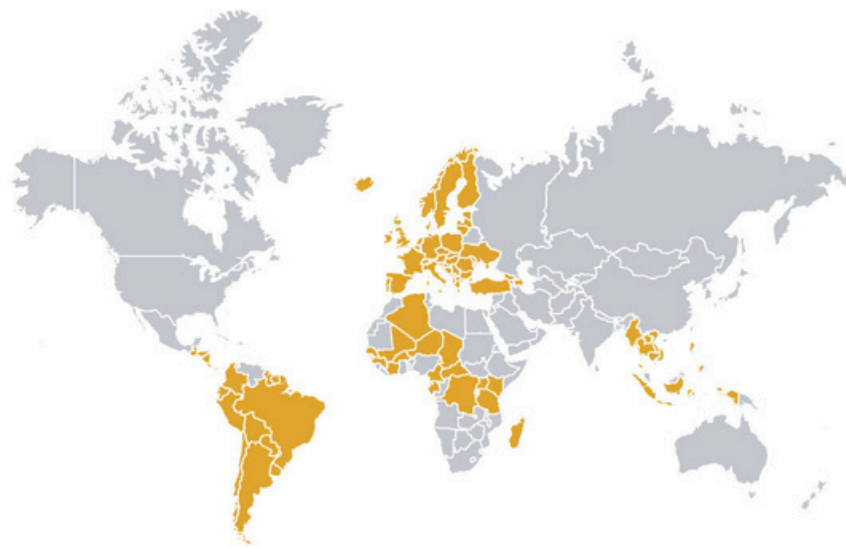
Figure 1: Geographical coverage of the case studies analysed in this report

For greater clarity, the authors have chosen to present a categorization of cases according to three focal points or axes of analysis:

1. The subject of the joint evaluation/accreditation: a single programme or a joint programme (in the case of programmatic evaluations), or a single institution or a group of institutions (in the case of institutional evaluations);

2. The assessment or accreditation process (carried out by a single body/agency or several);

3. The expected and observed consequences of the assessments described (full or partial mutual recognition of processes or assessment results, or non-recognition).

After this categorization, the authors proceeded to perform a cross-sectional analysis of the following elements: the purposes of joint assessment/accreditation, the stakeholders involved in (and initiating) the processes, the stages and tools of the methodologies deployed, the impacts (expected and unexpected) observed, the degree of acceptance of the processes - i.e. the recognition obtained or not - and finally, the achievement of objectives, particularly from the point of view of temporality.

This cross-functional analysis identified a number of success and risk factors, as well as a series of avenues for reflection as to the future success of the *Joint QA for Africa project*.

The overall aim of the project is to "contribute to the harmonization of higher education in Africa by establishing comparable quality assurance systems, defined through the cooperation of national authorities and higher education institutions"[1]. The project's foundations are robust, particularly in terms of the number and diversity of the partners involved. The various aims expressed are achievable to different

degrees: the experimental
dimension (with appropriate methodological calibration according to the aims expressed and the expected effects) will have to be combined with a strong political commitment (especially in the "recognition" dimension, with the production of explicit references to legal texts, but also in the capacity-building dimension in terms of quality assurance for the quality agencies recently set up).

To support the successful completion of the project, the authors of the report invite the partners to :

■ Ensure that the joint nature of quality assurance and the ultimate aims of the project, as well as its strategic objectives, are made explicit and jointly understood;

■ Build consensus around prioritizing these;

■ Revisit and refine the provisional definition of joint assessment/accreditation established when the project opened, namely:

■ The result of an evaluation process leading to accreditation and involving at least two agencies (e.g. CAMES, national agency), using a consensus repository or the repositories of partner agencies.

■ The result of this accreditation is accepted by all stakeholders.

■ In light of the information presented in this report, define the methodological choices of the pilot experiment (evaluation or accreditation? institutional or programmatic? mechanisms for recognizing processes? results? substitution or complementarity mechanism? scope of recognition: bilateral state/CAMES or inter-state (Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire)?

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1. OBREAL, "About the project", in OBREAL. Welcome to Joint AQ Africa. [Online]. <https://jointqa.obreal.org/aproposdenous/>. (Accessed February 28, 2024).

- Document and analyse the current situation (priority issues) of partner countries and partner higher education institutions with regard to quality assurance;

- Draw on African quality assurance harmonization frameworks, establishing explicit links with the methodological experiment to be built;

- Ensure fair, reciprocal commitment from all partners and, above all, formal collaboration from the authorities concerned;

- Build and maintain a space of mutual trust through mechanisms of transparency and evidence-sharing. This space will then be able to leave room for innovation, flexibility and creativity;

- Aim to develop a quality culture that goes beyond "quality assurance practices".

LEXICON

This glossary is deliberately succinct: three definitions taken from Directive N° 01/2022/CAMES, one definition taken from the EQAR website and a provisional definition drawn up at the opening conference of the JOINT QA for Africa project (Abidjan, June 2023).

- ACCREDITATION[2]: procedure whereby an authoritative body provides formal recognition that an organization is competent to perform specific tasks.
    - National accreditation - issued by the national body;
    - Regional accreditation - issued by CAMES through its diploma recognition and equivalence programme;

- JOINT ACCREDITATION[3]: the result of an evaluation process leading to accreditation and involving at least two agencies (CAMES, national agency, for example) using a consensus reference framework or the reference frameworks of partner agencies. The result of this accreditation is accepted by the stakeholders [provisional definition to be reconsidered for the rest of the project];

- EVALUATION[4]: a methodical, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the evaluation criteria have been met;
    - JOINT PROGRAMME[5]: a study programme developed and organized jointly by higher education institutions from at least two countries, with credit recognition agreed between the parties. Upon successful completion, the joint programme may lead to double or multiple degrees, or to a joint diploma;

- RECOGNITION[6]: attestation, issued by a competent authority, of the validity and academic level of a validated qualification or training course (also homologation, accreditation). [Editor's note: while this definition focuses on "recognition of results" of assessments or accreditations, some of the case studies detailed in this report refer to "recognition of processes" of assessment or accreditation[7].]

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2. CAMES. Directive N° 01/2022/CM/CAMES relative à l'assurance qualité et à l'accréditation dans l'espace CAMES. [Online]. <https://www.lecames.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Directive-AQ-ACCREDITATION-CAMES-VF.pdf>. (Accessed March 05, 2024).

3. This is a provisional definition developed at the opening conference of the JOINT QA for Africa project (Abidjan, June 2023).

4. CAMES. Directive N° 01/2022/CM/CAMES relative...op. cit.

5. EQAR, "Definitions", in EQAR. Reliable information on quality of European higher education and its assurance. [Online]. <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/>. (Accessed February 28, 2024).

6. CAMES. Directive N° 01/2022/CM/CAMES relative...op. cit.

7. Thus, to recognize the result is to recognize that a given programme (or institution) is validated/considered to be at the required level; to recognize the process is to consider that the assessment or accreditation carried out by another organization replaces (is equivalent to) that carried out by the quality assurance agency to which the programme or institution belongs.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AQ ASEAN	Quality assurance
ASG AUF	Southeast Asia regional space
AUN	African Standards and Guidelines
BENELUX	*Agence universitaire de la Francophonie*
BF CCA	ASEAN University Network
CESA	Belgium - Netherlands - Luxembourg
CHARM-EU	Burkina Faso
	Central American Council for Accreditation of Higher Education
	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
	Challenge-driven, Accessible, Research-based, Mobile European University
CM	Council of Ministers
CI	Côte d'Ivoire
CTI	*Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur*
EAJP	European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ENSA	*École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique*
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EUniQ	Pilot evaluation of European university alliances
ODL	Open and/or distance learning
FWB	Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)
WG	Working group
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MERCOSUR	Latin American regional space
RAFANAQ	Francophone African Network of National Quality Assurance Agencies
SKVC	Lithuanian Quality Assurance Agency
UA	African Union
EU	European Union
UNIBASQ	Basque Quality Assurance Agency

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background

This report is the first documentary stage of the Erasmus+ project Joint QA for Africa, the overall aim of which is to "strengthen national and regional quality assurance mechanisms through a joint evaluation and accreditation process in Africa".

Coordinated by OBREAL Global Observatory, the project involves 16 other partners, including :

Partner	Code	Country/Region
Agency for the Evaluation of Quality in Higher Education	WQTA	Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)
African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education	CAMES	Espace CAMES - 19 countries
Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny	INPHB	Côte d'Ivoire
Ministry of Higher Education		Cameroon
Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation		Burkina-Faso
Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation		Cameroon
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	MESRS	Côte d'Ivoire
Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya	UPC	Spain
Alassane Ouattara University	UAO	Côte d'Ivoire
Catholic University of Louvain	UCLouvain	Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)
Douala University	UDO	Cameroon
University of Dschang		Cameroon
University of Liège	ULiège	~~Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)~~
University of Montpellier	UM	~~France~~
Norbert Zongo University	UNZ	~~Burkina-Faso~~
Thomas Sankara University	UTS	~~Burkina-Faso~~

The project is also supported by the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), the Réseau Africain Francophone des Agences Nationales d'Assurance Qualité (RAFANAQ) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

At the project's opening conference in Abidjan in June 2023, the programme gave participants the opportunity to discover an initial panorama of regional ecosystems and policies, illustrating the benefits as well as the difficulties of any initiative to harmonize quality assurance practices. By way of example, regional policies in Latin America (MERCOSUR) and Southeast Asia (ASEAN) were presented, as well as the implementation of the European Approach to Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes (EAJP) and other transnational quality assurance initiatives. This also gave an opportunity for the partners to initiate an initial discussion on the joint nature of evaluation or accreditation and the associated concepts, the real common thread running through this project. These experiences reveal a particular interest for the project in that "the focus on harmonization of quality assurance standards, collaborative approaches and mutual recognition of accreditation decisions corresponds not only to the Africa-EU cooperation agenda, (...) reaffirmed at the Africa-EU summit of February 17-18, 2022, but also to intra-African cooperation and higher education harmonization objectives as defined by the African Union (CESA 2025)"[8].

One of the project's strategic objectives is to identify the key issues involved in the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, and to propose a methodology for dealing with them: "with the support of European partners, test a model for joint collaboration in the assessment of institutions, and advocate with decision-makers and key players for the adoption of the model on a regional scale that will facilitate joint accreditation and mutual recognition of accreditation decisions"[9].

To contribute to the harmonization of quality assurance on the African continent, the project aims to develop cooperation and recognition, already existing within the French-speaking African space formed by the three pilot partner countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire).
It should be pointed out that the project covers both an experimental dimension (deploying a joint institutional and/or programmatic evaluation model in the six volunteer universities) and a political dimension (carrying out political advocacy with key players - notably through the participation of regional players such as CAMES and RAFANAQ, and representatives of national authorities)[10].
Underlying all this are the objectives of capacity building in quality assurance - both for higher education institutions and quality agencies - and continuous improvement in the quality of higher education.

The aim of this report is therefore to map out experiences of joint assessment and/or accreditation, together with elements of analysis.
It is intended first and foremost for project partners, to provide them with a documented analysis of joint assessment and accreditation processes developed in various parts of the world, thus allowing this analysis and the many questions it raises to guide them in the

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8. Quote from an internal European Commission document containing a description of the Joint QA for Africa project (ERASMUSEDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-3), p. 65.

9. *Ibid*, p. 7

10. *Ibid*, p. 4.

choice of a methodology they wish to experiment with during the course of the project. In addition, the authors hope that the international comparative analysis they propose in this report will be of interest to all stakeholders involved in and concerned with the impact of quality assurance and regional or inter-regional cooperation schemes.

I.2. Mapping methodology

As stipulated in the project specifications, the mapping was coordinated by EQTA. A call for applications from the consortium enabled EQTA to set up the working group (WG) as follows:

Partners	Cartography WG members
WQTA	Aurélie DETAVERNIER, Caty DUYKAERTS, Eva JAROSZEWSKI, Alexis VERMOTE
	Saturnin ENZONGA YOCA, Zakari LIRÉ
CAMES	David Koffi AKAKI
Institut national polytechnique FH Boigny	Elizabeth COLUCCI, Marina LARREA, Angel
OBREAL	Manuel RAFAEL
	Abdou LAHATE CISSE
RAFANAQ	Vincent WERTZ
UCLouvain	Catherine VANDELEENE
ULiège	Ricard DE LA VEGA ALEMPARTE, Imma RIBAS
Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya	Sylvie NAJEROS, Lili ARBRUN
University of Montpellier	

Between July 7, 2023 and March 7, 2024, the WG met 7 times by videoconference.
The first task the WG set itself was to develop a working method to produce the study. To this end, the WG drew up a list of concrete cases of joint experience to be analysed, and the members of the WG divided up the cases listed.
The following thirteen experiments were analysed:

- the regional policies of MERCOSUR, CCA Central America, the Southeast Asian region ASEAN, the European Higher Education Area (illustrated in particular by the testimony of the Spanish quality agency UNIBASQ) and the East African region (IUCEA);

- CAMES activities;

- European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes (EAJP);

- the joint evaluation and accreditation procedure for engineering programmes conducted by AEQES and the Commission des titres d'ingénieurs (CTI);

- the EUniQ pilot experiment conducted for European university alliances;

- the design and implementation of a joint programme within an alliance of European universities (CHARM-EU);

- the Benelux political initiative to adopt a treaty for automatic recognition of diploma levels within a given area (the treaty signatories) and to invite other states to join;

- an institutional evaluation experiment conducted by the Lithuanian agency (SKVC) in Algeria;

- another Erasmus+ project to prepare universities in Togo and Senegal for CTI accreditation of engineering programmes.

In parallel with the identification of these experiences, the WG listed those comparability criteria that seemed relevant, and produced a standard form to be completed to report on these various case studies.

Case analysed	
File author(s)	
Resources mobilized/consulted	
1. BACKGROUND (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.)	
2. PURPOSE of the joint assessment	
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS for joint evaluation	
4. VOLUNTARY or MANDATORY nature of joint assessment	
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	
6. SELECTION AND GENERAL COMPONENTS OF THE REFERENCE SYSTEM	
7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	
8. LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	
9. Other comments, general or supplementary	

Figure 2: Analysis grid to complete

All thirteen completed forms are appended to this report. The WG also analysed the

performance indicators (KPIs) announced in the project file
and drew up a roadmap for the work (timetable and expectations). It is important to point out that the project steering committee has scheduled regular monitoring of the production of this mapping (progress reports, discussions and decisions, intermediate validations). During the course of its meetings, the WG identified a number of points of

attention,
which have been used to structure the present report (e.g. analysis of the joint nature

of the project, what does it cover? What is its initial motivation? How does it translate? What impact does it have? To what extent has the evaluation framework been adapted to take account of local specificities and sensitivities? Etc.).

A draft structure was presented by AEQES to the WG and then to the steering

committee,
which enriched and validated it. Two subsequent meetings enabled the WG to develop elements of shared analysis for inclusion in the present report. EQTA then coordinated the drafting of a report which was submitted to the WG for discussion and validation (January, February and March 2024). The report was then forwarded to the Joint QA for

Africa project steering committee,
which formally acknowledged the work carried out by the Cartography WG and, with the submission of this report, considered the first stage of the project closed (March 2024).

II. CATEGORIZATION OF CASES ANALYSED

At the project's opening conference, part of the discussion focused on the question: "What does a joint assessment approach comprise?" Echoing these discussions, one of the first lessons to emerge from the mapping work carried out was the wide diversity of situations illustrated in the documentation available and listed, which quickly led the members of the WG to categorize the cases analysed.

The cases analysed illustrate both

- non-joint programmes evaluated jointly by two agencies,
- a joint programme evaluated by one agency (or via a single procedure),
- an establishment evaluated by several agencies or by an agency other than the national agency,
- a group of establishments assessed jointly (via a single procedure),
- mutual recognition of accreditation decisions,
- regional policy construction narratives (interstate arrangements) aimed in particular at diploma recognition and student mobility.

It should be noted that at this stage of the project, no object (programme or institution) is run jointly in the countries concerned (Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire), and that the evaluation processes are distinct (evaluation or accreditation conducted by the national authorities, possibly followed by an evaluation or accreditation conducted by CAMES). The relevance of the experience observed in the case studies to the context of the six universities participating in the project will be examined in the concluding chapter.

For greater clarity, the WG has therefore chosen to present the cases here according to three focal points or axes of analysis:

1. The subject of the joint evaluation/accreditation[11] : a single programme or a joint programme (in the case of programmatic evaluations), or a single institution or a group of institutions (in the case of institutional evaluations);

2. The assessment or accreditation process (carried out by a single body/agency or several);

3. The expected and observed consequences of the assessments described (full or partial mutual recognition of processes or assessment results, or non-recognition).

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11. The similarities and differences between "assessment" and "accreditation" are discussed on pages 11, 17, 18 and 19.

II. 1 The purpose of joint assessment/accreditation

For this first categorization, the WG identified two possible objects of evaluation or accreditation: either a programme or an institution (which, incidentally, gives rise to two distinct evaluation methods, a programmatic evaluation or an institutional evaluation).

There are two possible scenarios for the "programme" object:

- either the programme(s) is/are offered by a single establishment (there is no collaboration between establishments to share a training offer);

- or the programme(s) is/are joint, meaning that it/they is/are proposed by several establishments which share in its/their development, implementation and management, and are jointly responsible for its/their continuous improvement.

With regard to the "establishment" object, the WG made a distinction between institutional evaluation, which concerns one establishment (regardless of the organization carrying out the evaluation), and institutional evaluation, which concerns a group of establishments grouped together in an alliance.
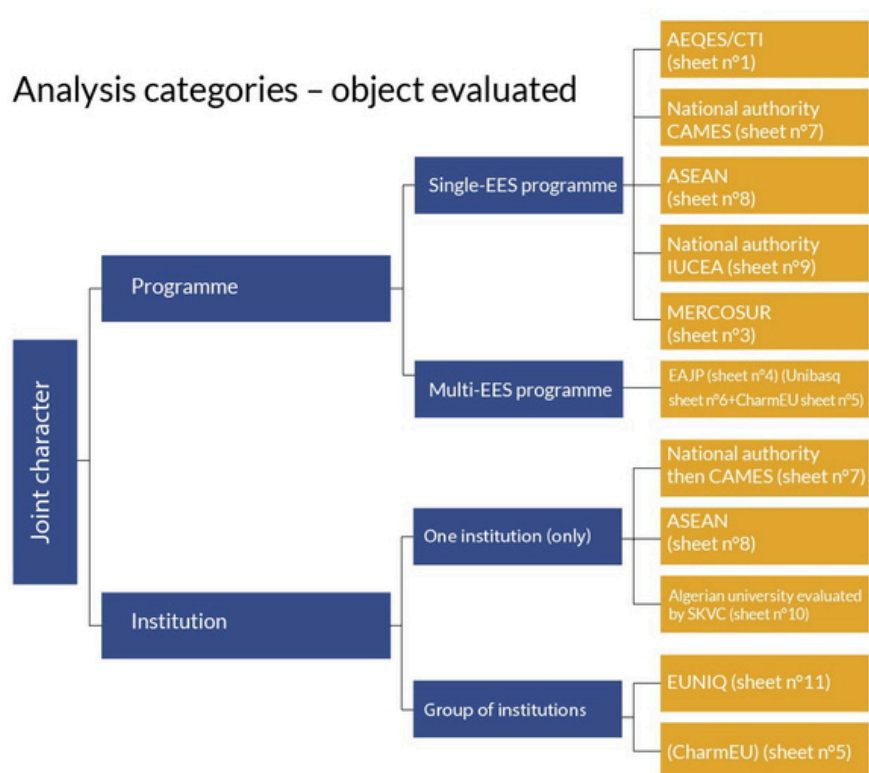

Figure 3: Categorization according to purpose of assessment

In the diagram above, the green boxes correspond to the cases studied (i.e. the data sheets in the appendix).

Programmatic approach

In the case of the joint AEQES/CTI procedure, four faculties from four universities applied to AEQES in 2010 to combine the compulsory evaluation of engineering programmes (legislation in French-speaking Belgium) and CTI accreditation (with the EUR-ACE label) in a single procedure. A total of 58 different courses were involved (1st and 2nd cycles). The joint operation took place following the signature of a collaboration agreement between AEQES and CTI, which specified the methodology (e.g. joint AEQES-CTI evaluation committees), validated the integrated AEQES-CTI reference system, and organized financial and logistical considerations. An assessment of this AEQES-CTI collaboration has been drawn up. Collaboration with the CTI continued for the evaluation of other engineering courses (a total of 42 different courses offered by nine other higher education establishments in FWB).

Also worth noting is the experience of engineering programmes delivered by

engineering
schools in Togo and Senegal, which are currently being prepared for CTI accreditation via an Erasmus capacity-building project. The ASICIAO project (4 European partners and 7 partners from Togo and Senegal) aims to enable the seven engineering schools (Togo and Senegal) to improve the quality of their training programmes in order to meet CTI standards and obtain French accreditation. In this project, the obligation for some of these establishments to also undergo national accreditation procedures has not been explicitly taken into account, and the challenge of a joint evaluation is thus still present.

Within the framework of the regional policy of MERCOSUR (a region made up of the three signatories of the 1991 Treaty of Asunción: Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, later joined by the associated countries of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Surinam), the approach of the regional accreditation system known as ARCU-SUR is exclusively programmatic: accreditation essentially concerns officially recognized study programmes and associated diplomas, the list of which is drawn up by the region's ministries of higher education, with a particular focus on courses requiring recognition for professional practice.

In the documentation collected, examples of joint study programmes come from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The fact sheet describing the European Approach for Joint Programmes (EAJP) places the proposed quality assurance procedures for such programmes in a European context.

The EAJP was developed to facilitate the external quality assurance of these joint programmes: it defines standards based on the tools adopted within the EHEA framework, without applying additional national criteria. Placing the joint nature of the programme at the heart of the assessment process, the European approach is based on a reference framework built in the spirit of the ESG (many direct references are made to this). The

external evaluation is carried out by an agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)[12] and jointly designated by the consortium of institutions cooperating in the organization of this joint programme. The aim of this procedure is not to subject a joint programme to numerous evaluations (one per country involved), but to a single external evaluation. However, the level of application

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12. An agency is included in the EQAR register if it has been judged to be ESG-compliant following an external assessment.

and acceptability of this European approach by national authorities is still rather limited, as we shall see below in section II.3.

The UNIBASQ and CHARM-EU factsheets describe, respectively, the overall context (legal basis, players/instances involved, successive stages, expected effects) of these developments within the European Higher Education Area, and a concrete example of the implementation of joint programmes (specifying the operational procedures, but above all the spirit that prevails in its development and implementation).

Programmatic and institutional approaches

CAMES essentially promotes two types of evaluation: institutional evaluation, which is formative and does not lead to accreditation, and programmatic evaluation, which does lead to accreditation. CAMES evaluation is based either on the reference framework for the evaluation of face-to-face training offered by higher education and research establishments, or on that for the accreditation of open and/or distance learning (ODL) offerings. This evaluation is carried out on a voluntary basis, at the request of public and private higher education and research institutions, with a view to accrediting their training offerings.

CAMES regional accreditation is conditional on the national accreditation granted to the higher education institution by the national quality assurance agency or equivalent body in the member country.

In countries where there is no such agency, national accreditation is generally issued by a directorate or department of the national ministry responsible for higher education. It should be noted that 9 of the 19 CAMES member countries have a national agency. Most of these agencies have only recently been set up, and are not yet fully operational.

Accreditation, and therefore CAMES evaluation, is voluntary. It is up to public and private higher education institutions to decide whether or not to undergo such an evaluation.

By way of illustration, the table below documents the number of dossiers submitted to CAMES by the project's three partner countries over the years 2021 to 2023.

	2021		2022		2023	
	accreditations	files submitted	accreditations	files submitted	accreditations	files submitted
BURKINA FASO	78	79	55	58	29	32
CAMEROON	n.a.	0	n.a.	0	6	6
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	9	13	16	16	25	27

Figure 4: Number of CAMES accreditations obtained out of the number of applications submitted by the three partners, from 2021 to 2023

In the Southeast Asian regional area (ASEAN fact sheet), both objects of evaluation/ accreditation - namely study programmes and higher education institutions - are taken into consideration in the regional quality assurance model. The ASEAN University Network

(AUN), an association of universities, initiated the AUN-QA Network, which developed this model.

Today, the association has 179 members in 10 countries: Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Singapore.

The first programme evaluations began in 2007, and to date 1120 study programmes have been evaluated in 8 countries, while institutional evaluations were introduced in 2017, with 8 institutions evaluated in 4 countries. The methodology was designed as a harmonized system applicable in all the countries considered, with a single reference framework for each type of evaluation. The expert committees are appointed by the Board of the AUN-QA network on the basis of their skills, experience and language proficiency, and do not include members from the country of the institution being evaluated, at least for the institutional evaluation.

The East African Community, established by treaty at the end of 1999, includes Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in 2000, followed by Rwanda and Burundi in 2007, South Sudan in 2016 and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2022. This community has a legislative assembly which, in 2011, proposed an amendment to the decree establishing the Inter-University Council for East Africa - IUCEA - entrusting the latter with the mission of operationalizing a harmonized regional accreditation system for study programmes and higher education institutions.

The East African Higher Education Area was formally established by the Heads of State of East Africa in May 2017. Its aim is to harmonize many aspects of higher education quality through common frameworks: curriculum, assessment and certification procedures, academic and professional qualifications frameworks, etc., with the overall objective of mutual recognition of diplomas and comparability and compatibility of education and vocational training systems. The regional programme accreditation methodology (including criteria and guidelines) has recently been adopted, and the first accreditations are underway. It should be pointed out that in the two areas under consideration (ASEAN and IUCEA), regional evaluation or accreditation systems are mechanisms that complement national systems, but do not replace them. They are requested on a voluntary basis by higher education establishments.

Corporate approach

One example concerns an Algerian university that was evaluated, on a voluntary basis, by the Lithuanian agency SKVC. This was a pilot evaluation within the framework of an ERASMUS+ Capacity Building project (QUALS Project), aimed at strengthening the internal quality assurance systems of Algerian institutions. The project did not provide for automatic recognition of this evaluation (the result of which was positive) by the Algerian national authorities, but recommendations were made to them at the end of the project. SKVC also made recommendations to the École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique13 (ENSA)13 concerning its internal quality assurance system, but was not mandated to monitor this, which remained the responsibility of the establishment.

13. ENSA. Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique Kasdi MERBAH. [Online]. <https://www.ensa.dz/fr/>. (Accessed March 05, 2024)

The very recent case of European universities grouping together within an alliance14 is emblematic of the political will (backed by substantial European funding) to boost the visibility of European higher education, and its potential for collaboration and mobility within its area.

As stated in the CHARM-EU alliance's programme sheet, "European Universities are alliances
of European higher education institutions funded by the European Union and globally supported by national/regional governments. They aim to offer new learning, research and
innovation opportunities to their communities, while contributing to European excellence
and the global influence of higher education and research in Europe"15. The EUniQ

project sheet details a pilot "institutional" evaluation of four alliances: the
focus of the evaluation is on the effectiveness of the alliance's internal quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms. The evaluation criteria reflect the PDCA cycle of an internal quality assurance system. According to EUniQ, alliances that have just been launched will not yet have completed this cycle. The developmental phase is therefore considered relevant for evaluation. In concrete terms, the external evaluation committee assesses each criterion in terms of development levels (what has yet to be developed, what is in the start-up phase, what is partially developed, what is already developed).

Two initiatives stand out in this respect: on the one hand, an "institutional" approach
on the scale of the alliances tested during the EUniQ project, with a strong desire to simplify procedures (and reference frameworks) to support the strategic development of these alliances; on the other hand, programmes developed jointly by the grouped universities that would/will naturally be called upon to be evaluated or accredited via the EAJP procedure. It should be noted that the European Commission is also in the process of developing and testing a European label for these programmes (a test phase is being completed at the time of finalizing this report). We may therefore see that two methodologies coexist here: institutional evaluation and programmatic evaluation, each with its own purpose.

For information purposes, and not as a joint process, here is a summary of an overview
(institutional and programmatic approaches in the European Higher Education Area) drawn up by Alexis Fabregas-Almirall (ENQA) at the invitation of EQAHEA during its study day in May 2023.

Institutional evaluation and accreditation have developed particularly strongly over the last 10-15 years, due to three main factors: "programmatic evaluation fatigue", growing institutional autonomy, and the gradual development of a quality culture within HEIs. This does not prevent the continuation of programmatic evaluations, albeit from more diversified angles than before.

ENQA's survey shows that 81% of quality assurance systems in Europe today are
mixed systems, combining programmatic and institutional approaches. This means that situations where only one dimension exists are in the minority:

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14. European Commission initiative: "The European Universities Initiative is a flagship initiative of the European Education Area. It will enable a new generation of Europeans to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines, developing a strong European identity". See EUROPEAN COMMISSION. European Education Area. Quality education and training for all. [Online]. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>. (Accessed March 05, 2024).

15. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH. "European Universities", in Le Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche. [Online]. < https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/les-universites europeennes-46476>. (Accessed March 12, 2024).
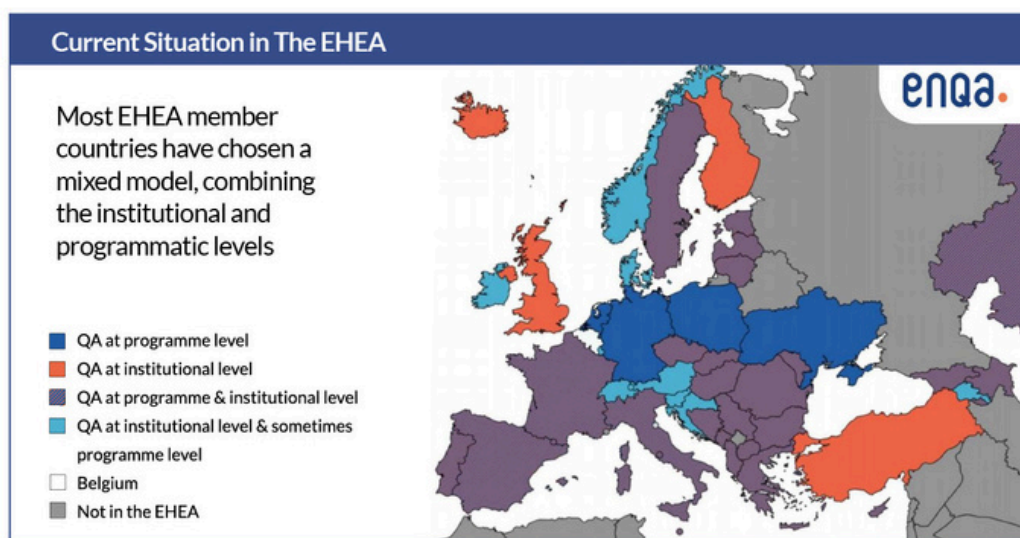
■ *Programmatic evaluation/accreditation only: in Germany, only programmatic accreditation is compulsory, and system accreditation is optional. HEIs that obtain quality system accreditation are then exempt from mandatory programme accreditation, while remaining obliged to send their programme evaluation report to the German accreditation agency; Poland has decided to do away with the institutional dimension since 2016, and in the Netherlands and Ukraine, plans are being developed to introduce institutional accreditation. In the Netherlands, voluntary quality audits have been in place since 2010, enabling HEIs to apply for programme accreditation on a simplified basis.*

■ *Institutional evaluation only: where programme evaluation by the national agency has never existed (Iceland, Finland, UK and Turkey). In the UK, institutional evaluation is mandatory to enable HEIs to offer programmes for which students can apply for scholarships or for which international students can obtain study visas. Note the diversity of EQA systems within the UK (interesting example of QAA-Scotland with its institutional assessment with a strong improvement focus). In Finland, the institutional quality audit has existed since 2005, and now covers a wider field: teaching, but also research, internationalization and societal impact. HEIs that pass the quality audit are awarded a quality label or even a label of excellence (depending on the results). In Turkey, the agency is responsible for institutional accreditation, and institutions regularly apply to other agencies for accreditation of their programmes. The Icelandic agency is responsible for institutional evaluations, while HEIs are required to carry out field evaluations, after which they must send the results to the Icelandic agency.*

■ *A few trends are emerging in the context of mixed models: grouping programmes into clusters or areas (the benefits are streamlining and overview); streamlining mechanisms in Spain or Portugal (after an institutional assessment, other assessments are lighter)*

■ *Some special cases in mixed fields: Denmark, where programme accreditation is carried out according to the results of institutional accreditation; in Switzerland and Armenia, institutional accreditation and accreditation of specific programmes only (mainly health field). Without accreditation of these programmes, a graduate cannot, for example, register for professional entrance examinations. In Slovenia, Croatia and Lichtenstein, only new programmes need to be accredited. In Slovenia, since 2019, institutional accreditation has been accompanied by accreditation of 2% of the programmes offered by the HEI. In Norway, Ireland, Austria and Cyprus, institutional accreditation procedures vary according to the type of institution (differentiation of criteria and differentiation in the ability of programmes to be self-accredited).*

In conclusion, there is no single ideal system to be applied, but rather systems which are the fruit of discussions between the various stakeholders and which are based on important parameters such as: the level of development of quality systems and quality culture within establishments, the diversity of HEIs (in particular their more or less centralized decision-making capacity depending on the type of establishment) and finally, the roles devolved to the quality agency.

Current Situation in The EHEA

Most EHEA member countries have chosen a mixed model, combining the institutional and programmatic levels

- QA at programme level
- QA at institutional level
- QA at programme & institutional level
- QA at institutional level & sometimes programme level
- Belgium
- Not in the EHEA

Excerpt from Alexis Fabregas Almirall's presentation (ENQA) May 2023

To conclude this first line of analysis from the point of view of the purpose of joint evaluation/accreditation, it may be of interest to take a look at the regional policy of a group of 7 Central American countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. In this context, the CCA (Central American Council for Accreditation of Higher Education), set up in 2005, aims to promote and harmonize the quality of higher education in the region through the evaluation and accreditation of organizations which in turn evaluate and accredit study programmes (quality assurance agencies).

II. 2. The assessment/accreditation process is carried out by at least two bodies or an organization (by delegation)

The analysis here focuses on the organization(s) conducting the assessment/accreditation process, and the way in which they decide to conduct it. The cases listed show that situations where at least two bodies jointly and concomitantly organize an assessment or accreditation process are rather rare, while the sequential mode (one body first - often 'the national authorities' as a prerequisite - followed by a body requested at a second stage) is more often illustrated in the examples chosen. Lastly, the "by delegation" mode could become more prevalent in the future, if only because of its advantages in terms of streamlining procedures. Let's take a closer look.
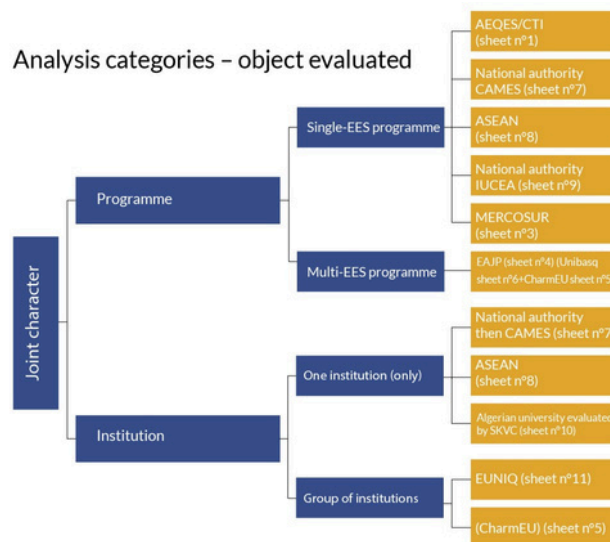
Figure 5: Categorization according to whether the process itself is joint or not

Of all the examples listed by the WG, only the case of the collaboration between AEQES and CTI attests to a process carried out jointly and simultaneously, with evaluation visits carried out by mixed and joint expert committees (50% of experts contracted by AEQES and 50% of experts contracted by CTI), even though procedures such as the European Approach to Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes, or the model tested by the EUniQ project, could in theory involve two (or more) agencies in carrying out an evaluation or accreditation process. In practice, however, it has proved more pragmatic to mobilize just one agency.

Even though the visits and subsequent evaluation reports were carried out by a joint committee, there was a subsequent sequencing: evaluation and publication of the reports in the first instance; the accreditation phase carried out by the CTI only in the second instance. It should also be pointed out that joint procedures only continued until 2017, when WQTA adopted a 'recognition procedure16 which, under certain conditions, enables institutions applying to other assessment or accreditation bodies to have these processes recognized by WQTA. So today, when WQTA is planning the assessment of engineering programmes, the institutions organizing them can either benefit from WQTA's services, or have procedures carried out by others recognized by the Agency. One of the reasons for this development stems from the experience of the collaboration itself: the results of accreditation by the CTI (on the basis of joint evaluation) produced a significant desynchronization. There were three possible outcomes: non-accreditation, three-year accreditation and six-year accreditation. These varied results occurred within the same faculties, depending on the programme. The effective management of this desynchronization involved differentiated follow-up of initial evaluations. This collaborative experience therefore served as a transitional stage, one of the benefits of which (from the point of view of the collaborating agencies) was to learn from each other and to create a space of trust. It is important to remember here that EQAO "recognizes the process" but doesn't need to "recognize the results" of it, because the legal particularity of

16. AEQES, "Terms and conditions of collaboration between AEQES and another agency for an assessment (recognition or joint assessment)", in Manuel qualité (version 5), p. 44 [Online]. <https://aeqes.be/infos_documents_details. cfm?documents_id=134>. (Accessed March 05, 2024).

French-speaking Belgium in terms of higher education is that external quality assurance does not have the task of giving or confirming the authorizations granted to institutions (upstream and through a legal framework) to offer training and to graduate the students who successfully complete them.

The "joint" character observed in the other cases analysed shows a sequenced system - for example, an accreditation or authorization mechanism provided by the national authorities and then, on the initiative of the establishment, an accreditation mechanism to obtain regional or more international visibility. Examples of this can be found in French-speaking Africa (CAMES), Latin America (MERCOSUR) and Southeast Asia (ASEAN). Regional accreditation is voluntary, and is a mechanism for complementarity rather than substitution. In this case, establishments do not obtain any procedural relief, but they consider that the benefits are sufficiently important to make use of them.

To conclude this second line of analysis, it is worth considering the reasonableness or desirability of a substitution mechanism. This would be an attractive solution for institutions, as it would simplify procedures. It should be remembered that the national authorities in each country have legislative powers and prerogatives in educational matters. The issue is therefore more political than methodological. In terms of programme evaluation or accreditation - and in the case of joint programmes - the European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes (EAJP) is not mandatory, but is strongly encouraged politically. According to EQAR, 2/3 of joint programmes today apply for EAJP[17] , but there are still many regulatory and legal obstacles in the countries from which the partner institutions come (see also the next section). In terms of institutional evaluation and accreditation, the question of national prerogatives is even more pressing, even though the EUniQ pilot project has been deployed with the ambition of eventually simplifying[18] quality assurance mechanisms for European partner universities in their own countries.

II.3 What are the expected and observed consequences in the various cases?

For this last line of analysis of the cases considered, the focus was on the expected and/or observed consequences of joint assessment or accreditation processes.

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17. EQAR, 2023 - presentation of a thematic analysis on EAJP at a peer-learning activity organized by the Bologna Follow-up group - TPG C: Melinda SZABO. Thematic Analysis on European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes. Brussels, September 13, 2023. [Online] <https://ehea.info/Upload/PLA_FirstSession_EQAR_compressed.pdf>. (Accessed February 28, 2024). Ndlr : this ratio of 2/3 is undoubtedly to be qualified in that it does not represent 2/3 of the joint programmes offered in the European Higher Education Area, but 2/3 of the evaluation or accreditation reports uploaded to the DEQAR database by the agencies listed on the EQAR Register. In practice, this proportion therefore does not include programmes for which there is no compulsory national accreditation or evaluation, or programmes evaluated by agencies that do not enter their reports on DEQAR. The total number of evaluations or accreditations carried out in 7 years on the basis of the EAJP is 31.

18. "National authorities are encouraged to consider whether evaluation reports according to this Framework and provided through the evaluated European University can simplify or support national QA requirements for institutions and programmes. Self-accrediting universities should not be obliged to use this Framework, although they may voluntarily choose to apply the Framework for enhancement purposes or to support their partner universities that are subject to national QA requirements". See EUniQ. European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities. P.3 [Online]. < https://www.nvao.net/nl/attachments/view/european%20framework%20for%20 the%20comprehensive%20quality%20assurance%20of %20european%20universities>. (Accessed March 06, 2024).

Before commenting on the diagram in Figure 5, it is worth recalling that there are similarities and differences between "evaluation" and "accreditation". Referring to the definitions given in the lexicon and taken from the CAMES directive, it may be understood that all accreditation includes an evaluation dimension, but the opposite is not true. Achieving a level defined by the criteria is the condition for obtaining accreditation.

These definitions illustrate the link established between the type of methodology used and the recognition dimension (here circumscribed to a programme of study or training).

In the joint assessment of their collaboration19, the authors approach the comparison from the following angle:

> *Is it possible to harmoniously combine accreditation and assessment? This point*
>
> *constitutes a more global reflection, in terms of behaviour and impact, on the two approaches used in this collaboration. It addresses questions of motivation and stakes, explicit and implicit frames of reference; and finally, postures, behaviour and ...tone.*
>
> *1. Motivation and challenges*
>
> *While AEQES evaluation is compulsory and free of charge (in terms of covering the cost of expert visits), it is at first sight perceived as an administrative burden with no particular stakes. Accreditation, a voluntary, fee-paying system, is perceived more as a consultancy service that comes with visible recognition (the EUR-ACE quality label and admission of the accredited diploma by the French government). The combination of the two procedures has resulted in significant time and cost savings for the establishments (...)*
>
> *2. Normative referential and implicit indicators*
>
> *AEQES evaluation is part of the fitness-for-purpose model, a more general approach in which the objectives are determined by the institutions (within the framework of legal guidelines). (...) In the CTI accreditation process, on the other hand, there are indicators that must be met by the courses. (...) These indicators are implicit in accreditations outside the territory of the France. (...)*
>
> *3. Postures, behaviour and tone*
>
> *Surprisingly, the level of trust in the interviews was (almost) identical to that of the interviews conducted as part of the AEQES assessments, i.e. without any issues other than that of continuous improvement.(...) The difference in tone came instead from certain experts who, on the basis of a more prescriptive [mental/implicit] frame of reference, conducted investigative interviews and made judgements. While the assessor tries to understand what is going on ('tell me how you do it and why you do it this way'), adopts a neutral stance that reflects the establishment's image back to it (mirror effect), highlights contradictions between stated objectives and observed results, and finally makes more systemic recommendations that encourage the establishment to tackle certain issues, the accreditor is more concerned with issuing an opinion of (non) conformity with the model, and gives more prescriptive recommendations focused on weaknesses. [...]*

The diagram below analyses curriculum evaluation/accreditation processes in terms of their formal consequences, and indicates three levels of recognition: full recognition

19. Full text here: Caty DUYKAERTS, Bernard REMAUD & Joëlle SALLETS, "Bilan de la collaboration AEQES/CTI pour l'évaluation des programmes de bioingénieur et ingénieur civil en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles : évaluation et accréditation, approches compatibles?", in AEQES. Studies and analyses. January 16, 2014. [Online]. <https://www.aeqes.be/documents/Bilan%20collaboration%20AEQES CTI.pdf>.

(academic and professional), partial recognition (more academic) or non-recognition. The WG rejected the institutional dimension of recognition as irrelevant in the present context.
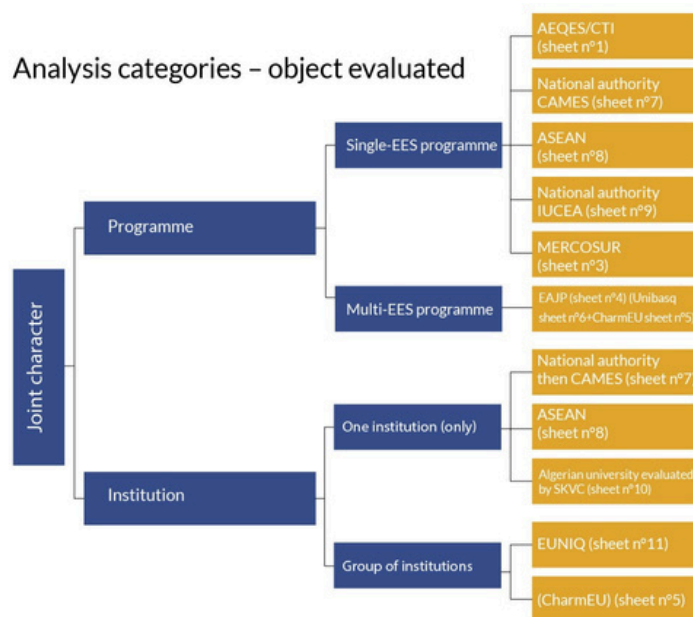

Figure 6: Categorization according to the consequences of the assessment/accreditation process

The diversity of the cases analysed - from regional policies to one-off initiatives such as collaborative projects or experiments - is also reflected in the diversity of the consequences in terms of recognition or non-recognition.

In the case of regional policies (MERCOSUR, ASEAN, IUCEA, etc.), the overall objective

is often the development and guarantee - and hence recognition (either academic or professional, or both) - of the quality of higher education in the said region. One might hypothesize that recognition is facilitated by this general framework of explicit intentions.

The maximum commitment that a joint regional accreditation system can reach

involves the mutual and automatic recognition of the right to professional practice within all the countries belonging to said alliance, regardless of the country in which the studies were completed. [MERCOSUR]

In reality, developments are slow - because they involve quality tools that take time to

be put in place and appropriated by all players, because regulatory and legal obstacles persist, or for a combination of these reasons. As an example, we may note that the

implementation of the EAJP (adopted by the
European Ministers of Higher Education in 2015) is based on the political will that the results of evaluation/accreditation be recognized across all the countries involved and the EHEA.

However, it must be said that there are still a number of obstacles to be overcome

(mainly
on the legal front, in several countries).

According to recent data published by EQAR[20], today there are :

- 22 countries that recognize the EAJP as an alternative to national assessment/ accreditation (e.g. FWB, Spain, etc.);
- 12 countries that recognize the results under certain conditions (e.g. France, etc.);
- 17 countries that do not recognize the results.

Faced with the slow adoption of recognition processes, the Benelux countries (Belgium - Netherlands - Luxembourg) took the political initiative in 2015 to introduce automatic mutual recognition of bachelor's and master's degree levels, to which associate degrees and doctorates were added in 2018. For their part, the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) also already mutually recognized their diplomas. The two groups of countries felt that there was real added value in forging links in this area, and to this end signed a declaration of intent in 2019. A Treaty, signed in September 2021, has since provided a legal and political framework for automatic, generic recognition. The Treaty is open to accession by other countries in the European Higher Education Area, provided that the quality requirements for automatic and generic mutual recognition of degree levels are met.

Leaving Europe behind, we note that, in accordance with the Lomé Convention (1972), accreditation by CAMES confers full validity on higher education diplomas in all member countries (19). This guarantees academic and/or professional mobility within the CAMES area and internationally.

The essential difference between the two systems - the Benelux and Baltic States Treaty and CAMES Accreditation - is as follows: the former binds the education systems of the six signatory countries (all "generic" diplomas are concerned, not "specific" ones[21]), and this is a legal consequence of the Treaty, whereas in the case of CAMES accreditation, the diploma in question must be the subject of an accreditation process (a voluntary initiative by an institution) in order to obtain (in the event of a positive result) recognition throughout the CAMES area. The two systems share the same aim, that of facilitating

student and worker mobility by simplifying/removing the administrative burden on individuals.

In the case of the more specific initiatives shown in Figure 6, the results are mixed:

- recognition obtained :

  - via the formal CAMES framework: accreditation aims to confer academic and/or professional recognition on the diplomas awarded by higher education establishments. Ultimately, it seeks to ensure the mobility of students and workers within the CAMES space and internationally;

  - The AEQES-CTI collaboration agreement was supplemented by an

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20. EQAR. "National implementation of the European Approach", in EQAR. Reliable information on quality of European higher education and its assurance. [Online]. <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/national-implementation/>. (Accessed February 28, 2024).

21. By way of illustration, this means that a Master's degree (generic diploma) is equal to a Master's degree in all signatory countries, but does not represent recognition of a Master's degree in law or a Master's degree in philosophy (specific diplomas), for example.

exchange of official letters between the two countries' ministers of higher education (since CTI accreditation led to the registration of diplomas in the French Journal Officiel, and thus to official academic and professional recognition).

- A non-recognition because this point was not considered in the project

    - ASICIAO project - no formal recognition by national authorities of the potential CTI accreditation of engineering programmes in Togo and Senegal;

    - QUALS project: institutional evaluation of an Algerian institution by SKVC: While the exercise was relevant and positive, one must undoubtedly question the fact that the dimension of recognition by SKVC of an Algerian institution was not sufficient. The Algerian national authorities were not considered upstream of the project. The question of follow-up to this evaluation also remains open. While the follow-up to any evaluation is primarily the responsibility of an institution, it should be remembered that both the ESG and the ASG require agencies to set up follow-up processes [ESG 2.3, in the reference and ASG-QA, B3, in the guidelines].

National and international legal frameworks and tools do, however, exist to promote recognition. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

Finally, it may be useful to consider another type of "recognition", that of a brand with international visibility and a more promotional function, such as a quality label or certificate. Within the framework of regional policy in Southeast Asia (ASEAN), a mechanism for positioning against criteria exists for both programmatic and institutional evaluations.

> *A seven-point system and the same rating scale is used for AUN-QA programme- and institutional-level assessments (from 1) Absolutely inadequate to 7) Excellent - Example of World-class or Leading Practices. It provides universities and assessors with an instrument to scale their verdicts and to see how far they have progressed in their AUN-QA journey.*
>
> *For a university to receive the AUN-QA certificate for a successful institutional or programme assessment, a rating of at least "4" must be obtained. The certificate will be valid for a period of five years and an interim report has to be submitted by the university to AUN-QA Secretariat two years from the date of the assessment.*
> *Based on the assessment results, the institution has fulfilled/not fulfilled the requirements of the AUN-QA model for institutional assessment.*
> *Based on the assessment results, the xxx programme at xxx university has fulfilled the AUN-QA requirements to be awarded the AUN-QA certificate for a successful programme-level assessment.*

Once a certain level of development has been reached, a certificate or quality label is awarded for a specific period.

As part of the AEQES-CTI collaboration, the granting of an EUR-ACE label for engineering courses was undoubtedly a key factor in motivating engineering faculties to seek this collaboration with the CTI.

III. CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

The aim of this chapter III is to consider all the cases listed in a cross-cutting manner, by examining different elements or angles of analysis chosen by the Cartography WG, and to seek answers to the following questions:

> What were/are the aims underlying all the initiatives studied? Which group of actors took the initiative for these policies and/or projects, and which stakeholders were particularly involved? How were the selected examples implemented methodologically? In particular, on what type of tools or reference frameworks were they based or created? What impact did they have? Both the expected and unexpected impacts on internal quality assurance practices within facilities, and on external quality assurance practices in a given region or territory? Can we observe a level of acceptance - of results or processes - of joint assessment or accreditation? What formal tools (such as conventions, bi-national or international agreements, pre-existing legal frameworks or products in the pipeline) have supported this acceptance? Is it possible to assess the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, and in what timeframe?

The answers to these questions and the reflections they generate should make it possible to identify success factors and obstacles, as well as to formulate some suggestions or avenues for the continuation of the JOINT QA for Africa project. This will be the subject of the concluding chapter.

III. 1 Aims of joint assessment or accreditation initiatives

Given the diverse nature of the cases analysed (the construction of regional integration and cooperation policies in the field of higher education, various pilot projects and experiments, the implementation of European procedures, etc.), it is reasonable to find diverse formulations of aims, if only in the choice of what constitutes an aim or a means to achieve it.

Nevertheless, among the declared purposes, certain common points stand out:

- Develop, achieve and maintain high quality standards of higher education within a given region;

- Increase the credibility, comparability and mutual recognition of diplomas across all countries in a given region, or raise the profile of a particular course by seeking accreditation from a recognized body;

- Harmonize education systems in a given region (by aligning national reference systems, curricula, assessment methods, etc.) and develop their internationalization.

These first three aims are designed to promote academic and cultural exchange, and thus stimulate mobility (of students, teachers and graduates) across a region or between several countries.

One of the cases studied also adds, in terms of aims, the fact of increasing the skills and knowledge of individuals involved in higher education to make a significant contribution to the region's development.

- Reduce the number of assessments by delegating the assessment process to a single body: this purpose reflects a logic of substitution (a system is approved and recognized by all) Examples: EAJP, EUniQ and the AEQES recognition procedure (since 2017).

One particular aim stands out: that of promoting the "joint character of a programme" (via a procedure and a reference framework that explicitly emphasize this character (EAJP), or that of promoting "European values and dimensions" (reference framework in the EUniQ pilot experiment).

III. 2. Stakeholders involved and main responsibility for the initiative

Stakeholder issues are important in all types of organization. This is also true for higher education.

The introduction to ESG22 reminds us of this:

> *Higher education has a number of objectives, including preparing students for life as an active citizen, preparing them for their future careers (e.g., helping them to enter the job market), supporting their personal development, creating a deep and diverse knowledge base, and stimulating research and innovation. Stakeholders, who may prioritize different objectives, may therefore have a different vision of the quality of higher education; quality assurance must therefore take account of this diversity of perspectives.*

It is interesting to note that in all cases of joint evaluations or accreditations, participation is voluntary. This is evident not only in the choice to participate in a project or methodological experiment, but also in the context of building regional integration mechanisms in the various geographical areas concerned. It is probably an important lever, a facilitating approach that mobilizes and motivates.

As stakeholders involved in, and even at the origin of, the initiative, higher education institutions play an important role: the demand from French-speaking Belgian establishments at the root of the AEQES-CTI collaboration, the choice of establishments to take part in an Erasmus-type project (ASICIAO project, QUALS, etc.), the choice of establishments to apply to CAMES for evaluation or accreditation, to apply to EAJP for accreditation of joint programmes, or the choice of several establishments to form an alliance and engage in the design and implementation of joint programmes, etc. In the case of quality assurance schemes that are part of a regional integration policy, the main initiators have been ministers of higher education (Mercosur, Bologna reform and

22. FRAQ-SUP NETWORK. References and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). May 2015, p. 11 [Online]. <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/filebase/esg/ESG%20in%20French_by%20Re%CC%81seau%20FrAQ.pdf>. (Accessed March 05, 2024).

EHEA, development of EAJP, etc.), the Benelux General Secretariat for the Recognition Treaty, and the East African Legislative Assembly in the case of the IUCEA scheme. It was the South East Asian Universities Network that initiated the ASEAN regional policy on quality assurance in higher education and, notably, four sectors have been involved in the creation and development of the CCA since 2003: representatives of the academic world (public and private sectors), ministers of higher education (political support), federations of professional associations and student representatives.

Quality assurance agencies are also prominent stakeholders in the cases studied:

some take the initiative to participate in forward-looking projects (co-constructing a new methodology, as in the case of EAJP or EUniQ) and, like the institutions, choose to contribute to collaborative projects or experiments. In addition, they can use the leverage of the institutions that represent them to influence the development of quality assurance policies and practices. Other institutional players have emerged over time as part of these (inter)regional integration developments (examples for the European area: EQAR, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, ENQA, ECA, European Commission, Enic-Naric centres, etc.). In the cases listed, however, it is surprising to note, with one or two

exceptions, the absence
or low presence of two stakeholder groups: representatives of the professional world and student representatives. This is all the more surprising given the need for greater dialogue between the academic and professional worlds, for the benefit of students and young graduates for whom employability may be an important dimension. A UNESCO-

IIEP publication, edited by Michaela Martin23 , provides a wealth of case
studies from several regions of the world, highlighting the benefits of internal quality assurance mechanisms built around the employability of graduates. In some cases,

however, it is clear from the descriptions of the data sheets that these
stakeholders are involved in one or other stage of the process. For example, any implementation of quality assurance processes in compliance with ASG-QA or ESG requires their participation.

And to take the example of the AEQES-CTI collaboration, the CTI is a quality agency with

equal representation of academics and industrialists.

Is it not a pity that these implications are given more implicitly than explicitly?

III. 3 Main stages of implementation (including the development of an ad hoc repository)

Quality assurance clearly plays a central role in the various situations analysed. Quality

assurance may be the subject of specific harmonization, as in the case of design, experimentation and adoption of a methodology (protocol and guidelines) targeted on specific objectives.

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23. Michaela MARTIN et al (eds.), Internal quality assurance: improving the quality and employability of higher education graduates, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 2019. [Online]. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367775/PDF/367775fre.pdf.multi>.

Examples:

  ■ the European approach to joint programmes (EAJP), whose reference framework, largely inspired by the ESG, focuses on the analysis of what makes a programme joint;

  ■ the EUniQ project, with 4 pilot institutional evaluations of each voluntary alliance (made up of several establishments): the focus of the evaluation is on the effectiveness of the alliance's internal quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms, using the following 4 criteria: - strategy and policies, - policy implementation, - evaluation and monitoring, - improvement policy. Each is broken down into benchmarks that describe what is expected of a fully deployed alliance.

Quality assurance is an instrument for harmonization in the construction of regional policies, in the sense that a regional quality assurance framework is built up, with common tools24 that have the aim of regional integration, which in turn can serve a number of purposes (development and credibility of the region's HE, internationalization, mobility of citizens, etc.). This is the case for the MERCOSUR, IUCEA and ASEAN models, as well as for Africa and Europe, with their ASG-QA and ESG meta-frameworks…

It is worth noting that some schemes require quality agencies themselves to be assessed and accredited, among other aspects: this is the case with the EAJP (particularly if recognition and the substitution/relief mechanism are concerned), the signing of the Benelux Automatic Recognition Treaty, and the first developments in the CCA regional policy. With regard to the examples of Central America (CCA) and Latin America (MERCOSUR), there are no mandatory evaluation mechanisms - either at regional or national level - for quality agencies. However, an increasing number of them are being assessed (this being considered international best practice). So whether it is a compulsory mechanism (as advocated by ASG-QA and ESG) or a voluntary one, the assessment or accreditation of quality agencies has the effect of consolidating their legitimacy, facilitating the improvement of their practices and contributing to the space of trust useful to cooperation, whatever it may be.

Some projects, depending on how one interprets them, are devoted more to consolidating internal quality assurance mechanisms (e.g. QUALS project) and/or preparing establishments for subsequent accreditation (CTI accreditation of engineering programmes in the ASICIAO project).

What type of procedures? Which frames of reference?

The vast majority of cases listed concern programme accreditation, and if the aim is to obtain a label and/or formal recognition - particularly for professional training courses - the reference frameworks are more prescriptive.

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24. As an example, the repository adopted in 2021 by IUCEA: The regional accreditation framework will serve as an external quality assurance tool as it encompasses internationally recognized criteria: relevance of the programme and graduates; quality of the curriculum, staff and facilities; appropriate modes of teaching and learning); provision for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and student mobility; collection and utilization of student, alumni and employer survey data in curriculum enhancement; student-centered assessments; and student support systems. See IUCEA, Standards, Guidelines, Processes and Procedures for the EAC Regional Programme Accreditation, Kampala, June 2021, p. 6. [Online]. <https://www.iucea.org/ mdocs-posts/standards-guidelines-procedures-and-processes-for-regional-programme-accreditation/>.

There is a tension between the demand for international recognition based on predefined criteria considered to be 'international standards', and the demand for programmes, establishments and quality agencies to be assessed with full consideration of their specific contexts.

For example, some academics from French-speaking Belgian engineering faculties

have expressed dissatisfaction with the use of indicators that are more or less implicit in the common AEQES-CTI reference framework used by experts during programme evaluation-accreditation in 2012 and subsequently. In the same vein, the experience revealed a number of cultural discrepancies in curriculum design, such as the traditional emphasis on internships.

This dissatisfaction is to be linked with the recommendations of the collaborative

publication25 (ENQA-EQAR- EUA-EURASHE- ESU, 2017) which draws attention, in a context of developing transnational quality assurance, to a series of points to be taken into consideration.

From an SEA perspective	From the perspective of quality agencies
Why engage in an assessment or accreditation process with another quality agency? What added value can we expect?	Why engage in an assessment or accreditation process with a 'foreign' institution? What added value can we expect?
Which agency can best meet your needs (philosophy, values, methods, etc.)?	Do we have the capacity to act (understanding the issues, making methodological adjustments, selecting experts, etc.)?
Context: in place of the national system or in addition to it? Legal and strategic impacts (LT)	Context: what HE and QA systems? Regulations and institutional contexts
Financial aspects, logistics, workload, working language, etc.	Financial aspects, logistics, workload, working language, etc.
Results, complaint or appeal procedure, publication, communication, follow-up, etc.	Results, complaint or appeal procedure, publication, communication, follow-up, etc.

Illustration 7: Some considerations before embarking on a transnational quality assurance process (adapted freely from KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA)

Examples of the "jointly-led" institutional approach are more limited in the sample of cases analysed. In regional integration policies, they are sometimes provided for in the integrated framework, but are much more recent and/or too few in number to draw any analytical conclusions. The EUniQ experience and its follow-up are at the heart of discussions within the IMINQA project26 and its working groups.

25. ENQA et al (eds.), Key Considerations for Cross-Border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Brussels, 2017. [Online]. <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Key-Considerations-CBQA-EHEA.pdf>.

26. EHEA. "About the IMINQA project" in EHEA. [Online]. <http://ehea.info/page-TPG-C-on-QA-Meetings-2021

The site reads:

> The Working Group on the QA of European Universities involves national authorities, QA agencies and of course European Universities. The main work of the group is focused on the follow up of the EUniQ framework for the QA of European Universities. As the development of (QA of) European Universities has just started, peer learning activities will be carried out to increase mutual awareness and understanding of QA expectations between the different stakeholders. Equally, or even more, important is the necessity of bringing together national authorities to discuss the legal obstacles.

Focus on the importance of trust

Unsurprisingly, all the framework texts and other declarations of political intent emphasise the importance of establishing, building and maintaining trust between stakeholders… in order to deploy productive cooperation policies over the long term. In the basic practices of quality assurance, too, this space of trust is a guarantee of success. The question is probably how.

The annual forum dedicated to quality assurance in European higher education (EQAF) chose "Building trust and enhancement: from information to evidence" as the theme for its 2021 edition27 . And the organizers contextualized the theme as follows:

> To promote trust and serve as a basis for informed decision-making and quality enhancement, quality assurance needs to be evidence-based. The amount of data on higher education and the performance of higher education institutions has increased in recent years and its nature is changing partly due to digitalization. This makes it increasingly important to determine which information is meaningful and relevant for stakeholders in higher education, and hence worth serving as evidence for robust quality assurance processes. The Forum addressed questions such as how to ensure an appropriate balance between qualitative and quantitative data and diverse sources of information. It will also focus on how to analyse and interpret the data, as well as how to ensure that it is used to enhance quality and promote trust. Notably, the 2021 EQAF offered an occasion to analyse how to make the best out of the opportunities offered by digitalization while avoiding pitfalls. The Forum explored the evidence used in external and internal quality assurance and how to improve its use and impact.

In her paper28 at one of the Forum workshops, Angeline Aubert-Lotarski presented the concluding elements as follows:

> The reflection on the experience of three representatives [HEI, expert, quality assurance agency] of stakeholders has highlighted some conditions of trust. In a

2024#h87slbqpswwnx91yt11igetoa116e6wc>. (Accessed March 06, 2024).

27. EUA. "2021 European Quality Assurance Forum," in EUA The Voice of Europe's Universities. [Online]. <https://eua.eu/events/138-2021-european-qualityassuranceforum.html#:~:text=The%202021%20European%20Quality%20Assurance,on%2018%20and%2019%20November>. (Accessed March 06, 2024).

28. Angeline AUBERT-LOTARSKI, "Building trust and enhancement: from information to evidence", in 2021 European Quality Assurance Forum. November 18 and 19, 2021. [Online]. <PS_C_Aubert_Duykaerts_Lanares.pdf (eua.eu)>. (Accessed March 06, 2024).

pilot phase, providing evidence throughout the process is a critical foundation for confidence in its transparency, relevance and fairness (…). This paper stresses the importance of also strengthening trust in QA by clarifying mutual expectations between and amongst stakeholders. In this respect, providing clear communication, documentation (surveys, reports, etc.) as well as dedicating time for discussion and regulation is crucial throughout a pilot phase. (…) Indeed, building trust is a complex phenomenon that requires understanding and taking into account the various assumptions/expectations of all actors involved.

Fact sheet 6 on the history of the construction of the European Higher Education Area states:

[…], trust plays a complementary yet critical role. Building mutual trust among the members of the Regional Alliance is paramount. Conducting external peer evaluations and fostering reciprocal visits between countries within the regional alliance significantly contributes to cultivating this mutual trust. Failure to do so can impede the development of such trust.

III. 4 Impact of initiatives (expected / not expected)

In the case of MERCOSUR's regional integration policy, the regional accreditation of national programmes has led to the development of fruitful networking practices and increased trust between partners. In addition, the quality of the work carried out by quality agencies and their professionalism have been strengthened. Between certain countries (e.g. Argentina - Uruguay), automatic recognition of national diplomas in partner countries is a tangible reality, and a veritable administrative revolution that simplifies the procedures for citizens wishing to undertake professional mobility or further study.

Situations analysed from the angle of joint programmes in Europe also provide evidence of the development of trust between partners. On the agency side, there are also lessons to be learned from these international collaborations: evolution of practices towards greater flexibility, understanding of contextual, cultural and methodological differences; intensification of networking within the community of quality assurance practitioners.

Collaboration between CTI and AEQES has led to the adoption of a procedure allowing AEQES to recognize evaluations carried out by another agency within the FWB. This flexibility is now available to institutions wishing to choose an evaluation or accreditation operator other than their regional operator.

Finally, the recent development and gradual strengthening of European university alliances will inevitably serve as an experimental laboratory for the deployment of other similar alliances around the world. The creation of joint programmes in the context of these alliances underlines the pressing need to also build methodological frameworks and tools to facilitate their implementation and recognition/readability. To contribute to this, quality agencies and other support mechanisms (e.g. national and supranational qualifications frameworks) are called upon to develop their expertise in the use of these methodologies. In the view of the authors of this report, it is important that those involved in the Joint QA for Africa project draw inspiration and reflection from these initiatives.

III. 5 Acceptance of joint schemes at local/regional level and tools to support this acceptance

Acceptance of joint assessment or accreditation schemes means, in the context of this report, the achievement of recognition objectives, either of the process, or of the results, or of both. The authors of the report are not in a position to provide quantitative information in this respect, with the exception of the survey produced by EQAR on the implementation of EAJP (see above).

However, a specific procedure has been formally approved by the Ministers of Higher Education (the EAJP adopted in Yerevan in 2015), communiqués from HE ministerial conferences emphasize the importance of this recognition, and the agencies that "practise" EAJP are all listed on the EQAR Register, thus deemed to be GSE-compliant...

On a theoretical level - and with a view to the Joint QA for Africa project - it is useful to consider the methodological choices to be made: recognition of the process? Recognition of results? And in the latter case, we need to anticipate non-convergent results...

European quality agencies, which have been subject to ENQA assessments and EQAR accreditations for the past two decades, are well aware of the issues involved in a joint procedure. Disparities in results can arise, and the two European bodies are working to consolidate their systems in order to minimize these impacts.

Furthermore, there are no figures in the analysis sheets on the potential impact of obtaining quality labels or other programme certifications, for example, in terms of increased student or graduate mobility or increased enrolment in accredited study programmes. Or to put it another way, what guarantee is there that accredited and recognized programmes will produce the desired effects? On the other hand, it is more positive to note that regional (and even international)
integration initiatives are gradually being equipped with legal texts, conventions, joint declarations and other agreements to provide a legal basis for discussions and consolidate
collaboration and recognition processes and tools.

In practical terms, the appended sheets list the numerous framework texts, whether political or more operational (common frames of reference, for example), and this
is particularly true of those dedicated to MERCOSUR (sheet no. 3), EAJP (sheet no. 4), UNIBASQ (sheet no. 6), CAMES (sheet no. 7), ASEAN (sheet no. 8), IUCEA (sheet no. 9), CCA (sheet no. 12) and the Benelux Treaty (sheet no. 13). When a framework text does not exist
at the start of a project, official correspondence
between authorities (cf. the letter between the education ministers of French-speaking Belgium and France in the AEQES-CTI experiment) can provide the expected
guarantees... In fact, there are perhaps too many framework texts or broad-spectrum
conventions...
Is the addition of the Benelux Treaty not symptomatic of irritation at seeing integration systems unfold too slowly, or the expected effects being unattainable for a variety of reasons?
Many players are involved in recognition mechanisms, and one of the lessons learned from the report produced by the LIREQA 2019 (Linking Academic Recognition and

Quality Assurance) project29 is that the groups of players involved - higher education institutions, quality agencies, ENIC-NARIC centres and other stakeholders (national authorities and students) - have a substantial number of framework documents and tools for implementing the principles. What is partly lacking is communication between these different groups. This is why they are all called upon to disseminate information on their activities and results more effectively and transparently.

III. 6 Achieving our objectives, particularly in terms of the timeframe of our systems

For this last dimension of analysis, the report seeks to examine both the attainment of stated objectives and the time factor.

Erasmus+-type projects generally last three years, but this time constraint has an advantage in that deliverables must be produced and actions carried out. Moreover, when the scope of a project requires renewal, the partners submit a new application (e.g. HAQAA1, HAQAA2, HAQAA3).

The other examples illustrate the gradual development of regional integration and are, quite logically, processes that take time. Of course, mastering quality assurance practices requires training and experience. The question of temporality cannot be addressed without underlining the main challenge, namely the differences in the pace of development observed in any given context. Whether within a single institution (different departments or faculties), within a given education system (a given institution), at the level of quality agencies in a region, or even at the level of administrative and political services in a country, the pace of development in terms of quality assurance practices varies, for a multitude of reasons. These are essentially human reasons (leadership, commitment, buy-in, resistance to change, power issues, allocated resources, etc.). Finding methodological answers to these realities is particularly difficult. First and foremost, we need to identify converging political and societal visions, backed by a long-term commitment.

29. SKVC et al (eds), Integrating academic recognition and quality assurance: practical recommendations, Vilnius, 2019. [Online] <https://www.skvc.lt/uploads/documents/files/Kita_infromacija/Leidiniai/LIREQA_recommendations_final_version_web.pdf>

IV. NEXT STEPS FOR THE JOINT PROJECT QA for AFRICA

In this concluding chapter, the members of the Cartography WG would like to present a few observations drawn from the cases analysed, in the form of success factors and risks, in the specific context of the examples chosen, and to supplement them with a few ideas for the continuation of the project.

This precaution serves to underline the fact that it is not a question of transferring "ready-made recipes" from one region of the world to another, but rather of bringing the reflections arising from the analysis of these cases into the specific context of the project.

What are the project's goals? With what strategic objectives?

As a reminder, the Joint QA for Africa project focuses on the harmonization of quality assurance standards, collaborative approaches and mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. To contribute to this harmonization on the African continent, the project aims to develop cooperation and recognition within the French-speaking African area made up of the three pilot partner countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire).

One of its strategic objectives is to identify the key issues involved in the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, and to propose a methodology for dealing with them: 'with the support of European partners, test a model for joint collaboration in the assessment of institutions, and advocate with decision-makers and key players for the adoption of the model on a regional scale to facilitate joint accreditation and the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions.'

The project therefore covers an experimental dimension (deploying a joint institutional and/or programmatic evaluation model at the six volunteer universities) as well as a political dimension (carrying out political advocacy with key players), notably thanks to the participation of regional players such as CAMES, RAFANAQ and representatives of national authorities. The project also aims to build capacity in quality assurance - both for higher education
institutions and for quality agencies - and in continuous quality improvement in higher education.

Success factors and risk factors in the 13 cases analysed

SUCCESS FACTORS
Clearly defined goals and objectives
Identified challenges, prerequisites and priorities
In-depth knowledge of contextual factors (education systems, national and supranational legal frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms, stakeholder needs, etc.)
No major legal obstacles
Flexibility, simplification and innovation in project implementation
Full and fair partner commitment, membership
Solid structural framework and common language
Consensus and political commitment (explicit and formal: signature of agreements, framework documents, conventions, protocols, etc.)
Highly participatory model and sustained dialogue
Existence and/or development of a climate of trust between partners
Voluntary nature and/or explicit request from some of the players
Communicating a shared vision: values and societal impacts - transparency
Co-construction of common tools - convergence in understanding concepts and methods

RISK FACTORS / OBSTACLES
Resistance to change
Too many very general objectives, with little or no hierarchy
Lack of adhesion and commitment
Lack of information or awareness of contexts, issues, importance of regional integration, etc.
No political support
Power struggles, little dialogue, mistrust
Regulatory and legal asymmetries and disparities, in terms of human and material resources, and pace of development
No or low stakeholder involvement
Stakeholders not involved
Tools not adapted to specific contexts
Little or no co-construction (of a shared vision, tools to be deployed, etc.).
…

…

Suggestions for the future of the Joint QA for Africa project

Taking these factors into account in the conduct of any project should act as a facilitator – this is a matter of common sense, after all. But realities are often more complex, and many elements are in tension. Would the wisest and most effective option not be to work together to clarify these elements in tension, and to choose where to place the cursor?

To illustrate this with a methodological dimension: when considering30 quality assurance tools and methods for higher education in their practical application (beyond even their conception), two aspects are in tension, for example, namely their universal or generic character and their high degree of contextualization to a particular sector/educational system/country/institution. The need for international recognition and visibility can be

met through training
accreditation, verifying the achievement of pre-established criteria commonly considered as "international standards" (a quality label or certificate can play the same role). The need

to develop quality assurance skills in an approach that makes sense to the
players involved (with the aim of appropriating the approach and supporting the development of a quality culture) can be better met with more generic tools linked to the fundamentals of quality assurance and a formative evaluation format (of a study programme or an institution). Of course, there are middle paths to be built, but this requires clarification and prioritization of project objectives and a shared understanding of concepts and methods.

Is it possible to prioritize the project's strategic objectives?

If so, which one?

How do you do this, given the multitude of players involved?

The very name of the Joint QA Africa project says it all. In the project description file, the

question arises as to what exactly the joint nature is.
To deal with the 13 cases identified in this mapping, a categorization has been proposed, examining in turn the object of the joint assessment/accreditation, the assessing/

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30. Section III.3 of this report deals with the choice of reference frames.

accrediting bodies and their mode of collaboration, and finally, the consequences of the processes in terms of recognition.

This being the case, the joint nature of the project can also be understood in a broader sense, as implied by the three types of goals formulated: "harmonization of quality assurance standards", i.e. a certain vision of a minimum common base for players in the three countries (and even for other institutions associated with the project, such as CAMES); "collaborative approaches", i.e. considering that the method is also the goal; "mutual recognition of accreditation decisions", i.e. the indispensable collaboration between bodies and other authorities to establish a formal level of mutual recognition...

In addition, the project's goal of building capacity in quality assurance, and consequently the contribution of all stakeholders to improving the quality of higher education in the region concerned, will become a reality through the "putting into action" of the project. In a way, this is the "learning by doing" approach so dear to pedagogues, which is placed at the service of the project. This capacity-building is present in all the examples analysed: working together towards one or more objectives implies an increase in knowledge and skills, and this better understanding of others (in this case, institutions vis-à-vis authorities and vice-versa, Southern partners vis-à-vis Northern partners and vice versa, institutional bodies vis-à-vis individuals and vice versa) generates and maintains a space of trust which, in turn, acts as a success factor.

And in the context of the Joint QA for Africa project, experimenting with joint assessments together will undoubtedly meet the triple objective of consolidating nascent quality agencies in the three countries concerned, exchanging best practices between agencies and between establishments, and working collaboratively towards greater harmonization of tools and reference systems.

At the start of the project (Abidjan conference, June 2023), a provisional definition was proposed:

> *The result of an evaluation process leading to accreditation and involving at least two agencies (e.g. CAMES, national agency), using a consensual repository or the repositories of partner agencies. The result of this accreditation is accepted by the stakeholders.*

On reading this, we note the use of the words "evaluation" and "accreditation", as well as the openness to the technical nature of the process (referential(s)).

During the many meetings held with partners in the early months of the project, these words and their scope were regularly discussed, as was the purpose of the quality assurance processes.

Do we want to prioritize the programmatic approach? Or the institutional approach?

	EVALUATION	ACCREDITATION
Programmes of study/training	?	?
Institution and all its missions	?	?

In the 13 cases analysed, the programmatic approach predominates (9 out of 13), while the institutional approach accounts for 3 out of 13 cases (+ two cases which envisage an institutional approach, but at a later planning stage). It should be noted that this quantitative observation does not foreshadow the methodological choices to be made during the experimental phase of the project.

When it comes to recognition mechanisms, do we want to maintain a complementarity mechanism (and if so, why?) or do we want to aim for a substitution mechanism (and if so, what do we need to 'ensure the quality of higher education' in the systems under consideration?)

The project's foundations are robust, thanks in particular to the diversity and number of its partners.

The aims expressed are achievable to varying degrees: it will be a question of combining the experimental dimension (with appropriate methodological calibration according to the aims expressed and the expected effects) and a strong political commitment (especially in the 'recognition' dimension with the production of explicit reference to legal texts, but also in the capacity-building dimension in terms of quality assurance for the quality agencies recently set up).

But the project is ambitious.

To sum up, here are the questions that need to be answered:

Ensure that the joint nature of quality assurance and the project's ultimate goals and strategic objectives are made explicit and understood. Build consensus on how to prioritize them.	*Should the project experiment with institutional evaluation of each partner university? or institutional accreditation? and why? If so, how should the programmes to be evaluated/ accredited be chosen: who chooses, and on what criteria? What 'partnership geometry' should be considered in the experiment: bilateral geometries such as Côte d'Ivoire/ CAMES, Cameroon/CAMES and Burkina Faso/CAMES? Or should we aim for an integrated partnership of three partner countries (a sub-region in the French-speaking region of Africa)? How does CAMES position itself in relation to these configuration choices?* *How do the authorities envisage recognition mechanisms? Recognition of the process? Recognition of the results? And in the latter case, we need to anticipate non-convergent results...* *Still in terms of recognition, do we want to maintain a complementarity mechanism (and if so, why?) or do we want to aim for a substitution mechanism (and if so, what is needed to 'ensure the quality of higher education' of the systems under consideration?)* *How do we now formulate the provisional definition of joint accreditation (see page 34)?*
Document and analyse the current situation of partner countries and higher education institutions' quality assurance partners.	*What are the priority issues for the education systems in the three countries? What are the common quality assurance mechanisms? What are the distinct quality assurance mechanisms?...*

Draw on African quality assurance harmonization frameworks, making explicit links with the methodological experiment to be built.	*What are the harmonization frameworks to be used in the experiment?... What degree of innovation are the partners willing to explore (for example, in terms of reference frameworks or tools)?*
Ensure fair, reciprocal commitment from all partners and, above all, formal collaboration from the authorities concerned.	*How will the project coordinator ensure this commitment? By what methods and according to what timetable? How will the national authorities and quality agencies commit themselves in a context of restricted resources?*
Build and maintain a space of mutual trust through mechanisms of transparency and evidence sharing. This will leave room for innovation, flexibility and creativity.	*What data would partners like to exchange? What innovations would partners like to see?*
Develop a quality culture that goes beyond 'quality assurance practices'	*What degree of commitment and involvement in current quality assurance practices (both internal and external) can be observed in the three project countries? What values does the project aim to build on?...*

The authors hope to seize the opportunity of the meetings scheduled for 2024 to address all these issues and work towards the success of the project.

APPENDIX: ANALYSIS SHEETS DRAWN UP BY GT MEMBERS

Preamble : The following sheets are presented and numbered in order of appearance in

the text of

the report. Each fact sheet refers to source documents that will enable readers to deepen their analysis. The summaries presented are the responsibility of the authors.
Some sheets have been written in English, others in French.

	CASE ANALYSED	AEQES-CTI joint evaluation
	Authors	Eva JAROSZEWSKI, Alexis VERMOTE, Caty DUYKAERTS, Vincent WERTZ and Catherine VANDELEENE
Sheet no. 1	Mobilized resources	- AEQES-CTI collaboration agreement for joint assessments (2011 and 2017) - Joint AEQES-CTI evaluation framework - Cross-sectional analysis of the joint evaluation of the BIOINGENIEUR and CIVIL ENGINEER in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation by AEQES-CTI https://www.aeqes.be/documents/ATINGENIEURS.pdf - Bilan de collaboration AEQES-CTI, drawn up by the two organizations (the subject of a paper at the 8th EQAF symposium: 'Working together to take quality forward' (November 2013) and at the 26th ADMEE-Europe symposium: 'Cultures et politiques d'évaluation en éducation et en formation' (January 2014) https://www.aeqes.be/documents/Bilan%20 collaboration%20AEQES-CTI.pdf

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. DATA BACKGROUND *(history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.)*	**Assessment bodies concerned** AEQES = evaluation agency for higher education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FWB) CTI = accreditation agency for engineering programmes in France, enabling recognition of the engineering diploma in France, but also operating outside France. Agency authorized to issue the EUR-ACE label (European label specific to engineering courses). **History** 2010 AEQES: FWB universities expressed the wish to have their civil engineering and bioengineering programmes jointly assessed by AEQES and CTI. This concerns 4 universities and 58 programmes (1st and 2nd cycle). The aim is to combine the compulsory assessment by AEQES (FWB legislation) with the optional assessment by CTI, a French agency specializing in engineering training assessments. Expected benefits: a single assessment procedure (saving resources[31]) + recognition of FWB diplomas by the French state (=> easier mobility for graduates) + obtaining the European label. 2011 AEQES and CTI signed a collaboration agreement to carry out a joint assessment, based on a common reference framework and methodology. The agencies then took steps (by exchanging letters) to formalize the agreement. Recognition of the joint evaluation by the two ministers concerned (the French minister and the FWB minister). 2012-2013: completion of joint evaluations and accreditation and labelling decisions.

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31. This not only saves time, but also financial resources: CTI assessments are subject to a fee, whereas EQAO assessments are not.

	2014: a number of FWB universities asked AEQES and CTI to work together again on the joint evaluation and accreditation of their industrial engineering programmes. This involves 9 universities and 42 programmes (1st and 2nd cycle). AEQES and CTI sign a new collaboration agreement for joint evaluation, based on a common reference framework and methodology. 2015-2016: completion of joint evaluations and accreditation and labelling decisions for industrial engineering degrees. 2018-2019: renewal of a joint evaluation of university engineering and bioengineering programmes (new evaluation cycle). Since then, the two agencies have ceased to carry out joint evaluations, and EQAO now recognizes the evaluation processes carried out by CTI on FWB territory, and exempts CTI-assessed programmes from EQAO evaluation.
2. PURPOSE of the assessment joint	The aim is to combine the compulsory assessment by AEQES (FWB legislation) with the assessment (not compulsory in FWB) by CTI, a French agency specializing in engineering training assessments. Expected benefits: a single assessment procedure (saving resources) + recognition of FWB diplomas by the French state (=> easier mobility for graduates) + obtaining the European label.
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the assessment joint	1/ Desire expressed by establishments: meeting a need 2/ Mutual trust between the two organizations (supported by the fact that they apply the ESG and are full members of ENQA + listed on the EQAR register) 3/ The absence of legal obstacles 4/ The construction of a joint reference system (=> a single assessment tool and no juxtaposition of the two tools)
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY nature of the joint assessment	Voluntary (some facilities did not request a joint evaluation and were evaluated solely by EQTA)
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both) 6. CHOICES AND	Programmatic evaluation (but some of the criteria in the standard concerned aspects of quality policy and institutional governance, see below)
COMPONENTS GENERAL STANDARDS	[Referential following the structure of the AEQES referential, in which CTI has added specific elements or placed greater emphasis on certain dimensions] : 1. Quality policy and governance, quality management, programme management, internal communication 2. Relevance of programmes in relation to the legal framework and the needs of stakeholders; coordination of programmes with research and socio-professional circles; international dimension of programmes; external communication. 3. Internal programme coherence: learning outcomes, learning activities, assessment of learning outcomes and overall programme layout 4. Programme efficiency and equity: human and material resources, equity for students, use of data for steering purposes 5. Self-reflection and continuous improvement
7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	For programmes accredited by the CTI: some for 6 years, others for less. This accreditation has enabled the diplomas to be accepted by the French state and to be registered in the French Official Journal (=> easier access to the French job market for FWB graduates). In addition, certain programmes have been awarded the EUR-ACE label (a quality label designed to encourage the mobility of engineering students during their studies).

8. ACCEPTANCE LEVELS of joint accreditation at ministerial, continental and regional levels	(see exchange of letters between ministers above). The joint assessment has been recognized in FWB as equivalent to an AEQES assessment. In France (Ministry, French State), it has been recognized as equivalent to a CTI evaluation.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	In 2017, AEQES included in its procedures the possibility of recognizing programme evaluations carried out by another agency on FWB territory, which exempts these programmes from AEQES evaluation. Recognition is automatic if the agency is listed in the EQAR register. If the other agency is not recognized by EQAR, the EQAR Recognition Commission will examine the possibility of recognition of the assessment by EQAR in the light of specific criteria (compatibility of assessment objectives, criteria and procedures + compatibility with ESGs). If the recognition committee recommends that the evaluation carried out by an organization not recognized by EQAR should not be recognized (and the EQTA Management Committee confirms this decision), then the EQTA evaluation remains compulsory. If the Recognition Committee recommends that the assessment be recognized (and is followed by the EQARF Management Committee), then the institution is exempt from EQARF programme evaluation. This recognition mechanism only applies to programmatic evaluations (it does not apply to institutional evaluations). Some benefits and points of attention concerning this joint evaluation : ■ success factor: procedure launched at the request of universities ■ reciprocal learning and communications on the part of agencies ■ inevitable desynchronization between the CTI and AEQES procedures due to programme-specific results (non-accredited - accredited for 3 years (or less) - accredited for 6 years) and more complex monitoring from the AEQES perspective ■ evolving context (in the meantime, introduction of institutional evaluation and possible autonomy for HEIs regarding their programme evaluations via PAG) ■ …?

Sheet no. 2	CASE ANALYSED	ASICIAO project (ERASMUS+ Capacity Building)
	Authors	Vincent WERTZ
	Mobilized resources	

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. DATA BACKGROUND (history, factual data, number countries concerned, etc.)	The ASICIAO project (4 European partners and 7 partners from Togo and Senegal) aims to enable seven engineering schools (in Togo and Senegal) to improve the quality of their training programmes to meet CTI standards and thus obtain French accreditation.
2. PURPOSE of the joint assessment	(Engineering) programme evaluation and CTI recognition (accreditation!)
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS for joint evaluation	The seven engineering schools were identified by the project leader (Université Technologique de Troyes), who had started a similar programme (Mose-FIC) with three engineering schools in Cameroon two years earlier.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY nature of the joint assessment	School participation in this programme was, of course, voluntary, even if there was strong pressure for all schools to join (which they did).
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Evaluation of programmes awarding the national title of engineer
6. CHOICES AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	The aim of the project is to prepare the schools for CTI evaluation, using the CTI standards. At the end of the project, only two schools (one in Togo and one in Senegal) appear to be ready for this assessment, although all have made progress in terms of quality assurance.
7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	Schools meeting CTI criteria will receive French accreditation. There is no automatic recognition of this accreditation by the Togolese and Senegalese authorities, so national procedures must ALSO be followed.
8. LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE for joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental	No
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementary?	It has never been proposed, or discussed, that CTI should adapt its standards to take account of the African context. It is likely that the experts will adapt their judgement to take account of this context.

Sheet no. 3	CASE ANALYSED	MERCOSUR
	Authors	Ricard DE LA VEGA ALEMPARTE, Imma RIBAS
	Mobilized resources	

Things to consider	Observations, comments
1. DATA BACKGROUND (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.)	**Mercosur has so far been a 30 year journey.** The regional accreditation was led by the education ministers of Mercosur, at least during the first 10 years. The political decision to initiate the regional accreditation was taken by the Mercosur Council of Education Ministers. It was officially established with the signing of the Treaty of Asunción in 1991 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Over the years, additional countries have joined as associated states, including Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname. The journey of Mercosur has been marked by power disputes, structural asymmetries, legal and regulatory differences, resource and capacity gaps, and variations in the pace of integration among member and associated states. 1991: MERCOSUR Educational Sector (SEM) was officially created. The SEM has turned into a space for coordinating educational policies that brings together South America as a whole. 1995: the recognition of degrees between Mercosur countries is established. During the first decade of existence of the SEM, the Higher Education Commission devoted itself to the signature of a series of protocols (international treaties that create regional rights and obligations among Member States) to facilitate academic activities, higher education student and teacher mobility and academic recognition. However, protocols did not have a real impact in transforming the practices of academic national communities. 1998: the Meeting of Ministries of Education approved an Experimental Accreditation Mechanism for the Recognition of University Degrees in MERCOSUR countries called MEXA. MEXA allowed the consolidation of common quality criteria for each degree, the definition of minimum quality standards and the assessment of the progress of the joint work of the National Accreditation Agencies, overcoming asymmetries. 2008: the 'Memorandum of Understanding on the creation and implementation of a system of accreditation of university degrees for the regional recognition of their academic quality in MERCOSUR and associated States' was signed. This MoU guaranteed respect for the national legislation of each country and for the academic and institutional autonomy of universities. The schedule designed in the first stage covered professional degrees in the fields of Agronomy, Engineering and Medicine. It was decided that no supranational or regional agency was to be created to pursue the objectives of MEXA. MEXA constituted the legal precedent and regulatory framework for the future design and implementation of the permanent accreditation system of MERCOSUR called ARCU-SUR (Regional Accreditation of University Degrees of the South). http://arcusur.org/arcusur_v2/index.php ARCU-SUR only considers those degree programmes with official recognition and graduates. It covers degrees determined by the Ministers of Education of the region, considering in particular those that require a degree as a condition for professional practice. This recognition is not limited to academic aspects: it facilitates professional practice in countries other than the country where the degree was issued.

	Each country has the prerogative to define with which degree programmes it enters the recognition mechanism. Each member state has to ratify the agreement in its parliament.
	Some of the main problems and setbacks they had to face have been or are:
	1. Power disputes: Mercosur has witnessed power struggles among its member states. Disputes over decision-making and policies have been prevalent.
	2. Structural asymmetries: The economies and industrial capacities of member states are not equal.
	3. Legal and regulatory differences: Harmonizing legal and regulatory frameworks across diverse member and associated states with differing legal traditions and systems has been a challenge.
	4. Resource and capacity gaps: Disparities in resources and capacities among member states have been a barrier to achieving equitable benefits from the integration process.
	5. Different speeds of integration: Member and associated states have progressed at different speeds in terms of implementing the integration agenda.
2. PURPOSE OF JOINT EVALUATION	The purpose of ARCU-SUR and its accreditation process is to ensure that universities and academic programmes maintain high-quality educational standards, which contributes to improving the overall quality of higher education in the region. By establishing consistent criteria and procedures for evaluating and accrediting university degrees, ARCUSUR aims to enhance the credibility and comparability of degrees across participating countries in the southern region of South America. https://normas.mercosur.int/public/normativas/128 Regarding the main objectives, there are three outer objectives and three inner objectives. The outer objectives are:
	1. Raising Citizen Awareness in Favour of Integration by promoting active engagement and awareness among citizens within member and associated states about the benefits and importance of regional integration within the higher education sector.
	2. Training of Human Resources for Development by enhancing the skill sets and knowledge of individuals involved in higher education to contribute effectively to the development of the region and
	3. Harmonization of Educational Systems by working towards aligning educational standards, curricula, and assessment methods across member and associated states to facilitate smoother integration and mobility of students and professionals.
	The inner objectives are:
	1. Accreditation via Quality Assurance by ensuring the quality and credibility of higher education programmes and institutions through a rigorous accreditation process based on defined standards and criteria.
	2. Mobility at All Levels to facilitate the movement of students, faculty, and staff across universities within the ARCUSUR network to promote academic and cultural exchange.
	3. Mutual Recognition by promoting mutual recognition of qualifications and degrees across member and associated states, reinforcing the acceptance and value of academic achievements obtained within the region.

3. CONDITIONS AND PREREQUISITES FOR JOINT EVALUATION	In a system based on mutual trust, such as ARCU-SUR, it is neither necessary nor obligatory to cede or transfer national competence or sovereignty over higher education, although this point could also be jointly agreed upon. But what it is absolutely necessary is to have or to create (from scratch) some entity, organization or system agreed upon between the countries that make up the regional alliance that can, at the internal level of each country, decide which university or which educational programme exceeds, or does not, the minimum cut-off (or meets the requirements) of the joint accreditation system. Having a national quality agency is a significant and relevant condition to be able to act. If this is not possible, another formula must be found at the country level that allows it to act as an umbrella for the universities of said country. Otherwise, an ad hoc committee is the choice. Furthermore, the strategic purpose to be achieved through said joint alliance must be plain and precise, focusing on a few strategic milestones. Therefore, the social value added and derived from said strategic statement must be completely specific, measurable and communicable to all the stakeholders considered relevant. In this regard, the involvement of professional associations or similar entities, if they exist, is positive with regard to employability and professionalization. The added value can focus on many different aspects, but it must always be measurable. For instance, promoting the mobility of students between the countries involved or promoting the employability or professionalization of graduates or other students. Having a board where all these strategic decisions are analysed and formally agreed is therefore also a precondition to put in place a joint system. In short, the minimum conditions to develop a joint system are: - political commitment where trust among everybody is fulfilled, - a pre-analysis of relevant political and legal conditions has been performed, - a real impact on societal and professional spheres has been considered, and - there is a true compromise with the main stakeholders and the society.
4. VOLUNTARY or MANDATORY CHARACTER of joint assessment	Voluntary, based on consensus between peers and never imposed over a legal-rule of authority basis. This is a key element for success.
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Programme scope, not at an institutional level. Mainly related to undergraduate professional programmes and degrees. This approach emphasizes and focuses on studies related to professionalization, such as medicine or engineering.
6. CHOICES AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	The system is based on advisory commissions in which professors generate the quality rubrics considered necessary. Therefore, the criteria are defined by experts in the field of higher education, and not by bureaucrats from other administrations or the ministry. The regulations of each country dictate whether national accreditation must be carried out before regional accreditation. The quality assurance analysis has been divided into three consecutive moments: - Internal quality assurance - External quality assurance by accredited peers, and - Quality assurance agencies. The evaluation for accreditation will include the degree in its entirety (its processes and results), considering for all degrees at least the following dimensions: institutional context, academic project, human resources and infrastructure. The regional quality criteria will be agreed upon by Advisory Commissions for each degree, under the coordination of the Network of National Accreditation Agencies.

7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, EFFECTS OF LAW	Legally valid among all countries involved with no possibility of supplementary or additional criteria. Does not imply or authorize the automatic exercise of the profession in another country. The recognition of degree qualifications will, under this Agreement, produce the effects that each Party confers on its own official qualifications. For those linked to the exercise of regulated professions, it will be necessary to comply with the non-academic requirements that each Party requires, in accordance with the legal regulations in force for each profession. However, to ensure non-discriminatory treatment, in no case may these rules require additional requirements that imply a distinction based on nationality or the country of issuance of the qualification. The recognition of the academic quality of the university degree titles or diplomas granted pursuant to the terms established here does not, in itself, confer the right to practice the profession in other countries. https://www.academia.edu/10246817/Reconocimiento_de_ titulos_y_grados_academicos _of_E
8. LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE joint accreditation at ministerial level, continental	No supranational evaluation agency has been created, so it is mainly enforced at a national level.
9. Other comments, general or supplementary ?	To enhance the effectiveness of a joint process, such as ARCUSUR or the one in development, Africa QA, it is crucial to address the main strategic challenges. This requires fostering trust, promoting equitable participation, enhancing regulatory convergence and bridging resource gaps through collaboration. The maximum commitment that a joint regional accreditation system can reach involves the mutual and automatic recognition of the right to professional practice within all the countries belonging to said alliance, regardless of the country in which the studies were completed. Obviously, this assumption occurs when the university or educational programme meets all the relevant requirements posed by the joint accreditation model. Some strategies may be of help: ■ Developing a robust accreditation framework with clear quality indicators and assessment criteria aligned with international best practices. ■ Conducting regular and thorough evaluations of educational institutions to assess compliance with the set accreditation standards and provide actionable feedback for improvement. ■ Promoting a culture of continuous improvement within universities by encouraging them to address the identified areas for enhancement based on accreditation assessments. ■ Establishing a regional database or platform for the verification and validation of academic credentials to ensure transparent and efficient recognition of qualifications. ■ Facilitating dialogue and agreements among member states to develop a framework for the mutual recognition of degrees, certifications, and professional qualifications; and ■ Encouraging universities to adopt and adhere to common academic standards and practices, reinforcing the credibility and acceptance of qualifications obtained within the region. The future agenda of higher education integration within the MERCOSUR region will be characterized by the strategic combination of three elements that will interact and reshape the historical triad: ■ the internationalization of curricula ■ the digitization of academic offering ■ academic recognition Finally, bear in mind that resistance to change will undoubtedly appear among the professors. Cocreation is the best way to overcome this universal fact. The more cocreation, the less resistance.

	CASE ANALYSED	European Approach for Joint Programmes (EAJP)
Sheet No. 4	Authors	Eva JAROSZEWSKI, Alexis VERMOTE, Caty DUYKAERTS, Aurélie DETAVERNIER
	Mobilized resources	- report by the group of experts commissioned by the Bologna follow-up group to develop the European approach - text adopted by the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area in 2015 - presentation of the approach and its tools available at https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. DATA BACKGROUND (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	Here, 'joint programme' is understood to mean: a programme of study developed and organized jointly by higher education institutions from at least two countries, with credit recognition agreed between the parties. Upon successful completion, the joint programme may lead to double or multiple degrees or a joint diploma (definition available on the EQAR website). The EAJP was developed to facilitate external quality assurance of these joint programmes: it defines standards based on the tools adopted within the EHEA framework, without applying additional national criteria. In the Bucharest Communiqué (April 2012), the EHEA Ministers agreed: 'We will allow EQAR-registered agencies to operate throughout the EHEA, while respecting national requirements. In particular, we will seek to recognize the quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies concerning joint programmes and double degrees. (...) We encourage higher education institutions to further develop joint programmes and degrees as part of a wider EHEA approach. We will examine national rules and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees to remove obstacles to cooperation and mobility inherent in national contexts'. The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) has therefore included in its 2013-2015 work programme the task of: 'Develop a policy proposal for a specific European accreditation approach for joint programmes, to be applied to all joint programmes that are subject to mandatory programme accreditation at national level.' BFUG commissioned a small ad hoc expert group to draft such a policy proposal. The expert group presented this report and the proposed European approach at several BFUG working group meetings, and revised the proposal on the basis of the working groups' comments. The final report and proposal were approved by the BFUG in October 2014. The EAJP was approved by the EHEA ministers in May 2015 in Yerevan. ■ The EAJP is applied according to the needs of higher education institutions cooperating on one or more study programmes and the requirements of their national frameworks: ■ If some of the cooperating higher education institutions require external evaluation at programme level (if accreditation or programme evaluation is mandatory), the cooperating institutions must select an appropriate quality assurance agency from the list of agencies on the EQAR register. ■ The agency uses the ad hoc standard (see below) and the ad hoc procedure to carry out a single assessment or accreditation of the entire joint programme. The result of this assessment/accreditation must be accepted in all EHEA countries. Depending on the national legal framework, the external quality assurance decision must come into force or be recognized in all countries where the programme is offered, as agreed in the Bucharest Communiqué.

	■ If all cooperating higher education institutions are subject to external evaluation or accreditation at institutional level only, they can use the European approach to set up joint internal approval and monitoring processes for their joint programmes. ■ The European approach can also be used for joint programmes offered by higher education institutions both inside and outside the EHEA. Institutions from non-EHEA member countries are invited to find out whether their national authorities accept the European approach framework and are able to recognize the decision of an agency listed on the EQAR register, where applicable.
2. PURPOSE of the assessment joint	1. Reduce the number of assessments/accreditations to which joint programmes are subject when organized by several countries 2. Propose a methodology, procedure and reference framework that explicitly emphasize the "joint" nature of programmes (> greater relevance of evaluation).
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the assessment joint	1. Joint programmes involving several countries 2. A mechanism for regular assessment of quality agencies to verify compliance and ensure registration on a register 3. The removal of legal and regulatory obstacles so that the results of the assessment carried out through the EAJP are recognized in all the countries concerned.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY CHARACTER of joint evaluation EAJP is not compulsory, but politically highly encouraged.	According to EQAR, 2/3 of joint programmes now involve EAJP[32]
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both) Programmatic evaluation.	Methodology: self-evaluation, visit by a committee of experts, published evaluation report, possible decision (in the case of accreditation), possibility of appeal, follow-up. Composition of the expert committee: at least 4 members (combining disciplinary expertise, representatives of the professional world and expertise in quality assurance in higher education). Through their international expertise and experience, the experts address the particular features of the joint programme. Together, they have knowledge of the HE systems involved in the institutions, and of the languages used within the programme. The committee includes members from at least two of the countries involved in the consortium offering the programme. The committee also includes at least one student.
6. CHOICE AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	The EAJP framework is structured around 9 criteria, largely inspired by the GSS: 1) Eligibility; 2) Learning outcomes; 3) Curriculum; 4) Admission and recognition; 5) Learning, teaching and assessment; 6) Student support; 7) Resources; 8) Transparency and documentation; 9) Quality assurance. The core of this framework is the analysis of what makes a programme 'joint'.

32. EQAR, 2023 - presentation of a thematic analysis on EAJP at a peer-learning activity organized by the Bologna Follow-up group - TPG C : Melinda SZABO. Thematic Analysis on European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes. Brussels, September 13, 2023. [Online] <https://ehea.info/Upload/PLA_FirstSession_EQAR_compressed.pdf>. (Accessed February 28, 2024). Ndlr: this ratio of 2/3 is undoubtedly to be qualified in that it does not represent 2/3 of the joint programmes offered in the European Higher Education Area, but 2/3 of the evaluation or accreditation reports uploaded to the DEQAR database by the agencies listed on the EQAR Register. In practice, therefore, this proportion does not include programmes for which there is no compulsory national accreditation or evaluation, or programmes evaluated by agencies that do not enter their reports in DEQAR. The total number of evaluations or accreditations carried out in 7 years on the basis of the EAJP is 31.

7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, LEGAL EFFECTS	The periodicity of the EAJP is six years. The political will is for the results of the assessment/accreditation to be recognized throughout all the countries involved and the EHEA. However, it must be said that there are still a number of obstacles to be overcome (mainly legal, in several countries). According to recent data published by EQAR, there are now : ■ 22 countries that recognize the EAJP as an alternative to national assessment/accreditation (e.g. FWB, Spain, etc.). ■ 12 countries that recognize the results under certain conditions (e.g. France, etc.). ■ 17 countries that do not recognize the results.
8. LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	See above. Concerning the degree of acceptance and use of this procedure: cf. regular reports from European bodies on the degree of implementation of the joint quality assurance approach for joint programmes + https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	Examples of EAJP-based assessment/accreditation reports are available at https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/european-approach cases/.

	CASE ANALYSED	Joint degree between 5 European universities (CHARM-EU)
Sheet no. 5	Authors	University of Montpellier
	Mobilized resources	https: //en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognitionqualifications-concerning-higher-education

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	This Master's-level programme is a joint degree offered and delivered by 5 of the universities in the CHARM-EU alliance. It is aimed at future project managers in the field of sustainable development. The degree, delivered entirely in English, features several unique aspects, including a flexible course structure, a truly international environment with integrated mobility options, varied content, a transdisciplinary approach, and a strong emphasis on inclusion and challenge-based learning. It consists of three phases of one semester each. The University of Montpellier has been a member of the CHARM- European University Alliance since 2019, alongside eight other prestigious universities in Europe. CHARM-EU combines universities from different European countries with different cultures, traditions and academic strengths. This diversity is an asset in developing an innovative and collaborative approach to teaching and research. European Universities are alliances of European higher education institutions, financed by the European Union and globally supported by national/regional governments. They aim to offer new learning, research and innovation opportunities to their communities, while contributing to European excellence and the global influence of higher education and research in Europe.
2. PURPOSES of the joint degree	The CHARM-EU Master's - experiment with a unique new university model designed to improve the quality, international competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education, - share experience and make tools available via the CHARM-EU website (see toolboxes: https://www.charm-eu.eu/toolkit) - offer an international, cross-disciplinary training programme that draws on the strengths of our partner universities.
3. PRECONDITIONS of the joint degree	The following prerequisites must be met in order to roll out this course, which is supported by several European universities: Themes aligned with the research areas of partner universities: Water, Food, Life & Health Consistency with the site's offerings: training that is neither redundant nor competitive A European market study, a consultation of social and economic players A transdisciplinary training programme that welcomes all student profiles, training experts/leaders of complex projects with an international dimension. Innovative content and teaching methods Creation of international, multidisciplinary knowledge-creation teams (Knowledge Creation Teams, KCTs: teachers-researchers, civil society, companies) Principles and values CHARM-EU's pedagogical charter and values: authentic challenges, inclusion, intercultural, transdisciplinary, using advanced technologies, research-based training, student-centred, environmentally friendly. Internationally recognized quality training

	European Approach to Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes Conducted by AQU, evaluation by international experts, recognized by the 5 accreditation agencies including HCÉRES. Alignment of academic and legal rules to define common procedures and processes The creation of joint bodies Academic Council Jury admission Examination board Creating an administrative structure Joint virtual administrative office with one administrative staff member per university.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY nature of the joint diploma	The University voluntarily joined the CHARM-EU alliance. This involved setting up a joint degree, which was one of the commitments made to the European Commission.
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	The teaching programme is identical for all partner universities. It is delivered using hybrid methods in classrooms designed according to the same organization for all sites. Joint procedures have been put in place, which are then adapted to the specific needs of each facility. Documents are shared in SHAREPOINT.
6. CHOICES AND COMPONENTS GENERAL STANDARDS	The diploma syllabus has been jointly defined by international, multi-disciplinary Knowledge Creation Teams (KCTs: teacher-researchers, civil society, companies). This model will evolve in line with feedback from various sources (course evaluations, etc.).
7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes involving the 5 quality agencies of the partner countries, including HCÉRES for France
8. ACCEPTANCE LEVELS of joint accreditation at ministerial, continental levels	Master's level accreditation in all 5 countries, parchment and joint diploma supplement signed by the 5 heads of school.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	

Sheet no. 6	CASE ANALYSED	Implementing QA policy in the European higher education area - testimony from UNIBASQ
	Authors	Ricard DE LA VEGA ALEMPARTE, Imma RIBAS
	Mobilized resources	

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	UNIBASQ does not possess or has not developed a unified accreditation system for the European sphere, similar to ARCUSUR in the Mercosur domain. As a university quality agency in the Basque Country, UNIBASQ collaborates with other European University Quality Evaluation Agencies in defining, implementing, and evaluating various initiatives. The aim is to consolidate the common European space within the realm of higher education. It is crucial to clarify that this is not a specific system of mutual recognition, but rather a collective set of European initiatives working towards the establishment of this common educational space. Therefore, there is no specific approach or model to use as a reference, but a convergence of various initiatives contributing to the creation of this space. The journey has been long, commencing with the Bologna Statement in 1998, and as of 2023, it remains an ongoing process. Some aspects are functioning effectively, while others are still a work in progress. Key milestones include: ■ The 1997 Lisbon Agreement on the recognition of qualifications related to higher education in the European region. This agreement emphasizes the recognition of university degrees and study time, unless substantial differences can be proven by the recognizing institution. ■ The 1998 Bologna Declaration, a political agreement establishing the European Higher Education Area. It outlines the commitment of signatory countries to reform their educational systems. ■ The creation of the European Higher Education Area in 1999, stemming from the Bologna process. Its objective is to harmonise the diverse educational systems within the European Union and facilitate effective student exchange. ■ The formation of the European Consortium of Accreditation in Higher Education ECA- (https://eche.eu/) in 2003, aimed at mutual recognition of accreditations conducted by member quality agencies. ECA also fosters mutual learning and the exchange of best practices in higher education. ■ The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education during the UNESCO General Conference in 2019. This convention focuses on easing academic mobility between countries and regions, making it the first United Nations treaty on higher education with a global scope (https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition qualifications-concerning-higher-education). There is a practical guide to recognition which may be of interest for the Joint QA: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374905 Institutional references of significance include: 1. ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education): https://eche.eu/ o https://ecahe.eu/archive/ (documents regarding mutual recognition)

	2. ENQA https://www.enqa.eu/ (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education which leads ESG, the agreed common framework for quality assurance systems: https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance in-the-european-higher-education-area/ and an ESG adaptation to the reality of the African continent: o https://www.enqa.eu/news/enqa-haqaa3/ on review of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA)
	3. EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education): https://www.eqar.eu/ o Relevant EQAR programmes: https://www.eqar.eu/kb/jint-programmes/ o Agreed standards for joint programmes: https://www.eqar.eu/kb/jintprogrammes/agreed-standards/ o Agreed procedure for joint programmes: https://www.eqar.eu/kb/jintprogrammes/agREed-proedure/
	4. INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education): https://www.inqaahe.org/
	5. ENIC-NARIC network, representing centres coordinating information on mutual recognition of qualifications in each country: https://www.enic-naric.net/. With regard to the African continent, https://www.enic-naric.net/page-africa, there is specific information on recognition https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372988 and quality assurance https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ASGQA_Manual_en_09.FINALE-with-License-1.pdf
	6. As a specific example, in the Netherlands, they have already implemented an active automatic recognition system (project completed in August 2023; not yet available): https://www.nuffic.nl/en
2. PURPOSE of the joint assessment	The overarching objective is to cultivate a cohesive European higher education space that enables unrestricted mobility of citizens and automatic validation of academic qualifications across European nations. This inclusive space should facilitate professional practice throughout the European domain without necessitating additional documentation. Additionally, a significant focus is placed on encouraging mobility among students and professors, fostering the development of a European identity and sense of citizenship.
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the joint assessment	The political consensus that clearly defines the intended goal, coupled with mutual trust at the political level among the various countries involved, constitute the two fundamental elements for achieving success. In the realm of European higher education, a comprehensive framework of European qualifications exists alongside national frameworks. This broader framework delineates educational levels using expected learning descriptors, emphasising the outcomes and achievements in learning. At the European level, a parallel framework for professional qualifications is also in place. The harmonisation of each regional system hinges on this framework. This necessitates a prior examination to determine what can be acknowledged and what should not, based on substantial differences. To facilitate this, an official catalogue of qualifications is imperative.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY CHARACTER of the joint assessment	The European approach for joint programmes is still in an experimental phase. Not all countries can automatically recognize the degrees of other countries.
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Programme scope, not at an institutional level. Related to all programmes and degrees but easier in professionalisation scope.

6. CHOICE AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	European standard and guidelines: https://www.enqa.eu/wp content/ uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf and https: //www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04 /02 _ European_ Approach_QA _ of_Joint_ Programmes_v1_0.pdf
7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, LEGAL EFFECTS	Quality assurance agencies established a formal agreement through which accreditation decisions will be recognized (more or less) automatically in several countries. As a rule of thumb, recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.
8. LEVELS ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental levels	Ministr y.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	Unibasq has been involved in three different joint accreditation processes, for the time being. The joint programmes with this joint accreditation system, implemented and officially recognized, are: - Joint Master's Degree Programme in International Humanitarian Action (NOHA+) in 2019, - Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Marine Environment and Resources (MER) in 2023 and - Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Environmental Contamination and Toxicology (ECT+) in 2023. During the conversation, UNIBASQ gave us some recommendations to carry out this project, based in its experience, as discussed below: At the core of any successful project is a clear understanding of its ultimate interest or purpose, upon which the entire project is built. The initial crucial step involves mapping out the qualifications and analysing the structure of these levels, and also quality accreditation systems, or comparable controls. This analysis should be contingent on the bachelor- master-doctoral level structure, for instance. The indispensable foundational conditions for this undertaking are twofold: first, the complete engagement and commitment of ministries; second, a thorough examination of the existing quality assurance systems. This involves a comprehensive study of national educational systems, enabling a regional comparison to determine comparability. In cases where significant differences exist, engaging external, independent experts proves instrumental in providing an objective analysis. In addition to this, trust plays a complementary yet critical role. Building mutual trust among the members of the Regional Alliance is paramount. Conducting external peer evaluations and fostering reciprocal visits between countries within the regional alliance significantly contributes to cultivating this mutual trust. Failure to do so can impede the development of such trust. Regarding mutual recognition, this may manifest itself at various levels, each with distinct implications. Examples include recognition of qualifications within individual countries, acknowledgment of external evaluations facilitating such recognition, or the creation of correspondence tables to analyse equivalences between degrees. The latter option, particularly among Francophone countries, should be relatively more feasible. Following accreditation decisions at the agency level, the subsequent steps should encompass an analysis of qualifications within the framework of degree levels (bachelor's, master's, and PhD), followed by political agreements and adaptations tailored to each country. Notably, agreements between similar countries have shown effective outcomes. Within the Francophone community, emphasising the identification of substantial similarities and differences should be a foundational aspect of the project, strategizing how to navigate these variances to promote mutual recognition.

	CASE ANALYSED	CAMES accreditation procedure
Sheet no. 7	Authors	Zakari LIRÉ and Saturnin ENZONNGA YOCA
	Mobilized resources	~~Lomé Convention on the recognition and equivalence of~~ diplomas, 1972, - Convention establishing the statutes of the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES), 2000 - Agreement on the organization and operation of the programme recognition and equivalence of diplomas, 2009; modified in 2021; - Directive N° 01/2022/CM/CAMES relative à l'Assurance qualité et à l'accréditation dans l'espace CAMES, 2022; - Référentiels CAMES : ▪ CAMES quality reference framework for the evaluation of the face-to-face training offer of higher education and research establishments (2018); ▪ Reference framework for the accreditation of Open and/or Distance Learning offerings (2014); ▪ Revised repository "institutional assessment" of Higher Education and Research Institutions (2018); ▪ Référentiel d'évaluation des écoles doctorales du CAMES (2017); ▪ Référence qualité du CAMES pour l'évaluation des programmes de recherche scientifique dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche (2018).

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	1968: creation of CAMES: January 1968: 1972: signing of the General Convention on the automatic validity of higher education diplomas 2000: Adoption of the revised CAMES statutes; 2009: adoption of the Agreement on the organization and operation of the diploma recognition and equivalence programme; 2012: creation of the Quality Assurance Programme. 2022: adoption of Directive N° 01/2022/CM/CAMES on quality assurance and accreditation in the CAMES area, *The Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur* (CAMES) harmonizes higher education and research policies and systems in 19 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo), most of which are in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, it is responsible for quality assurance and accreditation, notably through the Diploma Recognition and Equivalence Programme and the Quality Assurance Programme, which since 2022 has been overseen by a regional department.
2. AIMS OF THE JOINT ASSESSMENT	CAMES evaluation is based either on the reference framework for the evaluation of face-to-face training offered by higher education and research establishments, or on the framework for the accreditation of Open and/or Distance Learning (ODL) offerings. This evaluation is carried out on a voluntary basis, at the request of public and private higher education and research institutions, with a view to accrediting their training offerings. The aim of accreditation is to confer academic and/or professional recognition on the diplomas issued by these institutions and higher education establishments. Ultimately, it seeks to ensure the mobility of students and workers within the CAMES area and internationally.

3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the joint assessment	CAMES regional accreditation is conditional on national accreditation being granted to the higher education institution by the national quality assurance agency or equivalent body in the member country. In countries where there is no such agency, national accreditation is generally issued by a directorate or department of the ministry responsible for higher education. It should be noted that 9 of the 19 member countries have a national agency, the oldest of which is Senegal. Most of these agencies have only recently been set up, and are not yet fully operational.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY nature of the joint assessment	Accreditation, and therefore CAMES evaluation, is voluntary. It is up to public and private higher education institutions to decide whether or not to undergo such an evaluation.
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	CAMES essentially promotes two types of evaluation: institutional evaluation, which is formative and does not lead to accreditation, and programmatic evaluation, which does lead to accreditation.

6. CHOICES AND COMPONENTS GENERAL STANDARDS	A. Face-to-face training
	  ■ Basis/justification of the training offering
	  ■ Definition and architecture of the training offering
	  ■ Training programmes are part of a national, regional and international framework
	  ■ Educational organization
	  ■ Quality of training results and effects
	B. A la carte face-to-face training
	  ■ Basis/justification of the training offering
	  ■ Definition and architecture of the training offering
	  ■ Pedagogical organization
	NB: A separate repository is dedicated to the ODL offering.

7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	In accordance with the Lomé Convention, CAMES accreditation confers full validity on higher education diplomas in all member countries. This guarantees academic and/or professional mobility within the CAMES area and internationally.
8. ACCEPTANCE LEVELS of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	CAMES accreditation is accepted in all CAMES member countries and beyond.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	The CAMES directive adopted in 2022 now makes it possible to promote a harmonized quality assurance and accreditation area. It also contributes to the establishment of a permanent framework for consultation between member countries, in a particularly dynamic African context with regard to HAQAA 1, 2 and 3 initiatives and the African Qualification Framework (CAQF).

	CASE ANALYSED	ASEAN (South-East Asian regional policy)
Sheet no. 8	Authors	Marina LARREA (OBREAL)
	Mobilized resources	- AUN-QA Factsheet (Last Updated Oct 2023) - Guide_to_AUN-QA_Assessment_at_Programme_Level_Version_4.0_4 - Guide_to_the_AUN-QA _ Assessment _at _the_ Institutional_ Level_Version_ 3.0

Things to consider	Observations, comments
1. Background data *(history, facts, number of countries, etc.) concerned, etc.)*	In 1998, the ASEAN University Network (AUN) mooted the AUN-QA Network which led to the development of the AUN-QA Quality Assurance Framework. Since then, the network has been promoting, developing, and implementing quality assurance practices based on an empirical approach where quality assurance practices are tested, evaluated, improved, and shared. The 3rd version of the AUN-QA Model for Institutional Level Assessment has been redesigned as a transnational quality assurance model in support of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to promote cross-border mobility for students and faculty members, and the internationalization of education. It is aligned with: 1) Principle 3 - Internal Quality Assurance of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), 2) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015 - Part 1), and 3) the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework (Education -2015/16). 2007: implementation of the first programme assessment 2017: implementation of the first institutional level assessment Results so far: ▪ - 346 programme assessments (1,120 study programmes) in 8 countries ▪ - 8 institutional assessments in 4 countries ▪ - QA trainings ▪ - 15 publications ▪ - 179 members in 10 countries (Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Singapore)
2. Purposes of the joint assessment	The AUN-QA Model for Institutional Level Assessment has been redesigned as a transnational quality assurance model in support of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to promote cross-border mobility for students and faculty members, and the internationalization of education. Features: An institutional QA assessment panel will be appointed by the Chairperson of the AUNQA Council based on the assessors' background, experience, and language ability as well as the above principles of assessment. The members of the assessment panel will be from different universities and countries other than the country the assessment university operates in. The Chair of the institutional QA assessment panel, who is also the Chief Assessor, in consultation with the Chairperson of the AUNQA Council, will appoint the lead and other assessors

3. Prerequisites for joint assessment	To be eligible for institutional QA assessment under the AUN-QA Network (defined as the systematic assessment of strategic and systemic quality assurance in education, research, service, as well as the results and effectiveness of the quality assurance system of that institution. It aims to determine if an institution has met the stated quality criteria and requirements); the applying institution or university must fulfil the following conditions at the time of application: - be an AUN member university or an associate member university of the AUNQA Network; - have at least five (5) study programmes assessed and certified by the AUN-QA Network with the certificates being valid at the time of application; and - for renewal of the Certificate for AUN-QA Assessment at Institutional Level, the certified institution must fulfil the requirements for the submission of an interim report. - Institutions or universities accepted for institutional QA assessment must also comply with the requirements stated in the "Guidelines for AUN Quality Assessment and Assessors (Version 2.0)". - Further to the above conditions, the final decision to accept any application for an AUN-QA institutional assessment rests solely with the AUN-QA Council. As part of the self-assessment report (SAR) to be presented, institutions have to fill the Institutional Level Assessment Checklist comprising the 15 criteria (view row 5. Perimeter...) Voluntary.
4. Voluntary or compulsory nature of joint assessment	
5. Perimeter (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	

Institutional level assessment		Strategic QA (institutional)
		Systemic QA (internal QA system)
	Programme assessment	Functional QA (Education, Research and Service)

The AUN-QA model for institutional level assessment is designed as a holistic framework encompassing 15 criteria in strategic QA, systemic QA, and results:

Figure 1.4 - AUN-QA Model for Institutional Level Assessment (v3.0)

6. Choice and general components of the reference system	INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT 15 CRITERIA **Strategic QA** 1. Vision, mission, culture and governance 2. Leadership and strategy 3. Human resources 4. Financial and physical resources 5. External relations and networks 6. Policies for education 7. Policies for research 8. Policies for services **Systemic QA** 1. Quality assurance system 2. IQA information management 3. Quality enhancement Results 1. Educational results 2. Research results 3. Service results 4. Financial and market results **PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT 8 CRITERIA** 1. Expected learning outcomes 2. Programme structure and content 3. Teaching and learning approach 4. Student assessment 5. Academic staff 6. Student support services 7. Facilities and infrastructure 8. Output and outcomes
7. Recognition effects, legal effects	A seven-point system and the same rating scale is used for AUN-QA programme- and institutional-level assessments (from 1) Absolutely inadequate to 7) Excellent - Example of World-class or Leading Practices. It provides universities and assessors with an instrument for scaling their verdicts and to see how far they have progressed in their AUN-QA journey. For a university to receive the AUN-QA certificate for a successful institutional or programme assessment, a rating of at least "4" must be obtained. The certificate will be valid for a period of five years and an interim report has to be submitted by the university to AUN-QA Secretariat two years from the date of the assessment. Based on the assessment results, the institution has fulfilled/not fulfilled the requirements of the AUN-QA model for institutional assessment. Based on the assessment results, the xxx programme at xxx university has fulfilled the AUNQA requirements to be awarded the AUN- QA certificate for a successful programme-level assessment.
8. Levels of acceptance for joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	n/a
Any other comments, of a general or complementary nature?	

	CASE ANALYSED	IUCEA - East African regional policy
Sheet no. 9	Author	Marina LARREA (OBREAL)
	Mobilized resources	- STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EAC REGIONAL PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. Background information (history, facts, number of countries concerned, etc.)	The genesis of establishing a harmonized regional system of accreditation dates back to 2011, when some members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) proposed the amendment of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Act 2009, for IUCEA to undertake regional accreditation of both institutions and programmes. The anticipation was that such harmonized mechanisms would facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications, comparability, compatibility and synchronization of higher education and training systems among other goals. Thus, the EAC was declared a Common Higher Education Area by the Summit of the EAC Heads of State on 20th May 2017 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The pronouncement by the Heads of State directed that national higher education and training systems be operated and guided by the common regional frameworks under which curricula, examinations and certification as well as academic and professional qualifications, and the quality of the educational and training output in higher education will be harmonized. IUCEA was tasked to provide all the necessary technical support in the operationalization of the Common Higher Education Area under the oversight of the EAC Council of Ministers. With the ever increasing demand for cross-border higher education, the importance of a regional accreditation framework that provides an internationally accepted quality mark for academic programmes offered from within the EAC region is critical. The IUCEA is conducting its first ever programme evaluation and quality assessment. Discipline (Cluster Area) 1. Agriculture: (Crop & Animal Production/ Forestry/ Horticulture/ Agri-business, Animal Health, Agro-Processing, Floriculture/Fisheries and Aquaculture/Soil Science/ Land use and Management) 2. Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences 3. Health Sciences (Medicine, Public Health, Nursing, Laboratory Sciences, Imaging) 4. Animal Health (Animal production, Tropical Animal Health, Epidemiology, Molecular Biology, One Health, One Health Analytical Epidemiology, Vet Anatomy, Vet Physiology) 5. Data Science (Statistics, Actuarial Science, Biostatistics, Econometrics, Population & Demography) 6. ICT (Computer Sciences, Information Sciences, Information Systems, Computer Engineering, Software Engineering) 7. Engineering (Water Engineering, Civil, Electrical, Process, Chemical, Renewable Energy, Telecommunications Engineering) 8. Science Education (Subjects: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, ICT, Physical Education, Sport Sciences, Professional Education disciplines) EAC has, since 2022, adopted a Regional Programme Accreditation Framework. The Framework is defined by Standards, Guidelines, procedures, and assessment tools. This accreditation process is a Voluntary, Quality-based mechanism, anchored in the National Accreditation process.

2. Purposes of the joint assessment	The regional accreditation mechanism will facilitate mutual recognition of institutions and/or programmes that are recognized and accredited by the National Commissions and Councils for Higher Education in their respective Partner States. More importantly, the regional accreditation will be one of the means to enforce implementation of regional standards and guidelines and will form part of important policies and instruments for operationalization of the EAC Common Higher Education Area to facilitate free mobility of learners, labour and services. It would further serve as a mark of quality in addition to national accreditation and a competitive advantage, increasing institutions and programmes' ability to target the best students, academic staff and most outstanding research

3. Prerequisites for joint evaluation	1. Type of programmes: Submit only Academic/professional Programmes that lead to an award of a qualification.
	2. Accreditation Requirement: Programmes should have been duly accredited by Commissions and Councils for Higher Education or recognized national accreditation bodies in the respective EAC Partner State or other countries in which the Institution is found.
	3. Fees:
	    ▪ Payment of requisite initial non-refundable fees of USD 1,000 (for institutions within the EAC region) and USD 2,500 (for institutions from outside the EAC region) for administrative and technical review of the programme prior to facility verifications/inspection.
	    ▪ Programmes that meet the requirement at the review stage shall progress to facility verification/inspection. The institution shall be required to pay a subsidised fee of USD 5,790.

4. Voluntary or compulsory nature of joint assessment	Voluntary. It is also important to underline that the proposed regional accreditation is meant to be voluntary, quality-based and complementary and incremental to, as opposed to being a substitute of the respective national accreditation of the programmes in question.
5. Perimeter (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Programmatic evaluation. Includes an "Institutional space and facility inventory"
6. Choice and general components of the frame of reference	Accreditation status of the programme Curriculum development process Curriculum document Modes of Teaching and Learning Academic Staffing Governance and Administration Infrastructure/ Facilities Teaching and Learning Resources Student Assessment Student Support System Community services

7. Recognition and legal effects	The regional accreditation process results in recognizing academic programmes with a Seal of Quality for STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EAC REGIONAL PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION. 11 purposes of enhancement of cross-border higher education and regional and international recognition and visibility.
8. Levels of acceptance for joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	IUCEA has been mandated by the EAC to harmonize higher education in Eastern Africa. It is expected that all member States will recognize regionally accredited programmes. Any other comments, of a general or complementary nature? IUCEA's regional accreditation system is very similar to that of CAMES. It is based on a voluntary approach, shared standards and a harmonized higher education area, and ultimately aims to ensure the quality of training, recognition of diplomas and the promotion of academic and professional mobility. The only fundamental difference with the CAMES accreditation system is that not all member countries have national quality assurance agencies. While encouraging the creation of such agencies, the challenge would be to bring the national bodies responsible for quality assurance and accreditation more or less up to standard. The Joint QA project's mechanisms and approaches should help to reinforce this dynamic. Joint assessment is perhaps or certainly the best way to achieve this.

	CASE ANALYSED	QUALS project: QA for ENSA (Algeria) by SKVC (Lithuanian quality agency)
Sheet no. 10	Author	Vincent WERTZ
	Mobilized resources	

Things to consider	Observations, comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA *(history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).*	In the framework of an international project (ERASMUS+ Capacity building) named QUALS, ENSA had to undergo an institutional review performed by SKVC
2. PURPOSE of the assessment joint	Institutional review (Pilot case) in the framework of the QUALS project, without recognition by the Algerian QA Agency (and/or Ministry)
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the assessment joint	Three institutions were selected to participate in the project - they were trained for 20 hours about quality management, ESG principles, institutional review process, preparation of the SER. And three prepared SERs. One was selected to undergo a voluntary pilot review.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY nature of the joint assessment	Voluntary for ENSA
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Institutional
6. CHOICES AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	The SKVC methodology, with minor revisions discussed within QUALS
7. RECOGNITION EFFECTS, LEGAL EFFECTS	An official statement by SKVC stating the evaluation result, which was positive. Review report also made publicly available, according to SKVC procedures. Report available here: chromeextension:// efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https: //www.skvc.lt/uploads/ documen ts/files/SKVC_Final_Report_ENSA_2022.pdf
8. ACCEPTANCE LEVELS of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	Not necessarily - depends on ENSA initiative and collaborations with the Ministry.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementary?	The follow-up actions should be initiated by the institution (ENSA), as SKVC advised. The external expert panel had advised ENSA to also look at ESG for Africa and participate in the process of building the Algerian quality assurance system at the national level following ESG and ESG for Africa.

	CASE ANALYSED	EUniQ (pilot evaluation of European university alliances)
Sheet no. 11	Author	Caty DUYKAERTS, Eva JAROSZEWSKI, Alexis VERMOTE (AEQES)
	Mobilized resources	- https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/europeanuniversities-initiative - https://www.nvao.net/en/euniq

Things to consider	Observations, comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA *(history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).*	**1. 1 Background European alliances :** European Commission initiative: 'The European Universities Initiative is a flagship initiative of the European Education Area. It will enable a new generation of Europeans to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines, developing a strong European identity'. 2019: 1st European Commission call to HEIs (for 17 alliances) 2020: 2nd call (24 alliances) (ps1: 2019+2020 represent 41 alliances, i.e.: 280 SEEs & 27 EU members + Iceland, Norway, Serbia, United Kingdom, Turkey) 2022: 3rd call (20 alliances) 2023: 4rd call (30 alliances) (ps2: 2022+2023 represent 50 alliances, i.e.: 27 EU members + Iceland, Northern Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Turkey + Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro + Ukraine) Ambition for mid-2024 to increase the number of alliances to 60 (i.e. 500 SEEs)
	1. 2 EUniQ background : EUnIQ: European framework for the comprehensive quality assurance of European Universities Co-funded by Erasmus+, the EUniQ project took place between May 2019 and November 2021. EUniQ was tested through four pilot alliance evaluations (Una Europa, Eutopia, Unite!, Young Universities for the future of Europe). The pilot project was led by a consortium whose members are listed here: https://www.nvao.net/nl/attachments/view/list%20of%20 euniq% 20par tners.
2. PURPOSE of the assessment joint	**Objectives :** 1) support improvement: contribute to improving the internal quality assurance of the alliance (grouping of European universities and higher education establishments) 2) facilitate alliance quality assurance: support external quality assurance by aiming to minimize multiple QA procedures, while respecting national responsibilities and quality assurance requirements (*-> aim to simplify QA requirements for European universities given the multiplicity of legal and national contexts*)
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS of the joint assessment	**EUniQ conditions for the alliance:** 1) Definition of the alliance's evaluation expectations, 2) The alliance chooses one or more agencies from the EQAR register to coordinate the assessment, 3) Publication of results and communication to national authorities.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY CHARACTER of joint evaluation	Voluntary nature

5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Institutional evaluation of the alliance (made up of several HEIs): the focus of the evaluation is on the effectiveness of the alliance's internal quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms, taking into account the "developmental" nature of the evaluation criteria. With the following clarification: *"Some European Universities are planning the development of joint programmes. These joint programmes can be assessed with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, as adopted by European Ministers responsible for higher education in Yerevan (2015). The assessment of joint programmes according to the European Approach could be supported by the evaluation of the European University that provides these joint programmes. For instance, the evaluation of a European University according to this European Framework could provide evidence and trust when assessing its joint programmes with the European Approach standards on Eligibility (standard 1), Admission and Recognition (standard 4), Transparency and Documentation (standard 8), and Quality Assurance (standard 9) "*.
6. CHOICE AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	Focus on the alliance's quality management system (see point 5 above). 4 criteria : - strategy and policies, - policy implementation, - evaluation and monitoring, - improvement policy. Each is broken down into benchmarks that describe what is expected of a fully deployed alliance. The evaluation criteria reflect the PDCA cycle of an internal quality assurance system. According to EUniQ, alliances that have just been launched will not yet have completed this cycle. The developmental phase is therefore considered relevant to the evaluation. The external evaluation committee assesses each criterion in terms of levels of development (what has yet to be developed, what is in the start- up phase, what is partially developed, what is already developed). *"The framework is based on a set of criteria for the evaluation of European Universities in relation to their stage of development. The evaluation criteria with their respective reference points describe what is to be expected from a fully developed European University. The reference points indicate for each of the criteria the elements that may be relevant considering the long-term expectations from the European Universities Initiative. It should be noted that, especially in the initial years of existence, it is realistically impossible for European Universities to meet all expectations. Whilst the criteria have general validity in view of the development of internal QA systems, the reference points should be handled with flexibility, respecting the autonomous choices and the developmental stage of the European University. The criteria are organized around the following inter-related questions:* *1. What is the European University's vision on the quality of its education and, where possible, research, innovation and service to society?* *2. How will the European University realise its vision as to quality?* *3. How does the European University monitor the extent to which its vision as to quality is actually realised?* *4. How is the European University working on improvement?* *5. How is the quality of the European University's provision assured in an internationally accepted manner, respecting the EHEA principles and objectives?"* **Conclusion**: developmental, broad, flexible, fit-for-purpose frame of reference, aligned with the strategic aims of the EHEA (via reference to EHEA principles and objectives and ESG in particular) and the alliance.

7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, LEGAL EFFECTS	At present, no. These fields may be developed in the future, depending on the use of the EUniQ framework. *"National authorities are encouraged to consider whether evaluation reports according to this Framework and provided through the evaluated European University can simplify or support national QA requirements for institutions and programmes. Self-accrediting universities should not be obliged to use this Framework, although they may voluntarily choose to apply the Framework for enhancement purposes or to support their partner universities that are subject to national QA requirements."*
8. LEVELS ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	**EUniQ link with ESG** : *In: Criterion 2.1 : strategy and policies -> reference point : "The QA policies for the provision of the alliance are aligned with Part 1, and where relevant Part 2, of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)".*

Sheet no. 12	CASE ANALYSED	CCA - Central American regional policy
	Author	Ricard DE LA VEGA ALEMPARTE, Imma RIBAS
	Mobilized resources	

Things to consider	Observations, comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA(history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	The Central American Council for Accreditation of Higher Education -CCA- https://ccacalidad.org/, was created with the mission of promoting the continuous improvement of the quality, relevance and harmonization of Higher Education, through the creation of an evaluation and accreditation system that promotes the strengthening and accreditation of organizations or agencies that accredit programmes or degree courses in Central America and the Caribbean, in a commitment to the development of the Region. It aims to assess and validate the quality of educational programmes and institutions to ensure they meet specific standards and criteria. The CCA was founded in 2003 and was officially created in 2005, aiming to promote the improvement of quality and integration of Central American higher education, through national or regional accreditation agencies duly recognized by the CCA. https://ccacalidad.org/normativa/ It comprises seven countries: 1. Belize 2. Costa Rica 3. El Salvador 4. Guatemala 5. Honduras 6. Nicaragua, and 7. Panama 19/11/2003: The CCA arises out of the negotiation of representatives of seven countries, from Belize to Panama, and four sectors: state academic and private academic (public and private universities), Government Sector (Ministries of Education), Professional Sector (federations of professional associations) and Student Sector The council of the CCA comprises twelve members; one representative per country and a representative for each sector of the Central American region linked to higher education: state academic, private academic, government, professional and student. Each of the twelve regular representatives has a first and second substitute. 14/11/2005. The CCA is recognized as a Central American regional organization. The CCA accredits national quality agencies, and national agencies are responsible for accrediting degrees in order to generate a system of mutual trust between agencies based on public accountability processes. 2015- The agency ceased its activity due to lack of funds. The University that hosted the agency decided to end its economic support of the CCA. The agency took three years to find another location to start the activity again. 2018- The CCA headquarters was moved to Panama. The agency spent two years rethinking its activities. 2018-2020: Project AUDIT-Central America. Pilot project for the creation of a quality assurance platform so that Central American Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can certify the design of the Internal Quality Assurance System for Higher Education Training (SIAC) and have an international quality seal for university training issued jointly by the CCA and the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) of Spain, https://ccacalidad.org/programa-audit-centroamerica/ After this period, the agency started offering activities beyond its initial purpose.

	2021-2024: The CCA-ANECA Agreement is designed to certify the design of quality systems in Higher Education Institutions in Central America. Additionally, it addresses the certification of the implementation of quality systems for those HEIs that have already received the design certification
	2021-2024- CCA-HCÉRES Agreement to help Universities to obtain institutional accreditation with HCÉRES https://ccacalidad.org/acreditacion-hceres/
	Currently, the CCA is also dedicated to:
	- supporting agencies to strengthen the culture of quality and continuous improvement. - accreditation of programmes for online degrees
2. PURPOSE OF JOINT EVALUATION	The mutual recognition of academic competencies between different countries and regions. Key points concerning the CCA joint evaluation include: 1. Purpose: working towards enhancing the quality of higher education in Central America by setting accreditation standards, conducting evaluations, and accrediting institutions and programmes. 2. Accreditation: following a rigorous accreditation process based on predetermined criteria related to faculty qualifications, curriculum quality, infrastructure, resources, teaching methodologies, and more. 3. Regional collaboration: involving coordination with higher education authorities and institutions to ensure a unified approach to accreditation and quality enhancement.
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS for joint evaluation	None. Unknown.
4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY CHARACTER of joint evaluation	Even though the role of CA is changing, the aim of this agency was to be an accreditation agency for national quality agencies that accredit degrees in their country in Central America.
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	Currently, the CCA is focused on evaluation and promotion of good practices between quality agencies.

6. CHOICE AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	The CCA model is based on the CIPP, a model that was developed by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield in the late 1960s for the evaluation of social programmes and projects. The CIPP model is designed and developed in order to build useful information for decision-making. In other words, it offers transformative and improvement potential for the programme or project in which it is used. The CIPP model responds to the enumeration of four different types of evaluation:
	    ■ Context evaluation (C)
	    ■ Evaluation of inputs (I)
	    ■ Process evaluation (P) and
	    ■ Product evaluation (P)
	
	The CCA action current programmes (https://ccacalidad.org/servicios/) are as follows:
	- The AUDIT Central America Programme (technical support and accompaniment are offered to develop internal quality assurance systems in Central America that are certified by ANECA).
	- Institutional accreditation by HCÉRES that allows it to be evaluated and accredited according to reference frameworks aligned with the guidelines of the European Higher Education Area.

	- Evaluative Framework for virtual and distance education. - Training programme on Internal quality assurance issues, as a means to promote the quality culture and continuous improvement of HEIs and accreditation agencies. - Self-assessment guide to determine the degree of incorporation of the Central American University Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction within universities and - Quality Policies promote regional linkage and integration. In this context, HCÉRES (https://www.hceres.fr/en) and ANECA (https://www.aneca.es/) are two fundamental CCA partners at the international level. The AUDIT International 2022 Model has 10 criteria with guidelines seeking to strengthen HEIs, so that when designing their internal quality system and systematically implementing their processes with the participation of stakeholders, they ensure execution leading to the evidence to undergo processes of external evaluation as a recognition of their commitment and effort in the continuous improvement of Higher Education training. The criteria are: ■ Quality policy and objectives, ■ Quality assurance of training programmes, ■ Student teaching guidance, ■ Academic/research and teaching support staff, ■ Resources and services, ■ R&D&i and knowledge transfer, ■ Link with the environment, ■ External dimension of the Institution, ■ Publication of information on the development of activities and programmes, and ■ Maintenance and updating of the system. Meanwhile, the HCÉRES model is made up of three domains: - Domain 1: strategic and operational management - Domain 2: research policy, innovation and inclusion of science in society and - Domain 3: education policy, student life and university life
7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, LEGAL EFFECTS	The CCA was set up with the objective of recognizing qualifications between different countries, but to be recognized, these qualifications must also comply with the regulations of each country. Therefore, although qualifications are recognized, at the level of recognition of professional practice, said recognition is not automatic and the country's regulations must be complied with, which involves verifying the study plan, and if it is equivalent, it is recognized.
8. LEVELS ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	This depends mainly on each country. Each country differs. In Honduras it is the university that evaluates the study plan. In Costa Rica it is CONARE (https://www.conare.ac.cr/). In Guatemala, the University of San Carlos. In Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador, the ministry itself.
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	The initiative arose from the universities, not from the ministries. It is currently redefining its mission. The difficulty in obtaining financial resources is hindering its operation. In some countries, like El Salvador, there is only one public university that is part of the initiative. Furthermore, in some countries, such as Guatemala, they do not have their own quality agency either. For all these reasons, it would be fair to say that at present, the Central American higher education system is still in the organizational phase. The CCA aimed to have the role of accreditation agency for national quality agencies that accredit degrees in their country. Since it has not worked as desired, it is being reoriented to offer good practices for quality agencies and university quality systems. There must be mutual trust for mutual recognition to be possible. Quality mechanisms help to generate this. Furthermore, it is necessary to create a shared and common language about the field, since in each culture or country, each concept may be associated with different meanings.

Sheet no. 13	CASE ANALYSED	BENELUX - Baltic States Treaty on automatic recognition of diploma levels
	Author	Caty DUYKAERTS
	Mobilized resources	https: //www.benelux.int/files/9016/3291/ 1003/ TREATY_14 .09.2021_ FR_002.pdf TREATY ON THE AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION https: //www.benelux.int/f r/post/les-country-f rom-benelux- and-the-states-baltic states-recognize-automatically- their-respectful-diplomas/ official launch of the Treaty (communication Sept 2021 on the BENELUX website)

Things to consider	Observations and comments
1. BACKGROUND DATA (history, factual data, number of countries concerned, etc.).	In 2015, the Benelux countries (Belgium - Netherlands - Luxembourg) introduced automatic mutual recognition of bachelor's and master's degree levels, with associate degrees and doctorates added in 2018. The Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) already recognized each other's diplomas. The two groups of countries felt that there was real added value in forging links in this area, and as such signed a declaration of intent in 2019. This Treaty, to be signed in September 2021, will provide a legal and political framework for automatic and generic recognition. The Benelux countries and the Baltic States now form the only region in the European higher education area where the level of higher education qualifications is automatically recognized. They are pioneers in this field, and it is their ambition that other countries should follow suit. The Treaty is therefore open to the accession of other countries in the European Higher Education Area, provided that the quality requirements for automatic and generic mutual recognition of degree levels are met.
2. JOINT EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	This is not a joint assessment, but a legal framework (TREATY) that guarantees the recognition of diploma levels across the signatory countries of the Treaty. The purpose of the Treaty is to *facilitate the free movement of people holding a diploma issued by one of the six countries who wish to study or pursue their professional career in another.* *This automatic recognition of diplomas removes a potential obstacle to studying or finding a job in one of these countries. This measure may also make it easier to find a job, thanks to greater comparability of educational levels.*
3. PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS for joint evaluation	Article 4 of the treaty details the conditions for recognition of degree levels for the four degree levels - associate degree (120 credits), bachelor, master and doctorate (recognition by the competent authorities and recognition by the higher education institution or authorized body). Conditions also include quality assurance systems and compliance with the provisions of qualifications frameworks (European and national). Conditions for accession (to the Treaty) [article 13]: *Any State having ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention and belonging to the European Higher Education Area may apply to accede to this Treaty, provided that:* *- it applies reliable quality assurance systems for its higher education* *programmes, which can demonstrate proven compliance with the GSEs,* *- its higher education system is a three-cycle system in line with the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area, and* *- it has referenced its national qualifications framework for higher education to the EQF.*

4. VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY CHARACTER of joint evaluation	Voluntary adherence to the Treaty by a State Compulsory recognition of diploma levels by the signatory state
5. PERIMETER (institutional evaluation, programmatic evaluation, both)	**associate degree:** a short-cycle higher education qualification awarded in accordance with the legislation of one of the Parties and belonging to its higher education system, corresponding to EQF level 5; **bachelor's degree:** a first-cycle higher education qualification awarded in accordance with the legislation of one of the Parties and belonging to its higher education system, corresponding to EQF level 6; **master's degree**: a second-cycle higher education qualification awarded in accordance with the legislation of one of the Parties and belonging to its higher education system, corresponding to EQF level 7; **doctorate**: a third-cycle higher education qualification awarded in accordance with the legislation of one of the Parties and belonging to its higher education system, corresponding to EQF level 8.
6. CHOICE AND COMPONENTS GENERAL REFERENCE	/
7. EFFECTS OF RECOGNITION, LEGAL EFFECTS	Article 1 specifies the scope of application > LEVEL recognition of diplomas. This means that [art 1, paragraph 3: *This Treaty shall not apply to: a) the recognition of specific programmes of higher education qualifications in a particular field of study, b) the recognition of periods of study, c) the recognition of qualifications which do not belong to the higher education systems of the Parties, or d) the recognition of professional qualifications in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, or in accordance with other relevant provisions adopted within the framework of the European Union.* The basis for mutual trust lies in the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and an active role in the European Higher Education Area, evidenced by the implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter referred to as the 'ESG'), three-cycle higher education systems, national qualifications frameworks and other transparency instruments.
8. LEVELS ACCEPTANCE of joint accreditation at the ministerial, continental level	
9. OTHER COMMENTS, general or complementar y ?	The field of "recognition" is extremely complex in practice (see, for example, chapter 8 by Howard Davies on the European experience in MATERIALS ON AFRICAN REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION). Here, we note a recent initiative (2015-2018-2021) led by two trios of countries, all six within a vast higher education area developing on the momentum of the Bologna reform and consolidated by numerous communiqués, framework texts, conventions, … and other structures dedicated to recognition (such as the Enic-Naric centres https://www. enic-naric.net/). Faced with the slow implementation of recognition mechanisms, denounced mainly by students and graduates, the political will of these six countries to conclude a Treaty and invite others to join is a worthy initiative, even though it may be interpreted as an indicator of failure - or at least of the extreme slowness in achieving objectives - of the more global policy of integration…

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