Meeting of the Advisory Committee of June 24th, 2013

REPORT (ENGLISH Version)

Agenda of the Meeting held on June 24th, 2013 - 12:00 at MIUR:

2. Presentation of Guidelines for Doctorate courses
3. Discussion on the indicators of Right to Education
4. AOB

Attendees:

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<tr>
<th>CUN</th>
<th>Gabriele Anzellotti</th>
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<tr>
<td>CNEL</td>
<td>Ivan Lo Bello (Presidente) Guido Fiegna Mariano Bella</td>
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<td>CRUI</td>
<td>Marco Mancini</td>
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<td>ESU</td>
<td>Leonardo Esposito</td>
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<td>Conferenza Stato Regioni</td>
<td>Adriana Agrimi</td>
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<td>Accademia dei Lincei</td>
<td>Ciro Ciliberto</td>
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<td>CNR</td>
<td>Luigi Nicolais</td>
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Absentees (justified):

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<tr>
<th>ERC</th>
<th>Claudio Bordignon</th>
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<tr>
<td>CNEL</td>
<td>Francesca Aulicino</td>
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<td>CODAU</td>
<td>Luca Bardi</td>
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<td>ERC</td>
<td>Giorgio Margaritondo</td>
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<td>EUA</td>
<td>Jean Marc Rapp</td>
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<td>OCSE</td>
<td>Dirk Van Damme</td>
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<td>CNSU</td>
<td>Elisa Ljljanic</td>
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Absentees (not justified):

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<th>ESU</th>
<th>Fernando Miguel Galan Palomares</th>
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<tr>
<td>CNSU</td>
<td>Francesco Mattia Sgura</td>
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<td>Stefano Lonardi</td>
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<td>OCSE</td>
<td>Dirk Van Damme</td>
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The Chairman dr. Lo Bello invites to participate to the meeting the ANVUR President, Stefano Fantoni, the members of the ANVUR Board, Sergio Benedetto, Massimo Castagnaro and Luisa Ribolzi, the ANVUR General Director Roberto Torrini, the Manager of the Research Evaluation Area Marco Malgarini and Brigida Blasi of the ANVUR Technical Secretariat. The Advisory Committee ratifies.

The Chairman first draws the attention of the members on the "Decreto fare" decree, that contains urgent measures for the growth and has been approved in the Council of Ministers’ meeting on Friday, June 15th, 2013.

The decree provides certain measures on the university, including:
1) Unlock of the staff turnover to 50% for universities and research institutions from 2014
2) Mobility grants for deserving students
3) More flexible university financing system and simplified procedures for resource allocation
4) Special interventions for research.

The President points out that in addition to these elements that can be considered positive, there are some critical aspects, in which ANVUR is directly involved. The decree attributes to ANVUR a new task, i.e. the assessment of the administrative activities of universities and research institutions. This task as part of the Brunetta reform was previously assigned to CIVIT, called to assess the performance cycle also for universities and research institutions. Such a measure is aimed at guaranteeing the unity of the planning and evaluation actions and offering to universities and research institutions a single contact point for both institutional and administrative objectives. However, the choice raises many doubts in the light of the resources available to ANVUR. The President remarks that the measure is made within the "given resources with no additional cost to the government". So, by this decree ANVUR does obtain neither the stabilization of the funding or the elimination of the limit on the number of evaluators.

President Lo Bello continues stressing the difficulties for ANVUR to fulfill its duties, since the Agency cannot entrust more than 50 experts for the evaluation of 4.300 university courses and all the academic system. Also in light of these new tasks assigned to ANVUR, these limits are clearly unsustainable, as well as its staffing plan of 18 people (when fully implemented) is inadequate to carry out self-administration and institutional tasks.

Various interventions follow, made by the present members (Fantoni, Nicolais, Mancini, Torrini) about the measures provided by the "Decreto fare" and aimed to affirm the need to solve some basic problems (funding stabilization and elimination of the limit on the number of evaluators) to allow a proper fulfillment of the tasks by ANVUR.

The President then examines a set of issues identified as priorities for the work of the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups to support the ANVUR Board.

About the update on the VQR, the President stresses the importance of the work undertaken by ANVUR in 2011 to identify the evaluation parameters of research in the VQR, whose results will be presented on July 16th, 2013. The President remarks that it is necessary to communicate to the media these results in an appropriate manner, i.e. carefully not to amplify fears and doubts about the validity of the evaluation.

President Lo Bello draws the attention on the document, recently presented by the Minister Carrozza in front of Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic Standing Committees, containing the guidelines on School, University and Research and where ANVUR is mentioned several times. It may be shared the willingness declared by the Minister to review the Agency’s tasks excluding those para-ministerial, but on the other hand, there is a clear need to strengthen ANVUR’s autonomy and character of impartiality, safeguarding the full respect of European guidelines on university evaluation and courses.

The intervention of prof. Benedetto, member of ANVUR Board and VQR coordinator, follows in which he sets out the progress of the evaluation of research quality in the period 2004-2010, with particular reference to: purpose and timing of VQR, number of research products (expected and conferred), members of Groups of Experts for Evaluation, subjects evaluated, referees involved, bibliometric evaluation and peer review, research quality indicator and other indicators of the Call for Participation VQR 2004-2010, calculation method of the final structure indicator and presentation of the results for structures and departments.

An extensive debate follows on the issue of VQR with several interventions (Mancini, Nicolais, Bella, Fantoni, Anzellotti, Torrini, Edwards, Ciliberto).

The Crui President Mancini expresses, on one side, his appreciation for the work carried out by ANVUR through VQR since it represents a historic event for the Italian university and research system. On the other side, he emphasizes the need to use caution during the presentation of the results in order to prevent improper use by the press.

The Chairman of the Conference of the Presidents of Public Research Institutions, prof. Nicolais emphasizes that the assessment should cover the whole structure and not the individual components: the evaluation of the sub-structures should be carried out within the autonomy of the institution. Prof. Benedetto remarks that the assessment of the sub-structures is required by the Ministerial Degree of July 12th 2011 that has initiated VQR.

Dr. Bella highlights the need to identify a clear communication strategy by ANVUR for the dissemination of VQR results.

Prof. Anzellotti raises questions about the level of aggregation that will be used in the presentation of data and the method of calculation of the department indicators.

Dr. Esposito shares the concerns related to the VQR results and, above all, to the distribution of FFO connected to them. Therefore he recommends the maximum transparency.
Prof. Ciliberto considers helpful for the university and research system the acquisition of VQR data, but also focuses on the political and economic use that will be made of them and that should rather be thoughtful and virtuous. Ciliberto therefore suggested to communicate the data prior to the stakeholders and then, taking into account comments and indications, to the media.

President Lo Bello intervenes confirming that the assessment is a key element, since not just a ranking of the universities, but a very complex process that the country is putting in place to assess the research quality.

2. Presentation of Guidelines for Doctorate courses

The President introduces the second item on the agenda, the presentation of the Guidelines for Doctorate courses. With the publication in the Gazzetta Ufficiale of the Ministerial Decree 45/2013 "Regulation governing accreditation procedures for doctoral offices and courses and criteria for the establishment of doctorates courses by accredited bodies", it is necessary to start the application of the decree with the maximum simplification of the activities required to the institutions. It is useful to reconcile different needs related to university autonomy through a careful assessment and to provide in due time the start of doctorate cycles. Dr. Lo Bello also expresses sharing for ANVUR proposal accepted by the Ministry to postpone to 2014 the accreditation of doctoral programs and to initiate an experimental phase as established in the guidelines.

The intervention of dr. Malgarini follows to outline the guidelines for the proposal of doctoral courses according to Ministerial Decree 45/2013, with particular reference to the PhD titling, scientific quality of the members of the PhD Board, scientific quality of the proponent subject and presence of specific and qualified operational and scientific structures, number of grants, university doctoral degrees and doctoral degrees in collaboration with industry.

The President concludes by stressing the importance of ANVUR’s role to increase the curricula quality and make universities internationally more competitive. Also, he highlights how ANVUR can make an important contribution to the strategic positioning of the university themes on the national political agenda.

For these reasons, he invites the members of the Committee to ensure maximum collegiality by valorizing the present eminent personalities in representation of the most significant realities linked to the evaluation of the university. Then he thanks the presents for agreeing to contribute to the work of the Advisory Committee and invites them to ensure an active and constant participation for the best outcome.

3. Discussion on the indicators of Right to Education

The President then asks the present Working Groups coordinators to update the other members of the Committee on the progress of the groups, charging dr. Fiegna to report about the third item on the agenda, the discussion on the Right to Education indicators.
The interventions of the coordinators of the Working Groups (Agrimi, Anzellotti, Fiegna) follows. The coordinator (Bordignon) of the group 4 - European Guidelines, Indicators and Ranking, is not present.

Dr. Agrimi, coordinator of the group 3 - Third Mission, intervenes describing the activities on the Third Mission launched by ANVUR and the importance that the presentation of VQR data will play in this process. In particular:

- The workshop on "The Third Mission of Universities and Research Institutions", held at ANVUR on April 12th, has allowed to deeply review the research on the Third Mission and examine the state of the art on indicators, experiences and data, also in a perspective of experimentation. The Third Mission was defined, both in terms of economic valorization of research (academic patents, start-up and spin-off, science parks) and impact of research on society (health protection, management of cultural heritage, education and civic engagement, relationships between science and society).
- Starting from VQR presentation, data will be available on Third Mission activities made by all the 133 structures evaluated on both technological dimensions (third party contracts, patents, spin-offs and incubators) and socio-cultural dimensions (consortia, museum centers, archaeological sites, initiatives of science popularization and other activities related to third mission).
- In autumn 2013, ANVUR will set a working plan for a new Third Mission evaluation of universities and research institutions involving the most important stakeholders.

Prof. Anzellotti, coordinator of the group 2 - Research (VQR) and Doctorate invites to reflect on which parameters and technical procedures are adequate to support the evaluations of doctoral programs, pointing out in particular that:

- the use of the concept of macro-sector (or sub-set) to identify the breadth of the scientific field of a doctorate appears not technically suitable for the intended purpose;
- the scientific qualifications of the teaching staff of the Doctorate, even if starting from the analytical evaluation of the scientific production of the individual members, should have an overall character and take into account the presence of particular excellence; it does not seem appropriate for the assessment of teachers to make rigidly reference to the criteria established by the commissioners of the national scientific habilitation.

About the DM 45/2013 prof. Anzellotti points out that:

- The number of 16 for the members of the Doctorate indicated by DM 45 can be a reasonable general guideline, but it could prove to be a constraint harmful to the launch of new doctorates in emerging areas;
- It is not clear the nature and usefulness of the "curricula";
- It is not clear the specificity of the instrument of the Consortium in relation to the instrument of the Convention.
Prof. Anzellotti observes that, even for the evaluation of the Doctorates would be extremely useful to have the National Register of Professors and Researchers and Scientific Publications (ANPRePS), provided for by Law 1 of 2009, and asks at what stage of implementation is the Registry.

Dr. Fiegna, coordinator of the group 1 - Teaching (AVA) and Students, focuses on the fact that the evaluation activity should be supported at the local level, but also based on updated national and international standards. He also arises the problem in the definition of responsibilities and tasks for the reliability of the whole information system. Finally, he reminds that some issues require reflection and possible support action by the Advisory Committee:

- Right to Education
- Employment outcomes and "satisfaction" of graduates
- Some of the indicators used over time for the allocation of resources (FFO and Programming)
- National Register of university students

At 15.30, there being no other matters for discussion, the plenary meeting is closed by Prof. Marco Mancini as Vice President of the Advisory Board ANVUR.