UPDATE ON EQAR ACTIVITIES

1. Updates regarding the Register and implementation of ESG 2015

At its meeting in **Lisbon on 5/6 June 2016, the EQAR Register Committee** considered and approved the first application for inclusion on the Register by **MusiQuE (Music Quality Enhancement)** based on the ESG 2015. At its meeting on 2/3 December 2016 the Register Committee will consider six applications for renewal of registration and one initial application for inclusion on the Register.

EQAR has presented the **Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG**[1] at a number of trainings and seminars for agency reviewers, organised by the most-used review coordinators, ENQA and the German Accreditation Council (GAC).

As part of a consortium led by EURASHE and including ENQA, EUA, ESU, EI, UiO and CCISP, EQAR has been supporting the dissemination and promotion of ESG 2015 through the EQUIP project (Enhancing Quality through Innovative Policy & Practice).

See: https://www.eqar.eu/documents/decisions.html - http://www.equip-project.eu/

2. EQAR Members' Dialogue (24-25 November 2016, Oslo)

The **sixth edition of the Members' Dialogue** was hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The event focused on two important discussions initiated by the self-evaluation of EQAR: the possible database of quality-assured programmes/HEIs, and clarifying the strategic leadership of EQAR.

Within the event, members also discussed the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Key Consideration for Cross- Border QA and learned about the new developments in the automatic recognition of qualifications in Western Balkans, the quality assurance of transnational higher education as well as developments within the national legal frameworks for external quality assurance in Switzerland, Netherlands and the Belgium–Flemish Community.

2.1 Database of quality assurance results and decisions

Exploring the feasibility of a database of higher education institutions and programmes that have been subject to external quality assurance in line with the ESG has been part of EQAR's Strategic Plan and current Work Plan. In the course of 2016, EQAR carried out a survey of potential users, distributed to its members and wider network, in order to investigate in detail the possible needs and benefits of such a database. 385 responses were received. At the same time, registered QA agencies were also surveyed to analyse the feasibility of the database.

Based on the surveys and dialogue with existing initiatives, the EQAR Secretariat prepared a **Report and Operational Model of a Database of External Quality Assurance Results**, which was presented and discussed at the EQAR Members' Dialogue. Further steps will be considered taking into account the discussions at the Members' Dialogue.

---

[1] https://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/eqar/official/RC_12_1_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v1_0.pdf

2.2 Proposals regarding a president

Taking forward a recommendation coming from EQAR's self-evaluation (2015), the Extraordinary General Assembly, held in conjunction with the Members' Dialogue, adopted the proposal to clarify the position of president in EQAR.

The President will be elected by the General Assembly, based on a proposal by a Selection Committee including representatives of EQAR members (governments and stakeholder organisations), the Executive Board and Register Committee. The President will chair the Register Committee, Executive Board and General Assembly of EQAR.

3. EQAR governmental membership

An application by the Greek ministry responsible for higher education to join EQAR as Governmental Member was saluted and recently approved by the EQAR Executive Board.

Starting with 1 January 2017, Greece will join the other 38 governmental members in taking an active part in shaping EQAR's activities, strategic direction, plan of work and bringing further contribution within the regular meetings of the EQAR General Assemblies and Members' Dialogue.

See: https://www.eqar.eu/association.html

4. Key Considerations for CBQA

Following up the recommendations from the RIQAA project, EQAR and the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE) agreed to discuss further the key issues that should be taken into consideration when planning cross-border quality assurance activities.

While reaffirming that the ESG are the basis for all QA in the EHEA, and thus also for cross-border QA, the document comes to support and inspire higher education institutions and QA agencies that engage in, or consider engaging in, cross-border QA activities.

The key considerations have been discussed with participants at this year's European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) in Ljubljana (Slovenia). They have been further disseminated for feedback to ENQA members and presented at the EQAR Members' Dialogue in Oslo (Norway) and during the workshop of the BFUG WG2 on Implementation in Nice.

The key considerations are non-biding in character. In addition to higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies they might serve as a useful tool also for governments when reviewing their legal frameworks with a view to allowing their institutions to make use of a suitable EQAR- registered agency in fulfilling their external QA requirements.

The finalised document will be published early next year.

See: http://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/CBQA-160725-draft.pdf

5. Monitoring of legal frameworks

The information on national legislative frameworks for external QA, provided on the EQAR website, has been updated for all EHEA countries and is now presented in a more systematic manner.

As a general introduction, there is a description for each country of the external QA required by national legislation (e.g. obligatory programme accreditation or not, etc.).

Example:

Austria

Austria has been a Governmental Member of EQAR since 2008.

Focus of external quality assurance

- *Public universities:* Institutional audit
- *Universities of applied sciences:* Institutional and initial programme accreditation; Institutional audit (after an uninterrupted accreditation period of 12 years)
- *Private universities*: Institutional and initial programme accreditation
- *University colleges of teacher education:*own methodology

Can higher education institutions choose a suitable EQAR-registered agency?

- *Public universities*: yes.
- *Universities of applied science:* after having been re-accredited by the national Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria)
- *Private universities & university colleges of teacher education:* no.

- **Eligibility requirements for foreign agencies**:
    - Registration on EQAR
    - QA agencies have to submit an expression of interest to the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.

- **Condition for the agency's work**: compliance with the criteria by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.
- **Further information/regulations**: ⤴ Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) (§ 19.) (page 14) & ⤴ BMWF Presentation

See: https://eqar.eu/register/map.html