

ENQA in a nutshell

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established in 2000 to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance (QA) in higher education. In 2004, it was transformed into the **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education**, but its acronym remained the same (ENQA). Since then, the **mission** of ENQA is to contribute significantly to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education at a high level, and to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna signatory countries.

ENQA is a **membership association** which represents its members (40 full and 7 candidate members and 42 Affiliates from 25 Bologna signatory countries, as of December 2012) at the European level and internationally. ENQA members are quality assurance organisations from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) member states that operate in the field of higher education. The membership criteria of ENQA encompass Part III of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and some additional requirements and guidelines.

Bodies that do not wish to, or for whatever reason are unable to, apply to become members of ENQA may request affiliate status within ENQA. An **Affiliate** body will be a network of bona fide quality assurance agencies or other bona fide umbrella organisation concerned with the quality assurance of higher education.

ENQA's **purposes** are:

ENQA's purposes are essentially threefold:

- **to represent its members** at the European level and internationally, especially in political decision making processes and in co-operations with stakeholder organisations;
- **to function as a think tank** for developing further quality assurance processes and systems in the EHEA;
- **to function as a communication platform** for sharing and disseminating information and expertise in quality assurance among members and towards stakeholders.

The **organisation** of ENQA consists of three entities. The **General Assembly** (GA), composed of the representatives of the ENQA member agencies with Affiliates, and stakeholders attending as observers, is the main decision-making body of the association. As the executive body of ENQA, the **Board** ensures an effective management of the issues in between the annual GA meetings. The **Secretariat** takes care of the day-to-day operation, administration, record-keeping and account management.

To achieve its objectives, ENQA **disseminates information** on experience, good practice and new developments in the field of quality assessment and quality assurance in higher education to stakeholders, namely to public authorities, higher education institutions, students and quality assurance agencies. ENQA's activities comprise events such as **conferences, workshops** and **seminars** as well as transnational quality assurance **projects, cooperation** with stakeholders and development and maintenance of its **website** (www.enqa.eu).

ENQA produces **publications** dealing with developments in European quality assurance. Publications include the series of *Occasional Papers*, *Workshop and seminar Reports*, and various statements and position papers (all available on the website).

ENQA acknowledges that the primary responsibility for quality rests with **higher education institutions**. External quality assurance, for which **QA agencies** are responsible, fulfils a different need: at its best it combines both accountability for the reassurance of the public and an objective and developmental role for enhancing quality in institutions.

ENQA is committed to respect the **fitness for purpose principle** (purpose-process alignment) that is at the core of the European dimension of quality assurance.

ENQA works closely with its **key European partner organisations**: European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students' Union (ESU), BusinessEurope and Education International. ENQA is a member of the E4 Group together with EUA, EURASHE and ESU.

ENQA is also firmly committed to a continuing **cooperation with other quality assurance networks**, such as the Central and Eastern European QA Network (CEENQA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA), the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN).

ENQA respects the **diversity** of European higher education, the diversity of quality assurance and enhancement approaches and measures and the diversity of approaches to setting-up national quality assurance systems.

ENQA is one of the founder members of **EQAR**, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, which was established in 2008 to increase the transparency of quality assurance in higher education across Europe and which publishes and manages a register of quality assurance agencies that substantially comply with the ESG.