

EQAR Members Dialogue 2025

Reader

1. Revision of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

15 October (11:00 – 13:15)

This session will present the state of play of the revision of the ESG and include reference to the initial conclusions and proposals of the ESG revision Steering Committee. In addition to providing information about the timeline and working structures for the ESG revision, the session will also include an overview of key proposed revisions, on which the participants will be asked to provide their reflection and feedback. In this way, this session will also aim to prepare the participants and serve as an introduction to the publication of the first draft of the revised ESG in November 2025, as well as the consultation session that will be organised at the BFUG meeting in December 2025.

Key preparatory and guiding questions:

- Are the draft revisions appropriate and relevant?
- Do the draft revisions successfully reflect the stakeholder input from the previous consultations (QA FIT project)?

Further preparatory materials:

- [ESG 2015](#)
- [Key findings of the QA-FIT project](#) (stakeholder input on the ESG revision)
- [Overview of key proposed revisions](#) (briefing note)

2. Analysis of outcomes and trends related to the independence of QA agencies

15 October (14:15 – 15:00)

The notion of independence of QA agencies has been an important element of the European quality assurance framework since the first version of the European standards and guidelines (ESG) in 2005. This independence is conceived as a counterpart of institutional autonomy in higher education and as an important element of QA agencies' effectiveness – since they conduct external evaluations, often with formal outcomes (e.g. accreditation), independence is necessary for facilitating trust within the higher education system and internationally.

This session will present initial findings from the study of EQAR Register Committee discussions and decision-making on ESG 3.3 (Independence of the QA agency). Participants will be able to find information about and discuss key examples of infringement upon agencies' independence, as well as discuss different fundamental categories of dangers to independence, i.e. potential vs. actual, or *de jure* vs. *de facto* infringement.

Key preparatory and guiding questions:

- How is the independence of QA agencies protected in your legislation? Which elements, if any, could (potentially) endanger the agencies' independence?
- Which are the best practices of agencies' independence?
- Do you consider some types of infringements upon the agency's independence as more severe or harmful than the others? If yes, which ones and why?
- What do you see as main challenges to agencies' independence in the future?

Further preparatory materials:

- examples of [non-compliance](#) or [partial compliance](#) of QA agencies with ESG 3.3.

3. Upgrading the EQAR Knowledge Base

15 October (15:00 – 15:30)

EQAR currently provides different type of data and information related to quality assurance to the public. Most notably, DEQAR ([link](#)) includes detailed data on accredited higher education institutions and programmes, but in addition to that, EQAR also publishes information on registered QA agencies ([link](#)) and on the different national or system-level tools, methods, processes or frameworks ([link](#)).

This session will present the EQAR Knowledge Base and different types of information that it contains, following which a needs analysis survey will be presented. This survey will be directed at all the EQAR stakeholders in order to reliably assess what are the needs of the European HE sector for information provision related to external QA.

Finally, participants will be asked to provide feedback and input about the EQAR Knowledge Base in line with the questions outlined below.

Key preparatory and guiding questions:

- How useful is the information currently provided by EQAR in general?
- How useful is the information on country or system-level about QA and related regulatory or policy framework?
- Which information should be added to the EQAR Knowledge Base?
- Which relevant information could you provide to the EQAR Knowledge Base in the future? How often should the country or system-level information be updated?

4. Knowledge Café sessions

15 October (16:00 – 17:15)

*A) Session 1: Quality Assurance of European Universities Alliances,
Elena Cirlan (ENQA)*

This session will present the outcomes of the report on QA of European Universities Alliances that was conducted within the IMINQA project.

Further preparatory materials: [Report on Quality Assurance of the European Universities alliances: state of play and future perspectives](#).

*B) Session 2: Providing reliable data on micro-credentials - QualityLink project results
Colin Tuck (KIC)*

This session will present the results of the QualityLink project which aims to create an open, reliable and scalable ecosystem for quality data on micro-credentials and other courses.

Further preparatory materials: [QualityLink website](#) and [QualityLink guide](#)

*C) Session 3: Introducing QA of micro-credentials in national legislation: example of Slovenia
Jernej Širok (Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation)*

This session will present how the recent legislative changes in Slovenia introduced micro-credentials in the comprehensive Slovenian legislation and how this impacts the quality assurance in Slovenian higher education.

Further preparatory materials: [Briefing note on the revision of Slovenian regulatory framework](#).

*D) Session 4: Recent advances in implementation of the European Approach: example of Italy
Lavinia Monti (Italian Ministry of University and Research)
Daniele Livon (Director, ANVUR)*

This session, delivered jointly by the representatives of the Italian Ministry and national QA agency, will present how the recent legislative changes enabled the application of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes in Italy and will reflect on the path to successful implementation.

Further preparatory materials: [European Approach application guidelines](#)

E) Session 5: tbc

5. Parallel sessions

16 October (09:30 – 10:45)

A) Session 1: Relevance and impact of QA on recognition tools

*Speakers: Aurelija Valeikiene (SKVC)
Marie-Anne Persoons (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training & Chair of the Steering Committee for Education at the Council of Europe)
Alessandra Ricci-Ascoli (Council of Europe)*

Automatic recognition of qualifications has been a core ambition of the European Higher Education Area. This session will kick off with a presentation introducing the Council of Europe's forthcoming Convention on Transparency and Quality Assurance, highlighting its role in building trust and reinforcing Bologna commitments. A second presentation will focus on strengthening the connections between digital tools that support automatic recognition – particularly the integration of accreditation data from DEQAR with AR-go, a central portal offering standardized information on nationally recognized qualifications and their comparability in the Benelux countries – alongside other European-level tools. Together, the contributions show how legal frameworks, quality assurance, and digital databases can converge to make recognition more transparent, consistent, and seamless.

Further preparatory materials: [Information on DIGI-REQA project](#), [AR-GO portal](#)

B) Session 2: Linking quality assurance and the social dimension of higher education

*Speakers: Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (Institute for the development of Education - IDE)
Arno Schrooyen (ESU)*

This session will examine how quality assurance can contribute to advancing the social dimension of higher education and whether external mechanisms should play a role in monitoring progress. It will build on the work of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) on the social dimension and recent European Commission reports. The session will also consider how principles for the social dimension adopted in the European Higher Education Area could interact with existing quality assurance frameworks. Participants will be invited to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of linking quality assurance with equity and inclusion in higher education.

Further preparatory materials: [Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in EHEA](#), [Eurydice report: Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe](#), [NESET report: Linking quality assurance and the social dimension of higher education](#)

C) Session 3: Council Recommendation on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in Higher Education European Commission (tbd)

In May 2025 the Council of the European Union adopted a Council Recommendation on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education. The Recommendation

highlights the role of quality assurance systems as the foundation for mutual trust, which enables transnational cooperation and seamless learning mobility. Besides building the foundations for a joint European degree label, the document includes recommendations to improve all quality assurance systems, specific recommendations to make external evaluations more agile, introduce the concept of a dedicated framework for quality assurance for alliances of higher education institutions and includes recommendations to implement automatic recognition of qualifications. This session will take a closer look at these recommendations and explore how they could fit into ongoing work at national/regional levels. Further preparatory materials: [Council Recommendation](#).

6. European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes block

16 October (10:45 – 13:15)

Though the concept of *joint programmes* is older than the Bologna Process, comprehensive and structural integration of this form of international collaboration in the regulatory frameworks and educational practice began with the EHEA. In 2015, European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was adopted by the EHEA Ministers. This framework document provides a tool for simplifying and streamlining the accreditation process of joint programmes by translating the ESG into standards directly applicable to joint programmes and outlining the procedure for conducting the accreditation process only once (by an EQAR-registered agency which facilitates trust of all parties involved), and then having the accreditation decision accepted in all relevant legislations.

However, even though the European Approach terms joint programmes the “*hallmark of EHEA*”, the uptake of the joint programmes in EHEA has been relatively weak. Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020 quotes U-Multirank on this matter, which provides information on 12,500 joint study programmes (EACEA & Eurydice, 2020, p. 133), while the 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report estimates that “*less than 25% of higher education institutions participate in joint programmes and less than 5% award joint degrees with marked differences of the extent to which countries are engaged in these actions*” (EACEA & Eurydice, 2018, p. 246).

One potential reason for these relatively low numbers is the regulatory and operational complexity of the joint programme accreditation process – precisely the issue that the European Approach has been created to solve. However, EQAR data on the European Approach adoption demonstrates that this implementation has been very uneven across EHEA and only 21 out of 51 EHEA systems have implemented the European Approach.

This session will therefore aim to initiate the work on a new phase of activities on the European Approach implementation by presenting the key data on the *status quo*, gathering insights from different stakeholders (ministries, QA agencies, and universities involved in joint programmes). The session will also provide an opportunity to discuss potential paths forward for a more comprehensive implementation, as well as the need for updating the European Approach together with the ESG in 2027.

Key preparatory and guiding questions:

- How effective was the implementation of the European Approach in your legislation?
- If it has not been implemented yet, what is the reason? Which obstacles are you facing in implementing the European Approach?
- How could the European Approach be improved as a part of the upcoming ESG revision in 2027?

Further preparatory materials:

- [European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes](#)
- [Thematic analysis of European Approach implementation](#) (IMINQA project)
- [Resources and examples of best practice for European Approach application](#) (IMPEA project)