

# Moving from a regulatory to an improvement oriented and quality culture building model – The Case of Cyprus

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ENQA  
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Porto,  
October 2019

## What this session explores – An overview

2

- the role a quality assurance agency plays in embedding the principles of ESG into a national higher education context
- how this is done through the external quality assurance activities of the agency and its other activities
- what impact does an agency review against the ESG have on these activities

## Specific questions to be addressed:

3

- What exactly are the ESG?
- What was the motivation of the agency to undergo a review against the ESG?
- How was the review approached? In particular,
  - ✓ the consolidation of expectations (i.e. the agency, the Ministry, HEIs, student representative organisations, others)
  - ✓ what was the role of the agency in this?
  - ✓ What were the particular challenges in this regard?

## Specific questions to be addressed [2]:

4

- What impact did the review have on the external QA activities of the agency, and ultimately, on the higher education institutions?
- What was/is the most challenging ESG 2015 standard to implement nationally? What was/is the agency's role in this?

## What exactly are the ESG?

5

- They are not prescriptive on how QA processes are implemented.
- They do not present specific measurable standards for quality in HE.

## What exactly are the ESG? [2]

6

- They provide guidance on QA in higher education for institutions and agencies, by covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education.

## What was the motivation CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG?

7

### CYQAA's framework of operation:

The Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) was established on the basis of

*“Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws, of 2015 to 2019”*

## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [2]

8

### CYQAA's mission - Pillar 1:

- Ensure the quality of higher education in Cyprus and to support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study.

## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [3]

9

CYQAA's mission - Pillar 2:

- Create a quality assurance framework for higher education in Cyprus within which higher education institutions will be driven to enhance quality and develop an internal quality culture.

# What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [4]

10

## CYQAA's Guiding Principles:

- Responsibility toward students and the society for the provision high quality higher education.
- Ensuring Quality Assurance in Higher Education on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

# What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [5]

11

## CYQAA's competencies - External QA Activities:

- Institutional, Departmental and Programmatic Evaluation and accreditation of higher education
- Quality Assurance in higher education on the basis of the European Standards
- The Evaluation and Accreditation of cross-border forms of education, offered by local institutions in member states or third countries

## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [6]

12

### CYQAA's competencies - External QA Activities:

- Assessment of the conditions for the provision of cross-border education from foreign institutions in Cyprus
- Assessment of inter-institutional cooperation of higher education institutions
- The provision of information of Quality Assurance in higher education

## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [7]

13

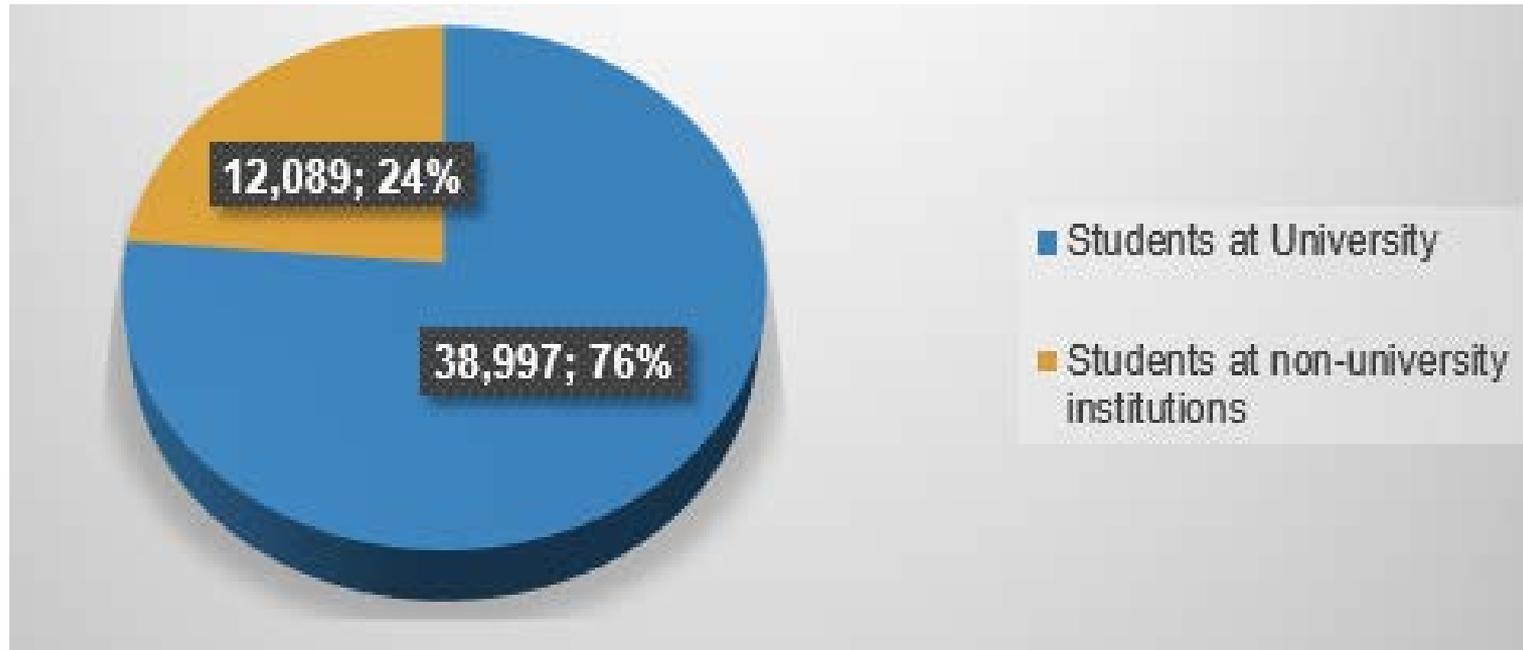
### A rapidly growing Higher Education sector:

HEIs in Cyprus operate under the effective control of the laws and regulations of the Republic of Cyprus, focusing on quality in education, and excellence in teaching whilst protecting academic freedom.

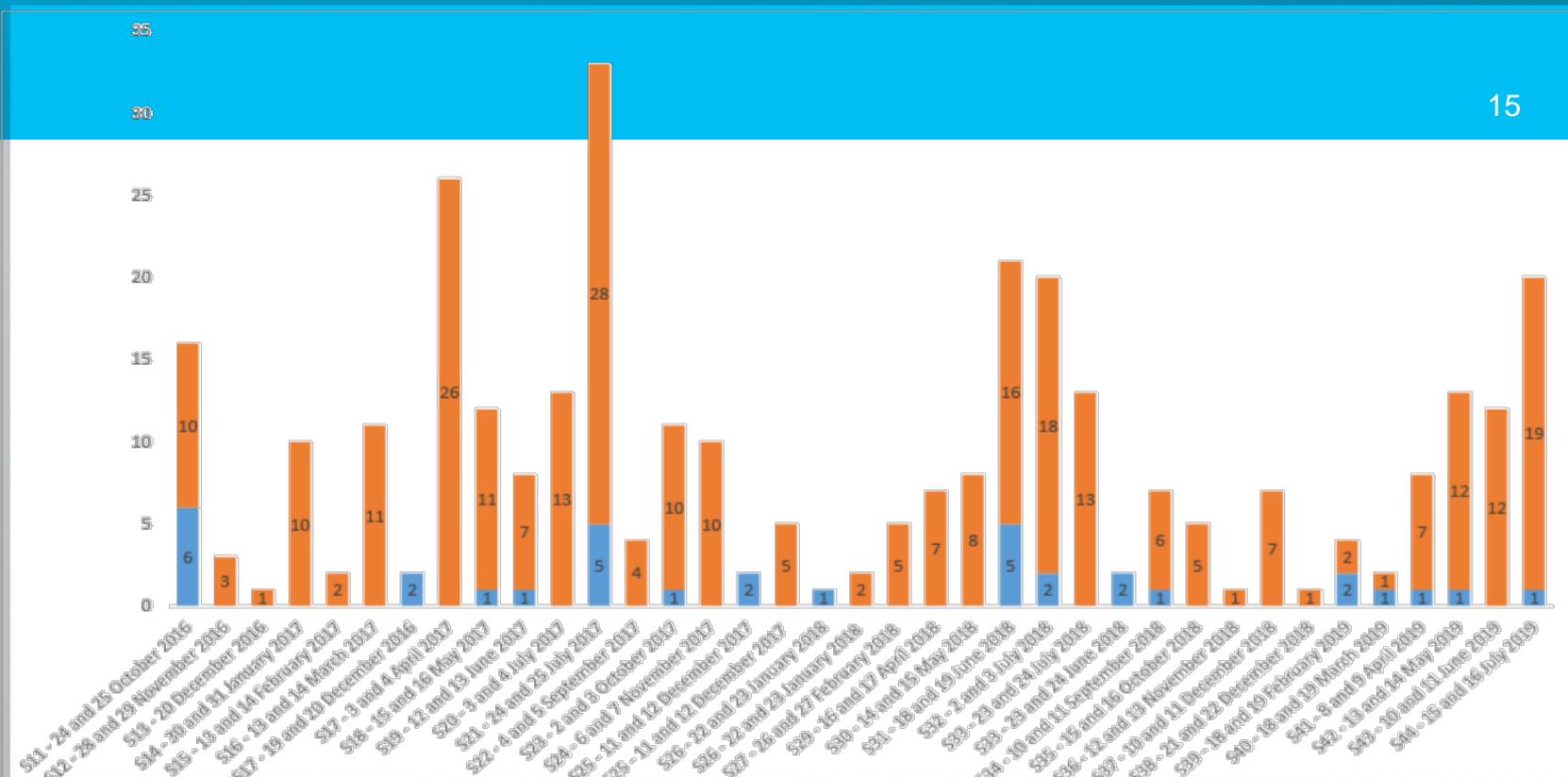
- 3 Public Universities
- 5 Private Universities
- 58 non-university institutions of higher education
- 51,086 students

## Student Distribution by HEI's Type 2018-2019:

14



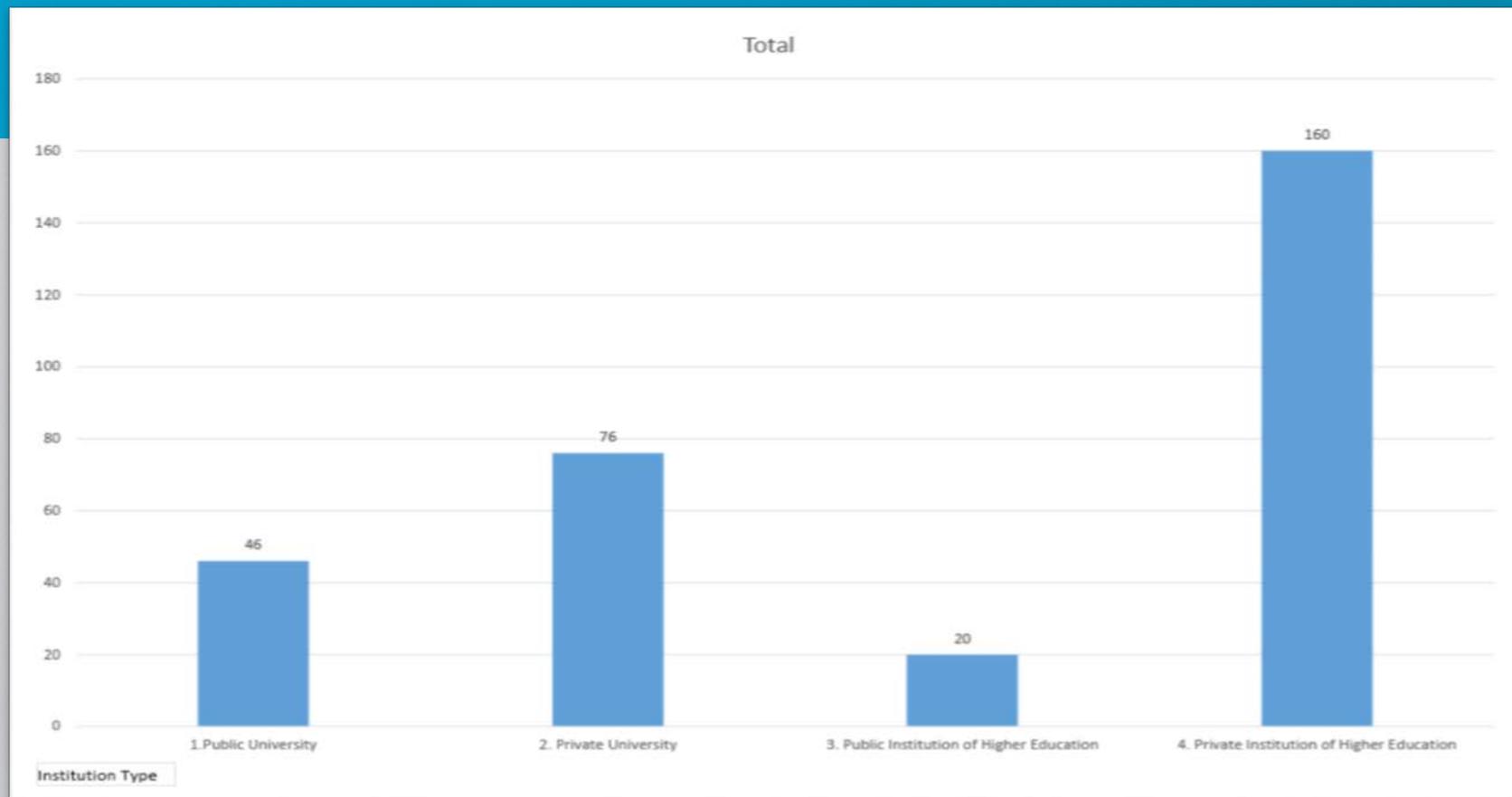
# Total number of external evaluations:



15

Accredited  
 ■ NO ■ YES

# Programme Accreditation by HEI's Type:



## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [8]

17

- Agency reviews are a prerequisite to apply registration to EQAR
- CYQAA's external evaluation against the ESG is provided in its Law of establishment

## What was the motivation for CYQAA to undergo a review against the ESG? [9]

18

External review was pursued to:

- test/ensure the quality of the Agency's work
- gain self-awareness
- enhance its accountability
- Show by example the value of entering a review process and its beneficial outcomes.

## How was the review approached?

19

### The ESG:

- ✓ 3.1 - Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
- ✓ 3.2 - Official status
- ✓ 3.3 - Activities
- ✓ 3.4 - Resources

## How was the review approached? [2]

20

### The ESG:

- ✓ 3.5 - Mission statement
- ✓ 3.6 - Independence
- ✓ 3.7 - External quality assurance criteria and processes
- ✓ 3.8 - Accountability procedures

## How was the review approached? [3]

21

### Government:

Government policy for higher education aims to harmonize Cyprus' higher education with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and to enable Cyprus to become a respectful education and research center.

## How was the review approached? [4]

22

### HEIs:

- Have recognized that by engaging in quality assurance through external evaluation processes, they will be able to showcase the quality of the education provided,
- Realise that ESG implementation contributes toward the value and recognition of the academic qualifications of their programs of study.

## How was the review approached? [5]

23

### CYQAA

- Shares the vision of the Bologna Process for the creation of the European Higher Education Area.
- Adopts government policy in higher education
- Assumes a leading role in supporting higher education systems and institutions

## How was the review approached? [6]

24

### Stakeholders' common point of departure:

- ✓ Higher education, research, and innovation play a catalytic role in supporting social cohesion, economic growth and competitiveness.
- ✓ European societies seek to develop into knowledge-based societies and higher education is an important component of socio-economic and cultural development.
- ✓ At the same time, the constant search for new skills and competences requires higher education to respond timely and effectively.

## How was the review approached? [7]

25

### Stakeholders' consensus:

- ✓ Quality in higher education is the goal
- ✓ Quality assurance is the key
- ✓ ESG provide a framework to get there faster.

## What were the challenges in ESG implementation?

26

- Making quality measurable - Setting specific criteria for external evaluation
- Making the ESG country specific – Taking into consideration Cyprus' special characteristics
- One size fits all? – Taking into consideration the types of institutions

## What were the challenges in ESG implementation? [2]

27

- Contradictory discourse – The need for a common language in higher education and quality
- Top-to-bottom policy on QA - Resistance to change
- Bureaucratic burden

## What impact did the review have?

28

1. Trust building
2. Detecting areas of development
3. Added value for CYQAA

## What impact did the review have? [2]

29

### Trust building:

The review,

- verified CYQAA's independence and integrity
- reinforced transparency of procedures and decisions
- further developed stakeholder involvement
- confirmed CYQAA's effectiveness

## What impact did the review have? [3]

30

### Detecting areas of development:

Official status - The review provided leverage to further increase CYQAA's autonomy (ESG 3.3)

CYQAA proposed amendments to the Law regarding:

- legal status
- council appointments
- separation of the budget etc.

## What impact did the review have? [4]

31

### Detecting areas of development:

Stakeholder involvement and guidance - The review indicated areas of further improvement (ESG 3.4, 3.6, 2.1)

CYQAA developed:

- Thematic Analyses
- Seminars for guidance and training
- Mechanisms for stakeholder participation in policy decisions

## What impact did the review have? [5]

32

### Detecting areas of development:

Transparency and consistency - The review indicated areas of further improvement (ESG 2.4, 2.5, 2.6)

CYQAA proceeded with:

- New mechanisms for dissemination of information
- New improved website with publication of (a) experts' selection criteria, (b) written guidelines for experts, (c) all reports, (d) complaints and appeals procedures etc.

## What impact did the review have? [6]

33

Improvement of External Quality Assurance Procedures and tools:

- Redesigning and enriching templates
- Mechanisms for consistent application of the CYQAA standards
- New final reports for accreditation including areas of future development.

## What impact did the review have? [7]

34

### ENQA Membership for CYQAA:

- The Agency benefits from ENQA's and its European partner organizations' experience and expertise
- Provides opportunities for involvement in ENQA activities
- The Agency actively engages in the ongoing dialogue on the challenges, developments and best practices in higher education and its quality assurance.

## What challenge lies ahead?

35

*“The main challenge that lies ahead for CYQAA is to manage to cultivate such a quality culture, within which the system will evolve on the basis of an improvement-oriented model of external quality assurance.”*

*From CYQAA’s SAR*

## What challenge lies ahead? [2]

36

There is a precondition to moving from a regulatory to an improvement oriented and quality culture building model:

**The establishment of a,**

- ✓ **mature,**
- ✓ **objective,**
- ✓ **reliable,**
- ✓ **effective**

**internal quality system.**

## What challenge lies ahead? [3]

37

CYQAA strives to implement a dual system combining internal and external quality assurance, improvement oriented and regulatory.

- Re-designing procedures for QA
- HEIs' self-assessment enhancement
- Continuous training on QA
- Stakeholder involvement in procedures and policy making

## What challenge lies ahead? [4]

38

*“If the national quality assurance system in Cyprus will gradually move from a regulatory nature to a more improvement oriented and quality culture building model, trust and collaboration should continue to increase [. . .]”*

*From CYQAA’s SAR*

# Any Questions?

39

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