Annex XIII: Summary of government and stakeholder interviews

The interviews were conducted by Cornelia Racké on behalf of EQAR between 20 August 2010 and 19 October 2010.

All organisations that are consultative members of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) were interviewed. The SEG sampled 12 countries for an interview, of which 6 are Governmental Members of EQAR and 6 are not.

The SEG ensured that within each group there were small, medium and large countries from different regions in Europe. 2 sampled countries did not wish to be interviewed or did not respond.

The following countries and organisations were interviewed:

	Interviewee(s)	Type
International organisations		
European Commission	Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Robin van Ijperen & Christian Tauch	personal
Council of Europe	Sjur Bergan	phone
UNESCO / CEPES	Peter Wells on behalf of Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić	written
Stakeholders (consultative BFUG members)		
ENQA	Achim Hopbach	personal
ESU	Allan Päll	personal
EUA	Jean-Marc Rapp	phone
EURASHE	Lars Lynge Nielsen & Stefan Delplace	personal
BUSINESSEUROPE	Henning Dettleff	personal
Education International	Monique Fouilhoux & Koen Geven	personal
EHEA governments that are EQAR members		
Belgium	Noël Vercruysse	personal
France	Yves Vallat & Hélène Lagier	personal
Germany	Peter Greisler	personal
Malta	James Calleja	phone
Norway	Toril Johansson & Tone Flood Strøm	personal
Non-member EHEA governments		
Albania	Arjan Xhelaj	written
Croatia	Luka Juroš	personal

Latvia	Gita Revalde	written
Sweden	Myrna Smitt	personal
United Kingdom	Peter Baldwinson & Ann McVie	personal

The Netherlands (Governmental Member of EQAR) responded to the Public Call for Comment with a written contribution.

The following summary was compiled with the support of the Danish University and Property Agency. It includes significant viewpoints voiced during the interviews. The viewpoints are organised under the following headings:

1) Is EQAR fulfilling its mission?

2) Organisational structure, legitimacy and trust

3) Influence of national governments and stakeholders

4) Transparency

5) Visibility and communication

Is EQAR fulfilling its mission?

International organisations' point of view
It will be for EQAR to analyse why some countries are more represented on the Register than others. Is EQAR better known in those countries, do their governments provide more incentives? Why is it considered an important instrument in some countries and not in others?
EQAR is a European register, it should have an impact as a European tool. Otherwise it will not achieve its objectives. The external assessment will be very helpful in answering the question in how far EQAR has already succeeded in becoming a European quality stamp and a worldwide reference.
EQAR could also have a more proactive role in promoting mobility and the "Europeanisation" of higher education, including joint degrees. In the future one of the criteria in quality assurance could be how active agencies are in promoting or supporting joint programmes.
[Agencies] prepare their applications well and conversely also that in the few cases where they have not been admitted, this has been a blow, and they do everything they can to avoid it. It is gradually establishing itself as a kind of gold standard. [...] the procedure and the number of agencies is such that I take that as a clear sign that it is actually a serious undertaking. It would have been a problem also if at this time every country had an agency in the Register.
For many outsiders it may still be difficult to see the difference between the Register and ENQA. What does it mean if an agency is a member of ENQA but not yet in the Register? Is that a real difference? Is that a technical choice of the party? Does it mean that the agency is not quite up to EQAR's

standards or is membership of ENQA sufficient? That is perhaps a real issue for the future and, depending on the answer, you would also need to provide information.
One big question is really: will an evaluation by an agency that is in EQAR be valid not only in the country of the agency but also accepted in other countries? If you talk about the European Higher Education Area, it would certainly be an idea that I would hope would take root. We know that governments are sceptical to accept an evaluation by a foreign agency for their own institutions. That will be an important issue.
Also the membership of agencies from outside of the European Higher Education Area. Will an institution evaluated by such an agency be accepted as having been quality-assessed for the purposes of the European Higher Education Area? This is also a crucial issue and I hope the answer to both will eventually be yes but to get there might be a cumbersome process.
EQAR is still relatively unknown in many countries and/or seen as an unnecessary 'club' to join.

Stakeholders' point of view

EQAR will only be able to have the desired impact once governments are ready to accept the listing of an agency on the Register as a kind of state recognition of the agency.
Ultimately, EQAR will only be able to have the desired impact once governments are ready to accept the listing of an agency on the Register as a kind of state recognition of the agency. In most countries QA agencies take decisions that are closely linked to decisions on the awarding of state recognition to programmes or institutions. As long as there is this link at national level and countries don't take the fact of being listed on the Register as quasi recognition of the agency, EQAR's effect will continue to be limited.
It is also about how the agencies themselves see being part of it and for what reasons they are or are not applying to be listed. We have seen that there is still among some governments and agencies confusion and lack of understanding of what the role of the Register is; especially in regards to ENQA or ECA (the membership organisations). (…) That also inhibits the further development.
The establishment of the Register helped the ESG to be more widely used and referred to and to become more institutionalised.
[…] there are some standards to be met if you want to be taken seriously as QA agency in Europe
[…] it is time to look at the part of the mission related to creating transparency and mutual trust, what further steps to take, what EQAR could do in promoting the Register - through building databases, organising seminars etc. This part of the mission should now be tackled more. […] When it comes to the expectations of what is at the core of the Register, to support mobility, recognition, mutual trust - that I think we can be more critical of.
Recognition problems are still very evident. The quality assurance decisions

made in one or another country are not really being trusted, and that problem goes to the institutional level more directly. These things should be tackled more and more openly. But as I said, we cannot expect too much of the first two years.
[W]e are still in the phase of establishing it and it is something that we should carry through, promoting it, making sure that it is credible, that we in this process are careful enough that it is well-known and respected by the agencies, governments, and all the public bodies. This is one thing that could battle this very misleading discussion about what is quality and what is transparency; because it is not providing simplistic answers but it is more led towards general trust building and enhancement.
Only a little more than half of the countries that could be members are actually members. On top of that, there is probably still some sort of underwood of not too serious agencies claiming to be doing a serious job. Whether EQAR has really changed European higher education, it is too early to say.
Because of the close involvement with the world of employment, it is terribly important that there is trust in the education programmes and the institutions, and EQAR is the safeguard of that, so it is all closely linked.
At this stage, EQAR does not yet have the impact it was expected and can still be expected to have in the future, namely to create a QA system for the EHEA, which is not a national but an international one. What EQAR has achieved already, is to maintain the discussion on this European QA system and to create the preconditions for it, namely by listing agencies that have been reviewed against the ESG. So once national QA systems have opened up for agencies listed on EQAR, the European system could directly get started.
There is the need to further the process of creating a common area of European QA, which possibly could be one of EQAR's tasks. It is important to make sure that this process is progressing rather than maintaining the status quo, which should not be our aim. One important precondition for this development is for EQAR to get more governmental members. I don't have any concrete measures to suggest but EQAR needs to promote its own cause and to create trust.
The European Standards and Guidelines, they are not owned by EQAR, they are not owned by anyone. They are owned by the ministers for higher education because they adopted them in Bergen in 2005. They were not designed to be very operational in evaluating agencies, throughout the operation of EQAR it is becoming increasingly clear that they are not. We learnt last week that ENQA is undertaking a study on how to operationalize the European Standards and Guidelines. The only thing you would wonder about: what is the role of EQAR? Because it has substantial experience in working with these European Standards and Guidelines. It has a very clear purpose for them. It should definitely have a voice in developing these guidelines further and use its expertise and its structures to contribute to such an evaluation process.

Governments' point of view
[How] many non-European agencies will apply for inclusion on the Register? To what extent will the Register actually be used? Will universities indeed make use of agencies that are based in another country? The answers to those questions don't depend on EQAR alone but also on the framework conditions that we as governments create in our countries. (...) In the end, it is only going to work if everybody joins in.
People also still tend to confuse EQAR and ENQA and don't really see that EQAR is something different with specific objectives and why it was important to have such an independent register. EQAR though is known among EHEA Ministries and ENIC-NARIC centres but still seems to stand as a "threat" so to say to non-EHEA members of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (...).
EQAR has existed for only two years and the main urgent task was first to set up the association, its inner structures, as such, to organize the very first rounds of expertise of applications while not all QA agencies are ready yet to apply without having an external evaluation first. So all in all, it would have been difficult for EQAR to go any faster, as sound blocks first matter for a good setting up and a further development. This very early history of EQAR should be borne in mind.
We need to see EQAR developing a bit further, having more agencies listed on the Register. That is probably going to change the role and the influence of EQAR. The fact that they already list agencies has an impact and you could see that these are actually in line with the Standards and Guidelines and fulfil everything. That's the initially impact, that you see that we are going somewhere. So it is too early to judge but it is going in the right direction.
Further down the road, the users will be able to find out who has accredited what, which country or organisation has good procedures etc. [...] how much of those ideas can really be achieved with a small or lean organisation like this, with such a small number of people? [...] you see that we are going somewhere. So it is too early to judge but it is going in the right direction.
Degree mills are a threat that is definitely still there. One of the basic purposes of EQAR was to make it easier to sort out proper quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions. It is important that people understand what they get from an agency that is on the Register. [...] It is an attestation that the agency works in an appropriate way, not about what is actually taught in an individual classroom inside an institution.
[...] the Register does not contribute to trust among providers of education in the EHEA, that is to say: trust in the quality of education and recognition of diplomas or credits. Needed for trust is an indication/statement that educational institutions adhere to the ESG and that levels of education programmes are in conformity with the levels as indicated by the Dublin descriptors of the QF-EHEA. [...] what relation exists between the quality

> assurance agency and the quality of the education provided -the teaching and learning environment - and the education process?

> [The] more agencies join up, that will then foster the impression that it actually is a Europe-wide quality assurance agency of quality assurance agencies. If you are not there, you are somehow not up to scratch, your country's system is inferior, which is not always the case.

> Some of the tasks that we assigned to EQAR might be a bit too ambitious. The mission statements are quite big. Is it EQAR as a Register that can help to improve quality or is it the BFUG and ENQA that have some of these roles? We set up a mandate which perhaps is too much. One area EQAR was supposed to further was the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, which has been an area that we have been very much engaged in. Is EQAR actually the right place to do that? Can a Register do that? Maybe we looked at this as a "mini-ENQA" or a different ENQA. Maybe we were a bit too ambitious. All the elements listed are very important to the process and to quality assurance but it is hard to say if EQAR can really implement them.

> That's why I said that at this moment, EQAR is serving as a place where countries can discuss what accreditation means, what cross-national quality assurance means, etc. That is already quite a lot. On the long-term goals, of course, a lot remains to be done. If you take a look at the goals and what they actually mean, I don't think EQAR has yet achieved what it set out to achieve – but I don't think anyone could have achieved that, it simply was impossible within those two years, the goals were very ambitious.

> A question remains which I do not yet know the answer to: what are the reasons why some countries do not send their agencies to apply for the Register (or why do some agencies do not choose to apply themselves) if it is certain that they satisfy the criteria for inclusion? It does go to show that there is some policy problem still remaining in the background.

Recommendations:
- Since EQAR wants to foster cross-border quality assurance, it should have an intrinsic interest to be closer to the outside world, more so than ENQA, which is a network for cooperation.

- EQAR should try to find out why many agencies apply from one country while there are zero responses from others, and in a second step EQAR could try to encourage applications from underrepresented countries.

- EQAR should monitor whether the ESG are a useful instrument for the work of quality assurance agencies.

- The BFUG and EQAR should bear in mind the need to revise the ESG at some stage.

- For EQAR to be successful in the long run, governments need to think about the importance they are ready to grant to the inclusion on the Register.

- To get additional members, EQAR needs to be more aggressive in its marketing, addressing exactly the questions, which countries that are reluctant to join may ask: What's in it for us? If we could persuade countries that their own influence and importance and being taken seriously in the EHEA also depends on the seriousness of their evaluation and accreditation system, then perhaps they would start coming to us.

- There is the need to further the process of creating a common area of European QA, which possibly could be one of EQAR's tasks. It is important to make sure that this process is progressing rather than maintaining the status quo, which should not be our aim.

- It would be good to have a better connection with the BFUG, given that quality assurance is a core component of the Bologna Process. It would also be good to know more about the activities of EQAR [...], making EQAR more well-known would be very useful.

- It is important that EQAR makes itself better known to a wider audience and also describe possible applications, which will contribute to the acceptance of the system.

Organisation, legitimacy, trust

International organisations' point of view
There was some criticism about the way decisions were taken in EQAR and that some agencies should not have been accepted because they did not really fulfil some of the essential conditions. As a result there were doubts about the fitness for purpose of the structure of EQAR and whether all members of the Register Committee had the necessary expertise and were sufficiently well-prepared to assess the applications.
The structure is fit for purpose. You need a permanent secretariat. The size of the secretariat as it is now is very close to the minimum.
The fact that the number of agencies in the Register is quite high but not so high as to raise questions about the integrity of the process, is already a good sign of the efficiency of the secretariat.
The Register Committee and the Appeals Committee are obviously needed. There is one point on which I have some reservations, which has to do with the secrecy of the process around how the Register Committee operates. [...]The Register Committee could be a little more transparent about its work.
Stakeholders' point of view
The strict division of tasks between the Register Committee and the Executive Board is crucial and I also could not imagine another composition of the Register Committee because stakeholder involvement is crucial.
When it comes to the Register Committee itself, it is clear now that they are independent.
[...]the relationship between the Register Committee, the body that is taking

decisions, and the Board is a rather complicated one. But again, it's as in some countries, the relationship between a court or tribunal and the supervising body of the tribunal is always complicated.
Furthermore, we should keep in mind that there is an ongoing discussion, with the European Commission especially pointing to it, whether the legislation should allow for this market for quality assurance to be fully established. How would that affect the future of quality assurance, would it change the nature of it and does that empower the Register or will there be calls to also establish competition also for EQAR based on the critique that the current stakeholder led approach does not allow EQAR to fulfil the role of a public authority.
There are different understandings of how to interpret the ESG and evaluate based on the ESG, and the Register Committee itself has a very distinct view on this. Whereas if they are using, for instance, ENQA reviews, which are made for ENQA membership purposes, it might confuse the system a bit and might actually inhibit the real aim of achieving transparency. And this question is very crucial since it will be difficult to advocate EQAR to be a transparency instrument helping to foster trust, if the procedures and functions being in place do not allow for equal treatment or an equal level of transparency.
One general issue with quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area is legitimacy. There is a big question of why can quality assurance agencies or even higher education institutions judge the quality of teaching, of education? [...] So the simple fact that academics are a fundamental part of this Register Committee but are also invited to all the General Assemblies builds legitimacy for quality assurance in Europe.
EQAR is not only an institution that is promoting quality assurance but an institution that is in a way taking the lead on how quality assurance can be organised.
And of course, since it is such a new thing, what do we do if there are problems that arise later with the agencies that have been included? What kind of impact does inclusion bring? How should the Register act, if it appears that an agency, which has been listed, has publicly violated the ESG?
Governments' point of view
It's difficult to know precisely on the basis of which elements the decision is made to put an agency into the Register, or not. The main argument put forward is that the European Standards and Guidelines should not be understood like a checklist. But what is really unacceptable? What is "substantial" compliance despite diversity in QA agencies and QA approaches?
We are still in a process of confidence-building; confidence that it is indeed an independent organisation [...]. When this confidence is there, you can build on that.
Trust needs to grow. Basically, EQAR is an instrument of trust. That's why we need to be a bit more patient; two years are certainly too short.

Maybe EQAR is not well-equipped to meet all those expectations. Of course, EQAR should not become too technocratic but looking at the mission statements and objectives, does EQAR really have the appropriate means and staff to fulfil them?
[From] the outside, it seems to be purposefully built. It is not easy to come up with a much simpler solution; I don't know how you could cut down.

Recommendations:

- One criterion for admission to the Register could be the degree of internationality of an agency. Agencies with an international outlook are of greater interest to EQAR than those with a very specific profile that operate only in a national context.

- It is [...]'s wish that as many governments as possible will become members, for the financial sustainability of the Register and also from a legitimacy standpoint.

- One important precondition for this development (read: creating a common area of European QA) is for EQAR to get more governmental members. I don't have any concrete measures to suggest but EQAR needs to promote its own cause and to create trust.

Influence of national governments and stakeholders

International organisations' point of view
There is still insufficient communication between BFUG and EQAR at the European level and the governments and agencies at the national and regional levels. On the other hand, it is normal that there should be start-up difficulties: EQAR is an innovative construction and it takes time to establish the interaction and the checks and balances between the Register Committee, the Board, the member states and the agencies. That can only be done through the kind of discussions we have seen for the last years.
All stakeholders are involved and they want to keep their good relations. This is understandable and important, but it should not impede more openness and EQAR needs to define their separate roles more clearly.
Stakeholders' point of view
The strict division of tasks between the Register Committee and the Executive Board is crucial and I also could not imagine another composition of the Register Committee because stakeholder involvement is crucial.
There has been some external critique about this stakeholder driven approach. It is quite unique in how it is organised. But for us, we are a membership organisation ourselves and we have a clear mandate, so for us the current structure ensures a level of stability. We as membership organisation will support the Register and that will not disappear overnight very easily; whereas, if there was less stakeholder involvement or less ownership, then it could change and other, commercial perspectives could come in.

The structure of this Register, which is a kind of private international organisation with stakeholders and governments on board, is rather original. It may be complicated to understand for some countries, in which the tradition of having stakeholders at the forefront is not as extensive. This stakeholder involvement is one of the most important aspects of the Register, beyond the tasks of listing the agencies.

Of course, with Board being composed of the E4, you could question the independence of EQAR but I cannot really think about an alternative. You need actors that are passionate about the matter, which are first and foremost those four. And as long as the Register Committee takes its decisions in such a way that not even those in the inner circle know why they are taken that way, I doubt that the Board could influence the decisions. (...) has (a) representative(s) on the Register Committee (that's why also from a stakeholder perspective it is the appropriate structure) and has good contacts to the person(s) nominated (of course not on individual decisions), which assures trust.

So the simple fact that (...) are a fundamental part of this Register Committee but are also invited to all the General Assemblies builds legitimacy for quality assurance in Europe. In that sense, EQAR is not only an institution that is promoting quality assurance but an institution that is in a way taking the lead on how quality assurance can be organised. So we are very happy with that.

Governments' point of view

There is also a missing link between the Executive Board, which is composed only of representatives of the founding members, and the public authorities, as there is no representative of the public authorities in the Executive Board. The other thing is the Register Committee. As I perceive it, it is composed of representatives of the founding members. Only the founding members can propose somebody for the Register Committee. There should be a shift towards more independent experts. From the outside you can perceive them as representatives; of course they are no real representatives, that is correct. But why not appoint a smaller committee within the General Assembly to search for more independent experts? Instead of giving every founding member the right to propose two members of the Register Committee.

Only the E4 are proposing members for the Register Committee, which then have to be approved by the General Assembly, but it is not easy as a member of a General Assembly to ask questions about somebody; it sometimes becomes very personal. In general, there is a too heavy dominance of the E4 in the whole construction of EQAR. (...) It should become a more normal decision-making procedure within the organisation. Otherwise the General Assembly exists only to comply with the rules of a non-profit organisation in Belgium. It has nothing to do with policy-making.

The governmental members are considered as funding source and not much more than that. 80% of the funding is coming from the governments. Therefore, I think there should also be a more active openness from the

Executive Board and from the Register Committee to the General Assembly. Not only passive openness […] I would like to see a more active openness […].
[G]overnmental members in the General Assembly are also supposed to represent their own Ministry. While in theory, governments have their say in the General Assembly; in reality, Ministry representatives cannot do anything. The way the statutes are written, it is hard for them to have an impact on something, and so is it really worth it? … Yet higher education is a public responsibility.
We have confidence in the way everything is set up and in the way the Register Committee is composed of outstanding experts, there is no doubt about their professionalism. But because higher education is something to be looked after by ministries, they should have more of a say within EQAR as well.
Governmental members do have observers in the Register Committee, as "watchdogs" from our side, but even in the General Assembly we are more like observers. We as countries are made too passive in the General Assembly. So a better balance between public responsibility and the must of independence for EQAR should be struck.
[Some governments] would have liked to control everything but that was simply impossible. The majority of countries argued in favour of an independent organisation (which then also became the consensus) and the question was how to achieve this. The solution we found in the end seems to be a good one. The funding comes from both governments and agencies, which is a good mixture. The same goes for the distinction between the decision-making body where the governments are not represented (only with 5 observers) and the General Assembly where the political decisions are taken. I was positively surprised, this division of tasks worked out quite well. They took our concerns seriously without us (the governments) influencing individual decisions.
I still think that it is a good organisational structure. It is influenced by the need to ensure that individual decisions are taken independently, while it does not develop a life of its own but stays within the political parameters set by the governments. That's why we have the General Assembly, which works well. We will certainly have some discussions on how this will develop in the future but the basic structure is the right one.
It will be interesting to see if the evaluators are able to see possibilities for simplifying the complicated structure, given the different roles that you have to take care of. You need the BFUG as a partner, you need the countries. Since the evaluations of the agencies should be independent, the countries cannot be in that room but we have to be in some other rooms to take our roles and our responsibilities.
It would be good to strengthen the link between the BFUG and EQAR. It has just been decided that those representing the BFUG on the Register Committee have to be BFUG members and that is very important, precisely

to strengthen that link.
The General Assembly might not have found its format yet, maybe we have not had the discussions that we need. It could develop into an arena to discuss and develop policy and quality, but maybe these discussions should also stay with the BFUG.
The Register provides a mechanism for governments to talk about quality assurance on the institutional, governmental and national policy levels; a place where governments can talk on how to approach the issue of accreditation and quality assurance on the European level.

Recommendations:

- The Register Committee should be composed of more independent experts, rather than only of representatives of the E4. For practical reasons it is perhaps a little bit difficult to have some people from America, that depends on the number of meetings that are necessary, but why not have people from outside the EHEA in the Register Committee? (...) It is not necessary to have a big experience in a quality assurance agency but you have to have an attitude of independence and the skill of critical and independent judgement. That is more important than to have experience in quality assurance mechanisms or agencies.

- [There] should also be a more active openness from the Executive Board and from the Register Committee to the General Assembly. [...] the dominance or the weight of the E4 in the whole project should be diminished.

- The governmental members should be a little bit more involved in the running of EQAR.

Transparency

International organisations' point of view
The decision-making process of EQAR has been considered not very transparent. [...] EQAR has to strike a difficult balance between remaining independent and discrete about its deliberations, [...] while at the same time fulfilling its important purpose of giving governments reason to trust the decisions taken by EQAR.
Stakeholders' point of view
There are different understandings of how to interpret the ESG and evaluate based on the ESG, and the Register Committee itself has a very distinct view on this. [...] And this question is very crucial since it will be difficult to advocate EQAR to be a transparency instrument helping to foster trust, if the procedures and functions being in place do not allow for equal treatment or an equal level of transparency.
What is difficult is that the deliberations underlying the decisions of the

Register Committee are not transparent. [...] there are also good reasons why it cannot be entirely transparent – for reasons of data protection and the need to treat decisions confidentially, especially if an agency is rejected. On the other hand, if decisions are not entirely transparent, it is difficult for "outsiders" [...] to grant EQAR a bigger role than it currently has.

Governments' point of view
It is important that procedures and processes are as open and transparent as possible. You cannot be open on everything but as far as it is possible, everybody involved should know what is going on and understand the processes.
The reports from the Register Committee have been very good and very interesting and have shown great insight into the whole aspect and we look forward to the next report. Also the presentations we get from EQAR are very good. [...] EQAR is eager to present us with the information we need, they are very service-minded, which is very good.
[The structure of EQAR are] quite process-driven and without a clear view of what they are trying to achieve through all these processes. Process takes over because it is about demonstrating openness and transparency. And that tends to become the prime reason for the bureaucracy [...].
Anticipating that the Register Committee continues to account for their operations and judgement, as is done with their first report (read: report of October 2009) via the E4 and the General Assembly, the process of registration is clear.

Recommendations:

- EQAR needs to do some serious re-thinking on how to make the work of the Register Committee confidential for its applicants while at the same time offering more transparency.

- [The] decisions of the Register Committee and the rationales behind should also be written down and made public so that it becomes clear what is expected of an agency, which contributes to the development of quality standards and trust.

- Ensuring transparency in the cooperation of the different bodies and eventually also vis-à-vis the outside world – beyond a mere list of accredited agencies – is something EQAR still needs to accomplish.

Communication

International organisations' point of view
There is still insufficient communication between BFUG and EQAR at the European level and the governments and agencies at the national and regional levels.
For many outsiders it may still be difficult to see the difference between the Register and ENQA.
EQAR needs greater visibility and a communications/PR strategy, to raise its

profile and the benefits of becoming a member (i.e. it's not a question of whether you can afford to join, but whether you can afford not to)[.]

Stakeholders' point of view
[...] there have been complaints from agencies that EQAR has an extremely formalistic way of working. It is understandable that in the start-up phase a new organisation wants to show that it is serious organisation. But EQAR should make it as easy as possible (with regard to the procedures) for agencies to apply for inclusion. After the first round of applications EQAR has improved the information for applicants significantly, which was also necessary, and now this problem seems to have been solved.
EQAR can be more proactive, that's for sure. [...] it can do a lot promoting transparency etc. *Qrossroads* is a perfect example of something similar that the Register itself can do as well.

Governments' point of view
[There] is still among some governments and agencies confusion and lack of understanding of what the role of the Register is. Especially in regards to ENQA or ECA (the membership organisations).
[...] not full awareness of the procedures outside of the founding members. Also when it comes to the wider public, the Register needs to be promoted much more (also in the sense of raising awareness about how it functions).
[The] visibility of the Register should increase considerably. Because the more people become aware of it, the more people understand that there is this thing and agencies have been listed and they are deemed credible, the more people will scrutinize it and ask critical questions.
[You] need to make sure the "clients" are aware of the possible ways to use [the Register].
EQAR is a quite sophisticated tool which is known only by professionals.

Recommendations:
- The insiders understand the difference between ENQA and EQAR, but a stronger communication effort is needed to explain the specific role of EQAR to outsiders, e.g. through the website. [...] EQAR has to market itself through its own value.

- EQAR needs greater visibility and a communications/PR strategy, to raise its profile and the benefits of becoming a member.

- [The] visibility of the Register should increase considerably. [...] So I guess it is a matter of formulating a communication strategy, together with all the involved parties, and then following it up.

- EQAR can be more proactive, that's for sure. [...] it can do a lot promoting transparency etc.

- To get additional members, EQAR needs to be more aggressive in its marketing, addressing exactly the questions, which countries that

are reluctant to join may ask: What's in it for us? If we could persuade countries that their own influence and importance and being taken seriously in the EHEA also depends on the seriousness of their evaluation and accreditation system, then perhaps they would start coming to us.

- EQAR needs to present more actively what is already happening. There are, for instance, already joint degrees that are also jointly accredited, by one agency. Information on such examples needs to be disseminated.

- We also need acceptance outside the EHEA. […] It should enter into dialogue and develop further and certainly not stick to the status quo.