ENQA STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

Introduction

The Bologna Process and, with it, quality assurance are at a crossroads: the Paris Communiqué of 2018 urged a "more ambitious" European Higher Education Area (EHEA) beyond 2020. As a means of achieving this goal, the Communiqué allocated quality assurance particular importance as one of three key commitments of the process, and devised a system of peer support between countries to achieve the set objectives. In 2019, the year of the 20th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration and the 10th anniversary of the EHEA, stakeholders reassessed the goals and organisation of the Bologna Process as it entered its third decade.

Higher education itself is rapidly evolving. The boundaries of the traditional university are blurring; university networks in various configurations are fostering systemic collaborative approaches to organising teaching and research. At the same time, the traditional curriculum is under pressure from new forms of education. In the wake of the technological revolution, the employment landscape will change dramatically, and personal competences will need more frequent updating.

Against this backdrop, the challenge for the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) as an association is to represent it members and their interests in the Bologna Process and to offer them meaningful services. For the community of quality assurance agencies under ENQA's umbrella, there is also the challenge to periodically reassess external quality assurance processes in order to assure that they remain fit-for-purpose, and to explore potential new concepts of quality and quality assurance.

This, the 3rd Strategic Plan for ENQA, covers the five-year period from 2021–2025. It offers direction for the Association's members and affiliates, its Secretariat and external stakeholders on the organisation's mission, vision, values and goals, as well as indication of how ENQA intends to achieve them.

The Plan will inform successive work plans which will set out the objectives, actions and outputs to be achieved each year by the Association. Over the course of the next five years, ENQA will monitor, review and report on the implementation of this strategy.

The development of this Strategic Plan was overseen by the ENQA Board and Secretariat following input from the members and affiliates. The draft plan was endorsed by the Board for recommendation to the General Assembly of the Association. The plan was approved by the General Assembly of ENQA, held online in April 2020.

Vision

An EHEA where persistently high-quality education contributes to responsible and active European citizens in democratic and sustainable societies, where access is attainable for all, and where graduates acquire a broad knowledge base on which to build regionally and globally rewarding careers while inspiring their personal development.

Mission

As the designated stakeholder organisation of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA, ENQA represents their interests internationally, supports them nationally and provides them with comprehensive services and networking opportunities. Under ENQA's umbrella, the community of agencies drive innovation in quality assurance and refines quality assurance processes.

Values

ENQA respects the diversity of higher education systems and quality assurance approaches and operates in keeping with its values, which it promotes amongst its members:

- **Integrity**: ENQA operates with integrity and in a fair, equitable, impartial, objective and professional manner in consultation with its members and affiliates, partners and fellow associations.

- **Transparency**: ENQA operates with clear policies and processes; it publishes its criteria and procedures for decisions and makes its reports and information about projects and events available to the public.

- **Independence**: ENQA is responsible only to its members; it ensures the independence of the ENQA agency review process and its membership decisions.

- **Social responsibility**: ENQA is mindful of its social responsibility in developing its criteria and processes. In its communication with stakeholders, ENQA promotes social responsibility in quality assurance and its contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Goals

I
Representing interests of quality assurance agencies

ENQA is the representative of diverse quality assurance agencies throughout the EHEA

As an association ENQA has grown significantly over the past years: In 2020, ENQA has over 110 members and affiliates representing 44 of the 48 countries in the EHEA. With the geographic size of the EHEA comes a corresponding diversity of higher education systems and of historical and cultural contexts. ENQA's contribution to policy-making is based on sound experience, know-how and research into the quality assurance of higher education in Europe.

1. **ENQA represents the interests of its members and provides advice in the policy-making process of the EHEA and beyond.**

ENQA represents the interests of its members, taking into account their diversity, in the policy-making processes at the European level and – where appropriate – in their national contexts. In order to be successful, ENQA needs to be representative of the diversity of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA – whether regional, national or pan-European, comprehensive or discipline-specific. This diversity must be reflected in its governance and its activities.

ENQA supports and represents its members in the policy dialogue with actors such as the European Commission, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, EU Member States and countries in the wider EHEA.

ENQA provides public authorities and political decision-makers with relevant expertise to facilitate informed political decision-making in relation to the quality assurance of higher education in the EHEA.

ENQA functions as a European policy forum for developing and proposing standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance and finding points of convergence between European quality assurance systems.

2. **ENQA supports the establishment and operation of independent and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating on the basis of agreed standards.**

ENQA supports affiliates in seeking membership status. It also supports new agencies as they establish themselves as independent agencies and develop their operations and processes in line with the ESG.

ENQA assists quality assurance agencies in working with higher education institutions to help them find the appropriate balance between internal and external quality assurance in their given national contexts.

ENQA promotes the independence of quality assurance agencies from national governments, higher education institutions and any other third parties.

II
Providing services to members and other stakeholders

ENQA is a key source of reliable information, expertise and know-how on QA

ENQA anticipates, analyses and responds to the needs of its members; ENQA offers them support and developmental opportunities through the provision of services. ENQA's services take account of the members' diversity.

3.   ENQA's Agency Review Programme is the preferred partner for reviews against the ESG.
ENQA organises external reviews of quality assurance agencies in a professional manner with appropriately trained and experienced reviewers, consistent with the ESG.

Through the reviews it organises, ENQA supports the development of independent and trustworthy quality assurance agencies and provides mature agencies with tailor-made reviews that improve and enhance their processes, activities and procedures beyond threshold standards.

4.   ENQA offers a training and consulting programme valued by its members.
ENQA supports the ongoing development of its member agencies, in particular through staff development and mentoring schemes for quality assurance agency staff.

5.   ENQA is a reference point for quality assurance in the international context.
ENQA cooperates with strategic partners and networks beyond the EHEA to contribute to the global development of quality assurance of higher education – both to learn from and to actively contribute to developments outside Europe. ENQA represents European principles and values of quality assurance, as expressed in the ESG, internationally.

ENQA organises events on relevant and topical issues and offers opportunities for its members to network and to exchange good practices and information. ENQA involves interested members in its projects and facilitates joint initiatives between members.

ENQA's membership reflects the diversity of the EHEA and represents a multiplicity of missions and approaches; ENQA's member agencies bring together the knowledge on quality assurance in Europe. ENQA makes this knowledge accessible in a useful and structured way.

ENQA develops its Members' Forum to make it an effective means for direct exchanges between member agencies.

Driving the development of external quality assurance

ENQA monitors changes in the higher education landscape and is a guarantor of knowledge-based development of external quality assurance.

Quality assurance needs to be dynamic and constantly adapt to developments in the contexts in which it takes place. Quality assurance also needs to continually innovate in order to remain an effective tool for quality enhancement. With the diversity of its membership and affiliates, ENQA is well placed to be an arena for this innovation, to support the development of existing practices and to respond to developments in higher education.

6.   ENQA works towards quality assurance for a purpose.

ENQA highlights the importance of quality assurance as an instrument to support universities and institutions of higher education in fulfilling their mission. Quality assurance is sensitive to the diversity of missions and contributes to successful and enduring institutions which, in turn, contribute to broader sustainability in society.

ENQA takes an active part in the discussions about how this can best be achieved: with its members and with the relevant European actors, ENQA will work to clarify the role that external quality assurance plays and will continue to play in securing and enhancing quality in higher education, including online provision.

7.   ENQA explores new ways of quality assurance.

Higher education is related to a complex series of tasks and goals. Universities and institutions of higher education define their missions in their own context. Such mission statements may include objectives around responsible citizenship, research-based knowledge development, or education for the labour market (e.g. employability and entrepreneurship) and the role of sustainable development (e.g. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

Within the framework of these objectives, higher education institutions create their own definitions of quality and related goals.

ENQA involves all stakeholders in taking the concept of quality forward by providing fora for sharing good practices and for members to work together on innovative projects. ENQA explores and provides a platform for reflections on new concepts and approaches to quality assurance.

ENQA is active in facilitating the discussion on any changes in higher education and its provision and the consequences these changes may entail, also with respect to quality assurance, including the implications of digitalisation, flexible approaches to learning and teaching, diversity of the student body, and internationalisation.

ENQA stimulates discussions on how the ESG shape the development of quality assurance towards the quality enhancement of higher education.

ENQA review reports are rich sources of information on quality in higher education. ENQA develops and encourages research projects that make use of these reports in order to detect trends, innovative good practices, and areas that demand attention. ENQA also leads or is a partner in projects and studies that address specific topics related to quality assurance in higher education.