

## MEMORANDUM

### 1. AQU Catalunya: an agency of both national and international renown

AQU Catalunya was the first quality assurance agency to be set up in Spain (1996), or prior to state legislation concerning the need for QA agencies to be set up, and was a response to the commitment of Catalan universities catalanes and the Generalitat de Catalunya to the quality assurance and enhancement of the university system in Catalonia. It is at the present time the main instrument for the promotion and assurance of quality in the Catalan university system.

AQU Catalunya was one of the founder agencies as well as being a current full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2000); it was one of the first agencies to be registered with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR, 2008); and the outcomes of the international external review (2012) have seen it become one of the best agencies in Europe in terms of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, approved by the ministers responsible for higher education in Europe (2005).

AQU Catalunya is also a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE, 1998), for which it currently hosts the network's Secretariat for a renewable period of two-and-a-half years (2013-2015). It was also a founder member of the Spanish body that brings together all higher education QA agencies (Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria/REACU, 2006) and it forms part of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA, 2009). It was the first European QA agency to be certified with ISO standard 9001 (2000).

In AQU Catalunya, therefore, Catalonia has a QA agency with a strong, consistent and rigorous track record, which has made it into a university QA agency with a solid reputation at international level.

### 2. AQU Catalunya: main contributions

AQU Catalunya has been and is an innovative agency that has generated numerous contributions for the Catalan university system, many of which have been subsequently adopted at national level. The Agency has carried out pioneering work in the following:

- The development of QA methodologies, since 1996 to the present day, and integration of the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of study programmes in the building of a consistent, enhancement-based external QA system.
- Participation, together with the Catalan universities and the Government of Catalonia, in the setting up of the UNEIX database and in the use of indicators to analyse the running and delivery of university degree programmes, which, as of 2012, can be consulted through the WINDDAT application (<http://winddat.aqu.cat/>).

- The carrying out of studies and surveys on the labour market outcomes/destinations of university graduates since 2001. It is currently involved in the student satisfaction survey and the employers survey.
- Institutional (faculties) and programme review, as well as the assessment of teaching staff prior to recruitment (pre-selection) and the assessment of merits.
- The development and application of the teaching assessment handbooks, a forerunner of the (national) DOCENTIA programme, since 2003.
- Instrumental in developing internal quality assurance systems in Catalan universities, through the AUDIT programme, since 2007.
- The undertaking of studies and the development of tools to support the quality enhancement of the university system (general frameworks, guides to skills and competences, guides for designing curricula, etc.).

### 3. AQU Catalunya: expenditure pattern 2013

The budget for AQU Catalunya in 2013 was €2,783,820.56<sup>1</sup>, the distribution of which was as follows:

| Strategic tools (that encompass all of the activities of AQU Catalunya) | Total budget 2013 (personnel expenses and operating expenses distributed according to the Agency's main areas of activity) |
|---|--|
| I. Programmes of study  | 984,295.84 €   |
| II. Quality of teaching staff   | 711,629.13 €   |
| III. Knowledge generation   | 482,285.26 €   |
| IV. Internationalisation  | 208,529.56 €   |
| V. Strategic management and communication                               | 397,080.77 €   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>2,783,820.56€</b>   |

In this distribution, personnel costs have been allocated to the respective projects and the organisation's operating costs distributed as indirect costs proportional to each main area of activity.

In the CORA report, €2,241,122.53 has been allocated to Catalonia for programme review and teaching staff (I & II), whereas €1,695,924.97 was actually allocated by AQU Catalunya as indirect costs and personnel, i.e. 25% less.

With the closure of accounts for 2013, costs will be thoroughly calculated for each QA performance report. As an estimate, in the case of programme validation and modification in 2013, the cost per QA performance report will be around €1,900, and in the case of teaching staff it will be around €350 (according to the type of assessment). According to the ANECA

<sup>1</sup> This budget is dated 1 December 2013, so these figures may well change with the closure of accounts for the year.

budget that appears in the CORA report and taking into account the number of programmes reviewed by the national agency, the average costs for their QA processes are approximately 25% higher than those of AQU Catalunya.

#### 4. The QA agency model in Europe

With regard to the process of concentrating QA agencies, there are countries, for example, Germany, that has more than eight agencies that are members of ENQA; France and the Netherlands both have two. This can be consulted at <http://www.enqa.eu/agencies.lasso> and <http://www.eqar.eu/register/map.html>.

There are ten countries in the European Union<sup>2</sup> with less population than Catalonia<sup>3</sup> with a full member agency in ENQA and/or registered with EQAR (for example, Bulgaria, Serbia, Denmark and Finland).<sup>4</sup> Twelve more have an agency affiliated with ENQA (for example, Greece, Kazakhstan, Slovakia and Cyprus).

Furthermore, twelve countries<sup>5</sup> with a GNP lower than that of Catalonia<sup>6</sup> have one full member agency at ENQA and/or registered with EQAR (for example, Finland, Greece, Portugal and Ireland), and nine more have an agency affiliated with ENQA (for example, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia).

If one takes per capita GNP, the number of signatory countries with a full member agency in ENQA and/or registered with EQAR that are below Catalonia is increasing notably (approximately thirty).

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Eurostat (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>).

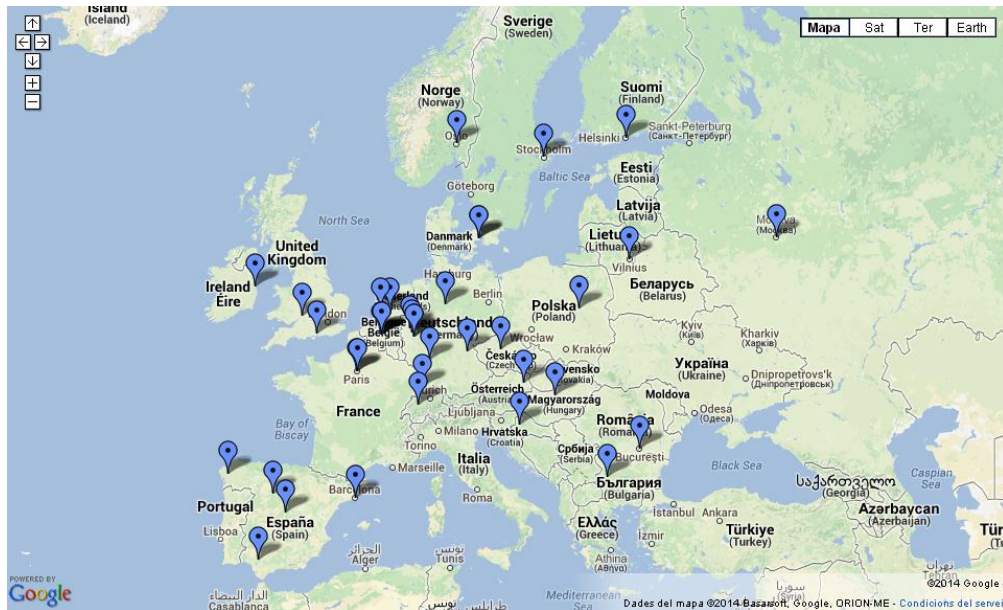
<sup>3</sup> Source: Idescat (<http://www.idescat.cat/>).

<sup>4</sup> For the countries not belonging to the European Union, the source is UNdata (<http://data.un.org/>).

<sup>5</sup> Source: OCDE (<http://www.oecd.org/>).

<sup>6</sup> Source: Idescat (<http://www.idescat.cat/>).

It is also interesting to see the geographical distribution of the QA agencies around Europe.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.enga.eu/index.php/members-area/members-interactive-map/>.