



INTERIM REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE EURASHE CONSULTATION

EURASHE held a consultation on the impact and implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in institutions and programmes with a professional orientation.

We used an on-line questionnaire, had telephone and face to face interviews and organised workshops, in which not only our members were involved, but all those who had an affinity with our sector.

We purposefully opted for different consultation methods as to guarantee an input from various sources (institutions, QA experts and stakeholders). Additionally, the proviso that the consultation would bear on the three distinct parts of the ESG attracted different categories of respondents (rectors, QA experts, students, alumni and sometimes employers).

In a first mailing we addressed heads of institutions, who were asked to identify other respondents in their own environment, such as a QA coordinator, a student and an 'external' stakeholder' (not directly linked to their institution), such as employers, alumni, student counsellors, etc. They were asked to participate in an on-line survey on our web-site, containing a set of about 30 questions bearing on the three parts of the ESG. The deadline for participation was later extended to include all interested stakeholders in higher education, and when concluded we collected over 230 fully completed and 'valid' responses from 26 countries in the EHEA.

The consultation in the form of workshops at a members' event (the annual EURASHE conference, 1 April 2011, Nice) was originally targeted at the standard attendants at our members' events (heads of institutions, programme and internationalisation directors), but the attendance proved to be much more diverse, and because of this the focus was nearly always on 'knowledge' and 'awareness' of the ESG on institutional level, rather than on the degree of implementation, although the process of the ESG implementation was also discussed.

For this reason it was decided to add a third consultation method (next to the on-line survey and the workshop sessions), namely structured telephone and face to face interviews (called 'in-depth interviews' as the target group was this time a sample of those that had responded on-line). This selection of identified 'interested persons' in a number of countries were given targeted and 'open' questions which this time were geared more to the implementation and the 'review' perspective of the ESG. A set of detailed questions was then sent to the targeted persons, who had expressed their interest in such an in-depth questioning, proposing a prior written input from their part, and inviting them for a telephone/face to face interview of 30-60 minutes.

For this part of the consultation an attempt was made to cover different geographical and cultural areas in the EHEA, based on the conclusions from the on-line consultation that the geographical and cultural spread was an important element when assessing the degree of both knowledge and implementation of the ESG.

The consultation involved countries having different QA systems and a varying experience with and knowhow of QA, due to an early or more recent involvement in the higher education reform process.

The different approaches, using varying sources of consultation, resulted into well-documented and extremely diverse findings, in which we have attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the ESG implementation for the professional sector of the EHEA covered by EURASHE, within the given time constraints.

The present report is a summative version of a larger EURASHE report on the implementation of the ESG in institutions of professional higher education, which will be made available in March 2012, together with the full questionnaire and a transcript of the main content of the telephone and face to face interviews.

The structure of this summative report follows the agreed structure of the intended E4 report with the major findings derived from the consultation and a set of conclusions and recommendations based on these. In the findings, wherever that is possible, we indicated what the source of the information is (i.e. the different consultation methods, on-line survey, workshop sessions, in-depth interviews).

The subtitles in the underlying report are the questions and statements from the on-line questionnaire, which is the basis of the EURASHE report on the implementation of the ESG.

AWARENESS/KNOWLEDGE OF THE ESG

Knowing European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)

More than two thirds of the respondents of the EURASHE survey claim to know the ESG. This is not surprising considering the profile of the respondents in the three consulted target groups (Nice workshops, online survey and in-depth interviews).

How did you become acquainted with the ESG?

Most consulted persons came in contact with the ESG through the QA agencies (essentially in Western and Northern Europe). The QA agencies introduced the ESG in the institutions through External QA (EQA). The ESG standards are points of interest or are linked to the criteria used in EQA. Some respondents mentioned that they came in contact with the ESG as a panel member in EQA procedures.

Others were aware of the ESG as they had been following the Bologna process since 1999 and as a consequence knew the outcomes of the Bologna Ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005.

The EQAF meetings were mentioned several times as a reference in the dissemination of the ESG. A lot of persons came for the first time in contact with the ESG in EQAF workshops or paper sessions.

A final group of respondents, mostly coming from Eastern Europe, said they came in contact with the ESG through international projects (Tempus projects on QA or on the implementation of the Bologna Declaration priorities) or via networks of institutions and umbrella organisations.

It is not surprising to see that most Northern and Western European institutions (also including the Spanish ones) have known the ESG since 2005 and that they have since then included the standards in their External and Internal QA procedures.

Institutions in countries which joined the EHEA later, consequently implemented the Bologna Declaration priorities and the ESG at a later stage. It is not exceptional to see that some institutions or countries introduced the ESG in QA only very recently.

Being aware of the different chapters?

Generally spoken, a fair 75% of the respondents are familiar or know very well part 1 of the ESG. Two thirds also state knowing part 2 quite well. Finally more than 50 % do not know part 3 at all, or very little of it.

Elements being part of Internal QA?

Elements in Internal QA (IQA) having been strongly influenced by the ESG are the QA policy as such, the implementation of the policy into procedures and the periodicity of evaluations. It is interesting to see that more attention is paid to student assessments (an observation made in the online survey as well as in the in-depth interviews).

Quality of staff, of learning resources and of student support are considered as less important in IQA. However these observations in the survey are somewhat in contradiction with other conclusions.

Finally collecting data as a support for programme management or for public information is considered as less important.

Internal QA redesigned?

Most respondents mention that their institutions had an IQA, and even an EQA, years before the publication of the ESG. However under the influence of the QA agencies, most institutions changed their IQA, converging it to the ESG standards. The impact of the QA agencies on EQA as well as on IQA is considerable. It needs to be said that policy changes of the QA agencies and conversion towards ESG are strongly influenced or steered by governmental decisions, new legislation, international pressure and the fact that both ENQA and EQAR use the ESG as criteria.

A lot of respondents mention that the IQA becomes more consistent, that more attention is paid to students' assessment, that external stakeholders are more involved and that the PDCA circle is now widely introduced in IQA.

Students' involvement increased considerably in internal and external QA. They participate in peer review panels, in programme and course surveys, formulate recommendations on QA to institutions, HE umbrella organisations and governments.

As a consequence of the more cyclical character of external evaluations, attention for internal QA policy, processes and procedures increased automatically. Efficiency and workload control are important considerations.

Multiplication effects, mutual learning and exchange of experiences are consequences of international and regional cooperation and networking within the Bologna process including QA development.

Finally some respondents mention that the effect of the ESG is not limited to QA of education. The QA principles are often, directly or indirectly, applied in other institutional domains such as research, administration and management.

Internal QA checked with ESG?

A direct check of IQA against the ESG is rare. Indeed the influence of ESG on IQA is rather indirect considering the requirements put by QA agencies in the EQA procedures. Institutions know the ESG, especially parts 1 and 2. The ESG principles are implemented in the IQA but the link is rather implicit.

National QA provisions or regulations connected to the ESG?

More than 50 % of the respondents agreed that national legislation and regulation on QA are redesigned under the influence of the ESG. Several authorities used the 'stick' of ESG for reorienting the national HE policy and for insisting on accountability from the HEI. QA commitments (mandatory external evaluations, accreditations,...) and often a feeling of losing institutional autonomy are consequences of this process. However, most institutions welcome the QA changes and appreciate the stimulating effect of the ESG on the enhancement of institutional autonomy.

AIMS OF THE ESG

Have the objectives been achieved?

When it comes to the question whether the objectives of the ESG have been achieved, the picture varies. Both HEI and stakeholders seem to have realised the impact of the ESG, but opinions differ, giving different impressions for internal and external QA.

Almost two thirds of the respondents of the on-line survey are sceptical about the impact of the ESG on higher education in general, and on the fostering of "vibrant intellectual achievement" in particular. This mirrors the general question whether QA leads to a better learning experience for students. Probably the scope of the ESG is being viewed as a catalogue for QA criteria and procedures and the effect they can have on the intellectual life within an institution is only obvious for 35% of the respondents.

This corresponds with the scepticism that the ESG fulfil their aim of informing and raising the expectations of HEI, students, employers and other stakeholders about the processes and outcomes of higher education. 60% of the respondents think that they have not done so or only in part. Again, in the minds of the respondents, the ESG are closely connected to QA as their predominant scope and objective.

Both aims discussed here are not part of the core paragraphs of the ESG. To be aware of the fact that these objectives are inherent in the ESG, the reader has to read around the parts that give hands-on practical advice on what should be taken into account when working on an institution's QA. So it can be concluded that if the ESG are not yet as effective in reaching these aims as they were expected to be, this may be the result of the reading patterns adopted: the parts of the text that are well perceived are those needed for daily work.

This is confirmed by the fact that when asked whether the ESG succeeded in providing a source of assistance and guidance in QA, the number of negative answers was very low (3%). 97% of the respondents saw at least partly a success story here, half of them were convinced that the ESG had achieved their aim of being useful to HEI and agencies when they worked on developing their own quality culture. Thus the ESG have established themselves as one of the main sources for HEI and

agencies when it comes to drawing up processes and procedures, criteria and culture. They have inspired developments and change in the institutions, agencies and organisations.

This holds true especially for the agents of external QA. Half of the respondents were sure that the ESG have influenced the quality approach of and by quality assurance agencies. As two parts of the ESG out of three deal with the QA of QA agencies, and as the compliance with the ESG is known to be crucial for the agencies to be awarded ENQA membership or to be listed on the EQAR, the ESG are clearly perceived as setting the standards for external QA and its actors. Those who think that this objective is only partly achieved are mainly living and working in countries in transition, where the agency has not yet gained enough independence from former structures and actors.

Have the ESG achieved the aim of providing a “common framework”? As we will see later (cf. Implementation), this largely depends on a) when a country has taken up initiatives in QA in Higher Education (before 2005, after 2005) and b) when it joined the Bologna Process.

Have the stated purposes of ESG been realised?

Only a third of the respondents are convinced of the direct impact of the ESG on the students’ learning experience, but another 61% state that they have “partly” improved the education. Thus, an overwhelming majority of more than 90% believe in a positive effect of the ESG on education across Europe. When it comes to the question of quality enhancement and, as a result of that, more institutional autonomy, almost half of the respondents see a close connection here, and the other half (only 6% deny the connection) attribute it partly to the ESG. This is a clear statement that QA, as a means of enhancement and accountability, has become a prerequisite for institutional autonomy, and is perceived as such by the HEI.

The ESG’s relevance for the work of QA agencies is firmly established: more than half of the respondents say that yes, the ESG form the background for external QA. Another 42% say that it is partly the case. We may assume that this is due to the different stage of QA-evolution that the countries, their HEI and agencies respectively, are in. Added up, there is a 94% positive response v. only 6% of definite nays. The ESG are the accepted framework for external QA among the vast majority of respondents, and they are seen as an important “transparency tool”: Only 8% of the respondents fail to see their contribution “to make external QA more transparent and simpler to understand” for everybody involved.

IMPLEMENTATION

When analysing the implementation of the ESG there are three sets of questions and answers that are looked upon: the usefulness of the ESG and the implementation of the ESG in both internal and external QA.

a. Usefulness of the ESG

Use of the ESG?

On the question how the ESG are actually implemented, a very large majority respond that the ESG are only used as inspirational principles or in broad compliance. This seems to be a healthy response, since the ESG were never meant to be used as criteria in a strict checklist, but as principles to be translated on the level of internal QA, external QA and QAAs.

Usefulness of the ESG for the institution?

The same conclusion on implementation can be drawn from the questions about the usefulness of ESG for institutions.

42% of the respondents think that the ESG are rather theoretical, but can nonetheless help in the implementation of QA at institutional level. Once again the healthy mix of inspirational principles gains the majority. While 35% think the ESG are a very practical tool.

Looking at the geographical spread of the opinions on the practicality of the ESG, there is a possible link with the history of the development of a national QA system. In countries where a national QA system was developed before 2005, as was the case in the Netherlands and Finland, the ESG are regarded as a more theoretical framework. While in countries where a national QA system was developed after 2005, like in Bulgaria and Kazakhstan, the ESG are more regarded as a practical tool. It is known that in the latter countries the ESG were more than inspirational to the development of a national external

QA system. Thus the ESG entered into internal QA via external QA. Yet this has never been the concept nor the aim of the ESG. The in-depth interviews confirm this historical dimension.

Usefulness of the ESG for QAAs v. Institutions?

This finding is confirmed by the (different national) responses on the usefulness of the ESG at institutional level as compared to QAAs. A large majority (69%) think that the ESG are equally useful for both, while 25% think that the ESG are more useful for QAAs and only 5% think that they are more useful for the institution.

Usefulness of the ESG to the different actors in the institution?

As for the question of the usefulness of the ESG for the different institutional actors, a large majority (61%) experience that the ESG are most useful to the QA management. It is a positive observation that the second category to whom ESG are most useful is identified as the Board of Directors/the Management. This means that the top of the institutions take their responsibility or leadership for QA. On the other hand the fact that the usefulness for academics or teaching staff is only considered by 12%, which is lower than for the administrative staff (16%), is an indication that QA is still regarded as top-down and as an administrative task rather than the heart of the matter for academics. The fact that the ESG were approved in 2005 and first implemented in the national development of external QA and for the registration of QAAs by EQAR from 2008 onwards, which, in many countries, was before a healthy and participative internal QA system was established on institutional level, certainly plays a role here. The fact that the ESG usefulness to traditional other stakeholders of HE (students, alumni and employers) is only rated from 10% to 3%, is an indication that the ESG are not specifically focusing on them (although the ESG strongly advocate the stakeholders' model and the participation of the students) and that these stakeholders are not (yet) very much involved in QA either.

Satisfaction with the implementation of the ESG by the QAAs?

The fact that 70% of all respondents are rather satisfied with the implementation of the ESG by QAAs proves that most know the ESG relationship with external QA through QAAs and 70% think that the relationship is healthy, and at the same time are conscious of some tensions. The low percentages of both extremes (very satisfied 12% and not satisfied at all 2%) prove that the relationship between internal and external QA is not one to one.

b. Implementation of the ESG in internal QA

Although former surveys on institutions and internal QA seem to indicate that they were less aware of the ESG and used the ESG not or far less on institutional level, the EURASHE survey seems to contradict this. Not only does the awareness on institutional level seem high, but also the implementation of the different aspects of the ESG in internal QA appears to be very high. It would be interesting to investigate whether this difference in degree of knowledge and implementation is dependent on the sector (university – non-university HE) that is surveyed, on the time of implementation (later in the non-university sector) or influenced by both factors.

Elements connected to the Internal QA of the institution?

The fact that *policy for QA* is rated highest in terms of implementation of the elements of QA in the institutions, may not be a surprise, since the ESG are a Bologna document and are seen by many as a political decision or certainly influenced by the national, and thus political, implementation. The fact that in some countries and certainly in some institutions the development of internal QA has only recently started or is (being) redesigned adds to this perception of being primarily a 'policy for QA'. From the analysis of the general use of the ESG it has already become clear that internal QA is primarily seen as a matter for the executives and QA (administrative) management.

The fact that the lowest score of ESG implementation is given to *information and public availability of QA results* may not come as a surprise. In quite some countries where the national external QA has only recently been developed or changed, no reports have been published yet. Even in countries where an external QA has been in place for long, the quality culture has not yet reached a stage where information about programmes and awards from internal QA are made public. Self-evaluation reports are still seldom public and in most cases only used for internal aims and/or in preparation of external site-visit and reports. The fact that still 74% of our respondents give a high rating to *publicly available information* may refer to information in course guides, on curricula and degrees that is available on the institutions' websites or in folders, but which is not a result of internal QA.

c. Implementation of the ESG in external QA

Connection of the national QA provisions and regulations to the ESG?

While the way of implementing the ESG in internal QA seems to be characterised by a healthy mix of inspirational principles, the national QA provisions seem to be more designed on the structure of the ESG. Also this may not be surprising. It has been a general observation that the ESG as adopted by the Bologna ministers in 2005 had their first influence on the development of national external QA systems and the role of QAAs in these. The fact that both ENQA and EQAR, each in their own way, use the ESG as criteria for membership or registration of QAAs has had a fairly strong impact on both the functioning of QAAs and the national external systems. The national QA provisions that were only inspired by the ESG represent only a bit more than half of those definitely designed on the ESG structures. Although the ESG took existing (best) practices into consideration while being written, the most strictly ESG-based national systems are those developed or redesigned after 2005.

APPROPRIATENESS

Degree of support of the ESG for QA?

The ESG have proven to be a huge success when it comes to supporting the characteristics of QA, such as harmonisation of principles and criteria, quality improvement and culture and the improvement of quality procedures. Overall, more than 95% of the respondents are of this opinion.

The strongest support among the topics mentioned above goes to the improvement of quality assurance procedures. This shows that the ESG - although giving HEI and agencies a wide range of methods by not defining any - have had an enormous impact on what is going on in QA in the EHEA. They are appropriate for supporting the HEI in the task of QA as the evidence shows.

When having a closer look at some of the topics of quality culture and improvement, the respondents are overwhelmingly convinced of the appropriateness of the ESG: in both cases the results are almost identical, as 98% think that the ESG support quality culture and improvement in varying degrees (support, support strongly or slightly). This is proof that the ESG as they were written some years ago are building a very strong framework for QA. Their standards and their guidelines indeed have the effect of harmonising QA. This is even more impressive as they - as stated above - have this impact without prescribing ways, procedures and methods. They have succeeded in improving and enhancing QA without being a detailed rulebook with boxes to tick. To quote Peter Williams' speech at the 5th EQAF, QA in Europe is indeed "One fleet, many ships, same destination".

At one point the wine is watered down a bit: when it comes to information to the public and the support for fixed reference points, the "strong support" goes down to 15%. We have already seen in the part on the Aims of the ESG, that the aim of improving information seems to be the one that is in want. On the other hand, the publication of complete evaluation or accreditation reports often means a more challenging move for HEI or agencies than quality development as such. In many cases, there is no tradition of public information that contains not only "good news" on an institution. Regarding the fact that the HEI are competing for the best students, this is not surprising, and even the ESG have not yet been able to change this behaviour all over the EHEA-countries. Nevertheless, an additional 50% feel that the ESG support information to the public, so we should take this as "work in progress".

Regarding the feature of supporting *fixed reference points for the institutions*, the ESG never aimed at providing them. We have already seen that they have fulfilled their task of being a framework, a fence around QA, and were never meant to be a prescriptive list of features to be checked. If they, nevertheless, get acclaim for supporting HEI in developing QA reference points from 72% of the respondents (95%, if we add those who detect a slight support), this is indeed an indicator for "exceeding expectations".

In the opinion of the survey respondents the greatest overall support is for the *QA system* itself, and as is generally felt, the ESG are found the least supportive in their *Informative role towards the public*. Though they may never have meant to have such an explicit role, the assumption that this informative role is embedded in the present QA structures, is clearly disproven here. Their support for quality culture and quality improvement is also recognised.

Rating the ESG on a set of objective criteria?

The respondents were asked to give an opinion on whether the *clarity* of the ESG is appropriate. When looking at the results, we have to keep in mind that the ESG were drafted by a group of people in which the native speakers were a minority. So is the largest part of their readers: for most of them English is a second, if not a third or fourth language.

Even with that barrier, 80-90% of the readers feel that the ESG are clear on a very high or rather high level. In several discussions it has been suggested that a glossary added to the ESG would make them easier to understand, but we all have faced the difficulties of defining concepts that have different traditions in different countries and are traditionally perceived in different ways. In the most important area of *conceptual clarity*, the ESG have scored the highest approval: this means the message that the ESG transport gets across to the reader and user. One should keep that in mind when calling for a radical reform of the text.

The *level of detail* is rated worst in this question, but it is questionable whether this result should be heeded. Providing a detailed description and being a “how-to”-book has never been the aim of the ESG. It speaks for the readers that most of them (80 %) do not call for greater detail, having grasped the spirit of the ESG.

REVIEW SECTION

To the straight question “*Should the ESG be revised?*” the majority of the respondents answered positively (73%). To the question “*How should the ESG be revised?*”, the same percentage (73%) stated that the ESG should be modified slightly; 26% of the respondents said that the ESG should be modified intensively, while one per cent suggested starting from scratch.

Once this assumed, next comes the issue of considering how to cope with a possible revision, what modifications to bring, with what impact on which actors, and finally how to proceed to carry on this possible revision process.

If they suggested modification for the ESG, the respondents were submitted five possible answers. Here’s what should be changed, according to them, from the highest to the lowest score:

- 87% of the respondents would like to have the level of awareness among the general public changed/raised
- 75% of the respondents agreed with the addition of new elements
- 66% of the respondents would like to have the distinction between standards and guidelines modified (but without further specification)
- A minority of 32% of the respondents consider that the structure in three parts needs modification
- Only 31% of the respondents would see “*must*” replace “*should*” in the ESG.

A low level of awareness among the general public was one of the striking findings of the workshops organised by EURASHE.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EURASHE

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE ESG

- Two thirds of the respondents claim they 'know' the ESG, but the degree of knowledge varies greatly.
- Respondents know the ESG mainly through the external quality assurance (EQA), and especially in Northern and Western Europe the QAAs are given as the main source.
- The different parts of the ESG are known by over 75 % (part 1), 66 % (part 2) and less than 50 % (part 3).

AIMS OF THE ESG

- Where the ESG seem to be most effective is when they give hands-on practical advice on what should be taken into account when working on an institution's QA.
- Whether the ESG achieved the aim of providing a "common framework" for QA, largely depends on a) when a country has taken up initiatives in QA in Higher Education (before 2005, after 2005) and b) when it joined the Bologna Process. Where this happened late, the countries may still be on the way to modelling their QA systems according to the ESG, thus being still in transition and the ESG are not perceived as a strong framework.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ESG

Usefulness Of The ESG

- There are important 'regional' differences in the state of implementation of the ESG in the EHEA.
- A large majority of the reviewed persons say that the ESG are only used as 'inspirational principles' or 'broad compliance', rather than as a 'checklist'.
- There may be a link between the history of the development of a national QA system and the 'use' that is made of the ESG in a particular country. In countries where a national QA system was developed before 2005, the ESG are regarded more as a theoretical framework, whereas in countries where this happened later, the ESG are regarded more as a practical tool.
- The countries/regions rate the 'practical usefulness' of the ESG very differently, with the 'new Bologna countries' rating is much higher than those who have had an advanced quality system for a long time, which was brought in line with the ESG quite early.
- When it comes to defining the 'actors' at institutional level who take the greatest benefit from the ESG, the Board and the QA managers come largely before the other categories (administrators, academic staff, students and alumni).
- In the opinion of the respondents the greatest overall support is for the QA system itself, and the ESG are found the least supportive in their Informative role towards the public. Though they may never have meant to have such an explicit role, the assumption that this informative role is embedded in the present QA structures, is clearly disproven here. Their support for quality culture and quality improvement is also recognised in the on-line survey and the interviews.

- Respondents to the survey are by a large majority (70 %) 'rather satisfied' about the implementation of the ESG by the QAA, but very few express a 'high appreciation rate' (16 %). Judged per country, we see once again a more positive attitude towards the ESG coming from the 'new Bologna' countries.

Implementation of the ESG in IQA

- The ESG have contributed most to the implementation of a quality assurance policy in an institution.
- From the analysis of the general use of ESG it has already become clear that internal QA is primarily seen as a matter for the executives and QA (administrative) management.

Implementation of the ESG in EQA

- The national QA provisions that were 'only inspired' by the ESG represent only slightly more than half of those 'definitely designed' on the ESG structures. Although the ESG took existing (best) practices into consideration while being written, the most strictly ESG-based national systems are the ones developed or redesigned after 2005.

APPROPRIATENESS

- The ESG never aimed at becoming a framework for institutions, so if they get acclaim for supporting HEI in developing QA reference points, this is indeed an indicator for 'exceeding expectations'.
- In most countries there is no tradition of 'public information' on the results of QA proceedings, so as to the role of the ESG in supporting information to the public, we should take it as "work in progress".
- According to our findings on their 'appropriateness' the ESG get the highest rating for *Conceptual clarity*, which means that the message carried by the ESG gets across to the reader and user. This should be kept in mind when calling for a radical reform of the text.
- Other features such as *Level of detail*, *Linguistic clarity*, *Internal consistency* and *Balance between the different parts* equally receive a relatively low rating.

IMPACT OF THE ESG

- The standards and guidelines have had the effect of harmonising QA. They have succeeded in improving and enhancing QA without being a detailed rulebook with boxes to tick.
- Most institutions changed their IQA, converging it to the ESG standards, under the influence of QA agencies. Generally, the impact of the QA agencies on EQA as well as on IQA is considerable.
- Students' involvement has increased considerably in both internal and external QA.
- Some respondents mention that the effect of the ESG is not limited to QA of education. The QA principles are often, directly or indirectly, applied in other institutional domains such as research, administration and management.
- Most institutions know the ESG, especially parts 1 and 2, via EQA. The ESG principles are also implemented in the IQA but the link is rather implicit.
- Most institutions welcome the changes in QA and appreciate the stimulating effect of the ESG on the enhancement of institutional autonomy.



REVIEW

- A significant number of respondents think that the ESG should be revised, but the majority think that there can only be slight revisions, in the form of an update.
- In some countries the implementation of internal and external QA proceedings in the 'non-university sector' (and as a consequence also of the ESG) may have come later than was the case in universities, which means that a full revision of the ESG at this moment would be untimely. This impression is confirmed more precisely in the in-depth interviews, which reveal that some institutions have only recently started implementing them.
- There is no doubt that the implementation of the ESG has a beneficial effect on other activities of institutions than *teaching and learning*, notably in the way *research* is managed in the institution, and also in its *service to the community*.
- The link between the ESG and the other instruments and realisations of the Bologna Process (of which they are an output themselves) are acknowledged by most respondents. However, how they relate to each other, is confusing to most of the respondents and therefore a setting of the ESG in the overall Bologna framework is required, which could be in the introductory text of the ESG document.

Brussels, November 2011