

ENAAE 4th General Assembly
Bruxelles, 22 January 2009, 9.30-13.00
("Fondation Universitaire", 11 rue d'Egmont)

President's Report

(Talk Notes)

First of all, thanks to the "Fondation Universitaire" for hosting us today in these wonderful premises.

This Assembly has a very full Agenda, and must close by 13.00, because at 15.00 there will be the Workshop with the two lectures by Sebastião Feyo and Ian Freeston, to which all of us look very much forward: I thank them in advance.

Therefore, this will be a short Report on what has been achieved in the first three years of life of ENAAE. If there will time, the discussion on the future of ENAAE and the EUR-ACE system may take place under item 5 of the Agenda, after the elections and the report by Iring Wasser: otherwise, it will be postponed to the next meetings of the Administrative Council. I hope also that discussions, perhaps even more poignant, will develop in the Workshop.

Having thus defined the limits of this report, it is fair to state that, notwithstanding some remaining dark spots, we can on the whole be satisfied by what we have achieved in less than five years. Five years ago, EUR-ACE and ENAAE did not exist and the names themselves had still to be formulated: the first step was the application for the EUR-ACE project, submitted in April 2004; the project then started in September 2004 with a first meeting in London.

It is true that we did not start from scratch: ESOEPE had been established in 2000, but had remained practically dormant for 3 ½ years.

ESOEPE was dissolved and ENAAE was born in February 2006, and held the first G.Ass. on 31 March 2006, the second on 17 November 2006, the third on 14 November 2007, the fourth today. In these three years, the AC has met 12 times (if I am not wrong). The 13 founding members have been already joined by three more: CLAIU, MÜDEK, IGIP. Today I propose an addition to the Agenda: the ratification of the recommendation by the Administrative Council to accept one more member: the Instituto de la Ingenieria de España.

After the first EUR-ACE project (2004/2006), ENAAE has participated actively in the EUR-ACE IMPLEMENTATION and PRO-EAST projects, both aimed at establishing the EUR-ACE accreditation system, respective in the EU and in Russia, and also (indirectly) in the LEPAC project, aimed at proposing a set of engineering accreditation standards in Lebanon.

ENAAE and EUR-ACE have been presented in several international events, including:

- Second and third European Quality Assurance Forum (Rome 2007, Budapest 2008)
- IFEEES Engineering Education summits and ASEE Global Colloquia 2007 (Istanbul) and 2008 (Cape Town)
- Engineering Deans' Conference, Florence (2005) and Berlin (2008)
- A Seminar in Tokyo, organized by JABEE (December 2007)
- etc. etc.

To summarize very briefly our achievements, let me remind that, since 2004, we have:

- Compiled and approved the EUR-ACE Framework Standards;
- Founded a brand new European Association
- Started an accreditation system of engineering education in six European countries
- Established and made known EUR-ACE within relevant circles in Europe and beyond.

Now, as Denis McGrath put it (06/01/09)

We should be careful to consolidate what we have achieved. It is important that we do not continually review/change our policies/procedures. We should keep things as simple as possible without permanent "navel-gazing".

Other important info & comments from Ph.Wauter's message (15/01/09):

EUR-ACE has been confirmed as a key project for FEANI ... but ...

the Board of FEANI is not very impressed by the present results, neither by the number of authorized agencies nor by the number of EUR-ACE accredited programmes. To the latter one, the numbers of accredited programmes vary according to some personal interpretation but correctly registered, we have today 96 programmes from ASIIN, 76 programmes from Ireland, 3 programmes from Portugal, and 10 programmes from Russia; total only 185 programmes, listed on the ENAE website.

(I underline that the programmes accredited by CTI do not appear yet on the website)

These unsatisfactory numbers can (and – I hope – will) be improved gradually in the forthcoming years. The challenge will be – in Iring Wasser's words – in not "jeopardizing the integrity of the systems and the quality of the procedural and content standards".

Let us indeed consider the difficulties that EUR-ACE faced (and face), but that we have often tried to turn into assets:

1) Countries with a very great diversity of educational and professional systems have been involved from the start, contrary to WA born from inside the Anglo-Saxon system.

Indeed, when we started to compare the Standards, we found it possible to write a common Framework, and later we succeeded, not only in devising and start implementing a transnational accreditation system, but also in accrediting and re-accrediting the accrediting agencies with international teams of peers. This gives us the confidence and the leverage for further broadening the system...

2) The partners of the EUR-ACE project, and now the members of ENAE, are varied also in character and statutory scope: engineering accreditation agencies (EC-UK, CTI, ...), association of Universities and HEIs (SEFI, CLAIU, IGIP), professional Associations (FEANI, EUROCADRES) ...

This allows ENAE the potential to represent the whole engineering community....

3) Contradictions within the Bologna Process and the EHEA:

- unclear definition/distinction of FCD/SCD, and their relation with the two sets of EQF,
- undefined relation between academic and professional qualifications.

A personal recollection:

In 1994 Antonio Ruberti, then European Commissary for Education and Research, promoted a Task Force in charge of investigating possible synergies between recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes (the word "accreditation" was still a taboo in EC circles) and made me the honour of indicating me as co-chair. The report of this Task Force lead to an EC Recommendation issued in December 1994 (one of the last acts of the Delors Commission), but – as far as I know – the Recommendation had no follow-ups .

Thus, EUR-ACE appears the first concrete application of general/generic indications, especially with regard to FCD/SCD : but this theme will be treated by SFA and I do not want to anticipate his lecture.

4) Other continuing difficulties arise from the never-ending discussions in Europe and in European countries on Quality Assurance in HE, discipline-specific or general QA Standards, institutional accreditation, programme accreditation,

We are learning to navigate among these rocks!

5) Several among our partners participate (or desire to participate) in other systems and international agreements, in particular the Washington Accord...

This certainly creates some difficulties in the relations within and outside EUR-ACE, but has the advantage of guaranteeing that EUR-ACE is not isolated on the global scene.

It also makes even more important the comparative study of the EUR-ACE Framework and the Washington Accord that Ian Freeston will propose in his lecture.

Again, I do not want to anticipate Ian's findings and indications. Allow me only – to the risk of repeating myself – to underline once more that the distinction between FCD and SCD labels is and must remain an essential characteristic of EUR-ACE vs. WA and other systems. The very existence of FCD labels permits to underline the significance of the SCD label vs. the WA "Bachelor".

On the other hand, there are several indications that international interest versus EUR-ACE is growing, also because an alternative to the global monopoly of American Associations (ABET and ASEE) is welcomed.

A first small but concrete step: ENAE has stipulated a Memorandum of Understanding with NAQAE/Egypt, ratified yesterday by the AC.

To conclude:

I certainly do not want to ignore the problems:

there is still much to do, in terms of strengthening and spreading the system, giving the EUR-ACE labels a significant recognition status, making ENAE more efficient, etc. etc.

But most problems are functionality and efficiency problems, that we must and will tackle courageously but are essentially growth problems of a young structure. Therefore I am not too worried by them: in Iring Wasser's paper and in the comments received, there are several relevant and useful suggestions that the new AC must strive to implement.

Of greater concern to me is the sensation that ENAE member Associations, and even AC members, do not yet feel enough their "belonging" to ENAE and their engagement in EUR-ACE: the active participation in ENAE's life is limited to too few people, most of whom moreover feel more as the representatives of the Association that has supported their participation than ENAE members. This must be corrected.

I am approaching retirement age, and already have no more any teaching duty.

Thus, if you agree and Fate will permit, I can and will dedicate three more years almost exclusively to ENAE and its development.

I am confident on some success, on the basis that

(i) we already have an accreditation system that works in 5 countries, with a 6th (UK) already participating in principle (although no EUR-ACE labels have been awarded yet), and a 7th (Turkey) that was included yesterday;

(ii) ENAE is the coordinating partner of the new project EUR-ACE SPREAD that will should bring into the system a few more countries: Lithuania, Romania, Switzerland, perhaps Italy...

Hence, if we are not too impatient (as at my age one is tempted to be) the prospects for ENAE and EUR-ACE are very positive!