

Transnational Quality Assurance

Swedish higher education institutions' experiences of
quality assurance of European Universities alliances
and joint programmes



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Report 2024:14

Published by Swedish Higher Education Authority 2024

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Content

Summary	4
Introduction	7
Increase knowledge of transnational quality assurance	7
The Commission is pushing for increased internationalisation.....	8
Surveys and interviews reveal how HEIs work with quality assurance.....	10
Quality assurance of the European Universities alliances	13
Most HEIs have no joint quality assurance policy	14
Student influence in the European Universities alliances.....	19
The varied role of labour market representatives.....	23
Challenges, obstacles and success factors.....	25
Quality assurance of joint programmes	32
Many HEIs are part of joint programmes with HEIs in other countries	32
Quality assurance of joint programmes often does not cover the entire programme.....	35
Challenges, obstacles and benefits of joint programmes	39
Reflections and conclusions.....	42
Inherent differences between European Universities alliances	42
Strong interest in joint programmes among Swedish HEIs	44
Our proposals and our assessment	47
The UKÄ continues its work on transnational quality assurance	50
References	51

Summary

In light of the results presented in the report, the Swedish Higher Education Authority proposes that the Government take the initiative to review

- Swedish regulations and procedures that make it difficult to participate in and implement joint programmes.
- options for the UKÄ to carry out reviews outside Sweden in accordance with the Bologna Process.
- the possibility that Sweden can recognise reviews carried out by other EQAR-registered organisations in accordance with the Bologna Process.

The review of the above areas should include impact assessments for the UKÄ's assignments and UHR's assignments and the regulations that govern these. In addition to the proposals, the UKÄ assesses that:

- The UKÄ needs to establish procedures for receiving information from foreign quality assurance organisations concerning reviews that will be carried out in Sweden and concerning decisions on review results.
- Swedish HEIs need to increase their knowledge of transnational quality assurance processes linked to joint programmes.

Higher education institutions respond to international developments

Swedish HEIs have generally responded to the push for increased internationalisation, which is something both the ministers in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Commission are aiming to achieve. Nineteen HEIs are included in alliances within the European Universities initiative, and two out of three HEIs currently offer or plan to offer transnational joint programmes.

Challenges of transnational quality assurance

Although the standards and guidelines established for quality assurance within the EHEA (ESG) also apply to the education programmes offered through transnational collaboration, there are challenges associated with quality assurance that affect both alliances in the European Universities initiative and joint programmes. These challenges often relate to differences in the way various countries view quality assurance and differences in national regulations. To address these challenges, comprehensive processes are needed where HEIs can be better equipped to navigate through different systems, adapt, and ultimately arrive at solutions that allow them to be successful.

Quality assurance in the alliances is a work in progress

Most of the European University alliances that include Swedish HEIs do not have a joint quality assurance policy. Currently, several alliances also lack joint processes for utilising the results of quality assurance work and integrating them into strategic decisions. Furthermore, few alliances have concrete plans for evaluating the range of joint education programmes. The quality assurance work performed by the alliances is characterised by an ambition to create mutual trust and confidence between the collaborating HEIs.

Joint programmes may be the subject of multiple reviews

Joint programmes may be the subject of multiple national reviews when the countries in which the collaborating HEIs are located do not recognise the review results of other countries. Therefore, quality assurance work is often divided up, and HEIs may review only the part of the education programme for which they are responsible. This can lead to fragmentation and duplicate work, thus reducing the ability to get an overall picture of the quality of the education programme, where the various parts complement each other to make a greater whole.

Despite the challenges, many Swedish HEIs offer joint programmes. They recognise the advantages of being able to access a broader knowledge base, which does not always exist at every HEI. This allows them to elevate the quality of the education programme and better prepares students for their future careers.

Low awareness of the European Approach

It is unusual for the European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes to be used. Survey responses from Swedish HEIs show that there is a low level of awareness of the approach and its intended benefits. One reason for low awareness may be that Sweden does not recognise results where the European Approach has been used.

Transnational Quality Assurance in Sweden

Without changes to Swedish law, the UKÄ cannot carry out reviews in other countries or recognise the results of other quality assurance organisations in relation to the activities of Swedish HEIs. The fact that Swedish HEIs cannot select the UKÄ as a quality assurance organisation creates a risk that they will refrain from coordinating European University alliances and joint programmes, and that Sweden will fall behind.

Transnational quality assurance is already being done in Sweden, as Swedish HEIs currently seek the assistance of foreign quality assurance organisations. In most cases, the UKÄ is unaware when this occurs. In order to facilitate transnational quality assurance, increased cooperation

between quality assurance organisations and harmonisation of national systems is needed. The mutual recognition of review results is consistent with the objectives of the Bologna Process. At the same time, reviews should be flexible so that they can be adapted to different review objects. This can help ensure accuracy, which is something the UKÄ has taken steps to achieve in Sweden.

Introduction

In this report, we describe the experiences of Swedish HEIs in the quality assurance process in the European Universities alliances and in transnational joint programmes. This description is based on a survey the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) designed in collaboration with the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) and interviews with a selection of HEIs. UHR has been given a government assignment to survey and analyse the conditions for Swedish HEIs to participate in the European Universities initiative.¹

The report begins with a description of the purpose and background of our study. We also describe the methodology used to conduct the survey and interviews. This is followed by a chapter that describes the experiences of HEIs in the quality assurance process within the European Universities alliances, followed by a chapter on experiences of quality assurance of transnational joint programmes. These two areas overlap to some extent, but the quality assurance work within the European Universities alliances includes the issue of a joint quality assurance system that applies across alliances. In the last chapter of the report, the UKÄ presents its conclusions and a reflection on the results.

Increase knowledge of transnational quality assurance

The report aims to increase knowledge of transnational quality assurance based on the Swedish context. This knowledge is important for both the UKÄ and our stakeholders – the Swedish Government, HEIs, and students. This knowledge will make the UKÄ better equipped to respond to developments in quality assurance as a result of the increased internationalisation in higher education. Transnational quality assurance here refers to quality assurance of the activities carried out by HEIs – primarily education and research – across national borders. For example, it may be that a quality assurance organisation is involved in a quality assurance process in a country other than the country in which the organisation is based.

¹ The Swedish Government. *Uppdrag att kartlägga frågor om Europauniversitet, Regeringsbeslut U2022/04065* (Assignment to survey issues associated with the European Universities initiative, Government Decision U2022/04065). Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, 2022.

The Commission is pushing for increased internationalisation

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is working to increase internationalisation in higher education. The European Commission is also calling for increased internationalisation in its work to increase the implementation of the goals and tools in the Bologna Process. The European Commission has also introduced several initiatives that will have far-reaching consequences for the higher education sector. In January 2022, the European Commission announced its European University Strategy² comprising four flagship initiatives:

- European Universities initiative in Erasmus+
- Legal form for alliances
- European degree
- European Student Card Initiative.

In February 2022, the Swedish Government presented the Commission's proposal to the Riksdag in a memorandum of facts.³ In this memorandum, the Government welcomed the Commission's investment in the European Universities initiative and the long-term ambition to establish the European Education Area in synergy with the European Research Area. At the same time, the Government hopes to ensure that the Bologna Process is based on the principles of voluntariness and trust between the education systems in different countries. The Swedish Government was doubtful regarding whether there was a need to develop a framework for external quality assurance due to the fact that there is already a framework within the Bologna Process. In addition, the Swedish Government emphasised that the proposals should be designed in a way that accounts for the Member States' national competences in the area of education.

The European Universities Initiative (EUI)⁴ is a key part of the EU's higher education strategy and aims to strengthen European values and a European identity by encouraging strong cooperation between HEIs. This includes removing barriers to student and staff mobility, innovative degree programmes, joint degrees and interdisciplinary projects. One of the key objectives of the European Universities initiative is to elevate the quality of education programmes. To achieve this goal, alliances are

² European Commission. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – On a European strategy for universities (COM/2022/16 final)*. Strasbourg: European Commission, 2022.

³ Government Offices of Sweden. *University strategy: Memorandum of Facts 2021/22:FPM63*. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Education and Research, 2022.

⁴ For a more comprehensive description of the European Universities Initiative, refer to information from the Swedish Council for Higher Education. *Swedish higher education institutions' participation in the European Universities initiative – Opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions and higher education in Sweden*. Report 2024:3 Solna: Swedish Council for Higher Education, 2024.

expected to cooperate in offering a range of education programmes, including joint programmes.

The EUI started with pilot calls in 2019 and 2020 under the previous Erasmus programme, which resulted in 41 alliances with three years of funding. The response from Swedish HEIs was enthusiastic, and eleven HEIs participated in the pilots. The EUI is now being developed further in the current Erasmus+ 2021–27, and the high level of participation among Swedish HEIs continues, with nineteen universities and university colleges participating in alliances in the European Universities initiative. However, when we conducted our survey, which was sent out in May 2023, only thirteen HEIs were included in these alliances.

At the end of March 2024, the European Commission presented its proposal for new Council recommendations on a European system for quality assurance and recognition of higher education. The aim was to provide support for transparency, mobility and transnational cooperation, as well as to maintain high quality and mutual trust. The proposal aimed, in part, to simplify the quality assurance of transnational joint programmes and to shift the focus from the programme level to the HEI or alliance level.⁵

At the end of April 2024, the Swedish Government presented its preliminary positions on the Commission's proposal in a memorandum of facts.⁶ The Swedish Government aims to strengthen the international character of higher education and to increase mobility. The Swedish Government welcomed the Commission's investment in the European Universities initiative. At the same time, the Swedish Government does not see a need to develop a new, separate framework for the evaluation of the European Universities initiative. Furthermore, the Swedish Government maintained that work in the area of education at EU level should be based on fundamental respect for the competences of the Member States and for national systems, including funding systems. Finally, the Swedish Government believes that it is reasonable to develop a European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes and that programmes at the national level will be reviewed by a quality assurance organisation appointed by the Government as needed.

When the higher education landscape changes in Sweden and within the EHEA, it has an impact on both the UKÄ and Sweden's national quality assurance system. Political developments within the European Union and the actions of the Swedish Government are particularly important. These political developments may mean that the UKÄ will need to adapt its

⁵ European Commission. *Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in Higher Education (COM 2024/147 final)*. Brussels: European Commission, 2024.

⁶ Government Offices of Sweden. *A roadmap towards a European degree: Memorandum of Facts 2023/24:FPM55*. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Education and Research, 2024.

operations and working methods. However, the time frame and scope of the changes are unclear.

The UKÄ's participation in the effort to increase integration and internationalisation of higher education in the EHEA is facilitated by membership in The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registered in The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), of which Sweden is also a member state. This means that Sweden and the UKÄ have an opportunity to take a proactive approach to address relevant issues, to adopt clear national positions and navigate the complexities of the EUI in order to promote effective solutions in European higher education. A number of Swedish universities and university colleges have expressed to the UKÄ that such an approach is needed.⁷

Surveys and interviews reveal how HEIs work with quality assurance

To learn more about how Swedish HEIs work with quality assurance in the European Universities alliances and transnational joint programmes, we sent out a survey containing a series of questions. The survey was conducted together with UHR. After the survey responses were received, we interviewed a selection of HEIs based on the survey responses.

A survey of all HEIs with the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

The survey was sent out to Swedish universities and university colleges in May 2023 with a deadline of 30 June 2023. The aim was to increase the understanding of the conditions for Swedish HEIs to participate in the European Universities alliances and to offer transnational joint programmes, as well as the steps they are taking to manage the move towards transnational quality assurance.

The joint survey was part of UHR's government assignment to survey and analyse the conditions for Swedish HEIs to participate in the European Universities initiative. A report on the assignment was sent to the Swedish Government on 27 March 2024. The Swedish Government believes that Sweden should fully participate in and work to shape EU cooperation in a way that protects the interests of Sweden and Europe as a whole.⁸ The European Universities initiative and the EU processes that

⁷ This has emerged from interviews conducted in connection with the UKÄ's external monitoring and in the survey that served as a basis for this report.

⁸ The Swedish Government. *Uppdrag att kartlägga frågor om Europauniversitet, Regeringsbeslut U2022/04065* (Assignment to survey issues associated with the European Universities initiative, Government Decision U2022/04065).

are already linked to the initiative may require Sweden to make certain adaptations on the national level.

The survey was sent to all Swedish HEIs that have accreditation within Erasmus+ (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education) and who are therefore able to apply to participate in the European Universities initiative. The survey was divided into seven different sections with up to 55 questions, including questions on overall strategic issues, quality assurance and study administration. The questions were adapted based on whether the responding HEIs

- participate in the European Universities initiative
- have applied to participate but have not yet been accepted
- have expressed interest in participating
- are not interested in participating.

Before the survey was sent out, a quality assurance step was performed to analyse the questions in a dialogue with five HEIs. A total of 39 out of 43 (91 per cent) HEIs responded to the survey.⁹

This report presents the responses to the questions related to quality assurance of the European Universities alliances and joint programmes. In its report, UHR presented responses that concern other areas. With a few exceptions, questions about quality assurance of the European Universities alliances were presented to the Swedish universities and university colleges that were participating in European Universities alliances at the time of the survey. Questions about quality assurance of transnational joint programmes were presented to all HEIs, but depending on the answers to certain questions, the rules for the survey dictated which follow-up questions would be asked.

Interviews with a selection of the HEIs

In order to elaborate on the responses from the survey, follow up was done through conversations with a small number of the participating HEIs. The UKÄ and UHR jointly conducted some of the interviews, while some of the interviews were conducted solely by the UKÄ or UHR, based on the selection made by each authority based on their assignments.

The interviews were semi-structured, where question areas were disclosed in advance. The discussions in which the UKÄ participated were the in-depth follow up of the survey questions that dealt with quality assurance of the European Universities alliances and of joint programmes. Both the UKÄ and UHR had the opportunity to introduce questions in the conversation. The HEIs themselves assessed which

⁹ Marie Cederschiöld University College, Beckmans College of Design, the World Maritime University and ALT School of Theology did not respond to the survey.

individuals were best suited to participate in the conversations. The interviews were conducted remotely and lasted a maximum of one hour.

Due to limited resources, the UKÄ chose not to interview HEIs that reported having no experience in transnational joint programmes, because our aim was to combine interviews about joint programmes and the European Universities alliances. Our selection included five HEIs: The University of Gothenburg, University of Gävle, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University and Uppsala University.

A central question in the interviews concerned the advantages and disadvantages of integrated quality assurance systems. Only four HEIs had a joint quality assurance policy or equivalent for the European Universities alliances. Three of these HEIs are located in Stockholm, and therefore one of the three, Karolinska Institutet, was excluded. The fourth was not chosen because, according to the survey responses, it did not have joint programmes.

We also aimed to include HEIs with joint programmes that responded that they do not have integrated quality assurance systems within their participation in the European Universities alliances. The University of Gothenburg, like KTH Royal Institute of Technology, participated in the EUniQ pilot (see fact box in the next chapter) to create a joint framework for quality assurance in the European Universities initiative. Uppsala University was selected in part due to the detail and content of the answers to the survey.

Table 1: List of HEIs interviewed by the UKÄ and the name of the alliance in the European Universities initiative in which the HEI is included.

HEI	European Universities alliance
University of Gothenburg	EUTOPIA European Universities Transforming to an Open Inclusive Academy for 2050
University of Gävle	EU GREEN European Universities alliance for sustainability: responsible Growth, inclusive Education and Environment
KTH Royal Institute of Technology	Unite! University Network for Innovation, Technology and Engineering
Stockholm University	Civis <i>A European Civic University</i>
Uppsala University	ENLIGHT European university Network to promote equitable quality of Life, sustainability and Global engagement through Higher education Transformation

Quality assurance of the European Universities alliances

In this chapter, we present the survey responses that relate to the Swedish HEIs' experiences of quality assurance within the European Universities initiative. Most of the questions that touch on this topic have been presented to the thirteen Swedish HEIs that, as of May 2023, had been granted funding from the European Commission to participate in the European Universities initiative. The two questions concerning potential obstacles that the HEIs have already encountered or expect to encounter in terms of quality assurance of the European Universities alliances were also presented to the HEIs that have applied for funding to participate in the European Universities initiative but have not received a decision at the time of the survey.

The UKÄ has also conducted semi-structured interviews with a selection of the Swedish HEIs that are part of European University Alliances. The answers from these conversations are reported to the extent that they contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the survey responses.

EUniQ: a joint European framework for quality assurance

European Approach for Comprehensive Quality Assurance of (European) University Networks (EUniQ)

The UKÄ has previously participated in EUniQ, a pilot project for quality assurance of the European Universities initiative. The EUniQ project was implemented by a consortium consisting of eight quality assurance organisations, six ministries, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union (ESU) and ENQA. The project was co-funded by Erasmus+ and led by the Dutch and Flemish quality assurance organisation NVAO.

The project developed a framework and roadmap for quality assurance of the European Universities initiative. Within the framework of the project, four pilot studies were also carried out. Of the four pilot studies, Swedish HEIs included in the European Universities initiative were included in two: KTH Royal Institute of Technology through Unite! and the University of Gothenburg through Eutopia.

More information about the project can be found on the NVAO website and in the EUniQ factsheets.^{10, 11, 12}

Most HEIs have no joint quality assurance policy

Most of the European Universities alliances that Swedish HEIs are included in have not developed a joint quality assurance policy or equivalent, but four¹³ have. UNITE!, the European Universities initiative,¹⁴ in which KTH Royal Institute of Technology is included, has produced a joint document, the Quality Management Manual, which guides the Alliance's quality assurance work. In the Civis alliance,¹⁵ in which Stockholm University is included, the quality assurance policy is not a separate document, but the issues are included in the strategy document, Educational Framework. They also have a Quality Assurance Plan that outlines responsibilities for quality assurance work.

¹⁰ De Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie. EUniQ Project. *De Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie*. <https://www.nvao.net/en/euniq> (retrieved 2024-03-25).

¹¹EUniQ. Developing a European Framework for Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities. Swedish Higher Education Authority. 2021. <https://www.uka.se/download/18.6c63f1051842ca8221a98c/1667218365181/EUniQ%20Fact%20sheet-webb.pdf> (retrieved 2024-03-25).

¹² EUniQ. European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities. *De Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie*. <https://www.nvao.net/nl/attachments/view/european%20framework%20for%20the%20comprehensive%20quality%20assurance%20of%20european%20universities> (retrieved 2024-04-05).

¹³ Five HEIs answered "yes" to the question in the survey, but the free-text responses showed that there were four alliances in the European Universities initiative that have a de facto joint document that describes the quality assurance work.

¹⁴ University Network for Innovation, Technology and Engineering.

¹⁵ European Civic University Alliance.

EUniWell,¹⁶ which includes Linnaeus University, has a Quality Culture Framework, which the university described in its free-text response as very comprehensive, while NeurotechEU,¹⁷ in which Karolinska Institutet is included, has a number of governing documents related to quality assurance, such as the Document of Responsibility and Quality Plan.

The above joint quality assurance documents apply not only to regular credit-bearing education programmes within the alliances, but also to one or more of the following options: micro-credentials/short-form courses, blended intensive programmes and other credit-bearing education activities. In a couple of cases, the strategy documents also cover research and collaboration.

Instead of adopting a quality assurance policy, the European Universities initiative Enlight alliance,¹⁸ in which Uppsala University is included, has a website that has not yet been externally published, which shows how each HEI complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Ingenium, in which the University of Skövde is included, plans to develop a joint quality assurance policy and quality assurance system based on ESG and EUniQ. Lund University, which is part of the Eugloh alliance,¹⁹ reported that they do not have a separate policy for quality assurance of the education programmes offered within the alliance. However, the university's own quality assurance system has a quality assurance policy that also applies to courses within the collaboration. The perspective within Eugloh is that there needs to be mutual trust between participating HEIs and that there should be no duplication of processes for quality assurance. Several other HEIs take a similar position when it comes to trust instead of having parallel systems.

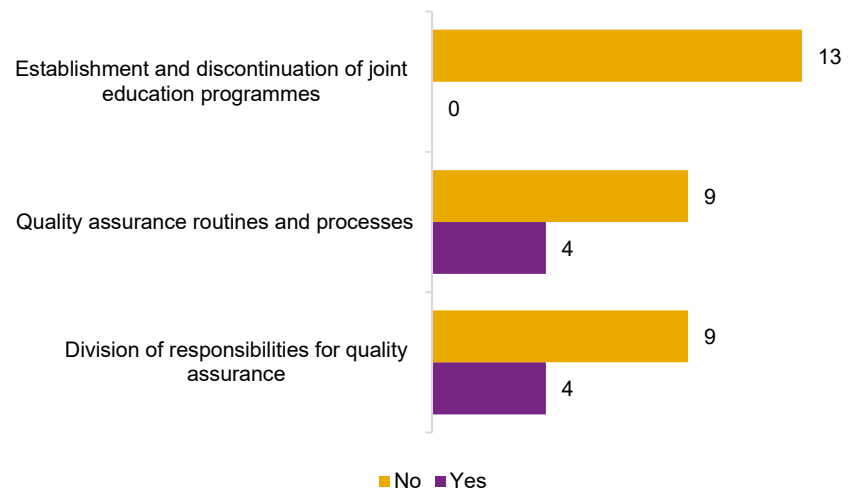
¹⁶ European University for Well-being.

¹⁷ European University of Brain and Technology.

¹⁸ European university Network to promote equitable quality of Life, sustainability and Global engagement through Higher education Transformation.

¹⁹ European University Alliance for Global Health.

Figure 1. Which of the following documents have been established specifically for the European Universities alliance?



Most alliances within the European Universities initiatives in which Swedish HEIs are included have not divided responsibilities for quality assurance, routines and processes for quality assurance, or for establishing and discontinuing joint education programmes. However, the four alliances in the European Universities initiative in which Swedish HEIs are included and which have a joint quality assurance policy or equivalent have also established a division of responsibilities for quality assurance and procedures and processes for quality assurance.

In its survey responses, Karolinska Institutet reported that the documents established within NeurotechEU have so far only been applied to a summer course at another HEI and that the HEI is therefore not yet able to report how the policy will work in practice. However, the HEI points out that it has local documents and procedures that are comparable.

During the interviews, questions were asked to elaborate on the survey responses. Representatives from the University of Gothenburg stated that there was no intention to create a centralised quality assurance system for Eutopia.²⁰ The University of Gothenburg reported that it is important for members of the alliance to have trust in each other's systems, since all participating HEIs operate according to the ESG. The experience that members of the alliance gained from participation in the EUniQ pilot project reinforced the belief that it should not establish a joint quality assurance system for the alliance. At the same time, the HEI reports that important learning happens between the internal projects.

During the interview with KTH Royal Institute of Technology, the HEI reported that it had been decided from the beginning that they would develop joint procedures and platforms for the alliance. And the fact that Unite! had developed from an alliance that has already existed for 30 years meant that a framework was already in place. KTH Royal Institute

²⁰ European Universities Transforming to an Open Inclusive Academy.

of Technology is part of a national collaboration that can inspire transnational quality assurance with Karolinska Institutet and Stockholm University, all of which have responded that they have some form of joint quality assurance documents within their respective alliances. At the same time, KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that it would be beneficial to establish a national cooperation and exchange for the HEIs that are part of the European Universities initiative. Unite! also participated in the EuniQ pilot project. Within the framework of this project, the European Universities initiative was tasked with creating a joint manual for quality assurance, but it has been slow to deliver this document. Initially, a quality assurance manual was created that was too large and complex. This has subsequently been revised, resulting in a more concise manual. The HEI reported that the quality assurance work in the alliance is mainly based on the PDSA cycle.²¹ Within the alliance, there are various communities, which in turn have subgroups that carry out different activities. During the first year, each subgroup must choose an activity where they apply the PDSA cycle. Through this approach, the groups create a model that they can work with and are offered support from central parts of the alliance.

According to Stockholm University, the Civis alliance has included quality assurance issues since the start of the European Universities alliance. The university reports that this approach is taken because Civis is an alliance that wants to reach out to all students, instead of a niche group of students. According to the university, when you work with such a broad approach, you need to address quality assurance. At the same time, Stockholm University pursued a policy where they did not establish a joint quality system for the alliance that runs parallel to that of the individual HEIs, since all of the HEIs in the alliance already have established quality assurance systems. However, when joint programmes and courses are established in the European Universities initiative, the university states that it is important to consider quality assurance issues.

Civis has a quality assurance policy for joint education programmes. The policy is based partly on ESG and partly on developing confidence in each other's quality assurance systems to the fullest extent possible. But according to Stockholm University, you sometimes need to make compromises and not rely exclusively on mutual trust. Specific information may be needed from students and teachers, and some items may need to be centralised in order to enable the European Universities alliances to work towards continuous improvement. Civis has tried to have teachers send course evaluations to the students, but this has proved difficult. They have instead started working with focus groups. According to Stockholm University, it is a constant balancing act. The basic principle is that you trust each other's quality assurance systems as much as possible. But according to the university, it is not realistic to

²¹ PDSA is an acronym for "Plan, do, study, act". PDSA is a four-step method for quality assurance. The four steps are repeated cyclically one after another.

work with separate, completely parallel systems over the long term. This holds especially true for the approach used to evaluate the joint programmes. Currently, a significant effort is being made to develop a consortium template for joint programmes, which will support the development of joint programmes within Civis. The alliance has placed a major focus on education, including at the doctoral level. In the long term, the aim is to conduct research that is linked to the education programmes.

According to representatives from Uppsala University, Enlight also discussed the issue of a joint quality system for the European Universities alliance from the outset. However, the creation of a parallel quality system was believed to be a cumbersome process when all participating HEIs already have established procedures that meet the requirements of ESG. The various HEIs in the alliance work to address quality assurance issues in different ways, and there are differing views on what constitutes good quality assurance work. For example, some HEIs in Enlight take a more quantitative approach, which differs from Uppsala University's approach. But according to Uppsala University, the most important thing is that the approach partners use to perform quality assurance of education programmes complies with ESG, which is the joint document the HEIs defer to. When asked if there are areas where common guidelines would be beneficial, the representatives from Uppsala University mention individual courses in particular. Several of the HEIs in the alliance do not have a reliable way to perform quality assurance for individual courses. At Uppsala University, freestanding courses are included in the model for their own programme evaluations. The other HEIs need to build up their own routines and processes.

The University of Gävle, which is part of the EU Green alliance in the European Universities initiative,²² is at an early stage in the process of building up its participation in the European Universities initiative. In the interview, representatives from the University of Gävle stated that it has not yet been decided whether they will have a joint quality assurance system in the future. However, the university acknowledges that it is important to have common criteria and a common view on quality assurance work. They stated that it is important to be able to ensure the quality of anything in which their teachers and students are involved. At the same time, the objective was described as forming a joint university, and then the alliance needs to have a joint quality assurance system and a joint quality assurance policy. But they have not yet arrived at that point and have not had time to weigh the advantages and disadvantages.

²² European universities alliance for sustainability: Responsible growth, inclusive education and environment.

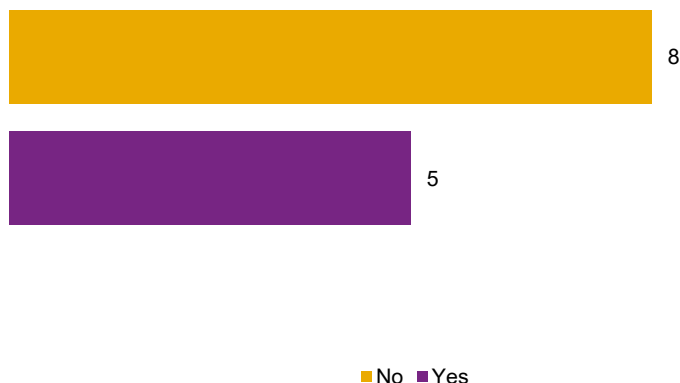
Student influence in the European Universities alliances

Student influence within the framework of the organisation of the European Universities alliances is a topic that has featured prominently in both the survey and in the interviews with the Swedish HEIs that are part of the alliances. In all cases, students are involved, but the results reveal both difficulties and opportunities. One particular issue we highlight is whether student representatives should be compensated for their time and commitment, which reveals both differences in opinions between Swedish HEIs and challenges when the issue is raised at the European level, where the tradition of student influence is not as firmly established.

Barriers to involving students in the alliances' quality assurance work

In Sweden, students have a statutory right to exert influence in matters relating to their education, but the same does not apply in all European countries. Despite this, students and doctoral students are involved in various ways in the quality assurance work of all alliances that include Swedish HEIs. However, the opportunities and conditions encountered by student and doctoral student representatives vary, and representatives also participate at different levels. In many of the European Universities alliances that include Swedish HEIs, there are special groups or bodies that are only open to students and doctoral students, which act in parallel with the local student unions.

Figure 2: Are there any obstacles that stand out in relation to involving students and doctoral students in the quality assurance of the European University alliance?



Several of the HEIs that were asked whether there are any notable obstacles associated with involving students and doctoral students in quality assurance work responded that there are indeed obstacles, although the majority stated that there are not. The free-text responses

show that the obstacles are often related to circumstances that also make it difficult to involve students in the HEI's local quality assurance work. In its response to this question, one HEI stated that compared to several other countries in Europe, Swedish HEIs generally have more experience with student and doctoral student participation. Another HEI reported that it can be difficult to appoint student representatives, since the work they do is mostly unpaid, and students often have busy schedules. A couple of HEIs emphasised that it is difficult to maintain continuity due to the short term of office for student representatives and the fact that they are therefore replaced relatively often. It is also considered to be difficult for one or two student representatives to represent all students from the many different HEIs that are part of the alliance. Finally, one of the HEIs reported that student influence within the European Universities alliance is not a problem, as student influence is ensured through the HEI's local quality assurance work.

Students and doctoral students are represented at different levels

All Swedish HEIs that participate in the European Universities initiative reported in their survey responses that students and doctoral students are involved in quality assurance. In some cases, students and doctoral students are represented, or will be represented, in the highest decision-making bodies of the European Universities alliance. This applies to Enhance,²³ which includes Chalmers University of Technology, ECIU24, which includes Linköping University and Ingenium, which includes the University of Skövde. In Enhance, students make up half of the General Assembly, a body tasked with monitoring the development of the European Universities alliance. Within EU Green, which includes the University of Gävle, students are represented in strategic forums. They also participate in the work packages that the university leads for the alliance. In other cases, students and doctoral students participate in quality assurance through their respective HEIs. In some European Universities alliances, students are part of special working groups that handle quality assurance issues.

The five HEIs interviewed by the UKÄ have student representatives who actively participate in the work of the alliances. This participation takes different forms, occurs on several different levels and in different bodies. Within Enlight, which includes Uppsala University, Unite!, which includes KTH Royal Institute of Technology, EU Green, which includes the University of Gävle, and Eutopia, which includes the University of Gothenburg, students are represented in the highest decision-making bodies. Students have voting rights in Enlight's Governing Board and the

²³ European Universities of Technology Alliance.

²⁴ European Consortium of Innovative Universities.

EU Green Senate, while they have the right to attend Unite!'s Governing Platform and Eutopia's Board of Directors and General Assembly.

Within Civis, which includes Stockholm University, students are represented in the Steering Committee, which was described during the interview as the second highest decision-making body. Students are also represented at the same organisational level in Enlight in the Directors Meeting, a body in which the students have voting rights.

Special groups exclusively for students

The European Universities alliances that include the Swedish HEIs we have interviewed all have special groups or bodies where students from the various HEIs in the alliance can meet alongside the local student unions. The bodies are referred to as the Student Council, Student Network, and Students in Unite! for Representation and Empowerment (SURE).

Within EU Green, each HEI appoints students and doctoral students to the student council. The student union at the University of Gävle decided who will be nominated and the Vice-Chancellor then decided to appoint the students who currently serve on the council. The University of Gävle stated that the process for the other HEIs within the alliance can vary, and the connection between the student union and the HEIs also differs.

Within Civis, the Student Council appoints students to participate in the Steering Committee. Within Enlight's Student Network, Uppsala University's United Student Unions, a collaboration between the local student unions, appoints students from the University. The student network in the alliance has started to divide into different subgroups for student welfare and strategic purposes. During the interview, Uppsala University explained that students from other HEIs can be appointed or selected in other ways, as each HEI applies its own local procedures. The University of Gothenburg described a similar experience, which emerged in Eutopia's work package on student influence. The student representatives in various bodies in Eutopia are not always elected by one or more student unions. In the alliance, the perception of some student representatives is that they are there to represent their personal views, while others perceive that they are to represent the student body as a whole.

Opportunities and challenges for student engagement

Several HEIs interviewed by the UKÄ expressed that there were concerns that they would have to work hard to convince other HEIs within the alliances to ensure student influence, but that those fears have been unfounded. Instead, the Swedish approach to student influence has been relatively well received.

During the interview, the University of Gävle stated that student engagement is seen as an important factor in achieving the goals of EU Green. The local student union contributes to achieving these goals in a number of ways, for example, by working on international issues in its own working groups and engaging in dialogues with the HEIs.

According to Uppsala University, Enlight provides students with the opportunity to participate in the various decision-making bodies on the same terms as other parties. However, the intended objective is not always achieved, because in some cases, students do not have the opportunity to gain a full understanding of the complex contexts in which the alliance operates. According to the university, this is because students usually study full-time and have time-limited assignments, meaning that they have significantly less time to devote to the alliance than salaried employees. According to Uppsala University, this means that students do not have the same opportunity to develop an understanding or apply in-depth reasoning.

KTH Royal Institute of Technology also reported that students are able to participate in all working groups, but that they do not always do so. According to the HEI, there is a continuity problem. Students are usually active for a single year, but the projects run over several years. A further complicating factor is that the terms of office for student representatives differ between the different HEIs. This means that the students replace each other and, in the best-case scenario, participate in one meeting while they are active. The university also expressed concern that students may not be motivated to get involved in the alliance if they do not see the fruits of their labour.

Stockholm University noted that student participation in both preparatory and decision-making bodies has been well received, but that in some cases, change has been a slow process. Within Civis, follow up is done to monitor student representation through various indicators.

Students do not always receive compensation for their time and commitment to European Universities alliances

An important prerequisite for student influence is that student representatives are compensated for their time and commitment.²⁵ The interview responses show that there are differences not only between the different European Universities alliances, but also within them.

During the interview, the University of Gävle stated that the student representatives within EU Green receive compensation. Within Unite!, which includes KTH Royal Institute of Technology, they receive no

²⁵ European Students' Union. BM84: Strengthening student representation within the framework of the European Alliances of Higher Education Institutions. *European Students' Union*. 2022. <https://esu-online.org/policies/bm84-strengthening-student-representation-within-the-framework-of-the-european-alliances-of-higher-education-institutions-2/> (retrieved 2024-03-27).

compensation, unless they already have a paid role with the local student union.

The student representatives from Uppsala University are paid a fee for their assignments within Enlight, but student representatives from other HEIs within the same alliance are not always paid. According to the university, there has been a discussion about what the alliance should do to make things more equitable, and the differences may be attributable to different regulations in the different countries. Student representatives receive compensation from some HEIs in the form of ECTS credits instead of fees.

Within Civis, the president and vice president of the student council can receive compensation in the form of a fee paid by the alliance. For others, the type of compensation varies: Some are paid a fee by their HEI, such as those from Stockholm University, others receive higher education credits (equivalent to 2 higher education credits) for their representation assignments, while others receive no compensation at all.

Stockholm University expressed that the issue is difficult to address. Some HEIs consider it wrong in principle to pay student representatives a fee within the alliance, since local student representatives at the university do not receive a fee.

A survey is now being done within Eutopia to determine how the various HEIs within the alliance work to compensate their student representatives. At the same time, the University of Gothenburg stated in the interview that the issue of compensation for student and doctoral student representatives is not something they want to spend too much energy on, as it is more important to ensure students have the right to influence their studies.

The varied role of labour market representatives

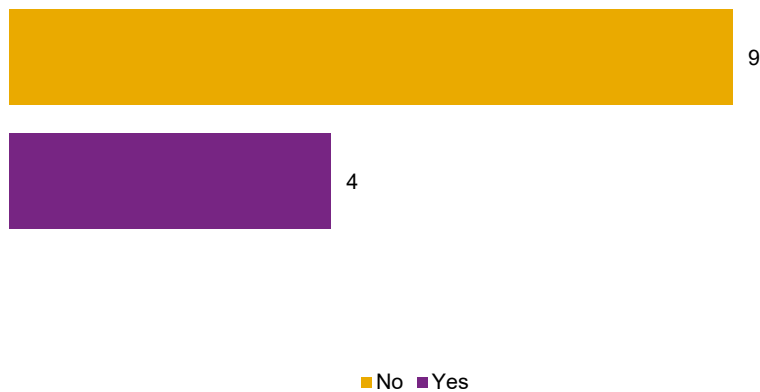
Representatives of working life organisations and society at large are involved in the quality assurance work of European Universities alliances to a varying extent. The level of involvement ranges from no involvement at all to assignments that include central and local involvement. In their survey responses, a couple of HEIs described that these stakeholders do not have a significant role in their alliances' quality assurance work. On the other hand, several HEIs reported that external stakeholders from working life and society at large are partners at each HEI that is included in the alliances, and that they are, for example, represented in various decision-making bodies or have advisory functions.

In ECIU, which includes Linköping University, representatives from working life are represented on the alliance's board. The university

reported that these representatives play a central and active role in the European Universities alliance. Linköping University notes that the participation of representatives from working life within ECIU is one of the alliance's main strengths. The Enhance alliance, which includes Chalmers University of Technology, has strategic partners who are included in the General Assembly. Their role is to monitor the development of the alliance and act as advisors to the board. The University of Gävle reported that they have affiliated partners with representatives in the steering group, who contribute to the alliance's work.

Stockholm School of Economics, which is part of the Civica alliance,²⁶ stated that the business community, municipal institutions and non-profit organisations are all involved in several of the European University alliance's work packages. Students also get exposure to working life by offering solutions to challenges faced by businesses and by visiting and participating in the activities of a specific business. Students report on their participation in non-academic bodies and then receive various certificates from the European University alliance.

Figure 3. Are there any obstacles that stand out in relation to involving representatives of working life/society in the quality assurance of the European University alliance?



Most of the HEIs responded that there are not any difficulties that stand out in relation to involving representatives of working life or surrounding society in the quality assurance of the European University alliance. However, it appears that the responses may have something to do with the fact that the HEIs have not yet had time to note any difficulties, or that it is too early to comment.

KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Stockholm University stated that the focus so far has been on building up and establishing cooperation within the alliance. Therefore, contacts with working life or

²⁶ The European University of Social Sciences.

society at large have had to take a back seat. In its free-text response, Karolinska Institutet reported that they consistently find it difficult to engage representatives from working life who can dedicate enough time to the extent that it makes a real difference. The university states that it is a challenge to find representatives from working life with experience that is relevant to education programmes with a broad labour market, but that it is too early to say whether there are notable difficulties with this in their alliance. The University of Skövde's view is in line with that of Karolinska Institutet. They state that it can be difficult to find representatives from working life or surrounding society with a suitable competence profile.

Challenges, obstacles and success factors

In their survey responses, the HEIs describe challenges, obstacles and success factors within the quality assurance of the European Universities alliances. There are challenges linked to the communication of quality assurance results and the evaluation of the range of joint education programmes. The survey responses also show that many HEIs believe that it is too early to clearly describe success factors in the work that has been done thus far.

The communication of results is a challenge

Few HEIs use the Internet to disseminate the results of their quality assurance work, and few have an established process for utilising the results of their quality assurance work in the strategic management of the European Universities alliances. When it comes to feedback of the results to internal and external stakeholders, it is not entirely clear from the HEIs' responses whether they are discussing the individual HEI's quality assurance work or the European University alliance's quality assurance work. Some HEIs stated that feedback is done according to the standard procedures and guidelines at each HEI within the alliance. Other HEIs offered no description of how feedback is delivered but stated that it does occur.

In the survey responses, the Stockholm School of Economics described that the team at the university that works for Civica systematically reports back the results to internal and external stakeholders. It is also essential that important work steps carried out within the alliance do not clash with the quality assurance work at the HEI – if steps are taken that do not align with the individual HEI's strategy or regulations, it is reported back to the alliance.

Linnaeus University, which is part of EUniWell, stated that the alliance's board is the first body to receive feedback. But it also takes place

through the alliance's Quality Culture Arena, which is still in the start-up phase.

Within Civis, which includes Stockholm University, the results of the alliance's quality assurance work are published both on an internal website for staff and student representatives and an external website. In its survey response, Stockholm University also reported that continuous feedback of results occurs through the preparation of reports and decisions on reports in various bodies and groups.

Within Unite!, which includes KTH Royal Institute of Technology, there is feedback between various activities and the alliance's board, where all HEIs are represented, but there is currently no feedback to external stakeholders. Luleå University of Technology responded that the results of the quality assurance work performed in the alliance are shared internally with all work packages and members and externally with the European Commission. The University of Gothenburg responded that feedback within Eutopia normally occurs within each sub-project.

The University of Gävle responded that, within the European Universities alliance EU Green, they have specially appointed project managers and a specially appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor who is responsible for feedback for the results of the quality assurance work both internally and externally.

In Ingenium, which includes the University of Skövde, the results of the alliance's quality assurance work must be published each year in a report produced by external experts. However, since work is still ongoing to decide on a plan to communicate results, it is still unclear how the results of quality assurance will be communicated.

Only a few HEIs that are part of a European University alliance expressed that problems have emerged or may emerge in relation to feedback of the results of quality assurance work specifically related to the alliances. Stockholm University states that the size of the alliance is a challenge. Civis includes nearly 600,000 people, of which about 500,000 are students, and the alliance also collaborates with a number of African universities. Linköping University expressed that it may be difficult to separate the results that specifically relate to the European University alliance, since the quality assurance work it does for the alliance is part of its regular activities, which in itself is seen as positive. The University of Skövde states that there is a risk that the results will get lost in the shuffle if information flows are inundated with a large amount of other information.

Few HEIs reported that their European University alliance has an established process for utilising the results in the alliance's governance. Only three HEIs responded that they have or will have an established process for utilising the results of their quality assurance work in their European Universities alliances. Within Civica, which includes the

Stockholm School of Economics, there is a President Committee, where all HEIs are represented by their senior manager, who has ultimate responsibility for all decisions related to quality assurance and the design of local education programmes. In Unite!, which includes KTH Royal Institute of Technology, the Steering Committee actively participates in the quality assurance work and disseminates the results further to the alliance's Governing Platform. According to the survey responses from the University of Skövde, which is a member of Ingenium, the alliance will develop a joint system for quality assurance based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), where methods will be included to utilise the results of the quality assurance work.

Few concrete plans for evaluation of the joint range of programmes

Only three HEIs stated that there are concrete plans or procedures for external evaluations of the HEI's education programmes within the framework of their European Universities alliances. KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that this will likely be implemented in 2025. The University of Skövde and Uppsala University stated in their responses that this is done regularly within their regular quality assurance system every six years.

Stockholm University stated that they have no plans for an external evaluation of Civis' entire range of education programmes, but instead have plans for the evaluation of individual educational activities, such as joint programmes. However, the university also stated that an external evaluation of the entire project will be started in 2024. This will include a review of the processes for education indicators for different education activities.

Few success factors

Most of the HEIs stated that they have not progressed far enough in this area to be able to report success factors. Stockholm University highlighted the advantages of having an experienced quality officer, who works closely with the management of Civis and participates in and supports the work of various working groups in the quality assurance of the education programme. This approach can help increase and disseminate knowledge about quality assurance. The university also emphasised the importance of surveying and analysing the quality assurance systems of the participating HEIs in relation to ESG at an early stage. This increases the understanding of the HEIs' similarities and differences and makes it easier to reach compromises and identify solutions.

Karolinska Institutet stated that it participated in the development of a quality assurance approach for a summer course at another university in

the alliance. This helped create a more concrete link between the syllabus and the course evaluations, as well as to the development of the wording of the governing documents on the syllabus and the course evaluations for courses within the alliance.

The Stockholm School of Economics highlighted the alliance's IT structure and website as positive aspects. A discussion has also been initiated on the challenges of having a European library.

Uppsala University and the University of Gothenburg both emphasised the importance that HEIs have confidence in each other's quality systems within their alliances. If this is achieved, they believe that it is not necessary to create a parallel system in addition to the individual quality systems.

Differing views on quality assurance pose a challenge

When asked whether there are challenges associated with the quality assurance of the European Universities alliances, a recurring theme that emerged is that countries and HEIs often have different views on quality assurance, as well as differences in culture around quality assurance practices. Further, different national and local rules, laws and regulations also have an impact on the process. Several HEIs stated that these differences, and the failure to acknowledge these differences, can create a great deal of difficulty in quality assurance work. For example, one HEI mentioned that different lead times and anchoring processes can lead to frustration, as the decision-making process can take much longer at some HEIs than others. The fact that public-sector HEIs in Sweden are public authorities was also described as a factor that affected the conditions for successful quality assurance.

Another HEI reported that the scope of the quality assurance work within a large alliance was also a challenge. The time allocated in the project budget is perceived to be very limited. Another problem that was highlighted was a lack of competence in the quality assurance of education programmes at partner universities.

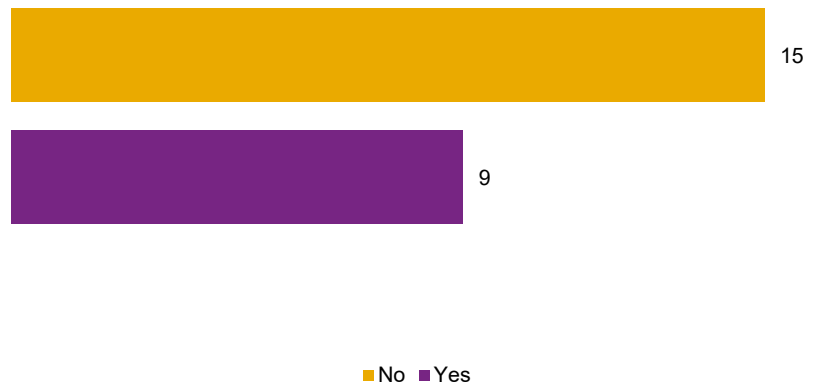
Another HEI highlighted differences in English proficiency as a major challenge, especially in the terminology used in quality assurance. They therefore called for establishing a set of English terms with definitions (e.g. quality, high quality, quality assurance work), which would be developed by the UKÄ, preferably in collaboration with ENQA.

Legal obstacles are a recurring problem

In the survey, the participating HEIs were asked whether they had encountered any legal obstacles in the quality assurance of their European Universities alliances. Several HEIs mentioned differences in

national and local rules. This concerned, for example, admissions, course and programme syllabi, student workload and requirements in qualification systems.

Figure 4: Has your HEI encountered, or do you foresee any legal obstacles when it comes to quality assurance of your European Universities alliance?²⁷



One HEI stated that the various HEIs within the alliance are at different stages in their work with the Bologna Process. Since in most cases, the participating HEIs have not previously worked together, they do not have any real knowledge of each other. This can have consequences for their quality assurance work.

Another HEI anticipated that its control over the quality of courses and programmes will be reduced, as they will be offered jointly within the alliance in which the HEI is included. The HEI also believes that the discussion on the legal form of alliances, which is another flagship initiative for the Commission, is difficult for individual HEIs to understand and pursue.

Some HEIs referenced various administrative problems, such as the dual employment of staff. Several HEIs cited difficulties linked to the admission of students to joint programmes or courses.

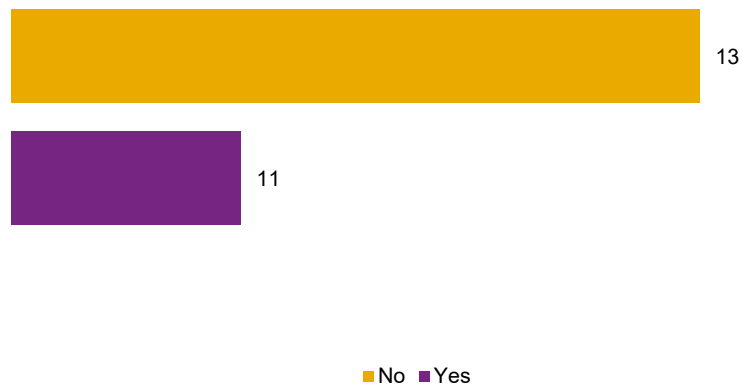
Finally, two HEIs mentioned that a significant legal obstacle to the quality assurance of European Universities alliances is that Swedish administrative authorities, including the UKÄ, are generally not allowed to operate abroad.

²⁷ The survey question about legal obstacles was presented to HEIs that are part of European Universities alliances and HEIs that have applied for funding to be part of an alliance, but that had not been granted funding at the time of the survey.

HEIs also encounter other obstacles

In the survey, the HEIs were also asked whether they had encountered obstacles, other than purely legal obstacles, in relation to the quality assurance of their European Universities alliances. Just over half had not encountered any notable obstacles, while just under half had encountered obstacles.

Figure 5: Has your HEI encountered, or do you foresee any other obstacles when it comes to quality assurance of your European Universities alliance?²⁸



One HEI pointed to the risk that quality assurance models may become too complicated or extensive when an attempt is made to harmonise and synchronise models at different HEIs or in different countries. Another HEI emphasised that it is difficult for smaller HEIs with less resources to meet the standards set for the Commission's European Universities initiative, given the resource-intensive process involved in quality assurance.

Another obstacle raised by the HEIs was the lack of a uniform quality assurance framework at the European level, which can make it difficult to perform a comparative quality assessment at different universities. Karlstad University reported that within its alliance, it has proposed joint accreditation because the individual members work with quality assurance in different ways. But joint accreditation would mean additional work, as all HEIs are already subject to quality assurance in their home countries.

The division of the academic year into semesters and study periods was cited as another obstacle to the administration and planning of the alliance's activities.

²⁸ The survey question on legal obstacles to quality assurance in the European Universities alliances was presented to HEIs that are part of European Universities alliances and to HEIs that have applied for funding to be part of an alliance, but which had not been granted funding at the time of the survey.

One of the HEIs stated that one challenge is that the home countries of different HEIs are at different stages in the process of introducing ESG and that they work according to the principles of constructive alignment to different extents. Another HEI stated another obstacle is differences and a lack of understanding of the various national and supranational regulations. This can relate to quality assurance systems, where to draw the boundaries for issues that are specific to a single HEI, and what needs to be agreed upon within the European Universities alliance.

Quality assurance of joint programmes

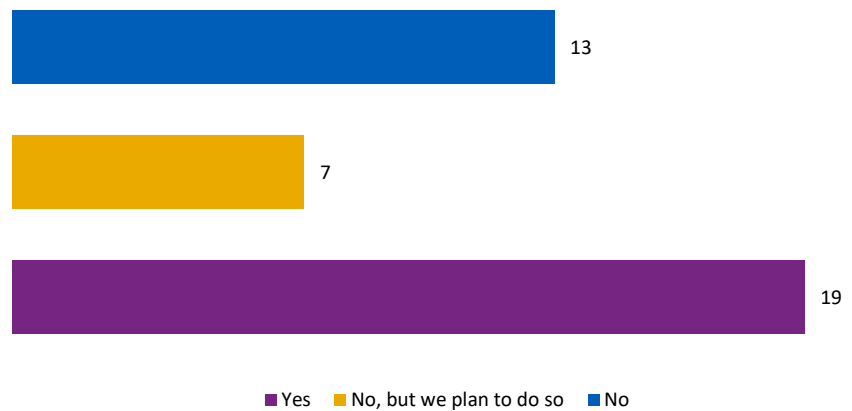
This chapter presents the survey responses that cover the Swedish HEIs' experiences of quality assurance of transnational joint programmes, i.e. degree programmes that are offered jointly with at least one HEI in another country. Since questions in this section were guided by the HEI's previous answers, the number of respondents differs between the different questions and thus in the report's diagram. The UKÄ has also conducted semi-structured interviews with a selection of the HEIs that responded to the survey. The answers from these conversations are reported to the extent that they contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the survey responses.

Many HEIs are part of joint programmes with HEIs in other countries

Nineteen of the HEIs that responded to our survey have participated in offering joint programmes within or outside the European Universities alliance. Seven of the HEIs that have not participated in joint programmes plan to establish such collaborations,²⁹ while thirteen HEIs have no plans to do so. It varies whether the programmes lead to joint, double or multiple degrees.

²⁹ Two HEIs answered "Yes", but based on their free-text answers, it was apparent that their answers were about planned programmes. Their answer has therefore been reported in the chart as "No, but we plan to do so".

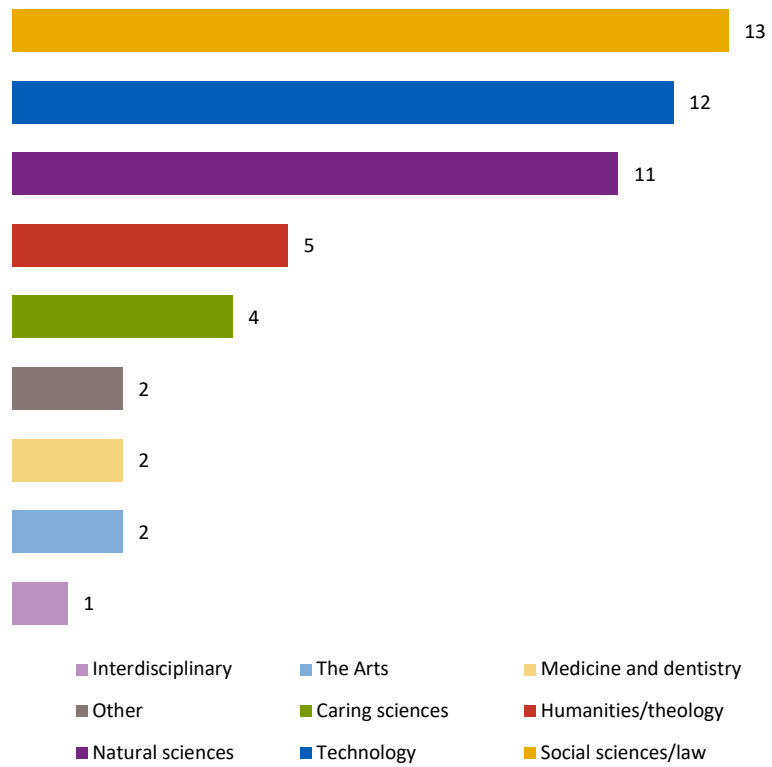
Figure 6: Is the HEI included in or has the HEI been part of any joint programmes that lead to double, joint or multiple degrees?



The HEIs who stated that they have joint programmes include several large HEIs, such as Uppsala University, Stockholm University and the University of Gothenburg, but also smaller HEIs, such as the University of Borås, Blekinge Institute of Technology and Sophiahemmet University.

Figure 7 below shows the subjects in which HEIs reported that they have joint programmes. Social sciences/law, technology and natural sciences are the subject areas in which most HEIs have (one or more) joint programmes. It is less common for HEIs to have programmes in, for example, the arts or medicine and dentistry.

Figure 7: What subject areas do these programmes cover?³⁰



Of the HEIs that participated in the interviews, four stated that they have plans to offer more joint programmes in the future, while pointing out that planning and implementing joint programmes can take a long time and require a lot of work. Uppsala University expressed that the complexity and uncertainty in the process of creating joint programmes means that there is relatively little interest and enthusiasm to do so.

³⁰ Note that the figure does not show the *Number of programmes* in each subject area, just the number of *HEIs* that have joint programmes in the subject area. An HEI can therefore have one or more programmes within the subject area(s) they specified in their responses.

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, often shortened to the European Approach, was developed to facilitate external quality assurance of transnational joint programmes. A single evaluation where the European Approach has been applied by an EQAR-registered quality assurance organisation is sufficient for the programme to be accredited in all countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) where accreditation is mandatory and where the European Approach is applied.

The methodology is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the EHEA Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA). The approach defines standards based on the use of tools agreed upon within the EHEA, without applying additional national criteria. It aims to facilitate quality assurance of the programmes as a whole in line with their character as joint programmes. The approach was adopted in 2015 by the ministers of the EHEA.

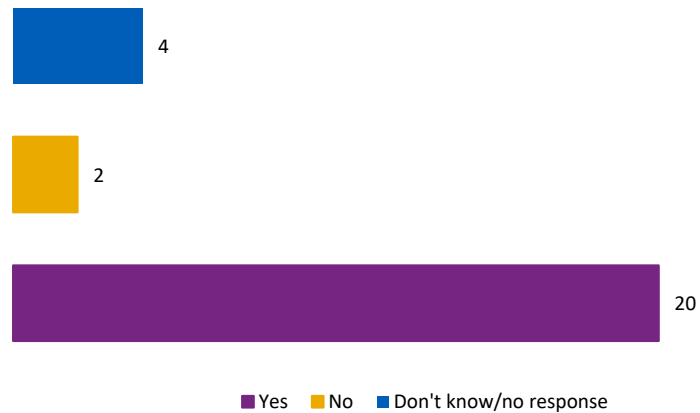
More information on the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes can be found on the EQAR website.³¹

Quality assurance of joint programmes often does not cover the entire programme

In the survey, the HEIs were asked whether quality assurance had been done for the joint programme in accordance with European standards and guidelines. Virtually all HEIs answered that this was the case. Two answered no to the question, one HEI answered that they did not know, and three gave no answer.

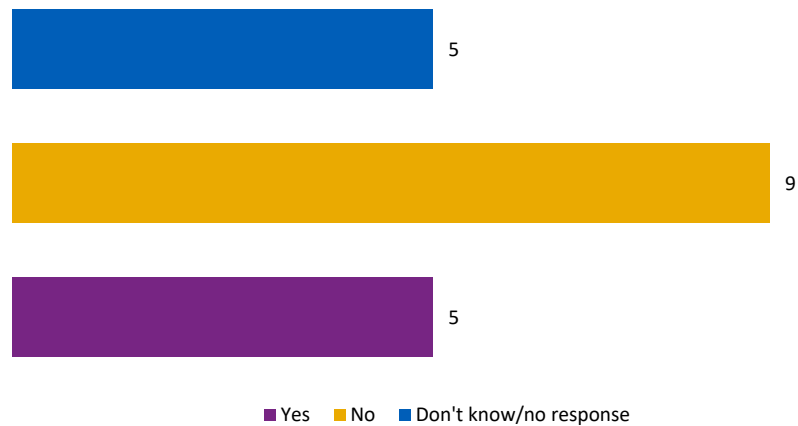
³¹ The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes, The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/> (retrieved 2024-03-25).

Figure 8: Has quality assurance of the joint programme been done, or will quality assurance be done, in accordance with ESG?



When asked if the programme has been developed in accordance with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the HEIs provide fewer definitive responses. KTH Royal Institute of Technology responded that the criteria for the European Approach are generally followed when joint programmes are first developed, but that the European Approach has not been used for the accreditation of joint programmes. Other HEIs, including Linnaeus University and Stockholm University, stated that it is too early in the process to answer the question. Still others, including Stockholm University of the Arts and Örebro University, stated that they intend to perform quality assurance of joint programmes, or see it as a beneficial step if the future development of the programmes takes place according to the European Approach. Mälardalen University stated that it is unsure whether it will use the European Approach.

Figure 9: Was the programme developed in accordance with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes?³²



During the interview with Stockholm University, it was noted that low awareness of the European Approach is an obstacle for joint programmes, but that it is working within its European Universities alliance to raise awareness. The University of Gothenburg stated that it has not used the European Approach for its programmes, while KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that the use of the European Approach is decided on a case-by-case basis.

Three HEIs, the University of Borås, Mälardalen University and Mid Sweden University, stated that the coordinator role, and thus central responsibility for the development and quality assurance of the programmes, lies with other HEIs. They therefore found it difficult to definitively answer the questions. Mid Sweden University said that they have attempted to elevate issues related to quality assurance within the collaboration, but that it has been difficult to push for change if the HEI that has the main responsibility for quality assurance already has an established process for the development of programmes.

During the interviews, Uppsala University, the University of Gothenburg and the University of Gävle described that the quality assurance of the joint programmes in which they are involved tends to take place in a process where each participating HEI performs quality assurance for the courses for which they are responsible.

The University of Gothenburg went into more detail, stating that quality assurance varies between the different programmes in which they participate. If they coordinate a programme by themselves, quality assurance is largely done according to procedures for the university's own quality assurance work. The University of Gothenburg reported that

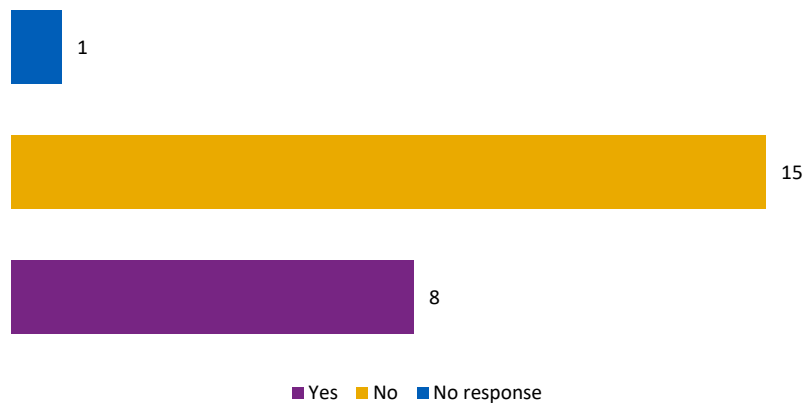
³² Note that in the figure, we have only reported the responses for the HEIs that responded that they have joint programmes.

it has not used the European Approach in its programmes, and accreditation is mostly done on the national level. According to the university, there may be a need for a centralised quality assurance process of joint programmes with a joint degree, but not for those with a double or multiple degree.

In the interview, KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that they are currently engaged in discussions on the need for quality assurance of joint programmes as a whole. They link this to questions about ensuring the internal cohesion of the programme, managing changes in a course at an HEI and avoiding overlap between courses.

In the interview with Stockholm University, the university stated that they do not have a definite answer on how the quality assurance of their joint programmes should be done. However, as mentioned above, they are working to increase knowledge of the European Approach within their European Universities alliance. They also pointed out that many member universities within the Civis alliance have previously worked with joint programmes, which is a positive, but they have not worked specifically with HEIs in Sweden.

Figure 10: Has the joint programme been assessed by any quality assurance organisation?³³



Several HEIs, including Karlstad University, the University of Gothenburg and Lund University, responded that quality assurance for joint programmes is done at the national and local level, in the same way as the HEIs' other programmes. One HEI (KTH Royal Institute of Technology) stated that quality assurance is done through an internal process within their European Universities alliance Unite!. Södertörn University stated that joint programmes are reviewed by the faculty board at the university. Only two HEIs, the University of Borås and

³³ Note that in the figure, we have only reported the responses for the HEIs that responded that they have joint programmes.

Mälardalen University, stated that joint programmes are evaluated exclusively by external auditors, namely the French Commission de Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI) and the European Foundation of Management Development (EFMD).

Challenges, obstacles and benefits of joint programmes

Of the nineteen HEIs that reported that they offer joint programmes, virtually all stated that they have encountered obstacles or challenges when establishing and implementing joint programmes. Many HEIs stated that there are perceived obstacles due to differences between the different countries' education systems and national regulations. It is reportedly an arduous task to find a balance between these factors when offering joint programmes.

When establishing and setting up a joint programme, HEIs encounter a number of different obstacles that need to be resolved jointly within the collaboration. In most cases, these obstacles are related to administrative regulations for admission, degree requirements, degree certificates, the design and duration of the education programme, the academic calendar and funding.³⁴

In some respects, challenges and obstacles are also related to the actual quality assurance of the joint programmes. When HEIs described perceived legal obstacles in their work with joint programmes, a recurring theme was differences in national legislation and local regulations, which was also mentioned in other areas of the survey. Several HEIs reported that the process of identifying, investigating and addressing these differences can be extensive and resource intensive. Stockholm University of the Arts reported that it can be problematic if participating countries do not recognize each other's quality assurance systems, as they feel it is unnecessary for a single programme to be evaluated by several different countries. As several HEIs described, the coordination and harmonisation of regulations needed for this process can also be a significant challenge.

Differences in admission rules and degree requirements create significant challenges for many HEIs.

In their survey responses, many HEIs state that the admission process for joint programmes is challenging. Since HEIs that intend to offer a

³⁴ For a more comprehensive description of these aspects of the HEIs' work with joint programmes, see the Swedish Council for Higher Education: *Svenska lärosätens deltagande i Europauniversitet – Möjligheter och utmaningar för lärosäten och högre utbildning i Sverige*. (Swedish higher education institutions' participation in the European Universities initiative – Opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions and higher education in Sweden).

joint programme usually have different rules for admission, they need to agree on the rules for admission to the joint programme in a consortium agreement. In the interview with Uppsala University, the university emphasised that the process is easier if the participating countries have similar national regulations in the area in question, as there are so many different aspects where the parties are required to have a similar system. However, the university stated that it is never possible to completely hand over admission decisions to another HEI and that, in practice, they always need to perform some form of review of students who are admitted.

Degree requirements are another area that several HEIs identifies as a challenge. In the survey, KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that since joint programmes are required to meet degree requirements at a number of different HEIs in different countries, it can be a significant challenge to include the courses they want within the framework of the degree. As an example, they refer to courses in language, culture and entrepreneurship. In the survey, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences emphasises that regulations are often incompatible and that this leads to an additional administrative burden.

It is clear that many HEIs find it particularly challenging to create a joint programme with a joint degree. The survey shows that several HEIs have instead invested in double or multiple degree programmes, because this has proven to be easier to implement. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, which is a partner in four different master's programmes with international partners, has chosen to offer its students a double degree, as they have found it to be impossible to offer these education programmes with a joint degree.

Higher quality education programmes through a broader competence base – benefits of joint programmes

The HEIs that participated in interviews were also asked about their views on the positive aspects of joint programmes. Several mentioned the potential benefits of a broader knowledge base and the expertise available at different HEIs. As Stockholm University put it, this allows them to offer "more, very exciting programmes". In addition, the HEIs state that it allows researchers to be linked in research collaborations.

In the interview, the University of Gothenburg reported that collaboration in the joint programme allows the university to offer its students an education programme where they gain experience that they would not otherwise have access to and which they could not offer as an individual university. The University of Gävle also held a similar view and believes that by gathering different strengths and expertise in a collaboration that includes a joint programme, it is possible to raise the

quality of the education programme and create a greater benefit for the students.

KTH Royal Institute of Technology stated that the group of students who apply for joint programmes, especially international programmes, tend to be very ambitious and have a high completion rate. They also enter the labour market very quickly after completing their studies. According to the university, this group of students is attractive to employers.

Uppsala University stated that it is very beneficial to allow a joint programme to develop over time, so that teachers have the opportunity to systematically develop the programme. In addition, it is an advantage if the initiative comes from within the operation rather than from the top down. This creates greater opportunities for the programme to survive and develop over the long term. Uppsala University also believes that positive momentum can be built if you start by developing courses and micro-credentials that can grow into joint programmes over the long term.

During the interview with KTH Royal Institute of Technology, it was expressed that developing joint programmes is certainly not an easy task, but the constant quest to find solutions to a wide array of problems in order to arrive at a joint programme leads to a situation where they are "forced to develop". In other words, it is a process that is often labour-intensive but that ultimately leads to the development of a joint programme.

Reflections and conclusions

In this report, we have provided an account of Swedish HEIs' experiences of transnational quality assurance within their respective alliances in the European Universities initiative and of joint programmes. In this chapter, we will reflect on the results that emerged in this process and offer conclusions based on the Swedish Higher Education Authority's (UKÄ) assignment on quality assurance of the Swedish HEIs' activities and our exchange with other quality assurance organisations in Europe. We also present three proposals to the Government regarding the exploration of the possibilities to perform transnational quality assurance in Sweden and to strengthen the opportunities for Swedish HEIs to establish and implement joint programmes.

Inherent differences between European Universities alliances

The European Universities alliances that include Swedish universities and university colleges differ in several respects. They are set up in different ways and have different levels of collaboration. And based on these differences, they have developed in different directions.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area apply to all higher education programmes offered within the EHEA, regardless of the mode of study or where the education programme is physically offered, including transnational collaborations. However, in our report, we can state that a majority of the alliances have not yet developed joint quality assurance policies, although there are some exceptions. This shows that there is a certain degree of variation in the way the alliances approach their quality assurance work.

Quality is context-specific, and the HEIs that are part of European Universities alliances have all presented explanations for the approaches they have adopted in their respective alliances. At the same time, the alliances that have joint policies or similar documents related to quality assurance are working to create structures for the division of responsibilities and processes for quality assurance, though these systems are not fully developed or not yet applied in practice. A common feature of the alliances is that the issue of quality assurance is characterized by an ambition for mutual trust and confidence.

The opportunities and conditions for students and doctoral students to influence the alliances also differ between the different alliances. Based

on our findings, several challenges stand out in relation to student representation and ensuring continuous and meaningful participation on an equal and democratic basis. In addition, student and doctoral student representatives are not consistently compensated for their time and their commitment to the development of the alliances. It is important that this area is prioritised in order for students and doctoral students to be able to act as co-creators in achieving the goals of the alliances and the goals of the European Universities initiative.

Many alliances have not yet developed processes for communicating and utilising the results of their quality assurance work. Processes need to be developed to apply the results of quality assurance in strategy decisions. At the same time, few HEIs reported having concrete plans for the evaluation of the alliances' joint education programmes, and differences in national and local rules exacerbate this problem. Different views on quality assurance between collaborating HEIs also make it difficult to carry out systematic quality assurance activities in a way that is accepted by all stakeholders. Quality assurance can be a resource-intensive process, and HEIs with less resources find it challenging to meet the requirements imposed by the Commission. The Swedish Council for Higher Education addresses this issue in more depth in its report and submits proposals to the Government for future funding in the European Universities initiative.³⁵

One success factor that was cited by a number of Swedish universities and university colleges, which the UKÄ also recognizes in the descriptions from other HEIs in Europe,³⁶ is the ability to thoroughly analyse the partner HEIs' quality assurance systems in relation to ESG at an early stage of the collaboration. This approach can create better conditions for mutual trust and confidence and facilitate the establishment of joint processes for quality assurance. It can also result in quality assurance work that is less resource-intensive.

The UKÄ is limited in its quality assurance of Swedish HEIs' international activities

Within the alliances, quality assurance, which in this context is a form of transnational quality assurance, is closely linked to external transnational quality assurance. For a number of reasons, the UKÄ is unable to act in the transnational European education arena by performing reviews outside Sweden's borders. Furthermore, the UKÄ is unable to acknowledge the results of reviews of Swedish HEIs performed by other

³⁵ Swedish Council for Higher Education. *Svenska lärosätens deltagande i Europauniversitet – Möjligheter och utmaningar för lärosäten och högre utbildning i Sverige*. (Swedish higher education institutions' participation in the European Universities initiative – Opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions and higher education in Sweden).

³⁶ Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) provided examples of this: Lisbeth Opendacker (University of Antwerp), Aleksandra Deluka Tibljas (University of Rijeka) and Dusko Pavletic (University of Rijeka). Building a sustainable quality assurance system for university alliances: the YUFE approach, lecture during the European Quality Assurance Forum 2023-11-24.

quality assurance organisations. In order to enable this, changes are needed, particularly changes to the authority's government instructions, but also regulatory and legislative changes at multiple levels.

For this reason, the UKÄ does not perform any transnational quality reviews. However, due to the participation of Swedish HEIs in the European Universities initiative, there are overlaps with the national quality assurance system. This situation can create an increased workload for Swedish universities and university colleges, and both Sweden and the UKÄ will have less influence because, despite registration in EQAR, we can neither be selected as a quality assurance agency by Swedish HEIs nor foreign HEIs. There is a risk that Swedish HEIs will choose not to coordinate within alliances and joint programmes, and that Sweden will fall behind in this area.

For increased integration into European higher education, increased coordination and recognition are needed

The results from our study show that there is currently a need for increased collaboration between quality assurance organisations, harmonisation between the national quality assurance systems and regulations that facilitate quality assurance across national borders. Mutual recognition of the results of external quality assurance and accreditation is also in line with the objectives of the Bologna Process. At the same time, it has been expressed that it should be possible to adapt quality assurance processes to the subject of the review. This is evident, for example, in reports that parts of the European Approach are applied (rather than the whole) to better suit the joint programme. The custom application of this approach creates a balancing act between international standards and requires sensitivity to specific institutional contexts, where HEIs, the UKÄ and the Swedish Government need to highlight Sweden's areas of strength.

The European Commission's European Strategy for Universities and the HEIs' response to this strategy indicate that transnational collaborations in education and research will become increasingly integrated in the future. This will require a coordinated effort between HEIs, authorities and other stakeholders in the education sector in order to support the move towards more effective transnational quality assurance.

Strong interest in joint programmes among Swedish HEIs

Nineteen Swedish HEIs have been included in joint programmes and seven more HEIs are planning to establish joint programmes. This corresponds to two out of three universities and university colleges in Sweden. Most often, the joint programmes that are currently offered lead

to a double or multiple degree, but some programmes lead to a joint degree.

The survey responses show that HEIs are seeking increased collaboration through joint programmes, but that there are several challenges related to both the establishment and implementation of these programmes. The challenges primarily relate to differences in administrative procedures and regulations, but in some cases, to quality assurance processes. However, despite the challenges, the HEIs we interviewed described several advantages offered by joint programmes, not least in terms of raising the quality of their education programmes.

The results show that there is a need for simplified administrative processes and regulations to facilitate the establishment and implementation of joint programmes. The results also highlight the importance of cooperation and dialogue between HEIs, quality assurance organisations and governments in order to overcome legal and administrative barriers that limit the development and integration of European higher education.

Success requires adaptation to different regulations and systems

The ability to navigate and adapt to different national regulations and quality assurance systems is crucial for successfully establishing and implementing joint programmes. This requires a long-term commitment from all HEIs that are included in the programme's consortium, where clear responsibilities and communication are needed to overcome both initial challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the programmes. When HEIs succeed, positive effects are felt in a number of different areas. For example, the quality of education programmes improves as resources can be pooled efficiently and research collaborations are strengthened and closely linked to the education environment.

The European Approach is rarely used for external quality assurance of joint programmes

The European Approach is designed to facilitate the quality assurance of joint programmes, with a particular emphasis on the “joint” features. However, our report shows that the European Approach is seldom used, or that HEIs pick and choose parts of the approach to create specially designed evaluations that are better suited to the HEIs included in the collaboration. This is also an effect that the UKÄ recognises from the descriptions and presentations from the foreign HEIs we have

encountered within the framework of our external monitoring and international engagement.³⁷

Given that Swedish HEIs have shown a high degree of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), it is a bit unexpected that the application of the European Approach is not as consistent in the external transnational quality assurance of joint programmes. At the same time, the Swedish HEIs' survey responses show that there is a relatively low level of awareness of the European Approach among Swedish universities and university colleges and of the intended benefits of the approach in the external quality assurance of joint programmes.

Transnational quality assurance is already being done in Sweden

Quality assurance organisations based in other countries are already operating in Sweden and have carried out reviews using the European Approach. In EQAR's database, DEQAR, where registered quality assurance organisations report their review results, there are results published from six other quality assurance organisations (in addition to the UKÄ) from reviews in Sweden.³⁸ The aforementioned French Commission de Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI), which is registered in EQAR, and the Brussels-based European Foundation of Management Development (EFMD), which is not registered in EQAR, have not reported results in DEQAR. The reviews they have carried out in Sweden have therefore not been published.

Three of the reviews published in DEQAR that were performed by foreign quality assurance organisations used a different methodology than the European Approach:

- The German Quality Assurance Organisation *Zentrale Evaluations und Akkreditierungsagentur* (ZEVA) reviewed a programme offered by the World Maritime University in 2015.
- The Brussels-based European Organisation Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) reviewed two programmes offered by Lund University in 2019.
- The German organisation the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN e.V.) reviewed a joint programme at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in 2020.

³⁷ Examples of this were given by the 4EU+ European University Alliance: Sonja Kiko (Heidelberg University) and CHARM European University: Meritxell Chaves (University of Barcelona). Quality Assurance in European University Alliances, lecture during the European Quality Assurance Forum 2023-11-24.

³⁸ Reporting of review results to the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) is carried out on the quality assurance organisations' own initiative. The extent of external quality assurance of the activities of Swedish universities and university colleges by foreign quality assurance organisations may therefore be underreported.

In three known cases, the European Approach has been applied in Sweden by foreign quality assurance organisations. These cases concern a review of a joint programme offered by Uppsala University and seven other HEIs, where the Spanish quality assurance organisation Agency for Quality of the Basque University System (Unibasq) was hired to perform the review. The French quality assurance organisation High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) was hired for the review of a joint programme offered by Stockholm University and two other HEIs. The Spanish quality assurance organisation Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU) was hired for the review of a joint programme offered by the University of Gävle and two other HEIs.

When a Swedish HEI engages a foreign quality assurance organisation to perform an external review, the UKÄ is usually only aware when the results of the review are published in DEQAR. This is despite the fact that the European Approach emphasises that the organisation chosen by the HEIs to perform the review should communicate with relevant organisations that primarily operate in the areas where the HEIs are based.

Our proposals and our assessment

Based on the results in this report, the Swedish Higher Education Authority proposes that the Government take the initiative to review

- Swedish regulations and procedures that make it difficult to participate in and implement joint programmes.
- options for the UKÄ to carry out reviews outside Sweden in accordance with the Bologna Process.
- the possibility that Sweden can recognise reviews carried out by other EQAR-registered organisations in accordance with the Bologna Process.

The proposals are presented in more detail below. The review of the above areas should include impact assessments for the UKÄ's assignments and UHR's assignments and the regulations that govern these.

In addition to the proposals, the UKÄ assesses that:

- The UKÄ needs to establish procedures for receiving information from foreign quality assurance organisations concerning reviews that will be carried out in Sweden and concerning decisions on review results.
- Swedish HEIs need to increase their knowledge of transnational quality assurance processes linked to joint programmes.

Since, in most cases, the UKÄ is unaware when transnational quality assurance is carried out in Sweden, we need to develop procedures in the

short term for receiving information from foreign quality assurance organisations about upcoming reviews that include the activities of Swedish HEIs. We should also have procedures in place to receive information about the results of these reviews. The UKÄ also needs to be able to communicate results within the framework of its international engagement.

In order to raise the level of knowledge of transnational quality assurance processes, HEIs should consider offering professional development opportunities to its employees. This is already being done by some HEIs that are participating in alliances in the European Universities initiative, and we want to highlight this practice as a good example.

A review of Swedish regulations and procedures that make it difficult to participate in and implement joint programmes.

Within the framework of their degree-awarding powers, Swedish universities and university colleges generally find it easier to establish new programmes than their counterparts in other countries and, in some areas, legislation is more flexible in Sweden. Nevertheless, HEIs face several challenges linked to transnational joint programmes due to restrictive national regulations and the incomplete implementation of the Bologna Tools at the national level.³⁹

In the survey responses and in our conversations with the HEIs, we have gathered more information and identified concrete examples of laws and regulations that could be reviewed to facilitate the implementation of joint programmes with the participation of Swedish HEIs. Several examples are provided in this report and in the Swedish Council for Higher Education's report on its government assignment.⁴⁰ This applies to the academic calendar, admission rules, the design of degree certificates, degree requirements and funding, among other things. The Council of the European Union has recommended that member states make it easier for HEIs cooperating in transnational educational programmes to offer joint programmes and award joint degrees.⁴¹

³⁹ European Commission, Gerda Burneikaitė, Donatas Pocius, Elizaveta Potapova et al. The road towards a possible joint European degree: identifying opportunities and investigating the impact and feasibility of different approaches: final report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU, 2023. pp. 27–30, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/945147> (retrieved 2024-04-02).

⁴⁰ Swedish Council for Higher Education. *Svenska lärosätens deltagande i Europauniversitet – Möjligheter och utmaningar för lärosäten och högre utbildning i Sverige*. (Swedish higher education institutions' participation in the European Universities initiative – Opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions and higher education in Sweden).

⁴¹ Council of the European Union. Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (2022/C 160/01). Brussels: Council of the European Union, 2022.

We therefore propose that the Government take the initiative to review Swedish regulations and procedures that make it difficult to participate in and implement joint programmes.

A review of the options for the UKÄ to carry out reviews outside Sweden in accordance with the Bologna Process

The UKÄ has been registered in EQAR since spring 2021 but has a limited ability to act within the European Higher Education Area as it is not authorised to carry out transnational reviews. In order for the UKÄ to be able to carry out actions on the international level, changes are required, particularly changes to the authority's government instructions (2012:810), but also regulatory and legislative changes at multiple levels. We propose that the Government take the initiative to review the options for the UKÄ to carry out reviews outside Sweden in accordance with the Bologna Process. This change may mean that Sweden will have an increased engagement and influence in the European arena for external quality assurance, which will benefit the development of Swedish HEIs. If the UKÄ is able to carry out reviews outside Sweden in accordance with the Bologna Process, it can also help reduce the administrative burden on HEIs and strengthen the ongoing integration between European countries within higher education and research.

A review of the opportunity for Sweden to recognise reviews carried out by other EQAR-registered organisations in accordance with the Bologna Process

Swedish HEIs that are part of transnational joint programmes or alliances in the European Universities initiative may need to undergo double reviews, as the quality assurance carried out by another EQAR-registered quality assurance organisation cannot replace a review carried out by the UKÄ. This is because Sweden does not recognise the review results of other quality assurance organisations. At present, this limitation is not comprehensive, but it may be in the future given developments within the EHEA and the EU.

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process is to promote European cooperation in quality assurance. Therefore, the implementation of quality assurance systems that are in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) is a step in the right direction. At the same time, Sweden's recognition of higher education qualifications from other countries within the European Higher Education Area has progressed significantly further than the recognition of review results from quality assurance processes carried out by quality assurance organisations that comply with ESG. The reason for this is that the Riksdag has ratified the Lisbon

Convention⁴² and the principles of mutual recognition are acknowledged by the Government in the Higher Education Ordinance⁴³

We therefore propose that the Government take the initiative to review the possibility that Sweden can recognise reviews carried out by other EQAR-registered organisations in accordance with the Bologna Process. Such a change could mean that Swedish universities and university colleges will not need to be reviewed in dual review processes that apply similar methods and criteria. The Government's review could also help reduce the administrative burden of Swedish HEIs and strengthen the integration between European countries in higher education and research. The review is in line with the communiqués that the responsible Swedish government minister co-authored and adopted in Bucharest in 2012,⁴⁴ Yerevan in 2015⁴⁵ and Rome in 2020.⁴⁶

The UKÄ continues its work on transnational quality assurance

This report is the first publication that includes the results of the Swedish Higher Education Authority's project on transnational quality assurance. The next step in our work will explore future scenarios, or cases, that are based on policy developments in internationalization and increased integration of European higher education. Based on these scenarios, the UKÄ will investigate what adaptations can be made within the existing national regulatory framework and review a number of potential developments within the EHEA that would require changes in regulations at different levels.

The UKÄ will continue to monitor and influence developments in quality assurance at the European level, for example, within the framework of its membership in ENQA.

⁴² Government Offices of Sweden. *Sveriges internationella överenskommelser: No. 46 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region - Lisbon Recognition Convention of 11 April 1997, (SÖ 2001:46)*. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, 2001.

⁴³ SFS 1993:100. Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 6.

⁴⁴ European Higher Education Area Ministerial Conference. *Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Bucharest Communiqué*. 2012.

⁴⁵ European Higher Education Area Ministerial Conference. *Yerevan Communiqué*. 2015.

⁴⁶ European Higher Education Area Ministerial Conference. *Rome Ministerial Communiqué*. 2020.

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The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet – UKÄ) is to contribute to strengthening Swedish higher education and Sweden as a knowledge society. We review the quality of higher education programmes; we analyse and follow-up trends within higher education and we monitor the rights of students.

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