

# Foreword

The five Nordic countries have cooperated systematically in the field of higher education quality assurance for about ten years now. In practical terms this has meant that the representatives of the respective national quality assurance agencies have convened once a year to annual meetings where new projects have been initiated, evaluated and completed. The cooperation has been constructive and good-spirited throughout the existence of this unofficial network of the Nordic countries. This report is the latest result of this joint effort and one that, according to the Steering Group of ENQA, may well be of interest to our European colleagues, as well. This is why the Steering Group decided that this particular report should be published in the ENQA publication series.

Mutual recognition is a well-known method in quality assurance of education, not least because of the so-called “Washington Accord”, an agreement among accreditation agencies in the field of engineering. The signatories of this agreement are committed to the recognition of each others’ accreditation systems as well as engineering programmes.

The concept of the Nordic project on mutual recognition of evaluation agencies is entirely different from the one in engineering, however. For instance, there are a number of authority functions vested in the same evaluation agency, such as an authority of the approval of programmes or institution, a follow-up on evaluations, a setting of standards and an approval of foreign degrees. On the other hand, some agencies simply hold the responsibility for evaluation and their other functions are vested with other parties.

Thus, a mutual recognition of agencies that are responsible for evaluation will not automatically include other aspects, such as recognition of degrees. What this method can provide is international transparency and legitimacy for the agencies involved.

I would like to thank the working group consisting of the five Nordic agencies for the preparation of this report and hope that it will be of interest and value to our European colleagues.

**Christian Thune**

Chairman

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