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# ENQA REPORT TO MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE EHEA

Bucharest Ministerial Conference, April 2012

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With this report, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) wishes to highlight relevant features of the state of development of quality assurance in the EHEA and its most recent contribution to developing quality assurance further, as well as its responses to the challenges that are lying ahead.

It is noteworthy that various analytical reports on the development of quality assurance in the EHEA, such as the stocktaking reports of 2007 and 2009, the independent assessment of the Bologna Process in 2010, the ENQA report "Learning from agency reviews" and, last but not least, the MAP-ESG report give clear evidence that also through the review of agencies ENQA's contribution has had a considerable impact on the development of quality assurance in the EHEA in general and the implementation of the ESG in particular.

The implementation of the ESG, and thus the development of quality assurance throughout the EHEA according to common principles, is to be seen as one of the greatest successes of the Bologna process. The results of the MAP-ESG project, conducted by ENQA together with its E4 partners, give evidence about the crucial role of the ESG in the successful development of quality assurance in the EHEA and in achieving the goals of the Bologna Process. ENQA will strengthen its efforts to make the ESG as the foundation of all kinds of quality assurance commonly accepted by all relevant actors, notably the growing variety of new actors in the field like the so-called Quality Labels and agencies conducting voluntary quality assurance. This is the precondition for keeping the high level of acceptance of the results of quality assurance in the EHEA.

ENQA indicates its willingness to prepare, together with its partners and by taking into account the input of as wide a range of relevant stakeholders as possible, the revision of the ESG based on the recommendation of the E4 partners.

Variety and dynamism are two distinctive features of quality assurance in the EHEA and will remain so in the future, as revealed by the results of the project "Quality

procedures: visions for the future", conducted by ENQA in 2011. The main priority in the future development of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA is the relationship between external quality assurance procedures and the development of mechanisms to enhance higher education. Innovative practices currently implemented by the agencies are developed around four forward-looking strategies. These strategies will take into account that quality assurance of teaching and learning should always put the learner at the HEI into the focus of their activities. In addition, the agencies consider that progress needs to be made regarding the international recognition of evaluation and accreditation practices being implemented at the national level.

Two features of quality assurance in the EHEA have caught attention in the last two years and will remain in the focus of ENQA's work in the future:

### QUALITY ASSURANCE IN JOINT PROGRAMME

Based on its experience, ENQA recommends to the ministers responsible for higher education in the EHEA to allow for a specific European accreditation approach for Joint programmes, which should be applied to all those Joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level. ENQA would welcome the opportunity to explore the practicalities in developing such an approach.

### QUALITY ASSURANCE AND TRANSPARENCY TOOLS

Bologna transparency tools, quality assurance and rankings/classifications serve different purposes, although they support each other to a certain extent. It is misleading to consider them as alternatives. In 2012-2013, ENQA will focus on and strengthen the transparency function of external quality assurance and, at the same time, emphasise the specific purpose of quality assurance compared to other transparency tools.

## INTRODUCTION

In advance of the ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area meeting in Bucharest 26/27 April 2012, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) wishes to highlight its most recent contribution to the development of quality assurance in the EHEA as well as its responses to the challenges that are still lying ahead.

ENQA comprises 52 member agencies from 27 countries of the EHEA and in addition 35 affiliates. All in all agencies and

other actors from 39 countries from the EHEA and beyond are represented in ENQA. Based on the vast experience and expertise of its members, ENQA wishes to indicate its willingness to continue contributing to the further development of the EHEA and to the development of quality assurance in all countries of the EHEA in particular.

In order to achieve this, ENQA will strengthen its collaboration with those countries that have not set up quality assurance agencies so far or which are in the phase of setting up an agency.

## 1. ENQA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA

### 1.1 THE ENQA REVIEWS OF AGENCIES AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR IMPLEMENTING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA (ESG)

In 2005, ministers of the Bologna signatory countries, at their meeting in Bergen, adopted the ESG which, in the third part, also comprise standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies. The eighth standard of this part states that "agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability". As part of these accountability procedures the guidelines mention "a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years."

This standard has had an immediate impact on the accountability procedures of agencies. Indeed, when ENQA became an association in 2004, the new statutes of the association had already stated that agencies have to undergo an external review in order to be granted membership status; agencies which were already members of the ENQA Network before 2004 had to undergo a review by September 2010. Consequently, ENQA introduced part III of the ESG as its main membership criteria. In addition, ENQA set standards and procedures that need to be applied in order for external reviews of agencies to be acceptable for ENQA. External reviews of agencies started immediately and in 2006 the first

membership decisions based on the compliance with the ESG were taken. In the course of 2010 ENQA completed the first round of external reviews of quality assurance agencies; and by February 2012, a total of 43 agencies have been reviewed against the ESG.

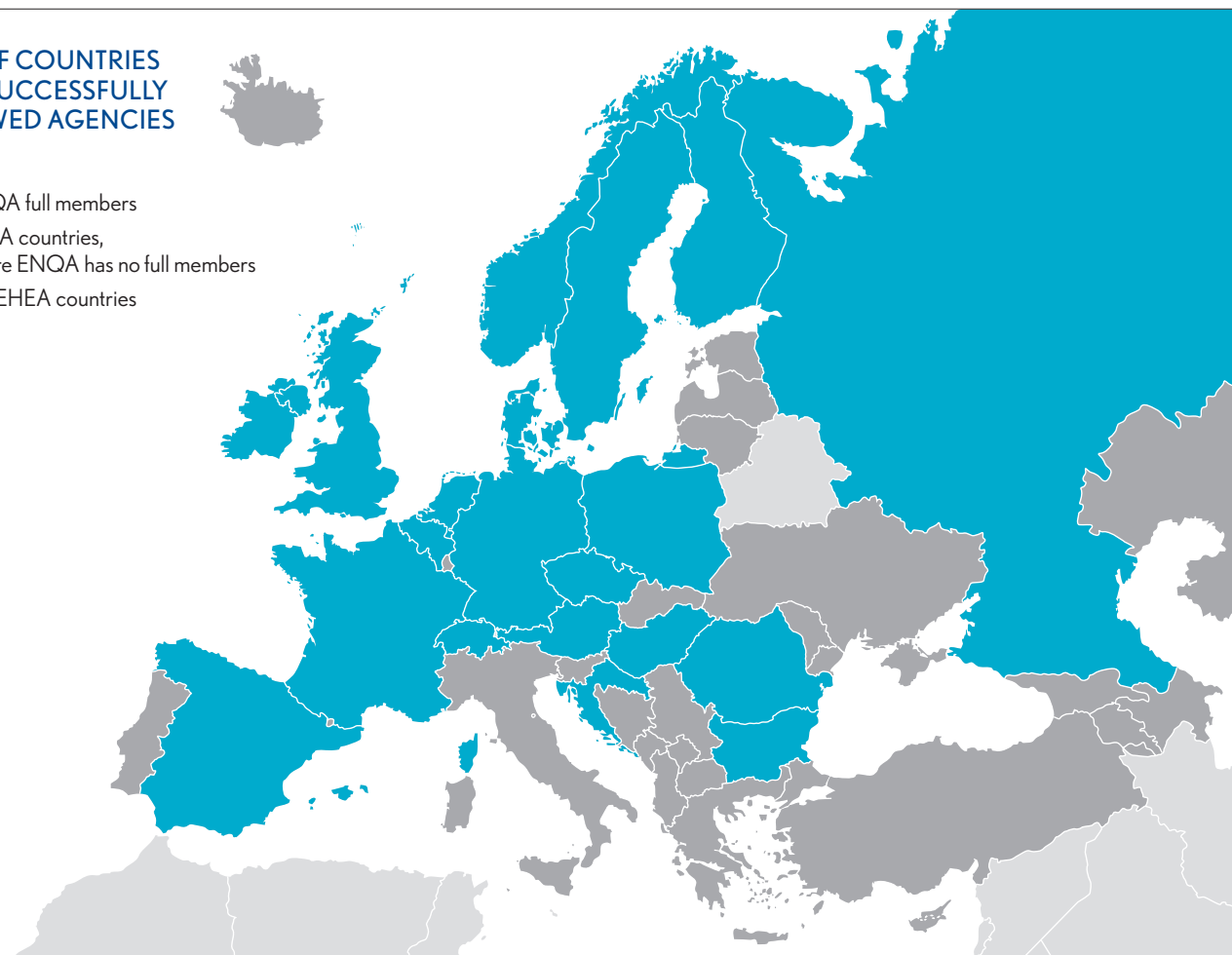
Various analytical reports on the development of quality assurance in the EHEA, such as the stocktaking reports of 2007 and 2009, the independent assessment of the Bologna Process in 2010, the ENQA report "Learning from agency reviews" and last but not least the MAP-ESG report, give clear evidence that also through the review of agencies ENQA's contribution has had a considerable impact on the development of quality assurance in the EHEA in general and the implementation of the ESG in particular.

This counts not least because an external review, which demonstrates compliance with the ESG, is also a precondition for access to EQAR. Since EQAR does not conduct reviews but relies on the reports of reviews carried out for ENQA membership purposes, the meaning of ENQA membership reviews cannot be underestimated.

It is a fact that quality assurance agencies from 27 countries of the EHEA are reviewed against the ENQA membership criteria and the ESG has an additional effect at national and institutional level which was not envisaged when the ESG were adopted. This results from the specific structure of ESG and the link between parts three, two and one of ESG. Since, according to the first standard of the third part, agencies are required to demonstrate compliance with ESG part two, the reviews of agencies function at the same time as drivers of implementing

#### MAP OF COUNTRIES WITH SUCCESSFULLY REVIEWED AGENCIES

- ENQA full members
- EHEA countries, where ENQA has no full members
- non EHEA countries



external quality assurance at national level. Likewise, since the first standard of the second part of ESG requires agencies to demonstrate that they take into account the effectiveness of internal quality assurance mechanisms according to part one of ESG (standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance), the reviews of agencies function at the same time as driver for implementing quality assurance within higher education institutions. On the one hand, one can say that the initiative of setting up or adjusting internal quality assurance in accordance to the ESG should not be initialised by external actors but rather internally. On the other hand, this may lead to an even better cooperation between internal and external quality assurance in higher education. Anyhow, it demonstrates the substantial effect the ENQA reviews of quality assurance agencies have had and have for the development of quality assurance in the EHEA.

Now that the first round of agency reviews is completed, ENQA will put a specific emphasis on the developmental function of the reviews in order to strengthen the capacity of its member agencies to be responsive to new demands on quality assurance and to new challenges in the field of quality assurance.

## 1.2 MAPPING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICATION OF THE ESG (MAP-ESG PROJECT)

One of ENQA's priorities since the ministerial meeting in Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve has been the conduction of the MAP-ESG project. Since the adoption of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA* (ESG) by ministers in Bergen (2005), considerable progress has been made in their implementation and impact. However, until now, there has been no overarching study on the implementation of the ESG in all its parts, and no thorough analysis that the impact of the ESG had yet been carried out. Hence, the MAP-ESG project was launched by ENQA together with its E4 partners in order to gather information on how the ESG have been implemented and applied in the 47 Bologna signatory countries in HEIs and in quality assurance agencies.

ENQA feels encouraged by the report and its main findings regarding the applicability and the implementation of the ESG which give evidence about the crucial role of the ESG for the successful development of quality assurance in the EHEA.

As clearly evidenced by the findings of the MAP-ESG project, the ESG have proved to be a major achievement of the Bologna Process – they are well-regarded by all stakeholders, have proved to be applicable across diverse contexts, have impacted on the development of QA processes at institutional and national level and on the work and review of quality assurance agencies. They have facilitated a shared

understanding of QA amongst the relevant stakeholders and actors in HE. Quality Assurance, whether internal or external, is conducted across the EHEA according to the framework of principles they provide. They constitute a crucial means for achieving the goals of the Bologna Process.

The conclusions of the project, therefore, focus on the improvement of the ESG as they are currently formulated rather than recommending a wholesale revision of the content of the principles enshrined in the document. It was generally concluded that it is essential to maintain the concept of the generic principle in order to ensure the continuing relevance of the ESG to all relevant stakeholders in the EHEA and to maintain their authority as the common reference point for QA in the EHEA. There was agreement that the current scope is generally appropriate but there is encouragement to reflect on the extent to which a revised ESG document should link to specific Bologna commitments and reflect overarching principles agreed among the Bologna signatories.

It is also clear that the document could be improved by some further work to increase clarity of terminology and to ensure the removal of ambiguity both in terms of the language used and also with regard to the standards and guidelines themselves to ensure that they are as clear as possible.

ENQA indicates its willingness to prepare, together with its partners and by taking into account the input of as wide a range of relevant stakeholders as possible, the revision of the ESG based on the recommendation of the E4 partners:

*“Based on the findings of the project, ‘Mapping the implementation and application of the ESG’ and the conclusions derived from the findings, ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE recommend that ministers of the EHEA countries mandate the E4 organisations to carry out, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, notably Education International, Business Europe, the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and EQAR, a careful revision of the ESG in order to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness. This work would be carried out in the understanding that the current principles would be maintained. The report, with the revised document, would be presented to the BFUG.”*

ENQA wishes to underline that, in order to keep the main strengths of the ESG, which is the applicability in the various countries of the EHEA, it is paramount to stay with the generic approach and to resist every temptation to make the ESG a detailed and prescriptive checklist. It is also worth to emphasise that the success of the ESG is based not least on the fact that they have been developed on a consensus basis. This should also be the guiding principle for any revision.

## 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA: SPECIFIC FEATURES

At the ministerial conference in Leuven/Louvain-La Neuve, ministers highlighted the crucial importance of a *European dimension of quality assurance* and asked the E4 organisations to continue their co-operation in developing the European dimension further.

This was the first time that the concept of a European dimension of quality assurance was mentioned in the Bologna process documents. The Bologna Seminar “The European Dimension of Quality Assurance”, jointly organised by the German Rectors’ Conference – Project nexus – and the German Accreditation Council, on the 14th of March 2011 in Berlin, clearly showed that different stakeholders use different definitions of the European dimension in quality assurance. For the quality assurance community, this dimension seems to refer mainly to the application of the common European principles and procedures; to others it is more linked to the development of international academic standards at a discipline level or to the contribution of quality assurance to reaching the broader policy goals of the Bologna process.

ENQA wishes to reassert that the European dimension constitutes not least the specific notion of quality assurance in the EHEA which is in the first instance laid down in the following principles:

- The primary responsibility for quality lies with the institutions
- Internal quality assurance forms the basis of the whole quality assurance system. External quality assurance has to take into account the results of the internal part
- Quality assurance processes, irrespective of the very nature and design of the chosen approach, have to serve the developmental function of quality assurance
- Involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including students, in quality assurance processes and quality assurance agencies
- Publication of reports

Although these principles could be applied in other regions of the world as well, it is noteworthy that, in many regions, it would be challenging to involve all the stakeholders, especially students, and also to make results of quality assurance procedures public. It is fair to say that applying these principles presented challenges in many countries of the EHEA; quality assurance agencies, for example, had to make a lot of efforts to live up to these European principles and to integrate them in the national system. The high level of attention that the European approach to quality assurance receives from other regions of the world encourages ENQA to follow this route. Notably, the publication of quality assurance results and stakeholder involvement seem to spread beyond the countries of the EHEA.

ENQA wishes to highlight that these principles should be adhered to by all actors in the field of quality assurance within the EHEA. Particularly the growing variety of new actors in the field like the so-called Quality Labels and the agencies conducting voluntary quality assurance, are requested to respect the primary responsibility of HEI for quality of higher education. In addition, stakeholder involvement and publication of reports are indispensable features for acknowledging new actors as being in line with the broad consensus about quality assurance in the EHEA. ENQA will strengthen its efforts to make the ESG as the foundation of all kinds of quality

assurance commonly accepted by all relevant actors. This is the precondition for keeping the high level of acceptance of the quality assurance results in the EHEA.

ENQA wishes to highlight the following features of quality assurance in the EHEA which caught attention in the last two years and which will remain in the focus of ENQA’s work in the future.

### 2.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN JOINT PROGRAMMES

Joint programmes, resulting in a truly (trans-)European degree, facilitating mobility and attracting students from other EHEA countries or even from outside the European Higher Education Area, have been on top of the agenda from the beginning of the Bologna process. They were already mentioned in the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), and the Ministers of Higher Education involved in the Bologna process raised the issue at most of the ministerial conferences since then. In 2007 and 2009, the implementation of joint programmes was also followed up in the stock taking exercises.

At the Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve conference in 2009, ministers emphasised that “joint degrees and programmes [...] shall become more common practice”.

Already in the early days of joint programmes it became clear that they challenge the existing national quality assurance procedures: more than one provider develops and offers a joint programme which is studied at more than one institution in more than one country with different political and legal frameworks and not the least differing quality assurance regimes.

In September 2011, ENQA organised a workshop on “Quality assurance of Joint programmes” in order to take stock of the developments in this field and to derive recommendations for the future. The workshop provided excellent opportunity to share the ample experience gained in this field by the quality assurance agencies and to make a proposal for developing the procedures further.

The European quality assurance agencies accepted the above mentioned challenge and made a great effort in the last years to analyse the specific issues of quality assurance in joint programmes and to develop approaches for this specific case.

The most important projects were the “Transnational European Evaluation Projects I and II” (TEEP I and II) by ENQA, “Joint Master’s Programmes – Joint Evaluations: A Nordic Challenge” by the Nordic Quality Assurance Network, and the work done by the European Consortium for Accreditation, not least in the field of mutual recognition. In addition, EUA developed the European Master’s New Evaluation Methodology (EMNEM).

Hence, today one can rely on ample experience with quality assurance of joint programmes. The main lessons learnt are as follows:

In principle, part II of the ESG is applicable to accreditation of Joint programmes. However, national specificities in the application of the ESG, namely regarding composition of expert panels, design of site visits, and the formal decision making constitute differences in the process design. HEI and quality assurance agencies developed approaches to joint accreditation procedures of the responsible agencies. Although joint accreditation procedures lower the burden on the HEI, they defy the accreditation agencies concerned because joint procedures must be designed for each case. An alternative would be the recognition of parts of the accreditation conducted by one responsible agency through another agency,

which also challenges the agencies in terms of comparing procedural regulations and criteria. Hence, the ultimate aim is to reduce the accreditation of Joint programmes to a single procedure with effect in all national jurisdictions concerned.

A commonly accepted design of external quality assurance approaches to Joint programmes is not a difficult task. Although different approaches to quality assurance are in place (accreditation vs. evaluation vs. audits; programme level vs. institutional level) agencies demonstrated in the last years that these differences can be easily overcome, due to the alignment of existing national procedures with the ESG.

A more substantial hurdle for Joint programmes emerges in those countries where compulsory programme accreditation is implemented and where there are national specifications for approval of degree programmes. There is clear evidence that those national regulations, which do not refer to the quality of programmes, but to formal issues such as the denomination of degrees, workload, semester periods, etc. are a much bigger obstacle for implementing Joint programmes than the accreditation or external quality assurance as such. Hence, more flexibility regarding formal but not quality related criteria for Joint programmes is paramount. It is worth mentioning that these national formal specifications are out of the remit of the quality assurance agencies.

Based on its experience, ENQA recommends to ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area to allow for a specific European accreditation approach for Joint programmes which should be applied to all those Joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level. ENQA would welcome the opportunity to explore the practicalities in developing such an approach.

The European accreditation approach for Joint programmes should be designed based on the following principles:

- A commonly accepted definition of a Joint programme. This definition should emphasise the 'jointness' as specific feature of such a programme.
- Deduced from that definition, a specific set of criteria for accrediting Joint programmes should be developed. This set would be based on the proper application of the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA, ECTS, DS and internal quality assurance in accordance with part I of the ESG. In addition, criteria regarding the specific nature of Joint programmes, namely joint responsibility, joint development and joint provision of the programme would be applied.
- Additional national criteria should only be applied if they are related to the quality of the programme. Formal national criteria as the most important obstacle to implementing Joint programmes should not be applied.
- The procedural regulations regarding the new approach should be based solely on part two of the ESG and guarantee especially the restriction to only one procedure with only one expert panel including international members and to one site visit.
- Agencies should apply these criteria and these regulations instead of national formal but not quality related specifications (in case accreditation is mandatory) which means that Joint programmes that have been accredited with the European approach would not need to be accredited for a second time at national level.

The full workshop report can be found here: [http://www.enqa.eu/pubs\\_workshop.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/pubs_workshop.lasso)

## 2.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND TRANSPARENCY TOOLS

HEIs face a steadily growing interest among students, all stakeholders and the public at large in accessing detailed and reliable information on individual study programmes, faculties and higher education institutions, and especially on quality at programme and institutional levels.

The Bologna Process may be named the most significant factor in striving for transparency in European higher education, in particular by introducing transparency tools such as Qualifications Frameworks, Diploma Supplement and ECTS.

In addition to this, rankings and other approaches like Classifying European Institutions for Higher Education (CEIHE) were acknowledged at the Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve ministerial meeting as playing an important role.

As a result of the Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve meeting, ENQA explored how the various tools contribute to the demand for information and how these tools relate to quality assurance. In its position paper on transparency, issued in 2011, ENQA concludes:

"Bologna transparency tools, quality assurance and rankings/classifications serve different purposes, although they support each other to a certain extent. It is misleading to consider them as alternatives."

From the view point of quality assurance and its two main purposes, accountability and enhancement, their relationship to other transparency tools looks as follows:

The Bologna transparency tools are important reference points for quality assurance. The qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area describes the level and scope of qualifications graduates will have acquired by the time they graduate. The diploma supplement describes the profile of a qualification, and ECTS is an important tool to guarantee realistic curriculum design as regards student workload, and also fosters mobility.

Rankings and classifications, by putting performance of institutions in relation to criteria, contribute to the accountability function by informing the public, but they do not contribute directly to quality enhancement, the second function of quality assurance. Thus, rankings and classification tools should not be seen as quality assurance tools; in particular, they do not provide information about the potential for the future, although HEIs may draw conclusions from rankings. They might be seen rather as providers of a certain type of information that is useful for quality assurance. On the other hand, it is true that quality assurance may provide quantitative information on aspects of the performance of a programme or an institution for comparison purposes, although this is not the core purpose. The report can be found here: <http://www.enqa.eu/files/QA%20and%20Transparency%20-%20Final.pdf>

In 2012 and 2013 the transparency function of external quality assurance will be one of the focus areas of ENQA. Amongst others, ENQA will analyse the publication practices of agencies in the EHEA and explore common standards for the format and content of the reports of the various quality assurance procedures. In doing so, ENQA strengthens the transparency function of quality assurance and, at the same time, emphasises the specific purpose of quality assurance compared to other transparency tools.

### 3. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA: VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Variety and dynamism are two distinctive features of quality assurance in the EHEA. The second ENQA survey conducted in 2008 revealed that although the accreditation and evaluation of programmes are the most common approaches, followed at a significant distance by evaluation and accreditation of institutions and by audits, no single model for external quality assurance in European higher education is in place. 90 percent of the quality assurance agencies were not confined to only one external quality assurance process but used more than one approach on a regular basis. At the same time, 75 percent of the agencies responded that they recently changed their approach or that they were about to do so.

In order to learn more about current and future developments at national level, ENQA conducted a third project on "Quality procedures: visions for the future" which was the follow-up of two previous projects on quality procedures conducted in 2003 and 2008. This third project took stock of the development of quality assurance in the EHEA and revealed that variety and dynamism will remain distinct features. In addition, the survey gave indications on the priorities in the future development of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA.

The agencies that are members or affiliates of ENQA consider the main priority to be the relationship between external quality assurance procedures and the development of mechanisms to enhance higher education. A look at the relevant innovative practices currently implemented by the agencies shows a high level of methodological variability, together with a certain confluence of processes around four forward-looking strategies. The selection and intensity with which these strategies are practiced vary from one agency to another.

- The first strategy involves promoting the QA systems managed by the HEIs and external review of their effectiveness in bringing about enhancement. This strategy is associated with greater attention paid to institutional review and a resolve to optimise external review processes carried out by QA agencies, with the reduction of red tape and the main focus on results.
- To encourage comparability in external review processes and to foster the introduction of system-wide enhancements. The second strategy is based on benchmarking and the establishment of reference frameworks, for example, in learning outcomes and other areas of higher education. In relation to this point, QA agencies have identified the need for more international components, especially in relation to the quality of study programmes.

- Thirdly, there is the identification of excellence in higher education and the dissemination of good practice. This is an emerging area that stems from different lines of thinking, the aims of which are to generally improve the provision of study programmes, encourage innovation in teaching and promote the attractiveness of certain programmes at the international level.
- The fourth strategy involves intensifying the monitoring and follow-up of the quality of programmes and institutions through the availability of figures, data and indicators in order to continuously measure improvement. There is an increasing amount of available quantitative data on higher education, although further progress and improvement at the instrumental and interpretative level is necessary.

These strategies will take into account that quality assurance of teaching and learning should always put the learner at the HEI into the focus of their activities.

Complementary to these strategies, the agencies consider that progress needs to be made regarding the international recognition of evaluation and accreditation practices being implemented at national level.

Last but not least, it should be pointed out that the majority of agencies extend the scope of their activities sufficiently beyond what is the customary idea of quality assurance and/or accreditation. They increasingly provide services of an advisory nature in quality assurance to universities, policy makers and stakeholders, and in terms of methodological output. The knowledge and understanding that QA agencies have acquired since their establishment place them in a privileged position as think tanks. The actions implemented by QA agencies facilitate and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in the debate on the concept of quality in the higher education sector now and in the future.

The full report can be found here: [http://www.enqa.eu/pubs\\_occasional.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/pubs_occasional.lasso)

## CONCLUSIONS: PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

ENQA will strengthen its efforts to make the ESG as the foundation of all kinds of quality assurance commonly accepted by all relevant actors, notably the growing variety of new actors in the field like the so-called Quality Labels and agencies conducting voluntary quality assurance. This is the precondition for keeping the high level of acceptance of the results of quality assurance in the EHEA.

Now that the first round of agency reviews is completed, ENQA will put a specific emphasis on the developmental function of the reviews in order to strengthen the capacity of its member agencies to be responsive to new demands on quality assurance and to new challenges in the field of quality assurance.

ENQA indicates its willingness to prepare, together with its partners and by taking into account the input of as wide a range of relevant stakeholders as possible, the revision of the ESG based on the recommendation of the E4 partners.

ENQA wishes to highlight that, in order to keep the main strengths of the ESG, which is the applicability in the various countries of the EHEA, it is essential to stay with the generic approach and to resist every temptation to make the ESG a detailed and prescriptive checklist. It is also worth emphasising that the success of the ESG is based not least on the fact that they have been developed on a consensus basis. This should also be the guiding principle for any revision.

ENQA recommends to ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area, to allow for a specific European accreditation approach for Joint programmes

which should be applied to all Joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level. ENQA would welcome the opportunity to explore the practicalities in developing such an approach.

ENQA will focus on the transparency function of external quality assurance. In addition to this, ENQA will analyse the publication practices of agencies in the EHEA and explore common standards for formats and content of the reports of the various quality assurance procedures. In doing so, ENQA strengthens the transparency function of quality assurance and, at the same time, emphasises the specific purpose of quality assurance compared to other transparency tools.

ENQA will develop quality assurance procedures further by:

- paying greater attention to institutional review and a resolve to optimise external review processes carried out by QA agencies, with the reduction of red tape and the main focus on results;
- paying greater attention to ensuring that assessment processes are fit for purpose and assist the further development of student-centered learning;
- encouraging comparability in external review processes and fostering the introduction of system-wide enhancements;
- addressing the development of excellence in higher education; and
- intensifying the monitoring and follow-up of the quality of programmes and institutions through the availability of figures, data and indicators, in order to facilitate the continuous measurement of improvement.