

European Quality Assurance
Register for Higher Education



Cross-border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area: New Developments

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Structure of the presentation



- Introduction
- Part 1: Cross-border QA activities in EHEA and progress around EQAR-registered agencies since Bucharest
- Part 2: What could be the outlook for Yerevan ?
- Conclusion

Introduction (1): emergence of cross-border HE and National QAA



- Since the beginning of the 1980s, cross-border higher education in Europe has grown considerably through student mobility, the development of joint study programmes and research cooperation.
- The Bologna Process has accelerated these trends in particular with a huge growth of joint masters
- But since the 1990s, most governments in Europe have introduced national QAA for HE.
- National legislation and national QAA have had some difficulties adapting to, and coping with cross-border activities.

Introduction (2): diverse reactions



- QAAs have taken initiatives and have worked on mutual recognition agreements to try to adapt to this new European context.
- Many HEIs also seized the opportunity and asked for complementary assessments by non national agency.
- Several national ministries have officially asked for example IEP to perform evaluations bringing a European perspective to their national landscape.
- Since 2005 the Bologna Process has developed a common framework (ESG) adopted by all signatories to facilitate a dialogue between national actors in Europe.
- At the level of the EHEA the issue is now to move from working together but keeping national rules to acceptance of having adopted common rules (substantial compliance to ESG) by lowering the barriers to EQAR-registered agencies.

Part 1: Some progress around EQAR-registered agencies



1.1 A favorable European context

- **Clear will of the EHEA ministers:**

“ 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 QA decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.” (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012)

- **Commitment of all HE actors to EQAR’s success. They are concerned by and involved in EQAR; HEIs, students and QAAs support and manage EQAR and have fixed as a strategic goal:**

“the international trust and recognition of registered QAAs, their results and decisions throughout the EHEA”

- **Mutual trust already exists among national QAAs who have been working together (trainings, seminars, workshops) and exchanging best practices through ENQA for many years.**

Part 1: Some progress around EQAR-registered agencies



1.2 General trend

- Countries have started to open their HE system to non-national QAAs for programme or institutional evaluations
- Most often with some restrictions:
 - After a first national accreditation
 - If using the same criteria as the national QAA
 - Final decision still in the hands of national authorities
 - Reserved to some agencies that passed a further selection process by national authorities

Part 1: Some progress around EQAR-registered agencies



1.3 Cross-Border Openness to EQAR- Registered QA Agencies (updated Oct 2013)



Part 1: Some progress around EQAR-registered agencies



1.4 Interesting examples

- **Austria** July 2011 law: EQAR-registered agencies are placed at the same level as the Austrian national QA agency for the periodic external institutional audit requirements of public universities.
- **Flanders** July 2013 law: automatic, full recognition of HE degrees given after successful completion of programmes accredited by an accreditation agency included in EQAR.
- **Denmark** for the accreditation of Erasmus Mundus joint programmes or Danish diplomas offered abroad: internationally recognised agencies play the same role as the national Danish agency; EQAR-registered agencies are automatically “recognised”.
- **Poland**
 - to apply for the right to offer doctorate degrees, Polish HEIs must be reviewed by an EQAR-registered agency
 - to have the right to establish branch HEIs or departments in Poland, foreign HEIs must be accredited by any EQAR-registered agency

Part 2: What could be the outlook?



2.1 As a first step, find a solution for the QA of joint programme in the EHEA

- **Paradox of the EHEA: joint programmes and QA are strongly promoted but coexist without links**
- **At the moment, no clear QA procedures for joint programmes, even for Erasmus Mundus Master label that have existed for almost 10 years**
- Two BFUG working groups are trying to propose one procedure built on EQAR-registered agencies and their substantial compliance with the ESG principles adopted in the EHEA
- This could also help promoting an automatic recognition of degrees within the EHEA

Part 2: How to achieve more



2.2 EQAR's contribution through an analysis of the recognition of registered agencies (EC grant 10/2013 - 9/2014)

Purposes:

- Understand the rationales of countries that do not recognise foreign EQAR-registered agencies
- Inform stakeholders and policy makers and enable them to build on the experiences of different EHEA countries
- Promote, through EQAR, international trust and recognition of registered QAA agencies as well as their results and decisions

Outcomes:

- Mapping the evolution of national legal frameworks
- Highlighting the experience of higher education institutions and understanding the benefits of working with (EQAR-registered) QAAs from other countries
- Examining the reasons that are behind the QAAs' pursuit of international activities

Conclusion: why is it so difficult to make progress?



For reasons linked to QA in the EHEA

- Great diversity of European QA practices (evaluation, accreditation, audit, etc.)
- National and historical specificity in awarding degrees (as ECA study shows) and of linguistic diversity in Europe (QAA are not able to operate everywhere)
- QA and finance (easier if the link was not so tight in many countries)

For more general reasons

- National authorities and agencies: are they prepared to loose some control or power ?
- Why adopt rules only for EHEA in a global context?