

Work Plan 2022 – 2023

General Assembly

13 April 2022

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Introduction

The General Assembly agreed on the principle of a “rolling work plan”, covering two years and being updated annually.

The Work Plan sets EQAR’s priorities for the coming year and describes how the activities envisaged in the Strategy will be implemented. In doing so, the Work Plan also describes the work that is part of EQAR’s statutory core function of managing the Register. This is a permanent key priority for EQAR, and the organisation invests considerable staff time and financial resources in fulfilling this function.

EQAR is currently involved in a few projects that support the implementation of the EHEA. Activities that relate to those projects are tagged accordingly:

- **DEQAR CONNECT**: Enhancing the Coverage and Connectivity of QA in the EHEA through DEQAR
- **IMINQA**: Implementation and Innovation in QA through peer learning (TPG C umbrella)
- **TPG-LRC CoRE**: TPG-LRC Constructing Recognition in the EHEA (TPG B umbrella)
- **QA-FIT**: Quality Assurance Fit for the Future (analysis of the ESG implementation)

1. Strategic Goal: Transparency and Information

Goal: “EQAR provides reliable and widely-used information on registered quality assurance agencies as well as on which higher education institutions or programmes have been subject to external quality assurance in line with the ESG.” – **Activities:**

1. Maintain the register of quality assurance agencies and provide public information
2. Establish a database of external quality assurance results and promote its use by different stakeholders
3. Ensure that EQAR’s instruments for monitoring agencies are seen as effective by agencies and policy makers
4. Use analyses of the Register Committee’s decisions as well as the information available on registered agencies and their activities to provide the sector with statistics and analyses
5. Maintain the active dialogue and communication with ENQA as the main review coordinator and representative body of agencies

1.1 Managing the Register of Quality Assurance Agencies	1, 3, 5
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(a) Regular tasks

- Handle **applications for inclusion and renewal of registration**; these are EQAR's primary way of ensuring that registered agencies comply substantially with the ESG.
- Maintain **active communication with ENQA** as the organisation coordinating the vast majority of agency reviews against the ESG, including regular working and official meetings.
- Consider **Substantive Change Reports** by registered agencies re. their organisational structure, quality assurance activities and methodologies, and decide on action as necessary.
- Consider any **Third-Party Complaints** re. registered agencies' ESG compliance in accordance with the Complaints Policy.
- Consider any **appeals or complaints** against decisions of the Register Committee.
- **Survey registered agencies** for feedback after each application and decision, review responses for immediate issues on a rolling basis and carry out a comprehensive regular review every two years, leading to a brief public report.

Applications for renewal of registration

- review done, being considered (as of 12/3/2022)	3
- review ongoing, report expected during 2022	10
- review ongoing, report expected during 2023	11

Initial applications for registration

- review done, being considered (as of 12/3/2022)	2
- review ongoing, report expected during 2022	6
- review ongoing, report expected during 2023	2

(b) Improvements of the application process

- Prepare and implement revisions to the Procedures for Applications, incl. adjustments of the Guide for Agencies.
- Prepare and implement amendments to the Appeals Procedure.

(c) Enhance communication with review coordinators & training of reviewers

- Monitor closely the quality of reports from reviews coordinated by other organisations, and review the Policy on External Review Coordinators and Panels if needed.
- Consider how to develop arrangements for training, briefing and debriefing of panels (by coordinators or EQAR) in order to enhance

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<p>understanding and reflection of EQAR expectations in reviews.</p> <p>(d) Targeted reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the first experiences with the new targeted reviews approach once the first five cases have been completed 	
Responsible	Register Committee, President, Secretariat, Appeals Committee
Timing	<p>Register Committee meetings 3 times/year in situ, up to 3 additional ad-hoc online meetings in between</p> <p>(a) ongoing; monthly EQAR-ENQA working meetings and annual official meetings; next comprehensive review in 2022</p> <p>(b) draft amendments presented to GA 2022, finalised and implemented subsequently</p> <p>(c) review coordinator policy after three reviews by other coordinators than ENQA since adoption of the policy</p> <p>(d) approximately 2nd half of 2023</p>

1.2 Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)	2
<p>EQAR maintains the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR). In addition to ongoing technical and data maintenance, the priority tasks for the current period are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Monitor continuous updating and follow up whether reports are promptly fed into DEQAR, implement a suitable automatic reminder mechanism. (b) Expand coverage of DEQAR through support to registered agencies in feeding their reports into DEQAR, address remaining agencies individually/bilaterally. (c) Strengthen the connection with ETER/OrgReg and implement a fully automatised update/synchronisation of institution data. (d) Review the presentation of information with regard to different user groups (e.g. additional filters, defining user pathways, information presented tailored for different users and their questions) 	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	<p>(a) reminder mechanism by mid-2022</p> <p>(b) regular</p> <p>(c) implement by the end of 2022</p> <p>(d) decide on changes by end of 2022, implement in 2023</p>

1.3 Analysis on ESG and EHEA Key Commitment	4, 6
<p>EQAR makes active use of the Register Committee decisions on registered agencies, information from DEQAR and information on national QA systems to analyse important trends and developments in external QA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Produce an annual Policy Brief that presents, maps and analyses the EQA activities of registered agencies and the development of external QA in the EHEA in line with the key commitment (also serves as preparatory analysis for the IMINQA PLA) (b) Organise a Peer-Learning Activity (PLA) on aligning legal frameworks with the ESG IMINQA (c) Provide easily readable information and statistics, incl. visuals/charts, on ESG compliance on EQAR's website. (d) Monitor developments in external QA at system level across the EHEA and maintain the knowledge base of national/regional frameworks for external quality assurance; contact all EHEA governments annually to systematically review the information. (e) Review and assure that the descriptors of the levels of fulfilment the EHEA commitments are meaningful and clear (f) Publish information on how the knowledge base is updated and how countries are classified on maps and tables (g) Carry out a survey of national ministries on the ESG implementation QA-FIT (h) Update and extend the analysis of findings from the Register Committee's decisions since the adoption of the ESG 2015. (i) Organise a focus group of national ministries QA-FIT (j) Organise a QA-FIT webinar and final policy event 	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) annual, presented in Q2 each year (b) September 2022 IMINQA (c) additional features implemented by autumn 2022 (d) continuously, systematic annual update in Q2 (e) second quarter 2022 (f) third quarter 2022 (g) survey in 4th quarter 2022, results by May 2023 QA-FIT (h) next update in summer 2023 (i) Oct/Nov 2023 QA-FIT (j) first half of 2024 QA-FIT

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2. Strategic Goal: International Trust and Recognition

Goal: “EQAR-registered agencies and their QA results are recognised across the EHEA. On that basis, qualifications that were subject to external quality assurance by registered agencies (whether at institutional or programme level) are recognised and, in line with national requirements, higher education institutions are allowed to work with a suitable registered agency to fulfil their formal external quality assurance obligations.” – **Activities:**

6. Maintain the public knowledge base on legal frameworks for external QA and cross-border recognition, including the use of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
7. Encourage EHEA governments to use EQAR registration as a basis to recognise external QA results and reduce duplication of efforts
8. Maintain the information exchange with the ENIC-NARIC networks to promote the role of external QA and EQAR to support (automatic) recognition of qualifications
9. Contribute to the EHEA working structure where relevant and appropriate in light of EQAR's specific role
10. Reach out to the remaining EHEA countries to identify the reasons for not becoming governmental members and encourage them to join EQAR

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2.1 Feed Expertise into European Policy Development	9, 7
<p>EQAR makes available its expertise on external quality assurance to interested policy makers, stakeholders or researchers. To that end EQAR contributes to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) working structures as well as other relevant European policy developments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Contribute to the EHEA 2021-2024 work plan in relation to quality assurance and automatic recognition as part of the BFUG and the following working groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ WG 1 on Monitoring the Implementation ◦ TPG B on Recognition TPG-LRC CoRE ◦ TPG C on Quality Assurance IMINQA ◦ Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA b) Feed expertise into the European Union discussions and initiatives related to quality assurance (e.g. the proposal of a European Degree label, the possible European Approach for QA of European University alliances, possible revision of the EU Recommendation on Quality Assurance, the European Higher Education Sector Observatory), amongst others through the EEA Higher Education Working Group. 	
Responsible	President and Secretariat

Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ongoing, aligned with external groups' schedules b) depending on external activities/consultations

2.2 DEQAR – Enhance Connectivity and Visibility	2
<p>EQAR will continue to enhance DEQAR's connectivity by exploiting existing synergies and exploring new opportunities to use DEQAR data directly in the recognition workflow, digital credentialing and elsewhere:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support and facilitate the integration of DEQAR data in recognition workflows: hands-on workshop for selected ENIC-NARICs and individual follow-up support DEQAR CONNECT TPG-LRC CoRE b) Support the uptake of the interface to Europass Digital Credentials DEQAR CONNECT c) Support the use of digitally-signed DEQAR data (presented as Verifiable Credentials) in the EBSI Diplomas Use Case and explore further use cases DEQAR CONNECT d) Contribute to the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER) Advisory Board to strengthen cooperation and links e) Reach out to information portals for potential students and explore how DEQAR data could be linked or integrated 	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) workshop in May 2022, ongoing support afterwards b) webinar before May 2022 c) ongoing d) ongoing e) identify portals of interest during 2022

2.3 Cross-Border Quality Assurance	6, 7
<p>EQAR promotes the EHEA ministerial commitment to enable cross-border external QA and allow higher education institutions to work with a suitable EQAR-registered agency. EQAR will feed the knowledge and insight from its monitoring into policy discussions and relevant seminars and conferences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Monitor national legal frameworks for the recognition of cross-border external QA activity. b) Monitor the extent to which countries have enabled use of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Maintain a specific page on its website with information on the European Approach, in particular with examples of using the European Approach. d) Produce policy briefs on cross-border QA and the European Approach drawing on data from DEQAR and ETER DEQAR CONNECT e) Organise Peer-learning activity (PLA) on cross-border QA and produce a preparatory analysis IMINQA f) Organise a PLA on the European Approach and produce a preparatory analysis IMINQA
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ongoing b) ongoing c) ongoing d) by end of May 2022 DEQAR CONNECT e) by March 2023 IMINQA f) by September 2023 IMINQA

2.4 Micro-credentials and alternative providers	2
<p>The quality assurance of micro-credentials and especially of alternative providers is discussed widely in the EHEA. EQAR will follow up the recommendations from the MICROBOL project and the EU consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Create a new category for “alternative providers” in DEQAR in order to allow agencies to upload respective reports IMINQA b) Develop a data standard for digital information on micro-credentials IMINQA c) Assess the feasibility of a quality label for micro-credentials based on QA aligned with the ESG IMINQA 	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) in progress, roll out necessary changes in 2023 b) by March 2024 c) by September 2024

3. Transversal

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3.1 General Assembly & Members' Dialogue	
<p>EQAR organises annually a General Assembly (GA) and a Members' Dialogue (MD). These events allows EQAR members – governments and European stakeholder organisations – to discuss policy developments in the EHEA and EQAR's strategic development.</p> <p>The Members' Dialogue 2022 will focus on current policy developments in the EHEA and the future strategy of EQAR.</p>	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	GA annually in the 2 nd quarter MD annually in the 4 th quarter

3.2 Strategy & Review									
<p>The Executive Board meets 3-4 times annually to oversee the implementation of EQAR's Strategy and Work Plan.</p> <p>Based on the external evaluation, the current Strategy – valid until 2023 – will be reviewed.</p>									
Responsible	All EQAR bodies involved								
Timing	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>once per quarter</td> <td>EB meetings</td> </tr> <tr> <td>summer 2022</td> <td>strategy review discussion RC & EB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>autumn 2022</td> <td>first draft, discussion at MD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>spring 2023</td> <td>adoption by GA</td> </tr> </table>	once per quarter	EB meetings	summer 2022	strategy review discussion RC & EB	autumn 2022	first draft, discussion at MD	spring 2023	adoption by GA
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3.3 Communication	
<p>EQAR's ongoing communication activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the EQAR website and regular news items • Preparation of the EQAR newsletters • Social media presence on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook • Attending to inquiries from the public 	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	ongoing, ca. 4 – 5 newsletters per year

3.4 Finances	
<p>The financial management includes EQAR's general accounting, the preparation of accounts, budget and for the external financial audit. This includes specific accounting for project-related transactions.</p> <p>As a coordinator of DEQAR CONNECT EQAR also collects and reviews financial reports from partners, and makes corresponding payments to partners.</p>	
Responsible	Secretariat
Timing	ongoing, annual audit before the GA DEQAR CONNECT project ending 31 May 2022, project accounts to be finalised and audited in July 2022

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3.5 Upcoming appointments and elections			
	Term ends	Election at	Remarks
President	30 June 2023	GA 2023	
Executive Board (EB)	GA 2022	GA 2022	
Register Committee (RC)	30 June 2023	GA 2023	
Appeals Committee (AC)	31 May 2023	GA 2023	