

To the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG)

Brussels, 24 July 2010

Interviews for the self-evaluation of EQAR

Dear BFUG member,

As you might be aware, EQAR is currently preparing for its external evaluation, which was requested by ministers at the London Summit.

The external evaluation will address the initial impact of EQAR, the fitness for purpose of the organisational structure, its efficiency and effectiveness, and make recommendations for improvement.

The aims and objectives set out in the ministerial decisions, the E4 report to the London summit as well as the EQAR statutes and mission statement are the framework of the evaluation.

The evaluation's purpose is twofold: to demonstrate accountability towards European governments and to help EQAR develop. The evaluation will follow the typical steps: self-evaluation, site visit and interviews by an independent expert panel, external evaluation report, and follow-up.

As part of our self-evaluation process, we are conducting interviews with a sample of European governments and stakeholder organisations. The feedback given in each interview will feed into the self-evaluation report to be prepared by EQAR's Self-Evaluation Group.

We envisage interviewing a total of 20–25 governments and stakeholder organisations. The interviews will be conducted by a contracted expert, Ms Cornelia Racké, personally or by phone. We aim to organise most of the personal interviews around the upcoming BFUG meeting on 24/25 August in Alden Biesen (Belgium).

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We have already sampled and contacted 12 Bologna signatory countries (6 EQAR Governmental Members, 6 non-members) for interview. In case your country has not been sampled but wishes to volunteer for an interview please inform us accordingly, preferably until 2 weeks before the BFUG meeting. Alternatively, BFUG members may also opt to offer comments in writing (see attached call).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions concerning the interviews and the self-evaluation exercise.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Tück".

Colin Tück
(Director)

Annex: Public Call for Comment

Public Call for Comment

to feed into the EQAR Self-Evaluation

(Deadline: 3 October 2010)

Background

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) manages a register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). As part of the Bologna Process, EQAR was founded by the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE) in order to enhance trust and confidence by providing reliable information on external quality assurance in Europe.

EQAR is currently preparing for its external evaluation, which was requested by European ministers of education at their London Summit. The external evaluation will address the initial impact of EQAR, the fitness for purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of its organisational structure, and make recommendations for improvement.

The aims and objectives set out in the ministerial decisions, the E4 report to the London summit as well as the EQAR statutes and mission statement are the framework of the evaluation.

The evaluation's purpose is twofold:

- a. to demonstrate accountability towards European governments;
- b. to make recommendation to help EQAR develop.

Currently, we are undertaking a self-evaluation process. In order to gather feedback from a range of stakeholders, we are approaching samples of quality assurance agencies, governments and stakeholders for feedback.

Invitation for comment

Additionally, we hereby invite any other person or organisation to submit written contributions. We kindly ask you to address the following questions in the light of the mission and objectives defined for EQAR (see summary in below):

1. What do you consider as the initial impact of EQAR on the European Higher Education Area? How do you judge this impact, bearing in mind that EQAR has been operational for about two years?

2. How do you judge the fitness of the implemented organisational structure of EQAR to achieve its mission and objectives? How do you judge its efficiency and effectiveness?
3. Which opportunities do you see for EQAR to improve its work with a view to better fulfilling its mission and objectives?

All contributions will feed into a self-evaluation report, which is prepared by our Self-Evaluation Group. While the self evaluation report will be made public together with the external evaluation report, individual contributions themselves will not be published.

Please submit any comments you wish to make by email to info@eqar.eu **before 3 October 2010**. For any questions you may contact us at the same address.

Mission and objectives (quotes from relevant documents)

EQAR Mission Statement (June 2008):

“EQAR’s mission is to further the development of the European Higher Education Area by increasing transparency of quality assurance, and thus enhancing trust and confidence in European higher education.

EQAR seeks to provide clear reliable information on quality assurance provision in Europe, thus improving trust among agencies.

EQAR seeks to facilitate the mutual acceptance of quality assurance decisions and to improve trust among higher education institutions, thus promoting mobility and recognition.

EQAR seeks to reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility in Europe, thus further enhancing the confidence of students, institutions, the labour market and society more generally in the quality of higher education provision in Europe.

To achieve its mission EQAR manages a register of quality assurance agencies operating in Europe that substantially comply with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

EQAR recognises the diversity of approaches to external quality assurance and is therefore open to all agencies, whether operating at programme or institutional level, whether providing accreditation, evaluation or audit services.

EQAR is committed to the principle on which the ESG are based: external quality assurance should recognise the central responsibility of higher education institutions for quality development and should be carried out by independent quality assurance agencies in a transparent, objective and responsible manner, involving their stakeholders and leading to substantiated results based on well-defined procedures and criteria.

EQAR acts independently from other organisations and is committed to taking proportionate, consistent, fair and objective decisions.

EQAR will make transparent its mode of operation and its procedures while ensuring necessary confidentiality. EQAR is committed to continuously improving the quality of its work.”

EQAR Statutes (March 2008):

The Association pursues the objective of furthering the development of the European Higher Education Area by enhancing confidence in higher education and by facilitating the mutual recognition of quality assurance decisions. The Association does not pursue to gain any profit from its activities.

London Communiqué (May 2007):

The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions.

E4 Group Report (March 2007):

The Register’s objectives would be to help to:

- promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among higher education institutions
- reduce opportunities for dubious organisations or ‘accreditation mills’ to gain credibility
- provide a basis for national authorities to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements
- provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements
- serve as an instrument to improve the quality of quality assurance agencies and to promote mutual trust amongst them.