

Consideration of social dimension in quality assurance

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European Association for the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)

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Definition

“Social dimension is the means by which we widen access to higher education, ensure it is representative of the diverse society in which it exists, fulfils its responsibility to extend social equality, and that those who enter higher education are supported to achieve and succeed. The social dimension is certainly not limited to or achieved by solely allocating and distributing financial support, but needs to be understood as all parameters that define an inclusive environment in HEIs and as a consequence in the society at large. These parameters include a big variety of incentives that foster the Higher Education’s responsibility to cultural, political, scientific and human development, which must be considered simultaneously as the whole breadth of the social dimension.”

(ESU Policy Paper on Social Dimension, 2015)

Social dimension in the Bologna process

- Mentioned in the communiqués since 2001
- Students strong advocates
- Change of strategic focus over the years:
Communiqué 2012: “reduce inequalities”, “step up efforts towards underrepresented groups”, etc.
Communiqué 2015: “gender balance”, opportunities... for disadvantaged backgrounds”,
Communiqué 2018: “unemployment”, "migration related issues", "political radicalisation", "violent extremism", etc.

2018 Ministerial Communiqué

- Further effort is required
- “We commit to developing policies that encourage and support HEIs to fulfil their social responsibility and contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive society through enhancing intercultural understanding, civic engagement and ethical awareness, as well as ensuring equitable access to higher education.”

European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)



- 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- 1.5 Teaching staff
- 1.6 Learning resources and student support

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Standard:

- Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Social dimension vs. student-centred learning

Challenges with ESG 2015 (equip project):

- *“ensuring the link between QA and the academic quality of learning and teaching (design and approval of programmes, and SCL)” and “assessing and measuring the extent to which a programme/a HEI has adopted a student-centred approach to teaching and learning”.*
- *a lack of a common approach to defining student-centred learning and the features that demonstrate its presence or lack thereof.*

1.5 Teaching staff

Standard:

- Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

→ acknowledges the changing role of and expectations towards teachers and that there is a resulting need for the ongoing development of staff competences to deal with the changing learning landscape.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Standard:

- Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

→ Support for learning, support for students to understand their own learning type, frameworks for independent learning...

Social dimension within the scope of external quality assurance

- Croatian case –

Agency for Science and Higher Education
(ASHE)

Ivana Borosic, ASHE

Major changes in the new institutional re-accreditation model

Improved quality standards

- Quality standards adjusted to new ESG, esp. regarding **ESG 1.2** (*learning outcomes and connection to CroQF*), **ESG 1.3** (*student-centred learning, teaching and assessment*) and **ESG 1.5** (*competencies and professional development of teachers / staff*)
- Shift from *inputs* to *outputs*

New standards of institutional re-accreditation

Standards were grouped into five thematic categories / areas of assessment:

1. Internal quality assurance and the role of the higher education institution in society (ESG 1.1., ESG 1.7. and ESG 1.8.)
2. Study programmes (ESG 1.2. and ESG 1.9.)
3. Teaching process and student support (ESG 1.3., ESG 1.4. and ESG 1.6.)
4. Teaching and institutional capacities (ESG 1.5. and ESG 1.6.)
5. Scientific / artistic activity

Standards

- 1.5. HEI understands and encourages the development of its social role
- 3.3. HEI ensures student-centred learning
- 3.4. HEI ensures adequate student support
- 3.5. HEI ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups
- 4.2. HEI has an objective, transparent and excellence-based procedure of teacher recruitment
- 4.3. Teacher advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures
- 4.4. HEI provides support to teachers in their professional development

Institutional re-accreditation

- 6 final reports - PILOTS
- Quality standards concerning the social dimension: general findings & examples of good practice; general recommendations

Assessment area

I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution (ESG 1.1, ESG 1.7, ESG 1.8)

1.5. HEI understands and encourages the development of its social role

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>HEI contributes to the development of economy (economic and technological mission of the university)</i>	The social role is incorporated in its mission	Through some more in-depth analyses conducted among alumni a more concrete social impact of this HEI may be made in cooperation with alumni
<i>HEI contributes to the development of the local community</i>	HEI is publicly responsible and socially sensitive	Strong and loyal empathy with the social role, from staff and students, but this could be more strongly expressed and explicitly (standardized) in the strategy document
<i>HEI contributes to the foundations of the academic profession and the accountability of teachers for the development of the university and the local community</i>	The research activities of the HEI contribute to the development of the community	The social role could be further improved by increasing the number of life-long learning programme programmes
<i>The development of its social role is a part of HEI's mission (e.g. development of civil society, democracy, etc.)</i>	Students and employees are involved in volunteering actions in order to help students with lower income and vulnerable groups of students	

Assessment area

III. Teaching process and student support (ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6)

3.3. HEI ensures student-centred learning

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>HEI encourages various modes of programme delivery, in accordance with the intended learning outcomes</i>	HEI delivers various modes of programme delivery such as classical learning, hybrid learning, e-learning courses, etc. E-learning courses are well developed and include literature in the English language. The modes of programme delivery are in accordance with the intended learning outcomes	There is no policy for students of lower economic status, students belonging to the Roma minority and students whose parents have lower educational qualifications
<i>Various teaching methods are used that encourage interactive and research-based learning, problem solving and creative and critical thinking (for example, individual and group projects, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, field work and other interactive methods)</i>	Teaching methods are adapted to suit also the needs of students with certain circumstances and disabilities. Help is provided to female students that gave birth in period of studies. Direct enrolment is ensured to children of soldiers who lost their lives in the war	HEI is encouraged to develop and implement the institutional support to student-centred learning and to accept it as part of the development strategy goals
<i>The HEI continually evaluates and adapts teaching methods and different modes of programme delivery</i>	All learning sources , such as teaching materials from the courses/exercises/seminars and textbooks, are available 24/7 via the e-learning platform	Develop new methods for collecting student feedback
<i>Teaching methods are adapted to a diverse student population (non-traditional student population, part-time students, senior students, under-represented* and vulnerable groups** etc.)</i>	Teaching staff emphasised that feedback from students is crucial for the readjustment and improvement of teaching methods	The implementation of effective feedback from students on their problems should be pursued. Evidence that that this feedback produces results i.e. those actions are taken following the results of the surveys should be provided and highlighted. It is recommended to implement compulsory online surveys and to publicise the consequent actions
<i>HEI ensures the use of state-of-the-art technologies to modernise teaching</i>		
<i>Available and committed teachers contribute to the motivation of students and their engagement</i>		
<i>HEI encourages autonomy and responsibility in students</i>		

Under-representation in higher education is defined as a lower participation of a certain group of students in relation to their percentage in general population, and situation in other European countries. The under-represented groups are as follows: students whose parents have lower educational qualifications; female students in technical fields and male students in humanities; mature students; students with disabilities; students with children; students belonging to the Roma minority.

***Vulnerability is perceived as difficulties in the academic or social integration of students, associated with certain personal characteristics of students.*

Assessment area

III. Teaching process and student support (ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6)

3.4. HEI ensures adequate student support

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>HEI provides guidance on studying and career opportunities to students (for example, tutors, supervisors and other advisers as a support in student learning and progress)</i>	HEI provides students with guidance by allocating a mentor to every student on the 1st year. The role of the mentor is to introduce the student to the faculty and explain any doubts and questions the student may have about studying. Career opportunities are available to students and are also marketed yearly on career	Support policy for students belonging to the Roma minority, students whose parents have lower educational qualifications and students of lower economic status should be implemented
<i>HEI has established functional procedures for student career guidance, psychological and legal counselling, support to students with disabilities, support in outgoing and incoming mobility, and library and student administration services, at university of faculty level and students are informed about them</i>	HEI provided evidence of support to student mobility, of adequate library and administration services, and to support students with disabilities. Procedures for student career guidance, psychological and legal counselling are established on university level	Student support through guidance starting from the 1st year of undergraduate studies should be implemented in order to reduce the high dropout rate
<i>Student support is tailored to a diverse student population (part-time students, mature students, students from abroad, students from under-represented and vulnerable groups, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, etc.)</i>	In order to improve the support and communication between students and the Management, the Faculty organises formal consultations with the Vice-deans, and a biannual informal social gathering, the so-called Coffee with the Vice-deans. Discussion with students revealed their attendance of both the formal and informal events	The names of student representatives (spokespersons) should be made public on the internal platform so that all students would know who their representative is
<i>HEI employs an adequate number of qualified and committed professional, administrative and technical staff</i>	For direct communication, HEI uses social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube	HEI should familiarize the students with the role and activities of the student ombudsman (during the introductory lectures, first day, etc.)
	HEI also has a Frequently Asked Questions column that provides an overview of the most frequently asked questions and the related answers	

Assessment area

III. Teaching process and student support (ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6)

3.5. HEI ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>HEI monitors various needs of students from vulnerable and under-represented groups</i>	HEI provides the support to pregnant and parenting students, to students with disabilities and learning difficulties and to students being children of Croatian soldiers from the Homeland War. This kind of help is institutionalized by regulations	HEI is encouraged to continue to provide and improve the support to all their students in need
<i>Teaching process is adjusted to the individual needs of students from vulnerable and under-represented groups</i>	Help to the handicapped students is provided for better access to faculty spaces, study rooms and other services	Introduce a buddy programme for students from vulnerable and under-represented groups from the time of their enrolment
<i>HEI invests resources in the support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups</i>	HEI grants five scholarships to children from social institutions / homes	HEI needs to set up a service for examining under specific rules students with learning disabilities (e.g., oral examination in students with dyslexia)
	Student support to students with disabilities is ensured through the coordinator working in the Student Affairs Office at the HEI. At the University level, the students may turn to the Office for Students with Disabilities within the University Counselling Centre	Information on the possibility of enrolment for vulnerable and underrepresented groups, as well as the enrolment methods for these persons should be published on the HEI web site. In particular, this refers to people with disabilities who have certain difficulties such as reading, spelling, writing disabilities. For such groups, clear criteria and evaluation methods for both the entrance exam and other knowledge assessment methods should be published on the web site
	HEI has removed all possible architectural barriers that could impede students with disabilities and adjust the water closets	
	HEI provides a discount on tuition fees for the students from areas of special state concern of the Republic of Croatia	
	The HEI gives support to students from vulnerable groups . Housing facilities for students from low-income families have been established and exams are adapted in case of illness or pregnancy	

Assessment area

IV. Teaching and institutional capacities (ESG 1.5, ESG 1.6)

4.2. HEI has an objective, transparent and excellence-based procedure of teacher recruitment.

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<p><i>The procedures of teacher recruitment are aligned with HEI development goals, relevant legislation and internal regulations.</i></p>	<p>Recruitment procedures seem to live up to national standards, which newly include research output. However, internationalization of the teaching staff is negligible. HEI states to be active in hiring internationally, but this does not seem to be done on a regular basis. An alleged difficulty is that salaries are not competitive</p>	<p>It is recognised that there are stifling constraints on the HEI (given legislation and funding issue etc.) but objectively there needs to be a fundamental change in the career progression expectations</p>
<p><i>In the selection, appointment and evaluation of teachers, HEI takes into account their past activities (teaching, research, student feedback, etc.).</i></p>	<p>HEI has objective and transparent procedures for teacher recruitment, which take into consideration performance in teaching and research. The methods for selecting best candidates that emerged in the interviews seemed appropriate. Nevertheless, standards do not always match those internationally prevailing</p>	<p>Interviews with the staff during the selection and appointment of academics should definitely be included</p>
<p><i>Teacher recruitment procedures are appropriately regulated, transparent, consistently applied and implemented within the prescribed deadlines.</i></p>	<p>Teacher recruitment procedure is established and transparent. Vacancies are published locally and abroad</p>	<p>The progression of teaching assistants to Assistant Professor is hampered by funding and not at all well-structured in terms of providing positions for the best candidates. This is a consequence of the lack of a consistent and visionary view from the government funding restrictions; effectively losing brilliant dedicated young potential staff because there is no structural mechanism for ensuring their continuing career progression from teaching assistant to full academic staff. A progression of 15-30% after a 10 yr financial and PhD training commitment is not good</p>
<p><i>HEI has appropriate methods for selecting the best candidates for each position and uses competitive, excellence-based recruitment criteria in addition to the minimum requirements prescribed by national legislation.</i></p>	<p>Selection criteria follow legal rules</p>	<p>HEI should seek funds to attract at least a small number of professors of international rank</p>

Assessment area

IV. Teaching and institutional capacities (ESG 1.5, ESG 1.6)

4.3. Teacher advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>The higher education institution uses objective and transparent academic promotion procedures</i>	It is clear that everything is being done at a high level to ensure teacher advancement; but the HEI is struggling to offer reasonable advancement and reappointment opportunities. An obvious consequence of this will be that the best students and staff will be pushed (against their will) to leaving	Performance-based criteria for advancement and re-appointment should be considered, designed, communicated and applied
<i>Academic promotion procedures are based on assessment and rewarding of excellence</i>	Advancement and re-appointment procedures seem to live up to the standards. However, given that the number of different rank levels is regulated, it is not clear who is actually advanced or re-appointed	Excellence indicators must be further clarified, and the institution should draw up a rulebook on the progress of scientists. An award system for teachers with excellent projects and publications should be defined to encourage the teachers' scientific activities. Appointment of a responsible person for checking that all teachers are uploading their scientific CV (publications, projects, etc.) to the database is recommended
<i>Additional criteria for the promotion of teachers reflect the strategic goals of the higher education institution</i>	The procedures are objective and transparent, though the level of excellence for minimum requirements is lower than expected for a prestigious HEI	There should be a defined framework for the evaluation process carried out by the committees of experts in charge of decisions. Such framework should be set at the HEI level or at level of departments. For example, a uniform criterion could be set for the range of points that can be allocated to the interview with the candidate, to scientific results, to the participation to various projects (scientific, industrial, etc.), to indicators of teaching and mentoring quality, mobility activities, etc. This way, the evaluation process could be more objective and uniform. The criteria should reflect priorities and strategic goals of the HEI and/or the Department.
<i>Important achievements (such as international contribution to the scientific discipline, high-impact publications, significant scientific discoveries, successful projects, success in securing additional funds, supervision of final and graduation theses, authorship of textbooks / study materials, popular lectures etc.) are taken into account when considering teacher advancement</i>	The re-appointment procedure is based on objective and transparent procedures. However, the Expert Panel considers that objectives for teacher advancement are not clearly defined and that there is a poor awards system for teachers with higher dedication to research projects and with good publication records	
<i>Indicators of excellence include scientific/artistic, teaching and professional contribution to the development of the higher education institution</i>		

Assessment area

IV. Teaching and institutional capacities (ESG 1.5, ESG 1.6)

4.4. HEI provides support to teachers in their professional development

Elements of the standard	General findings and examples of good practice	General recommendations
<i>The higher education institution provides opportunities for the improvement of teaching competencies at the level of the university or university constituent</i>	Mobility is encouraged , including sabbaticals and international visits	Teacher training courses could be increased and formal certified training made mandatory for all staff, including Teaching Assistants
<i>The higher education institution encourages the assessment and improvement of teaching competencies based on the peer-review recommendations and the results of student satisfaction surveys</i>	There is a certain amount of teacher training workshops available and also English language help. Teaching loads are very high but the teaching web-based facilities (Atlantis, and various software) are advanced and very well organised	Sabbaticals should be further encouraged and supported
<i>Teachers participate in international mobility programmes, projects, networks etc.</i>	All educational aspects are very well supported and encouraged by the Vice Dean for Education	The higher education institution should define motivation mechanism and/or initiatives towards the teachers to use the opportunities towards professional development
	Professional development at HEI takes place, but it could be more systematic and targeted	Teaching staff should have to attend scientific and professional conferences and meetings at least once yearly, with international meetings given priority
	HEI enables professional development if there is an initiative from teachers themselves. However, there is no clear motivation mechanism and/or initiatives from the management towards the teachers, i.e. professional development is mostly voluntarily	Teachers should participate in mobility programmes more in order to improve their competences, as well as to develop cooperation with other educational institutions abroad
	The HEI supports teachers in their professional development settling the costs for their doctoral studies and providing financial support for research not fully covered by scientific and professional projects	
	A further example for support of teachers in their professional development is an annual allowance of € 1000 for attending conferences provided by the HEI	

Public information

- Reports publicly available – ASHE website
- Croatian & English language

What could/SHOULD QA Agency do?!

- **ESG 2.4.** Peer-review experts - national & international, training of experts
- **ESG 3.4.** Thematic Analysis – *Analysis of the Five-year Cycle of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (ASHE, 2017)*
- **ESG 3.6.** Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct - ASHE employees participated in the project „E-Quality: Linking Quality and Social Inclusion in Higher Education in Croatia” financed from the European Social Fund in 2015.
- NGO representative is a member of the ASHE's Accreditation Council

Conclusion

What & Why is important for Croatian QA Agency:

- ESG, 2015
- Ministerial Conference
- Ministerial Communiqué



schweizerische agentur
für akkreditierung
und qualitätssicherung

agence suisse
d'accréditation et
d'assurance qualité

agenzia svizzera di
accreditamento e
garanzia della qualità

swiss agency of
accreditation and
quality assurance

SOCIAL DIMENSION WITHIN THE SCOPE OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

**Group project as part of the ENQA leadership
development programme: the case of Switzerland**

Nina Wyss, AAQ

OVERVIEW: THE CASE OF SWITZERLAND

Institutional accreditation in Switzerland: How is the social dimension being taken into account?

- Analysis of the relevant standards corresponding to the ESG
- Findings of procedures of institutional accreditation
- What should a quality assurance agency do?

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION IN SWITZERLAND

Legal base: the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education System (HEdA)

Obligatory for all institutions (private or public) of higher education who call themselves either

- University
- University of Teacher Education
- University of Applied Sciences

Object of accreditation: the system of quality assurance of the institution

First cycle of accreditation procedures is still ongoing: 2015-2022

Reports: <http://aaq.ch/en/procedural-reports/>

1. ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANT QUALITY STANDARDS

Quality standards according to the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education System (HEdA)

Area 1: quality assurance strategy

- QS 1.3 involvement in developing and implementing the quality assurance system

Area 2: governance

- QS 2.3 participatory rights
- QS 2.4 social sustainability
- QS 2.5 gender equality

Area 3: teaching, research and services

- QS 3.3 principles of the EHEA
- QS 3.4 transparency

Area 4: resources

- QS 4.1 personal resources
- QS 4.3 career development of staff

2. FINDINGS OF PROCEDURES OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION I

So far (November 2018):

A decision has been reached in six procedures

- **Four universities of applied sciences:**
 - Hochschule für Wirtschaft Zürich (HWZ)
 - Hochschule für Heilpädagogik (HfH)
 - Berner Fachhochschule (BFH)
 - Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Chur (HTW)
- **Two universities of teacher education:**
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Bern (PH Bern)
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Luzern (PH LU)

3. WHAT CAN OR SHOULD A QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY DO?

...apart from applying the quality standards:

Take the social dimension into account when

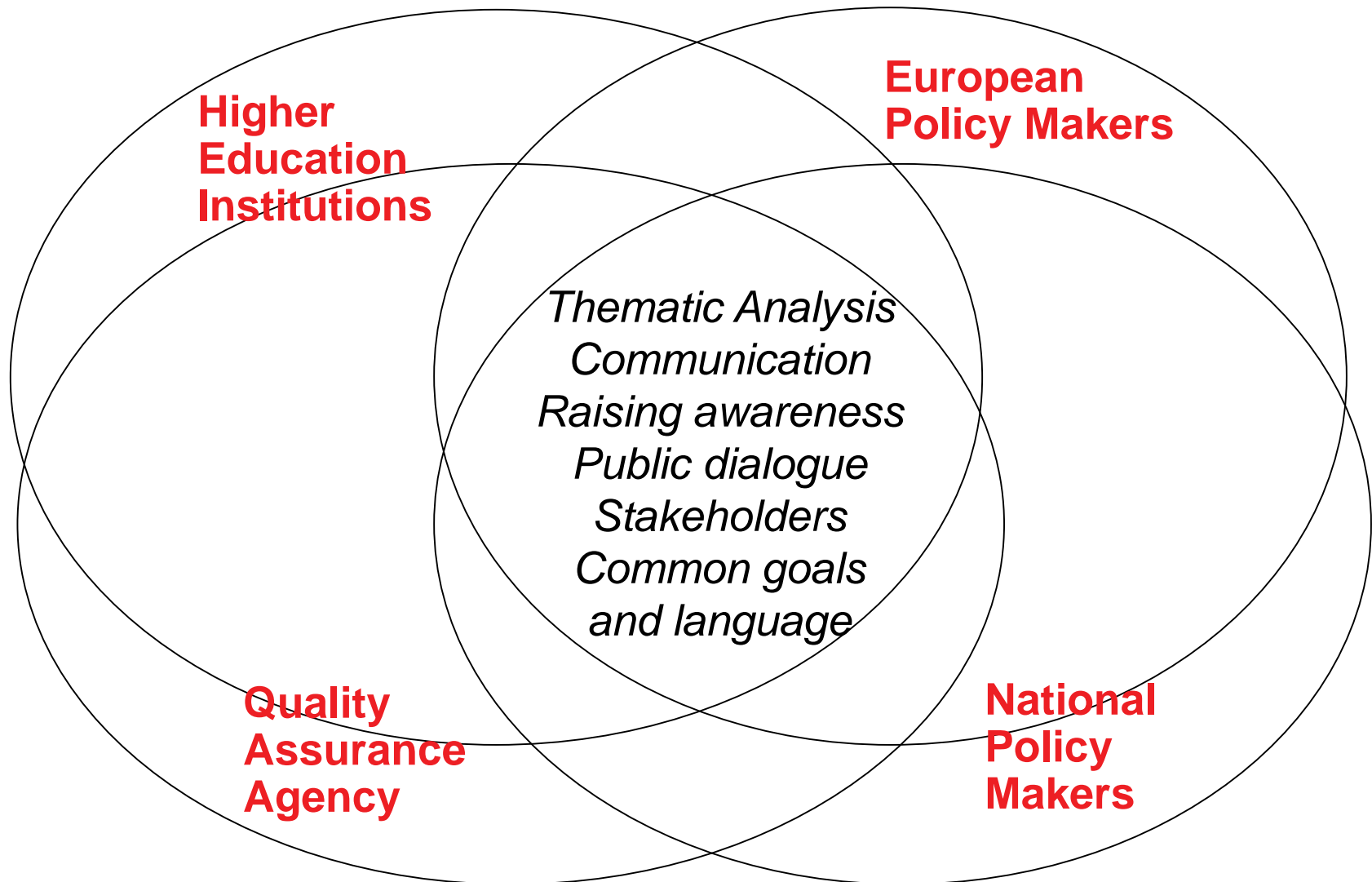
ESG 2.4: Peer-review experts (choosing a panel)

- Who are the members?
- Who is peer leader?
- Who do they represent?

ESG 2.6: Reporting (being transparent)

- Publish all reports of external evaluation
- Publish the guides of the procedures

CONCLUSION



Thank you!

