

The process of intensifying transnational, regional cooperation in the quality assurance of degree programmes is becoming ever more important. Given the internationalisation that is taking place in the field of higher education and in the globalisation of labour markets, this development cannot only be seen in Europe, but also in the emerging economies, in countries in transition and in developing countries. An international conference organised by the German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK) and the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) in Bonn from 18 to 20 June 2007 will address the general frameworks for and practical implementation of regional quality assurance networks in the higher education sector. The conference will enable university rectors and presidents as well as representatives of international higher education organisations, the World Bank, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that is financing the conference, plus students and representatives of companies and trade unions to discuss relevant questions and topics.

Transnational networks of cooperation in quality assurance have formed in many regions of the world in recent years. By establishing regional quality standards, the conference aims to achieve a common definition of the quality of degree programmes that is of central importance to the recognition of academic degrees and to the mobility of students, academics and researchers, and university graduates within regional higher education areas and employment markets. With this background in mind, the German Rectors' Conference and the German Academic Exchange Service are organising the conference on "Enhancing Quality Across Borders – Regional Cooperation in Quality Assurance in Higher Education" in Bonn from 18 to 20 June 2007. The conference is being held within the scope of the joint higher education management programme "Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies (DIES)". It will offer some 100 higher education experts from various countries a forum at which they can discuss different models of regional cooperation in quality assurance.

The conference aims to enable participants to exchange ideas and views on the processes taking place in the various regions and on their continuing development and enhancement, to define the institutional and political frameworks needed for successful regional networking in quality assurance, and, in addition, to find and identify approaches for increasing and consolidating cooperation between the regions. At the end of the conference, the organisers plan to adopt a joint statement by the participants that is meant to address quality assurance players in the higher education sector, the universities themselves, the ministries and regional coordination bodies, as well as international sponsors and donors.

The HRK and DAAD are convinced that funding and promoting regional quality assurance structures in higher education is of great development policy relevance, for example, by encouraging the revision of degree programme content from a labour market-oriented perspective. This is why the HRK and DAAD have focused part of their international work in recent years on quality assurance in Central America, as well as in East Africa, in South East Asia, and in the Middle East. The growing significance of these activities corresponds with the developments taking place in the European Higher Education and Research Area.

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