The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is a dynamic think tank in the area of international cooperation in higher education. Since 1993, ACA has worked to promote innovation and internationalisation of European higher education in collaboration with its membership network in and beyond Europe, each member responsible in their respective countries for supporting internationalisation in education and training. ACA further maintains a global perspective through its partners outside of Europe.

ACA’s activities include research and analysis, evaluations, consultancy for private and public bodies, advocacy, publications and events. It is a not-for-profit organisation whose Secretariat is located in Brussels – a privileged position to create and maintain close working relations with the European Union institutions and the world beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents ................................................................. .2
Message from the President ................................................... .3
Who we are: Our members ...................................................... .4
What we do I: Projects and activities ........................................ .6
What we do II: Events .......................................................... 10
ACA presentations, missions and meetings ................................. 13
What we do III: The monthly ACA news service .......................... 14
How we work: Administration, governance and finances .............. 15
2015 was an eventful year for ACA in many aspects. In just one year, ACA organised as many as seven events in total - quite an achievement for such a small team! Besides the regular four European Policy Seminars (EPSs) and the Annual Conference, we co-organised two successful seminars with our members - the European Leaders’ Forum in Vienna together with our Austrian member OeAD, and a seminar on joint and double degrees, hosted in Prague in October by DZS, our member in the Czech Republic. At the traditional starter of the year, the ‘What’s new in Brussels?’ seminar we also celebrated the jubilee birthday of ACA Director, Bernd Wächter. The second EPS focused on alumni relations, the third in the series reviewed global university rankings and their developments during the 12 years of their existence, while the last European Policy Seminar in 2015 was ACA’s response to the efforts of the European higher education community to tackle the refugee crisis and support scholars and students from the conflict regions. Timely and much needed support for an exchange at European level.

For the first time since the creation of ACA, the Annual Conference was held in Brussels, the city where the ACA Secretariat is based. The event was organised in cooperation with our two Belgian members, Wallonia Brussels Campus and Flanders Knowledge Area, as well as with the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training. This year, we gathered over 200 experts from around the globe and looked into internationalisation strategies and how to move from the ideas to practice.

ACA was also very actively involved in research, witnessed by the ongoing and completed projects and studies. Some of these include the StudyPortals-led project ‘EduCoach – Personalised Online Advising for Study in Europe Orientation’, finalised in the first half of 2015, ACA and DAAD’s joint study on ‘University Quality Indicators: A Critical Assessment’ for the European Parliament, the OpenSurvey – a study on the provision of open education in European higher education institutions, done for the European Commission's Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) and the ongoing study on EU-China Researcher Mobility, a joint effort of ACA and China’s Science and Technology Talent Center (STTC). ACA continues to be involved in the ‘Mastermind Europe’ project, coordinated by the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA) and realised as a Strategic Partnerships of the Erasmus+ programme. The big global project of promoting the attractiveness of European Higher Education in the world [Study in Europe] took off and ACA will be conducting a series of training seminars in Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa in 2016 and 2017.

Last, but not least, ACA’s monthly Newsletter ‘Education Europe’ continues to provide regular updates and analyses of global, European and national developments in higher education to a worldwide audience of key internationalisation actors. With more than 150 articles on EU, national and international news and analysis of higher education and research policies, ACA’s Newsletter covered an extensive range of countries—in Europe and around the world.

I warmly invite you to continue reading and rediscover ACA as we ourselves do every year anew.

Bonne lecture!

Sijbolt Noorda
ACA President
ACA’s strength as an organisation rests on the strong network of dynamic national-level bodies that comprise its membership. These organisations are involved in a broad range of activities in their respective countries in support of internationalisation of education, and play various key roles in terms of research, programme delivery, and policy formulation and implementation. ACA’s role is to promote the interests and needs of its members in EU policy circles, and to influence the European higher education policy and research agenda in ways that support the work of the members. For their part, the members participate actively in the governance, decision making and programmatic activities of the Association.

**WHO WE ARE:**

**OUR MEMBERS**

ACA’s strength as an organisation rests on the strong network of dynamic national-level bodies that comprise its membership. These organisations are involved in a broad range of activities in their respective countries in support of internationalisation of education, and play various key roles in terms of research, programme delivery, and policy formulation and implementation. ACA’s role is to promote the interests and needs of its members in EU policy circles, and to influence the European higher education policy and research agenda in ways that support the work of the members. For their part, the members participate actively in the governance, decision making and programmatic activities of the Association.

**MEMBERS**

- **Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (ÖeAD), Austria**
- **Flanders Knowledge Area, Belgium**
- **Wallonia-Brussels Campus, Belgium**
- **Centre for International Cooperation in Education (DZS), Czech Republic**
- **Archimedes Foundation, Estonia**
- **Centre for International Mobility (CIMO), Finland**
- **Agence Erasmus+, France**
- **Campus France, France**
- **German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Germany**
- **State Scholarships Foundation (IKY), Greece**
- **Tempus Public Foundation (TPF), Hungary**
- **Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (EP-Nuffic), The Netherlands**
- **Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), Norway**
- **Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE), Poland**
- **Perspektywy Education Foundation, Poland**
- **Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC), Slovakia**
- **Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), Slovakia**
- **Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), Sweden**
- **Swedish Institute, Sweden**
- **Foundation for Federal Co-operation, Switzerland**
- **Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities, Switzerland**
- **Turkish Centre for European Union Education and Youth Programmes, Turkey**
- **British Council, UK**
In 2015, ACA remained its solid membership basis and worked continuously on developing new activities with and for members. Overall, these were productive months for ACA resulting in as many as seven events in total, out of which 3 co-organised with members, and a very dynamic project year with several members at the forefront of these activities.

ACA organised two events for and with members: The European Leaders’ Forum in Vienna in April, together with OeAD, ACA member in Austria, and one on joint and double degrees in Prague in October, together with our Czech member DZS. Both events were a great success and we kindly thank our members for excellent management and support in organisation. The seminar year ended with a highly relevant event on the refugee crisis, titled “The international refugee crisis – what role for European higher education?”. The seminar provided a forum for exchange and discussion on this highly relevant matter among key stakeholders at national, European and international level. ACA is deeply grateful to all the speakers and participants for their engagement and contributions.

Quite a few projects – initiated, continued or completed – on the ACA plate in 2015. From studies on open education, EU-China researcher mobility, and quality assurance and rankings, to global promotion of European higher education, research on Master’s admissions at European universities and the provision of expertise on internationalisation at Romanian and Hungarian universities, the versatility of ACA and its Secretariat made another year of ACA’s work relevant in the field of international higher education.
Every year, ACA pursues - and is sought after to participate in - a broad range of research projects, consultancies and other activities related to our core areas of expertise in the field of internationalisation of higher education. ACA is renowned in European higher education policy circles for the top quality and relevance of its work, its ability to communicate quite technical information (e.g. related to international student mobility terminology) to non-specialist audiences, as well as its interest and capacity to follow and bring clarity to ongoing policy discourses at European level.

Our research work is carried out by our highly qualified and multinational Brussels-based Secretariat staff and in conjunction with a strong network of very qualified and knowledgeable professionals and academics from Europe and beyond.

**EDUCOACH – PERSONAL ONLINE ADVICE FOR STUDY-IN-EUROPE ORIENTATION**

In the first half of 2015 ACA finalised its work on the project ‘EduCoach – Personalised Online Advising for Study in Europe Orientation’, funded by the EU’s Erasmus Mundus Programme and coordinated by StudyPortals. The project consortium consisted of nine partners from six countries (Belgium, Estonia, Jordan, The Netherlands, Ukraine and US). The aim of the project was to increase the accessibility and visibility of European higher education (HE) in a structured and sustainable perspective through a set of personalised guidance and information tools for students from Eastern and Southern European Neighbourhood countries, but equally to support in this manner European higher education institutions in their communication and marketing activities targeting these regions. Launched in November 2012, 30 months of engagement between ACA and its partners resulted in a comprehensive set of tools comprising “live chats” and “webinars”, but also a knowledge base of thematic articles available for orienting students on a wider scale as well as a Recruitment Best Practice Guide. ACA took a central role in developing the recruitment guide - a collection of all expertise around student recruitment and the use of new generation communication tools for HE promotion (chats and webinars). The guide is directed at European universities and aimed to support them in the use of these rather novel tools for student recruitment.

The 2015 joint release of the final and second edition of the student recruitment guide produced by ACA, the Brenn-White Group and StudyPortals, brought to a close a working process that had included a first version of the guide presented at the 2014 EAIE conference and a meeting of promotion agencies in Prague, several site visits, desk research and the EduCoach experience.

**INTERNATIONALISATION AUDIT OF HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITIES**

In 2015, ACA continued to be engaged as experts and collaborators in a series of ‘audits’ assessing the internationalisation activities and strategies at 11 Hungarian universities. This project was commissioned by ACA’s Hungarian member, the Tempus Public Foundation (TPF). Building on pilot audits in a testing phase, the first institutions were successfully reviewed for their international activities in 2014, and in the first half of 2015 the project team completed its work on advising Hungary’s higher education institutions on their current internationalisation strategies by delivering the final four audits. The final conference was held in Pecs on 23-24 June 2015.

ACA embraced a chief advisory role for the project team in developing an ‘internationalisation audit instrument’ and represented one out of three visiting experts for each of the 11 site visits, which yielded the subsequent tailor-made audit reports and recommendations. ACA was pleased to see the participating Hungarian education institutions’ high regard for the produced evaluation reports, as well as the resulting peer learning and exchange opportunities. ACA is looking forward to continuing its work on advising internationalisation practices in a potential second project phase, currently under negotiation between TPF and the Hungarian Ministry of Education.
INTERNATIONALISATION EQUITY AND UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT (IEMU) PROJECT

In September 2015, the Internationalisation Equity and University Management (IEMU) project – a large-scale national initiative in Romania, funded via the EU Structural Funds and led by the Romanian UEFISCDI agency – came to a fruitful end. ACA Deputy Director, Irina Ferencz, participated in the project as an expert in an international expert team, led by the International Association of Universities (IAU), which advised 21 Romanian higher education institutions in the articulation and enhancement of their internationalisation strategies.

In the project period, the participating universities, supported by advice from the multi-national panel, articulated their international ambitions in higher education and research, goals that were then officially adopted by the university leadership. The project was formally closed via a large national conference in September 2015, which brought to light the much wider interest of Romanian higher education institutions in internationalisation-related matters. The event was also an opportunity for the project team to propose to decision-makers in Romania two important ideas: a blueprint of a strategy for the internationalisation of the Romanian higher education system and one for creating a national internationalisation agency, or, as put in the conference language – a “Romanian DAAD”.

MASTERMIND EUROPE – MASTER’S ADMISSION FOR A DIVERSE INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOM

In 2015 the Mastermind Europe project began to take off and show results. ACA embarked on its role of carrying out two large Europe-wide surveys exploring distinct aspects of the admissions process at Master’s level, to successfully and in an evidence-based manner advance the project’s ultimate aim of encouraging a paradigm shift in Master’s level admissions – from practices focused on the “recognition of diplomas and grades” to a system increasingly based on the assessment of competencies.

This three-year, Erasmus+ co-funded and multi-partner venture, coordinated by the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and involving nine other partners including ACUP, HRK (Catalan and German rector’s conferences) and StudyPortals, seeks to increase transparency and synergy in Europe at Master’s level admissions where the ACA-surveys, directed at university staff and students, addressed four critical areas to capture main trends in admission practice: a) the degree of restrictiveness of Master’s level admissions to ‘outsiders’, holding bachelors from a different institution b) the types of admission criteria at Master’s level c) legal/regulatory obstacles d) the perceptions of students of Master’s level admissions. Building on the assumption that current admissions at Master’s level are ill suited to recruiting students for a diverse international classroom, ACA began to analyse survey results in a draft report commenced in 2015, and to be finalised in the first half of 2016. The results consolidated in the report will also feed into developing effective tools and a set of guidelines, supporting programme coordinators and decision makers in moving to more competency-based assessment methods, and are disseminated via the Mastermind website that is by now up and running.

EU-CHINA RESEARCHER MOBILITY

In order to examine the current situation of researchers’ mobility flows between EU and China, ACA was commissioned in 2015 by the EU China Policy Dialogues Support Facility (PDSF-II) to produce a Joint study of EU-China Researcher Bilateral Mobility and Policy Recommendations in cooperation with China’s Science and Technology Talent Center (STTC). The joint report and study, which was essentially a mapping exercise, analysed push-pull factors influencing the mobility choices and patterns of researchers from China and Europe. The produced joint study, although revealing a strong imbalance in favour of incoming flows to Europe, successfully served its purpose to support the formulation of policy recommendations towards improving mobility and balancing the flow of researchers in both directions.

The fruitful work between ACA and Chinese experts and cooperation with the EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility (PDSF-II) contributed to successful bridging of an initial lack of reliable and differentiated mobility data. The final findings are to be presented to Chinese higher education specialists and education counsellors from embassies, at a Euro-China workshop organised by the EU Delegation to China in Beijing in late January 2016.
STUDY ON QUALITY INDICATORS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In November 2015, ACA and DAAD, with the support of ENQA, were pleased to announce the release of their joint study titled ‘University quality indicators: A critical assessment’. With this study, the partners fulfilled their mission to the European Parliament of reviewing the latest developments of two distinct approaches to higher education quality assessment, namely quality assurance (QA) and global rankings.

The third and largest endeavour under the framework contract with the EP, among which a briefing note for “Erasmus for all” proposal (2012) and “The Bologna Process: Stocktaking and Prospects” (2010), this critical assessment encompassed QA systems in eight EU and three non-EU countries, covered six global ranking instruments, and three major national rankings as well as a global business school ranking. Data collection included extensive desk research and analysis of policy documents, literature and websites as well as interviews with key stakeholders. The study concludes with 13 recommendations for the further development of quality assurance systems and rankings, with a particular focus on Europe’s very own ranking initiative, U-Multirank. The results of the comparative analysis ascertained the two instruments to differ fundamentally in their purpose, but also showed both QA and rankings to display signs of learning from each other in their methodologies and indicators. Recommendations emphasised a need to promote European instruments for QA, raise a ‘quality culture’ and embrace adaptability to serve changing learning environments. Research on potential indicators that could include the weight of teaching quality, and simplifying U-Multirank while raising its public visibility set the tone for the global rankings side of the spectrum.

STUDY ON OPEN EDUCATION

Starting February 2015 ACA, supported by experts Rita Morais and Marek Fuchs, conducted a five months long survey to map and identify the provision of Open Education in five EU countries (France, Germany, Poland, Spain and UK). Coming out on top in a competition for a contract with the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) (Seville) of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) in 2014, ACA had the opportunity to be at the forefront of exploring Europe’s open education landscape and to formulate first insights that would capture the current state of play in this emerging field across Europe. Following an extension of the project period, the end of 2015 saw the finalisation of the report for the European Commission titled – ‘How are Higher Education Institutions Dealing with Openness? A Survey of Practices, Beliefs, and Strategies in Five European Countries’ - that shows those trends held in common and those that differ between the respective countries. The report includes policy recommendations, and is unique in the field for providing a realistic and statically relevant picture of the provision of Open Education in the five countries. A big thank you goes as well to ACA’s member organisations and partners in the respective countries, who provided information and dissemination support to the research team.

Mastering this rather novel terrain for ACA, and capturing the IPTS’s wide understanding of open education that includes MOOCs, OER, e-learning and blended learning opportunities, the results gave a comprehensive picture into the extent Europe’s higher education institutions offer and cooperate around these instruction mediums. Building on the report, the European Commission considered commissioning further research, possible an EU-wide mapping exercise, which would provide a more comprehensive picture of the national contexts and practices in the field of Open Education.
PROMOTING INNOVATION & INTERNATIONALISATION

ENHANCING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD (STUDY IN EUROPE)

In 2015 a consortium of ACA members, in leadership of the British Council and comprising EP-Nuffic, Campus France, DAAD, the Archimedes Foundation and the ACA Secretariat, continued on its mission to establish and run a global promotion campaign of Europe as a study destination, with the aim of increasing the visibility and attractiveness of the European higher education space. Within the ‘Study in Europe project’, ACA has been actively developing networks of European Higher Education Experts (EHEEs) in five partner countries, namely the BRICS – Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa.

In 2015 ACA successfully identified and recruited the experts, and rolled out first training activities, laying the groundwork for building an expert, human resource, and knowledge base that could act as a cooperation platform between Europe and the five countries. The experts are to organise a series of Study in Europe information sessions, directed at students and researchers interested in studying or conducting research shorter- or longer-term in Europe. The aim of the sessions is to provide comprehensive information on funding opportunities for studying in Europe, on administrative requirements (visas, permits, etc.) and cultural landscape in 33 European countries.

The first ACA information and training seminar took place in mid-December 2015 in Moscow and attracted 10 higher education experts from various Russian higher education institutions. The four information and training sessions in China, Brazil, South Africa and India were respectively planned for the period January - March 2016. Judging by the first experience in Russia, there is strong potential for cooperation and exchange among universities, national-level promotion agencies as well as highly motivated individual experts, who showed admirable enthusiasm and expertise at the seminar in Moscow.

IMPALA – INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNISATION PROGRAMME FOR ACADEMICS, LEADERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

IMPALA is an Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Capacity Building in Higher Education project, developed with the aim to respond to the needs of and support internationalisation efforts in the South African higher education community through a collaboration network of European and South African universities and educational organisations. IMPALA is composed of nine full partners: five European higher education organisations (University of Antwerp, University of Bologna, University of Graz, ACA and Utrecht Network), four South-African universities (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of Fort Hare, University of Limpopo and University of Venda), with The University of Antwerp acting as project coordinator and the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) as an associate partner in an advisory role and supporting the consortium in data collection and the development of training programme for South African university staff.

ACA’s role, in collaboration with the colleagues from the Universities of Limpopo and Venda, is that of equipping international relations staff and university management with information, exchange as well as peer and online learning opportunities on international strategy development and good examples of strategic management of internationalisation processes at European universities. As coordinator of a working group for strengthening structures and policies at South African universities, ACA engages in the organisation of seminars, research, and site visits aimed to positively impact internationalisation in South African higher education.
EUROPEAN POLICY SEMINARS

ACA’s well-known, series of European Policy Seminars (EPS) continued in 2015, delivering yet another four events. Each EPS session consists of a substantive one-day event organised around a specific theme of interest. The seminars normally draw up to and sometimes above 100 participants to Brussels, all active in higher education leadership, management or policy-making, for a stimulating day of analyses, conversations and debates on key issues in international higher education.

EPS1: On 3 February, ACA held the 2015 and this time round 45th edition of its popular ‘What’s new in Brussels? Recent developments in European policies and programmes’ seminar. ACA kicked off its policy seminar series with its flagship event focusing on new EU programmes in education and research, and particularly on Erasmus+ by identifying and analysing experiences and developments in the new programme. About 100 stakeholders from universities, national agencies and governments, student associations and European Commission shared relevant studies and new initiatives, engaged in lively discussions around first experiences, achievements and lessons learned in Erasmus+. A diversity of knowledgeable experts answered to critical questions of those actors who took part in Erasmus+, Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions in Horizon2020 as well as Erasmus Impact Study and HEInnovate.

EPS2: ACA’s 2nd European Policy Seminar of 2015 was titled ‘Harnessing the power of alumni - a European perspective’, and covered a European overview of alumni work, the most recent trends, and national-level alumni support systems for international graduates. The seminar was strong in sharing examples of good practice and generating peer learning, by blending policy – and practice-oriented presentations from those higher education institutions and national-level bodies at the forefront of developing and sustaining robust alumni associations. A picture on the future of alumni relations and tracking was given through in-depth case studies including the University of Amsterdam, Campus France, DAAD, EUA, pan-European alumni associations as well as the EU’s new umbrella European alumni network – Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA), all of which set the stage for existing and emerging national or European resources on alumni work.

EPS3: ACA’s 3rd European Policy Seminar of 2015 was held on 15 October, as is tradition - in Brussels. Titled ‘12 years with global university rankings– a panoramic [re]view and an update on recent developments’, the seminar took stock of 12-year progress and developments since the launch of the first global university ranking by Shanghai Jiaotong University in 2003. Firstly, the audience had the opportunity

Bringing the expert community together for lively discussions, debates and deliberations on the current trends in innovation and internationalisation in higher education is one of ACA’s core activities. ACA’s brand name events - the European Policy Seminars (EPS) – held four times a year in Brussels - offer participants the opportunity to interact directly with colleagues and experts around a tightly defined topic, on a relatively small scale and in a highly collegial environment. Our annual conference, normally co-hosted by an ACA member in a different European country each year, brings together a larger yet as engaging set of speakers and delegates to explore a wider theme. ACA staff also regularly speaks at high level events across Europe and in other parts of the world.
to hear more about the results of the ACA-DAAD study for the European Parliament – University Quality Indicators. A critical assessment', while the rest of the programme focused on current and emerging trends in ranking providers, offered good practice examples of how universities could best use rankings as marketing and student recruitment tools fitted to their profiles and offered strategies on how to effectively deal with changes and aggregated reputational impacts of rankings.

**EPS4: The 4th ACA European Policy Seminar in 2015** was dedicated to a most pressing, yet rather new challenge faced by European higher education. ‘The international refugee crisis. What role for European higher education?’ gathered a large and diverse audience of over 120 participants, reflecting the urgent need to commence discussions and exchanges for a Europe-wide approach to the academic integration of refugees. The programme focused on current and planned activities aimed at mitigating the consequences of the refugee crisis, discussed potential joint activities, and responded to the audience's substantial need of building collective capacities, learning experiences and finding complementary resources and competences. With representatives of HEIs, European and national-level policy makers, NGOs, migration networks, humanitarian foundations, private donors and more present at the seminar, ACA’s strength in facilitating platforms that gather a full spectrum of target stakeholders showcased. The ACA Secretariat demonstrated its capacity to cater to, and promote cooperation on those topics truly relevant to its members and the international higher education community, by deciding to change the original theme of the EPS4 to accommodate multi-sector exchanges for those forcefully displaced from education opportunities. ACA is planning a number of follow-up activities after the excellent feedback from participating members and the wider audience.

**ACA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015 - INTERNATIONALISATION: FROM STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION**

ACA’s Annual Conference 2015, in partnership with ACA’s two members, Wallonia Brussels Campus and the Flanders Knowledge Area, as well as the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, under the title ‘Internationalisation: From strategy to implementation’, gathered slightly above 200 participants in mid-June, to the ACA Secretariat’s home base as a debut in Brussels. The 2015 conference explored the development of institutional internationalisation strategies, and their - although at times neglected - implementation challenges and opportunities. Particular attention was devoted to language policies and teaching in English; the integration of foreign students; incentivising staff and student mobility; funding internationalisation strategies; ‘mainstreaming’ internationalisation, and securing ‘buy in’ from faculty and staff.

A carefully selected group of internationally reputed experts from the fields of higher education research, policy and practice, brought the audience a skilful mix of internationalisation strategies from across the globe, inspiring case studies, and new pathways to funding and branding. For two days dynamic and critical stakeholder discussions on incentives for student and staff mobility, mainstreaming and implementation challenges filled the venue of the Flemish Parliament.
EVENTS CO-ORGANISED WITH ACA MEMBERS

In addition to the traditional series of four European Policy Seminars and the Annual Conference, in 2015 ACA organised two very successful events for and with its members.

EUROPEAN LEADERS’ FORUM

The European Leaders’ Forum in Vienna, a members-only seminar co-organised with OeAD, ACA member organisation from Austria, focused on current and future cooperation among ACA members and on potential member organisations from South-East Europe. It gathered a small and select group of 40 participants, leaders of ACA member organisations, National Agencies and Erasmus+ Offices in South-East Europe.

The ELF started with a keynote speech by Barbara Weitgruber, Director General in the Austrian Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and was followed by the first exchanges and presentations by ACA members on cooperation programmes and instruments between different geo-political regions of Europe. Together with a lively panel discussion on the first experiences with Erasmus+ and fascinating closing keynote by Pavel Zgaga, Professor of Education at the University of Ljubljana, ELF was received as a successful information, networking and knowledge sharing event. ACA is considering developing an ELF series in the future in order to provide more of such smaller-scale fora for exchange and networking.

ACA-DZS SEMINAR: JOINT & DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAMMES AS AN INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In late October, ACA co-organised another very successful event, this time in the beautiful city of Prague. Hosted by ACA’s Czech member and Czech’s national agency Dům zahraniční spolupráce (DZS), the seminar took place in the National Library of Technology in Prague on 29 October, bringing together over 150 participants from higher education institutions from Europe and beyond.

The seminar featured examples of good practice of joint and double degrees both between European universities and between higher education institutions in Europe and in other parts of the world. The audience was provided with an insight into the history of double and joint degrees - which goes back further in time than most would think – and speakers introduced participants to the wider concept of ‘mobility windows’. The event dedicated a session to alumni of joint and double degrees who shared their experiences and post-graduation success stories.

The general impression ACA-DZS seminar left was ‘an excellent choice of speakers, a very good balance of different perspectives and impeccable organisation'.
Staff of the ACA Secretariat regularly present at international conferences and seminars and workshops, serve as panellists at forums and undertake various advisory roles and other missions abroad. Some of the selected highlights of 2015 were:

- Speaker, UArctic North2North meeting (Copenhagen, 25-26 March 2015)
- Keynote speaker, International Day, Hochschule Darmstadt, (Darmstadt, 28-29 April 2015)
- Speaker and workshop moderator, International Week, (University of Vic, Vic, 8-9 June 2015)
- Speaker and chair, EUA event – Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs), Study visit (Gent/Brussels, 11-12 June 2015)
- Speaker, ‘final conference of the IEMU (Internationalisation, Equity and University Management) project (Bucharest, 23-24 September 2015)
- Speaker, final conference of the IntlUni project (Brussels, 24-25 September 2015)
- Chair at the IAU international conference “Internationalization of higher education: moving beyond mobility” (Siena, 28-30 October 2015)
- Keynote speaker, Peer Learning Activity (PLA) by the Tempus Public Foundation on “Introducing mobility windows in the curricula of Hungarian higher education institutions” (Budapest, 2 December 2015)
The ACA Newsletter - Education Europe that reaches monthly over 25,000 stakeholders in higher education Europe and worldwide, in 2015 continued to deliver on its mission of keeping its diverse readership up-to-date with the latest developments in higher learning across the globe.

Featuring over 60 articles on ACA members and activities, almost 50 on developments in EU policies and programmes, and close to 100 reports on global and national news, accompanied by ongoing calls for proposals and tenders as well as topical events and publications, the ACA newsletter sought to leave its footprint by circulating its dedicated perspective on those advances concerning the internationalisation side of higher education worldwide.

This year's readership base particularly grew in European Higher Education Experts (EHEEs) from the BRICS, receiving in the frame of the 'Study in Europe project' a two year free newsletter-subscription, where Education Europe now makes an enhanced contribution to building knowledge and inspiring potential cooperation with European higher education in these regions. Although the ACA Team is responsible for the production and dissemination of the newsletter, it is deeply grateful to all its members who regularly contribute with the newest developments in their national and organisational contexts, making 'Education Europe' a unique and first-hand source for readers all over the world, on happenings at the forefront and backstage of international higher education.
ACA is governed by a supreme body, the General Assembly (GA), where all ACA members are represented. The decisions of the GA are based on proposals put forward by the Administrative Council (AC). The AC consists of up to seven members who are elected for two-year terms by and from the members of the General Assembly. The Brussels based Secretariat handles the day to day affairs of the Association, with a high priority placed on professionalism, cost efficiency, and high quality service delivery. Very importantly, the Association is represented externally by a key figure – the ACA President – who is elected from outside the association for a mandate of 3 years.

**ACA LEADERSHIP**

At the end of 2015 the mandate of six out of seven ACA Administrators expired and ACA elected and re-elected its governing representatives for another two years. In the 2015 election ACA said goodbye to Antoine Godbert, its prior Vice-President, and welcomed Stefan Zotti of OeAD in this role. The decision on the position of the ACA Treasurer is to be made in 2016.

The newly elected ACA Administrative Council in 2015 comprised five Administrators among whom two had held a mandate previously, namely, Anette Pieper (DAAD), who was re-elected for another two-year term and Vidar Pedersen (SIU), who had been re-elected for another two-year term in 2014. Stefan Zotti (OeAD), Bianka Siwinska (Perspektywy) and Piet Van Hove (Flanders Knowledge Area) are the three newly elected Administrators, Stefan Zotti as Vice-President as well.

**ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Administrative Council (AC) met twice, as in every year. The spring meeting was held on 17 April 2015 in Vienna, following ACA’s members’ seminar, the European Leaders’ Forum, which took place the day before in Austria’s capital. The autumn AC meeting took place on 12 November 2015 in Brussels.

The spring ACA General Assembly (GA) took place in Brussels, back-to-back with the ACA Annual Conference, on 17 June 2015. Amongst other important decisions, it adopted the ACA accounts for the year 2014.

The Structured Dialogue of the spring GA meeting, titled “Measuring quality in (international) higher education”, as the title itself indicates, looked into links between internationalisation and quality assurance in current practices across Europe’s higher education systems. The choice of the theme linked as well with the then ongoing study “University Quality Indicators: A Critical Assessment”, conducted by ACA and DAAD, and commissioned by the European Parliament.

The autumn meeting of the General Assembly was held in Brussels, a day after ACA’s European Policy Seminar on the refugee crisis, which took place on 10 December 2015. During this GA meeting the election of the Administrative Council and Vice-President took place, as well as the adoption of the ACA budget for 2016. In the wake of the seminar on the refugee crisis, organised at members’ request, the Structured Dialogue was dedicated to the same theme so that member organisations could share concerns, plans and activities that target the academic integration of forcefully displaced individuals from the Middle East. On this occasion, ACA members expressed a strong need for another similar event in 2016 that would enable them, to take stock of existing project and activities in this area and explore cooperation opportunities.
Several changes took place in the ACA Secretariat in the course of 2015. Queenie K.H. Lam (Project Officer, now Project Manager) entered an extended maternity leave in August 2015 and Marija Mitić was appointed ACA Project Officer. Director Bernd Wächter provided overall leadership and guidance for the team, supported by Irina Ferencz, who was promoted to ACA Deputy Director in September 2015. After more than two years in ACA, Lynn Sobrie (Office Manager) left to find a job closer to home, which is in Gent. Natalia Tarachiu, formerly from the European Students’ Union (ESU), joined the Secretariat as the Office Manager.

ACA also benefitted from the work of three excellent stagiaires. Melania Lotti, Victoria Marambio, and Ester Magyar, all of whom contributed significantly to the quality and relevance of the monthly ACA Newsletter – Education Europe, among other projects and tasks. Victoria supported the team after her traineeship period until the end of October, when she went back to her home country, Chile.
## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ACA Accounts 2014 and 2015 [EUR]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>440,261</td>
<td>413,821</td>
<td>402,327</td>
<td>414,613</td>
<td>452,951</td>
<td>402,923</td>
<td>438,450</td>
<td>402,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat running costs/ infrastructure &amp; equipment</td>
<td>170,829</td>
<td>117,943</td>
<td>115,244</td>
<td>118,134</td>
<td>117,523</td>
<td>146,196</td>
<td>128,467</td>
<td>119,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, meeting &amp; subs.</td>
<td>12,993</td>
<td>10,835</td>
<td>3,352</td>
<td>7,545</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>10,807</td>
<td>16,279</td>
<td>25,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>788,368</td>
<td>785,930</td>
<td>749,370</td>
<td>820,580</td>
<td>787,847</td>
<td>794,267</td>
<td>799,717</td>
<td>763,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>315,634</td>
<td>307,090</td>
<td>278,597</td>
<td>303,957</td>
<td>274,498</td>
<td>256,427</td>
<td>296,230</td>
<td>271,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project income</td>
<td>468,658</td>
<td>453,967</td>
<td>466,567</td>
<td>492,408</td>
<td>482,185</td>
<td>451,803</td>
<td>520,543</td>
<td>537,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>122,346</td>
<td>12,538</td>
<td>16,700</td>
<td>16,893</td>
<td>27,233</td>
<td>26,736</td>
<td>28,209</td>
<td>54,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td>906,638</td>
<td>773,596</td>
<td>761,864</td>
<td>813,258</td>
<td>783,917</td>
<td>734,966</td>
<td>844,983</td>
<td>863,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Result</strong></td>
<td>118,270</td>
<td>12,333</td>
<td>12,494</td>
<td>-7,322</td>
<td>-3,930</td>
<td>-59,301</td>
<td>45,265</td>
<td>110,569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>