

Key findings and perspectives on the revision of the ESG

Agreement between stakeholders

- Stakeholders agree on the **importance of a European QA framework** especially for promoting common standards in HE, stimulate enhancement, and facilitate degree recognition
- Stakeholders agree that the **ESG support** development of L&T, trust in qualifications, student mobility, quality culture
- Stakeholders would like the ESG to provide **more guidance**
- Stakeholders strongly agree that the **ESG are still needed**

What should be revised?

- “Purpose and principles” of the ESG need **minor or no revision at all**
- Students and majority of QA agencies think that **current focus** of ESG (L&T) should be revised, and expanded to cover **new activities and aspects of higher education**, while less than half of HEIs agree
- Majority of QA agencies and students want “institutional management” and “institutional autonomy” to be covered, while HEIs are less keen
- Majority of stakeholders want to have topics such as digitalisation, research, third mission, academic freedom, etc. included in the ESG, but there are also significant portions of each stakeholder group (between 35% and 15%) that disagree

→ **Surveys gave us useful information, but more questions than answers regarding where to go next**

Open questions and future discussion points

- **Purpose** of the document
- **Scope** of the document/ elements covered
- **Structure** of the document(s?)
- **Future-proofing**

Purpose of the document

- A tool for international cooperation and/or basic standards for national systems?
- Or for enhancing systems through good practice and innovation?
- Use of the ESG as compliance tool vs. good practice/development tool

Scope of the document/ elements covered

- Learning and teaching focus – or also research, third mission? Institutional management (beyond IQA systems)?
- Topics: social dimension, values, lifelong learning, digitalisation...
- Also (non-HE specific) topics such as greening?
- Risks in widening the scope or coverage: acceptance? Possible duplication with other tools, principles, mechanisms?
- Impact of coverage on the methodology

Structure

- Role of and balance between standards and guidelines
 - More guidance needed
 - More clarity on standards (less scope for interpretation)

BUT also:

- More flexibility needed, no uniformity
 - Risk that guidelines become standards (and restrict innovation and applicability – and future relevance)
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- Separate guidelines which could be more easily adjusted? Risks and benefits?

Future-proofing

- Balance between addressing what is important *now*, and making sure the ESG remain relevant also in the future
 - To what extent should we mention AI, micro-credentials, alliances/networks... if at all?
- Forward-looking (and encouraging enhancement) without moving the compliance goalposts unnecessarily/unreasonably?

“What do you think?”

