

# Work Report 2003

Report Period: January to December 2003

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## Preface

The system of accrediting degree programmes established in Germany in 1999 resulted in structural changes, revealed existing weaknesses and – though not yet to the desired extent – contributed to the curricular development and to the improvement of the quality of degree programmes. The speed of the system's growth now suggests that a consolidation phase is desirable. On the other hand, the system currently faces a number of challenges which are calling for a degree of reorientation.

After the work of the Akkreditierungsrat<sup>1</sup> had been evaluated by an international group of experts<sup>2</sup> in 2001 and the decision to assure the quality of degree programmes through accreditation was judged as an important component in the modernisation of the German higher education system and an appropriate response to the challenges of international competition,<sup>3</sup> the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)<sup>4</sup> adopted a resolution in favour of the continuation of the accreditation system.<sup>5</sup> The KMK resolution "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions"<sup>6</sup> placed the accreditation system, initially established for a trial period of three years, on a permanent basis. Covering the period from 1 January through to 31 December 2003, the report at hand provides an account of the first year of operations subsequent to the enactment of the organisational statute which governs the membership, roles and affiliation of the Akkreditierungsrat.

Bonn, June 2004

Hans-Uwe Erichsen

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<sup>1</sup> German Accreditation Council

<sup>2</sup> The members of the audit team "Evaluation des Akkreditierungsrates" were: Dr. Stephan Bieri, Delegate and Vice-President of the ETH Council; Dr. Harry Brinkman, President of the Free University of Amsterdam retd.; Professor Dr. Evelies Mayer, Minister of State retd., TU Darmstadt; Professor Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, Rector of the ETH Zurich; Professor Dr. Winfried Schulze, Chairman of the German Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat), retd.

<sup>3</sup> Bieri, Stephan; Brinkman, Harry; Mayer, Evelies; Osterwalder, Konrad; Schulze, Winfried: Bericht der Gutachtergruppe "Evaluation des Akkreditierungsrates", Freiburg im Breisgau 2001

<sup>4</sup> Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany

<sup>5</sup> KMK resolution: "Future development of quality assurance in Germany across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 1 March 2003, sub-para. 3.1.

<sup>6</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 24 May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004)



## 1. Members / Approach

Membership of the Akkreditierungsrat has numbered 17 since 2003: the membership is made up of four representatives of higher education institutions, four Länder<sup>7</sup> representatives, five representatives of professional practice (including one representative of the Länder ministries responsible for civil service and employment legislation), two students, two international representatives. The members of the Akkreditierungsrat were jointly appointed by the KMK and the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Organisational Statute<sup>9</sup> the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat have to be members of the group of higher education institutions or of the group of Länder representatives; they must not belong to the same group. The Rules of Procedure for the Akkreditierungsrat were revised in accordance with the provisions of the Statute. The constituent assembly held subsequent to the enactment of the Organisational Statute, with its newly-appointed membership, elected Professor Dr. Hans-Uwe Erichsen as Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat and State Secretary Dr. Uwe Reinhardt as its Deputy Chairman. Following Dr. Reinhardt's retirement from the Akkreditierungsrat, Senator Jörg Dräger Ph.D. was elected to the office of Deputy Chairman.

In the year under report, the Akkreditierungsrat convened seven times to discuss current topics and questions relating to accreditation and to adopt resolutions on the system's continuing development. To prepare individual resolutions or to address various questions in greater detail, Akkreditierungsrat Workgroups were set up which did not only include members of the Akkreditierungsrat itself, but also representatives of the agencies and external experts.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Federal Republic of Germany is made up of 16 federal states (Länder).

<sup>8</sup> German Rectors' Conference

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, sub-para II.6. Sect. 1

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 2.3 for more information on the workgroups.

## 2. Statutory Roles<sup>11</sup> / Role Fulfilment

### 2.1 Definition of the Minimum Standards for Accreditation Processes

The minimum standards which the Akkreditierungsrat sets for accreditation processes relate to the organisation, procedures, criteria and frames of reference of an accreditation process which leads to a case-by-case (individual) decision.

The state defines which degree programmes are subjected to accreditation. Degree programmes leading to a Bachelor's or Master's degree in accordance with Article 19 of the Hochschulrahmengesetz (HRG)<sup>12</sup> continue, as in the past, to be subject to accreditation. Since the beginning of 2003, newly-established Diplom and Magister degree courses in subject areas for which no framework examination regulations exist or where current framework regulations are outdated are also subject to obligatory accreditation.<sup>13</sup>

#### 2.1.1 General accreditation guidelines

A fundamental task of the Akkreditierungsrat involves the continuing development of criteria and standards serving as guidelines for case-by-case decision-making in the accreditation process. Based on the "Structural guidelines for the introduction of study courses leading to the degrees Bachelor/Bakkalaureus and Master/Magister"<sup>14</sup>, as valid at the time, the Akkreditierungsrat in 1999 developed general guidelines in the form of minimum standards and criteria<sup>15</sup> and in the form of a Frame of Reference for Bachelor's/Master's programmes, as adopted in 2001,<sup>16</sup> which the agencies implement in processes that lead to a case-by-case accreditation decision. With respect to the guidelines which the disciplinary societies, faculty and departmental conferences drew up, the Akkreditierungsrat, in agreement with the KMK, pointed out that there must be no abstractly-set, disciplinary-contentual guidelines; rather the mutually-corresponding, disciplinary equivalence of academic performance, examination achievements and degrees must, in accordance with Article 9 HRG, be assured by a review report that has been produced as part of the peer-review process. In order to

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<sup>11</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 24 May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004), sub-para. II.4.

<sup>12</sup> German Higher Education Act

<sup>13</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 24 May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004, amendment relates to the quoted passage!), sub-para. I.2. sect. 2

<sup>14</sup> KMK resolution, 5 March 1999 as amended on 14 December 2001

<sup>15</sup> Akkreditierungsrat resolution: "Accrediting Accreditation Agencies and Accrediting Degree Programmes leading to Bakkalaureus/Bachelor's and Magister/Master's Degrees - Basic Standards and Criteria", as amended on 30 November 1999, last amended on 17 December 1999

<sup>16</sup> Akkreditierungsrat resolution: "Frame of Reference for Bachelor's/Bakkalaureus and Master's/Magister Degree Courses", 20 June 2001

promote the mutual and reciprocal exchange of information and to utilise the potential of the faculty conferences for accreditations (e.g. by establishing pools of reviewers), regular talks were held with representatives of the faculty conferences; a corresponding exchange with the departmental conferences is also to be commenced in 2004.

With its resolution of October 2003, the KMK presented "Common structural guidelines of the Länder as set out in Article 9 Clause 2 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study courses"<sup>17</sup>, which replace the structural guidelines dating from 1999/2001. In connection with this, the Akkreditierungsrat was given responsibility, also under consideration of international developments, for drawing up criteria for degree programme profiles. A corresponding draft of descriptors for the classification of Master's programme profiles as "more research-oriented" respectively "more practice-oriented" was drawn up by an Akkreditierungsrat workgroup (AG BA/MA) in 2003; the workgroup had been commissioned with examining the continuing development of criteria for the accreditation of Bachelor's/Master's programmes.

By the end of the period under report, 178 Bachelor's and 228 Master's programmes, equating to a total of 406 degree programmes run in line with the new two-cycle system, had been accredited. The average length of the accreditation process was 5.5 months. 18 accreditation applications resulted in a negative decision. Accreditations for more than 600 further programmes were currently in progress. Only a fraction of the submitted accreditation applications passed through the process unchanged; in the majority of accreditations, the successful conclusion was only assured after intensive continuing consultation with the agencies.

In accordance with the target definition contained in the Berlin Communiqué, namely "that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge",<sup>18</sup> the Akkreditierungsrat decided to make it an accreditation requirement for degree programmes to issue a Diploma Supplement to all graduates.

#### 2.1.2 Determining whether a degree qualifies holders for positions in the higher civil service

An accreditation may be accompanied by the determination that an academic degree qualifies holders for entry into the higher civil service.<sup>19</sup> As far as the required process to

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<sup>17</sup> KMK resolution, 10 October 2003

<sup>18</sup> "Realising the European Higher Education Area", Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003

<sup>19</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 24 May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004), sub-para III.11. sect. 3

determine whether the educational standards of Master's degrees gained at Fachhochschule universities of applied sciences qualify holders for entry into the higher civil service, the Akkreditierungsrat adopted a ruling, based on an agreement reached between the IMK<sup>20</sup> and the KMK in October 2002; this ruling was modified by resolution at the 32nd session held on 13 May 2003.<sup>21</sup> Around 30 of the Master's programmes accredited in the year under report were found to meet the requirements for entry into the higher civil service; a representative from the supreme administrative authorities responsible for the civil service career path participated in all these accreditations. To date, no application for determining that a degree qualifies holders for entry into the higher civil service has been rejected; cooperation with the representatives of the administrative authorities in accreditation processes to determine whether a degree is a suitable qualification for the higher civil service has in most cases been quick and cooperative.

### 2.1.3 Including other degree programmes in the accreditation process

As far as the field of state-regulated degree courses (especially teaching, medicine, law), degree courses leading to a church degree as well as artistic degree courses awarded by colleges of art and music are concerned, special arrangements remain in force according to the KMK common structural guidelines<sup>22</sup> which were not issued by the KMK in the year under report. This means that these degree courses are not yet included in the accreditation process. However, the Akkreditierungsrat drew the KMK's attention to the fact that a specialist-subject oriented, polyvalent Bachelor's programme run within the scope of a two-cycle teacher training programme already had to be accredited by the agencies on the basis of the usual criteria.

In the opinion of the Akkreditierungsrat, the decision reached by the conference of ministers responsible for higher education in Berlin on 18 and 19 September 2003 to include doctoral training as the third cycle of the Bologna Process<sup>23</sup> raises a large number of questions which still need to be thoroughly discussed. Nevertheless, applications already received by the agencies from universities for the accreditation of doctoral programmes show the need for doctoral training also to be subjected to a quality assurance process. In view of this finding, the Akkreditierungsrat made it clear to the HRK and KMK that the questions raised by the

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IMK and KMK resolution: "Zugang zu den Laufbahnen des höheren Dienstes durch Masterabschlüsse an Fachhochschulen", 6 July 2002 respectively 24 May 2002

<sup>20</sup> Innenministerkonferenz (IMK): Standing Conference of Ministers of the Interior

<sup>21</sup> Akkreditierungsrat resolution: "Zur Feststellung der laufbahnrechtlichen Zuordnung der Masterabschlüsse an Fachhochschulen im Akkreditierungsverfahren", adopted on 7 October 2002, amended on 13 May 2003

<sup>22</sup> KMK resolution: "Common structural guidelines of the Länder as set out in Article 9 Clause 2 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study courses", 10 October 2003

<sup>23</sup> "Realising the European Higher Education Area", Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003



inclusion of doctoral training into the Bologna Process needed to be addressed and discussed.

#### 2.1.4 Reaccrediting degree programmes

Since in all cases the quality certificate (*Qualitätssiegel*) of the Akkreditierungsrat is only awarded for a limited period (maximum: standard time to degree plus two years), reaccreditation by the agencies of the first round of degree programmes will become due in the foreseeable future. This is why the Akkreditierungsrat has opened talks on the measures which need to be observed by the agencies when they carry out reaccreditations. A corresponding resolution is in preparation for 2004.

#### 2.1.5 Relationship between evaluation and accreditation

At several of its sessions, the Akkreditierungsrat addressed the question of how and to what extent the accreditation workload could be reduced. In response to this point, the KMK in its resolution on the future development of quality assurance in Germany across the Länder and across higher education institutions<sup>24</sup> had recommended the inclusion of available and recently-produced evaluation findings into the accreditation process, but had, at the same time, pointed out that all efforts to reduce the procedural load would face limitations where an assessment based on a well-founded, disciplinary-contentual review of the to-be-accredited programme could no longer be guaranteed. It was, the KMK continued, absolutely essential for the accreditation decision to be underpinned by transparent and reliable review processes.

In line with this, the Akkreditierungsrat clearly stated in its resolution on the relationship between evaluation and accreditation<sup>25</sup> that evaluations and accreditations are carried out in separate processes in accordance with their differing objectives and are decided by different bodies, although synergies should certainly be used. This applies in particular when the evaluation findings were produced in accordance with the criteria of the Akkreditierungsrat.

## 2.2 Accrediting and Reaccrediting Agencies

Responsibility for the performance of the decentralised accreditation system in Germany lay and lies with the Akkreditierungsrat. It fulfils this responsibility by accrediting accreditation agencies. Accredited agencies receive the temporary right to accredit degree programmes

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<sup>24</sup> KMK resolution, 1 March 2002, sub-para. 3.5

<sup>25</sup> Akkreditierungsrat resolution: "Resolution on the Relationship between Evaluation and Accreditation", adopted on 30 November 1999, amended on 5 December 2003

(by awarding the quality certificate (*Qualitätssiegel*) of the Akkreditierungsrat). Further, the Akkreditierungsrat monitors the agencies' fulfilment of their responsibilities and periodically reaccredits agencies.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.2.1 Accrediting and reaccrediting German agencies

The Akkreditierungsrat appoints rapporteurs from among its members for each accreditation or reaccreditation of an agency. These rapporteurs support and advise the agencies in the application process and, after successful accreditation, accompany the work of the individual agencies. They have the right, in agreement with the respective agency, to attend meetings of the agency's decision-making body or to attend, as guests, the review sessions held during accreditations.

In the period under report, the Akkreditierungsrat accredited respectively reaccredited the following agencies:

- *Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik* (ASIIN).<sup>27</sup> ASIIN was created through the merger of two previously accredited agencies; the *Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften und der Informatik* (ASII – Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering and Informatics) and the *Akkreditierungsagentur für die Studiengänge Chemie, Biochemie und Chemieingenieurwesen an Universitäten und Fachhochschulen* (A-CBC – Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Chemistry, Biochemistry and Chemical Engineering at Universities and Fachhochschule Universities of Applied Sciences). ASIIN was accredited on 5 March 2003, backdated to 12 December 2002, with its accreditation to run until 11 December 2005;
- *Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur Hannover* (ZEVA)<sup>28</sup>, reaccredited on 5 March 2003, backdated to 5 February 2003, and with its accreditation to run until 4 February 2006.

This means that in the period under report six agencies were entitled to award the quality certificate (*Qualitätssiegel*) of the Akkreditierungsrat to degree programmes for a time-limited period.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions ", 24 May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004), sub-para. II.4. sect. 1

<sup>27</sup> Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics

<sup>28</sup> Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hannover

## 2.2.2 Accrediting or registering foreign agencies

In accordance with the increasing international orientation of higher education institutions and intensive cooperation between German higher education institutions and foreign partner universities, but also to expand the circle of agencies that can be considered for performing accreditations, an accreditation by foreign agencies represents an alternative to accreditation in Germany. Various foreign agencies have communicated their interest in becoming active in this field in Germany.

In its resolution on the future development of quality assurance in Germany across all Länder and all higher education institutions, the KMK informed the Akkreditierungsrat that it expected a positive list of foreign agencies to be drawn up in the medium term that can be considered for performing accreditations in Germany.<sup>30</sup> The topic was considered in detail in a first round of discussions held at the Akkreditierungsrat, a resolution on the development of an approval process for foreign agencies which subjects their activities in the German market to monitoring and supervision by the Akkreditierungsrat is in preparation for 2004.

## 2.3 How Akkreditierungsrat and Agencies Cooperate

Besides monitoring the fulfilment of responsibilities by the agencies, one of the tasks performed by the Akkreditierungsrat involves promoting communication and cooperation between the agencies. The Akkreditierungsrat held four roundtable talks with the agencies to this end in the year under report; above all, these served as a platform for the exchange of information. The talks covered topics like ways of accelerating the accreditation process and of making the process more efficient, uncertainties in respect of the application of the KMK structural guidelines as well as the agencies' experience with the inclusion of civil service career path decisions into accreditation processes.

The Akkreditierungsrat is responsible for ensuring fair competition between the accreditation agencies; however, in view of its lack of powers, this can only be achieved through the vehicle of mediation. In this context, the Akkreditierungsrat endeavoured to reach an agreement with the Washington Accord to avoid the provisional membership of a German

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<sup>29</sup> Detailed information on the individual accreditation agencies can be found on the Akkreditierungsrat website at: <http://www.accreditation-council.de>

<sup>30</sup> KMK resolution: "Future development of quality assurance in Germany across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 1 March 2002, sub-para. 3.5

agency in this international association from leading to the discrimination of the other agencies. Consequently, the Akkreditierungsrat will, during the term of the provisional membership, follow the review of the German agency by representatives of the Washington Accord and will subsequently analyse the impact which this membership has.

To advance cooperation between the Akkreditierungsrat and the agencies, joint workgroups (AGs) were established on special question areas:

- In the period under report, the Workgroup on Bachelor's/Master's Programmes (AG BA/MA) discussed and followed the KMK's continuing development of structural guidelines. After adopting "Common structural guidelines of the Länder as set out in Article 9 Clause 2 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study courses"<sup>31</sup>, the workgroup drew up descriptors for classifying Master's programme profiles as "more research-oriented" or "more practice-oriented" in accordance with the instructions which the structural guidelines contained for the Akkreditierungsrat. The Akkreditierungsrat plans to adopt these descriptors at the beginning of 2004.
- The establishment of a Workgroup on International Relations (AG Internationales) institutionalised the cooperation between the Akkreditierungsrat and the agencies as a vehicle for coordinating the position of the German members in international quality assurance networks (e.g. D-A-CH, ECA)<sup>32</sup>.
- A Workgroup on Standards (AG Standards) addressed the detailed definition of the standards to be met for accreditation and dealt with the problem of developing standards for accreditation by the agencies as well as by disciplinary societies. An Akkreditierungsrat resolution means that this workgroup will additionally be responsible for working together with ECTS advisers to develop standards for monitoring the correct application of ECTS (including modularisation) and for drawing up internal quality control standards regarding the definition of the student workload in accredited degree programmes.
- The Workgroup on Continuing Training is preparing a draft status report on and contextualisation of continuing training/postgraduate programmes.

## **2.4 Representing German Interests in International Networks**

In the Communiqué issued after the Bologna follow-up conference in Berlin, the European ministers responsible for higher education emphasised: "The quality of higher education has

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<sup>31</sup> KMK resolution, 10 October 2003

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 2.4

proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area. Ministers commit themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They stress the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance."<sup>33</sup> The introduction of accreditation for degree programmes in 1998 set a central course for quality assurance in teaching in Germany which meets the core demands arising from the Berlin Communiqué.

The Akkreditierungsrat sees its mission in representing the German accreditation system in international quality assurance networks and accreditation organisations. It is a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and of the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI). In particular, the aim of this international networking is to create transparency in terms of the study programmes offered and to facilitate the international recognition of degrees. The Akkreditierungsrat and the German agencies as well as organisations from countries with comparable quality assurance systems have joined together to form the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) which aims to continue the development of accreditation in the European context. The Akkreditierungsrat is a member of the ECA workgroups which are preparing the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, are developing a European qualification framework, are elaborating a common format for the publication of accreditation results and are drawing up a report on the continuing development of accreditation in Europe for the follow-up conference to be held in Bergen. In the trinational network made up of the accreditation bodies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (D-A-CH), the focus is on drawing up a policy paper for the next conference to be held within the scope of the Bologna Process in Bergen in May 2005 as well as the development and implementation of a common code of good practice as the key requirement for the mutual recognition of accreditations.

In the year under report, the Akkreditierungsrat concluded the following cooperation agreements with foreign accreditation bodies with the aim of coordinating accreditation standards and procedures and of using cooperation to promote the operational activities and the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions between the systems:

- Cooperation agreements were reached between the Akkreditierungsrat (AR), Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat (ÖAR)<sup>34</sup>, the Österreichischer Fachhochschulrat

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<sup>33</sup> "Realising the European Higher Education Area", Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003

<sup>34</sup> Austrian Accreditation Council

(FHR)<sup>35</sup> and the Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ)<sup>36</sup> on 15 July 2003 (D-A-CH Network),

- Agreement for Cooperation between the German Accreditation Council and the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), 19 September 2003,
- Agreement of Cooperation, European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), signed on 11 November 2003 by the ÖAR, FHR, AR, by the Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur Hannover (ZEVA)<sup>37</sup>, by the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA), by the Akkreditierungs-, Zertifizierungs- und Qualitätssicherungs-Institut (ACQUIN)<sup>38</sup>, by the Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen (AQAS)<sup>39</sup>, by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), by Nederlands/Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (NVAO)<sup>40</sup>, by the Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen (NOKUT)<sup>41</sup>, by the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA)<sup>42</sup>, and by the Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ).

The Akkreditierungsrat offers support and advice on the establishment of accreditation systems in other countries. For example, the Akkreditierungsrat, in cooperation with InWEnt,<sup>43</sup> held a several day long seminar as a forum for information exchange with the Central American Accreditation Council under establishment. The Akkreditierungsrat has also received a request for advice and support with the establishment of such a system from Argentina. In addition, foreign delegations repeatedly visit the Akkreditierungsrat; during these visits discussions are held on the German system, on its underlying concept and on the experience that has been gained to date.

On 18 September 2003, the Akkreditierungsrat organised a workshop on the topic of "Quality Assurance and Accreditation" that was held as part of the supporting programme for the Berlin follow-up conference. At the workshop, which was drawn up and initiated by the Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat, the Chairman of the ÖAR spoke on the "Function, Aspects and Consequences of Accreditation" while the Vice-Chairman of the Dutch (meanwhile Dutch-Flemish) Accrediting Organisation (NAO meanwhile NVAO) spoke on the "Requirements and Perspectives of cross-border Recognition by Accreditation".

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<sup>35</sup> Fachhochschule Council, Austria

<sup>36</sup> Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities

<sup>37</sup> Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hannover

<sup>38</sup> Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute

<sup>39</sup> Agency for Quality Assurance through the Accreditation of Study Programmes

<sup>40</sup> Dutch-Flemish Accrediting Organisation

<sup>41</sup> Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

<sup>42</sup> Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation

<sup>43</sup> Capacity Building International, Germany (InWEnt – Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH)

Contributions to the discussion were made by the Vice-President of the European University Association (EUA) and the Director of the Swiss Bundesamt für Bildung und Wissenschaft (BBW)<sup>44</sup>. The Akkreditierungsrat Chairman presented the results of the workshop in the final round of consultations held by the ministers.<sup>45</sup>

The Akkreditierungsrat was involved in the conception and realisation of an ENQA workshop on the topic of "Accreditation Models in Higher Education: Experiences and Perspectives" held in Rome from 16 to 18 October 2003. More than 40 participants discussed the obligation which the Berlin Communiqué had for the ENQA, namely for its members to develop an agreed system of quality assurance standards, procedures and guidelines and to examine ways of guaranteeing a suitable review process for quality assurance agencies and bodies and/or accreditation.<sup>46</sup> It is foreseeable that the results of the workshop will have an impact on the restructuring of the originally more evaluation-oriented ENQA network, with a greater focus on the equal consideration of the various approaches to quality assurance.

## **2.5 System Inadequacies and Weaknesses**

In the period under report, the fact that the German accreditation system lacked a legal basis had an increasingly negative effect. In contrast to the situation in the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland or Spain, for example, where accreditation was introduced by an act of law with defined key features, the legal quality and stability of the German accreditation system remains undefined.

The Akkreditierungsrat is responsible for accrediting agencies, for monitoring and supervising their performance of duties and for guaranteeing fair competition between them. Consequently, this is a concept which obliges the Akkreditierungsrat to control and steer the whole system of accrediting degree programmes by defining guidelines and measures, to supervise the agencies to ensure that they act properly and in accordance with the rules and regulations and to regulate competition between them. Indeed, this concept has only been partly implemented to date, because all stakeholders have accepted an "as if" situation with conflicts, so far, having been settled by means of mediation. In a real crisis, however, the Akkreditierungsrat lacks a stable legal foundation with which it can counter agency misconduct or misjudgement.

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<sup>44</sup> Federal Office for Education and Science

<sup>45</sup> Contributions published under: [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/de/conf\\_programme/erichsen.htm](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/de/conf_programme/erichsen.htm)

<sup>46</sup> Contributions published under: [http://www.enqa.net/workshop\\_rome.lasso](http://www.enqa.net/workshop_rome.lasso)

In the year under report, the Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat held a wide range of talks with the appointing bodies and the Länder with an aim to having a legal constitution drawn up for the accreditation system, a step which the auditors responsible for evaluating the Akkreditierungsrat<sup>47</sup> had urgently called for in the past. On 5 December 2003, the Chairman reported on the work of the Akkreditierungsrat and on the problems and weaknesses of the system to a session of the KMK Presidium that was open to all the Länder.

### 3. Affiliation / Financing

In accordance with its statute, the Akkreditierungsrat Office is located at the Secretariat of the KMK.<sup>48</sup> The beginning of 2003 saw the Akkreditierungsrat Office move into facilities at KMK Head Office in Lennéstraße 6, D-53113 Bonn.

The financial resources for the Akkreditierungsrat and its office are provided as part of the general budget for the KMK Secretariat. According to the 2003 budget for the KMK Secretariat, the KMK provided the Akkreditierungsrat with the following sums for the performance of its duties in the year under report; the funds were provided proportionally by the federal states in accordance with the Königsteiner Schlüssel<sup>49</sup>:

Staff costs for 3 posts	€ 160,000
Rent	€ 10,000
Official travel	€ 35,000
Publications	€ 5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 210,000</b>

No additional income or revenue was produced. The accreditation and reaccreditation of agencies was carried out free of charge.

Work on the Akkreditierungsrat is performed in an honorary capacity. The members of the Akkreditierungsrat receive neither expenses nor attendance fees; only travel expenses are reimbursed.

<sup>47</sup> Bieri, Stephan; Brinkman, Harry; Mayer, Evelies; Osterwalder, Konrad; Schulze, Winfried: Bericht der Gutachtergruppe "Evaluation des Akkreditierungsrates", Freiburg im Breisgau 2001, p. 4, 10, 11

<sup>48</sup> KMK resolution: "Statute for an accreditation procedure across the Länder and across higher education institutions", 24. May 2002 as amended on 19 September 2002 (meanwhile again amended on 5 February 2004), sub-para. II.8. sect. 1

<sup>49</sup> Official financing code for the distribution of financial burdens amongst the German Federal States.



#### 4. Information and Public Relations Work

The responsibilities of the Akkreditierungsrat, which result from its overall responsibility for the German accreditation system, include the creation and assurance of transparency. It performs this duty by editing information and publishing accreditation data. The Akkreditierungsrat mainly uses electronic media as a means of informing the interested public of the goals and results of its work. In the year under report, the content of the Akkreditierungsrat website was extended with a French translation now placed on the web, which means that information on the Akkreditierungsrat is now available in three languages.<sup>50</sup>

The web-based "Zentrale Datenbank der akkreditierten Studiengänge"<sup>51</sup> was linked with the HRK-Hochschulkompass<sup>52</sup>, a comprehensive online database on Germany's higher education institutions and the degree programmes and courses which they offer. The linking of these two services along with a user-friendly search and inquiry system provide quick and easy access to all the available detailed information. The service will provide potential students and employers, in particular, with assistance in assessing the degree programmes and courses that are offered.

Besides the "Zentrale Datenbank der akkreditierten Studiengänge", the Akkreditierungsrat Office also records and analyses statistics on the accredited degree programmes. These statistics provide information on the number of accreditations in progress and completed, broken down into various categories, such as degree title, subject group, conditional accreditation, federal state, accreditation agency and number of semesters (time to degree). The Akkreditierungsrat plans to publish its statistics on the website in 2004.

An overview of the decision bases for the approval of degree programmes leading to the degrees of Bachelor's and Master's in the individual federal states is produced on a regular basis. This and other information is continuously updated and published on the Akkreditierungsrat website.

Members of the Akkreditierungsrat as well as the staff of the Akkreditierungsrat Office have presented the German accreditation system at numerous conferences at home and abroad. The Akkreditierungsrat Office informs German and foreign guests on the work of the

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<sup>50</sup> see: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de>

<sup>51</sup> Central Database of Accredited Degree Programmes

<sup>52</sup> Higher Education Compass of the German Rectors' Conference

Akkreditierungsrat and advises inquiring higher education institutions and ministries, students and potential students on questions of accreditation.