DEQAR

Briefing Note for the Members' Dialogue 2021

(session 2.2)

1. Main findings

DEQAR was launched in 2018 during the Paris Ministerial Conference. DEQAR's comprehensive coverage is being improved with help of the second Erasmus+ DEQAR CONNECT project (2020-2022), which partners with 15 QAAs (uploading reports) and 4 ENIC-NARIC centres (building connection with DEQAR). Table below shows main indicators in time.

According to the survey results, 90% of respondents found that the **strategic goal of establishing a database for external QA and its promotion by different stakeholders has been sufficiently addressed by EQAR**, with no major variation between members and QA agencies.

	October 2019 (end of DEQAR project)	January 2021
Number of reports	46 838	54 670
Number of HEIs	2187	2694
Number of agencies uploading in DEQAR	32	40 (of 49 registered)
Number of countries	65 (40 EHEA / 25 non-EHEA)	80 (42 EHEA / 38 non-EHEA)
Comprehensive coverage of HE systems[1]	13	20 (see Figure 1)

The detailed survey results confirm the above general feedback, showcasing that EQAR members recognize the importance of **inclusion of information about national HE systems in DEQAR.** 19 EHEA governments answered that is very important, 16 answered that is important, 3 that is somewhat important, while only 1 respondent answered that showcasing information about their country in DEQAR is not important at all. The questionnaire also asked QA agencies how DEQAR adds value in their work. In their textual answers, agencies referred mainly to the *(a) recognition of agencies' work in the international area, (b) increase of visibility of domestic HEIs, (c) expanding of the reach to broader masses and promoting reports to more*

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[1] More than 50% of HEIs have at least one report in the database

HE stakeholders, (d) facilitating recognition of foreign degrees, (e) peer learning.

No reports

100%

of higher education institutions in ETER/national list

10%
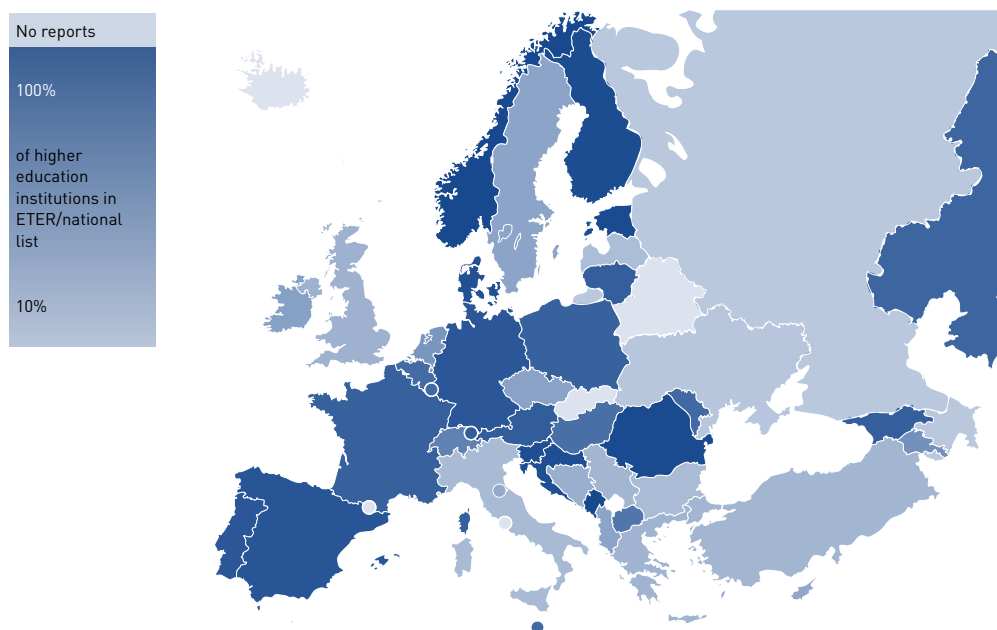
Figure 1: coverage of EHEA systems in DEQAR

Some of the governmental respondents required **improved coverage** of DEQAR in the upcoming years. One such example is a statement given by a governmental representative who hoped that DEQAR records all accreditation decisions taken by EQAR-registered agencies in 2-3 years, and the way to achieve this is by aiming to establish automatic connectivity between all agencies' databases and DEQAR. Another governmental member asked:

"How come some EQAR-registered agencies are not "playing the game" yet, hence resulting in missing QA reports in the database? Is it a technical issue about IT infrastructures from them?"

Survey results show that most of those responding agencies that have not yet uploaded reports to DEQAR are planning to do so; **only two agencies** stated that **they are not participating in DEQAR and are not planning to**. Reasons for not participating (earlier) can be summarised in the following groups: *(a) Lack of (IT) staff, (b) Outdated system for storing reports that is not suitable for upgraded digitalisation, (c) Having other priorities currently (e.g. reorganisation, going through review that is burdensome for the agency), (d) Reports are being uploaded by another agency already, (e) Not important for the national actors.* The strong need of assistance with IT matters was also expressed in a survey of the 15 QA agencies participating in the DEQAR CONNECT Project in April 2020. It showed that agencies need assistance with *(a) establishing their own database, (b) understanding the DEQAR data model and synchronizing with agency's one, (c) developing software which will enable automatic connectivity.*

Obstacles related to IT preparedness are visible in the methods that agencies use to upload information to DEQAR. So far only 13 agencies used advanced automated ways of uploading reports (i.e. through API).

Content wise, EQAR members would like to see some improvements of DEQAR. Out of 45 respondents, 30 think that DEQAR needs some enhancement, 7 think that it does not need enhancement, 7 are not sure, and 1 thinks that DEQAR needs lots of enhancement. In concrete terms, reflections highlighted the necessity of (1) updating the data model and type of information presented in the database, and (2) expanding the scope of the register taking in consideration new developments in EHEA (e.g. micro-credentials, distance learning programs etc.). In regards to the former, both respondents from governments and QAAs stressed the wish of introducing *(a) summary of reports in English*, *(b) making better distinction between different types of reports (i.e. program/institution, evaluation/accreditation, QA of flexible learning paths/traditional modes of studies etc.).* One open question is to what extent this should go beyond higher education institutions, illustrated by the textual response presented below:

"We would like to stress the outcomes of the discussions in the European Commission's consultation group on micro-credentials, where there were suggestions to establish a list of trusted providers from outside the higher education institutions. There were clear suggestions, although not fully discussed and agreed by the group, that EQAR could play a key role in this as well. This would need further discussions and probably an extension of EQAR's mandate" (European Commission)

The QA results database (i.e. DEQAR) page is the most visited part of EQAR website. With 45 529 unique visitors in 2020, this page accounted for 33% of website traffic. The surveys asked both members and QA agencies representatives about how often they are consulting DEQAR. Representatives from QAA are using DEQAR more often than members (see Figure 2).
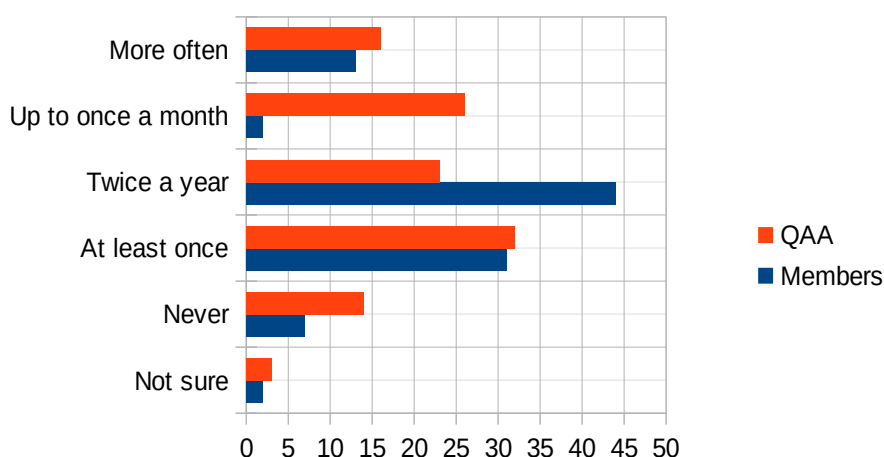
Figure 2: Visits to the DEQAR pages

For improving the **role of DEQAR in enhancing EHEA,** governmental members and observers mainly pointed to the need of e*nhanced collaboration (a) between EQAR and ENIC NARICs* and (b) establishing *interoperability with other HE databases.* On this point, the current DEQAR Connect project partners with 4 ENIC NARICs and several HE databases including Europass.

2. Questions for discussion

1. How can agencies be stimulated to update reports in timely manner?

2. How can DEQAR become more attractive source for ENIC-NARIC centres as well as other target audiences?

3. What would be DEQAR's role in presenting flexible learning paths and micro-credentials?

4. How should DEQAR show higher-education-level offers by other providers than higher education institutions, if these are evaluated or certified by registered agencies?

5. How to maximise the potential of automatic linking with ENIC-NARICs, Europass and other tools/platforms? Which are the most relevant platforms to reach out to?

3. References

- [EQAR Self-Evaluation Survey for Members and Potential Members](#)
- [EQAR Self-Evaluation Survey for QA agencies](#)