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INTERNATIONAL

Study visit at the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ)

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After hosting its Swedish partner agency UKÄ last January, Hcéres was invited to Stockholm for a reciprocal visit on 13-14 May. Meetings with the agency's external quality assurance department highlighted common issues in the evaluation of higher education and research. A visit to Stockholm University provided an opportunity to witness the practical implementation of an internal quality assurance policy in a higher education institution.

The Swedish agency, UKÄ, is the authority responsible for periodically evaluating the internal quality assurance systems of Swedish higher education institutions and their programmes, for granting degree awarding powers and for the legal supervision of HEIs. The agency is also responsible for producing national statistics on higher education.



Ulf Hedbjörk (UKÄ), Nina Bandmann (UKÄ), Amélie Bensimon (Hcéres), Sophie Guillet (Hcéres), Maria Wikse (UKÄ), Lotten Glans (UKÄ)

In terms of quality assurance, a major review has taken place in recent years, involving internal working groups as well as national and international advisory committees, to develop evaluation procedures in favour of greater simplification and flexibility. In particular, this has led UKÄ to reduce the number of criteria and to introduce additional dialogue phases to select issues specific to each institution. At the same time, the agency is also in a position to carry out thematic evaluations in order to highlight the HEIs' practices on certain specific issues, such as sustainable

development policies or widening participation in higher education.

Ongoing projects include national coordination to reduce the administrative burden of evaluation and an analysis of the internationalisation of institutions. Hcéres is also closely monitoring these issues at national level. Internationally, Hcéres and UKÄ are members of several joint agency networks, including the Quality Audit Network and ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education). Since September 2023, the two agencies have co-chaired an ENQA working group on research evaluation. So many opportunities to continue learning from each other!



The campus of Stockholm University. Photo: Sören Andersson/Stockholm University

The second day was devoted to a visit to Stockholm University, where the design of an internal quality assurance plan was presented. This plan includes the evaluation of all study programmes by expert panels made up of professors and student representatives from other faculties at the university. A meeting of the Department of Romance and Classical Studies provided an opportunity to discuss the perception and impact of these evaluations at a decentralised level. The discussions concluded with feedback on the evaluation of the LAGLOBE Erasmus Mundus Masters programme by Hcéres using the European Approach.