

Preface

Benchmarking as a higher education evaluation tool is used commonly but differently throughout Europe. Even the exact definition of the actual term *benchmarking* varies from country to country. A determination to map these various benchmarking concepts and to find common denominators to benchmarking resulted in an active workshop organised by ENQA on 14–15 June 2002 in Finland. European evaluation experts attacked these problems and were able to identify several good principles of benchmarking as well as recommendations for future action. This report, the second ENQA Workshop Report, is a direct result of the experts' hard work.

The Steering Group of ENQA sees benchmarking as one of the increasingly relevant evaluation methods today. As a consequence the Steering Group decided to support this workshop in its annual action plan. The feedback ENQA has received from the participants of the workshop indicates that discussions and group work were definitely among the most active ones in recent ENQA workshops. This is gratifying, because one of the cornerstones of our Network's activities is to bring together European experts to exchange views on supportable evaluation practices.

The number of participants in the workshops has intentionally been limited to about 30 persons per workshop in order to ensure the kind of intensive discussion among the participants, which again leads to joint practical results. This workshop showed once again that this method indeed is a practical one.

I would like to thank the organisers of the workshop who also have written this final report and I hope the reader will find the result worthwhile.

Christian Thune

Chairman

ENQA Steering Group