

EURASHE –Seminar „Managing your institution`s  
quality with the latest practices and policies“

Breakout Session: Cross-border quality  
assurance

Achim Hopbach

Brussels, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017

## „Outgoing Agencies“ in the EHEA - Overview

22 out of 39 agencies conduct reviews abroad:

ASIIN: 24 countries

FIBAA: 16 countries

ACQUIN: 14 countries

AQAS: 11 countries

AHPGS: 7 countries

AQ Austria: 5 countries

Average: 3.2 countries

## „Incoming Agencies“ in the EHEA - Overview

In 36 out of 49 countries foreign agencies operate:

Austria: 9 agencies

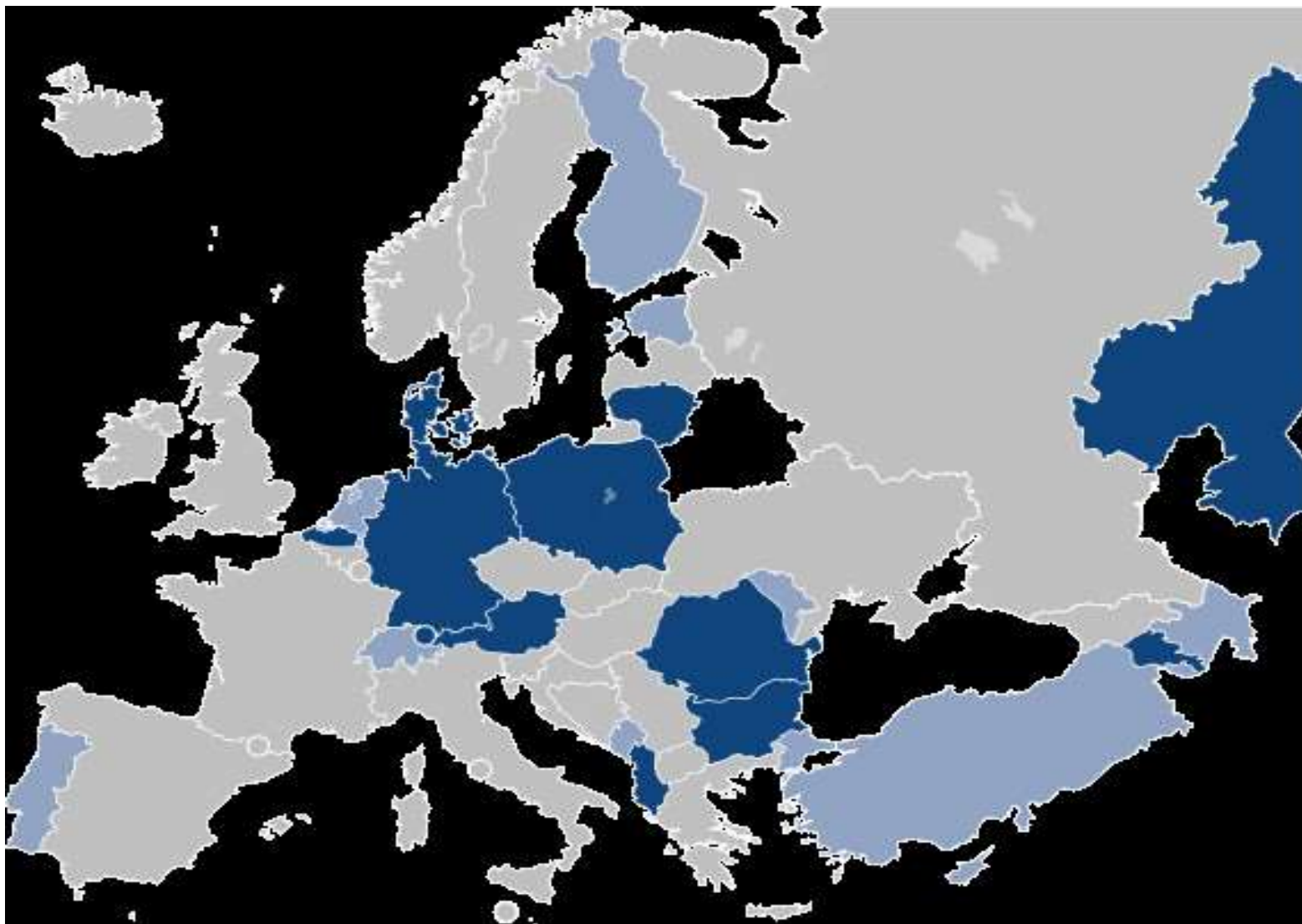
Slovenia: 7 agencies

Switzerland: 7 agencies

Russia: 6 agencies

Kazakhstan: 6 agencies

Average: 2.1 agencies





## **AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Basics**

Destination of reviews: Germany, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kazakhstan (coming soon: LU, BE, CH)

Type of reviews:

- Programme/System Accreditation in Germany
- Programme Accreditation according to „Guidelines for international accreditation“ in target countries
- Quality Audit in target countries

Volume of reviews: 8 out of approx. 120 in total (2016)

## **AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Definition**

What does „outgoing“ mean or entail?

Type of reviews:

- Programme/System Accreditation in Germany
- Programme Accreditation according to „Guidelines for international accreditation“ in target countries
- Quality Audit in target countries

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Definition

What does „outgoing“ mean or entail?

Type of reviews:

- Programme/System / AQ as a „German“ agency?
- Programme Accreditation according to Guidelines for international accreditation in target countries  
AQ with international approach
- Quality Audit in target countries  
AQ exporting its procedure

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Definition

What does „outgoing“ mean or entail?

Type of reviews:

**compulsory/legal consequences**

- Programme/System / AQ as a „German agency“
- Programme Accreditation / AQ with international approach for international accreditation in target countries **voluntary/compulsory**
- Quality Audit in target countries  
AQ exporting its procedure **voluntary**



## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Motivation

AQ Austria: International Activities – midterm priorities (2015):

**Networking: ...**

**Reviews:** „AQ Austria conducts reviews (Quality Audit, Programme Accreditation) abroad, if they don't mean a reputational risk, they support staff development, and offer useful experience. The target regions are German speaking countries and SEE...“

**Development: ...**

**Consultancy: ...**

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“- Motivation

Main benefits	Scores
Recognition of the agency by international partners	
To broaden the experience of the agency	
Recognition of the agency by national partners	
Enhancement of national methodology	
Improvement of the outcome of national activities	
Convergence of external QA in the EHEA	
Strengthening of a European dimension of HE	
Fostering recognition of qualifications	
Fostering student mobility	
Generating additional income	
*Scale from 1 to 11 (minimum 11 scores, maximum 429 scores)	

ENQA (2015), Quality Procedures in the European higher education area and beyond – internationalisation of Quality assurance agencies 4th ENQA survey , p. 31  
 AQ Austria / [www.aq.ac.at/](http://www.aq.ac.at/)

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## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“- Motivation

Main benefits	Scores
Recognition of the agency by international partners	349*
To broaden the experience of the agency	311
Recognition of the agency by national partners	295
Enhancement of national methodology	290
Improvement of the outcome of national activities	260
Convergence of external QA in the EHEA	233
Strengthening of a European dimension of HE	231
Fostering recognition of qualifications	219
Fostering student mobility	211
Generating additional income	132
*Scale from 1 to 11 (minimum 11 scores, maximum 429 scores)	

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## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“- Motivation

Views about risks	No	To some extent	Yes
Negative impact of imported methodologies on national QA mechanisms			
HEI choosing an agency whose accreditation framework is the easiest with which to comply			
Risks regarding the quality of the outcomes (i.e. experts are not adapted to the national context)			
Additional costs hindering the development of other national activities			
Financial problems (investments)			

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“- Motivation

Views about risks	No	To some extent	Yes
Negative impact of imported methodologies on national QA mechanisms	27,5%	67,5%	5%
HEI choosing an agency whose accreditation framework is the easiest with which to comply	12,5%	52,5%	35%
Risks regarding the quality of the outcomes (i.e. experts are not adapted to the national context)	15%	55%	30%
Additional costs hindering the development of other national activities	30%	60%	10%
Financial problems (investments)	21,6%	46%	32,4%

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Experience

Positive:

- Impact at institutional (maybe even at national) level due to long term engagement (voluntary reviews)
  - Good learning opportunity for the agency
  - One of the best learning opportunities for staff
  - Positive impact on reputation at home
- The agency benefits a lot from conducting reviews abroad

## AQ Austria as „outgoing agency“ - Experience

### Negative:

- Dubious motivation of some HEI to contract AQ Austria
  - „EHEA badge“ vs QA
  - Hidden agendas in a particular context (political, institutional, systemic)
  - Disciplinary/cultural „Colonialism“ in some countries
  - High investments
- If it's not just a business only long-term engagement is viable due to high investments



## **Austria and „incoming agencies“ - Experience**

Positive:

Development of system/own procedures through collaboration (foreign perspective)

## Austria and „incoming agencies“ - Experience

Negative (compulsory reviews):

- Unclear motivation of ministry
- Law discriminates AQ Austria
- Unrealistic expectation of ministry/stakeholders
  - Relevance of comparability of procedures and outcomes
- Dubious motivation of some HEI
- Pressure on AQ Austria to lower its standards
- Strange concept of international vs foreign
  - Negative impact on reputation at home

## **Austria and „incoming agencies“ - Experience**

- If foreign agencies do compulsory reviews market regulation is key!

## Conclusion

- The features of cross-border quality assurance vary significantly depending on its diverse legal natures
- The motivation must be clear!
- Cross-border quality assurance gives an added value if it's international.
- Cross-border quality assurance bears high potential for quality enhancement.
- „Outgoing“ agencies have a great learning opportunity
- Compulsory quality assurance and market logic don't fit (cross-border even less than within a system)!
- The reputational risks are high on all sides!



[http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/occasional-papers/enqa\\_oc\\_22.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/occasional-papers/enqa_oc_22.pdf)

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Dr. Achim Hopbach  
achim.hopbach@aq.ac.at  
www.aq.ac.at