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 pan-European network of member organisations, each responsible in their respective countries for supporting internationalisation in education and training. ACA also maintains a global perspective through its associate members in other parts of the world.

ACA’s activities include research and analysis, evaluations, consultancy for private and public bodies, advocacy, publications and much more. 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 institutions and the world beyond.
In my capacity as the President of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), I take pleasure in sharing with you the details of our association’s activities and accomplishments in the year 2011. In its almost 20 years of existence, ACA has achieved much. It is today one of the key actors in European higher education policy, particularly in the area of internationalisation. ACA stands for high quality, for instructive and inspiring international seminars and conferences, for exclusive networking between members, for cutting-edge studies, amongst others.

2011 was another successful year, adding to ACA’s reputation. The year saw further growth in ACA’s membership base. Three fine national organisations for international cooperation newly joined the association: the French Agence Education-Formation France (2e2F), the Polish Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) and the Swiss CH Foundation for Federal Cooperation. ACA’s international events once again attracted many satisfied participants. Most important of all, ACA produced cutting-edge studies in its key areas of expertise.

Of the many projects underway in 2011, I would like to single out two. They both relate to international student mobility, a subject in which ACA has a strong track record. Two landmark studies have shed further light on the various forms of student mobility: the two-volume publication *Mapping Mobility in European Higher Education*, published by ACA’s German member DAAD, as well as an investigation into national mobility policies across Europe, which will be published in early 2012.

The continuing and growing popularity of ACA’s events amongst Europe’s policy makers and opinion leaders gave us a further boost in 2011. Bringing together renowned speakers from across Europe and further afield, the 2011 Annual Conference on the ‘excellence imperative’ in Vienna provided new insights into the many faces of ‘quality’. Our seminar series saw four new editions, respectively devoted to internationalisation, the ‘social dimension’, the BRIC countries and the new EU programmes in the making. Most of them were – once again – oversubscribed.

I am also glad to report that our news service, the ACA Newsletter – *Education Europe*, is gaining more and more subscribers – and growing prestige.

Finally, 2011 was the year when I became the new President of ACA. I wish to thank my predecessor, Rolf Tarrach, for his inspiring leadership in the last three years. My key aim for the years ahead is to work towards further strengthening our association, together with new ACA Vice-President Ulrich Grothus and Treasurer Hubert Dürrstein.

*Bonne lecture.*

*Sijbolt Noorda*

ACA President
ACA’s strength as an organisation rests on the extensive 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 administration, 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.
In 2011, ACA was delighted to admit three fine organisations as new members:

Agence Europe-Education-Formation France (2e2f): Created in 2000, 2e2f serves as France’s National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme, as well as the National Contact Point for Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, the Bologna Experts French Team, Europass and Euroguidance. The Bordeaux-based agency manages all aspects of the European programmes for which it is responsible; it also liaises with national organisations in the fields of education and vocational training and organises many conferences, seminars and workshops.

Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE): FRSE serves as Poland’s National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme, the National Structure of the Erasmus Mundus Programme, and the National Contact Point for Tempus. Since its founding in 1993, FRSE has administered the main European education programmes and been involved in national efforts to modernise the education system, particularly with regard to quality and competitiveness. It has also promoted the Polish higher education system abroad.

Foundation for Federal Co-operation: Headquartered in Solothurn, the CH Foundation [as it is more commonly known] is an inter-cantonal organisation with members from all 26 Swiss cantons. It was created in 1967 and has for many years been engaged in efforts to support national and international educational, cultural and linguistic exchange and mobility activities. Since 2011, the CH Foundation also acts as the Swiss National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme.
Every year, ACA seeks out—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 internationalisation and innovation. ACA is well-known in European higher education policy circles for the high quality of work it produces, and its ability to communicate very technical information (particularly in terms of international mobility trends) to non-technical and policy-oriented audiences.

Our research is conducted both by our own highly qualified Secretariat staff (an international group in and of itself) and in conjunction with a wide network of extremely experienced and knowledgeable professional and academic colleagues across Europe and beyond.

**mapping mobility in european higher education**

2011 saw the much-awaited conclusion of *Mapping mobility in European higher education*, one of ACA’s largest and most complex projects of the last few years. Work on this European Commission-funded study was initiated in October 2009 and focused on two primary lines of inquiry. First, through an analysis of existing data from EuroStat, OECD and UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics, the project sought to provide a clear picture of the volume and patterns of student (and to a lesser extent staff) mobility into, out of and between the so-called Europe 32 countries over a recent ten-year period. “Europe 32” in the context of this study, consists of those countries covered by the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme: the 27 EU Member States, the four European Free Trade Association states (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), and Turkey. Second, the project aimed to assess the adequacy of the international data stock – and the approaches to its collection – with regard to the mobility phenomenon in the Europe 32 countries.

ACA served as the coordinator of the project, in close collaboration with Ulrich Teichler of INCHER at the University of Kassel. The work also benefitted from significant contributions by Campus France and DAAD (both ACA member organisations), as well as HIS (a German social science research institute). A number of researchers connected to Professor Teichler also participated in this mammoth exercise, which involved extensive analysis of both quantitative information and contextual considerations across the 32 very diverse countries covered by the study.

The final two-volume report provides amongst other things:

- a state of the art picture of student mobility into, out of and between the Europe 32 countries, on the criteria of both nationality and country of prior education/residence (‘real mobility’); it also features an historical account of this information (time series), displaying the major mobility trends
- in-depth studies of student mobility in 11 EU countries
- a critical assessment of the present state of international data collection and analysis, with recommendations for improved practice in the future
- a state of the art picture, including a historical dimension, of student mobility in European programmes (mainly Erasmus)
- a presentation of the [few] available data on staff mobility in Europe, as well as a suggested methodology for future data collection in this area
- an analysis of national policies for international mobility in all 32 countries covered by the study
- recommendations to boost student and staff mobility in Europe.

The full text of this epic report was made available on the European Commission’s website in autumn 2011. DAAD also graciously provided support for the publication of a hard copy version of the study, which came out in its Dok&Mat series in December 2011.
ENPMOB’s final report is due in early 2012 and will provide a substantial contribution to ACA’s body of work focused on international mobility.

STUDY ON EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL MOBILITY POLICIES [ENPMOB]

Over the course of 2011, ACA devoted significant resources to the completion of the Study on European and National Mobility Policies [ENPMOB]. This project, initiated in November 2010, was dedicated to the exploration and analysis of mobility policies and strategies at both the European level and in the same 32 countries covered in Mapping Mobility in European Higher Education project (see previous section).

Building on the quantitative foundation laid by Mapping Mobility, ENPMOB has aimed to make sense of the concrete set of objectives, instruments, responsible actors, monitoring actions, and timeline specifications for mobility articulated in the study countries and within the broader EU framework. This work was made possible by funding from the ERASMUS Programme’s ‘Accompanying Measures’. ACA served as project coordinator and worked closely with colleagues from Nuffic and DAAD to realise the project’s goals.

ENPMOB’s final report is due in early 2012 and will provide a substantial contribution to ACA’s body of work focused on international mobility. This will include a macro-level comparison of the mobility policies of the 32 Lifelong Learning Programme countries and the European Union itself. There will be a historical account and analysis of the evolution of EU mobility policies over the past 25 years as well as in-depth presentation of the national mobility policies in eight European countries – Austria, Cyprus, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

A central consideration within the study is the question of convergence or divergence. That is to say, the final report will endeavour to shed light on the fundamental issue of if, how and to what degree national and European-level policies are exerting an effect on one another. There will also be attention paid to the alignment (or lack thereof) between stated policy objectives and the ‘real world’, in the form of discernible mobility trends and the practical application of steering instruments. The final report will be published in ACA’s own monograph series, the ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education.

INDICATORS FOR MAPPING AND PROFILING INTERNATIONALISATION [IMPI]

Building on its core expertise in the area of internationalisation, ACA in 2011 continued to play an active role in the on-going IMPI project, which was launched in 2009. Coordinated by CHE Consult GmbH [Centre for Higher Education Development] in Germany, Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalisation is a three-year project funded by the European Commission. ACA members CampusFrance, NUFFIC, Perspektywy and SIU are also core partners in this work, which is focused on the development and testing of a set of internationalisation indicators that can be used by European higher education institutions through the medium of an online interactive “toolkit”. The indicators allow both for self-assessment of different dimensions of internationalisation by individual institutions, or they can be used for a coordinated benchmarking exercise among groups of institutions.

In 2011, ACA took the lead on a variety of IMPI-related activities, principally focused on guiding the team of core partners (and 20 participating higher education institutions from across Europe) through an in-depth testing phase of the indicators. Key activities included oversight of two day-long workshops—one in Vienna in May, the second in Copenhagen in September—as well as the convening of an external experts’ meeting in Brussels in April, which provided important feedback on the project’s achievements to that point, and its on-going development.

The IMPI project is due to be completed in 2012. ACA will be a central actor until the end, hosting the project’s final symposium in Brussels in May 2012.
October 2011 saw the launch of MOWIN, a project led by ACA and developed in partnership with ACA’s Finnish member, CIMO, as well as HIS, a German social science research institute. MOWIN is funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme and its objective is to ‘unpack’ the concept of “mobility windows”, an increasingly popular instrument for integrating study abroad periods into higher education programming. The project will have a lifespan of two years and, among other things, aims to provide a robust working definition of the (often vague) term “mobility window”, create an inventory and a typology of the different types of “windows”, and investigate how different mobility window models are implemented in a small group of countries and institutions.

The EUSEIF project was launched in late 2011, with financial support from the Lifelong Learning Programme. This one-year initiative is focused on analysing the interrelations between five issues of central importance to European higher education today, but which are rarely examined jointly. A core consideration will be the extent to which (if at all) the agendas of these different imperatives—social inclusiveness, excellent institutional performance, internationalisation, mobility, and funding—can be attained in parallel, or if and to what extent they are mutually exclusive. Five high-level concept papers will be produced by a team of experts, and an international conference will be convened in 2012, designed around the project’s main thematic tracks. The conference proceedings will subsequently be published in ACA’s monograph series, the ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education.

In January 2011, ACA and DAAD jointly submitted a “Detailed Briefing Note” to the European Parliament (EP), under the title The Bologna Process: Stocktaking and Prospects. This work was specifically commissioned by the EP and came as a result of DAAD and ACA having successfully responded in late 2010 to an EP call for tenders for a ‘framework service contract’. This very short yet dense report, published electronically by the EP, presented a concise overview of the Bologna Process since 1998, as well as an assessment of strengths and weakness in terms of the overall performance of the Bologna countries. Also included in the publication were nine ‘thematic status reports’ on the main achievements and challenges seen across the main Bologna action lines, from mobility to employability, and from the quality assurance to the external dimension.

This one-year initiative is focused on analysing the interrelations between five issues of central importance to European higher education today, but which are rarely examined jointly.
EUROPEAN POLICY SEMINARS

ACA’s well-known series of European Policy Seminars (EPS) completed its eighth year in 2011. Each EPS session consists of a substantive one-day event organised around a specific theme of interest. The seminars normally draw to Brussels 85 to 100 participants, all active in higher education leadership, management or policymaking circles, for a stimulating day of presentations, conversations and debates on key issues in international higher education. As in most years, in 2011 ACA offered four top-notch EPS events:

- **EPS1: What’s new in Brussels?** Recent developments in European programmes and policies launched the year of events for ACA in January, as it normally does. This session offered a special focus on the plans for the next generation of the European Union’s education and research funding instruments after 2013. High-level speakers from the European Commission, and intimate observers and analysts of EU policy, presented key intelligence on the future of the EU’s flagship programmes, the European Commission’s latest mobility strategy, and the Commission’s plans for an “Innovation Union”, among other important developments.

- **EPS2: In March 2011, ACA presented Brazil, Russia, India, China.** Key points on the European higher education compass? This session shone a spotlight on the major trends in higher education currently in play in the so-called BRICs countries and what these can (and do) mean for European higher education. The agenda included overviews of the higher education sector in each BRIC country, information about what is happening at the European level in terms of strategic thinking and orientations towards these emerging economies, and “case study” examples from several European universities working in one or more BRIC contexts.

- **EPS3: This instalment marked the 30th seminar in ACA’s EPS series and was dedicated to the complex and timely subject of The social dimension in European higher education.** The latest data on access and equity in European higher education were presented by representatives of EURYDICE and the EUROSTUDENT initiative. The seminar also showcased the work of the ‘Official Bologna Working Group’ on the Social Dimension, the European Commission’ latest policy position paper on higher education, and the OECD’s perspective on if and how our universities and colleges are catering to students from migrant communities.

- **EPS4: Rounding out the year, the fourth and final EPS event of 2011 took up a new angle on a signature topic for ACA.** Internationalisation revisited addressed the fundamental question of whether our understanding of internationalisation (now a topic of some ‘maturity’) has managed to keep up with ever changing international, national and institutional realities. Speakers from the International Association of Universities, the British Council, and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC), amongst others, provided a window on such key issues as evolving
Can the notion of world class be meaningfully expanded to a broader discussion of excellence across a range of dimensions?

definitions for internationalisation; important trends and new insights into “traditional” internationalisation activities; and nuanced views of internationalisation challenges and opportunities from the institutional level.

As always, ACA is exceedingly grateful for the contributions of the seminar speakers, and the active participation of the diverse groups of attendees who gathered for these events throughout the year.

ACA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Universities are called upon today to attend to many complex tasks, one of which is to actively aspire to ‘world-class’ status. Few movements have captured the imagination of institutional leaders, politicians and policymakers in quite the same way as the world-class ‘craze’ of recent years. But, what are we to make of the stark reality that, globally, the ‘best of the best’ in higher education is defined in a most narrow sense? Indeed, only a tiny subset of institutions can realistically aspire to join (or remain in) these ranks. What does this mean for the rest of the higher education enterprise? Can the notion of world class be meaningfully expanded to a broader discussion of excellence across a range of dimensions in which most of the world’s institutions are actively engaged, for example in teaching, service to society, and international programming and engagement?

The ACA 2011 Annual Conference, The excellence imperative. World-class aspirations and real-world needs, was grounded in the premise that this expanded consideration of what constitutes excellence can and must occur. And to stimulate this critically important conversation, ACA brought together in Vienna on 22-24 May a group of leading thinkers to address, from a wide range of perspectives, the central question of how the quest for excellence—in all its complexity—is playing out in Europe and beyond.

The conference was launched by a richly detailed, historically oriented keynote address by Georg Winckler, Rector of the University of Vienna. From there, such salient issues as how ‘world-class’ institutions may be defined and created, as well as the subjectivity of international rankings efforts and the limitations of their usefulness, were artfully introduced. Looking beyond traditional notions of excellence, other speakers highlighted such critical issues as the “dialogical principle” at the heart of “real teaching”, the relevance of diverse curricular approaches (e.g. through a focus on interdisciplinarity and the liberal arts), and the fundamental aspects of institutional responsibility. Internationalisation was also placed in the spotlight. Here, the role played (or to be played) by the English language in higher education, and misunderstandings about internationalisation, were also thoughtfully explored. Meanwhile, the future impact of the (uneven and uncertain) global demographic changes on higher education provided a striking, long-term dimension to the conversation about the conference theme.

The contributions of representatives from around the world—including from such organisations as the World Bank, OECD, the European Commission, the European Research Council and the International Association of Universities—provided extraordinary depth and breadth to the conference proceedings. ACA is immensely appreciative of the contributions of the individuals who shared their time and expertise in support of this event. Special recognition goes to ACA’s Austrian member, OeAD, which served as co-organiser of the conference, as well as the University of Vienna, which provided a most inspiring venue for the gathering.
ACA PRESENTATIONS, MISSIONS AND MEETINGS

ACA Secretariat staff regularly give presentations at international conferences and meetings, serve as panelists at forums and undertake missions abroad. These kinds of commitments took ACA staff to nearly 20 different countries over the course of 2011 and included such activities as:

- Discussant at a European Commission Hearing on the pending Communication on European universities (Brussels, January)
- Opening speaker on “Europe and internationalisation” and panelist on the role of Europe in an institutional internationalisation strategy, at the Universities UK/Europe Unit Conference (London, February)
- Plenary speaker on “An ever closer Union? The role of Brussels in shaping European higher education”, Annual Dearing Conference (Nottingham, February)
- Delegate, 4th IAU Global Meeting of Associations of Universities. “Internationalization of Higher Education: New Players, New Approaches” (New Delhi, April)
- Chair of opening plenary panel discussion, UNESCO forum on ranking and accountability (Paris, May)
- Speaker on student mobility flows between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, EU Presidency Conference, “The Eastern Dimension of Mobility” (Warsaw, July)
- Various chair, speaker and workshop responsibilities, EAIE Annual Conference 2011 (Copenhagen, September)
- Speaker, “Future of Higher Education” Bologna Process researchers’ conference (Bucharest, October)
- E-workshop presenter on the “Quality of Internationalization Management”, Columbus Project webinar for Latin American university representatives (October)
- Speaker on “Mobility in the European Higher Education Area: Trends and Challenges”, Implementation of the EHEA in the Republic of Moldova. Achievements, Challenges, Future Actions (Chisinau, December)
ACA NEWSLETTER – EDUCATION EUROPE

As in previous years, ACA's newsletter coverage of European and global higher education developments in 2011 was extensive. All told, this monthly e-publication included just over 130 articles on national and international trends in higher education in some 40 different countries or world regions. In addition, the newsletter team produced 48 pieces focused on European policy developments in the higher education and innovation sectors. The newsletter also profiled 102 different books, reports and other publications relevant to the field, and provided readers with overviews and direct links to 22 different EU funding opportunities.

Coverage throughout the year focused on a broad range of topics, although in 2011 a number of cross-cutting themes received significant attention, including international student mobility developments, institutional rankings and the "world-class" debate, national talent attraction and re-attraction schemes, quality assurance issues and many aspects of student tuition fees.

The newsletter continues to serve as an excellent vehicle for sharing information about what the Association and its members are up to, and for keeping subscribers well-informed about key issues in higher education across Europe and around the world.
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.

ACA LEADERSHIP

2011 culminated with several significant changes for ACA at the leadership level. At its December meeting in Brussels, the General Assembly (GA) voted in a new President, a new Vice President and a new Treasurer.

Sijbolt Noorda now sits as ACA’s fifth President, and will guide the organisation for a three-year term, with re-election possible at the end of 2014. He brings an impressive and highly relevant background to the ACA presidency, serving at the time of his election as both President of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands and as Chairperson of the Dutch Foundation for Education. Until 2006, he was President of the University of Amsterdam. He is also a former board member of the European University Association (EUA) and is a current member of Germany’s Akkreditierungsrat.

Rounding out the top leadership team, long-time ACA supporters Ulrich Grothus (DAAD) and Hubert Dürstein (OeAD) were elected as the Association’s newest Vice President and Treasurer, respectively.

ACA extends heartfelt thanks to outgoing ACA President Rolf Tarrach, whose outstanding leadership and thoughtful guidance were greatly appreciated throughout his tenure. The contributions of outgoing Vice President Rait Toompere (Archimedes Foundation) and outgoing Treasurer Ulf Melin (IPK) have also been deeply appreciated.

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Elections were also held in December 2011 for the ACA Administrative Council. As a result, the three administrators eligible to continue in their roles – Hubert Dürstein (OeAD), Ulrich Grothus (DAAD) and Pat Killingley (British Council) – were duly re-elected, while three new administrators were installed: Antoine Godbert (2e2f) Katarina Kostalova (SAIA) and Hanneke Teekens (NUFFIC). Pasi Sahlberg (CIMO), whose term as administrator did not expire in 2011, continues his work on the Administrative Council (AC) for another year. Prior to the election of new members in December, the AC met twice during the year (in April and October) to conduct its business, which was primarily focused on developing recommendations for the General Assembly with regard to the ACA budget and other key issues for the Association.

Meanwhile, as is standard practice, the ACA General Assembly met twice this year. In addition to the December 2011 meeting in Brussels noted above, the GA’s first gathering of the year occurred in May in the context of the ACA 2011 Annual Conference, held in Vienna. Both GA meetings of 2011 provided an excellent opportunity for information sharing on all sides. The Secretariat provided an update on its work, financial matters were discussed in-depth and a comprehensive tour de table allowed all members present to share information on programmes, initiatives and other developments of note within their organisations.
PROMOTING INNOVATION & INTERNATIONALISATION

ACA SECRETARIAT

Staffing at the level of the Secretariat was quite steady in 2011, with the five core staff members remaining in place for the year. Director Bernd Wächter provided overall leadership and guidance for the group, which consisted of Laura Rumbley (Deputy Director), Irina Ferencz (Policy Officer), Queenie Lam (Project Officer) and Elke Lingier (Office Manager).

ACA also benefitted from the work of three excellent stagiaires. Jehona Serhati of Kosovo, Neo Nkhereanye of the United States, and Veronika Kupriyanova-Ashina of Russia all dedicated themselves energetically and effectively to the monthly production of the ACA Newsletter – Education Europe, among other projects and tasks.
### FINANCIAL INFORMATION

**ACA Accounts 2011 (EUR)**

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