

Report of the Accreditation Council 2009



SUMMARY

This summary is based on the 2009 report of the Accreditation Council (according to § 4 paragraph 9 UniAkkG, Federal Law Gazette I No. 168/1999, as amended)
Decision of the Accreditation Council of 13 September 2010

The complete annual report [German only] is available for download under:
http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/files/downloads_2010/Jahresbericht%202009.pdf

Foreword

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Over ten years ago the Austrian education sector was opened up by the introduction of the University Accreditation Act for private universities. These statutory requirements have proven to be both practical and advantageous. The reference to international standards in the quality control of educational institutions allows for the integration of changes and developments in the European and international context and plays a pivotal role in strengthening the private higher education sector. In this respect, the Austrian model of quality assurance in the private higher education sector has proved its worth in a European context.

Following up on this, the ÖAR welcomes the idea of a fundamental restructuring of quality assurance, provided that the established structures of higher education can be integrated into one multi-sectoral system so that comparable standards and procedures for quality assurance for all higher education sectors can be implemented. The Austrian system would accordingly increase transparency, existing expertise could be combined and related synergies could be used. From the perspective of the ÖAR, with regard to the merger and restructuring process, there are some key points to pay attention to:

A decision-making body – at least half of which is made up of international experts – has successfully established itself in the work of the ÖAR and has been recognized internationally as an example of good practice. Moreover, this body must be independent and not be subject to directives and these features must be protected by law.

Regardless of the freedom of choice that universities have to hire (foreign) accreditation agencies to undertake the accreditation procedure, the new Austrian institution should have national decision-making authority. Thus ensuring that the constitutionally anchored public responsibility for the quality of the education system is taken seriously, that there is legal security with respect to effects and consequences of decisions and that those decisions are consistent and comparable.

The Austrian quality assurance system in the private higher education sector, in terms of a European comparison, is viewed as exemplary. This should by no means be jettisoned, quite the contrary, much can be learned from this experience. More streamlined procedures, for example voluntary audits for already developed and well-established private universities and a differentiation between 'providers of courses' and 'private universities' could lead to even clearer profiling and at the same time to high-quality degree programs, especially in continuing education.



Univ.-Prof. Dr. Hannelore Weck-Hannemann
Vienna, September 2010

1 The ÖAR – Tasks and legal basis

The **tasks** of the ÖAR are governed by the University Accreditation Act. ÖAR has the legal mandate to:

- The **accreditation of private universities** and their programmes
- The **accreditation of study programmes** at already accredited private universities
- The **re-accreditation** of private universities and their programmes
- The **supervision** of accredited private universities

The ÖAR fulfills its mandate in the following manner:

- The ÖAR interprets the quality requirements set out in the Accreditation Act through the development of **guidelines and quality standards** for accreditation
- The ÖAR has developed **instruments to continuously verify** if these requirements have been met by the private universities
- The ÖAR participates actively in **international cooperation** in the field of accreditation and quality assurance

The **legal basis** for the activities of the ÖAR is the Austrian federal law on the accreditation of educational institutions as private universities ([University Accreditation Act](#)) from the year 1999.

A second major legal determinant for the accreditation process takes the form of the General Administrative Procedure Act (AVG).

The current version of the [mission statement](#) is published on the website of the ÖAR.

The Council

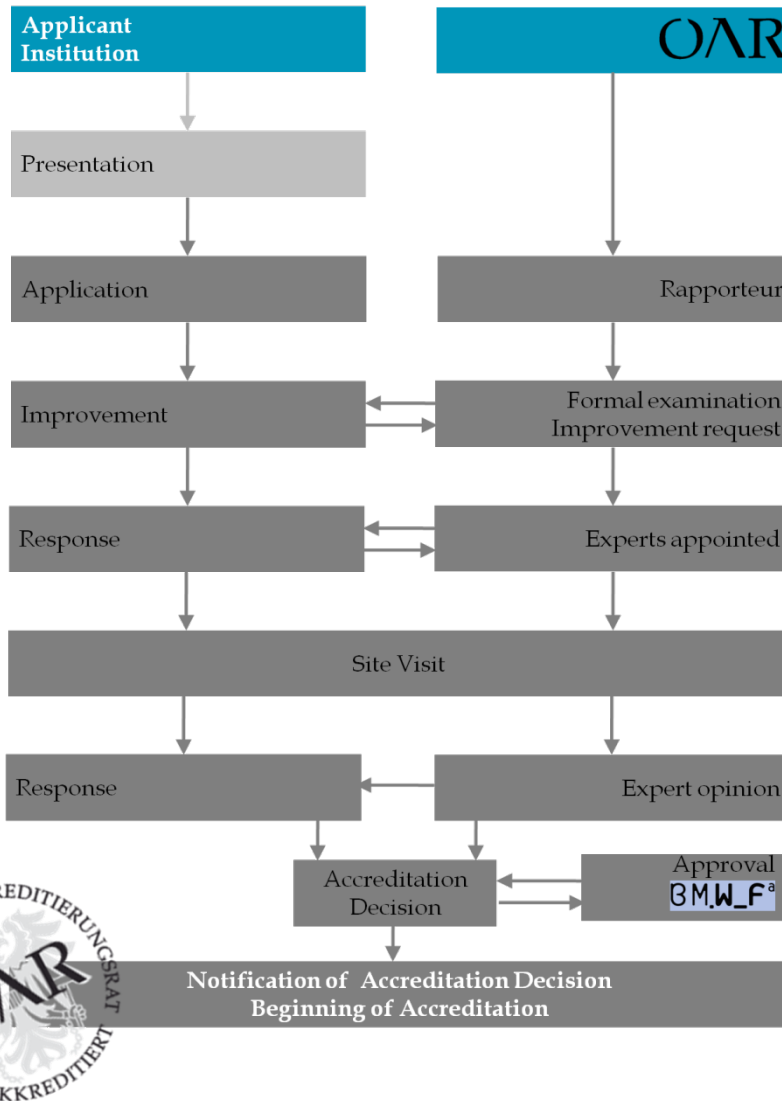
The work of the ÖAR and its international recognition is based essentially on its composition as **a pure expert panel** and the fact that half of its members come from **other European countries**. This not only ensures the independence of decisions from national conflicts of interest, but also guarantees compliance with the required international standards: Safeguarding that teaching and research as well as standards of quality assurance can survive international competition.

- **Autonomous and independent** authority
- **8 experts** from international academia
- Members from Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland

Members (in alphabetical order)

- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Hans-Uwe **Erichsen**, Germany
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Hans Robert **Hansen**, Austria (**Vice President**)
- Dr. MA Guy **Haug**, MBA, France
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Erich **Hödl**, Austria
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Evelies **Mayer**, Germany
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Johannes Michael **Rainer**, Austria
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Luc **Weber**, Switzerland
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Hannelore **Weck-Hannemann**, Austria (**President**)

The accreditation procedure



Experts

Two to four experts are appointed in regards to the appraisal of the contents of the application.

It must be guaranteed that every review team is represented through professional expertise of the highest scientific level, including expertise in the areas of quality assurance, research, scientific management, teaching and curriculum development.

Over 90% of the experts deployed in the procedures were not from Austria.

In 2009, the ÖAR worked with 35 experts.

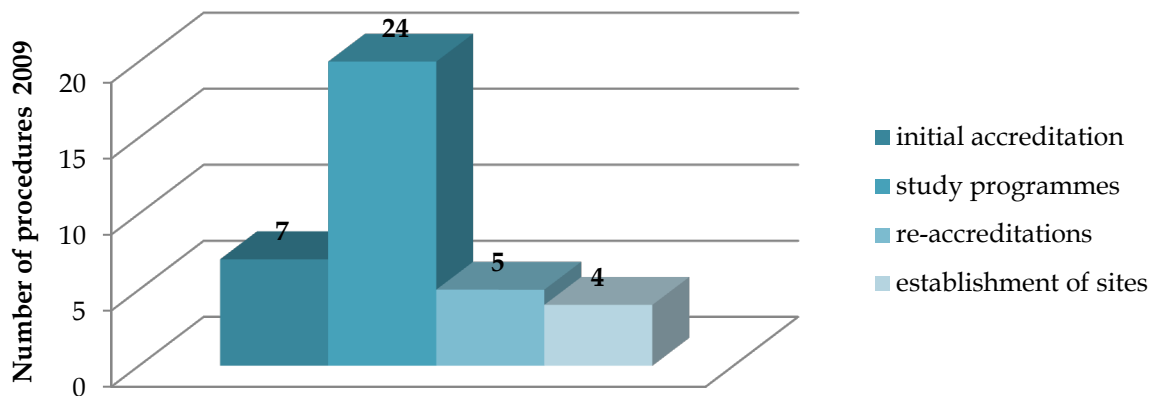
The practice of the ÖAR to make up its expert teams almost exclusively out of international experts and furthermore for half of its decision making board to be comprised of foreign experts, ensures the objectivity of its decisions and also led to its inclusion in the INQAAHE Database on Good Practices in 2009.

In addition, this practice is explicitly mentioned as an example of good practice in the Report of the EU Commission on progress in quality assurance in higher education (2009).

2 ÖAR Activities in 2009

Accreditation requests in 2009 - Overview

In 2009 there were seven procedures for accreditation as a private university and five reaccreditation procedures. Furthermore, 24 applications for accreditation for new study programmes at already existing private universities were processed.



Accreditation procedures 2009 (as of 31 December 2009)

► Institutional Accreditation

The first accreditation of a private university is an **institutional ex-ante accreditation**. This means, that ÖAR scrutinises either existing facilities and infrastructure of an education provider that is not yet operating at the university level or – and this is the case for the majority of applicants – it examines would-be-institutions that only exist on paper as a draft. The process therefore requires a special alignment of the test parameters. There are no measurable indicators like students or graduate careers or even the proof of an institution's ability to successfully attract funding for research. Therefore the ÖAR pays special attention to the organisation's **development potential**.

In 2009, seven applications were processed for accreditation as a private university.

► Programme Accreditation

New courses of studies at private universities are also subject to accreditation requirements. These standards take the form of programme accreditation, which also has to incorporate the institutional facet. In addition to the academic assessment of the course of studies, the extent to which this new course aligns itself to the **sustainable development** of the **overall profile** of the institution is very relevant to the ÖAR's quality assessment.

Quality assurance, resource planning and research are examined with respect given to the overall institution. Accreditation in this case asks the question whether the expansion of the study programme offers a **consolidation and sensible enlargement** of the private university, or whether the low carrying capacity of the institution cannot provide a secure foundation for the implementation of new programmes.

In 2009, 24 **applications for programme accreditation** were processed.

► Re-accreditations

Accreditation as a private university is **restricted to five years** during the first two consecutive accreditation periods and can thereafter be granted for a maximum of ten years. The purpose of this provision of the University Accreditation Act is to ensure the quality and long-term development of new institutions and to prevent any establishments that no longer meet those **quality requirements** from continuing to operate in the Austrian education market.

In principle, the same procedural rules and test areas apply for re-accreditation as were used in the initial accreditation process. The application needs to document and show that all accreditation requirements, in particular the basic criteria, have been met. In comparison to the first procedure, which is geared mainly to examining the **conviction and strength of policies and development plans**, the re-accreditation procedure examines an already existing institution. Institutional aspects and the existence of a comprehensive quality assurance system are combined with course related test areas.

In the year under review **five applications for re-accreditation** (extension of accreditation) have been processed.

The accreditation of the association Traditional Chinese Medicine Academy as TCM Private University LI SHI ZHEN, issued pursuant to § 6 paragraph 1 UniAkkG, expired with effect of 10th August 2009, because the association did not submit an application for the renewal of accreditation. All students, however, were able to complete their studies by the end of June 2009, which means that all education commitments of the private university were met.

► Establishment of Study Sites

The further development of private universities can not only be realised by increasing the numbers of programmes of study. Through the establishment of **study sites, domestically and abroad**, it is aimed to accommodate students geographically and in this way to reach new groups of students. The ÖAR carries out this accreditation process at the new locations to ensure that the quality of courses offered there corresponds to that of the originally accredited location. Once again, proof needs to be demonstrated that accreditation requirements have been met. The focus of the inspection, in addition to the question of resources, is **the inclusion of the new location in the quality management system of the private university**, and **the coordination of all study-relevant organisational processes** between the main location and the new study site.

Four applications for **accreditation of new sites** at existing private universities were processed in the reporting year.

By the end of 2009 a total of **twelve private universities offering 154 courses** in Austria had been accredited:

Private university	Accreditation period	Programmes offered				
		BA	MA	Dipl.	Doc.	ULG
Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität	16.02.2004-16.02.2014 (2 nd accreditation period)	13	11			2
Danube Private University	13.08.2009 -13.08.2014 (1 st accreditation period)	1	2	1		2
Katholisch Theologische Privatuniversität Linz	10.10.2000-10.10.2010 (2 nd accreditation period)	3	2	4	2	
Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität	15.06.2005-15.06.2010 (1 st accreditation period)	16	14			3
Modul University Vienna Private University	30.07.2007-30.07.2012 (1 st accreditation period)	1				3
NDU Privatuniversität der Kreativwirtschaft	27.12.2004-27.12.2012 (2 nd accreditation period)	4	2			1
Paracelsus Medizinische Privatuniversität Salzburg	26.11.2002-26.11.2012 (2 nd accreditation period)	2	1	1	2	4
PEF Privatuniversität für Management	22.05.2002-22.05.2012 (2 nd accreditation period)					3
Privatuniversität Schloss Seeburg	22.11.2007-22.11.2012 (2 nd accreditation period)	3	3			1
Sigmund Freud Privatuniversität	31.08.2005-31.08.2010 (2 nd accreditation period)	2	2		1	3
UMIT Private Universität für Gesundheitswissenschaften, Medizinische Informatik und Technik	16.11.2001-16.11.2011 (2 nd accreditation period)	5	5		4	3
Webster University Vienna Privatuniversität	9.01.2001-9.01.2011 (2 nd accreditation period)	12	9			
Total		62	51	6	9	25

International Cooperation

Through its intensive participation in international and European networks, the ÖAR is **actively involved in the development of a European system of procedures and guidelines for quality assurance**. This international collaboration also ensures that the work of the ÖAR meets international standards and can rapidly and adequately respond to developments.

The European Consortium for Accreditation ([ECA](#)) has developed itself, in the now ongoing second phase of the project, as a central forum for 16 leading European accreditation agencies from 11 countries. The ÖAR is represented in the ECA Management Group and in three of its four working groups, in one of them as chairperson.

Membership in international networks

- Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE NETWORK)
- European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

A success of this collaboration is the jointly launched [Crossroads database project](#), in which the ÖAR is a member of the founding team. The goal of this project is to pool data about accredited programmes and institutions, the structures of national education systems and accreditation bodies in Europe on a single website. So far, nearly 7000 accredited programmes from about 2800 educational institutions are available online.

The ECA-initiated project, **EU-funded TEAM II Project** (Transparent European Accreditation decisions and Mutual recognition agreements) focuses on the accreditation of Joint Programmes. These have to go through accreditation procedures in all involved countries. The objective of TEAM II is that only **one accreditation process** is to be carried out, the result of which will be **recognised in all countries involved**. The ÖAR is a member of the Steering Group and organiser of the Dissemination Conference.

► International Projects

In cooperation with *Österreich Kooperation* and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the ÖAR has initiated a **know-how transfer project** about "Roles, Regulation and Financing of Private Universities in South-Eastern Europe". After workshops including the participation of international experts in Tirana and Skopje a further workshop took place in Sarajevo during the reporting year.

There were also projects in 2009 together with:

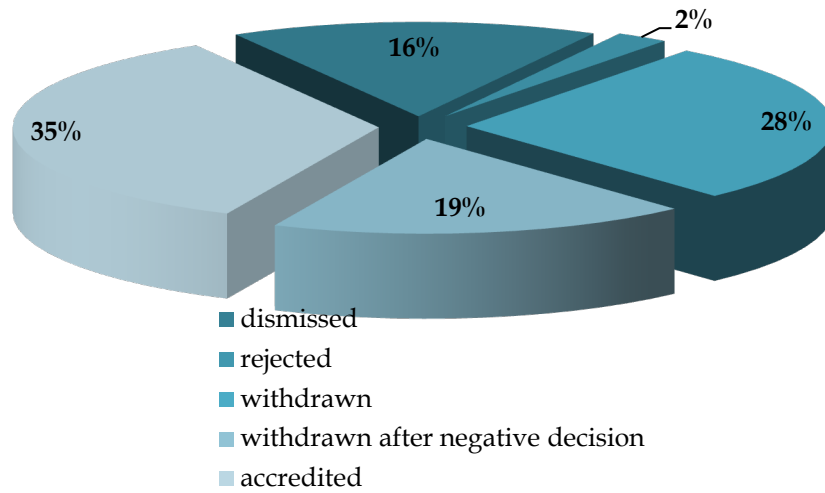
- Uniwersytecka Komisja Akredytacyjna (UKA), Poland
- Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna (PKA), Poland
- Centre for Public Safety Education and Development (KCPSED), Kosovo

International seminar in Vienna: In May 2009, the ÖAR together with the Dutch-Flemish quality assurance organisation (NVAO) organised an international seminar on the challenges faced in quality assurance at private educational institutions. The event *Business as Usual - Private Higher Education in Europe: Fact-Finding, Experiences, Pathways* facilitated the dialogue between private education providers and accreditation agencies. In the centre were questions concerning the relationship between public responsibility and the affect of market mechanisms, and the compatibility of the private sector with existing educational traditions.

3 Facts and Figures

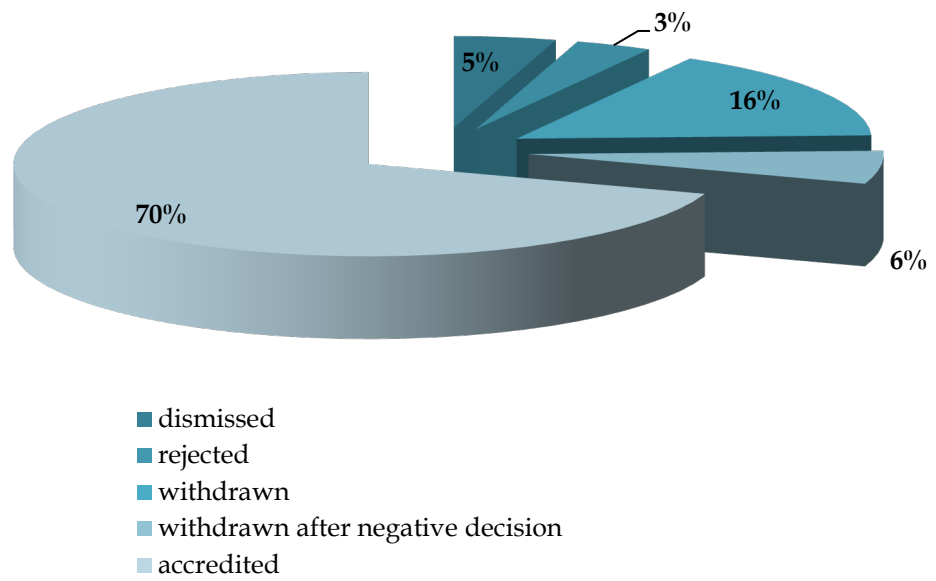
Initial institutional applications (2000-2009)

(Total 43)

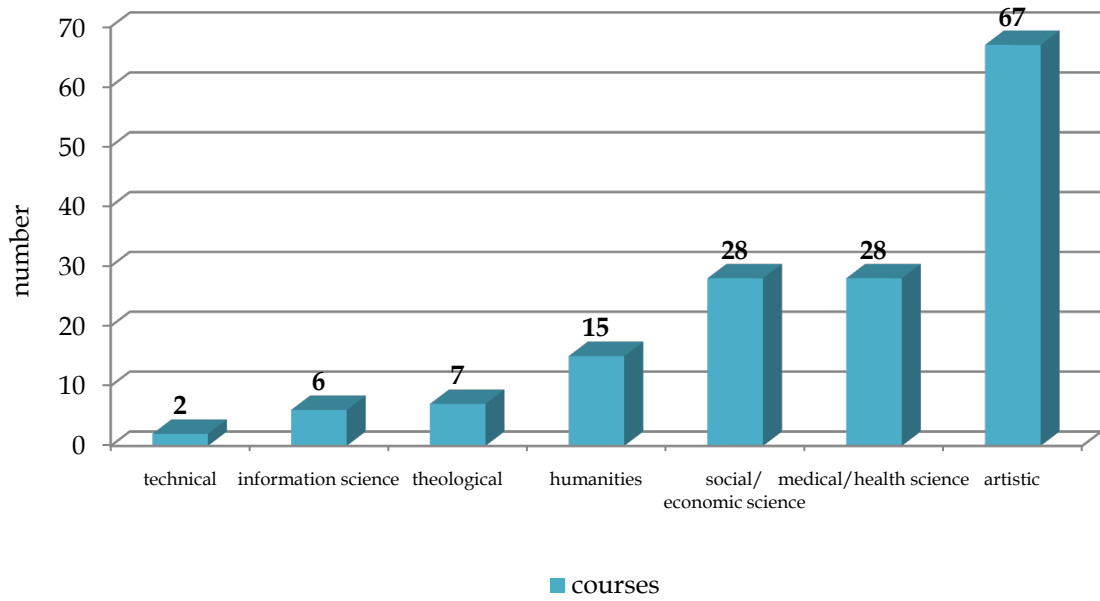


Applications for additional study programme accreditation (2000-2009)

(Total 86)

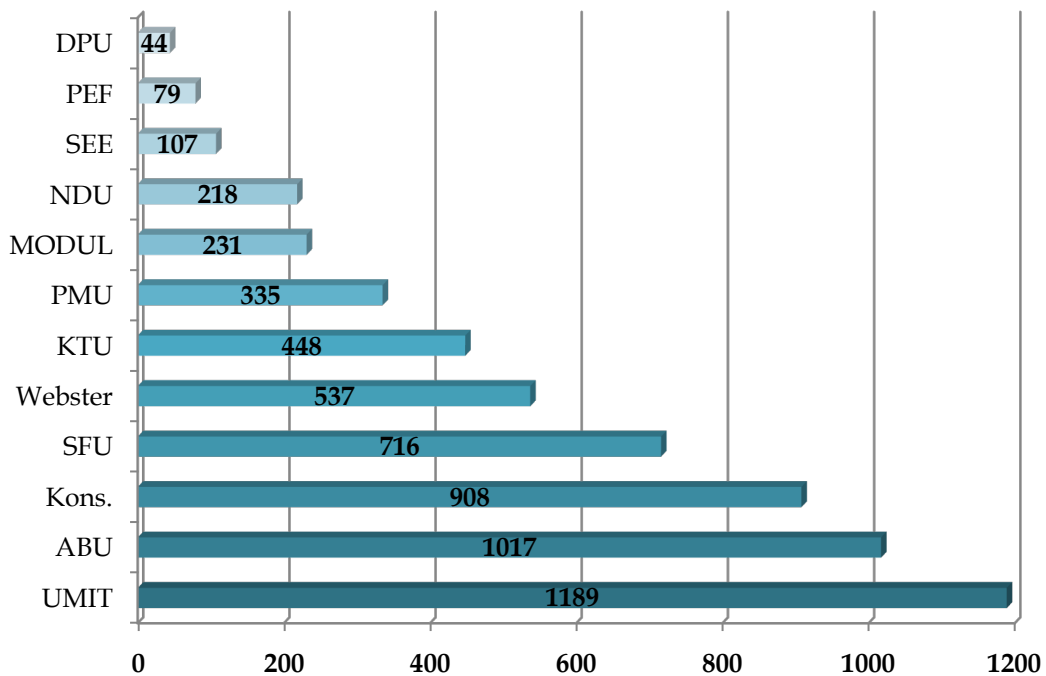


Distribution of study courses offered by field of study (2009)



Distribution of students by private university (2009)

Source: Statistics Austria



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stephanie.zwiessler@bmwf.gv.at

Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat
Palais Harrach, Freyung 3
1010 Vienna, Austria
Tel. + 43 (0)1 53120/5673
Fax + 43 (0)1 53120/815673
e-Mail: akkreditierungsrat@bmwf.gv.at
www.akkreditierungsrat.at
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