

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: EUROPE'S VISION AND THE ATTITUDES OF THE NETHERLANDS AND FLANDERS

date Europe is a very complicated continent. It has been the scene of two world wars and only recently was witness of a bitter war within a number of Balkan countries. Through forming a
May 25, 2010
subject European Economic Community first (as of 1958) and by enlarging this Community into a broader political European Union later on, Europe tries to find a balance between the individual ambitions and cultures of a large number of relatively small countries and the necessity of forming a "block" to be able to play a role in the global competitive world.
Internationalisation of Higher Education: Europe's vision and the attitudes of the Netherlands and Flanders

Europe counts over 40 countries after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. and former Yugoslavia. With the exception of Russia, Germany, the UK, Italy, France, Spain and Poland all these countries are relatively small, also the Netherlands (17 million inhabitants) and Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium (6 million Flemish people out of a total of 10 million for Belgium as a whole)

By looking for economic and political cooperation Europe tries to weigh as heavily as possible on global developments, but of course unification of all these separate interests is not easy. That is why the Bologna-declaration of 1999 is so important: a harmonized degree system (bachelor-master-doctorate), external quality assurance, a diploma supplement, a European Credit point system, Qualification Frameworks, all these measures contribute to the ideal of forming a European Higher Education Area.

The Netherlands and Flanders are both heavily dependent on trade, transport and services. Both regions are no autarky, because of the lack of sufficient oil, gas, gold or other raw materials. For both regions internationalisation is of the utmost importance. That means that in education attention has to be given to:

- the international content of the curriculum;
- knowledge of at least one foreign language, and preferably two or three;
- mobility of staff and students;
- acquiring international and intercultural competencies;

While Flanders experiences very strict language rules, the Netherlands are more open: almost all master courses nowadays are offered in the English language, which is a major advantage for the attractiveness of Dutch H.E..

The NVAO plays an important role in European associations of quality assurance. Three of these have a European significance:

- page 2 of 2 – ENQA: the network of European Q.A.-agencies : plays a political role and stimulates cooperation in procedures and methods.
- ECA: the European Consortium of Accreditation organisations: 17 organisations from 10 different countries with the aim of mutual recognition of accreditation results;
 - EQAR: the European Quality Assurance Register, a list of trustworthy European agencies which perform their activities according to the European Standards and Guidelines.

NVAO is in the board of ENQA, is vice-president and coordinator of ECA, and is vice-president of EQAR. This is evidence for the importance of internationalisation for The Netherlands and Flanders and the HEI's. The task of "internationalisation" was specifically named in the Treaty in which the binational NVAO has been established.

In his presentation Karl Dittrich will discuss some developments for stimulating "internationalization", in which the NVAO plays an important role, for instance:

- the certificate for outstanding internationalization;
- stimulating joint programmes and joint degrees and the quality assurance of these;
- the "Crossroad" project: a European dataset for accredited programmes;
- mutual recognition of accreditation results;

Besides that NVAO will supply information on the way in which "internationalization" will be included in the evaluation of basic quality of programmes.