

CHAPTER 4

FIFTY EXAMPLES OF BOGUS INSTITUTIONS AND ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

On the basis of the information sources and on the identification criteria described in the previous chapters, a group of 50 institutions has been selected, which for different reasons were judged irregular and which grant non-recognised titles in almost all national Higher Education systems.

It was decided to draft the list in alphabetic order, to facilitate browsing. Obviously such organisation is detrimental to the categorisation by "type of institution", which, due to the subject matter, is always quite complicated.

The list includes two types of institutions:

1. Institutions set up to the purpose of "selling" titles;
2. Institutions that, for different reasons, have not obtained recognition or accreditation, even though they are apparently providing programmes and applying the same methods as accredited institutions.

Firstly, forty irregular institutions will be listed, followed by ten accreditation mills.

Please note, that some of the institutions in the list have now ceased operating in the education market or their websites have been taken down from the internet. They are going to be described nonetheless, as it is important to spread information about bogus institutions which existed and issued qualifications over recent years and whose qualifications are still circulating in the market. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that the list below is not comprehensive and does not cover all cases of irregular institutions operating in the higher education market worldwide.

1. Accademia di Belle Arti di Mendicino

Location: Italy

Website: not available

This institution underwent a proceeding for misleading advertising initiated by the Italian Authority for Fair Advertising. The proceeding was started after the publication of an advertisement in Cosenza, which mentioned the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research. The poster led potential customers to think that the programme was accredited by the Italian Ministry, when it was not. Furthermore, the message contained also terms such as "Accademia" and "academic year", and it made reference to a Ministerial decree.

The *Accademia di Mendicino* declared "not to have any legal recognition to offer programmes at academic level, but to work together with different institutions". For example, the officially recognised *Accademia di Belle Arti Fidia*: for this institution the *Accademia di Mendicino* "functioned as multi-campus student office and looked after public relations"⁴².

2. Adam Smith University (ASU)

Location: USA, Liberia, France

Website: <http://www.adamsmith.edu>

This institution appears on the list of American diploma mills and grants qualifications at Associate, Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate levels in various disciplines. The ASU was founded in 1991 by Donald Grunewald, who is still the President of the institution. The Italian Authority on Fair Competition dealt with ASU in the context of proceedings started against other organisations operating in Italy, which claimed to award titles granted by this irregular institution⁴³. On its website, further clues of connections between the Adam Smith University and Italy can be found: as a point of contact for Italy and the Republic of San Marino, the European Institute of Technology is indicated, another non-recognised institution. The ASU claims to be officially recognised in the Republic of Liberia since 2001 and that its qualifications are also recognised in France, where the institution operates through the *École Supérieure Universitaire Adam Smith*. The authorities of the two countries refute such declarations. On the website, another thirty branches of the Adam Smith University appear in thirty different countries: none of them are authorised affiliations.

3. American College of Metaphysical Theology

Location: Italy, Belgium

Website: <http://www.americancollege.com> (website under renovation)

With a few hundred US dollars, this institution grants qualifications in Biblical studies. The American College of Metaphysical Theology is one of the diploma mills listed by the State of Michigan and Maine and it operated for a few years also in Austria, Germany and in the Scandinavian countries, where it was authorised to award academic qualifications in Theology. At the end of the Nineties, in order to warn the Austrian official institutions, the Austrian NARIC Centre⁴⁴ published a report, which analysed the case of qualifications issued by the American College of Metaphysical Theology, also known as The American College of Theology.

⁴² Proceeding n. 17516 published on the Bulletin n. 39/2007, issue date 18/10/2007.

⁴³ See also the CETUS case and Proceeding n. 14.785, published on the Bulletin n. 41/2005, issue date 12/10/2005.

⁴⁴ Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung: <http://www.bmwf.gv.at/naric>

4. American University of London

Location: UK, USA

Website: <http://www.americanuniversity.org.uk/>

This is a for-profit distance learning institution offering courses in Business & IT, Law, Humanities, Education and Liberal Arts and English. The contact details indicated on the website report a mailing address based in London and another one in Huston, Texas. The American University of London claims to be accredited by the World Association of Universities and Colleges (WAUC), which is a well-known US accreditation mill not recognised by the US Department of Education.

The institution is listed in the databases of diploma mills published by the State of Maine and Oregon.

5. Ateneo di Studi Superiori pro Pace

Location: Italy, Belgium

Website: not available

This institution operated in Italy from 1978 to 1988 and, allegedly, issued between 500 and 1000 irregular degrees and post-graduate diplomas. More than 200 people were summoned at court on charges of trading in fake qualifications⁴⁵. The institution is mentioned in the circular letter of the Ministry of Public Education of 16th June 1988 and in that of the Ministry of University, Research and Technology of 16th June 1993⁴⁶. The Ateneo di Studi Superiori pro Pace was founded by Pierino Gennaro, ex Franciscan friar, who was then expelled from the order of minor friars. He already had criminal records for fraud and he proclaimed himself Bishop of the Syrian-Antiochian Church, of Danzig and of the whole of Byelorussia. In addition to academic qualifications, the organisation also sold professional licences, knight crosses, aristocratic titles and it certified religious marriages with civil effects⁴⁷.

The Pro Pace institution does not exist anymore but, considering the great number of qualifications it awarded, some of them may still be found circulating in the market.

6. Belford University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.belforduniversity.org>

This Texan institution claims to grant academic qualifications based exclusively on the recognition of previously acquired professional experience, demonstrated through self-certification by filling out a CV. The "prospective students" can fulfil all operations on their own and they can order their credential by phone or on-line. Clients purchasing complete "academic curricula", such as a BA, a MA and a PhD, are entitled to obtain a price reduction. Belford University is not accredited by any official American agency: on the website, it looks as if it is accredited by the Universal Council for Online Education Accreditation (UCOE) and the International Accreditation Agency for Online Universities (IAAO), which are actually two

⁴⁵ *La Stampa*, 6th August 1988 and 10th January 1990.

⁴⁶ In this circular letter also other institutions connected to the Ateneo di Studi Superiori pro Pace are named: Unione Internazionale della Pace, Accademia Universale "Giosuè Carducci", Istituto Superiore di Ricerche sociologiche di Sosti, Chambre Européenne des Arbitres.

⁴⁷ In 1984, a couple married by "father" Gennaro with religious rite discovered that their wedding was not valid and was also more uxorio cohabitation.

accreditation mills.

Allegedly, the people in charge of Belford University have also opened two other diploma mills: Rochville University and Ashwood University⁴⁸. Qualifications obtained at Belford University come with a cover letter, a transcript and certificates demonstrating the accreditation of the institution. The whole package is sold at 400 US dollars and it is delivered within 7 days. It is worthwhile to quote the Belford's motto: "No studies, no admissions, no attendance"⁴⁹.

7. Bernelli University

Location: USA, Italy

Website: <http://www.bernelli.edu>

This institution was born from the ashes of the previous Berne University and it offers mainly courses at Master and PhD level, as well as a few undergraduate courses; it also issues various types of certificates. It is mentioned in the degree mills lists published by the State of Oregon, Maine and Michigan, both as Bernelli and in the relation to the Berne University. On the website, it is stated that the institution also operates in Italy, more precisely in the region of Trentino, in the town of Canale di Trenno, where the Bernelli Education Centre is located. The Centre offers weekend programmes in Riva del Garda, which also include the graduation ceremony, set in the fabulous castle of Drena. The Bernelli University invites groups and associations to take part in its weekend programmes.

8. Cambridge International University

Location: South Africa, Arizona (USA)

Website: <http://www.cambridgeinternationaluniv.co.za>

Cambridge International University is a distance learning institution, which offers exclusively on-line degrees. On its website, the institution claims to be located in South Africa, but it actually has no campus or premises there. Despite the South African country domain .za, the institution operates in Arizona, USA.

The University claims accreditation by the Global Accreditation Organization for Life Experience and Education (GAOLEE)⁵⁰, a well-known accreditation mill. Moreover, it is not registered as accredited in the List of Registered Private Higher Education Institutions of South Africa⁵¹ nor is it mentioned in the database of South African Qualifications⁵².

On its homepage, it is possible to find the typical features of a diploma mill, promising flexible course attendance, recognition of prior learning and work experience, absence of any admission requirements:

"Cambridge International University makes it possible for people to earn a university education regardless of where they live or work, or their commitments to careers or

⁴⁸ All three institutions appear on the website: <http://www.speedydegrees.com>, where the same template to order the diploma is used, no matter which institution the customer wants to apply for.

⁴⁹ <http://www.belforduniversity.org/university/InsideBelford.html>

⁵⁰ For further reference, see the report by Erik Johansson, Swedish National Agency for Higher Education: "Diploma mills, fake universities, and bogus credentials", 17th Annual EAIE Conference 2005, Krakow, Poland, available and downloadable at www.eaie.org/pdf/krakow/203.pdf

⁵¹ <http://www.sqa.org.za/docs/misc/phei/lphei.pdf>

⁵² <http://allqs.sqa.org.za>

families. The University strives to remove the barriers of time, space, past educational experience, and to a great degree, level of income. (...) In life, you learned at your own pace, now you should get credit for that experience. This flexible evaluation process frees you from the demands of specified class times and rigid institutional schedules. For ultimate flexibility, individualized evaluation applications are accepted year round. Any person 18 years of age or older, of any race, gender, or nationality, is eligible for admission to Cambridge International University".

Nonetheless, the website opens with a suspect disclaimer: "Welcome to Cambridge International University and its "new" way of learning. Cambridge International University is dedicated to the evolving methods of education available in today's ever-changing technological society. But, at the same time, although our acceptance is rapidly growing worldwide in this age of cyberspace, please realize that "not all" employers, educational institutions or accreditation organizations have accepted our educational programs".⁵³

9. Centro di Tecnologia Universitaria Straniera – C.E.T.U.S.

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.universitacetus.it> (not available anymore)

This institution was defined as "an association for the academic culture" and offered "degree and post-graduate courses of American universities, which have full validity in their country of origin", as well as "American Masters in alternative medicine". It underwent a proceeding by the Italian Authority on Fair Competition for misleading advertising. On the basis of a memorandum of understanding signed with the European Institute of Technology (EIT), CETUS "took on the responsibility to promote, organise and manage the teaching support of courses" for the qualifications awarded by the American partner universities of EIT: for instance, Honolulu University and Clayton University"⁵⁴. The latter institutions appear in all lists of diploma mills.

As a consequence, as CETUS representatives have also admitted, the qualifications granted by the above-mentioned American institutions do not have any legal value in Italy. As a matter of fact, on the website, it is said that "the term *laurea* always refers to an American qualification".

10. Clayton University

Location: Hong Kong, China, Republic of San Marino, Nigeria, India

Website: <http://www.culhk.com> (not available anymore)

This institution operated for many years, issuing titles of Bachelor, Master and PhD. In 1993, it was mentioned in a circular letter published by the Italian Ministry of Education and it now appears on a few lists of irregular institutions. Even though it was founded in the State of Missouri, the headquarters of the Clayton University were in Hong Kong; the other three branches operated in the Republic of San Marino, in Nigeria and in India. This institution declared not to be accredited in the USA but to be a member of UNESCO: it is one of the three institutions, which exploited the name of UNESCO for fraudulent purposes.

⁵³ On the website of the Cambridge International University, under the menu item 'Licensure', the initial disclaimer is further specified and the institution declines all responsibility for the recognition of the title it grants: <http://www.cambridgeinternationaluniv.co.za/html/licensure.html>

⁵⁴ Proceeding n. 14.785, published on the Bulletin n. 41/2005, issue date: 12/10/2005.

In numerous proceedings of the Italian Authority on Fair Competition, the Clayton University is mentioned as an organisation issuing qualifications of irregular institutions. At Clayton, students could obtain their final title with a 25 page dissertation for each examination, which had to be sent via e-mail: the students did not have to attend any lesson and the exams were not set by the institutions but chosen by the students themselves.

11. Concordia College and University

Location: Dominican Republic, USA

Website: <http://www.concordia-college.net>

This degree mill offers qualifications at Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate level, with a 12-hour turnaround.

The headquarters are in the Dominican Republic, the website domain is registered in Pakistan and the mail-box is in the USA. It claims to be accredited by organisations without any authority in Liberia, Indonesia, in the Dominican Republic and in the United States. On the website, there is a copy of a certificate coming from Italy and referred to a qualification issued by the College and University institution. There are counterfeit stamps of the Prefecture of Rome and of the Embassy of Liberia. Obviously, the above-mentioned "clues" are only referred to the legalisation of the document and they have got nothing to do with the recognition of such credential. The Concordia College and University grants qualifications, which are already certified with the Apostille of the Hague⁵⁵, which guarantees that the qualification is recognisable. This is a blatantly misleading strategy, since the purpose of the Apostille is not to certify that a qualification is issued by a legally recognised institution, but it only states that the document is original and bears an authentic signature.

12. Earlscroft University

Location: UK, Ireland, Seychelles

Website: www.earlscroft.com (not available anymore)

Unfortunately the website of this operation only shows the homepage and it cannot be accessed anymore, but its story is absolutely worth telling.

At the end of April 2009 Earlscroft University was struck off by Seychelles Authorities because its activities were found to be, or likely to be, contrary to Seychelles law⁵⁶. The institution declared to have administrative offices in Dulwich, London; affiliated divisions in Ireland and to be registered as a Limited Company in the Seychelles. According to Royal Mail, the address indicated on the website of the Earlscroft University corresponds to the headquarters of the company 'February Automation', which manages a mail forwarding service. This operation was also banned from operating in Texas, and it appears in the list, "Institutions Whose Degrees are Illegal to Use in Texas", published by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ The Apostille de la Haye (Apostille of the Hague in English) is a means of authenticating and legalising a signature on a qualifications. It was introduced in 1961 with The Hague Convention, in order to facilitate international legal relationships. The Apostille has the shape of a square (8 x 8 cm) and it is attached to the original documents in order to validate their authenticity.

⁵⁶ Accredibase Newsletter: *Seychelles International Business Authority takes action against 'Universities'* <http://www.accredibase.com/index.php?section=904>

⁵⁷ <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/consumerinfo/notx.cfm>

Finally, Earlscroft claimed to be accredited by the "United Congress of Colleges (UCC)", which has no significant presence on the web and does not even seem to exist⁵⁸.

13. École Supérieure Robert de Sorbon

Location: France

Website: <http://www.sorbon.fr>

This institution is active in France also with the name *Université Francophone Robert de Sorbon*; it claims to issue qualifications at Associate, Bachelor, Master, *Magistère*, MBA and PhD level. It openly declared that the above-mentioned titles are equivalent to the Italian qualifications of *Laurea* and *Dottorato*, to the German *Vordiplom* and to the Russian *Kandidat Nauk* e di *Doktor Nauk*, which would be recognised on the basis of agreements with American institutions. The *École Supérieure Robert de Sorbon* is not recognised by the French authorities. It is listed among the degree mills published by the State of Maine and Oregon. The institution cannot issue qualifications in Sweden, where it was prevented to operate. Its name blatantly recalls the *Sorbonne*, the most well known university in Paris.

14. European Institute of Technology

Location: Italy, Republic of San Marino

Website: <http://www.eit-ateneo.org>, <http://www.eit-univ.net>

This organisation must not be confused with the school of excellence with the same name founded by the European Commission and created in order to attract the best students and to compete with giants such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The EIT originates from the *Istituto Superiore Statale di Cibernetica Sammarinese*; the Italian Authority on Fair Competition started against it several proceedings for misleading advertising and it was also charged to pay a first fine of € 11,600 and a second one of € 6,000, because its qualifications result from the partnership with foreign universities and they are not recognised in foreign countries, in Italy or in the Republic of San Marino⁵⁹. As a matter of fact, EIT partner institutions appear in numerous lists of degree mills⁶⁰.

15. Freie und Private Universität Herisau

Location: Switzerland

Website: <http://www.unihe.ch>

This institution is mentioned in the circular letter n. 155 issued on 16th June 1993 by MURST⁶¹. It has been operating since 1980 and it targets the Italian market through print advertising. In a few newspaper ads, the institution declares that anyone can "graduate", regardless of their mother tongue or of their professional status. Today, it functions mainly through a website, where it is made clear that individuals, who

⁵⁸ CHEA: List Information about some degree-granting institutions not accredited by CHEA-recognized organizations: Earlscroft University http://web.archive.org/web/20060627232714/http://www.osac.state.or.us/oda/index_OR.html

⁵⁹ Proceeding n. 15.441, published on the Bulletin n. 18/2006, issue date 03/05/2006. See also Proceeding n. 15.629, published on Bulletin n.25/2006, issue date 21/06/2006.

⁶⁰ The list of EIT partner institutions can be downloaded at: <http://www.eit-ateneo.org/doccollaborazioni.htm>

⁶¹ Ministero dell'Università, della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica, now MIUR, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca.

have acquired high-level professional experience have the possibility to obtain a prestigious academic qualification. Furthermore, they state that "the study programs and means of evaluation are closely linked to the quality and professional experience of each individual candidate"⁶². On the same website, there is also a note on the recognition of the diplomas awarded at this institution: "The University cannot be held responsible regarding the use of degrees and the right to professional practice in individual countries. A degree from our University does not ensure membership of professional associations, nor is any equivalence with other academic titles guaranteed"⁶³.

16. Golden State University

Location: Lebanon, USA

Website: <http://www.goldenstateuniversity.edu>

This institution appeared on the Internet in 2002 and it claimed to operate on the Virgin Islands. According to the information contained in the Oregon State database, the Golden State University is located in Hawaii and is called Honolulu University of the Arts Sciences & Humanities. Allegedly, it also operated in Australia, but after an article appeared on *The Australian*, which brought the case to public attention, the contact details of the Australian branches were removed from the website. The Golden State University awards qualifications of any level and in any subject area; it is also closely connected with other on-line bogus institutions.

17. Greenleaf University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.greenleaf.edu>

This institution delivers Master and PhD qualifications through distance learning. On the website, it is explained that the Greenleaf University is inspired to "the pre-industrial model found in China, India, ancient Islam and in the European older universities like Oxford and Cambridge"⁶⁴. This institution appears among the degree mills of the State of Oregon database, where it is also highlighted that it is prevented from operating in Sweden.

18. Hamilton University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.hamilton-university.edu> (not available anymore)

First established in Hawaii as American State University, it relocated in Wyoming, where it could exploit the local regulations in favour of religious institutions and granted titles, which were declared to be valid. When the State of Wyoming amended such regulations, Hamilton University relocated once again to the Bahamas and it changed its name to Richardson University. On the website, a notice appeared informing the students, who had already purchased a qualification and wanted to receive a transcript of exams, that the institution had moved: the previous headquarters were located in a motel room. The Hamilton University was also accredited by a fake agency: The American Council of Private Colleges and Universities (ACPCU), created especially for this purpose.

⁶² <http://www.unihe.ch/eng/university.htm>

⁶³ <http://www.unihe.ch/eng/info.htm>. Please notice that in the text there are also numerous typos and grammar mistakes.

⁶⁴ <http://www.greenleaf.edu/about.htm>

19. Lacrosse University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.lacrosseuniversity.com> (not available anymore)

This institution granted Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees, as well as qualifications at PhD level. After the headquarters in Louisiana were closed upon decision of the judicial authorities, it relocated in Mississippi, where it was immediately added in the list of non-recognised institutions. The organisation operated following the same pattern of many other degree mills: it promised easy qualifications and offered recognition of professional experience. Furthermore, Lacrosse University claimed to be accredited by the Association of Distance Learning Programmes (ADLP), a non-recognised accreditation agency, which grants accreditation to irregular institutions and diploma mills.

20. Leibniz Campus – Libera Università Internazionale G. W. Leibniz

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.lunil.it> (not available anymore)

This institution operated through branches located in Milan, Bergamo, Rome, Velletri and Lamezia Terme. The name of its website changed many times: at first, it was called *Libera Università Internazionale G.W. Leibniz*, then a new institution appeared under the name of *Leibniz Campus*. The latter specified that the Leibniz Campus did not offer final qualifications equivalent to the Italian ones. Nonetheless, it decided not to apply for any kind of academic recognition by the Italian authorities, because it wanted to remain independent in choosing programme content and teaching methods, as provided by art. 33 of the Italian Constitution. On the website, the institution declared to grant qualifications such as the *Master universitario di primo e di secondo livello*, which can only be awarded by universities. Furthermore, it used the name of “university” to describe the status of its institution and it claimed to have the typical governing structure of a university, with a rector and academic senate.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Italian Authority on Fair Competition sanctioned the *Leibniz Campus* with a monetary fine of € 25.000⁶⁵. The authority ruled that through the production of unfair advertising, the institution gave misleading messages about its status and the status of the qualifications it granted, using different Internet domains; in so doing, the institution failed to comply with a previous proceeding for misleading advertising⁶⁶.

21. Libera Università degli Studi di Formello

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.uniformello.it> (not available anymore)

This institution claimed to have applied for recognition at the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research and, in the meantime, it claimed to award qualifications recognised by the Region of Latium. After a proceeding started by the Italian Authority on Fair Competition⁶⁷, the University ceased activity and its website domain was cancelled on 29th April 2004. The *Università di Formello* was

⁶⁵ Proceeding n. 15.203, published on the Bulletin n. 7/2006, issue date 15/02/2006.

⁶⁶ Proceeding n. 12.630, published on the Bulletin n. 47/2003, issue date 20/11/2003.

⁶⁷ Proceeding n. 13.429, published on the Bulletin n. 30/2004, issue date 22/07/2004.

founded by a consortium between the Municipality of Formello – now claiming to be the offended party - and the *Banca di Credito Cooperativo di Formello*. The only course offered at this institution was at the faculty for theatre and cinema, and it was advertised as a unique opportunity in Italy for technical and specialised training in this field, of European standard. During the investigation carried out before the proceeding, the Italian Authority on Fair Competition discovered that all claimed accreditation, as well as all references to European funds were made up. Furthermore, the Italian Ministry of Education confirmed that there was no accreditation procedure in progress for this institution. The people in charge of the operation have never answered to the requests of clarification submitted by the Authority on Fair Competition and they have not even issued a defence brief.

22. Libera Universitas Multidisciplinare Umanitaria per la Cultura Internazionale – LUMUCI

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.lumuci.org> (not available anymore)

The LUMUCI University operated through nine branches and offered Bachelor and Master programmes, as well as post-graduate training courses. It declared not to be officially recognised by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research and, as a consequence, that the qualifications it granted did not have any legal value in Italy. Nonetheless, “academic qualifications with international validity were issued in partnership with foreign universities, which had signed an agreement with the LUMUCI”. The term “international validity” is not correct, since foreign qualifications are never automatically recognised in education systems of other countries. The Italian Authority for Fair Advertising started numerous proceedings against this organisation on charges of misleading advertising, with reference to the information published on the website. In the defence documents, the LUMUCI claimed to be registered in the *Anagrafe Nazionale Ricerche* (National Register of Research) since 2004 and to be entitled to apply for funding at the Ministry of Education⁶⁸. The Ministry stressed that: “Such registration only means that an institution is actually involved in research activities but does not entitle it to offer courses at academic level or to grant qualifications with legal validity in Italy”. The fact that LUMUCI worked in partnership with foreign universities is irrelevant for recognition purposes, because “the latter do not seem to be officially recognised in Italy”⁶⁹.

23. Non Traditional University of USA – University of USA

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.univerusa.com> (not available anymore)

This institution was promoted in Italy by Net Italy snc, a company operating in the field of education, in partnership with some ‘Non Traditional Universities of the USA’ and constantly looking out for innovations, for the purpose of offering high-quality training. The company declared to work with US programmes and with numerous Italian and American professors. It is impossible to find information about the name of the partner institutions that worked with this company. The institution awarded Bachelor, Master, as well as *honoris causa* qualifications. Each page of the website

⁶⁸ Registration number 56316DDS (13th July 2004).

⁶⁹ Proceeding n. 15.533, published on the Bulletin n. 21/2006, issue date 24/05/2006.

specified that the Degrees (*Lauree*) granted in the US were not equivalent to those awarded in Italy, as a matter of fact, they could not even be called *Lauree*, since this name identifies exclusively Italian qualifications and not US ones, which have a completely different status. The Italian Authority on Fair Competition examined a piece of advertising published by Net Italy snc on national newspapers, where the disclaimer, which appeared on the Internet, was omitted. The Authority judged it as a case of misleading advertising and forbade its further diffusion⁷⁰. Net Italy snc tried to dismiss the charges of misleading advertising, claiming that the omission of the disclaimer was a print mistake. From the investigation, it emerged that the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research had made clear that: "The University of USA is not officially recognised in the Italian Higher Education system and the term "università" must not be used to describe it. Furthermore, the qualifications it grants cannot be defined "Lauree", because the only valid academic qualifications are those legally recognised in Italy, in compliance with current legislation, which cannot be awarded by private people or institutions, regardless of their name". Finally, the Italian Ministry of Education stressed that: "As far as affiliations with foreign universities are concerned, the University of USA is not authorised to carry out any educational activity as affiliation to a foreign university".

24. Pebble Hills University

Location: Italy (Seborga⁷¹)

Website: <http://www.pebblehills.edu>

The Pebble Hills University appears among the non-accredited institutions listed in the document of the Office of Degree Authorization of the State of Oregon⁷² and in the one drafted by the Department of Civil Service of the State of Michigan. It is interesting to note that the headquarters of the Pebble University in Seborga is also the headquarters of ten other institutions, all included in the online databases of diploma mills:

- Saint Bernard University (via Miranda 3, Suite 103)
- Eurasia Community College (via Miranda 3, Suite 105)
- Istituto Latinoamericano de Psicobiofisica - I.L.A.P. (via Miranda 3, Suite 101)
- St. Paul Ottawa College & University (via Miranda 3, Suite 304)
- Phoenix International University Europe (via Miranda 3, Suite 404)
- West Coast University - WCU (via Miranda 3, Suite 504)
- The International University (via Miranda 3, Suite 505)
- Miranda International University (via Miranda 3, Suite 507)
- Marquis Open University (via Miranda 3, Suite 508)
- James Monroe International University (via Miranda 3, Suite 509)

⁷⁰ Proceeding n. 12.057, published on the Bulletin n. 22/2003, issue date 29/05/2003.

⁷¹ Seborga is a little Municipality in the province of Imperia, which counts less than 400 inhabitants. According to unspecified historical documents, this little town claims to be independent from Italy, boasting to be the first constitutional monarchy in the world, which was self-proclaimed "Antico Principato di Seborga" (Ancient Principality of Seborga). During the years, media have often covered the case of Seborga, since they were attracted by the folk phenomenon which animated the small village. The town founders elect a Prince, which rules together with a council of 15 ministers, who do not have any legislative power. As a matter of fact, the Municipality of Seborga belongs to the Italian Republic and its inhabitants do vote for the Major and for the Municipal Council. Nonetheless, the "Principality" mints its own worthless coin, called "Luigino d'oro".

⁷² In this document the Pebble Hill University is described as follows: "Degree mill. Not a genuine postsecondary institution, has no meaningful authority to issue degrees".

An article appeared on *La Gazzetta di Seborga* (Seborga's Gazette), the on-line magazine of the Principality of Seborga, revealed that after being accused of fraud, the police started investigation on the case of Pebble Hills University and on all other partner institutions. The article also revealed that the headquarters of the institutions are in a room used as a cellar.

The institution claims to offer Bachelor, Master and PhD qualifications accredited by partner accreditation mills, located in various countries, and recognised by the Department of Education of Seborga: an utterly imaginary Ministry, since the Municipality is not autonomous and it does not even host secondary schools.

25. St. Christopher Iba Mar Diop - College of Medicine

Location: United Kingdom, USA

Website: <http://www.stchris.edu>

The British authorities made known that this institution is not eligible for recognition in the UK because it does not satisfy the minimal quality requirements in order to obtain accreditation.

The St. Christopher College operated for many years also in Senegal, where the official authorities have confirmed that it is a non-recognised institution. In Belize, it works under the name of The Medical University of the Americas, another non-accredited institution.

On the website, it is possible to find information about the courses offered but no mention is made of accreditation.

It is claimed that the programmes offered at this institution will prepare students for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE). The institution is reported in the list of degree mills published by the State of Oregon and Maine; the State of New York and of California rejected its application for accreditation.

26. Saint Regis University

Location: Liberia, USA

Website: <http://www.sru.multiservers.com> (not available anymore)

This institution was closed down after a decision of the US Federal Court in June 2005 and many of the people employed there were judged guilty. The St. Regis claimed to be accredited in Liberia and in India.

After this information became public, the Liberian Embassy in Washington D.C. circulated a message, which denied any involvement of the Republic of Liberia in the recognition of this institution. St. Regis operators were also involved in spreading information about recognition in India, which was untrue.

This institution operated in a network of at least thirty irregular institutions and it claimed to be accredited by the Distance Education Council, which was also an accreditation mill. In the last few years, other employees were arrested by the US Secret Service on charges of working for the biggest organisation producing fake qualifications⁷³.

After the institution was shut down, it emerged that former students at St. Regis were holding prominent positions at international companies such as Boeing Australia or even at the White House. The institution seems to have reached Australia also:

⁷³ S. Phillips, "A stress-free PhD? A snip at \$250", in «The Higher Education Supplement», 25th November 2005

according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, more than 50 Australians were linked to St. Regis. The majority of them were professionals with degrees in “electrical and mechanical engineering, law, IT, marketing, business management and theology”⁷⁴.

27. Stanford University – International Open University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.stanford-university.org/about.html> (not available anymore), <http://www.iou.edu.tf/>

Sometimes, spelling can be tricky, as it is in this case: We are not actually referring to the world-class Stanford University in California, but to a fully-fledged diploma mill based in Texas.

Recently, the institution was re-named International Open University and opened a new branch in California. It is accredited by the Council of Distance Education Culture and Faith of the Ancient Principality of Seborga in Italy and it appears on all lists of diploma mills. It is interesting to point out that, in the Internet domain of the new website (<http://www.iou.edu.tf/>), the termination ‘.tf’ refers to the Territory of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF), i.e. to the volcanic Antarctic isles in the Southern Indian Ocean, which are part of the French Overseas Territory (*Territoire d'outre-mer* or TOM).

28. The Yorker International University

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.nyuniversity.net>

This institution grants honorary degrees, as well as PhD qualifications in a number of disciplines. With proceeding n. 11.296⁷⁵, the Italian Authority for Fair Advertising found that an ad published by the Yorker International University was an example of misleading advertising. The institution claimed that the qualifications awarded were eligible for recognition in Italy, where it was neither recognised, nor accredited as an affiliation of a foreign institution. On the Italian version of the website, under the menu item ‘Agenzie’ (Branches), it is possible to find out that the institution has got branches in the USA, in South America, in China, in the United Arab Emirates and in Africa. Furthermore, it claims to be accredited by the Government Accreditation Association of Delaware: according to the Italian Authority this claim is not supported by any evidence. The Delaware Department of Education denied that the institution ever received authorisation to operate on its territory.

The Yorker International University is also a member of the International University Accrediting Association (IUAA), a well-known accreditation mill based in California and included in the list of non-recognised accreditation agencies of Michigan.

This association appears among those that claimed to be accredited by UNESCO. After the ruling of the Italian Authority on Fair Advertising, The Yorker International University stressed that “the American qualifications are not equivalent to the Italian ‘Laurea’” and that “The Yorker International University and its partner institution, *Université Intercontinentale Le Bon Samaritain*, are not affiliated nor recognised in any way by the Italian Ministry of Education or by the other Italian institutions”.

⁷⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, “Fakes on to know one: the best degree money can buy” by Anna Patty, 15th February 2010: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/fakes-one-to-know-one-the-best-degree-money-can-buy-20100214-nzn3.html>

⁷⁵ Proceeding n. 11.296, published on the Bulletin n. 41/2002, issue date 10/10/2002.

29. Trident University of Technology

Location: USA

Website: <http://trident-university.com> (not available anymore)

This institution specialised in economics and finance and granted qualifications at Bachelor and Masters level. It was based in the USA and it claimed to be accredited by the State of New Jersey; as a matter of fact, the institution never obtained official recognition in this State and the State of Wisconsin also rejected its application for recognition. On the website, the institution claimed to operate privately and that its qualifications were accepted by some official Higher Education institutions. It is registered in all US lists of degree mills.

30. Università Mons Calpe

Location: Gibraltar

Website: http://www.umc-puc.edu/umc_it/default.htm (not available anymore)

The Università Mons Calpe is a member of the Private University Consortium LTD, together with the American Business School LLC in Colorado and the University Europeanamense in Panama. The three institutions claim to grant qualifications belonging to three different Education Systems: American degrees, European degrees, American Masters, European Masters and *honoris causa* qualifications. These institutions are not officially recognised. The main objective of the Mons Calpe is to "recognise experience, skills and talents" and to grant *honoris causa* qualifications "to a selected and exclusive group of entrepreneurs, managers and professionals which distinguished themselves in their jobs". The Università Mons Calpe was mentioned in the circular letter published by the Italian Ministry of Education (MURST) in 1994, among the institutions that are not entitled to obtain recognition in Italy.

31. Università Popolare San Tommaso D'Aquino

Location: Italy

Website: <http://www.unitommaso.it> (not available anymore)

This institution was connected to the *Associazione Internazionale Universitaria San Tommaso d'Aquino* (International University Association St. Thomas Aquinas), and it specialised in adult education, organised research and teaching activities, as well as professional training courses. Sometimes, these types of institutions – also called *università popolari* (people's universities) – enjoy regional recognition and they are managed either by associations and by private institutions – as it was in this case – or by public institutions. Adult education institutions are not authorised to grant qualifications with legal value in Italy, as officially recognised universities do.

The website of the institution advertised a wide-ranging offer of Italian degree programmes, foreign degree courses and different kinds of professional training courses; in some cases, even the corresponding degree class number was specified. The institution made clear that qualifications were not issued directly by the UPST, because it is was not authorised to do so; as a matter of fact, it only carried out administrative, logistic, legal and technical activities in order to support students in the path towards the achievement of an academic qualification at officially recognised institutions. Unfortunately, on the website it was not possible to find the list of the Italian universities which awarded the credential.

In the category 'Foreign degrees' a course in Dentistry was advertised, which was organised in partnership with a Romanian institutions: unluckily, Romanian credentials are not called "Laurea" and they do not have any legal value in the Italian Higher Education system.

The Italian Authority for Fair Advertising also dealt with this institution and started a proceeding on charges of misleading advertising against the *Università Popolare San Tommaso D'Aquino – Campus Sicilia*, on the basis of the information displayed on the extinct website www.unisicilia.net, where it was claimed that the licence for "Rehabilitation therapist" was actually equivalent to the licence for "Physiotherapist".

The UPST only made known that the proceeding of the Italian Authority was not referring directly to the activities it promoted. The Italian Authority ruled that the UPST should pay a monetary fine of € 12.100⁷⁶.

32. *Universitas Internationalis Studiorum Superiorum "Pro Deo"*

Location: USA

Website: not available

This institution worked for many years and granting void *honoris causa* qualifications. It appeared in the circular letter of the Ministry of Public Education of 16th June 1988 and in the one published by the Ministry of University, Scientific and Technological Research of 16th June 1993.

The institution sent letters via mail, fax or e-mail targeted at "selected emerging personalities in different fields: policy, art, industry, etc"⁷⁷.

Despite working mainly in partnership with American institutions and operating mostly in the USA, the New York Department of Education declared not to have any information about this institution⁷⁸. For at least 10 years, from 1983 to 1993, it worked with the *Istituto Promozioni Internazionali* (Institute for International Promotion), a PR agency, which – as it was claimed in their documents – mainly worked with two other organisations in the USA: the *Constantinian University* and the *Universitas Internationalis Studiorum "Pro Deo"*. The *Istituto Promozioni Internazionali* defines itself as a "member and official sponsor of the United Nations".

It is very interesting to note that at the same address where the premises of the *Istituto* were located, there are now the headquarters of a new agency called *Servizi Mediazioni Internazionali Srl*, which surprisingly enough also advertised via e-mail qualifications such as "Degrees, Professorial credentials and *honoris causa* qualifications" granted by the *Constantinian University*.

On the Internet there is no trace of this university apart from a few mentions on some CVs.

Please note that the *Universitas Internationalis Studiorum "Pro Deo"* must not be confused with the *Università Pro Deo*, a Higher Education institution officially recognised in Italy, which operated in Rome until the Sixties.

⁷⁶ Proceeding n. 17.989, published on the Bulletin n. 5/2008, issue date 07/02/2008.

⁷⁷ These words are extracted from one of the letters which were sent by the institution in order to advertise the possibility to get a *honoris causa* qualification, with included trip to the USA for the graduating ceremony.

⁷⁸ Source: Il Sole 24 Ore, A. Plateroti: "USA: un ateneo sconosciuto" (USA: An unknown university), 6th March 1995.

33. Universitas Sancti Cyrilli

Location: Malta

Website: <http://www.unicyrl.org>

Browsing through the website of this institution, in the Historical profile sections, some 'Schools' are mentioned, which "organise courses leading to European and American academic qualifications (Diploma, Bachelor, Master, *Laurea*, Ph.D.)", as well as Bachelor of Arts - Bachelor of Science [B.S.]; Master of Arts - Master of Science, Master in Business Administration awarded directly by the affiliated American Universities; [while] the Doctorate in Political Science in Economics and Commerce [is] awarded directly by State Universities⁷⁹". On this profile page, the institution claims to issue qualifications belonging to different Higher Education systems. For the purposes of the present study, it is interesting to have a closer look at the history of the institution and of its accreditation.

"Genesis: The Universitas Sancti Cyrilli was founded in 1669 as "Imperial Academy of St Cyril" by the Grand Ducal House of Moscow, Rjurik Dynasty. It owes its prestigious name to St. Cyril (827 – 869), Apostle of the Slavs, who is credited with the introduction of the Cyrillic Alphabet.

Characteristics: The Universitas is an International University which retains the following historical - juridical characteristics: it is dynastic as the founding Family is a Sovereign Dynasty, formerly reigning over Moscow, which has never renounced to its prerogatives nor suffered the *debellatio*; it is patrimonial as it has an endowment of honorary and academic titles, forming part of the *fons honorum*; it is a moral Entity in view of its non-profit making character.

Recognitions: The Universitas has been recognised: in 1669 by Decree of Sultan Mohammed IV Osman; in 1788 by H.S.H. Duke Ercole III of Modena; in 1890 by the Imperial Royal Austro - Hungarian Government; in 1944 by Royal Decree of the Royal Government of Yugoslavia, in exile in London, which recognised its juridical personality and decreed it a moral Entity.

Recent Developments: The Universitas has traditionally been protected and administered by the Head of the Name and Arms of the Grand Ducal House of Moscow, Rjurik Dynasty.

On 12 October 1989 the Grand Duke, in the absence of male heirs and wishing to ensure the dynastic succession, proclaimed Prof. Alfred Josef Baldacchino, Prince of Gagry, His adopted Son and dynastic Successor, in virtue of an irrevocable Testamentary Act of Dynastic Adoption.

By the same Act the Grand Duke bestowed irrevocably on the Prince as dowry with immediate effect the Universitas, with authority to carry out suitable modifications to, and adequate updating of, the existing Statutes and Regulations. On 6 August 2000 the Grand Duke transferred to the Prince in absolute perpetuity the Sovereignty and the *fons honorum* of the Universitas".

On the website of the *Ordo Byzantinus Sancti Sepulchri*, connected to the Universitas, it is declared that: "The Universitas confers *Honoris Causa* Doctorates in various Faculties on exceptionally meritorious persons who have distinguished themselves in the arts, sciences, industry, commerce, labour, finance, politics, communications and other spheres"⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ http://www.unicyrl.org/en_profile.htm

⁸⁰ <http://www.obss.org/infoa.htm>

34. *Université Européenne Jean Monnet a.i.s.b.l.*

Location: Belgium

Website: <http://www.jeanmonnet.com>

The main purpose of this institution is "[to offer] post-secondary-education training courses of high professional quality and equivalent qualifications in all those fields which are not considered at all, or only partially, by the conventional training system, mainly with reference to new professions. [For this reason it offers] courses through its associate Institutes all over Europe. Such Institutes work completely independently, according to the rules of Jean Monnet statute, but also accepting the control and supervision by Jean Monnet". The presentation of the University ends with the following disclaimer: "UEJM is not a state university. It is not one of those universities which can decide about the academic qualifications, which are protected about the use of such qualifications or about the practicing of a profession". The association has been operating in the market for many years and in the sole territory of Italy, it has 25 branches. The Italian Authority on Fair Competition examined the case of the UEJM. Its advice was requested for the evaluation of the alleged connection with the *Libera Università di Cultura Europea (LUCE)* incorrectly indicated as an institution authorised to grant recognised degrees and qualifications in Italy. The Authority ruled that the ad appeared on the website was misleading. Afterwards, with the proceeding n. 15.346 of 11th of April 2006, the Italian Authority sanctioned the non-observance of the first measure and ruled the corresponding monetary fine. The Italian Ministry of University Scientific and Technical Research clarified that the qualifications awarded by this institution cannot be recognised in Italy for three main reasons: first of all, because the Italian branches are not affiliations of foreign accredited universities; secondly, because they are not accredited by the Italian Ministry; finally, because the UEJM is not recognised in the Belgian Higher Education system⁸¹.

It is important not to confuse the UEJM with the *Libera Università Mediterranea 'Jean Monnet'*, located in Casamassima (Bari), which is an officially recognised institution in Italy⁸².

35. *University of Berkley*

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.berkeley-u.edu>; <http://www.uofb.com>

This institution must not be confused with the prestigious Berkeley University in California. Its name contains, in fact, one 'e' less. This case is another example of spelling-based fraud. At first, it was founded in the State of Pennsylvania; then it was sanctioned and prevented from doing business with the citizens of that State, as it was also reported on the website of the institution⁸³. Furthermore, the Berkeley campus of the University of California requested and obtained an agreement that the Berkley diploma mill would declare itself, in public statements, to be a different institution from the University of California Berkeley Campus.

⁸¹ This information has been confirmed by the Belgian NARIC centre: NARIC de la Communauté française de Belgique; Direction générale de l'enseignement non obligatoire et de la recherche scientifique - Rue A. Lavallée, 1 B-1080 Bruxelles.

⁸² Proceeding n. 14.099, published on the Bulletin n. 8/2005, issue date 23/02/2005.

⁸³ From the website: <http://www.berkeley-u.edu>: "All potential applicants please be advised, 'The University of Berkley is not permitted to do business with any citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania'".

The Italian Authority on Fair Competition dealt with the case of this institution in connection with a piece of advertising published on the national newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, where the possibility to achieve degrees, PhDs, as well as *honoris causa* qualifications with no need to make the slightest effort was advertised⁸⁴. The Italian Authority got in touch with the Berkley Department of Career Development – Office of Postsecondary Services, which declared that the University of Berkley had not been authorised and that it was not accredited by any accrediting body, legally recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Any degree issued by the institution would be of dubious value given the conditions described above⁸⁵.

36. University of Bums on Seats

Location: Unknown

Website: <http://www.cynicalbastards.com/ubs>

This funny institution works exclusively on-line and grants free-of-charge qualifications. It offers degrees in a wide range of disciplines: from Navel Philosophy, to a Master in Issues and a PhD in Hairdressing and Ecology. All credentials are signed by Prof. Alan Dubious, the vice-chancellor of the institution, with an unmistakable signature 'X' and the motto: "The antithesis of academic excellence". This website is a mockery of irregular institutions, since it is possible to print all degree certificates from any computer, without any efforts. The qualifications are at different levels: from Bachelor to the title of Big Indian Chief. The final result is hilarious.

37. University of Ecoforum for Peace

Location: Switzerland

Website: <http://www.uep.ch/universita.htm>

This institution has got branches in different countries: Belgium, Hawaii, some Eastern European countries and in Switzerland, where the domain of the website is registered. The University Ecoforum for Peace is neither accredited nor recognised in any Higher Education system of the countries mentioned above and it is mentioned in all lists of diploma mills. The institution claims to grant UK and European qualifications. It offers the possibility to organise the academic curriculum at leisure, to attend lessons, seminars, workshops and research groups at universities affiliated to UEP; nonetheless, there is no mention of any partner institution on the website.

In line with the creed of the organisation, potential students are warned that the UEP does not use "impressive premises to administer courses in order to reduce to a minimum the waste of resources and to make the most of the existing ones".

38. University of the Holy Land

Location: Israel

Website: <http://www.uhl.ac>

This institution offers Master of Arts and Master of Theological Studies, as well as PhD programmes; it appears in the list of diploma mills published by the State of Oregon. On the website, it claims to enjoy recognition from a few Israeli ministries but, as a matter of fact, it does not have any. Furthermore, it is claimed that the qualifications

⁸⁴ The ad appeared on the *Corriere della Sera* of 23rd June 2002 declared: "It is not necessary to sit exams or to move abroad".

⁸⁵ Proceeding n. 11.519 published on the Bulletin n. 50/2002, issue date 12/12/2002.

granted are accepted in numerous universities worldwide and that they grant access to the further level of studies. In the website there is also plenty of information about the Holy Land, about tourist sites and the possibility to make donations to support this institution which operates in a difficult context. Nonetheless, it is not possible to find any accurate description of the study programmes, nor of its accreditation status.

39. Warnborough University

Location: Ireland, United Kingdom

Website: <http://www.warnborough.edu>; <http://www.warnborough.ie>;
<http://www.warnborough.ac.uk>

The Warnborough University offers Bachelor, Master and PhD courses and issues certificates of different kind. It operates through a network of branches located mainly in Asia, with two main headquarters in Ireland and in the United Kingdom. The institution is also known as the Warnborough College and grants qualifications, which are not recognised neither by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (<http://www.nqai.ie>), nor by the UK NARIC centre (<http://www.naric.org.uk/>). On the website of the Warnborough University Ireland, it is claimed that the institution has applied for accreditation at the Irish authorities and its qualifications are about to be added to the National Qualification Framework; furthermore, it claims to be accredited by other centres, such as the British one. Unluckily, such information has not been confirmed by any of the centres mentioned. The institution appears in the US lists of bogus universities.

40. Washington International University

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.washint.edu/en/>

The Pennsylvania Department of Education declared that, this institution is illegal and is not authorised to grant academic qualifications. Furthermore, the WIU must not operate in Australia or sell and advertise the qualifications it grants. The Hawaii Department of Commerce & Consumer Affairs sanctioned the WIU with a monetary fine, because it operated on the Hawaiian territory; the institution has left the State of Hawaii since 2000. It is mentioned in all lists of bogus institutions. It mainly offers distance learning courses, as well as, the possibility to have a tutor in one-to-one courses: Bachelor and Master qualifications are all signed and certified not only by academic institutions, but also by a notary public, which has got nothing to do with the recognition of the qualification.

41. Accreditation Governing Commission of the United States of America

Location: unknown

Website: <http://www.agc-usa.org>

Despite the tricky name, this agency is not recognised in the USA and it appears in all lists of accreditation mills. It is affiliated to seven institutions that sell qualifications without any legal value.

As we can read from the website, the agency relies on the self-government of the institutions it accredits and on the evaluation given by the students enrolled. In this way the agency denies any responsibility about the quality of the accredited institutions.

42. Association of Christian Colleges and Theological Schools

Location: USA

Website: <http://www.accts.cc> (not available anymore)

This institution specialises in the accreditation of institutes offering programmes in theology and it works without the authorisation of the US Department of Education. It must not be confused with the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, the first North American accreditation agency for seminaries. The Association of Christian Colleges accredits five irregular institutions, among others the Tyndale Theological Seminary, sanctioned by the Texas Supreme Court with a fine of \$173.000, because it was not authorised to use the noun "seminary" in its description.

It is possible to become an "Accredited member" upon payment of a fee of \$300. Organisations have also got the possibility to appear among the "accredited" institutions by paying only a few hundred dollars per year. This association is mentioned in the list of accreditation mills published by the State of Oregon and Michigan.

43. Centre of Academic Excellence UK

Location: United Kingdom

Website: <http://www.academic-excellence.org.uk> (not available anymore)

This institution is accredited neither by the United Kingdom Ministry of Education, nor by any other official authority in other countries.

It is affiliated with the following irregular institutions: University of Benin (Nigeria), School of English Studies, Dalian University of Foreign Languages (China), Department of English, Yunnan University (China), Sri Ramchandra Medical College and Research Institute (India), University of St. Gallen (Switzerland).

The accreditation fee varies according to the course offered by the institutions and to their level: from £800 to £1.500 + VAT for departments; while for the whole institution from £1.500 to £2.500 + VAT.

44. Distance Education & Training Council (DETC)

Location: UK, Cyprus

Website: <http://www.detc.org.uk/aboutus.php>

This accreditation mill appeared in April 2010 and it bears the same name as does an officially recognised Washington-based accrediting body "The Distance Education and Training Council" (DETC), whose genuine website is <http://www.detc.org/>. This bogus DETC" appeared with a British web domain and a Cyprus address.

The officials of the recognised American accrediting body, tried to get in touch with the DETC via e-mail and on the phone, but their queries were not answered and their calls were not returned. From further research emerged that there is no registered company in the United Kingdom with this name.

Moreover, the "Standards⁸⁶" section of the DETC website is a word-for-word copy of the section "Standards & Policies⁸⁷" of another recognised US accrediting body, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

⁸⁶ http://www.detc.org.uk/accreditation_standards.php

⁸⁷ http://cihe.neasc.org/standards_policies/

45. International Commission for Higher Education

Location: United Kingdom

Website: <http://www.icfhe.org>

This accreditation agency appears in the list of accreditation mills of the State of Michigan; it is affiliated to four institutions: the Breyer State University, the Pebble Hills University, the Worldwide Campus and the North America College.

With a fee of \$1.000 to be paid every four years, this agency promises institutional accreditation, on the basis of "certified" parameters and makes available some services, such as the Apostille, to be applied on the issued documents.

Furthermore, it offers a networking service with the other accredited institutions to facilitate the exchange of good practices and suggestions.

Finally, it also promises some reductions for already accredited institutions, in case they want to obtain further accreditation at different accreditation mills.

46. International Council for Accrediting Alternate and Theological Studies - ICAATS

Location: India

Website: www.icaats.org.in

This institution declares to be a Government-approved NGO, but neither the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development, nor the University Grants Commission of India recognises it and none of the institutions accredited by the ICAATS appear in the lists of official Indian institutions. The Indian Department of Education declares that non-accredited or institutions accredited by non-recognised agencies do not have any right to use the name of "university" or *Vishwvidyalaya* in the Indian territory.

The affiliated institutions, the Scotfield Graduate School (Modesto, California), the Calvin School of Apologetics and Theology (Kerala, India) and the Trinity School of Apologetics & Theology (Kerala, India), are all lead by Johnson C. Philip, who works as both the Headmaster and the Chancellor of the International Council.

47. Universal Council for On-line Education Accreditation - UCOEA

Location: Unknown

Website: <http://www.ucoea.org>

The number of institution accredited by UCOEA so far is unknown, also because the "Members' Area" of the website is not accessible. This fake accreditation agency is included in the list of accreditation mills of the State of Michigan and it is also affiliated to the most famous accreditation mill, i.e. the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC) – which includes four on-line accreditation mills. The websites of the three agencies have been conceived following the same standards: they have the same layout, and they share contents and texts⁸⁸.

48. University Degree Programme - UDP

Location: Israel, Romania

Website: <http://www.connect.co.il/degree> (not available anymore)

This organisation used to be a diploma mill consortium made up of four affiliated non-accredited agencies: the Distance Learning Council of Europe (DLCE), the European Council for Distance & Open Learning (ECDOL), the European Committee

⁸⁸ <http://www.heac.org/heac/onlineuniversities.htm>

for Home and on-line Education (ECHOE) and the Higher Education Services Association (HESA). The US Federal Trade Commission repeatedly investigated the case of the UDP. The agency includes 27 fake institutions, which appear in all lists of degree mills. Nine out of the 27 websites were shut down by US authorities. Among the founders of this institution there is the mother of a child who achieved a PhD in Maths at the age of four.

49. World Association of Universities and Colleges - WAUC

Location: Israel, Romania

Website: <http://www.waucglobalaccreditation.org> (not available anymore)

The WAUC is an accreditation agency, which is not recognised by the US Department of Education. It was funded by Maxine Asher, who also created the American World University, another non-recognised institution. Mrs. Asher despite complaining that "laws in the U.S.A. prohibit the recognition of global accreditation associations" decided to create a global accreditation agency anyway. This agency accredited 21 institutions, which were all diploma mills. In January 2006, WAUC offered accreditation to university at the special price of 100 US dollars.

50. World Information Distributed University - WIDU

Location: Belgium, Russia

Website: <http://www.widu.us>; <http://www.aeiedu.be> (not available anymore)

Also called, Academie Européenne d'Informatisation – AEI, this irregular institution worked mainly in Belgium, Switzerland and Russia; it offered qualifications belonging to the US Higher Education system (Bachelor, Master and PhD), as well as to the French one (*Licence, Mater, Doctorat*) in various disciplines. The competent Belgian authorities declared that neither the institution nor the qualifications it granted were valid to access any regulated profession⁸⁹. On the website, in the section dedicated to recognition, it was claimed that the qualifications issued by the WIDU/AEI were recognised in thirty countries worldwide, but the institutions mentioned are all irregular.

⁸⁹ A copy of the letter sent by the Belgian NARIC Centre to the American Association of College Registrars and Administration Officers is available at: http://www.osac.state.or.us/oda/doc/Widu_belgian_response.pdf