



# **ASEM-Education Process**

**PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY  
ON NEW APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE ASEM COUNTRIES**

19-20 February 2015, Brussels

**Report**

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## Executive summary

Following the commitment of Minister Mr Pascal Smet and Minister Mr Jean-Claude Marcourt, in charge for higher education respectively in Flanders and in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (Belgium), at the ASEM-Education Ministerial Meeting (ASEMME) held in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) on 13-14 May 2014, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels organised a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) entitled “New approaches to quality assurance (QA) in the ASEM countries” in Brussels on 19-20 February 2015. The PLA was attended by 32 experts in this field coming from five Asian countries and five European countries (namely Austria, Brunei, China, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal and Russia – plus Belgium as organiser) as well as regional and international organisations (namely the ASEM-Education Secretariat – AES, the Asia-Pacific Quality Network – APQN, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR, and the European Commission). Those experts were representing ministries for higher education, quality assurance agencies (QAAs) and higher education institutions (HEIs).

As explained more in details in section (1), the PLA aimed at further developing a common QA understanding and language between both Asia and Europe, focusing thus on the common aspects, specificities, challenges as well as the current developments and new approaches in both external and internal QA systems and procedures. In building the PLA, the organisers had carefully taken into consideration the outcomes of previous ASEM-Education conferences and seminars related QA, in particular: the ASEM-Education conference “QA and recognition in higher education: challenges and prospects” (Cyprus, December 2010), the ASEM-Education seminar on regional QA (Bonn, July 2011), the ASEM-Education seminar on QA in higher education (Sèvres, October 2012).

During one day and a half, the participants learned from the various regional organisations involved in QA through specific policies, programmes and projects. The participant had the opportunity to present and discuss their respective QA system and procedures with the view of fostering cooperation and inter-linkages at international and interregional level.

Previous to the meeting, a survey was carried out among all ASEM countries to gather comprehensive information on the national initiatives, projects and views relating to QA systems and standards, cross-border evaluation and involvement of the stakeholders. In addition to the countries participating to the PLA, some other ten ASEM countries responded to this survey. As further explained in section (2) of this report, the main results showed that despite the diversity between countries and regions, common approaches and orientations can be underlined for which the common (regional) standards, guidelines or principles play a crucial role.

At the closing of the PLA, the participants endorsed the conclusions of the rapporteur, Mr Lucien Bollaert, in particular the proposals for follow-up actions which include:

- further structuring and systematising the exchange of information on QA but also on qualifications frameworks (QFs) and recognition through various activities such as PLAs, seminars and conferences;
- exploring the potentials of the cross-border initiatives in supporting the common understanding of QA in both regions;
- linking more closely the developments of quality assurance and qualifications frameworks.

The present report will be sent to the ASEM-Education Secretariat for further dissemination to the participating countries and organisations to the ASEM-Education Process. It will be suggested distributing the report for information to the ASEM-Education Ministers at the occasion of the ASEMME5 to be held in Riga (Latvia) on 27-28 April 2015.

## **(1) Rationale for organising a PLA on new approaches to QA in the ASEM countries**

– Lucien Bollaert

### ***The EHEA and the Asia-Pacific region in a global society***

Since the 1990s the societies have gone through some fundamental changes. After the so-called third industrial revolution driven by informatics and its use in technology, and after the implosion of socialism in the Soviet area, the society has grown global in most of its basic activities in farming, industry, and services. These changes can be summarized in the following words: globalization of activities, massification of social participation while at the same time individualization of activities, responsibilities and roles, global immigration and multi-cultural cooperation against conflicts, climatologic changes which make ecology and sustainability necessary, innovation through application of new knowledge.

The global economic and financial crisis has only accelerated those fundamental changes, their challenges and the necessity to react in proper ways.

### ***The new mission of higher education in the global knowledge society***

Higher education (HE) has gone through some essential changes, precisely due to the global fundamental changes. Next to internationalisation and massification, students are addressed more and more as individuals that need to be prepared to function well in the new global society as responsible citizens. Therefore, the addition of knowledge by research, one of the essential characteristics of HE, is combined with education and services to society whose importance have grown in the mission of HE. Students need to be educated and trained not only as future researchers, but primarily as global citizens who have achieved the competences needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Skills and attitudes such as the ability to apply knowledge through insights in new contexts and creative thinking, the ability to analyze critically and come up with innovative solutions, the ability to communicate world-wide both with experts and non-experts, the ability to function in international and multicultural teams, and last but not least the eagerness to learn life long, have become essential. Thus, HE has been confronted with a fundamental paradigm shift in order to answer these new realities and goals in the right way.

HEIs are needed to be managed in another way, leaving their ivory tower and *laissez faire* policies – sometimes reduced wrongly to the concept of autonomy. Instead they need to open up to the global society with all its new characteristics, need and challenges. New Public Management has definitely entered HEIs in order to face the manifold challenges, including the competition for the best students and staff. By the introduction of internal and external quality assurance, HEIs have tried to combine the necessary quality enhancement of their educational and research processes and results with the accountability to their stakeholders and societies who subsidise them. All these changes were introduced and realized in an economic and financial crisis by which their subsidies were generally lowered and in a political and cultural context in which trust and esteem are not taken for granted anymore but need to be proved with evidence.

### ***The added value of cooperation between Europe and Asia***

Since the changes and challenges are global, the possible answers should be as well. Both Europe and Asia are confronted with the same global evolutions. Most of the challenges and changes mentioned above were identified and addressed in what has become known as the Bologna Process (BP) in

Europe since 1999. After 10 years, the HE ministers of the 47 participating countries could speak of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – and, for the 28 EU Members States, the European Research Area (ERA) – in which the goals and action lines were clear, but implemented in quite different ways, times and certainly not all yet at the grassroots of the HEIs.

The same process has started in Asia. As far as diversity is concerned Asia is even more diverse in cultures and HE than the EHEA. It counts tens of thousands HEIs delivering education in over 100 different languages. Notwithstanding, the region has developed a strong cooperation underpinned by growing massive mobility. Especially the theme of QA has been a major development, through APQN (see below), and thanks to funds by the World Bank Development Grant Fund (DGF) and UNESCO's Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC).

During the financial crisis, the economic balance of both regions has recently changed towards Asia. While the old Western Europe was confronted with its own traditions and nationalism, even tendencies to close up, the new opening towards Central and Eastern Europe coming out of an era of stagnation needed, to be helped. On the other hand, Asia has enjoyed an economic boom indeed, yet uneven, and has got a new generation eager to learn and progress internationally. While Europe knows a reduction of the birth rate of natives and is confronted with immigration and a rising birth-rate of immigrants putting multicultural diversity and its participation in society and HE on the agenda. In the meantime the Asian region enjoys a boom in native birth-rate and wants to open up to the world through economy and HE.

### ***Evolutions so far***

A lot has already been prepared by the Asia-Europe Dialogue in Education started in Berlin 2008, which was continued on ministerial level in Hanoi 2009, Copenhagen 2011 and Kuala Lumpur 2013. In the conclusions of the latest meeting (ASEMME4), the ministers reiterated the importance of education, cultural diversity and social cohesion in both regions, and, therefore, acknowledged the necessity to invest in all sectors of education and training in order to further improve the quality and attractiveness of education and training systems, to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and to contribute to the development of highly qualified and active citizens who have a strong sense of social responsibilities, are open-minded and respect cultural diversity. The ministers also wished to give additional political momentum to the ASEM-Education Process by asking Senior Officials to meet yearly in order to discuss the implementation and follow-up of the ASEM activities. It is in this context that the Ministers of Belgium, both of the Flemish and French Communities, decided to organize a PLA on new approaches in quality assurance in HE in connection with autonomy, responsibility and accountability.

Within the BP, QA has been identified not only as one of the major themes, but also as one of the most successful. Certainly with the approval of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) by the Ministers in Bergen 2005, external QA has been implemented in all countries and regions of the EHEA. In some countries this meant a kind of follow-up of the already existing internal QA systems. In other countries, internal QA was stimulated by the development and design of the external one. Since 2000, ENQA has gathered most European QAAs in order to cooperate on the European (policy) level as well as to learn from each other. The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) has concentrated on bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to recognize their decisions cross-border. With the founding of EQAR in 2008, the ESG have become even more recognised as European framework for QA, since QAAs can only be registered if they are and function in substantial compliance with them. The Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué has put the international recognition of QAA decisions through EQAR on the agenda. For the moment, the ESG are being revised in order to be even clearer to be used and to be updated.

Indeed, QA has become a global issue. More than 100 countries across the globe have established education related to QA mechanisms of various types based on purposes and processes. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAAHE) gathers most of them on the basis of their good practices. The Asian national QAAs are now being challenged for the quality of their own operations to meet some externally determined international standards. Before 2003 in most systems quality was implicit in HEIs. Quality and assurance were both internal. In 2003, APQN was founded in order to make focus and discourse on quality more explicit by developing external QA. APQN's mission states it wants "to enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific region through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them". APQN's constitution states the following purposes:

- (1) To promote good practice in the maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (2) To facilitate research in the region into the practice of quality management in higher education and its effectiveness in improving the quality of higher education in the region;
- (3) To provide advice and expertise to assist the development of new quality assurance agencies in the region;
- (4) To facilitate links between quality assurance agencies and acceptance of each others' decisions and judgments;
- (5) To assist members of APQN to determine standards of institutions operating across national borders;
- (6) To permit better informed international recognition of qualifications throughout the region;
- (7) To assist in the development and use of credit transfer schemes to enhance the mobility of students between institutions both within and across national borders;
- (8) To enable members of APQN to be alert to dubious accrediting practices and organisations; and;
- (9) Where appropriate, represent the region and promote the interests of the region, e.g. vis-à-vis other networks and international organisations.

Those purposes are still very current and could be formulated for the EHEA and ENQA/ECA as well. APQN too developed the so-called Chiba Principles in 2010. Recently Ms. Yung-Chi Hou, vice-president of APQN and professor at the Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, identified the challenges that Asian QAAs are facing, including "hardly making time for internal QA of their own", "difficulties in setting criteria and benchmarks for internal QA and external QA", and "budget constraints".

Sheer magnitude of complexity and diversity of cultures and HE systems make the task of the regional network more challenging, at the same time more rewarding in terms of great learning from each other. It is essential that the European and Asian-Pacific experiences and are not only shared, but that their activities meet in a global context.

At the same time, QA returns again on focusing more on internal QA and quality culture, while it tries to limit the administrative burden. In both areas comparable shifts can be observed in new approaches towards QA.

The risk-based approach was first implemented in Australia then in England from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013. The move of external QA from study programme level to institutional level is clear. In some systems, as in Flanders, the concept of self-accrediting institutions is being introduced. As in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, the stress on learning outcomes (LOs), both in internal and external QA, is thus most noteworthy. Some systems, as the Swedish, merely focus on the achieved learning outcomes by re-assessing the theses, while others, as in the Netherlands and Flanders, make a distinction between intended LOs and achieved LOs. Another very important new dimension for international trust and recognition is the link between international qualifications frameworks, national or regional ones,

discipline or domain's LOs and the LOs the study programmes actually define. These new tendencies and approaches in QA also touch upon the way of governance, the autonomy, responsibility and accountability of HEIs. The time is right to go deeper into these themes in relation to the global context and challenges.

### ***Outcomes of the previous ASEM-Education activities***

We would like to build the forthcoming PLA upon the outcomes of previous activities on QA organised from an inter-regional perspective.

The ASEM-Education conference "QA and recognition in HE: challenges and prospects", held in Limassol (Cyprus) on 6-7 December 2010 agreed on the following recommendations:

- Experts from QA and recognition agencies from Asia and Europe should meet and develop common principles of QA and recognition to be followed by both regions;
- Subsequent to setting these principles, all stakeholders should raise awareness of the existence of such standards and guidelines by organizing related Conferences;
- Networks of QA and recognition agencies of both regions should be established;
- Training seminars should be planned for HEIs officials in Asia and promote collaboration between HEIs in ASEM countries.

The participants in the ASEM-Education seminar on regional QA, held in Bonn (Germany) on 5-6 July 2011 made the following propositions in terms of enhanced interregional cooperation in quality assurance:

- To explore the possibility to fund more inter-regional curriculum development programmes in line with a cross border QA procedure;
- To stimulate mutual recognition of QAAs in Asia and Europe and their QA decisions/results within and between Asia and Europe, in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications;
- To promote the inclusion of regional and/or international assessors in peer review procedures, e.g. that assessors/peers from Asia can participate in European site visits, and vice versa;
- To observe and widen sub-regional approaches in internal QA procedures; progress in the ASEAN-QA project should be observed and could be presented in a follow-up seminar on QA.

Finally, we would like to refer to the topics discussed during the ASEM-Education seminar on QA in HE, held in Sèvres (France) on 11-12 October 2012 and recommendations made by participants in this seminar:

- The necessity of opening up the national QA systems in order to develop mutual understanding and trust;
- The importance of joint projects between QAAs and professionals from both regions in order to develop QA further and to settle the necessary international dimension of QA activities;
- The need for an all-inclusive dialogue, open to all the QA stakeholders;
- Within the ASEM framework the need for flexibility in developing instruments.

The participants feel the necessity to develop a common quality language and understanding that would seek commonalities between the CHIBA principles and the ESG. Furthermore, the participants recommend promoting joint cooperation such as sharing of information and good practices, to undertake joint projects and to promote the exchange of quality assurance professionals between the regions. Other propositions include the following:

- To promote capacity building concerning QA by developing joint training programmes for QA, by undertaking trans-regional projects involving several countries or by supporting the development of quality assurance in a single country;
- To develop concrete cooperation between QA and recognition professionals.

### ***Aims and intended outcomes of PLA***

The ultimate aim is to get to know each other better in order to set up precise, practical and thematic cooperation schemes between Asia and Europe. Therefore, all the categories of stakeholders of HE are invited and following themes are identified from the ASEMME4 Chair's conclusions and from the outcomes of previous seminars:

- To further develop a common quality assurance language and understanding;
- To share information and good practices related to quality assurance;
- To discuss new approaches and cooperation in QA, both internal (governance) and external, as well as the inter-linkages;
- To bring further international and interregional recognition of external QA decisions/accreditation through networks, such as APQN, EQAR, etc.;
- To develop a common understanding of the key role learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks play in internal and external QA as well as on a European, Asian and international level;
- To discuss how joint interregional projects with regard to quality assurance could be undertaken.



## (2) Between diversity of practices and similarities of approach: results from a survey on the new approaches to Quality Assurance in the ASEM countries

– Marc VANHOLSBECK

### **Key points**

- There is a diversity of QA practices, notably with regard to the possibility of using a QAA from abroad to assess national higher education systems;
- Some common approaches and orientations emerge though, with regard to the coverage of external QA procedures (issues to be included as well as types of HEIs covered), its main outputs and its potential impact on funding, and relating to the participation of students and academic staff in external QA review teams;
- There is a certain lack of information of the respondents about a few topics, particularly with regard to internal QA mechanisms established by HEIs.

### **Brief introduction and methodology**

Twenty countries participated to the survey, some of them through different organisms: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (FW-B), Denmark, France, Germany (3), Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Australia, Brunei, China (3), Indonesia, Japan (2), Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia (3) and Thailand.

The survey has been accessible on line between July 2014 and February 2015. Respondents had to answer closed-ended questions but were also allowed to contextualise some of their answers through qualitative answers (open text). Because some responding countries (Belgium, Germany, China, Japan and Russia) gave multiple answers through different organisms, the results are somehow biased in favour of what happens in those national contexts. Although we are well aware of the little number of responses this survey is based on, we still use percentages in the following analysis of the survey. It seems indeed the best way to standardise the presentation of the results, not all respondents having answered all the questions.

The regional representativeness is not statistically sufficient to allow a comparative approach at regional level. Nonetheless, the results allow emphasising some general trends observed in the Asian and European QA landscapes: the diversity in QA practices on the one hand, and some shared approaches and orientations on the other hand. The survey also delivered some interesting qualitative elements.

### **Diversity in QA practices**

The diversity in QA practices between as well as within both regions remains important in some respects. In particular, for 39% of the respondents, it is a single independent agency which is responsible, within their QA system, for the QA provision, while 32% of respondents answer that several independent agencies are responsible for it, and 21% of them, a government dependent agency or the Ministry itself. There is a balance between respondents whose QA system does and does not have a specific external QA system for research at national level (46% and 54% respectively). Similarly, the national QA system of one respondent in two does not allow choosing a QA agency from outside the country (54%), while such a “choice” is possible for assuring the quality of all institutions for 33% of the respondents, and for assuring the quality of some institutions for 13% of them. There are also very diverse modalities of involvement of students, international experts, academic peers and employers in the external QA procedures.

### ***Commonalities in approaches and orientations***

The survey also reveals some interesting commonalities in QA approaches and orientations.

For most respondents, the main aspects to be taken into account in external QA are: the use of LOs in curricula development and student assessment (for 96% of the respondents), student support services (91%), employability (91%), students' progression, dropout and completion (91%), internal QA (87%), as well as teaching and learning methods (87%). The main outcome of external QA is a decision granting permission for the institution or programme to operate, or a decision which is a prerequisite to operate (for 75% of the respondents).

External QA procedures generally cover all types of HEIs, according to the answers provided by 82% of the respondents. The external QA review has an impact on the funding, at least "in some cases", for 7 respondents in 10.

There are formal requirements for HEIs to develop internal QA system/processes in the national QA systems of 8 respondents in 10. Besides, HEIs are responsible for focusing internal QA processes according to 74% of the responses.

Rankings of HEIs are not used in QA processes according to 83% of the respondents. 70% of them also indicate that their QAA(s) has/have been evaluated against the ESG, the "Chiba Principles" or other similar types of standards and guidelines, and in most cases it was for the purpose of a membership in ENQA, APQN, ASEAN University Network (AUN)-Quality Assurance Network.

Although the involvement of students, international experts, academic peers and employers vary from one country to the other, for almost one respondent in two, students are required to be involved in the preparation of self evaluation reports (48%), as full members in external review teams (43%) or in governance structures of national QAA (39%). For 35% of the respondents, international experts are required to be involved as full members in external review teams. Academic staff is required to be involved as full members in external review teams in the QA systems of 65% of our respondents, as well as in the preparation of self evaluation reports, according to 48% of them. Four respondents in ten also answer that employers are required to be involved in governance structures of national QAA, as well as to act as full members in external review teams.

### ***Qualitative elements from the survey***

The answers to the open questions allow us to gain a deeper understanding of some national situations. So, it appears that different QAAs may be used for different types of HE, as it is the case in China (distinct agencies for under- and post-graduate education) or New-Zealand (specific agencies for university and non-university HE).

In some cases, as in Australia, the link between funding and QA is strong: "As per the Australian Higher Education Support Act 2003, HE providers must be approved before they are able to receive Government funding or their students can receive Government assistance. HE providers are subject to quality and accountability requirements which if breached may result in loss of Government funding." In other cases, as in Austria, the link between QA and funding works only for the programme accreditation of universities of applied science.

In different countries, some issues are included in QA reviews only when they relate directly to the evaluated study programmes, such as research – in Portugal: "research is included in external QA reviews depending on the type of degree programme (e.g. masters and PhD)" – or lifelong learning

(LLL), as in the Belgian Federation Wallonia-Brussels: “LLL is part of the evaluation when considering adults resuming formal education, but all the provision in LLL is not assessed.”

In some (rare) cases, as in Australia, students are “not involved in any formal assessment of a HEI” but are well “able to lodge complaints with the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency”.

### ***Lack of information***

Finally, the survey reveals a certain lack of information from the respondents with regard to some of the surveyed topics. In particular, a majority of respondents was not able to answer questions related to the conditions for the choice of a foreign QAA, the results of application of the QA, the publication of quality policies by HEIs, the arrangements taken by HEIs for internal monitoring of the quality of the programmes, as well as the publication by HEIs of critical outcomes coming from internal QA.

In our opinion, this apparent issue of “information gap” may advantageously be further studied in future research on the topic of QA in the ASEM countries.

### (3) Conclusions of the ASEM-Education PLA

– Lucien Bollaert

#### **Context**

Both in the rationale of the PLA as well as in the discussions the attendants observed a changing global context of their work. The shifts were summarized in the 3 words: globalisation, technology and economic and financial crisis. The globalisation definitely brought internationalisation in HE with a higher mobility and international cooperation in a context of massification and increasing diversity. Technology introduced informatics and digital communication causing a worldwide need of computer skills and the ability to deal with an oversupply of information in a global knowledge society as well as widening the provision of education with online teaching and learning. However, due to the economic and financial crisis, HE suffers from budget cuts while the global competition has increased.

Due to those fundamental changes, the participants concluded that QA is in a transitional phase, in which there is even more need for exchanging information and international cooperation. As a consequence of the globalisation, the participants clearly observed a rise in internationalisation of QA, both in activities and scope, still with opportunities and challenges or strains, in the context of a more open market versus a more regulated by international standards, guidelines or good practices. There is a rise of international platforms and networks of QAAs, while the international recognition of QA decisions is only starting. The globalisation also causes the need of global learning outcomes or competences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While technology has helped to create international digital platforms and communication, electronic overviews of QA systems, decisions and state of affairs in HE are far from complete. Technology has also challenged QA how to deal with on-line learning, such as MOOCs.

Finally the economic and financial crisis raised the need to decrease the financial and administrative burden of QA on HEIs as well as on QAAs. Inspired by this, there is a trend to move external QA to institutional level using more open and policy-inspired standards, while on the other hand there is a tendency to move away from trust to more evidence-proof control from the ministries subsidising HE with tax-money. At the same time, a rise of a risk-based approach can be observed, using specific indicators in order to focus the external QA activities. Last but not least, the use of employability or social relevance as QA standards is a still debated consequence of the crisis, with as possible answer the achievement of LLL competences needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **Main obstacles or challenges**

During the PLA, several obstacles or challenges to fruitful cooperation between European and Asian HE and QA were formulated and discussed. The most important ones were identified as:

- Lack of information about the HE and QA systems, about monitoring practices in internal and by external QA, about the on-going changes in systems and practices, and particularly in international or cross-border HE;
- The huge diversity that ranges internationally among and within the stakeholders both in European and Asian HE and QA, and between the two areas;
- The lack of agreement among the QAAs and their stakeholders, for example as far as the interpretation and use of employability is concerned;
- The lack of concrete and effective projects;
- The lack of capacity both within our regions as well as for the cooperation between both regions;
- The lack of bridging international EU-Asian QFs and national QFs;

- The lack of (the acknowledgement of) common standards & methodology, procedures and practices in QA, while in reality there could be more similarities discovered;
- Last but not least, precisely caused by the above-mentioned obstacles, a lack of trust.

In connection with those obstacles and challenges the cooperation between Europe and Asia should be able to answer the next questions raised specifically by the Chinese participants, which were felt to be urgent:

- How can existing national and international QA systems and instruments address the quality of programmes offered by transnational education providers?
- Can the accreditation of the exporting institution be transferred to the franchised or validated foreign institution or the branch campus?
- In what ways is it ensured that the quality in the delivering institution is the same as in the receiving institution?

### ***Steps to overcome the obstacles and find more cooperation and synergies***

In order to overcome the above obstacles more structured exchange of information, more real and effective cooperation in order to find more synergies are needed. Therefore, the PLA attendants thought of following concrete points of attention, steps and projects:

- In order to understand the different languages it is essential to find common definitions (cf. QACHE project) and look at or open up to each other's historical, political and cultural contexts;
- Urgently start with projects where there is already international collaboration existing, such as student/staff mobility, joint programmes and institutional cooperation or branch campuses with a special focus on recognition of successful study periods and QA decisions;
- Establish an international pool of QA peers or experts who join international assessment panels where cooperation exists and organize a reflection on the cooperation on top of the assessment of programme/HEI taking into consideration the diversity, both in context and in quality culture;
- Establish international QA projects on capacity building where needed.

### ***Concluding recommendations for further cooperation***

In order to remove the above obstacles and come to answers to the three specific questions raised, the need was felt to search for and build up common ground and exchange and collaborate in practice with the ultimate goal to of building up trust in the graduates' competences in a context of diversity and a global knowledge society.

In order to reach this essential goal the PLA concluded to propose following actions:

- Structure an exchange of information through ASEM-Education Process and activities such as this PLA, other seminars and conferences on HE and QA in HE specifically.
- Establish a Cross-Border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN) which should work out a compendium of QA systems in the two regions and compare them as well as try to find common grounds in methodology or approach and in standards referring to the QACHE, CBHE, ESG and OECD principles.
- Strengthen and structure the exchange of information and cooperation in the establishment of QFs and the exchange of information and cooperation between the European overarching Qualifications Frameworks (EHEA-QF and EQF-LLL) with the Pacific one as well as their coming updates. Make sure that the learning outcomes described in those QFs contain or are linked to the transversal global competences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- Establish a methodology in order to deal with QA in transnational education and the recognition of both QA decisions such as accreditation through a single, international assessment, as well as successful study/learning periods based on the learning outcomes.
- Organise every two years an ASEM QA conference where the concrete projects are presented as good practices and lessons are learnt, as well as the following steps and goals are formulated.

All in all, the PLA attendants felt that both regions are growing towards each other due to the globalisation of the knowledge society. There is a need to recognise its consequences on QA in HE through concrete projects of cooperation underpinned by comparable QA methodologies, standards and practices, as well as global competences.

## (4) Annexes

### Annexe 1: programme of the PLA

<b>18 February</b>	Arrival of the participants Welcome reception at the Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre (7 PM)
<b>19 February</b>	
9.00-9.30 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Welcome by Chantal KAUFMANN (Director General, Ministry of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels) and Noël VERCRUYSSÉ (Senior project manager, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training)
	Tour de table
9.30-10.30 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Introductory speeches <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ “Progress in Quality Assurance for Higher Education in the European Union” by Margaret WATERS (Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission)</li><li>▪ “Developments and trends in Quality Assurance in Asia” by Dr Jagannath PATIL (President, Asia Pacific Quality Network) (by video conference)</li></ul>
10.30-11.00 <i>(2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Coffee break
11.00-11.45 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Presentation of the survey results by Marc VANHOLSBECK (Attaché, Ministry of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels)
11.45-12.30 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Presentation of the Belgian Quality Assurance systems by Caty DUYKAERTS (Head of the executive unit, AEQES) and Lucien BOLLAERT (Board member, NVAO)
12.30-13.30 <i>(2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Lunch
13.30-15.30 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor); Room 1300 (1<sup>st</sup> floor)</i>	Presentation study cases in two parallel groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Group 1 moderated by Belgium/Flanders: Austria, Brunei, China, Latvia, Portugal</li><li>▪ Group 2 moderated by Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels: Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Russia, New-Zealand</li></ul>
15.30-16.00 <i>(2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Coffee break
16.00-16.30 <i>Room 2200 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)</i>	Wrap-up from study cases’ sessions

## 20 February

9.30-10.15 <i>Room 3100 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i>	Presentation of projects related to the international/interregional cooperation in Quality Assurance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Presentation of the RIQAA project's results by Melinda SZABO (Project Officer, EQAR) and Colin TÜCK (Director, EQAR)</li><li>▪ Presentation of the QACHE project's preliminary results by Paula RANNE (Project Manager, ENQA)</li></ul>
10.15-11.45 <i>Room 1300 (1<sup>st</sup> floor); Room 2300 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor); Room 3100 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor); Room 3200 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i>	Thematic discussions in four working groups, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Links between internal and external QA</li><li>▪ Synergies between European and Asian QA standards/guidelines</li><li>▪ Interregional and international QA cooperation</li><li>▪ Recognition of QA decisions</li><li>▪ Impacts of QA systems (funding, transparency, etc.)</li></ul>
11.45-12.15 <i>Room 3100 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i>	Wrap-up from working groups
12.15-12.30 <i>Room 3100 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i>	Concluding remarks by Lucien BOLLAERT (Board member, NVAO)
12.30-13.30 <i>(3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i>	Lunch



## Annexe 2: list of participants

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### **Annexe 3: presentations given by the participants**

All presentations are available via the following link: <http://bit.ly/1CC4rEh>.