



## Universities Challenged: Better Higher Education through a Better Ranking System in Europe?

**“There are not many ranking systems of universities of the type we are interested in. At present most rankings are typically mono-dimensional. But while they may have some merit, we are more interested in developing a ranking system that goes beyond the research performance of universities, to include elements such as teaching quality and community outreach. What we are looking at is multi-dimensional, because we want to take account of the rich diversity of our universities, so that potential students, researchers and staff can get better picture about the respective university.”**

- Ján Figel, EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, December 2008

Renaissance Hotel  
**Brussels**

29<sup>th</sup> June 2010

*Organised by*



Centre for  
Parliamentary  
Studies



*“An International Symposium for gathering knowledge, discussing the latest challenges and sharing best practices in higher education quality and standards in Europe”*

"In order to achieve a mapping of European higher education that provides guidance and transparency, we need ranking tools that take into account the existing diversity in terms of languages, subject areas, profiles, student services, research and teaching quality. CHE is among the projects which are giving an important contribution towards this objective."

**- Ján Figel, EU Commissioner, November 2008**

"Quality assurance is vital for making European higher education attractive and trustworthy, in line with the objectives of the EU modernisation agenda for higher education and the Bologna Process. Globalisation, economic integration and increased academic and professional mobility are making mutual recognition and cross-border quality assurance increasingly important. As a consequence, higher education is becoming more transparent and credible for citizens, employers and students within and outside Europe."

**- Ján Figel, EU Commissioner, September 2009**

"The Lisbon objectives and the Bologna reforms are major change drivers in higher education in Europe, and are having a significant impact both on quality assurance developments and rankings as tools to bring greater transparency to higher education."

**- Ms. Barbara Nolan, Head of Unit, Higher Education and Erasmus, European Commission, International Symposium on Standards in Higher Education organised by the Centre for Parliamentary Studies, December 2009**

## Abstract and Programme

The concept of university rankings in Europe has generally become accepted as an essential resource for prospective students because "comparable information on higher education institutions and their teaching and research programmes should make it easier for students and researchers to make **informed choices on where and what to study and where to work**. Better information would also **help policy-makers** at institutional, national and European levels develop future strategies in higher education". The relative merit between the growing numbers of ranking systems, however, has emerged as a subject for vigorous debate.

Recognising the need for clarity, the European Commission launched a new initiative "**for the design and testing of a new multi-dimensional university ranking system with global outreach**" that is also independent from public authorities and universities. It is hoped that through its emergence as a top priority on the EU higher education agenda, a new comprehensive ranking system will facilitate not only greater transparency and accountability of universities but also help policymakers to develop longer term strategies as part of the broader HE modernisation agenda.

With universities widely regarded as a measure of national economic achievements and aspirations in a globalised market, the need for a clearer and more representative ranking system has never been more paramount. This special International Symposium provides a timely opportunity for universities and other stakeholders across Europe to examine the overhaul of the university ranking system within the context of the wider HE reform process. The symposium will consider the challenges that lie ahead in terms of constellation between rankings, quality assurance systems and standards – barriers that must be overcome in order to achieve the vision of creating a *European Higher Education Area* with a robust framework to improve the comparative quality and competitiveness of universities across Europe.

The *Centre for Parliamentary Studies* welcomes the participation of all key partners, responsible authorities and stakeholders. The Symposium will support the exchange of ideas and encourage delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate.



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**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010**  
**Renaissance Hotel, Brussels**

09:00 *Registration and Morning Refreshments*

10:00 Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Prof. Luc François PhD, Director, AUGent (confirmed)*

10:10 **Session One:**

**The Design and Testing of a Multi-Dimensional Global Ranking System in Europe**

- Framework of the Future Ranking System – Indicators and Dimensions
- Expected Results – Implementation Challenges
- Best Practices and Lessons Learned so far

*Speaker:*

*Mr. Robin van IJperen, Policy Officer, Directorate General for Education and Culture European Commission (confirmed)*

10:35 First Round of Discussions

11:05 *Morning Coffee Break*

11:25 **Session Two: Accountability of Higher Education within the Perspective of Rankings and Transparency**

*Speaker:*

*Mr. Noël Vercruyse, Head of the Department of Higher Education, Flemish Ministry*

11:50 Second Round of Discussions

12:30 *Networking Lunch*



**13:30 Session Three: Dynamics of University Rankings in Europe**

- Defining Indicators and Dimensions of the University Ranking Systems in Europe
- International Comparison – Existing Practices
- Challenges Ahead
- Best Practices and Future Scenarios

*Speaker: tbc*

**13:55 Third Round of Discussions**

**14:35 Coffee Break**

**14:45 Session Four: The Global Institutional Profiles Project – Latest Analysis of World University Rankings**

- Thomson Reuters' Global Institutional Profiles Project captures key information about institutions to create a picture of universities as a whole. The first use of this data will be to inform the Times Higher Education World University Ranking, but the underlying profiles can be used in a variety of ways. A brief overview of the content and process of the project and status of where we are today

*Speaker:*

*Mr. Simon Pratt, Project Manager for Institutional Research,  
Thomson Reuters (confirmed)*

**15:10 Fourth Round of Discussions**

**15:50 Chair's Summary and Closing Remarks**

**16:00 Networking Reception and Refreshments**

**17:00 Symposium Close**

*\*\* Please note that the programme and speakers are subject to change without notice \*\**