

European Quality Assurance  
Register for Higher Education



# Policy Developments in Quality Assurance in Europe & Opportunities for Asia-Europe Dialogue

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# Outline



## 1. Overview

- a. European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
- b. European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

## 2. Policy Developments

- a. Cross-Border Quality Assurance
- b. Revision of the ESG
- c. External QA of Joint Programmes

## 3. Possible Asia-Europe Cooperation

# 1 a. European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)



- **Adopted by Ministers of higher education** in 2005, as part of the Bologna Process to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Agreed principles for quality assurance (QA)
  - Twin purposes: quality enhancement and accountability
  - Generic principles, not prescriptive rules or detailed norms
- Developed by the key stakeholders:
  - Higher education institutions (EUA, EURASHE)
  - Students (ESU)
  - Quality assurance agencies (ENQA)
- ➔ Established stakeholder cooperation in the E4 Group

# ESG at a glance



- Main responsibility is with higher education institutions
- Independent quality assurance agencies
- Peer-review involving academics and students
- Transparency and public reports
- Balance of accountability and enhancement
- International experts and cross-border QA

## 1b. About EQAR



Register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)

- Established by stakeholders at Ministers' request
- Jointly governed by stakeholders (E4, social partners) and EHEA governments
- External review of agencies by independent experts
  - Same principles as for institutions
- Independent **Register Committee**
  - Composed of 11 quality assurance experts
  - Takes all decisions related to registration



# Mission and Objectives

“coherent quality assurance framework for the EHEA in which HEIs have the freedom to turn to any EQAR-registered agency [...], and in which qualifications are thus universally recognised“

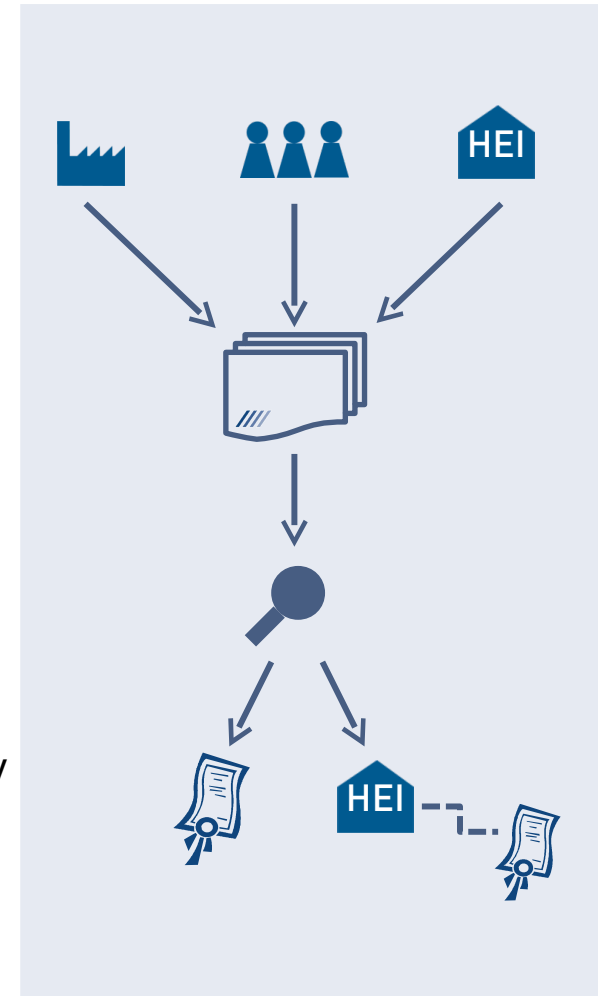
## Transparency and Information

- Information on bona fide agencies
- Prevent „accreditation mills“ from gaining credibility

## Trust and Recognition

- Enhance trust in and recognition of QA results
- Support recognition of qualifications/periods of study
- Allow registered QA agencies to operate across the entire EHEA, HE institution to choose agency

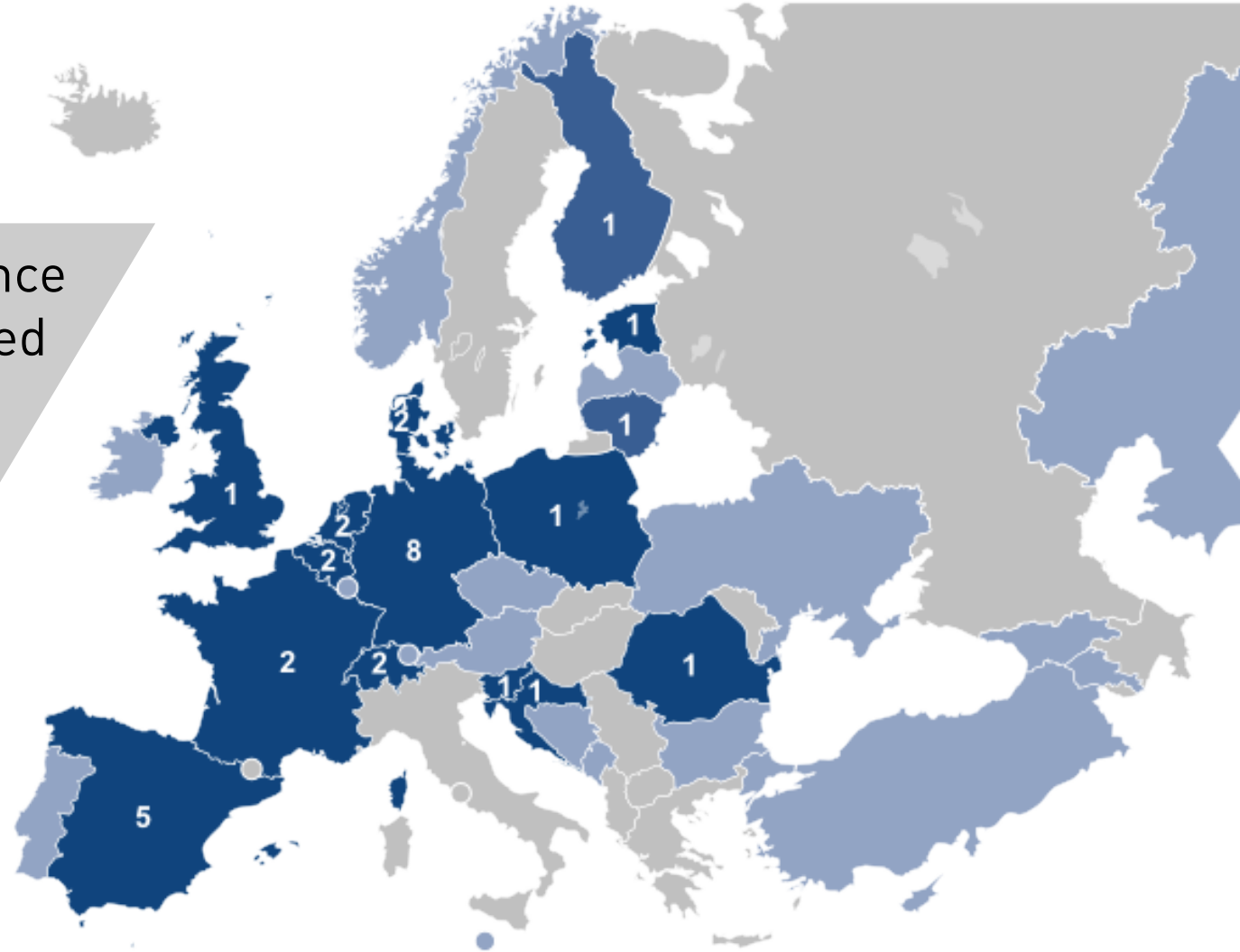
eqar



# Agencies and Governments



- 31 quality assurance agencies registered
- 31 Governmental Members



## 2. Policy Developments in Europe



Priorities set in Bucharest Communiqué of ministers (April 2012):

- **allow EQAR-registered agencies to perform their activities** across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements.
- **recognise quality assurance decisions** of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.
- **automatic recognition** of comparable academic degrees, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal of the EHEA.
- **revise the ESG** to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope, [...] based upon an initial proposal to be prepared by the E4 in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) [...]

(commitments related to quality assurance and EQAR)



## 2a. Cross-Border Quality Assurance



### EQAR project “Recognising International Quality Assurance Activity”:

- Mapping of the legal framework in EHEA countries allowing the use of EQAR-registered QAAs, including targeted consultation of BFUG rep.s
- Survey of QAAs on their cross-border activities
- Seminar with QAAs operating across borders in the EHEA (April 2014)
- **Case-study interviews with 12 HEIs to analyse institutional experiences regarding international quality reviews**
  - HEIs from countries that allow foreign QAAs to operate and from countries that do not
  - HEIs that were evaluated by a foreign QAA and HEIs who plan to do so
- Conference for governments and stakeholders in the autumn of 2014

Co-funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme

# CBQA – Legal frameworks



External QA by EQAR-registered agency ...	Outcome/decision directly recognised	Final decision with national QA body
All HEI's and for all external QA	FI, LI, RO	AL, AM, BE-fl, EE, KAZ, ME, NL
Some HEI's or some types of external QA only	AT, CH	LT, PT
Only joint degrees or similar circumstances	DK, PL	DE

# Challenges and Opportunities



Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Language</li><li>▪ Market logic</li><li>▪ Local context and rules</li><li>▪ Different degree structures/QFs</li><li>▪ Types of institutions</li><li>▪ Cultural differences</li><li>▪ EHEA framework vs national concerns</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Suit HEI's profile and strategy</li><li>▪ Specialised institutions and QAA</li><li>▪ Recognition of degrees</li><li>▪ Higher commitment on both sides</li><li>▪ Active choice by HEI</li><li>▪ Underlining autonomy of HEI's</li><li>▪ Improving the internationalisation</li></ul>

## 2b. Revision of the ESG



- ESG have **successfully conciliated**:
    - **Diversity** of national systems, cultures and approaches
    - Need for a **common ground** to enable trust and recognition
  - **Revision** in line with following principles:
    - Keep the strengths: integrated concept and understanding of QA, broad applicability, broad ownership
    - Overcome the weaknesses: vagueness, redundancies, inconsistencies
    - Update: ESG linked to the 'Bologna-Infrastructure' (esp. Qualifications Framework), take into account recent developments
    - Adaptability to future developments
    - Keep a balance between changing too much and too little
- ➔ **Fit for new challenges and an even better basis for trust**

## 2c. External QA of Joint Programmes



### Background:

- Various pilot projects of integrated external QA
- Yet: most joint programmes are evaluated “fragmented”, i.e. each national QAA reviews their part, no review of whole programme

### **European Approach for External QA of Joint Programmes:**

- Currently prepared by BFUG-mandated ad-hoc expert group
- Based on ESG and Qualifications Framework of the EHEA, but specified for joint programmes
- If programme evaluation/accreditation needed, can be carried out by any EQAR-registered QAA – or internal review by HEIs themselves
- Decision recognised in all countries, as agreed in Bucharest

# 3. Areas of Cooperation



- Exchange of experience with a view to establishing Asia-Pacific Quality Register
  - Starting today!
- EQAR is open to QA agencies irrespective of where they are based (criteria are the same)
  - Recognition of activities in Europe/EHEA
  - Advantage for local HEI's and degrees
  - ESG are not (and will not be) “exclusive” for Europe: significant overlaps, e.g. INQAAHE GGP
- In view of future Asia-Pacific Register:
  - Combination (e.g. review against ESG and Chiba Principle at the same time) could be feasible