European Quality Assurance
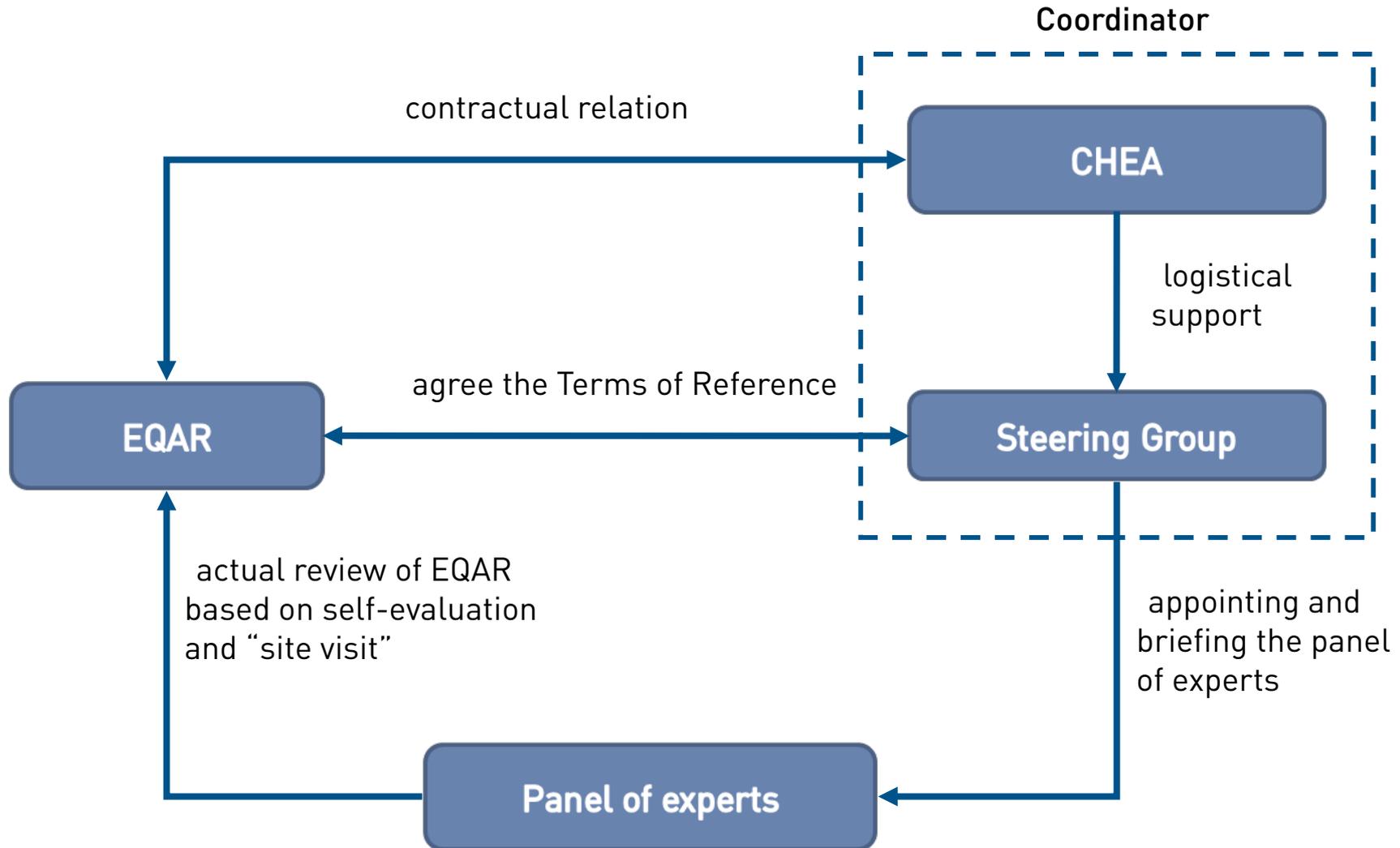Register for Higher Education

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External Evaluation of EQAR – Overview of Key Findings

European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)

18 November 2011, Antwerpen

Lucien Bollaert & Colin Tück

Setup and Coordination

Terms of Reference

- **Main questions:**
  1. Are the **organisational structures and methods** of EQAR fit for purpose in the light of the agreed objectives? Have they functioned effectively and efficiently in practice?
  2. What has been the **initial impact** of EQAR? Is it in line with the desired goals?
  3. What **improvements** are desirable? How might the organisation develop and act further with a view to best achieving its missions and objectives?

- **Not addressed by the evaluation:**
  - Ministerial decisions
  - European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) as such

Evidence Base

- **Self-Evaluation Report**
  - Interviews
    - Governments
    - Stakeholders
  - Surveys
    - QA agencies
    - Website visitors
  - Self-analysis by EQAR Self-Evaluation Group
- **Site Visit by the Evaluation Panel (May 2011)**
  - Interviews
    - EQAR committees
    - Governments
    - Stakeholders
    - QA agencies

Key Findings by the Panel: Organisational Structure

- EQAR was put in place swiftly and with minimal resources, structure is generally fit for purpose
- Majority of ESG-reviewed QA agencies applied
- Register Committee successfully established and safeguarded its independence
- Thus far, focus has been on operations and putting in place procedures for the Register
- In the next phase, a more strategic focus – aiming at achieving the wider objectives – will be required

Key Findings by the Panel: Procedures & Transparency

- Panel found that trust and confidence in EQAR's Procedures has emerged over the first 2 years

- Transparency: challenge in the early days of EQAR

- Register Committee reports (2009 & 2010) addressed the initial concerns

- Further efforts needed to make transparent:
  - Eligibility requirements and substantial criteria for inclusion
  - Decision-making on applicants
  - Different roles of EQAR and ENQA

Key Findings of the Panel:
Initial Impact

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- Difficult to analyse in-depth after only two years of operation, likely to be indirect rather than direct (e.g. objective of facilitating mobility and recognition)

- Registration is important for agencies to demonstrate quality – depending on context, it is a matter of status

- There is trust in EQAR's independence and integrity

- Noted that only national authorities have the competence to recognise/accept registered QA agencies and their results/decisions

Specific Recommendations

Register procedures:

- Publication of full decisions on applications by quality assurance agencies (incl. unsuccessful)
- Clarify organisational eligibility for the Register
- Publicly clarify the different roles of EQAR and ENQA, and their use of the ESG
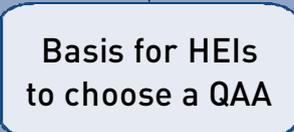- No longer include governmental observers on the Register Committee
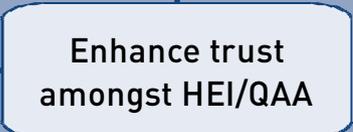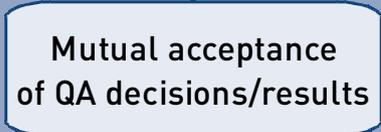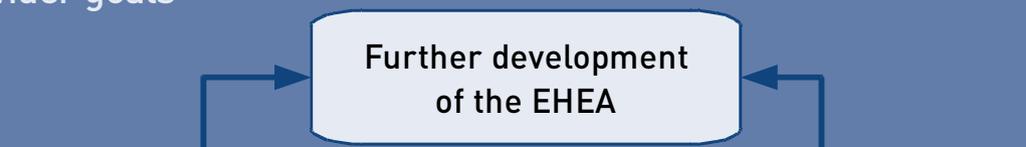
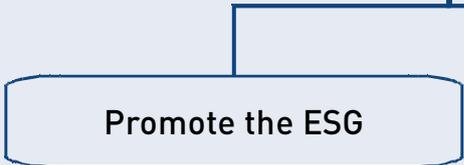# Specific Recommendations (cont'd)

Strategic development:

- Develop strategic function further
- Focus on the promotion of EQAR and the benefits of registration
- Develop indicators for impact on wider objectives
- Certain structural changes (functions, length of mandates, etc.)

Wider goals

Further development of the EHEA

Promote mobility and recognition

Enhance trust and confidence in QA and HE

Mutual acceptance of QA decisions/results

Reduce opportunities for accreditation mills

Not directly in EQAR's power

Enhance trust amongst HEI/QAA

Basis for HEIs to choose a QAA

Promote the ESG

Provide clear and reliable info on registered QAAs

Manage a register of QAAs

Within EQAR's own remit

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EQAR's wider goals and objectives

Next Steps

EQAR Members' Dialogue:

- Governmental and stakeholder members of EQAR will discuss the evaluation results and follow-up
- 21 & 22 November 2011, Vienna

Follow-Up and Implementation Plan:

- Adopted by EQAR members in January 2012
- Submitted to Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and Ministers, and published, together with the External Evaluation Report and Self-Evaluation Report