

The trend of an increasing competition in higher education is becoming global and has also reached Europe. In recent years a new phenomenon has emerged in the higher education context: borderless higher education or transnational higher education. There is not a unanimously accepted definition of these terms, which may or may not include e-learning.

Whatever the definition it seems that pure e-learning did not meet the expectations of explosive growth, as apparently there has only been a limited demand for online degree-granting liberal arts programmes. However, franchised curricula and overseas campuses continue to develop very fast in all over the world in borderless higher education.

These developments raise a problem of consumer protection associated with lack of adequate information (and therefore transparency) being available to potential students, employers and recognition authorities. There is need for consumer protection and regulation, especially to curb what some perceive as 'rogue' transnational providers.

Therefore non-profit HEIs should recognise that quality and accreditation might be the necessary instruments to avoid unfair competition from transnational providers, instead of falling into the trap of trying to avoid competition through legal protection. This makes quality and accreditation a major concern in relation to transnational or borderless education, becoming important regulation mechanisms for all countries, whether they are importing and exporting education services.