**DRAFT SUMMARY**

**Second Experts Meeting on an International Database/portal of Recognised Higher Education Institutions**
30 June 2004 – UNESCO, Paris

The second experts meeting on an international database/portal was convened on 30 June 2004 at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. (List of participants attached.) The purpose of the meeting was to prepare a proposal of the international database/portal on recognised higher education institutions for the second drafting session on 14-15 October 2004. It focused mainly on the four issues that were identified as follow up tasks at the previous meeting on 7 April 2004. These issues are:

(1) Which types of higher education institutions should be included in the database/portal? To which extent should this be left up to countries?

(2) Recommendations for the types of quality assurance mechanisms that would allow for an institution to be listed in the country list.

(3) In several countries it is not institutions but programmes which are being recognised. How can this issue be tackled in the database/portal when combining a list of institutions/programmes that has been quality assured/accredited/recognised and information on by whom?

(4) What kind of information could be included maybe in a second phase (information on countries quality assurance/accreditation systems, student guidelines, possible information on the academic recognition centres) as supplementary information to the database/portal?

**(1) Types of higher education institutions**

- Some participants suggested to use ISCED (International Standard Classification of education) 1997 as a common structure on categorising the types of higher education institutions. Others suggested that the structure should be left to each country to describe its own categories.
- There was a discussion on whether the information should be limited to higher education institutions or if all post-secondary education institutions should be included.
- The need to think what the users of the database/portal want when making the decision was stressed.
- It was agreed that the main challenge is how to take into account the diversity of higher education systems and maintaining a common structure of the database/portal.
- It was agreed that there is a need for access to a description of domestic higher education systems that supplements the list of recognised higher education institutions in order to accommodate the diversity of domestic systems.

**(2) Types of quality assurance mechanisms that allows an institution to be listed**

- It was pointed out that we need to consider the consequence of quality assurance mechanisms (in terms of degree-granting power, access to funding, etc.) when we discuss the types of quality assurance mechanisms that allows an institution to be listed in the international database/portal.
- Some suggested that the line could be drawn depending on whether or not an institution is legislated.
- Some stressed the need to know what kind of information students are looking for.
- Some suggested that the database/portal could serve as a guide to what kind of information students should seek for and from which source, including a list of questions that students could ask themselves when enrolling in a programme.

**(3) Institutions or programmes**

- The difficulty of keeping the database up-to-date if we decide to include information at the programme level was stressed.
- Some suggested that the database should provide information at the institution level. However, that this should be supplemented by a list of questions that students should ask, which will lead them to seek information at the programme level from another source.
- Some suggested that it depends on the domestic recognition mechanism. If the domestic system of recognition is done at the institution level, the information should be provided at the institution level. If the domestic system of recognition is conducted at the programme level, the information should be provided at programme level.
- The need for a mechanism to assure the reliability of information included in the database/portal was raised.

**(4) Supplementary information**

- There was a consensus that at least in the longer term, supplementary information to the list of recognised institutions is necessary.
- The need for appropriate human resources to manage all the information was stressed.
- During the discussion, two possibilities were suggested:
  - to aim for an international database of recognised higher education institutions with supplementary information
  - to aim for an international information platform that provides broad information rather than a database
- Some suggested to create a stand-alone website or an effort to ensure that the information is not buried in all other information was mentioned. At the same time, the need to make it clear that the database/portal is managed by UNESCO in order to maintain its legitimacy was stressed.

*Conclusion and Next Steps*

- It was agreed that further discussion is needed to clarify the scope and content of the international database/portal on recognised higher education institutions.
- A possibility to have a process of dialogue between countries to have a common understanding of the structure of the database/portal was suggested.
- It was agreed that for the Tokyo meeting, a proposal including several options on the scope of and the steps of a process to establish an international database/portal will be prepared.
- Some participants mentioned the need to clarify the purpose and the target of the international database/portal.
- Several participants referred to the need for further understanding of the students' and the employers' needs.
- A draft proposal with at least three optional strategies will be prepared by the Secretariats taking into account the discussion at the meeting by the beginning of September 2004 and will be circulated to the experts for their comments.
- **The revised proposal taking into account experts comments, to be discussed at the Tokyo drafting meeting will be circulated to all the participants of the drafting meeting by mid September 2004.**

**UNESCO/OECD Experts meeting**
**on International Database on Recognised Higher Education Institutions**

**30 June 2004**

**14:00 – 17:30**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris**

**Room V**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**EXPERTS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yves **BEAUDIN** | Tel : +1 416 962 8100 ext. 242 |
| National Coordiantor | Fax : +1 416 962 2800 |
| Canadian Information Centre for International | Email : y.beaudin@cmec.ca |
| Credentials (CICIC) | |
| 95 St. Clair Avenue West | |
| suite 1106 | |
| M4V 1N6 Toronto | |
| Canada | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Carolyn **CAMPBELL** | Tel : +44 1452 557004 |
| Assistant Director | Fax : +44 1452 557002 |
| Quality Assurance Agency for Higher | Email : c.campbell@qaa.ac.uk |
| Education (QAA) | |
| Southgate Street | |
| GL11UB Gloucester | |
| United Kingdom | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Judith **EATON** | Tel : +1 202 955 6126 |
| President | Fax : +1 202 955 6129 |
| Council for Higher Education Accreditation | Email : eaton@chea.org |
| (CHEA) | |
| One Dupont Circle NW | |
| 20036-1135 Washington D.C. | |
| United States | |

Eva **EGRON-POLAK**
Secretary General
International Association of Universities (IAU)
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
France

Tel : 01 45 68 48 00
Fax : 01 47 34 76 05
Email : eegron.iau@unesco.org


Tsutomu **KIMURA**
President
National Institution for Academic Degrees and
University Evaluation
2-1-2 Hitosubashi
Chiyoda-ku
101-8438 Tokyo
Japan

Tel : +81 3 4212 8202
Fax : +81 3 4212 8210
Email : tkimura@niad.ac.jp


Jan S. **LEVY**
Director General
Ministry of Education and Research
Department of Higher Education
Postboks 8119 Dep
0032 Oslo
Norway

Tel : +47 22 24 77 00
Fax : +47 22 24 27 33
Email : jan.levy@ufd.dep.no


Richard **LEWIS**
President of INQAAHE
Center for Higher Education Research &
Information (CHERI)
The Open University
344-354 Gray's Inn Road
WC1X 8BP London
United Kingdom

Tel : +44 20 7447 2567
Fax : +44 20 7837 0290
Email : r.w.lewis@open.ac.uk


Antony **STELLA**
Advisor
National Assessment and Accreditation Council
Dr Rajkumar Road, P.O. Box No. 1075
560 010 Rajajinagar, Bangalore
India

Fax : +91 80 2131 24047
Email : stellaa10@rediffmail.com


Isabelle **TURMAINE**
Director, Information Centre and
Communication Services
International Association of Universities (IAU)
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
France

Tel : 01 45 68 48 03
Fax : 01 47 34 76 05
Email : turmaine.iau@unesco.org

Jeffery D. **WALLIN**

Director
American Academy for Liberal Education
1710 Rhode Island Avenue N.W.
4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Tel.: (01) – 202 – 452 8611
Fax: (01) – 202 – 452 8620
Email: jwallin@aale.org

W. S. **WONG**

Executive Director
Hong Kong Council for Academic
Accreditation
Hong Kong, China

E-mail: wswongoman@yahoo.co.uk

Fumie **ITO**
Senior Specialist, Higher Education Policy
Planning Division, Higher Education Bureau
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science
and Technology
2-5-1 Marunouchi
Chiyoda-ku
100-8959 Tokyo
Japan

Tel : +81 3 6734 3331
Fax : +81 3 6734 3385
Email : itof@mext.go.jp

**OECD / OCDE**

**Kurt LARSEN**
EDU/CERI
OECD
DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
2, rue André Pascal
75016 Paris
France

Tel : 01 45 24 92 02
Email : Kurt.LARSEN@oecd.org

**Keiko MOMII**
EDU/CERI
OECD
DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
2, rue André Pascal
75016 Paris
France

Tel : 01 45 24 91 85
Email : Keiko.MOMII@oecd.org

**Miho TAGUMA**
EDU/CERI
OECD
DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
2, rue André Pascal

75016 Paris
France

Tel : 01 45 24 92 65
Email : Miho.TAGUMA@oecd.org

**Stephan VINCENT-LANCRIN**
EDU/CERI
DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
2, rue André Pascal
75016 Paris
France

Tel : 01 45 24 92 29
Email :
Stephan.VINCENT-LANCRIN@oecd.org

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|---|---|
| **U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** | Stamenka UVALIC-TRUMBIC<br>Chief, Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality<br>Division of Higher Education<br>7, place de Fontenoy<br>75007  Paris<br><br>Tel : +33 1 45 68 08 32<br>Fax : +33 1 45 68 56 28<br>Email : s.uvalic-trumbic@unesco.org<br><br>Zeynep VAROGLU<br>Assistant Programme Specialist,<br>Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality<br>Division of Higher Education<br>UNESCO<br>Access, Mobility and Quality Assurance<br>7 Place de Fontenoy<br>75352 Paris 07 SP<br>France<br><br>Tel : (33 1) 45 68 15 51<br>Fax : 01 4568 5629<br>Email : z.varoglu@unesco.org<br><br>Lyngra Tove<br>Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality<br>Division of Higher Education<br>Programme Specialist<br>Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality<br>UNESCO<br>7, place de Fontenoy<br>75007 Paris<br>France |

Tel.: + 33 1 45 68 10 07
Fax: + 33 1 45 68 56 32
E-mail: t.lyngra@unesco.org

**<u>UNESCO Institutes, Field Offices and Centres</u>**    Mr. R. Salame
Programme Specialist
UNESCO-Beirut
P.O. Box 5244
Beirut
Lebanon

Tel.: + 961 1 850013/ +961 1 850014
Fax: + 961 1 824854
Email: <u>r.salame@memo.unesco.org</u>