

# Cross-border reviews of higher education institutions and programmes with an EQAR-registered agency

EURASHE Seminar on the Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance (24 October 2013, Bucharest)

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The EQAR logo consists of the lowercase text 'eqar' in a blue sans-serif font, followed by four blue diagonal slashes (// // // //).

# Outline

- 1) Brief introduction about EQAR's establishment, mission and objectives
- 2) EQAR's role in ensuring international trust and recognition of QAAs in the EHEA
- 3) Recognising International Quality Assurance Activity (RIQAA Project)
- 4) Cross-border activity of EQAR-registered agencies
- 5) Benefits and challenges

# European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)



- Register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)
- Established by E4 at Ministers' request
- Jointly governed by stakeholders (E4, social partners) and EHEA governments
- External review of agencies by independent experts
  - Follows same model as accreditation of HEI
- Independent Register Committee
  - Composed of quality assurance experts
  - Takes decisions related to registration

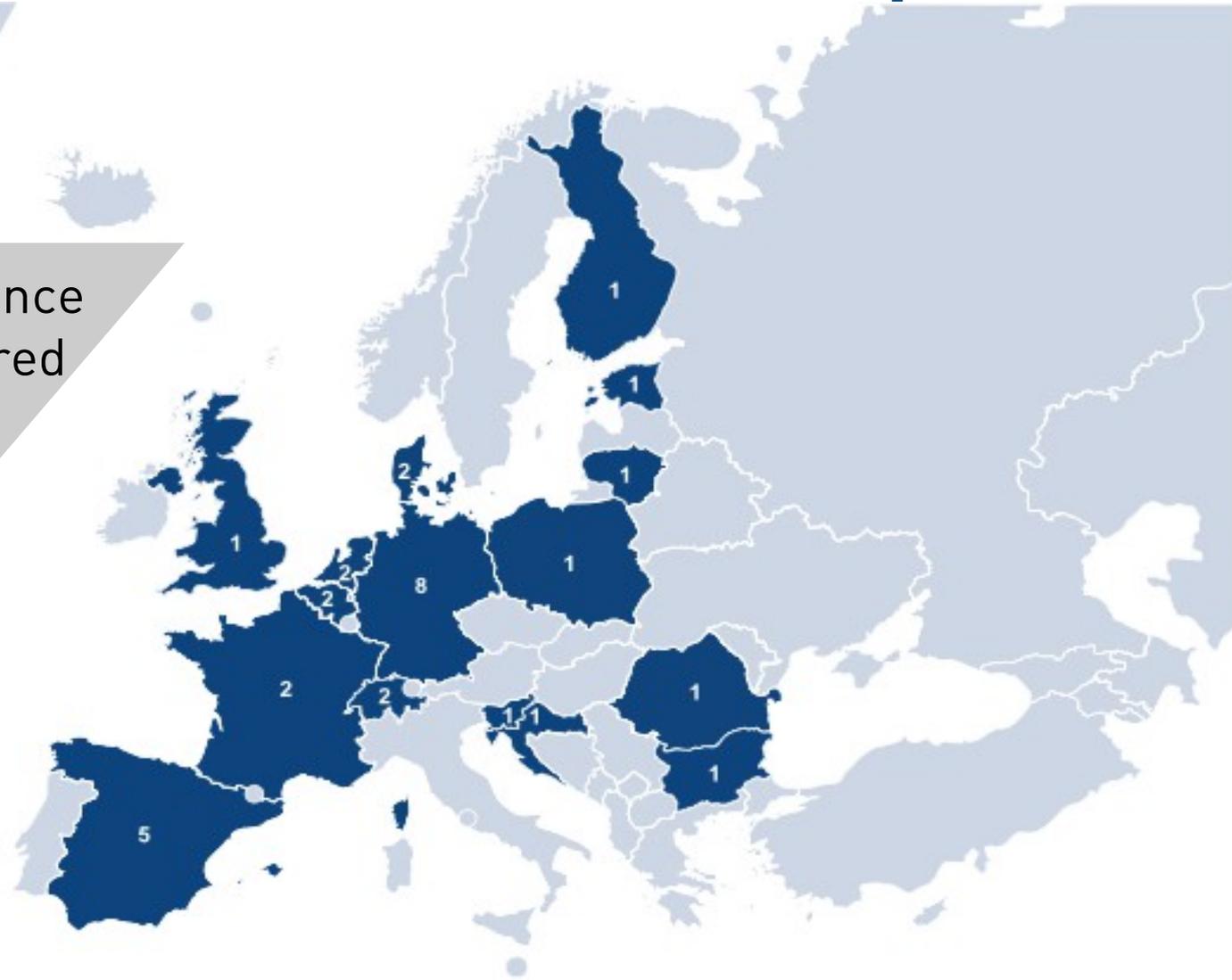


# Agencies and Governments



■ 32 quality assurance agencies registered

■ 31 governmental members



# EQAR in the European Higher Education Area



- European reference point for QAAs working in substantial compliance with the ESG;

*“The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG”* (London Communiqué, 2007)

- Ensure trust and recognition in QAAs

*“[...]to enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions”* (London Communiqué, 2007)

- Facilitate cross-border recognition of QAAs

*“We will allow EQAR-registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements. In particular, we will aim to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.”* (Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

# Mission and Objectives



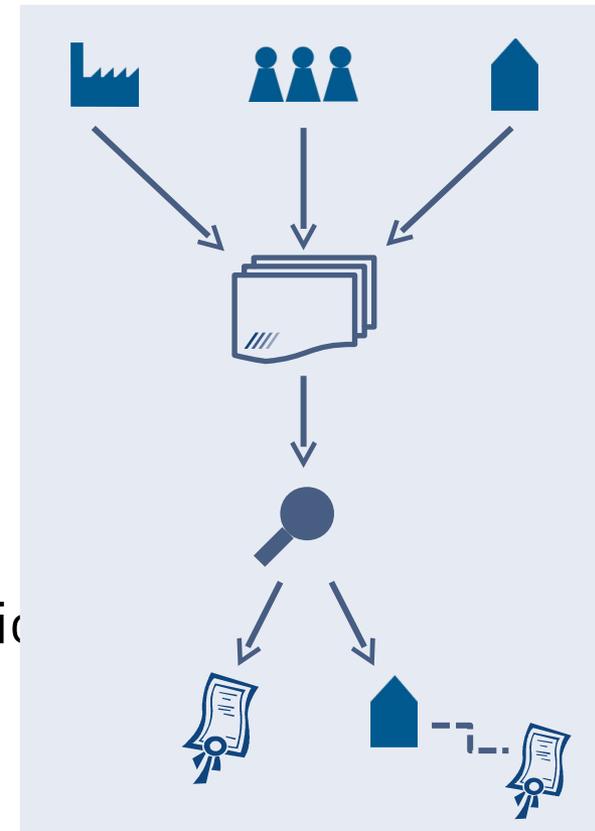
## Promoting a coherent and flexible quality assurance system in EHEA

### Transparency and Information

- Information on bona fide agencies
- Prevent „accreditation mills“ from gaining credibility
- Institutions to choose a QA agency

### Trust and Recognition

- Enhance mutual trust amongst quality assurance (QA) agencies and institutions
- Acceptance of QA results/decisions
- Support recognition of qualifications and periods of study
- Allow registered QAAs to operate across the entire EHEA



# Cross-border openness to EQAR-registered QA agencies (updated Oct 2013)



- Countries recognising internationally active EQAR-registered agencies to operate as part of the national requirements for external QA;
- Countries recognising foreign agencies as part of the national requirements for external QA
- Countries not open to external QA evaluation by an internationally active EQAR-registered QA agency

Still work in progress...



# Legislative Frameworks for International QA



All EQAR-registered agencies can evaluate/accredit/audit HEI's ...

- ... for all or most external quality assurance obligations in:  
Armenia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Poland, Romania
- ... limited to joint degrees or cross-border programmes in:  
Denmark, Germany

Austria	Denmark	Lithuania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universities can choose freely from amongst EQAR-registered agencies for quality audits</li></ul>	For <b>Erasmus Mundus joint programmes</b> and for Danish diplomas offered abroad automatic recognition of accreditation can be done by EQAR-registered agencies.	Review carried out by foreign QA agency, but final decision by national body (SKVC)

# Recognising International Quality Assurance Agencies Activity in the EHEA (RIQAA)



Co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU

Timeframe: March 2014 – July 2014

## Activities:

- Mapping of the legal framework allowing the use of EQAR-registered QAAs in EHEA countries.
- A targeted consultation of BFUG members and QAAs to verify the results of the desk research and check for updates;
- A seminar with QAAs operating in the EHEA;
- **Case-study interviews with 12 HEI to overview institutional experiences regarding international quality reviews :**
  - **8 HEIs** from four countries that allow internationally active (EQAR-registered) foreign QAAs to operate.
    - HEI have been evaluated (or ) by a foreign EQAR-registered QAA (either at the institutional or programme level);
    - with HEIs that were not evaluated by a non-national QAA body;
  - **4 HEIs** from as many countries that do not allow or are in the progress of allowing internationally active (EQAR-registered) foreign QAAs to operate.

EQAR-Registered Agencies	Countries where the agency has carried out cross-border reviews
<b>ACQUIN (DE)</b>	Switzerland; Austria; Germany; Russia; Holy See
<b>AHPGS (DE)</b>	Lithuania; Germany; Netherlands; Austria; Switzerland; Romania
<b>AQAS (DE)</b>	Ireland; Austria; Germany; Kazakhstan; Russia
<b>ASIIN e.V. (DE)</b>	Switzerland; Netherlands; Germany; Austria; Croatia; Finland; France; Poland; Portugal; Spain; United Kingdom; Kazakhstan
<b>CTI - Engineering Degree Commission (FR)</b>	Belgium; France; Germany; Luxembourg; Spain; Switzerland; Bulgaria
<b>ECCE (DE)</b>	Denmark; France; Spain; United Kingdom
<b>evalag (DE)</b>	Kosovo <sup>1</sup> ; Lithuania; Austria; Germany; Hungary
<b>FIBAA (DE)</b>	Switzerland; Russia; Romania; Netherlands; Germany; Austria; Ukraine; Albania; France; Luxembourg; United Kingdom
<b>FINHEEC (FI)</b>	Austria; Finland
<b>IEP (CH)</b>	Croatia; Bulgaria; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Belgium; Austria; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Russia; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"; Ukraine; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; United Kingdom
<b>NVAO (NL)</b>	Netherlands; Belgium
<b>OAQ (CH)</b>	Germany; Austria; Liechtenstein

## Types of evaluation

- Institutional level
  - Institutional accreditation
  - Institutional audit/evaluation
- Study programmes
  - Accreditation of study programmes
  - Accreditation of groups of programmes
  - Evaluation and accreditation of selected international study programmes
- Thematic evaluations

# Challenges and Opportunities



Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Language</li><li>▪ Local context</li><li>▪ Country-specific rules</li><li>▪ Specific degree structures</li><li>▪ Types of institutions</li><li>• Cultural differences</li><li>• Coherent EHEA framework vs national concerns;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ More valuable feedback</li><li>▪ QAA fits the HEI's profile</li><li>▪ Specialised institutions</li><li>▪ Joint degrees</li><li>▪ Higher commitment</li><li>▪ Active choice by HEI</li><li>▪ Improving the internationalisation at institutional or programme level</li></ul>

## Questions for the workshop:

- What would be the main rationale of an institution for approaching an agency from outside the country for an external review ?
  - What would be the major concerns?
  - What are your experiences regarding the accreditation and recognition of joint degrees and joint programmes?

