

## European Quality Assurance Register – EQAR

### Introduction

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) provides clear and reliable information on the quality assurance agencies (QAAs) operating in Europe: it is a list of agencies that substantially comply with the [► European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance \(ESG\)](#) as adopted by the European ministers of higher education in Bergen 2005. It is web-based and freely accessible.

EQAR was established by the E4 Group<sup>1</sup> and has been operational since the summer 2008. The European ministers in charge of higher education mandated the E4 Group to establish the EQAR at their summit in London (May 2007).

The Register is expected to:

- promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among higher education institutions;
- reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility;
- provide a basis for governments to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- serve as an instrument to improve the quality of agencies and to promote mutual trust among them.

### Criteria, reviews and applications

All agencies which comply substantially with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) can be admitted to the Register. As it is based on substantial compliance with the ESG as a criterion, full ENQA membership normally constitutes satisfactory evidence for inclusion in the Register.

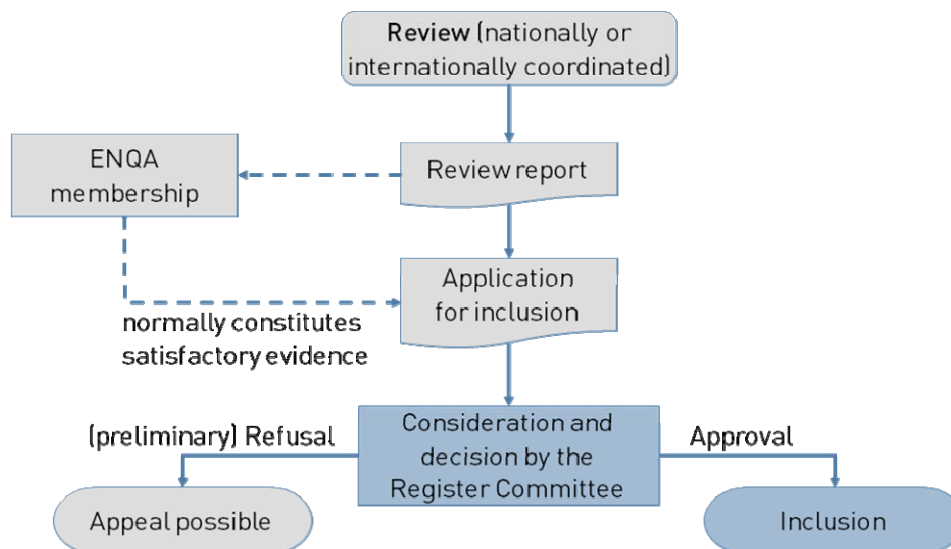
EQAR does not organise any reviews of quality assurance agencies (QAAs) itself. The agency itself identifies an independent organisation as a review coordinator. It is the review coordinator which appoints an independent review panel to carry out the actual review.

Usually one agency will not have to undergo multiple reviews. On the contrary, an agency can carry out one review for multiple purposes, provided

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<sup>1</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students’ Union (ESU, formerly ESIB), European University Association (EUA) and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)

it contains sufficient evidence of substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines. The Register Committee, in consultation with the General Assembly, has adopted Procedures for Applications that contain minimum requirements and guidelines for reviews.



The Register Committee takes its decision based on the review report and further information provided by the applicant agency. In case of rejection, the applicant is granted the possibility to make further representation before a final decision is taken.

The applicant can appeal against a decision of the Register Committee on procedural grounds or in the case of perversity of judgement. Appeals will be considered and decided upon by an Appeals Committee. A successful appeal will lead to reconsideration of the application.

## Structure and governance

EQAR's structure was developed based on the premise that the key stakeholders in higher education jointly bear the main responsibility to establish EQAR and to ensure its operation, as reflected in the mandate given to the E4 Group by ministers. At the same time, it was recognised that European governments bear the responsibility for Europe's higher education systems as a whole and thus needed to be involved in order to enhance overall accountability.

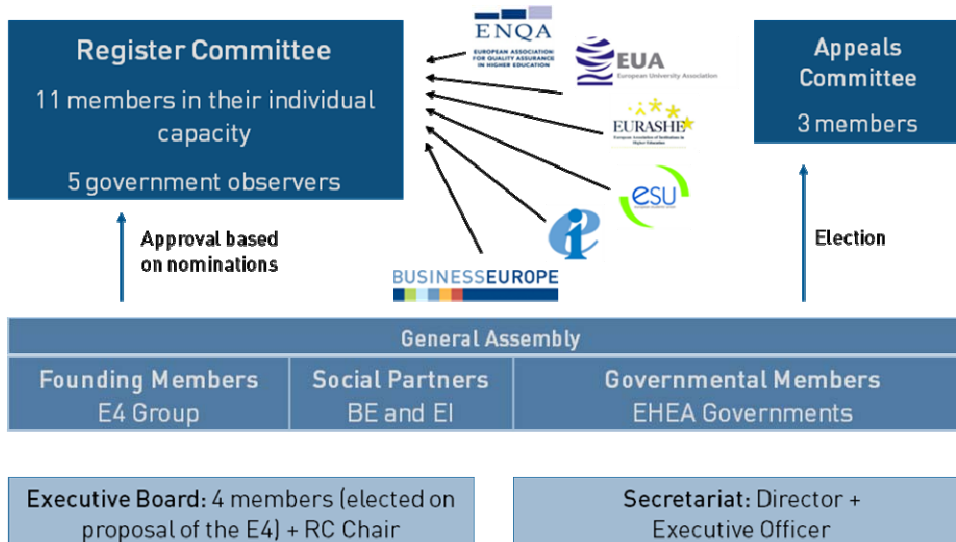
The E4 Group developed a structure featuring differentiated roles for governments and stakeholders, and several checks and balances (see Figure below). All Bologna Process countries were formally invited to become Governmental Members of the new association right from the start.

The **General Assembly** includes all members of the association:

- 4 Founding Members (E4 Group),
- 2 Social Partner Members (BUSINESSEUROPE & Education International), and

- currently, 26 Governmental Members.

It decides on general matters of the association, such as the annual budget and the composition of the Executive Board. A special voting scheme ensures that governments and stakeholders cannot outvote each other.



### Organisational Structure of EQAR aisbl/ivzw

The **Executive Board** includes one representative from each Founding Member. The members take turns in assuming the posts of President, Treasurer and two Vice-Presidents. The Executive Board is in charge of overall governance and management of EQAR, including all administrative and financial matters of the association.

The decision making on applications for inclusion on the register lies in the hands of the **Register Committee**. It is a dedicated body for this task, comprising of a chairperson and ten members with ample experience in quality assurance of higher education.

The members are nominated by ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE (2 each), BUSINESSEUROPE and Education International (1 each). All members are appointed in their individual capacity. The Chairperson is elected by the Register Committee itself as an additional member. S/he is also an ex officio member of the Executive Board.

The Committee's proceedings are observed by representatives of five European governments, nominated by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG).

Possible appeals against a decision of the Register Committee will be considered and decided by the **Appeals Committee**, comprising of 3 members and 3 deputies.

The **Secretariat** is responsible for the day-to-day management of EQAR. It currently comprises of the Director (full-time) and one Executive Officer (part-time).

*(updated September 2010)*