

AQUA

AGÈNCIA DE QUALITAT
DE L'ENSENYAMENT SUPERIOR
D'ANDORRA



EXTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION IN ANDORRA

QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION IN ANDORRA
(AQUA)

October 6th, 2023

Andorra la Vella



CONTENT

- Introduction
- QAA for HE in Andorra
- External Quality Assurance
- Enhancements: QAA and EQ
- Conclusions



INTRODUCTION

Andorra and its HE System

PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA



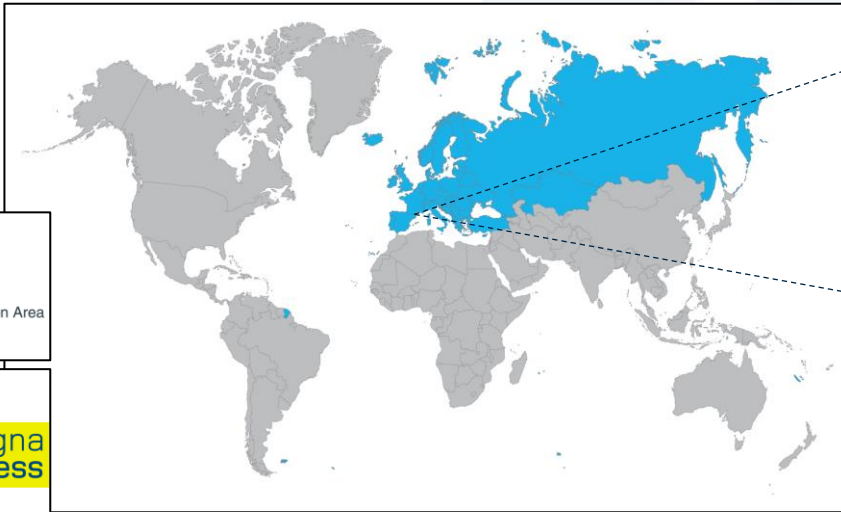
84.000



Catalan



468 km²



https://www.ehea.info/page-full_members



→ Since 2003

INTRODUCTION

Andorra and its HE System

Higher Education Institution	Logo	Year	Type
Universitat d'Andorra	UNIVERSITAT D'ANDORRA	1997	Public
Universitas Europaea IMF	UNIVERSITAT EUROPEA UNIVERSIDAD EUROPEA EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY <small>Principat d'Andorra</small>	2019	Private
Universitat Carlemany	UNIVERSITAT Carlemany	2020	Private
Humanium University	humanium International University	2021	Private
Western Europe University	WESTERN EUROPE UNIVERSITY	2023	Private

Online Teaching

- 1.500 students (~ 3,000 in total)

INTRODUCTION

Andorra and its HE System

MARC ANDORRÀ DE QUALIFICACIONS

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Higher Education

Level 8: Doctorate (3 years)

Level 7: Master's Degree (120 ECTS)

Level 6B: Bachelor's Degree for Specialization (60 ECTS)
Level 6A: Bachelor's Degree (180 ECTS)

Level 5: Diploma of Higher Education (120 ECTS)

- 45 National Degrees

<https://www.ensenyamentsuperior.ad/legislacio>

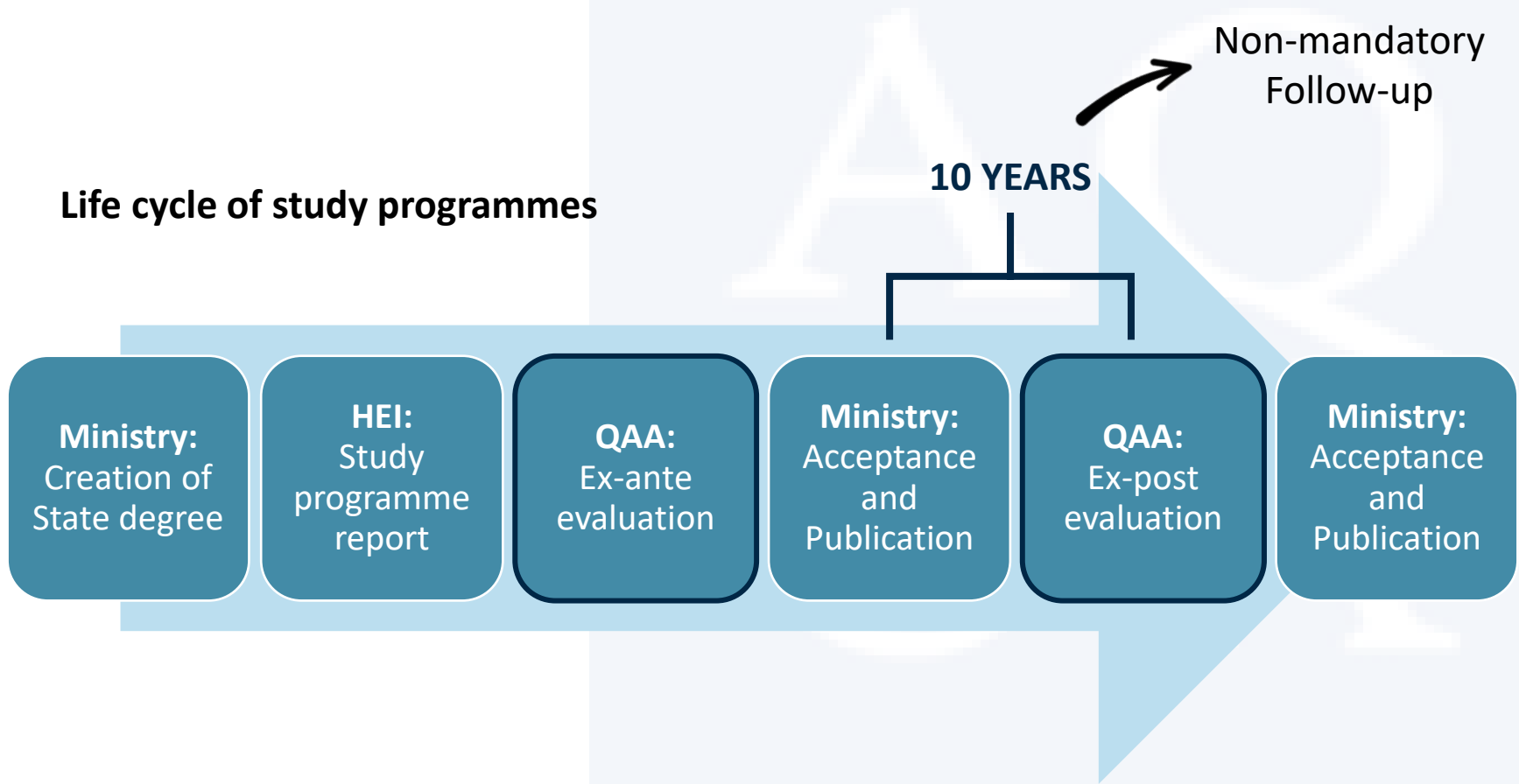


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INTRODUCTION

Andorra and its HE System

Life cycle of study programmes



INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance in Andorra



joins



in 2003

- Coordination of national **policies and legislative reforms** to comply with procedures and achieve **European standards.**

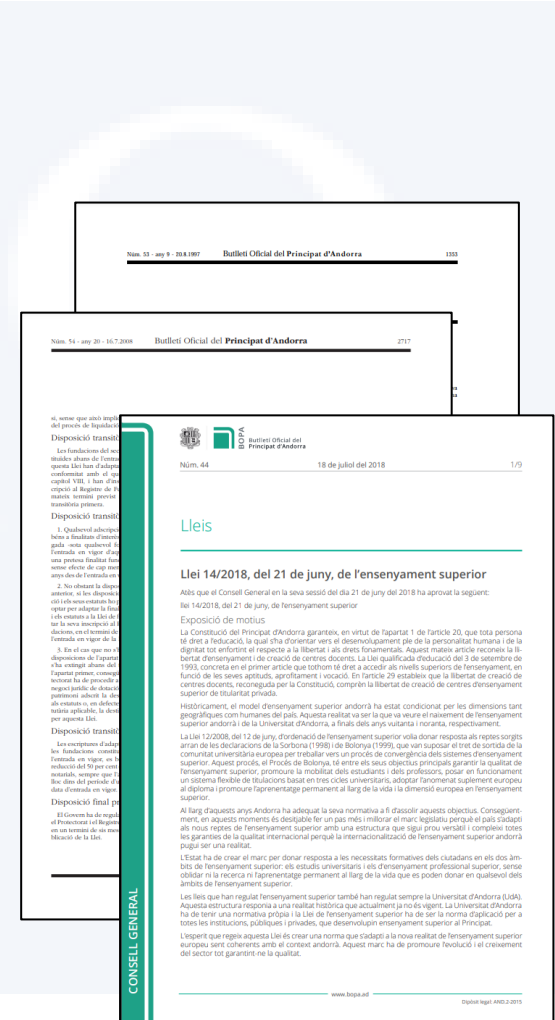
————> *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

————> *European Qualification Framework*

- Creation of a **system for evaluating the quality of HE.**



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QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Definition

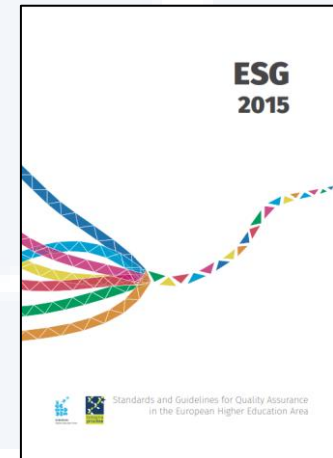


**Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education in
Andorra**

→ Public institution

Function:

'Assess, accredit and certify the quality of higher education in Andorra according to EHEA principles and the criteria established in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA.'



https://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG_2015_616002.pdf

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Definition



Law creating AQUA

<https://www.bopa.ad>



<https://www.bopa.ad>



<https://www.bopa.ad>

HE Law

AQUA's regulations

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Mission, Vision and Values



MISSION

The central mission of AQUA is to **uphold the quality of higher education in Andorra** by consistently adhering to the standards set by the EHEA. This mission is driven by a commitment to quality and rigor aligned with societal and labour demands. AQUA accomplishes its mission **through the evaluation, accreditation, and certification of teaching and research**, fostering improvement and **adhering to the principles established in the EHEA.**



VISION

AQUA strives to be **agile, accessible, and internationally renowned.** It stands as a pillar of support for HEIs, aiding them in their **continuous enhancement** endeavours. Additionally, AQUA aims to contribute to **knowledge creation and dissemination** in the area of quality assurance.

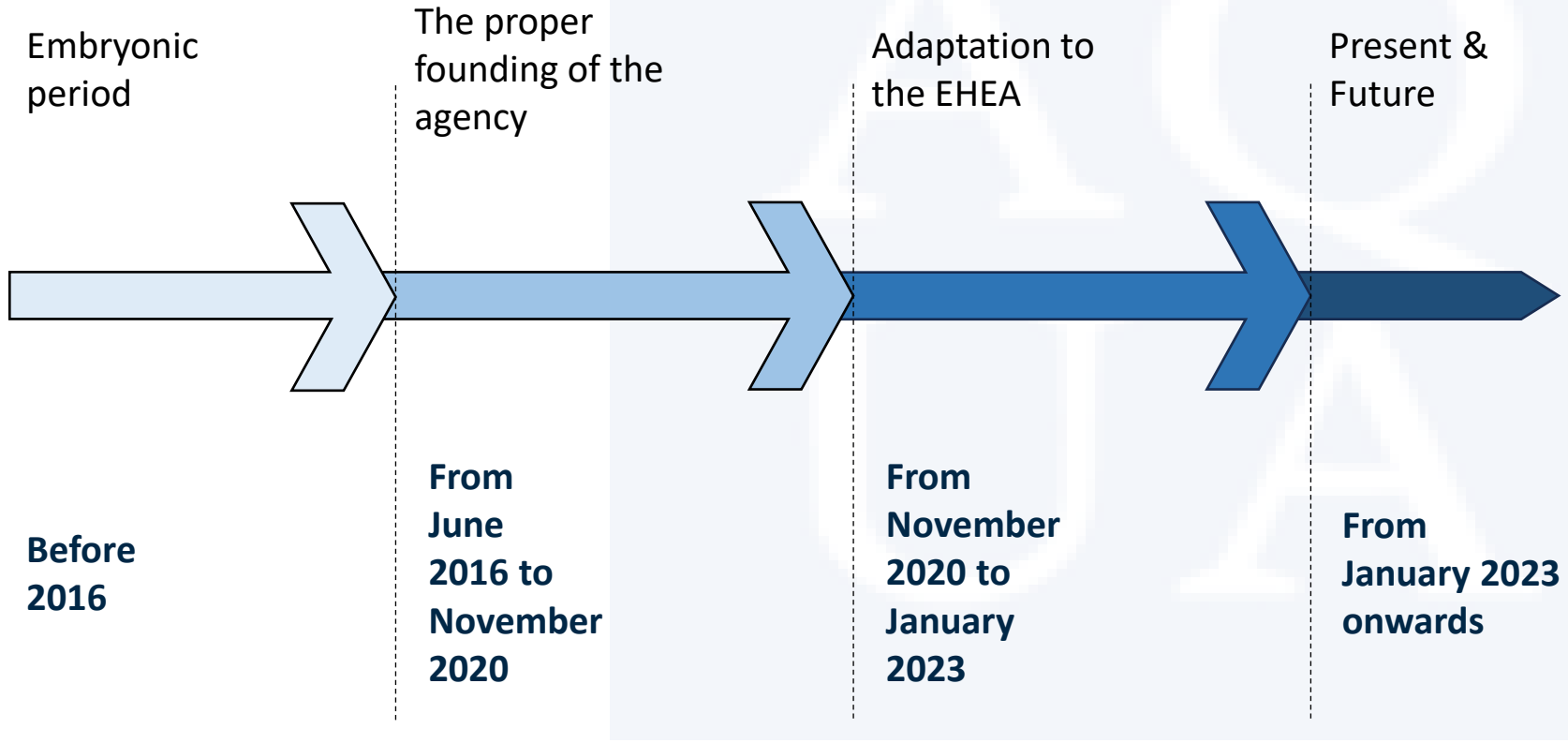


VALUES

- Independence
- Rigor
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Equity
- Innovation
- Sustainability

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history



QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

Before 2016: Embryonic period

- The **Government of Andorra** established AQUA in 2006 through a Decree to align the higher education system with commitments made during Andorra's integration into the **Bologna Process and the EHEA**.

—→ **Division within the Ministry responsible for higher education**

- **Limited resources and functions**

—→ **Agreements with ANECA or other Spanish regional agencies**

—→ **Basic study programmes accreditations, and curriculum design input.**

- AQUA affiliated with **ENQA**.



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QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

From June 2016 to November 2020:
The proper founding of the agency

- **Founding Law** was published aiming to enhance **AQUA's independence, transparency, professionalism, and international recognition**. This step marked the formal establishment of AQUA as an **autonomous agency**.



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- > AQUA secured its **own budget within the Parliament's budget** and **underwent audits by the Court of Accounts**.
- > The **Steering Committee** became more diverse: **representatives from Parliament, from the Ministry, the professional sector, students, university rectors, and international experts**.

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

From June 2016 to November 2020:
The proper founding of the agency

- AQUA initiated discussions through the **Working Group in Quality in Higher Education** to construct its quality assurance system:
 - Drafting assessment **criteria and guidelines**.

- A **website** was launched.



- AQUA renewed its affiliation with ENQA and became a member of INQAAHE.



QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

From November 2020 until January 2023:
Adaptation to EHEA

- To align more effectively with EHEA standards, the founding law of AQUA was modified.
- The Decree approving AQUA's regulation was published.



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- > Evaluation Committee and the Appeals Committee established.
- > Formal regulation of the Evaluation Panels was introduced.

Control of the entire assessment process autonomously, without relying on other agencies

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

From November 2020 until January 2023:
Adaptation to EHEA

- **External quality assurance processes were systematically organized.**

—————> **Assessment criteria and guidelines.**

- **AQUA's activities significantly increased as the Andorran higher education system expanded to include new private institutions.**

—————> **AQUA's funding increased.**

—————> **Fees law.**

- **Institutional ex-ante accreditation.**



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QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

AQUA's history

From January 2023 onwards:
Present and Future

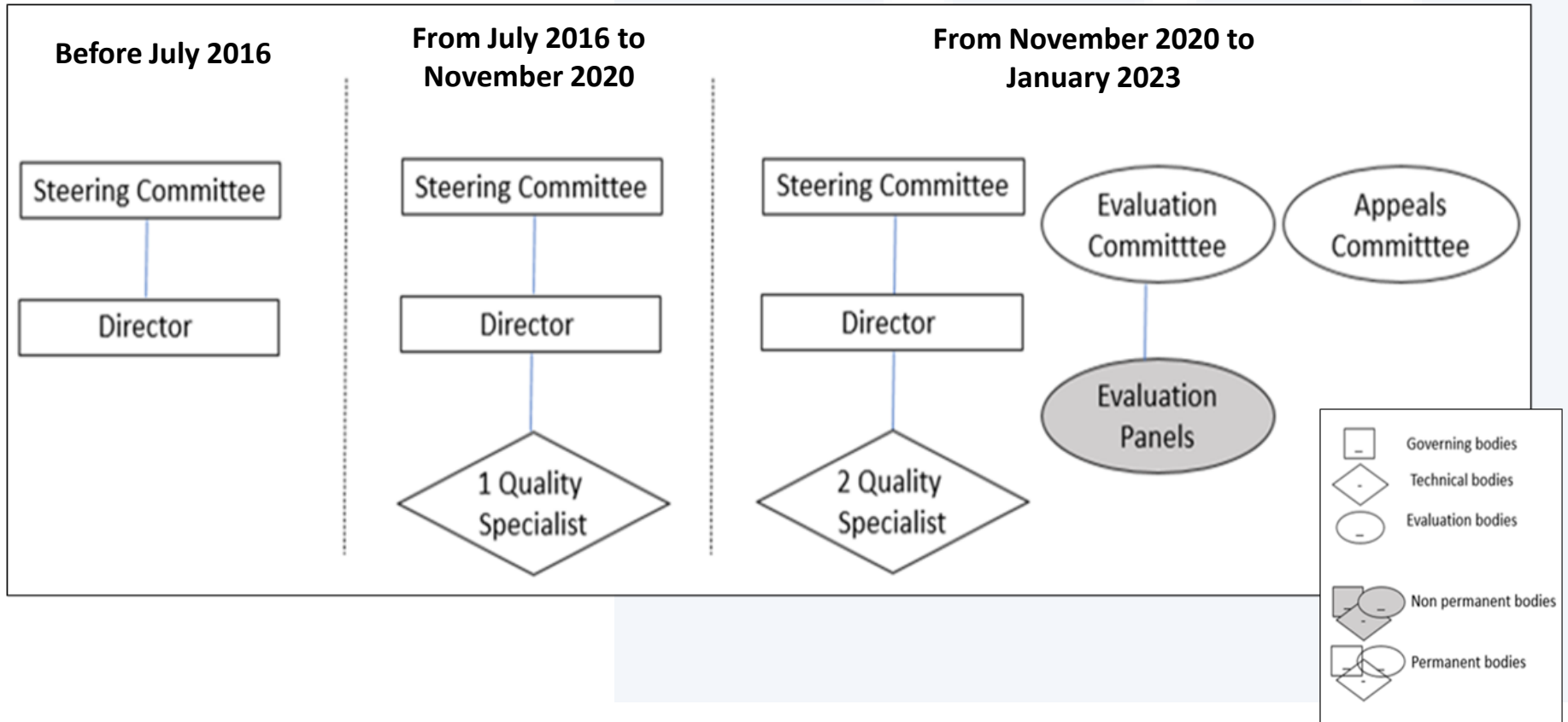
- First **strategic plan** for the period 2023-2025.
 → Strategic lines and objectives and their actions:

Internationalization
 Internal quality assurance system
 Human Resources
 Ex-post Institutional evaluation



QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Structure



QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Structure

Body	Main functions
<p>Steering Committee</p>	<p>Collective governing body of AQUA.</p> <p>It is responsible for establishing strategic priorities, approving activities and budgets, authorizing the signing of agreements, approving evaluation guides, and performing other functions necessary for the proper management and development of the activity.</p>
<p>Evaluation Committee</p>	<p>It is responsible for issuing evaluation reports.</p>
<p>Panels</p>	<p>They are responsible for providing knowledge and expertise in a specific to assess the achievement of evaluation criteria.</p>
<p>Appeals Committee</p>	<p>It is the committee responsible for resolving administrative appeals filed against the resolutions of AQUA.</p>

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Structure

Bodies	Internal and external stakeholders						
	Students	Academic staff	University rectors	Ministers or representatives of the Government	Members of parliament	Employers	International experts
Steering committee	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluation committee		✓					✓
Panels	✓	✓				✓	✓
Appeals committee	✓			✓			✓

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Functions

- AQUA's **responsibilities and functions** encompass the following:
 - **Evaluating, accrediting, and certifying the quality** of education that leads to official qualifications, along with the processes within **higher education** institutions, in alignment with the European area of QA.
 - Establishing **guidelines, criteria, and indicators** for quality evaluation within the domains of higher education and research, in accordance with European and international norms.
 - **Evaluating, accrediting, and certifying** both basic and applied **research** conducted within HEI.

QAA FOR HE IN ANDORRA

Functions

- AQUA's **responsibilities and functions** encompass the following:
 - > Crafting **studies** to enhance and innovate evaluation, certification, and accreditation models.
 - > Producing **evaluation reports** targeting HEI, educational administrations, stakeholders, and society at large.
 - > **Advising** educational administrations, higher education institutions, and other relevant entities within its operational scope.
 - > Building **cooperative partnerships** and collaborative protocols.

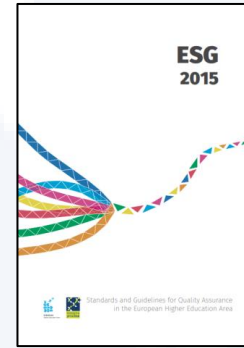
EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Overview

AQUA respects university autonomy and acknowledges that each HEI bears the responsibility of ensuring the quality of its programmes and other offerings



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https://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG_2015_616002.pdf

Programme evaluation

- Ex-ante
- Ex-post
- Modification
- Follow-up

← AQUA's regulations

Assessment dimensions	ESG 1.1	ESG 1.2	ESG 1.3	ESG 1.4	ESG 1.5	ESG 1.6	ESG 1.7	ESG 1.8	ESG 1.9	ESG 1.10
I. Internal quality and continuous improvement	✓						✓		✓	✓
II. Curriculum		✓	✓							
III. Teaching staff					✓					
IV. Resources and student support processes				✓		✓				
V. Public information								✓		

Institutional

- Ex-ante

GOV + RE

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes



I. Internal Quality and Continuous Improvement

- This refers to the **higher education institution's ability** to strategically and coherently **manage its quality** through information management, monitoring, and decision-making.
- The aim is to ensure continuous improvement in the execution of its functions.



II. Curriculum

- This encompasses the **activities** undertaken by higher education institutions **within their objectives**, subject to external evaluation, primarily focusing on academic activities.
- This includes **designing curricula** in line with relevant regulations and the key trends and characteristics of the **knowledge field**.
- It also promotes **student-centred** teaching, learning, and assessment.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes



III. Academic Staff

- *Academic staff* are pivotal for ensuring quality higher education, considering their **competence, sufficiency, and opportunities for training**.
- They represent the **primary teaching resource** available to students.
- Comprising **highly qualified** individuals, academic staff have the **academic freedom** to develop curricula and other activities.



IV. Resources and Support Processes

- This pertains to the **human, material and service** resources, and **technological resources** necessary to uphold the academic activities.
- This also encompasses all decisions and processes related to the **student lifecycle**, including **admission, progression, recognition, and certification**.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes



V. *Public Information*

- This encompasses the **information** that higher education institutions make **publicly available** to serve society and be accountable for their quality, in alignment with their objectives.
- This information includes aspects considered in the other dimensions.

→ **Institutional Accreditation**



Governance and management

Research and Knowledge Transfer

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

From Dimension to Criteria



ESG 1.5. Teaching Staff.

Law 14/2018, of 21 June, on Higher Education:

- Article 22. Teaching and research staff
- Article 23. Rights and obligations of teaching and research staff

Dimension	Key Aspect	Criterion
ACADEMIC STAFF	Training and professional and research experience of the teaching staff.	The training, professional and/or research experience of the planned teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activities.
	Teaching staff sufficiency .	The planned teaching staff is sufficient for the number of student places in order to guarantee teaching, coordinate and manage the qualification.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

From Dimension to Criteria

The training, professional and/or research experience of the planned teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activities.

- Insufficient information
- Unsatisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Excellent

Rubrics

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

From Dimension to Criteria

The training, professional and/or research experience of the planned teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activities.

Insufficient information

At least one of the following points is met:

- The **information provided is insufficient to assess** whether the training, professional experience and/or research experience and linguistic competence of the teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activity.
- **The HEI does not provide an assessment of the achievement of the criterion or of its challenges and opportunities.**

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

From Dimension to Criteria

The training, professional and/or research experience of the planned teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activities.

Satisfactory

All the following points are met:

- All the professors of the degree are in possession of a **master's or doctor's degree or AQUA accreditation in the case of DPA**, bachelor's and master's degrees; or in possession of a doctoral degree in the case of a doctoral program.
- The CVs of the hired teachers show that **they have the knowledge or experience** to teach the subjects.
- The profile of the teaching staff responsible for **the supervision/evaluation of the final year project** presents sufficient expertise considering the research field.
- The profile of the teaching staff responsible for the **supervision/evaluation of the training stays** has sufficient experience in the field of the degree.
- The **students do not express discomfort** with respect to the teaching staff of the degree.
- The teaching staff responsible has the necessary knowledge to supervise a thesis in the field of the **doctoral program**.
- **The IES values the achievement of the criterion and is aware of its challenges and opportunities.**

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

From Dimension to Criteria

The training, professional and/or research experience of the planned teaching staff guarantee that they are competent to carry out their teaching activities.

Excellent

In addition to the points provided for at the "adequate" level, at least one of the following points is met:

- The CVs of most of the teachers hired (more than 50%) show that they have relevant training, professional and research experience in the field of the degree and that, therefore, **they can bring added value to the teaching units**.
- The profile of the teaching staff responsible for the supervision/evaluation of the final work of studies presents **expertise in the international field** considering the field of research.
- The profile of the teaching staff responsible for the supervision/evaluation of the training stays has **extensive experience** in the field of the degree.
- **Students express satisfaction** with the teaching staff of the degree.
- The teaching staff responsible has the necessary knowledge and experience to supervise a thesis in the field of the doctoral program. **The faculty's curriculum accredits them internationally** to conduct research.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

- Ex-Post – 10 years
- Follow-up is non-mandatory

Activity	Object	ESG 2.3 processes				
		Self-assessment	External assessment	Site visit	Report	Follow-up
Ex-ante accreditation	Study Programmes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Ex-post accreditation		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Follow up		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Modification		✓	✓*		✓	
Ex-ante evaluation	Institutions	✓	✓		✓	✗

Notes:
* In the case of the Programme modification process, the kind, the magnitude and the scope of the modifications will determine if an external assessment is needed.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

Self-assessment reports

- All external QA **procedures commence** with an analysis of a **self-assessment report**.
- These reports are **generated** by the **HEI** undergoing assessment.
- The report serves as a means for the institution to **demonstrate that the outcomes achieved for a particular study programme / strategic plan align with the intended objectives** and correspond to established quality criteria.
- The objective of reviewing these reports is to **conduct an analysis, grounded in evidence and indicators**, of the accomplishments related to the assessed dimensions and criteria.
- In the case of **ex-ante accreditation**, the reports should also align with the **Decree sanctioning the regulations** for state higher education degrees or the authorization of private HEIs.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

External assessment

- In all external QA processes conducted, an **Evaluation Panel** comprising external experts is engaged.
- The primary function of this panel is to produce an expert report **evaluating the assessment criteria**.
- All external QA processes adhere to a **standardized sequence** of phases and yield the following reports: **Preliminary and Final**.
- Notice that the **preliminary assessment** issues a preliminary report which is an interim report open to **modifications and amendments**.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

Site-visit

- The **ex-post programme accreditation** and **programme follow-up** phases incorporate a site visit and interviews with stakeholders.
- In line with a predetermined **timetable coordinated between AQUA and the HEI**, AQUA proposes an agenda for the **visit to the university**.
- This agenda specifies the date and time of the sessions to be held with various **groups associated** with the degree, including degree coordinators, teaching staff, students, administrative and support teams, alumni, and employers. **This includes a public hearing that is open to the entire university community.**
- The stakeholder **interviews can be conducted** either in person or **online**.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

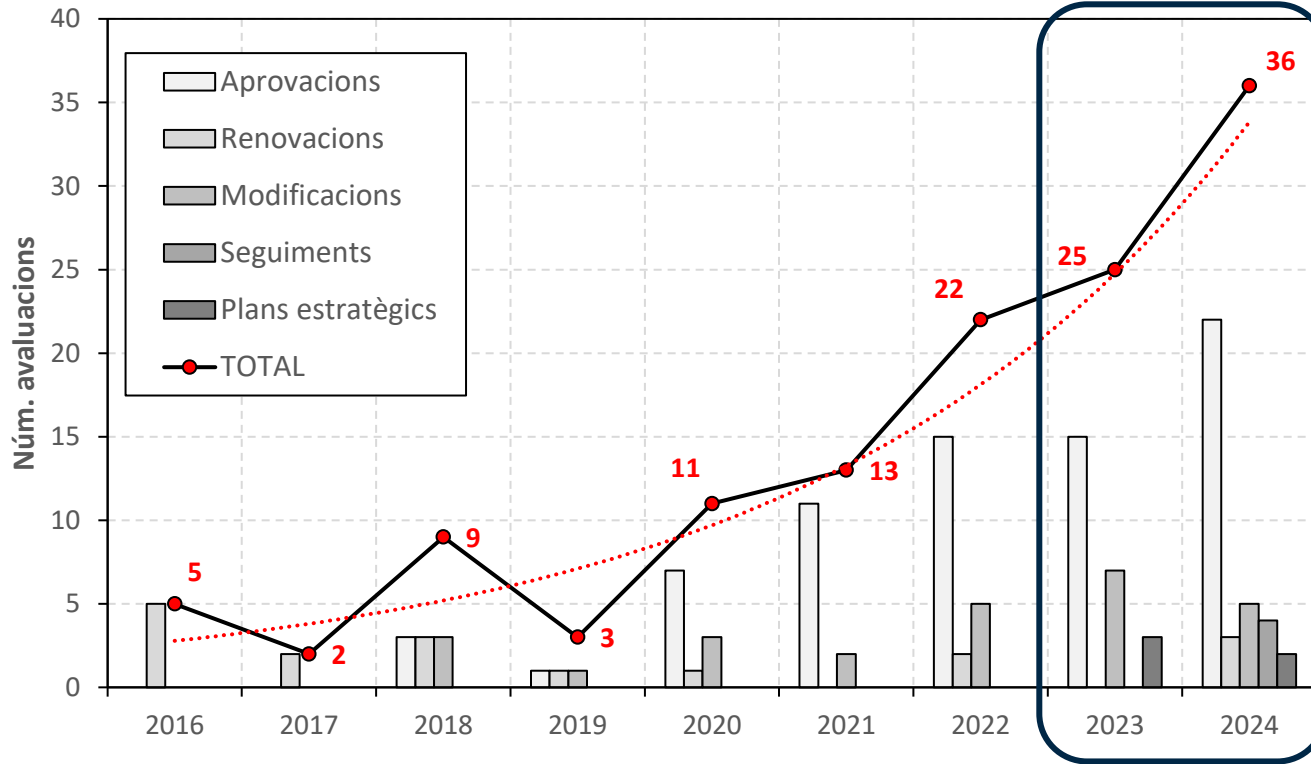
External report

- The **culmination** of all external QA processes involves the issuance of an **external assessment report**.
- The procedure commences with the **panel of external experts** generating an "expert report," providing a **well-founded evaluation** of compliance with the established criteria
- This expert report is subsequently **submitted to the Evaluation Committee**, which uses it as the basis for the evaluation or accreditation report, following the provided model.
- The university is allocated a **10-day period to present any objections or remarks**. After a thorough review of these submissions, if any, the final report is generated.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementing processes

- Ex-ante programme evaluation	74
- Programme modification evaluation	26
- Ex-post programme evaluation	17
- Programme follow-up evaluation	4
- Ex-ante institutional evaluation	5
TOTAL	126

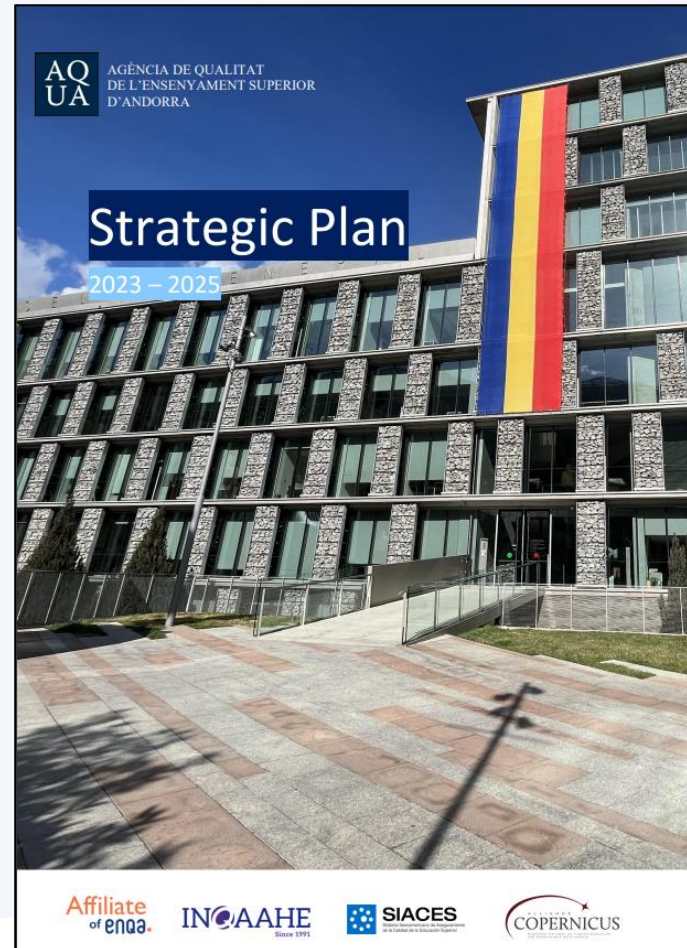


~50%

ENHANCEMENTS: QAA AND EQ

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

- Internationalization
- Adapt resources
- Internal Quality
- Efficiency in EQ



ENHANCEMENTS: QAA AND EQ

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

- Internationalization
- Adapt resources
- Internal Quality
- Efficiency in EQ

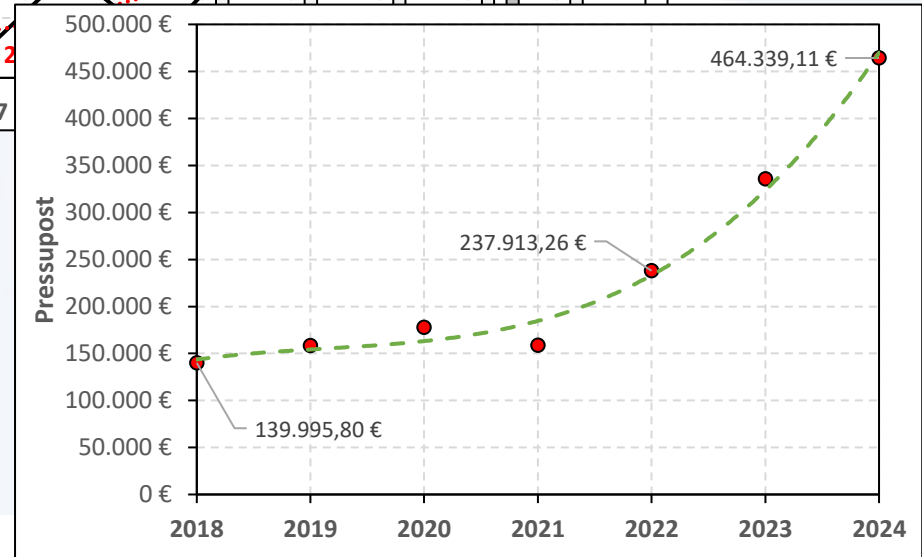
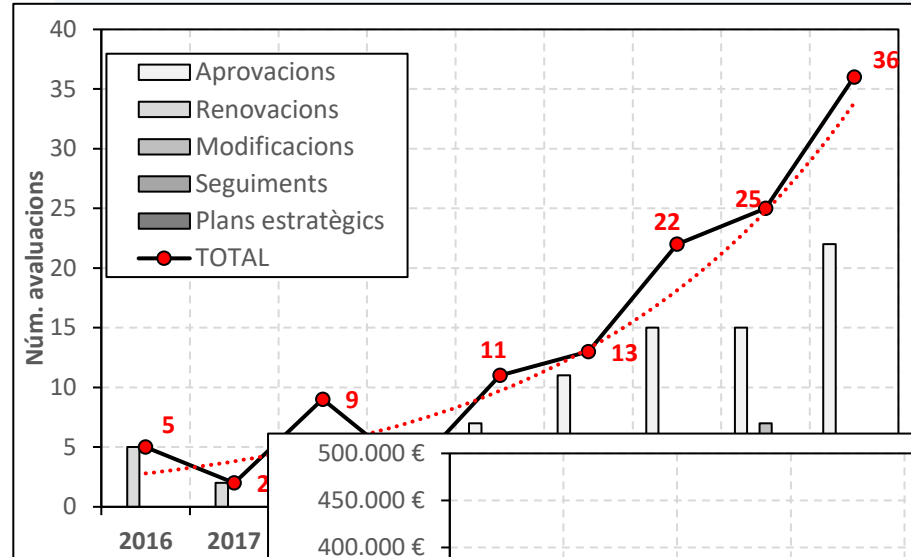


ENHANCEMENTS: QAA AND EQ

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

- Internationalization
- **Adapt resources**
- Internal Quality
- Efficiency in EQ

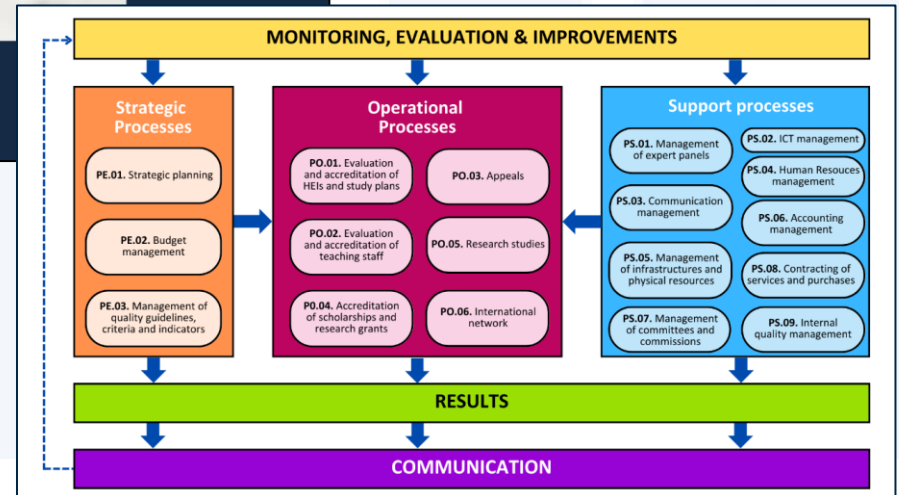
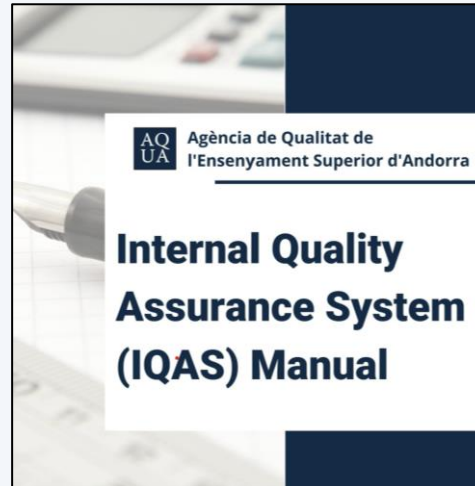
Improvement of AQUA's HR Policy
External Review



ENHANCEMENTS: QAA AND EQ

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

- Internationalization
- Adapt resources
- **Internal Quality**
- Efficiency in EQ



ENHANCEMENTS: QAA AND EQ

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

- Internationalization
- Adapt resources
- Internal Quality
- **Efficiency in EQ**

Purpose:

Enhancement 

Accountability 

**Ex-Post Institutional
Accreditation**

Digitalization of processes

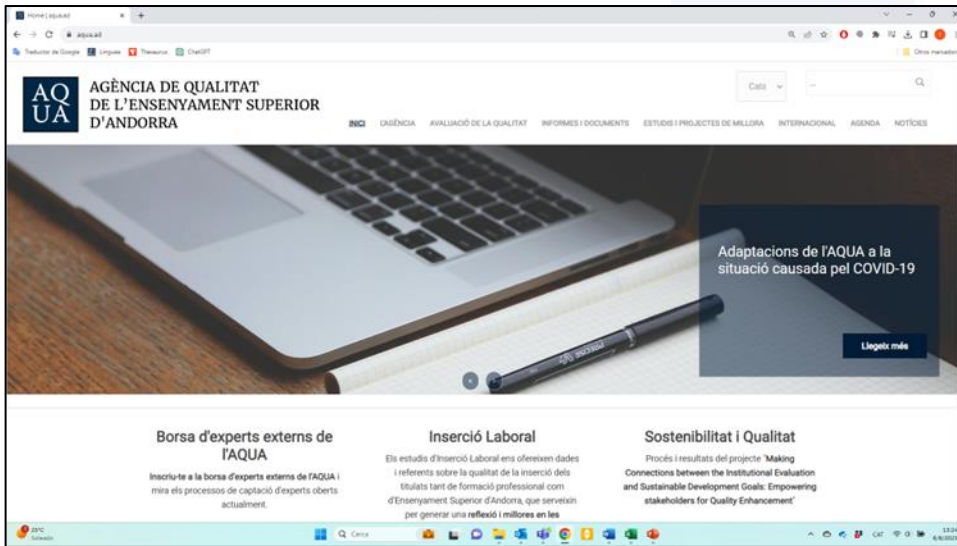
CONCLUSIONS

- Andorran HE system is changing.
- Andorra is a microstate however it decided to have its own QAA: AQUA.
- EQ processes in Andorra follow standards and guidelines defined by the EHEA.
- Ex-ante study programme evaluations are the most EQ process AQUA implements from 2016.
- Changes in the legal architecture are necessary to create greater confidence in the system.
- AQUA is equipped with an strategic plan to face the near future challenges.
- If resources are available, small country agencies can be at the same performance level than the ones in bigger countries.

CONCLUSIONS



Transparency and Communication



Agència de Qualitat de l'Ensenyament Superior d'Andorra (AQUA)



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QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR
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October 6th, 2023

Andorra la Vella

