Further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education

2004/0239(COD) - 15/02/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE : to build upon and improve European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education.

LEGISLATIVE ACT : Recommendation 2006/143/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education.

CONTENT : the Council adopted this recommendation by accepting all amendments suggested by the European Parliament.

It recommends that Member States :

- encourage all higher education institutions active within their territory to introduce or develop rigorous internal quality assurance systems, in accordance with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area adopted in Bergen in the context of the Bologna Process;

- encourage all quality assurance or accreditation agencies active within their territory to be independent in their assessments, to apply the features of quality assurance laid down in Recommendation 98/561/EC and to apply the common set of general standards and guidelines adopted in Bergen, for assessment purposes. These standards should be further developed in cooperation with representatives of the higher education sector. They should be applied in such a way as to protect and promote diversity and innovation;

- encourage representatives of national authorities, the higher education sector and quality assurance and accreditation agencies, together with social partners, to set up a "European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies" (European Register) based on national review, that takes account of the principles set out in the Annex, and to define the conditions for registration and the rules for management of the register;

- enable higher education institutions active within their territory to choose among quality assurance or accreditation agencies in the European Register an agency which meets their needs and profile, provided that this is compatible with their national legislation or permitted by their national authorities;

- allow higher education institutions to work towards a complementary assessment by another agency in the European Register, for example to enhance their international reputation;

- promote cooperation between agencies in order to build up mutual trust and the recognition of quality assurance and accreditation assessments, thus contributing to the recognition of qualifications for the purpose of study or work in another country;

- ensure public access to the assessments made by the quality assurance or accreditation agencies listed in the European Register.

Lastly, the Commission is invited to continue, in close cooperation with the Member States, its support for cooperation between higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, competent authorities and other bodies active in the field. It is also asked to present triennial reports to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of

the Regions on progress in the development of quality assurance systems in the various Member States and on cooperation activities at European level, including the progress achieved with respect to the objectives referred to above.