

Update on EQAR Activities

for the 24/25 September 2020 BFUG meeting

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1. Registration Renewed for Three Spanish QA Agencies

At the EQAR Register Committee on 22 June, held virtually, the Committee concluded that the following three agencies demonstrated their substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG), all of them renewals of registration:

- **AAC-DEVA** – Andalusian Agency of Knowledge, Directorate for Evaluation and Accreditation [AAC-DEVA REPORTS IN DEQAR](#)
- **ACSUCYL** – The Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León [ACSUCYL REPORTS IN DEQAR](#)
- **madri+d** – Fundación para el Conocimiento Madrimasd madri+d [MADRI+D REPORTS IN DEQAR](#)

The full decisions of the Register Committee can be found at:

<https://www.eqar.eu/register/decisions/>

2. Revised Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG

Following the consultation launched last year on the **Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG**, the revised version of the document **has been finalised and published**. The Register Committee took in comments and suggestions that were provided by reviewed agencies, review panel members, review coordinators and also by the EQAR General Assembly.

The policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG assists applicant QA agencies, review panels and the Register Committee itself when interpreting the standards. They support a common understanding, but do not claim to be exhaustive or exclusive.

The new version takes into account the new practices and approaches in external quality assurance, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and also the recent developments in higher education, underlining the broad applicability of the ESG at higher education levels outside of the traditional standalone degree programmes (e.g. micro-credentials, alternative credentials, continuing education, etc.).

<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/official-documents/#use-and-interpretation-of-the-esg>

3. General Assembly: Karl Dittrich Re-Elected President

EQAR members convened online on **26 June**, for their **16th General Assembly** (GA). Apart from the yearly recurring agenda items such as the annual accounts, the budget, the work plan and the annual report, the agenda included the election of the EQAR President, the election of the Executive Board and the planning for the Self-Evaluation and External Evaluation of EQAR.

Karl Dittrich was re-elected as EQAR President for a second three-year term. Karl was first elected, as the first ever EQAR President, in 2017 at the General Assembly in Gozo. As President, Karl presides over the Register Committee, the General Assembly and the Executive Board, speaks at many international conferences and events and additionally has numerous bilateral meetings with stakeholders and members.

More about the 2020 General Assembly:

<https://www.eqar.eu/eqars-16th-general-assembly/>

4. EQAR Annual Report 2019

The Annual Report 2019 was published on the EQAR website. It contains an overview of last year's activities & finances, a comprehensive report on the management of the Register and cross-cutting observations based on the Register Committee's decisions:

<https://www.eqar.eu/about/annual-reports/2019-2/>

5. Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)

The Database for External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) continues to grow and develop. The **DEQAR CONNECT project** kicked off in March 2020 and focuses on two of the EHEA key commitments: supporting quality assurance and automatic recognition inside the EHEA (see previous BFUG updates). Since June, the main activities under the project's two strands were:

Expand DEQAR's Coverage to More EHEA Countries

- Following the kick-off webinar for QAAs in May, DEQAR experts (8 colleagues from experienced agencies and EQAR) have provided **one-to-one peer support** to "their" agencies, primarily via online means.

They have supported agencies in planning the developments of their own systems and linking them up to DEQAR. Experts themselves are meeting monthly and discuss progress and share advise. A virtual peer support session will take place on 29 September 2020 for all DEQAR CONNECT QAAs.

- Seven QAA project partners have already uploaded a number of reports to DEQAR: ACSUCYL, ACQUIN, IAAR, IQAA, MusiQuE, NCEQE and NCPA.

Key Statistics

The DEQAR Website continues to attract ca. 4 500 page views monthly, making up over a third of the total traffic to EQAR's website.

	March 2020	September 2020	Target for 2022
Reports	47 267	52 533	50 000
Institutions	2 270	2 532	N/A
Agencies	31	34	39
Coverage *	18	18	23

* EHEA systems where DEQAR includes reports on at least 50% of the institutions listed in the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER), except where this does not represent a substantial part of the HE system: Belgium (Flemish community), Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Finland, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Slovenia.

» [Detailed DEQAR Statistics as of September 2020](#)

Enhance DEQAR's Connectivity with Other Tools and Systems

- Following the webinar in May, the **ENIC-NARIC** centres involved are now working on **integrating information on QA from DEQAR into their workflows**, with a view to speeding up the recognition process for qualifications from those HEIs present in DEQAR.
- Work has commenced on a **compatibility layer for the Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)**, which will allow DEQAR data to be used directly for the underlying Europass Accreditation Database. The data format required for the Europass Accreditation Database has been analysed and compared with the DEQAR data structure, and the DEQAR developers have started planning the implementation.

Countries with good coverage in DEQAR are able to feed information on their quality-assured institutions and qualifications directly from DEQAR into the Europass database, without having to supply that data once again. Interested countries are invited to contact EQAR on this opportunity.

- EQAR hosted a **Roundtable Meeting on Higher Education Data Interoperability** on 15 September 2020. The meeting gathered various European initiatives in the field of HE data in order to identify opportunities to better connect existing systems and data sets and to thus reduce unnecessary duplication of work.

Representatives of the following initiatives were present: Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI), Erasmus Without Paper (EWP), My Academic ID, European Student Card (ESC), EMREX, Erasmus+ App, European Tertiary Education Register (ETER), Register of Public-Sector Organisations (OrgReg) and DiploMe; the European Commission (DG EAC) participated as observer.

Together with the European University Foundation (EUF) and experts involved in the DEQAR CONNECT project, EQAR prepared proposals aimed at launching an on-going cooperation under the working title **Higher Education Interoperable Data Initiative (HEIDI)**.

The organisations welcomed the initiative and agreed to continue cooperating on a number of problem domains. There was consensus on higher education institution identifiers being the most pressing one, given that institutions are a pivotal entity and the question of identifying institutions affects a number of other areas in turn, e.g. identifiers for students, courses or modules.

A technical group was formed to work on possible approaches to identifying HEIs and will report back to a policy group of all organisations. The organisations have agreed to take turn in preparing and hosting future meetings, with the EUF volunteering to host the second meeting.

Information on DEQAR CONNECT activities:

<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/projects/deqar-connect/>

Information on the Roundtable Meeting and the Interoperability Initiative:

[Roundtable meeting agenda and presentations](#)

[General information on the initiative](#)

Further general information on DEQAR can be found at:

<https://www.eqar.eu/qa-results/deqar-video/>

<https://www.eqar.eu/qa-results/infographics/>

6. Policy Brief on External QA & Interactive Online Tool

EQAR has recently published a Policy Brief on the status and development of external QA activities in line with the ESG, accompanied by an interactive tool allowing a personalised statistics i.e. by country, QA agency and type of review. The Policy Brief reflects on the latest trends and changes in the external quality assurance in higher education systems across and beyond the EHEA, including on the implementation of key commitments within the EHEA, cross-border quality assurance and European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes.

Some key takeaways from the Policy Brief:

- The year 2019 saw the highest number of external QA activities carried out by registered agencies. The portfolio of EQAR-registered agencies includes over 300 types of external QA activities comprising of all forms of accreditations, evaluations, certification, assessments, audits or reviews within the scope of the ESG, signalling a diversified picture of external QA activities within the scope of the ESG.
- In 2019, registered agencies carried out more cross-border external QA activities outside the EHEA than within, signalling an increasing demand for ESG type of external QA activities to be carried out for higher institutions beyond the EHEA.
- A small number of QA agencies have recorded either a continuous decrease in their activities for the past four years (A3ES, ACSUG, AKKORK and QAA) or a continuous increase (AQ Austria, NVAO, and QQI), which usually reflects changes in their procedures or the quality assurance requirements within the higher education systems where they operate.

Read the full Policy Brief and check out our interactive online tool here:

<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/external-qa-activities/>