

DUBLIN, 18 OCTOBER 2022

DIVERSIFICATION OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA

QQI 10TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

GORAN DAKOVIC

HEAD OF AGENCY REVIEWS

enqa.

ENQA IN BRIEF



Who we are

Membership association of QA agencies:
 57 members from 32 countries
 54 affiliates from additional 32 countries



What we do

Represent interests
 Provide services to members and stakeholders
 Drive development of external QA



How we do it

Policy input	Projects
Events	Publications
Working groups	Agency reviews

INTRODUCTION

External quality assurance: all activities that provide for continuous improvement of HE (i.e., assurance and enhancement activities) → ultimately, serving stakeholders

(E)QA AND THE EHEA

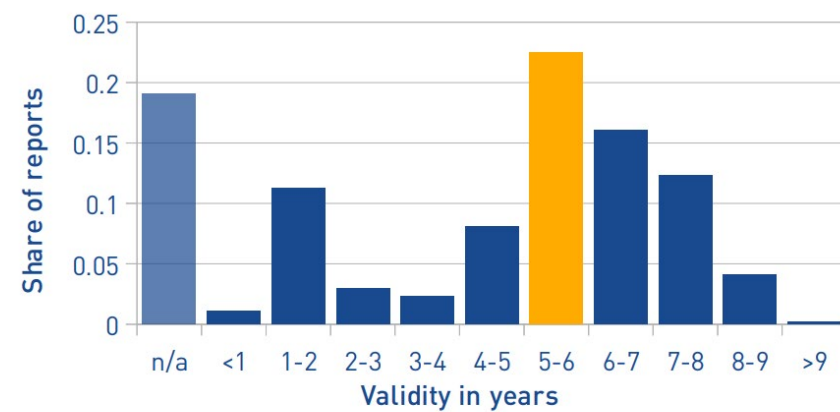


Figure 1: Length of time (validity) of an external QA procedure

■ Institutional & programme level
 ■ Institutional level only
 ■ Programme level only
 ■ Institutional & sometime programme level

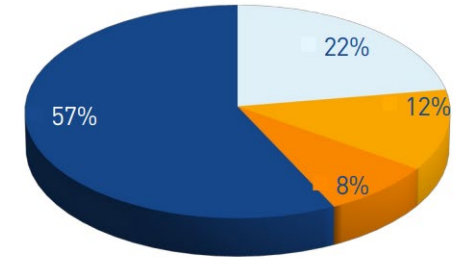


Figure 2: Focus of external QA frameworks within the EHEA

- Three decades of developments at varying paces across Europe, reflecting national strategies for higher education:
 - Accreditation with varying references to evaluation or improvement aspects (i.e., Poland, Spain)
 - Improvement-oriented QA without accreditation (Armenia, Finland, Slovenia, United Kingdom)
 - Reflecting the existing diversity and the different missions of their HEIs
- Compliance with the ESG & registration in EQAR an established and accepted part of HE systems in the EHEA

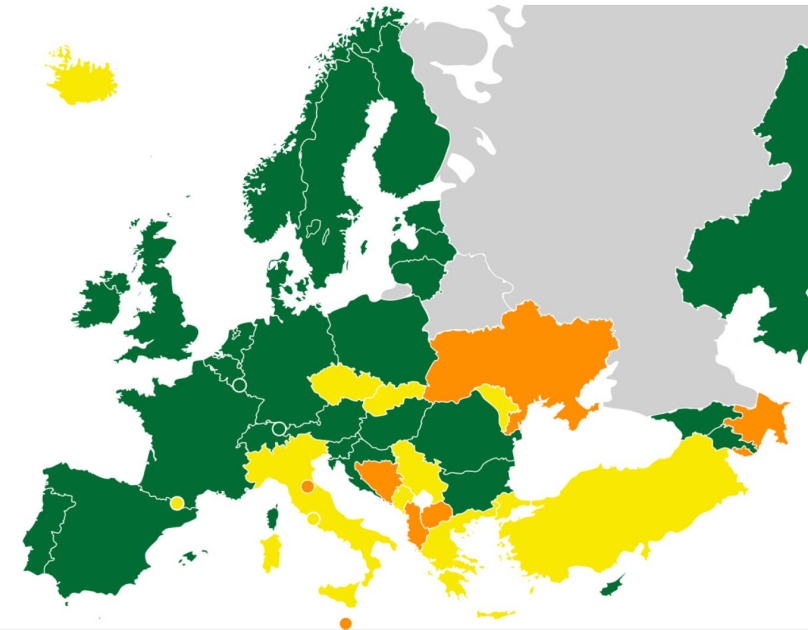
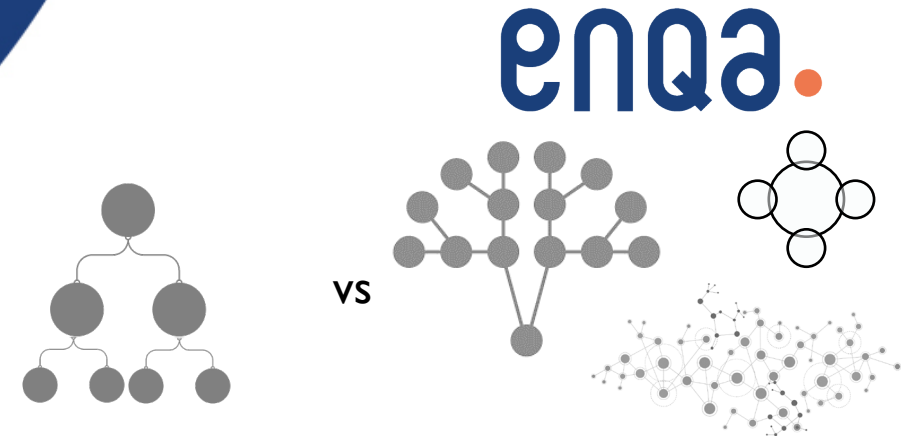


Figure 1. Stage of implementation of the key commitment on external QA across the EHEA

(NOT SO) RECENT DISCUSSIONS



- Marketisation of EQA (theoretical option of selecting a QA agency that will better fit the needs of a HEI)
- A more responsive EQA (Covid-19 and the role of EQA in supporting (online) L&T)
- A call for more innovation in external QA (e.g., ENQA GA discussions in Yerevan, 2019; Hopbach&Flierman, 2020)
- Coverage of other key missions in HE (research, third mission)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To what extent there is a discussion ongoing in QA agencies regarding the diversification of their external QA activities?

What are motives for, and characteristics of, such diversification?

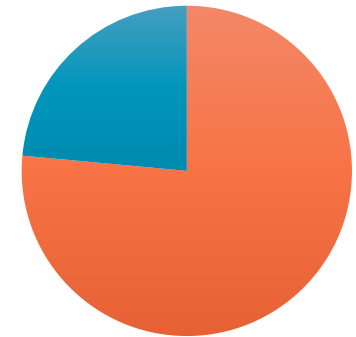
EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

- External reviews of QA agencies as conducted by ENQA in 2020 and 2021
- 17 agencies, 11 countries within the EHEA
- Screening of SARs



CURRENT ACTIONS AND/OR PLANS FOR FUTURE DIVERSIFICATION OF EQA

- Large majority of the agencies in the sample reflected on the need to diversify their external QA activities in the future (13 out of 17 agencies)
- Areas of action and/or plans:
 - Foster the response of learning and teaching to society's current challenges
 - Changing nature of agencies as organisations (monitoring and advisory function, sector analyses, centre of competence)
 - → what expectations can reasonably be placed on (E)QA?



- Identified aspiration and/or the need
- No diversification in sight

FOSTER THE RESPONSE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING TO SOCIETY'S CURRENT CHALLENGES

Three key points raised:

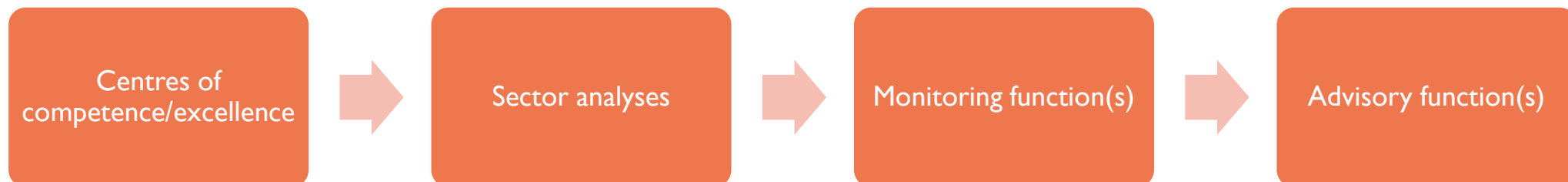
- Internationalisation
 - Growing heterogeneity of students, i.e., variety of educational biographies and its consequences for higher education and training
 - Consequences of demographic developments for HEIs and the demand for lifelong and digital learning in the future
- Impact on **standards** and **overall methodology** used in EQA
- Especially from agencies in the German HE and QA system, and/or from agencies working in a competitive environment of EQA

CHANGING NATURE OF AGENCIES AS ORGANISATIONS



Key points raised:

- Monitoring student employability and compliance of study programmes with the needs of the labour market (i.e., addressing pressure from the labour market)
 - Guaranteeing equal access for all to higher education (i.e., addressing larger public demands)
- Impact on the **agency's mission and vision** and **org. structure**
- Especially from agencies that are single/national EQA bodies (but not only!)



MOTIVES AND/OR CAUSES OF DIVERSIFICATION OF EQA



- Addressing the ‘evaluation fatigue’ among higher education institutions → the need to maintain the relevance of external quality assurance (in half of observed QA agencies, and mostly in national QA bodies)
- Responding to the recent major policy-level developments in the external QA systems (Germany, France) or at the European level (introduction of European University Alliances) – ‘marketisation of EQA’, support to ‘alternative procedures’
- Exploring new dimensions to EQA (e.g., the social dimension of HE and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals) → agencies to lay the first stone and serve as a model?
- Digitalisation of higher education provision → is EQA sufficiently following?
- Relevance of big data, data management, and automation of information flows that lead to new EQA activities and change the nature of agencies as organisations

DRIVERS BEHIND THE OBSERVED CHANGES

To which the current ESG allow for flexibility beyond or outside of the established traditional formats of external QA?

The European QA framework

Fighting the maturity of external QA vs developing the competitive advantage

Maturity of external QA

Covid-19 pandemic

Can changes be agreed and implemented rapidly when needed? Are Covid-19 times an unusual opportunity for innovation and allow for experimentation?

The European Universities Initiative, micro-credentials, digitalisation, online education, cross-cutting issues (diversity and inclusion), sustainability etc.

Developments in European HE

All-in all, when are conditions right for innovation to be beneficial rather than disruptive? At what point does the balance tip in favour of the desire to shake up the status quo?

Sub-question: Are Covid-19 times such an opportunity?

THANK
YOU

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Rue de l'Industrie 10
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Goran Dakovic, Head of Agency Reviews
goran.dakovic@enqa.eu

Link to the full paper: click [here](#)

enqa.