



Düsseldorf Declaration of the European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance (EASPA)

The European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance constitutes a pan-European platform of quality assurance in Higher Education that comprises the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation, the European Association of Conservatoires, the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association, the European Countries Biology Association, the European Federation of Geologists, the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education, the European Physical Society, the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education as well as the ISEKI Food Association. EASPA unites comprehensive European field-specific networks as partners in their common goal to maintain and further develop European-wide disciplinary learning outcomes, competence profiles and qualification frameworks as well as corresponding quality assurance tools, thereby making an important contribution towards the development and implementation of academic and professional mobility within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

EASPA has the following aims:

- Securing and improving the quality of higher education within the EHEA through the strengthening of mutual understanding and cooperation at the level of individual disciplines and study cultures;
- Advancing good practices and knowledge in the area of field-specific quality assurance while respecting the European Standards and Guidelines, and communicating to their study cultures the value of accreditation as a means of enhancing educational and professional quality;
- Specifying European reference points such as the Dublin Descriptors to the necessities of the various disciplines and study cultures thereby adding a content dimension to the tools and structural elements of the Bologna process while respecting autonomy of Higher Education Institutions;

- Facilitating trans-national recognition of academic qualifications through quality labels recognised in their respective disciplines and by the competent authorities;
- Protecting students, employers and other stakeholders against misleading information and sub-standard higher education degrees and other qualifications;

The members of EASPA have recognized the need for field-specific quality criteria and procedural guidelines as a critical element in facilitating academic and professional mobility. These complement the outcomes defined in the Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA, adopted in Bergen 2005, and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, adopted by European Parliament and Council in 2008. In line with the approach established by the EU-funded Tuning Process for the design, implementation, and evaluation of degree programmes, they reflect the state of the art in their respective disciplines and delineate the competences graduates must have acquired in order to be able to take up their chosen profession. The development and improvement of these quality criteria involves intensive consultation with experts from academia, scientific societies, employers and students, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Thus it is assured that these criteria do not only reflect the state of the art from an expert's point of view but also meet with the widest possible acceptance without compromising the quality requirements.

The undersigned European networks are firmly convinced that their work not only provides appropriate criteria for the accreditation or quality evaluation of trans-national programmes and of highly international disciplines, but also contributes to the harmonisation of the European Higher Education Area by providing a sound basis for the mutual recognition of qualifications awarded by institutions of higher education throughout the EHEA.

It is in this spirit that the representatives of the EASPA hereby submit this Düsseldorf Declaration to the 47 European Ministers of Education for the upcoming Bologna Ministerial Conference in Bucharest in April 2012,

based on the Bologna Declaration and the Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, April 2009, accentuating the continuing development of learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas by academics, in close cooperation with student and employer representatives, and

encouraged by the acknowledgement of the positive role of European networks and quality labels for specific subject areas in:

- the report "From London to Leuven" (2009) calling for broad involvement of stakeholders in improving work done on links and interaction between the qualifications frameworks and quality assurance and identifying the need of employers for trusting qualifications,
- in the EU Commission Report (2009) quoting the "Eurochemistry seal" and the "EUR-ACE label" as good practice examples and stating the need for further cross-border quality assurance,
- the report "The EU Contribution to the European Higher Education Area" (2010) stating that the Commission supports the development of subject-specific European quality labels.

EASPA pledges to support the Ministers in their joint political goal to complete the European Higher Education Area by 2020 through:

- creating European quality standards for other appropriate disciplines and professions;
- further developing the existing criteria and standards based on learning outcomes for the award of subject-specific accreditation certificates or European quality labels;
- acknowledging the significance of European quality labels complementary to national evaluation and accreditation for the assurance of quality in the European Higher Education Area and for the mobility of holders of academic qualifications;
- calling upon the governments of Bologna signatory states to facilitate the recognition of the European Quality Labels by the relevant national authorities.

Düsseldorf, 29 November 2011

For the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)



Pascale de Groote, President

For the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA)



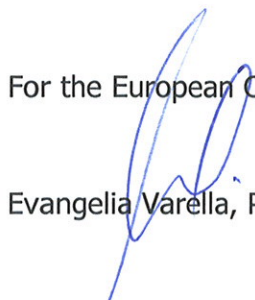
Dr. Theo van der Krogt, Secretary General

For the European Countries Biology Association (ECBA)



Harm Jaap Smit, Chairman

For the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association (ECTNA)



Evangelia Varella, President

For the European Network for the Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE)



Dr. Iring Wasser, Vice President ENAE

For the European Physical Society (EPS)



Luisa Cifarelli, President

For the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE)



Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Heiß, President

For the ISEKI Food Association (IFA)



Richard Marshall, President