



MESSAGE TO THE EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

PARIS, MAY 2018

/// EQAR's contribution to the EHEA

Since 2008, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) has been instrumental in promoting transparency, trust and the recognition of the work of registered agencies across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) and EQAR together form the fundament of external quality assurance in the EHEA. This common framework serves to facilitate cooperation between countries and higher education institutions, to enable cross-border quality assurance activities and to increase the mobility of staff and students. EQAR also serves as a basis for ultimately giving higher education institutions the possibility to choose the most suitable agency for their external quality assurance.

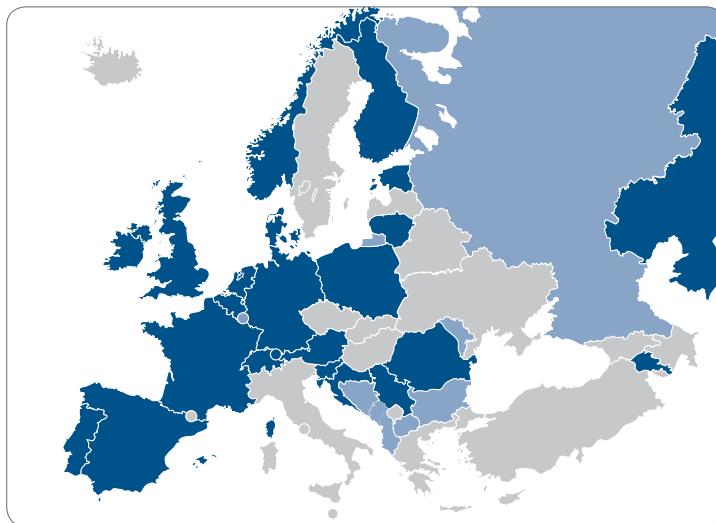
As of 2018, 24 EHEA countries fulfil the key commitment that external QA be performed by independent agencies demonstrably complying with the ESG as, evidenced through registration on EQAR. This reflects the remarkable progress made by governments and stakeholders across the EHEA in establishing quality assurance in line with the ESG.

EQAR provides information on registered agencies and a comprehensive knowledge base of national legal frameworks for external quality assurance.

This year EQAR launches the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), including quality assurance reports and decisions from a number of EQAR-registered agencies. By presenting information in a single web portal, the database will facilitate access to information on the quality of higher education and on how it is managed, for the benefit of different stakeholders.

/// Implementation of the EHEA Key Commitment on Quality Assurance

- External QA performed by agencies that demonstrably comply with the ESG, registered on EQAR
- For some, but not all higher education institutions



/// Priorities for the future

EQAR has three key priorities within the frame of the EHEA's fundamental values and key commitments, which are reflected in EQAR's Strategy 2018 – 2022:

- // all quality assurance agencies operating in Europe align their work to the ESG;
- // based on trustworthy external quality assurance performed by EQAR-registered agencies, comparable higher education qualifications are automatically recognised across the EHEA;
- // EQAR serves as a comprehensive information tool for students and staff in higher education, providing useful and reliable information on registered agencies, legal frameworks and external quality assurance results.

/// Action required from EHEA governments

To realise these priorities, EQAR aims to cooperate actively with both governments and stakeholders. EQAR calls upon ministers to join these priorities and particularly to support and encourage:

- // all EHEA countries to become governmental members of EQAR and to, actively engage in and use EQAR as a platform for policy dialogue on quality assurance;
- // all quality assurance agencies operating in the EHEA to apply for registration on EQAR;
- // national quality assurance agencies to participate in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) so as to maximise its usefulness and facilitate transparency and recognition;
- // the development of a genuine quality culture that promotes the autonomy of the higher education institutions and academic freedom.

/// EQAR: 10 years of promoting trust and recognition

EQAR was founded in 2008 as the official register of quality assurance agencies complying with the EHEA's Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). The Register today includes 45 quality assurance agencies that have demonstrated their compliance with the ESG through a thorough external review of their work.

In line with the commitments made in the Bucharest and Yerevan communiqués, 16 EHEA countries have enabled their higher education institutions to choose a suitable EQAR-registered agency for their obligatory external evaluation, accreditation or audit, making specific use of the EHEA infrastructure in recognising cross-border external QA.

The principle of recognising external quality assurance, performed by EQAR-registered agencies, also underpins the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Adopted by ministers in 2015, the European Approach is so far available to all higher education institutions in 12 EHEA countries, and to some higher education institutions or subject to further conditions in another 13 countries.

Governmental membership

EQAR's governmental membership now covers 38 of the 48 EHEA countries, representing a significant increase from 23 in 2008.

Governmental membership in EQAR is an important opportunity to engage in the governance of EQAR and to be in active dialogue on quality assurance with policy makers from across the EHEA.

The EQAR Members' Dialogue is the only regular event specifically for EHEA governments to discuss current policy developments and exchange with peers on issues related to quality assurance.

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