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EUA to publish 'annual review' of international university rankings

Universities are increasingly confronted with a plethora of ranking and classification initiatives – both at the national and international level. While many university leaders have reservations about rankings, their methodologies and criteria, there is a growing recognition that such initiatives are here to stay. Research has also shown that despite the acknowledged shortcomings of their criteria, rankings are having an increasing impact on decision making and activities in universities across Europe.

This is why the European University Association has decided that there is need to respond on behalf of the 850 universities it represents by publishing an 'annual review of international higher education rankings'.

The aim of this new pilot project will be to provide universities with transparent information about international rankings by critically evaluating their methodologies, assessing potential biases and suggesting improvements. The review will also help universities to develop strategies to cope with rankings, as well as encouraging alternative approaches to enhance transparency.

The annual review – due to appear for the first time in 2011 – will include a compendium of different international ranking initiatives with a thorough critique and analysis, and will be complemented by a series of critical articles by leading experts in the field. To disseminate this information and stimulate debate on the findings, EUA also plans to organise an annual rankings seminar for university leaders across Europe.

EUA President, Jean-Marc Rapp commented: “ In addition to existing international rankings (such as the Times Higher and Shanghai rankings), the OECD is working on a project to initiative to assess learning outcomes on an international scale, and the European Commission has now launched a project to develop a multi-dimensional ranking instrument for European universities. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that we make sure the university voice is heard in the rankings and classification debate. This will be a crucial project in achieving this goal.”

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

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