ENQA report to the BFUG, 7-8 March 2016, Amsterdam

Highlights of ENQA's activities since the Yerevan Ministerial Conference May 2015

1. Statutory issues: ENQA Board and membership

The ENQA General Assembly took place on 22-23 October in Dublin, Ireland. On this occasion, Christoph Grolimund (AAQ, Switzerland) was re-elected as ENQA vice-president and Caty Duykaerts elected for her first term as ENQA vice-president. Tove Blytt Holmen (NOKUT, Norway) was re-elected for a second term of three years as Board member. Christina Rozsnyai (HAC, Hungary), who had been co-opted to the Board in 2014, and Anne Flierman (NVAO, the Netherlands) were elected for their first full term of three years. In addition, Salvador Rus-Rufino (ACSUSYL, Spain) was elected for the replacement of the term of Anthony McClaran (QAA, UK), who left the Board in October 2015.

The General Assembly endorsed the renewal of membership of two agencies, and the admission of one new agency: the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA), Greece.

The GA also endorsed the decision to admit two new affiliates: the Academic Information Centre (AIC), Latvia and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualification (HKCAAVQ), Hong Kong. These changes brought ENQA's membership total to 48, and that of affiliates to 48.

In October 2015 ENQA's members approved of the revised statutes of the association. The main changes regard the change of the membership criteria (from ESG 2005 to ESG 2015) and the termination of the "associate member" category (criteria no longer in line with the ESG).

2. ENQA projects

QACHE final conference and toolkit on QA of CBHE

The final conference of the ENQA-led project Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education (QACHE) was held on the premises of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) in Paris on 5-6 November 2015. The conference gathered over a hundred participants from 38 countries. The conference presented the main findings of the project, especially the regional views and most prominent challenges in the quality assurance of cross-border higher education (CBHE) in Europe, the Asia-Pacific, and the Arab region. Among other findings, the project has identified that there is a sheer diversity of approaches and regulatory frameworks for inbound or outbound CBHE across the three regions. There is also a lack of information about, and knowledge of, other agencies' frameworks and approaches, which has led to a "trust gap" about the quality of CBHE between sending and receiving countries. These issues can be resolved by strengthening cooperation among QA agencies and regional networks of quality assurance, and also by providing accurate and up-to-date information about CBHE to all stakeholders.

The main output of the project, a *Toolkit for Quality Assurance Agencies*, was published and presented at the conference. It is designed to help QA agencies explore ways to fully harness the opportunities presented by CBHE and to avoid common challenges such as sub-standard education provision and the duplication of quality assurance procedures. The toolkit was developed in the spirit of strengthened cooperation to better facilitate cross-border education and to ensure the protection of students through the provision of high quality education across borders.

EQUIP project for the implementation of the ESG 2015

ENQA is currently involved as a partner in the Erasmus+ project "Enhancing Quality through Innovative Policy and Practice" (EQUIP) coordinated by EURASHE. The project also involves the two other E4 partners, EUA and ESU, as well as EQAR, Education International (EI), the University of Oslo (UiO), and the Portuguese Polytechnics Coordinating Council (CCISP).

The project aims at enhancing quality through innovative policy and practice in European higher education by supporting and promoting a consistent, efficient, and innovative embedding of the ESG 2015 at a grass-roots level. The project will identify the challenges and work collaboratively with all stakeholders and policy-makers to propose, share, and discuss the applicability of new solutions. The project specifically aims to manage the ESG 2015's publication, distribution, and dissemination.

Within this project, five events will be/have been organised:
- Webinar on 17 February 2016
- Workshop in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 14-15 March 2016
- Webinar on 13 April 2016
- Workshop in Vienna, Austria, on 9-10 May 2016
- Workshop in Lisbon, Portugal, on 6-7 June 2016

SHARE project on QA in the ASEAN

ENQA is involved as partner in a large scale project run by the British Council (BC) with Campus France (CF), German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European University Association (EUA),

the European Platform - Expertise and Service Centre for Internationalisation in Dutch Education (EP-NUFFIC) to enhance the harmonisation of the ASEAN higher education (HE) area through the formulation of ASEAN HE frameworks, taking into account the EU experience and work already under-way across the ASEAN area through international partnerships and to support mutual recognition and student mobility among higher education institutions in the ASEAN area. The project aims to support mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and to promote the mobility of students. The "Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region" (SHARE) project was launched in Jakarta, Indonesia, in May 2015. The project will be carried out in close cooperation with the ASEAN stakeholders. ENQA will be mainly responsible for providing the project with QA expertise and will be in charge of the execution of pilot external reviews of QA agencies.

HAQAA- initiative to support QA in Africa

A consortium consisting of ENQA, the University of Barcelona (coordinator), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the European University Association (EUA), and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has recently started to implement the "HAQAA-initiative" (Harmonising African Quality Assurance and Accreditation-initiative) on behalf of the European Commission. The objectives of the initiative are to contribute and support the harmonisation of higher education programmes and the creation of a revitalised African higher education area, through enhanced intra-African collaboration and, more specifically, to support the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at the institutional, national, regional, and Pan-African continental level.

The project will be organised in different phases during which the following goals will be achieved: (a) develop a common understanding on quality assurance in Africa, (b) develop African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (ASG) and reinforce institutional internal quality assurance, (c) consolidate a quality culture in Africa, and finally (d) sustain and further develop the Pan-African quality assurance and accreditation system.

In addition to these large projects, ENQA contributes to other European projects as partner.

ENQA contributes to European Parliament study on "University Quality Indicators"

The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) were commissioned by the European Parliament in early 2015 to produce a study, "University Quality Indicators: A Critical Assessment", comparing quality assurance and rankings in Europe. Maria Kelo, the Director of ENQA, was invited by ACA to co-author the study, which was published by the European Parliament in early 2016.

The study analyses the latest developments in quality assurance and global rankings and presents a comparative analysis of the two. The study underlines that while both make judgments on quality, the two instruments differ fundamentally in their purpose and approaches. Most rankings are concerned with measuring excellence, especially in research, and identifying the best higher education institutions. External quality assurance, on the other hand, aims to ensure compliance with minimum standards and to support quality improvement, with a focus on teaching and learning. Despite the many differences, both quality assurance and rankings display signs of learning from each other. Many quality assurance processes now include a category for quality that exceeds

threshold standards, which might indicate a move towards measuring excellence – or at least of "high quality". At the same time some global rankings are moving in the direction of U-Multirank, encouraging users to produce rankings based on their own criteria, thus allowing for different "conceptions of quality". The study puts forward 13 recommendations for the further development of quality assurance systems and rankings, with a particular focus on the future of the U-Multirank.

3. New ENQA working groups

ENQA IQA Group

One of the core activities of ENQA is to coordinate the external review of QA agencies against the ESG. ENQA has in place a number of internal quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the consistency and integrity of the outcomes of the review process, such as expert training sessions, briefings by the secretariat, or the review report scrutiny procedure (part of the revised methodology for ENQA Agency Reviews). However, given the importance of this activity, ENQA established in April 2015 a permanent working group in charge of the internal quality assurance of the agency external review process (ENQA-IQA Group). The main mission of the group will be to analyse and provide knowledge on the outcomes of the ENQA external review process (and particularly the self-evaluation and evaluation reports). The group will provide support to ENQA in the development of tools and other materials to further improve the overall process based on the previous analysis. The ENQA-IQA Group continues the work of the recently completed KP3-working group. The work of the group starts in the course of autumn 2015.

Quality assurance and recognition

The vision of ENQA, as stated in its new strategic plan 2015-2019, is closely linked to the recognition of qualifications; its reads: "A European Higher Education Area where students have access to high quality education and can achieve qualifications that are respected world-wide." This idea is also the main idea behind the establishing of the new working group on recognition in 2015. The group aims at contributing to the question of "meaning"; how meaningful is the work conducted by the QA sector and how does it translate into specific benefits for the higher education community? What is relationship between quality and recognition in general? The group begun its work with a meeting in September 2015 and it will regularly report to the Board of ENQA about its proceedings. The group is expected to produce a report accessible to all members and affiliates in the course of 2016.

The 4th ENQA Quality Procedures Project

In 2014, ENQA launched the 4th edition its "Quality Procedures Project" focusing on internationalisation. The findings of the project present the types of international activities in which QA agencies are engaged or in which they are planning to engage. It presents the priorities national governments have in terms of internationalisation, and what are the expected risks and benefits of internationalisation, as seen by agencies. It can be concluded that there is a diversity of activities

undertaken by quality assurance agencies that can be associated with internationalisation. At the same time, there is not yet a single, shared definition for the internationalisation of quality assurance. In general, it seems that governments' support towards internationalisation is focused on internationalisation 'at home', while urging agencies to apply international standards and to engage in international networks. They seem to be content with the original notion of internationalisation featuring cooperation and shared standards. The ESG remains as the main guiding document not only for work in domestic settings but also for conducting quality assurance activities across borders. Furthermore, the project report, published in September 2015, contributes to the discussion concerning whether the international market of quality assurance is emerging and what obstacles and possibilities it may pose. The report is available on the ENQA website. The outcomes of the project were presented at the ENQA Networking event and 15th anniversary reception in Brussels, in June 2015.