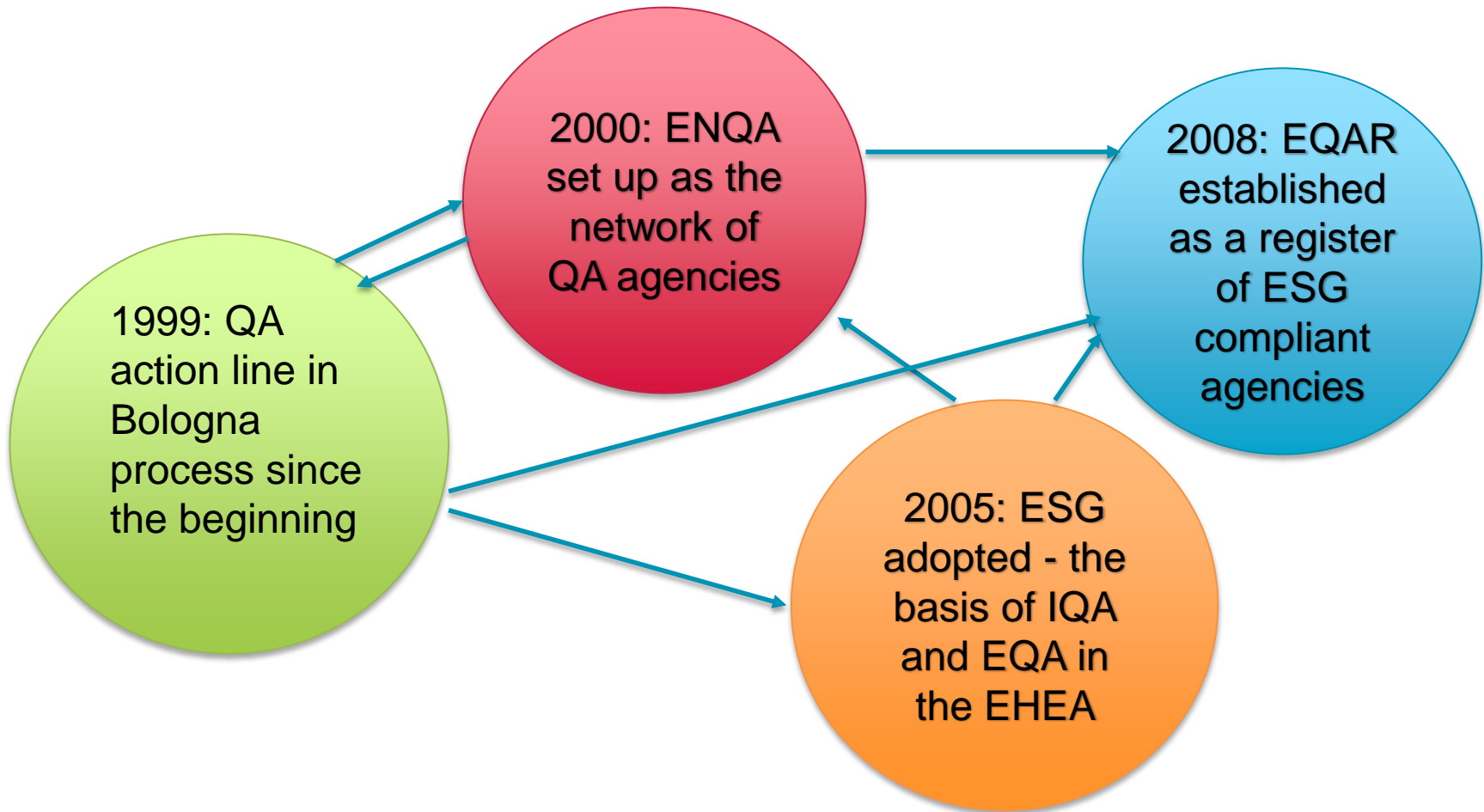


# **ESG 2015: the process, essence and implications for the QA agencies**

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Director, ENQA

Brussels, 3 November 2016

# European Quality Assurance Framework



# ESG 2015 and ESG 2005

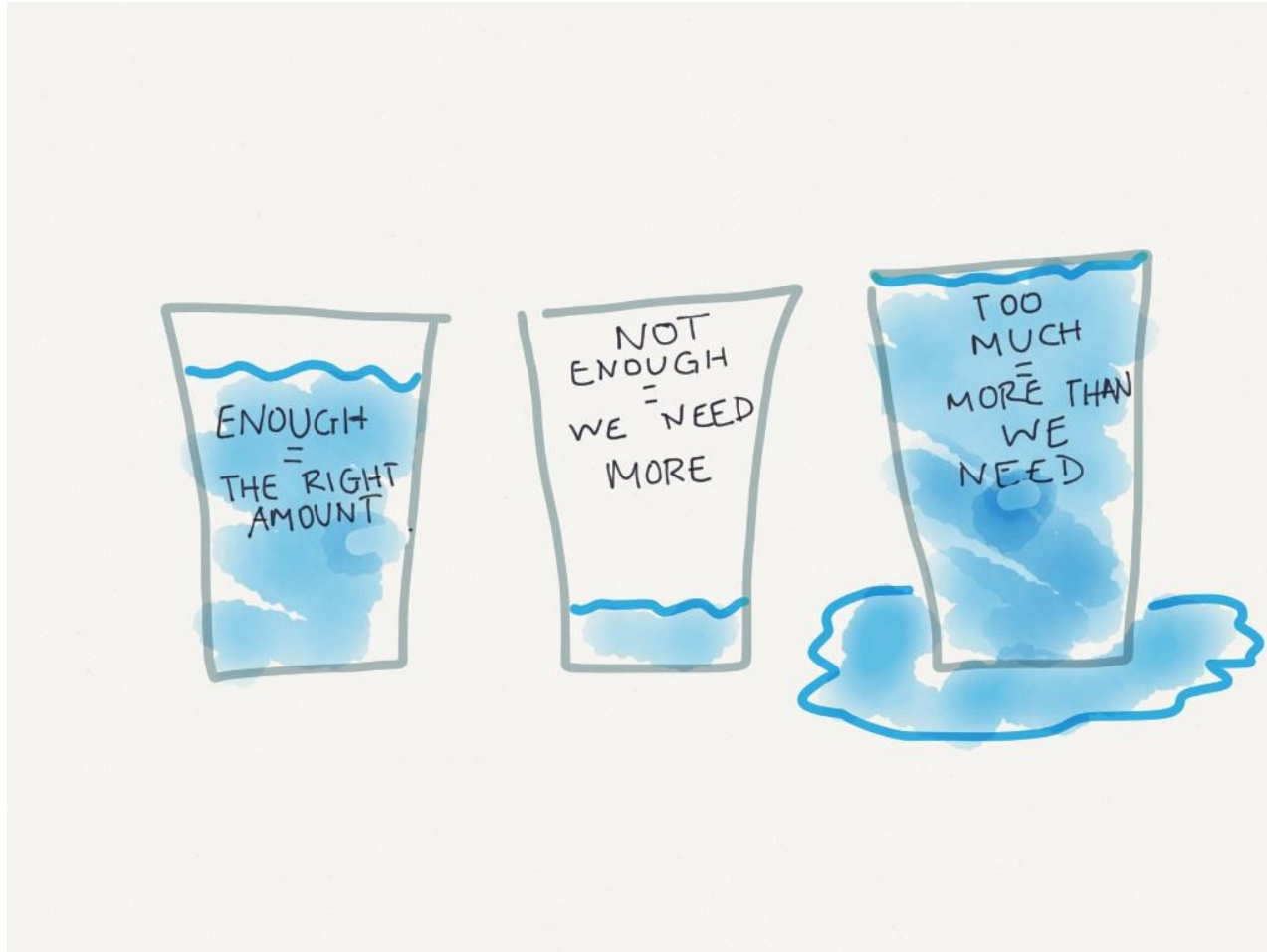
- Mandate in Bucharest, 2012
- ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE in cooperation with EI, BUSINESSEUROPE, EQAR
- Steering committee and drafting group, 11 meetings and a lot of work in-between
- Stakeholder driven: based on outcomes of the MAP-ESG and other experience with the ESG 2005
- Open consultation and dialogue with the BFUG (= ministry representatives)
- Approval by the BFUG, adoption by the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in May 2015



# Guiding principles for the revision

- **Keep the strengths:** integrated concept and understanding of QA, broad applicability, broad ownership
- **Overcome the weaknesses:** vagueness, redundancies, inconsistencies, confusion between “standard” and “guideline”...
- **Update:** ESG as part of the ‘Bologna-infrastructure’ - taking into account recent developments in QA and HE in general (NQFs and QF-EHEA; ECTS; LOs based approach...)
- **Enable adaptability** to future developments

# Finding the balance between changing too much and too little



# ESG 2015 and ESG 2005

- Comparative analysis of the ESG 2015 and ESG 2005
- Changes in context, scope, purposes and principles
- Changes in standards' wording and in guidelines' content
- ESG are a document that needs to be read as a whole:
  - introductory part is of central importance!
  - parts 1, 2 and 3 build on each other and are parts of one whole
- All parts have undergone significant changes, and requirements have become more stringent
- Biggest changes (perhaps) in part 1



[www.equip-project.eu/activities/comparative-analysis](http://www.equip-project.eu/activities/comparative-analysis)

# Purposes of the ESG 2015

- **Set a common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level
- **Enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of higher education in the European higher education area
- **Support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders
- **Provide information on quality assurance** in the EHEA

# The principles for QA in the EHEA

- **HEIs have primary responsibility** for the quality of their provision and its assurance
- **QA responds to the diversity** of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
- QA supports the **development of a quality culture**
- QA takes into account the **needs and expectations of students**, all other stakeholders and society



Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.

(William A. Foster)

izquotes.com

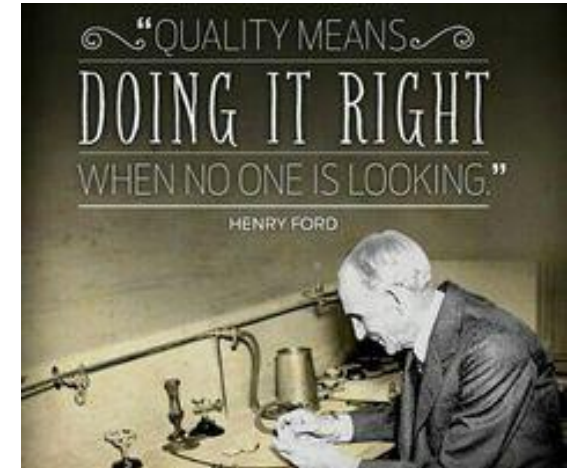


# Some important changes overall

- **Slightly modified scope:** focus remains on learning and teaching in higher education, but now includes
  - Learning environment
  - Links to research and innovation
- **The ESG 2015 explicitly apply to all programmes** whichever mode or place of delivery in the EHEA (e-learning, cross-border HE...) → many questions to HEIs and agencies:
  - How to carry out QA of programmes delivered abroad? Responsibilities, costs, cooperation with local agencies....
  - How to assess e-learning? Can the same criteria be used as for traditional forms of education (drop-out rate, m2/student, teacher-student ratio...)?
- Apply to agencies **wherever they carry out EQA** and **whether the activities are compulsory or voluntary** → Cross-border QA needs to be ESG compliant, too

## Some important changes overall - 2

- Underlines the **importance of enhancement for all QA processes**, and the support EQA needs to give to the **development of a quality culture at HEIs**
- Strong focus on **the shift to student-centered learning**
- **Remain generic principles** that allow for diversity of practical implementation
- **Standard** is a “should”, based on agreed and accepted practice; **guidelines** describe why the standard is important and how it *might* be implemented, and set out good practice



# The three parts

Part I - Internal QA within HEIs

Part II - External QA by QAAs

Part III - Internal QA and operation of QAAs

# EQA and IQA – a collaborative relationship

- Primary responsibility of HEIs for quality and quality assurance of their own provision
- Role of external QA is to:
  - Provide a way for autonomous institutions **to demonstrate their accountability externally**
  - **Support the HEIs in constant enhancement** of HE provision and its quality assurance
- Build on each other: EQA can only be successful if it takes into account and is informed by IQA – IQA can be further developed and supported by EQA

Concentric circles, one smaller only for sphere of activity, not for importance!

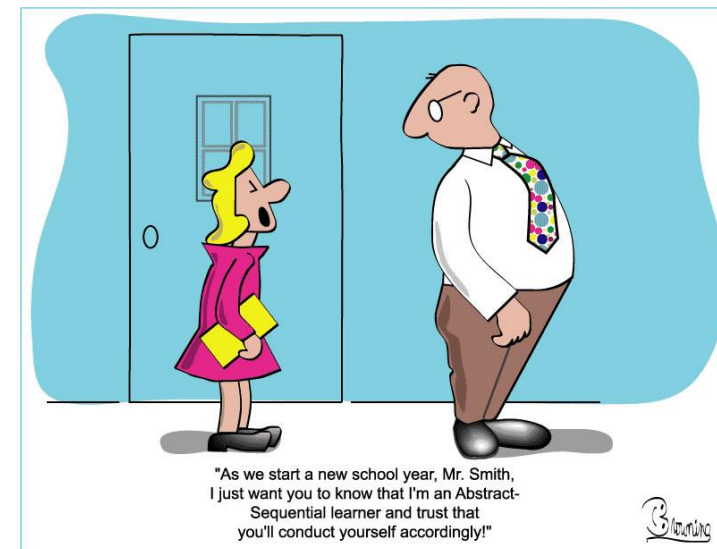


# ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 1

- High number of standards (from 7 to 10) and many more/longer guidelines than before
  - reflects the **focus on institutional responsibility** for quality and its assurance
  - **provides more guidance** (HEIs have expressed a need)
- Some structural changes to make the standards follow more logically the student “lifecycle”, and the programme “lifecycle”
- **Flexible learning central:** frequent reference to LLL, RPL, different delivery modes, diverse student body etc.

# ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 1 (cont)

- **Shift to student-centred learning: SCL and LOs** are mentioned in 5 out of the 10 standards!
- 1.3 - a new standard focusing altogether on student-centred learning, teaching and assessment → **requires a shift in thinking about “what is quality” in teaching and learning.** Not only a conceptual shift but leads to very concrete requirements (see the guidelines)
- **Is teaching staff ready for SCL?** Are the required skills there? Are the necessary tools available? → training and support, rewards, incentives, time, resources...
- **(Are students ready for SCL??)**
- **(Are QA agencies ready for SCL?)**



# ESG 2015 – Part 1 in details (cont)

- **Standards 1.7 and 1.8 – information management and dissemination**
- A lot of data and information is being collected by HEIs! BUT...
- (I)QA systems should be capable to generate information that is **valuable for both internal decision-making and external stakeholders**
- Need to collect information that is useful and **makes sense for their own context and purposes**
- Think about ... Whether less is more? What is useful and informative? Link to strategy? → help to assess achievement
- Do this through a variety of information sources and methods in order to **ensure a comprehensive and objective view** of institutional activities
- Interesting data and analysis available in EUA study “ESG Part 1 – Are universities ready?”

# ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 2

- **Rearrangement** to make it more consistent and logical
- Standard 1.10: **cyclical review** (moved out of Part 2) → institutional responsibility!
- Standard 2.4: peer-review experts
  - A new standard → More focus on the role of peer-reviewers
  - **requires a student member**, in guidelines **recommends** international experts → a cultural and practical challenge



# ESG 2015 – Main changes in Part 2 (cont)

- Standard 2.6: reporting
  - requires publication of **full expert** report (summaries and/or decisions not enough!) → legislative changes may be needed!
  - whether positive or negative
  - “Intended readership” clarified
  - Features of good practice encouraged
- Standard 2.7 (from ex 3.7 guidelines): complaints and appeals
  - emphasised (a standard of its own)
  - **now required for all procedures** (whether formal outcomes or not) → a change for many agencies

ESG 2005– Part 2		ESG 2015– Part 2
2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures		2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance
2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes		2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose
2.3 Criteria for decisions		2.3 Implementing processes
2.4 Processes fit for purpose		2.4 Peer-review experts (new)
2.5 Reporting		2.5 Criteria for outcomes
2.6 Follow-up procedures		2.6 Reporting
2.7 Periodic reviews (to part 1)		2.7 Complaints and appeals (from part 3)
2.8 System-wide analyses (to part 3)		

# ESG 2015 - Main Changes in Part 3

- **Rearranging** to be more coherent and logical (3.1. combines previous 3.1, 3.3, and 3.5)
- **3.3: Notion of independence explained better**
  - organisational, operational, and of outcomes
  - third party involved *in individual capacity* (to strike the balance between stakeholder involvement and independence; “solely based on expertise”)
- **3.4 thematic analysis**
  - 2005 “from time to time”, 2015: “regularly” → more strict
  - not system-wide necessarily (agencies may also not operate in “a system”, or across several “systems”)

## ESG 2015 – Main Changes in Part 3 (cont)

- 3.5: resources - now has **guidelines that explain what is “adequate resources”**: not only QA activities, but also thematic analysis, information activities, etc. → financial resources, but also HR (number and type)
- 3.7: **cyclical external review of agencies** (appeared before in guidelines to 3.8), to create a parallel with HEIs (see 1.10))

ESG 2005 – Part 3		ESG 2015 – Part 3
3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education		3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
3.2 Official status		3.2 Official status
3.3 Activities		3.3 Independence
3.4 Resources		3.4 Thematic analysis (from part 2)
3.5 Mission statement		3.5 Resources
3.6 Independence		3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct
3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies (moved to part 2)		3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies (from guidelines)
3.8 Accountability procedures		

# Conclusions

- ESG 2015 are not “reinventing the wheel” but **responding to developments and current challenges**
- Most changes in Part 1 – HEIs create and ensure the quality of their own provision in the first instance
- **Constant enhancement and the creation of a quality culture** underpin the ESG
- **Collaborative element underlined**: one document, not three → one element (IQA, EQA) cannot exist and flourish without the other
- Implementation is already on-going – and it will differ from one context to another → a richness, not an obstacle
- **In some cases, fast changes required!** → some of them will require legislative change in some countries (publication of reports) or change in mentality (involvement of students → the “black spot” for QA according to Bologna report)
- **Engagement with ministries/public authorities**: need to try to change what cannot change independently (use the ESG!) → need to show that have “done their part”
- Sharing of good practice and experience will be a helpful way to “make the most out of it”



Thank you!

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