Report to the 18ᵗʰ meeting of the BFUG (28/29 September 2009, Stockholm)

1.   This report informs the BFUG on the developments concerning EQAR since the BFUG meeting in March 2009 (Praha).

I. Eight applications in the third application round

2.   Since 15 April 2009, nine quality assurance agencies have been included on the Register. The attached Communiqué was published on the occasion of the inclusion of six quality assurance agencies in April.

3.   An update on the latest inclusions, decided by the Register Committee on 4/5 April 2009, was circulated to all participants at the Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve conference together with the EQAR Annual Report 2008.

4.   The third application round was closed on 26 July 2009. By the deadline, eight applications from quality assurance agencies for inclusion were received. The Register Committee is currently scrutinising these applications and will consider them at its meeting on 30 September 2009.

II. Mandate of the Register Committee

5.   The Register Committee had been approved by the Founding Assembly on 4 March 2008 (Brussels) for a 2-year mandate, as foreseen by EQAR Statutes.

6.   Thus, the next Register Committee will be approved by the 4ᵗʰ EQAR General Assembly in February 2010 and take over in time for the second application round in 2010, that is, from 1 July 2010.

III. Upcoming 3ʳᵈ EQAR General Assembly

7.   The next EQAR General Assembly will be held in Stockholm on **Tuesday 29 September 2009** after the meeting of the Bologna Follow-Up Group from 14:30 to ca. 17:00.

8.   Bologna signatory states that wish to join EQAR as Governmental Member and attend the 3ʳᵈ General Assembly are kindly asked to submit an application form, which is available from the BFUG website and on the EQAR website:

http://www.eqar.eu/association/members/becoming-a-governmental-member.html

IV. Miscellaneous

9.   Slovenia has been a Governmental Member of EQAR since March 2009. Switzerland joined EQAR as Governmental Members in June 2009. EQAR

now has 26 Governmental Members (25 countries), that is, 53% of the countries participating in the Bologna Process.

10. EQAR was interviewed by the researchers carrying out the independent assessment of the Bologna Process and provided information on the establishment of EQAR and its role for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

11. At the UNESCO World Conference for Higher Education, EQAR was represented with an information stand on the attached exhibition.

15/9/2009 - CT

Six new agencies included on EQAR

– Communiqué from the Chair of the Register Committee –

Brussels, 15 April 2009

1.   In the context of the Bologna Process, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was founded in March 2008 to enhance transparency and trust in quality assurance. It enables all relevant stakeholders to identify credible and legitimate agencies that perform quality reviews of higher education institutions or programmes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

2.   The Register Committee is an independent body of EQAR made up of independent experts in quality assurance who were nominated by key stakeholders. Its task is to review and take decisions on all applications for inclusion on the Register.

3.   On 4/5 April 2009, the Register Committee convened to consider applications received from quality assurance agencies for the second EQAR deadline as well as to continue its deliberations on applications received for the first deadline that had been deferred. Six applications were accepted at the meeting. Thus, the European Register[1] now features nine quality assurance agencies.

Criteria for inclusion and process

4.   Inclusion on EQAR is voluntary. Quality assurance agencies that wish to be included have to undergo an external review by independent experts in order to demonstrate their substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)[2].

5.   The external review process is organised by an organisation designated as "review coordinator", that appoints an independent expert panel to carry out the review. Quality assurance agencies can commission a coordinator of their choice, provided it is an organisation that has the necessary professional capacity and is fully independent of the agency under review.

6.   In the first half of 2008, the Register Committee developed Procedures[3] for Applications in a process involving consultation of stakeholder organisations and those European governments represented in EQAR's General Assembly. The Procedures set out the requirements for the external reviews that quality assurance agencies must follow if they wish to apply for inclusion on the Register.

7.   As the Register Committee takes its decisions on the basis of the results of external reviews of quality agencies conducted by third parties, rather than evaluating directly the work of the agencies, the requirements set out in the Procedures for Application are of crucial importance. They stipulate,

for example, that the external review panel must be independent and include relevant stakeholder perspectives, and that external review reports have to provide sufficient clear and reliable evidence in relation to each of the European Standards and Guidelines.

8.   The Register Committee follows a two step procedure in its work. Only when the requirements set out in the Procedures for Applications are fulfilled does the Register Committee consider the core question of whether an applicant quality assurance agency is in substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

Results of the first two rounds of applications

9.   Ten quality assurance agencies applied for inclusion on the Register for the October 2008 deadline. Three fulfilled all requirements in relation to their external review and were found to be in substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)[2]. They have consequently been listed on the Register since December 2008.

10. The remaining seven applicants were invited to make further representations and to respond to problems either concerning the organisation of their external review or their compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Two of the seven choose to withdraw their applications at this time.

11. Four new applications were received by the 9 February 2009 deadline. At its meeting on 4/5 April 2009, the Register Committee considered the five remaining and the four new applications.

12. We are pleased to announce that the following six quality assurance agencies have now been placed on the Register[1]:

- Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN, Germany)

- Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieur-wissenschaften, der Informatik, der Mathematik und der Naturwissenschaften (ASIIN, Germany)

- Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA, Germany)

- Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ZEvA, Germany)

- State Accreditation Commission (PKA, Poland)

- Flemish Council of University Colleges (VLHORA, Belgium)

13. One applicant has been rejected; two applicants have been invited to make further representations and to respond to particular problems with their application. Those applications will be considered further at the Register Committee's next meeting in the autumn.

Outlook

14. The Register Committee will convene for its second meeting in 2009 on 30 September and 1 October. The deadline for applications to be considered at this meeting will be 26 July 2009.

15. In May, an update of the EQAR Guide for Applicants will be available.

16. The Committee will prepare a more detailed report covering its work with applications so far. The report will be presented to the EQAR General Assembly in late September and will be publicly available following the Assembly.

Bryan McMahon
Chair of the Register Committee

Notes:

1. **The Register is accessible online at:**

    http://www.eqar.eu/register.html

2. The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) are available on the EQAR website:

    http://www.eqar.eu/application/criteria.html

3. The Procedures for Applications, as well as other official documents, can be consulted on the EQAR website:

    http://www.eqar.eu/application/external-review.html

    http://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/eqar/official/RC_01_1_ProceduresForApplications_v1_0.pdf