

Accreditation and Mobility of Engineers in Europe: SEFI and ENAEE joining forces

In his contribution to this SEFI 40 year anniversary publication , the Founding President of ENAEE and former President of SEFI, Professor Augusti, has recollected the origins concerning accreditation of engineering education, spanning all the way from the various Tuning Initiatives of the 1990s, the creation of the European Standing Observatory for the Engineering Profession and Education (ESOEPE) at the beginning of the last decade, the various “European Accredited Engineering” (“EUR-ACE”)-projects, which eventually culminated in the creation of the European Network for the Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE) in 2007. He also pointed to the institutional contributions of SEFI (founding member of ENAEE) and the personal contributions of Francesco Maffioli in this process. ENAEE will always commemorate him.

Today ENAEE and the “EUR-ACE” system have developed in one of the most viable field specific, disciplinary accreditation networks in Europe and indeed on a global scale. In spite of its voluntary character, in the past couple of years more than 1200 Higher Education programs from all across Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Australia have applied to be evaluated against the “EUR-ACE” learning outcomes and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). On the basis of self assessment report followed by a peer review on site, these programs have been granted the “EUR-ACE”-Bachelor and/or Master accreditation seal in recognition of their quality and in acknowledgement of the fact, that respective achieved program learning outcomes fulfill the entry requirements of their graduates for the exercise of the engineering profession.

The “EUR-ACE”-system, identified by the European Commission as Best Practice in European Quality Assurance and as engine of professional and academic quality in the European Union and the European Higher Education Area respectively continues to flourish with several hundred university programs being reviewed every year. Apart from authorized national agencies in France, Germany and Great Britain, Italy and Ireland, Portugal and Romania, Russia as well as Turkey countries like Spain, Switzerland, Poland, Finland and Estonia are on their way to introduce the “EUR-ACE”-system. Under various European TEMPUS and LLL-project lines the “EUR-ACE” quality assurance scheme is also currently introduced in (Central)Asian and Northern African countries.

These dynamic developments have been fostered by a number of important endorsements and decisions of key stakeholders in the European engineering realm: an example in case is the recent unequivocal SEFI endorsement vis a vis Higher Education Institutions to associate themselves with the “EUR-ACE”-philosophy. In addition, the European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI), which maintains the FEANI index of recognized institutions of engineering higher education in Europe and their engineering programs, has decided that all accredited “EUR-ACE” Bachelor and Master engineering programs are automatically included in the FEANI index while at the same time fulfilling the mandatory educational requirements of the professional EUR ING title.

It is also essential to note that in the current revision of the European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, the idea of introducing a “professional card” for engineers in Europe is contemplated, which again as a strong link to the “EUR-ACE” accreditation scheme. For applicants in some countries like Germany, where the professional card has already been introduced, the educational requirements are automatically recognized, if he/she has graduated from a “EUR-ACE” accredited program.

On the level of academic recognition of qualifications, it has become evident that the “EUR-ACE” scheme is/will continue to equally be instrumental in fostering academic mobility in the so far 47 countries of the “European Higher Education Area” (EHEA). In the past decade the political focus of the Bologna process has been on developing structural elements of compatibility in the EHEA such as a coherent system on the Bachelor, Master and (more and more also) on the Ph.D level by introducing the European Credit Transfer System and a Diploma Supplement for each European Graduate. Today the political focus has shifted and now focuses on the development of pan-European learning outcomes and competence profiles. This will also be one of the major recommendations of the upcoming report of the European Commission on new developments in European HE Quality Assurance until 2020.

SEFI, FEANI and ENAEE will continue to join hands in promoting the ideas and values of the “EUR-ACE” accreditation scheme and its contribution to promote academic and professional mobility in Europe. As President of ENAEE and on behalf of all its members, I sincerely thank SEFI for its commitment to our joint ideals and wish it another successful 40 years to come.

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