

ENQA's message to the Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference of 2018

Discussion paper for the ENQA General Assembly, 26-27 October 2017

I. Introduction to the discussion

The next Bologna Process Ministerial Conference will take place on 23-25 May 2018 in Paris. As with previous Ministerial Conferences, ENQA, as the association representing quality assurance agencies in the EHEA, will convey a message with recommendations to the ministers for the meeting.

In order to make sure that the voices of the ENQA membership are heard in the preparation of the message, there is a slot dedicated for this at the ENQA General Assembly in Sèvres, France on 26 October 2017. The participants of the General Assembly are thus invited to reflect on the issues in this discussion paper and bring forward any further topics for discussion.

The previous ENQA message was delivered to the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in 2015 and it can be found here:

http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENQA_report_Yerevan_2015.pdf

The Yerevan Communiqué can be found here:

<http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Yerevan-Communique.pdf>

The ENQA report to the ministers will follow the structure of the 2015 report:

1. Introduction
2. ENQA's contribution to quality assurance in the EHEA: follow-up on 2015 message
3. Quality assurance in the EHEA: priorities for the future
4. Recommendations to the Ministers

II. Suggested contents of the ENQA message

ENQA's contribution to quality assurance in the EHEA: follow-up on 2015 message

This section will report on ENQA's contribution to the implementation of the priorities of the Bologna Process since 2015, and in particular the ESG 2015.

- Outcomes of ENQA Agency Reviews (the state of the art, most challenging standards, etc.)
- Support to agencies in meeting the requirements of the ESG 2015 (events, training sessions, consultancy activities, analyses, etc.)

- The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes: https://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/bologna/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf
- Contribution to the key considerations document on cross-border quality assurance (CBQA) by ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, and EQAR: <http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/Key-Considerations-CBQA-EHEA.pdf>
- Activities of the Enhancing Quality through Innovative Policy & Practice (EQUIP) project: <http://equip-project.eu/>
- Main outcomes of other key projects related to the Bologna Process objectives, such as: Supporting Higher Education to Incorporate Learning Analytics (SHEILA): <http://sheilaproject.eu/>
An Adaptive Trust-based e-assessment System for Learning (TeSLA): <http://tesla-project.eu/>

Quality Assurance in the EHEA: Priorities for the future

This section of the report will contain ENQA's views on the priority areas for the next period until 2020, and includes our recommendations for action to the Ministers.

III. Issues for discussion at the ENQA General Assembly 2017 (feeding into the contents of the ENQA message)

These following topics will be brought forward for discussion at the General Assembly.

1. Lessons learnt from agency reviews based on the ESG 2015

ENQA Agency Reviews conducted since 2015 demonstrate that agencies are well on the way to implementing the ESG 2015. Some standards have proved to be hard if not impossible to fulfil due to some national regulations or laws.

- ➔ What are the main obstacles that agencies face in meeting the ESG 2015 that are not in the agency's own control but depend on the national framework?
- ➔ What do we need ministers to commit to in order to enable agencies (and HEIs) to meet the requirements of the ESG?

2. Changing role and profile of external quality assurance agencies

QA agencies' profiles are in constant flux in the EHEA, and the national monopoly agency with traditional EQA practices is no longer the only model. Recent trends that have had an impact on the role and activities of agencies include (though may not be limited only to):

- ➔ Acquisition of new tasks such as those of ENIC-NARICs, QA of Vocational Education and Training, or QA of regulated professions. Sometimes, though not always, this may take place through mergers with other national level agencies or bodies.
- ➔ What are the perceived risks and benefits of mergers and acquisition of new tasks by QA agencies in their contexts? How can agencies preserve the independence of their QA activities in this context?

Several agencies have broadened their scope of activities directed at supporting HEIs in quality enhancement. Such activities include training activities and other developmental support, as well as engagement internationally e.g. through collaborative projects.

The increase in CBQA and the blurring of traditional national boundaries in this field have further shaped the scope and activities of agencies.

➔ What is the impact of the changing profile of agencies?

3. Implementing the “Key considerations for Cross Border Quality Assurance”

Competition may bring benefits in terms of quality of services provided but if unregulated, it can also risk causing damage. As a result of the priority regarding Cross Border Quality Assurance in the 2015 message ENQA contributed to the “Key considerations for Cross Border Quality Assurance”, a document jointly elaborated by the E4 and EQAR.

- ➔ What should the ministers be aware of in relation to CBQA? What do we want to tell to countries which a) do not allow other agencies to operate in their territory and b) those who have a policy to encourage such CBQA?
- ➔ What are the risks and benefits that ENQA’s members see in this area?
- ➔ How should countries implement (if at all) the key considerations?

4. Open topic

Under this item, the participants of the General Assembly are invited to reflect upon and bring forward for discussion topics that they consider important for the ENQA message.

IV. Organisation of the discussion at the General Assembly

At the General Assembly, the session takes place on 26 October 2017 at 13.30. Participants are expected to contribute to the discussions on the defined discussion topics:

1. Lessons learnt from agency reviews based on the ESG 2015
2. Changing role and profile of external quality assurance agencies
3. Implementing the “Key considerations for Cross Border Quality Assurance”
4. Open topic

In practice, the session is organised in a gallery walk style:

- The participants are divided into groups of ca. 15 people.
- Each group will walk through four discussion “stations”. These stations are attended by a facilitator who will pose questions to each group. Each group will leave their comments and views in writing on a flipchart.
- After visiting the four stations, each group will come back to the station where they began. They will take note of the comments of other groups and make a summary about this topic. The summary is reported back to the plenary by the facilitator.

**A stop at each station will take 10 minutes.
Group numbers are found in the participant list.**

Starting points for groups:

Salle Montaigne, ground floor:	Groups 1-2
Salle Rousseau, ground floor:	Groups 3-4
Grande Bibliothèque, second floor:	Groups 5-8

V. Timeline for the preparation of the message

October 2017:	Discussion at the ENQA General Assembly to define the contents of the message.
By January 2018:	The ENQA Board prepares the message with recommendations.
February 2018:	The draft message is sent to ENQA Members and Affiliates for their consideration.
March 2018:	The message is finalised with layout.
May 2018:	The message is delivered to the Ministerial Conference.