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***The role in society of higher education and implications for (internal and external) quality assurance***

Parallel Session (Room C1.2.359, 2nd floor)

TPG C on QA meeting, 1st of June 2023, Astana

Learning and teaching, innovation and research are the traditional roles of higher education institutions.

In 2020, the ministers of higher education from the countries members to the European Higher Education Area committed to ”enable our higher institutions to engage with our societies to address the multiple threats to global peace, democratic values, freedom of information, health and wellbeing”. The potential of higher education institutions to drive change and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, by improving the knowledge, skills, and competences of students and society is recognised.

The [“Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area”](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiFlpejuYf_AhW4iv0HHQgdAa0QFnoECBAQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fehea.info%2FUpload%2FRome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0wFYAghXsvdpTYYw_YvLJa) , which were adopted as an annex to the Rome Communique, are stating, ”*Community engagement should be considered as a process whereby higher education institutions engage with external community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that can be mutually beneficial. Like social dimension policies, community engagement should be embedded in core missions of higher education*.”

EUA’s vision for Universities in 2030, ”*envision universities without walls; these are universities that are open and engaged in society while retaining their core values. All of Europe’s universities will be responsible, autonomous and free, with different institutional profiles, but united in their missions of learning and teaching, research, innovation and culture in service to society*.”

The [QA FIT](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjzw-3_u4f_AhXqgv0HHUQ2A7MQFnoECAoQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.enqa.eu%2Fprojects%2Fquality-assurance-fit-for-the-future-qa-fit%2F&usg=AOvVaw2JF3Qt1QVidrH95mMnE1zS) project, coordinated by ENQA, aims to map the state of play regarding the European Higher Education Area quality assurance framework, the implementation of the [European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiRu6T5u4f_AhX6_7sIHYpLDnsQFnoECAgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.enqa.eu%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2015%2F11%2FESG_2015.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1I2nXeAnQSI-qS6aMlVgYf) and new trends in QA, as well as to initiate the discussions regarding the future of ESGs. The QA FIT project included sending surveys towards QA agencies, higher education institutions, ministries and national unions of students to find out current realities and perceptions on the revision of the ESGs.

Even though the ESGs are mostly covering learning and teaching, the survey results showed that 82% of the quality assurance agencies are also covering the service to society / the third mission of higher education institutions. Engagement with industry, engagement with the society, activities related to technology transfer and innovation and continuing education are the main topics considered. More than 60% of the respondents, from all categories of stakeholders, believe to a large extent or to some extent that the third role should be included in an eventual revised version of the ESGs.

The objective of today’s discussion is to:

* **reflect** upon the state of play and results from the QA FIT survey on how the third role of higher education is embeded in quality assurance processes;
* **present** the extent to which the third role of higher education is explicitly or implicitly addressed by other bodies/mechanisms, and whether there is any link to QA;
* **present** best practices on supporting the third role of higher education through QA;
* **discuss** possible scenarios for development.