

European Quality Assurance
Register for Higher Education



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

APQN Annual Conference 2014

7 March 2014, Hanoi

Colin Tück



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”

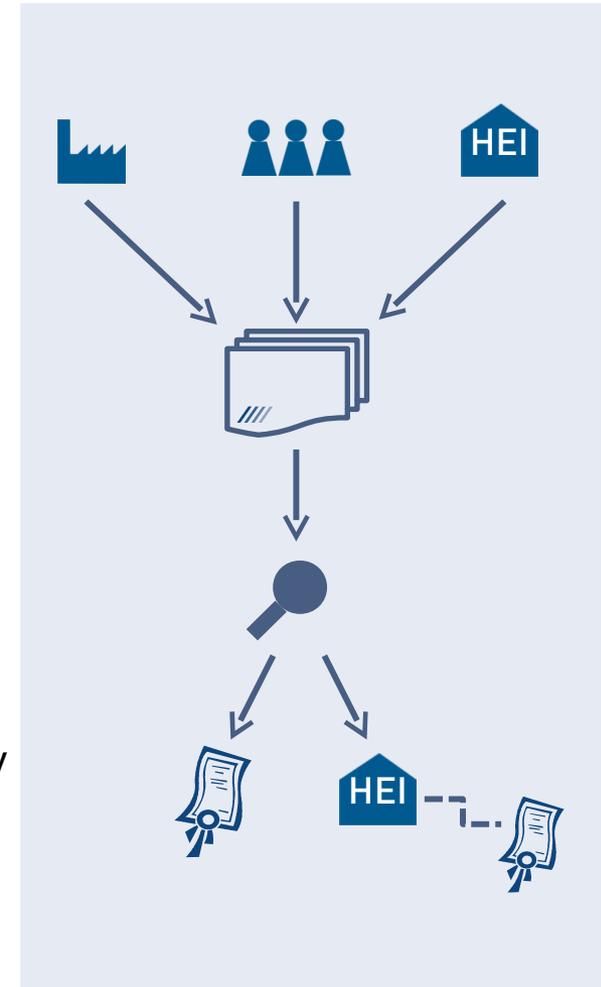
Transparency and Information

- 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

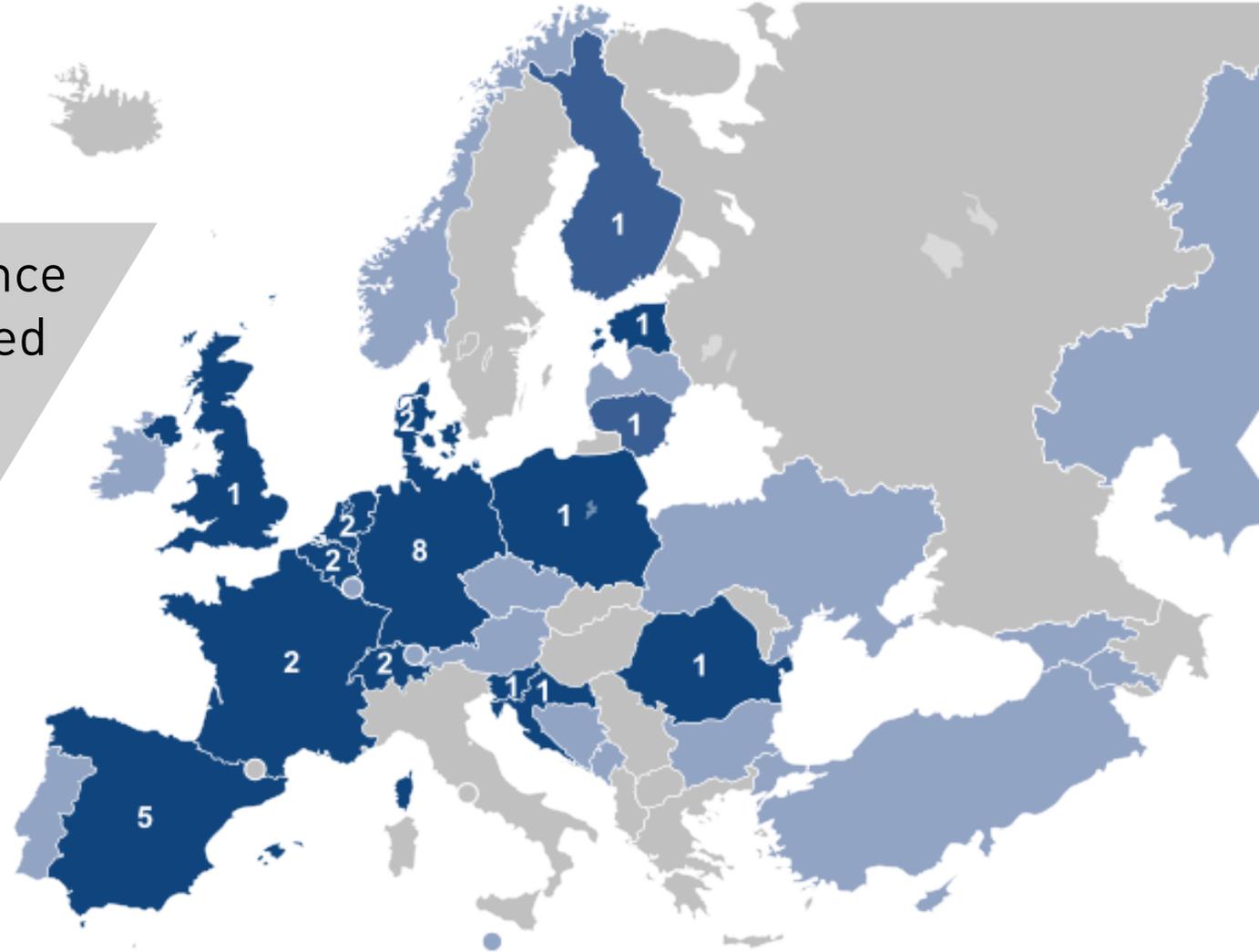
eqar



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

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