ENQA
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CURRENT PRACTICES ON EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ACADEMIC RECOGNITION AMONG QA AGENCIES

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REPORT FROM THE ENQA WORKING GROUP VII ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION

Occasional Papers 25

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. BACKGROUND

The fair recognition[1] of qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (to which we will refer in this report as "recognition for academic purposes" or "academic recognition") has been one of the main objectives of the Bologna Process since its creation. The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) sets up some agreed common operating principles that are legally binding for the concerned countries.

However, according to the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report[2], after two decades of existence, implementation of the LRC is still a challenge. In particular, students are still facing major barriers to mobility because of imperfect academic recognition of periods of study, certificates, diplomas, and degrees obtained from another national system or institution. Even though the situation varies between countries (with different legal frameworks and bodies involved), several reports make it evident that academic recognition in European higher education is largely in the hands of higher education institutions. The fact that higher education institutions are autonomous, and the signatory countries have limited capacity to bind them to the principles of the LRC, is identified as a major challenge.

As the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report states, this issue has been taken up in the context of improving quality assurance (QA) and in particular was addressed in the revision of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)[3]. The ESG 2015 (standard 1.4) explicitly considers academic recognition as an essential component of the internal quality assurance (IQA) system of a higher education institution:

> *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on:*
> - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;*
> - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.*

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1   In the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the term "recognition" is defined as the formal acknowledgment by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.
2   The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report, available at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf.
3   Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), available at: http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

With the adaptation to the ESG 2015, it is clear that QA agencies now have responsibility for addressing academic recognition issues in their external quality assurance (EQA) processes. ENQA has taken up the challenge of exploring the current and potential role of QA agencies in improving institutional recognition practices as well as developing suitable strategies to support QA agencies in this task.

1.2. THE ENQA WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION

In line with ENQA's 2016-2020 strategic plan4, which envisions "a European Higher Education Area where students have access to high quality education and can achieve qualifications that are respected worldwide", and aware of the new responsibilities for the quality assurance sector embedded in the 2015 version of the ESG, ENQA established a working group on quality assurance and recognition in July 2015.

The activities of the group in its two years of existence have focused on mapping current practices concerning the external quality assurance of academic recognition among ENQA agencies, identifying challenges and best practices, and developing strategies to disseminate the group's research.

Members of the working group
Teresa Sánchez Chaparro, CTI, France (chair of the working group)
Carme Edo Ros, AQU Catalunya, Spain
Eva Fernández de Labastida, Unibasq, Spain
Marie-Jo Goedert, CTI, France
Kyrre Goksøyr, NOKUT, Norway
Esther Huertas, AQU Catalunya, Spain
Maria Kelo, ENQA, Europe
Niamh Lenehan, QQI, Ireland
Rafael Llavori de Micheo, ANECA, Spain
Aurelija Valeikienė, SKVC, Lithuania

This working group worked under the coordination of Lindsey Kerber, from the ENQA Secretariat.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

The following activities were conducted by the working group during its two years of existence:

- Selecting and considering relevant publications and initiatives (EU-funded projects of particular relevance to the scope of the working group) regarding the European Area of Recognition and its challenges with implementation (see Chapter 5);
- Conducting an exploratory survey to QA agencies in September 2016. The results and conclusions of this study are presented in Chapter 2 of this report. The full text of the survey is included in Annex 1; and

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4   ENQA strategic plan 2016-2020, available at: http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/about-enqa/strategic-plan-2016-2020/.

- Organising a dissemination and consultation event aimed at exploring the links between quality assurance and recognition and addressed to three target communities[5]: QA agencies, higher education institutions, and ENIC-NARIC centres. The event, hosted by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland, an organisation which comprises both the QA agency and the official ENIC-NARIC centre in Ireland) and entitled "Exploring synergies between quality assurance and qualifications recognition", took place in Dublin on 1-2 June 2017. Chapter 3 provides an account of the main conclusions, while the full event programme and list of participants are available in Annexes 2 and 3 of this report.

1.4 LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

CBHE	cross-border higher education
CBQA	cross-border quality assurance
EAR	European Area of Recognition
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC	European Network of Information Centers in the European Region
EQA	external quality assurance
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
HEI	higher education institution
IQA	internal quality assurance
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
MOOC	massive open online course
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centers in the European Union
QA	quality assurance
RPL	recognition of prior learning[6]
VET	vocational education and training

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5   Information on the event is available at: http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/events/exploring-synergies-between-quality-assurance-and-qualifications-recognition/.
6   In this document, the abbreviation is used with an emphasis on non-formal and informal learning.

CHAPTER 2: SURVEY ON CURRENT EQA PRACTICES OF QA AGENCIES REGARDING ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

2.1. OBJECTIVES, TECHNICAL NOTES, AND PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

2.1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In September 2016 a survey (Annex 1) was addressed to ENQA members and affiliates that are QA agencies in the EHEA with the following specific objectives:

- To determine the role, interest, and mandate of ENQA agencies regarding academic recognition matters (links between quality assurance and recognition in a broad sense);
- To explore the links between ENQA agencies and other bodies or authorities involved in recognition, particularly ENIC-NARIC centres; and
- To map current practices on EQA of academic recognition policies and practices (the way QA agencies are currently responding to ESG 1.4).

2.1.2. SCOPE AND TERMINOLOGY

The scope of this study is "recognition for academic purposes" or "academic recognition". It covers the range of recognition policies and practices (most frequently put in place by higher education institutions) in the following contexts:

- *Recognition of academic qualifications* (qualifications providing access to higher education and higher education qualifications). It covers recognition (normally, in a context of admission for further studies) of formal academic qualifications; these qualifications can be of a different nature and delivered in a wide range of situations:
  - Domestic or foreign qualifications;
  - Qualifications delivered at home or in the context of cross-border higher education (CBHE);
  - Academically-oriented or professionally-oriented qualifications;
  - Qualifications obtained through different modes of delivery (including e-learning or blended learning).
- *Recognition of periods of study* (credits) gained at other institutions (domestic or abroad); i.e. credits achieved as part of an Erasmus exchange.
- *Recognition of prior learning* (normally, in a context of admission), also known as recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Informal learning is learning that results from daily activities related to work, family, or leisure. Non-formal learning is learning which results from planned activities but which do not constitute formal learning (community or non-credit adult courses, professional development courses, continuing education, MOOCs not awarding credits, etc.).

2.1.3. CONSIDERATION OF THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

When analysing the answers to the survey, the working group considered the national context of the agencies.

Obviously, the degree to which the principles of the LRC are embedded in national legislation is a central but complex factor. In particular, in some countries in which the LRC principles are not fully considered in national legislation, such as in Ireland or the United Kingdom, agencies seem to show more awareness and initiative in the matter than agencies in countries where the legislation formally complies with the LRC and its subsidiary legal texts.

Other national factors have an impact on the way QA agencies handle recognition, such as the degree of internationalisation of the higher education system. For example, recognition issues seem to be more prominent in agencies in countries that are net importers of students or that need to address specific issues, such as fighting diploma mills or recognising the qualifications of refugees.

The number of actors involved in the national quality assurance system and their specific roles regarding recognition are also important factors. For example, some agencies seem to feel less involved with recognition due to the fact that another quality assurance body in the same country has a specific legal mandate on the matter. As an example, in Spain, ANECA (the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain) was recently given a legal mandate to assess the individual applications for recognition of foreign qualifications; for the moment, this mandate is not shared by the regional agencies. In other cases, such as in Germany, the presence of various quality assurance bodies, including the GAC (German Accreditation Council) seems to have a positive or multiplicative effect, as the concerted action of all these bodies seems to have raised the general level of awareness.

In this context, applying a purely quantitative analysis to the answers could be misleading. A more qualitative approach incorporating the previous considerations was applied by the working group when judging the level of involvement to QA agencies in recognition matters.

2.1.4. NUMBER AND PROFILE OF QA AGENCIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

Thirty-six members out of 51 (71% of members) and 12 affiliates out of 50 (24% of affiliates) responded to the survey. Respondent agencies form a diverse group in terms of focus of EQA processes:

- Ten percent operate at institutional level, 16 percent at programme level, and 66 percent at both levels. Eight percent declared to have additional or alternative focus, such as evaluation of research, programmes, services, consultancy, etc.
- Eighty-two percent are generalist agencies and 12 percent are subject-specific agencies.

In terms of geographical diversity, 33 countries of the EHEA were represented in this study: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium (French-speaking community), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Countries represented in the survey
Countries not represented in the survey
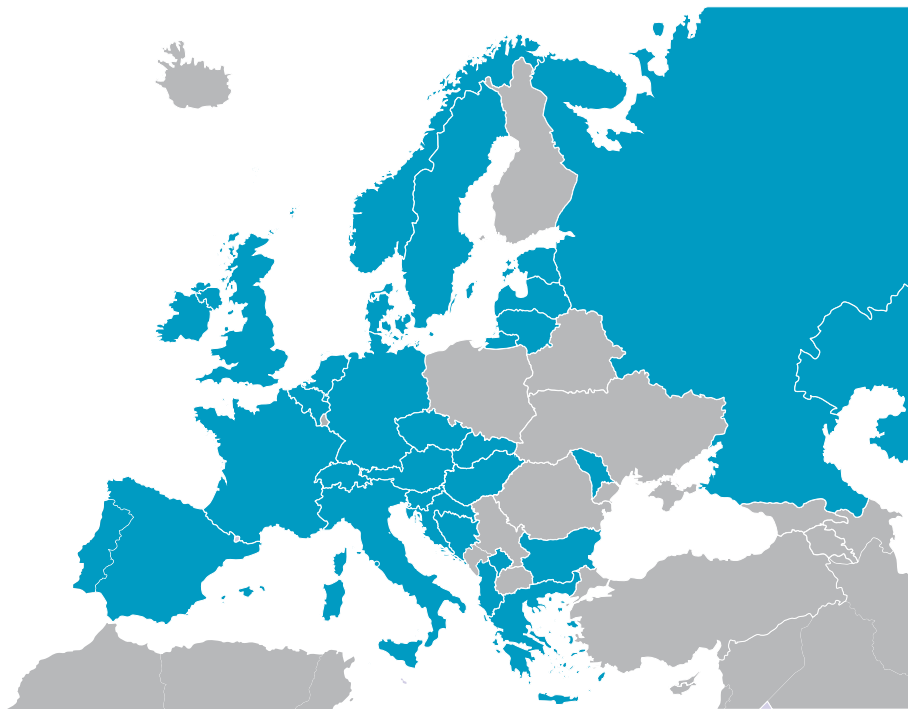
Twenty-three percent of respondents conduct quality assurance processes outside their boundaries. Two agencies are not linked to a specific national jurisdiction but operate at an international or European level.

Thirteen agencies (25%) have an official mandate regarding recognition, and in 18 percent of cases (9 agencies) the QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre are part of the same organisation.

An important finding is that several agencies (37%) wished to remain anonymous in the final report, which is probably an indication that the topic is still under development in many agencies. Hence, the particular cases mentioned within this text are not necessarily to be considered as "best" or "good" practices, but as merely illustrative examples coming from the agencies that granted permission to be mentioned in the report.

2.2. LINKS BETWEEN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

The study conducted by the working group focused on mapping the practices of QA agencies within the scope of ESG 1.4 (EQA of institutional recognition practices). Having said this, the working group is aware that the links between quality assurance and academic recognition are much broader.

Indeed, the core EQA processes conducted by an agency (assessments, accreditations, audits at the programme or institutional level) have considerable potential impact as to the extent to which a domestic qualification will be recognised abroad. Specifically, QA agencies can have an impact on the five relevant dimensions of a qualification, as established by Bergan[7] – level, workload, quality, profile, and learning outcomes – as well as on the use and quality of essential tools for recognition, such as the diploma supplement. EQA processes run by many agencies are directly linked to the licensing process and the "official" status of a given programme or institution.

Recognition obtained by domestic qualifications abroad should be one of the key success indicators of a higher education system. Even though this issue was not directly explored through this survey and requires further investigation, the experience of the working group and the answers provided seem to indicate that agencies do not usually have access to this information; in any case, it seems agencies do not generally monitor information related to recognition of their domestic qualifications abroad in the same way as they follow other key success indicators, such as employability rates or student satisfaction.

Additionally, beyond ESG 1.4 and the ordinary EQA processes of the agencies, this study has revealed a variety of practices of QA agencies that are related to academic recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning; these are:
- Facilitation of academic recognition of home or foreign qualifications,
- Participation in disciplinary networks and use of labels,
- Regulation of academic recognition, and
- Provision of quality assurance services outside national jurisdictions.

These practices are briefly developed in the following sections.

2.2.1 FACILITATION OF ACADEMIC RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS

Some agencies in this study are conducting specific activities aimed at facilitating academic recognition of domestic or foreign qualifications, such as:
- Collaborating with corresponding bodies outside their countries with the specific purpose of facilitating academic and professional recognition (of foreign degrees in their countries and of national degrees abroad). As an example, CTI (Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs, France) has established recognition agreements with the engineering orders in Canada at the federal and provincial level so as to facilitate the recognition of Canadian engineering degrees in France and vice-versa. CTI has also established specific agreements with AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate

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7   Council of Europe higher education series No.6 (2007), Qualifications -- Introduction to a Concept.

Registrars and Admissions Officers) to improve recognition of the French engineering degree in the United States of America.
- Issuing individual certificates or confirmation letters addressed to particular graduates upon request. This activity, conducted in order to facilitate recognition of home qualifications abroad was reported by two agencies, CTI and PAAHE (Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, Albania).

2.2.2 PARTICIPATION IN DISCIPLINARY NETWORKS AND USE OF LABELS

In certain cases, agencies carry out their missions within the context of a given discipline or profession. Certain agencies collaborate in the context of disciplinary networks and may use specific tools ("labels") to improve recognition of a certain type of degree. This kind of recognition operates both at a professional and academic level, for example, in a context of access from the bachelor's to the master's or PhD level. This is the case for ECCE (European Council on Chiropractic Education), which follows the CCEI Standards (Council on Chiropractic Education International), FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration, Germany), which follows the EQUAL standards, CTI, which is one of the agencies authorised to award the EUR-ACE label, or ANECA, which is authorised to award the EUR-ACE and EURO-INF labels.

Some agencies mentioned specific initiatives at the network level; in the case of ENAEE (European Network for Accreditation in Engineering Education), a multilateral recognition agreement[8] has been signed with all the agencies delivering the EUR-ACE label. This recognition agreement is expected to facilitate the licensing of professional engineers in the jurisdictions of the signatory bodies as well as academic mobility and the development of joint and double degrees. Within ECTNA (the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association), higher education institutions agree to accept applicants from other EURO-Bachelor/EURO-Master courses as being comparable to their own.

The value of these labels as facilitators for academic and professional recognition is still a matter of discussion and could be one of the topics for further investigation.

2.2.3 REGULATION OF ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

Agencies sometimes act as regulators and impose conditions for recognition (such as completing a number of years in an institution to be able to get a qualification from that institution or limiting recognition of prior learning); this is particularly common when these agencies are linked to regulated professions, such as engineering or chiropractic.

As an example, CTI imposes conditions on transfer students, as they must spend at least three semesters in an institution in order to have access to the engineering degree of that institution. Similarly, within chiropractic education, institutions accredited by ECCE specify that transfer students must complete at least two years at the institution prior to graduation. Additionally, little recognition for prior learning is allowed outside of the strict entry requirements, with the exception of medical doctors or students transferring from another accredited institution.

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8   The agreement is available at: http://www.enaee.eu/wp-assets-enaee/uploads/2016/06/EAA-MRA-agreement-A3-signed.pdf.

The survey responses of ECCE provided some rich insight regarding the risks of an excessively liberal approach to recognition, such as "when countries are forced to recognise medical and other health care degrees as equal, this can put the patients at risk". According to ECCE, "ENQA should be flexible about this issue", suggesting that the way standard 1.4 is approached should be different in the case of degrees linked to regulated professions.

2.2.4. PROVISION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICES OUTSIDE NATIONAL JURISDICTIONS

Increasingly, QA agencies offer quality assurance services (assessments, accreditations) outside their jurisdiction (e.g. cross-border quality assurance [CBQA]). Improving recognition of qualifications in certain regions (country of the agency, European area) or contexts (specific professions, disciplinary networks) is indeed one of the central expectations of higher education institutions requesting these kinds of services[9].

Assessment and accreditation conducted abroad have the potential to improve recognition through various mechanisms. Some of them are merely informal, such as the "reputation" of the agency (or even the reputation of the country in which the agency is established). The agency might have additional tools to operationalise this recognition, such as a quality or a discipline-specific label (see Section 2.2.2). In some cases, even though this is the exception rather than the rule, these processes can even lead to "official" forms of recognition. As an example, CTI's accreditation ("Admission par l'Etat") grants the right to engineering graduates from accredited institutions abroad to officially use the "Titre d'ingénieur diplômé" in France. This official form of recognition operates both at the professional and at the academic level, as, for example, master-level graduates from accredited institutions are normally granted a simplified or automatic access to PhD studies.

2.3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QA AGENCY AND THE ENIC-NARIC CENTRE

In 18 percent of cases (9 agencies), the QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre are part of the same organisation. One of the agencies included in this study, ANECA, is not officially the Spanish ENIC-NARIC centre, but through a recent regulatory development, in practice, ANECA has a mandate to issue assessment reports to the Ministry of Education on individual qualifications leading to official recognition decisions, including degrees linked to regulated professions. However, as many of these respondents claim, being under the same roof does not necessarily translate to agile communication and mutual learning. As several agencies in this situation state, relationships are often informal, and there is a need to evolve towards more structured and fruitful ways of communication.

Respondents mentioned some contexts in which a cooperation or an exchange of information is established between the ENIC-NARIC centre and the QA agency.

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9   See E4's 2017 report "Key Considerations for Cross-border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area", available at: http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/associated-reports/Key-Considerations-CBQA-EHEA. pdf.

One of the most natural contexts of exchange, as was mentioned by several agencies, seems to be EQA of cross-border higher education (CBHE) and/or CBQA. In this sense, QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres exchange information on foreign higher education institutions and qualifications requiring EQA processes from the agency. Respondents also referred to exchanges of information when the QA agency is organising assessments of joint programmes where at least one of the partners is based outside the country.

Through contacts with their fellow organisations, ENIC-NARIC centres would be a natural source of information regarding the extent to which domestic qualifications are recognised abroad. This information could be one of the key indicators agencies might want to monitor regarding their higher education system (together with employability rates or student satisfaction, for example). However, only one respondent claims to be regularly using information provided by the ENIC-NARIC centre for recognising certain national qualifications when making accreditation decisions.

Finally, a few respondents refer to exchanges or joint initiatives directly related to ESG 1.4 (internal or external quality assurance of institutional recognition practices):
- Participation of the ENIC-NARIC centre in the preparation of the sections regarding institutional recognition and admission processes in the self-evaluation guidelines provided by the agency to higher education institutions;
- Organisation of events or seminars addressed to higher education institutions in order to build awareness of the LRC and issues concerning its implementation; and
- Building of common databases or information systems.

Employability, vocational education, transnational education, and joint programmes are mentioned as the main common areas of interest.

There seems to be considerable room for improvement regarding collaboration between QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres. Sixty percent of respondents admit to having only occasional or no contact whatsoever with the ENIC-NARIC centre. Fifty-six percent of respondents foresee their relationship with the ENIC-NARIC centre likely evolving towards more frequent exchanges and collaboration. In particular, they mention the need for more cooperation between QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres due to the new formulation of ESG 1.4 and the increased internationalisation of higher education.

During the 2017 ENQA event on the links between quality assurance and recognition (Dublin, 1-2 June 2017), a specific session was devoted to successful QA agency – ENIC-NARIC centre collaboration. A brief account of this session, which provides some additional insights, is provided in Chapter 3.

2.4. EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION PRACTICES

Most agencies in this study cover the supervision and improvement of recognition practices conducted by higher education institutions to some extent. Seventy-two percent of respondents declare to fully or partially cover recognition of qualifications and study periods in their current EQA processes, and recognition of prior learning is fully or partially covered by 69 percent of respondents.

However, upon further exploration, this qualitative statement is translated to very different practical approaches. Agencies can be divided into three groups with regard to the way in which they address institutional recognition practices in their EQA processes; the characteristics of these groups are explained in the following sections

2.4.1. AGENCIES WITHOUT AN EXPLICIT FOCUS ON RECOGNITION

A first group of QA agencies (31 agencies or 65% of respondents) do not have explicit criteria covering institutional recognition practices. These agencies indicate that recognition is implicitly included in their guidelines and processes, under a more general section devoted to "admission" or "selection". According to comments from these agencies, it is clear that institutional recognition practices are not central when conducting their EQA processes. No explicit reference to the LRC or associated tools is made. They are not generally part of the discussion during the site visit nor are they explicitly covered in the reports.

Many of these agencies do not have specific plans nor do they see a clear reason to change the way in which they handle recognition issues in the short term. Some agencies are able to justify this lack of focus, for example, if there is another quality assurance body operating in the country with a specific mandate towards recognition or if higher education institutions in that country are not autonomous with regard to making recognition decisions.

One-third of the agencies in this group admit they are in transition due to different internal or external drivers, such as important regulatory changes at the national level (for example, one country was currently in the process of changing the legislation to incorporate the principles of the LRC), a change in the governance of the agency, or a debate on certain recognition issues at the national level (for instance, bogus qualifications and diploma mills or an increasing importance of prior learning at the national level, etc.). Four of these agencies explicitly mention the ESG 2015 as the main reason for this transition.

2.4.2. AGENCIES THAT FOCUS ON OUTCOMES AND METRICS RELATED TO RECOGNITION

A second group of QA agencies (6 agencies or 12% of respondents) show a strong focus on controlling the outcomes of the recognition or, more generally, the admission process. As one of the respondents states, the mission of the agency would be to "detect and eliminate from the system bad practices regarding academic recognition, either [those which are] inappropriately restrictive or inappropriately lenient". Some agencies focus on monitoring whether higher education institutions "remain vigilant" regarding the quality of their international partnerships (foreign institutions to which they send Erasmus students or with which they establish double or joint degrees, for example).

Agencies within this group refer to some instances in which recognition issues were explicitly covered during the site visits and reflected in the final report. Several agencies mention that they focus on the matter "only if problems are detected", suggesting the application of some sort of risk-based approach (i.e. through the monitoring of certain metrics at the institutional and system level or from the information gathered during a site visit).

It is clear that, compared to the previous group, recognition is a more prominent issue for this group of agencies; two of them even refer to recognition being a "growing concern". However, the answers suggest that their EQA processes do not necessarily focus on the aspects that would be more relevant within the context of ESG 1.4, such as the way the recognition process is structured within the institution, the use of the EAR tools and other information resources, the transparency of the process, and the main guiding principles (recognition unless substantial difference[10] is found or the right to appeal, for example). In short, these agencies do not seem to explicitly consider recognition practices as part of the IQA system within higher education institutions nor do they analyse whether they are in line with the LRC principles.

2.4.3. AGENCIES WITH AN EXPLICIT FOCUS ON EQA OF RECOGNITION
Finally, a third group of agencies (11 agencies or 23% of respondents) show good alignment with the aspects that should be covered in their EQA processes according to ESG 1.4. Their answers indicate a more systematic coverage of institutional practices and explicitly refer to the LRC principles and their associated tools.

Comments from this group reveal a number of specific challenges associated with the internal and external quality assurance of institutional recognition practices. Indeed, several agencies refer to the fact that even though institutions might have formal "regulations" or IQA procedures covering the LRC principles, in practice, interpretation and proper use are challenging. Indeed, a central LRC concept such as "substantial difference" is in fact, to a certain extent, a matter of interpretation. Additional challenges for higher education institutions are finding the relevant recognition body within the institution and ensuring an appropriate capacity for all practitioners involved.

Many agencies in this group state that there could be room for improvement regarding the way in which their EQA processes address academic recognition issues; some mention that they should probably focus less on "formal compliance" and more on "implementation"; one of them states that they would like to "include recognition in a more comprehensive way". However, some agencies express their doubts as to the feasibility of adopting a more thorough approach. As one of the respondents eloquently stated:

> Recognition is a separate topic and criterion, requiring specific knowledge. It is really a challenge how to best address recognition matters via external quality assurance procedures, since recognition is a vast issue, and EQA is very condensed in time, a challenge of integration.

2.5. CONCLUSIONS OF THE SURVEY TO QA AGENCIES
The study conducted by the ENQA working group on quality assurance and recognition has provided an initial answer to the three research questions enunciated as the main objectives of the survey, to: explore the links between quality assurance and recognition; investigate the links between QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres; and map current practices of EQA of institutional recognition practices among QA agencies. Additionally, it has enabled the identification of some central issues and challenges.

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10 "Substantial differences" are differences between the foreign qualification and the national qualification that are so significant they would most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in further study or research activities (The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions).

Regarding the links between quality assurance and recognition, this study has revealed that, beyond the scope of ESG 1.4, agencies are well positioned to have considerable impact. In fact, the ordinary EQA processes conducted by agencies have consequences in terms of recognition, as the items that are normally controlled or assessed (the way a qualification is expressed in terms of learning outcomes and ECTS, or how it is reflected in the diploma supplement, for example) are central to the recognition of qualifications. Agencies can also have an impact on recognition through other specific mandates and activities, such as participation in disciplinary networks, cross-border quality assurance, or the liaison of the QA agency with bodies involved in recognition, such as professional orders or ministries. However, the actual impact of QA agencies in this regard is difficult to estimate, as agencies do not generally seem to monitor information related to recognition in the same way as they do other success indicators, such as employability rates or student satisfaction.

Regarding the EQA of institutional recognition practices (ESG 1.4), there is considerable variability among QA agencies about the level of awareness and approaches applied. However, at the moment only a minority of agencies explicitly consider recognition practices as part of the institutions' IQA systems and analyse whether they are in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Many agencies do not clearly see the connection between their core activities and academic recognition, nor do they have any specific plans to change the way in which they handle recognition in the short term. Additionally, even those agencies that show an explicit focus on the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the issues that would be more relevant in the context of ESG 1.4 face several challenges.

Finally, with regard to the collaboration between QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres, there seems to be considerable room for improvement despite agencies reporting several ongoing initiatives. Collaboration within the context of ESG 1.4 (internal or external quality assurance of institutional recognition practices) seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that, for many QA agencies, EQA of institutional recognition practices is still an issue under development and poses important challenges. ENQA's action in this regard is central to raising awareness among a considerable number of agencies who do not seem to find sufficient argument in favour of establishing an agenda around this issue. A set of common guidelines developed at the level of the ENQA community could prove beneficial.

CHAPTER 3. MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DISSEMINATION EVENT

3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT

As part of its work plan, the working group decided to organise an event with the following objectives:

- To disseminate the results of the survey on external quality assurance of recognition conducted by the ENQA working group (see Chapter 2); and
- To reflect upon the main challenges related to IQA and EQA of institutional recognition practices.

The event was hosted by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) and jointly organised by ENQA and QQI. It took place in Dublin on 1-2 June 2017 under the title "Exploring synergies between quality assurance and qualifications recognition". The full programme of the event and the list of 49 participants representing higher education institutions, QA agencies, and ENIC-NARIC centres from 15 countries, are accessible in Annexes 2 and 3 of this report. Further information on the event, including presentations, is available on ENQA's webpage.[11]

The event was conceived as a dialogue among three target communitie: QA agencies, ENIC-NARIC centres, and higher education institutions. The programme included content sessions as well as an interactive discussion and two break-out sessions.

- The content sessions were conceived to provide a perspective from the three communities. An initial presentation from the ENIC-NARIC side provided an overview of the main recognition issues and challenges. It was followed by a presentation that offered an institutional perspective through multiple examples of IQA strategies and tools put in place by German higher education institutions. In the third content session, the results of the survey conducted by the ENQA working group on quality assurance and recognition were presented. Finally, the last content session of the event provided a synthesis of ongoing initiatives and tools in the field of recognition.
- The interactive discussion was devoted to exploring key factors for the successful collaboration of QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres under two organisational models: QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres under the same umbrella organisation and QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres under different organisations. As a basis for the discussion, representatives from NOKUT (Norway), Nuffic (the Netherlands) and NVAO (the Netherlands) provided some insight regarding fruitful intra- and inter-organisational collaboration.
- Finally, the break-out sessions were devoted to exploring the challenges of quality assurance and recognition in two contexts: recognition of non-formal and informal learning and recognition of qualifications and study periods.

A brief account of the exchanges in the interactive discussion and the break-out sessions is provided in the following sections.

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11 Available at: http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/events/exploring-synergies-between-quality-assurance-and-qualifications-recognition/.

3.2. INTERACTIVE SESSION ON QA AGENCY AND ENIC-NARIC COLLABORATION

The conclusions of this session served as a confirmation and at the same time provided some additional insight to the initial findings of the working group (see section 2.3). As already found, being within the same umbrella organisation is not a guarantee of close cooperation between the ENIC-NARIC and the quality assurance departments. Indeed, physical proximity can facilitate communication, but there is still a need to actively promote intra-organisational communication. On the other hand, this particular organisational setting could also be a source of difficulty as the distinction of roles between the ENIC-NARIC and the quality assurance functions is less clear for higher education institutions. As an example, a representative from NOKUT mentioned that the counselling role of the ENIC-NARIC towards higher education institutions could be less effective if institutions, as a result of NOKUT's quality assurance activity, perceive NOKUT as a control body.

Regarding inter-organisational collaboration, Nuffic and NVAO provided multiple examples of fruitful cooperation:
- Receiving and sharing international delegations;
- Referring delegations to each other's organisations;
- Presentations at each other's conferences;
- Joint Erasmus+ projects, such as SQUARE or FAIR (see Chapter 5); and
- Other joint initiatives in the context of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), such as CeQuInt, IMPACT, or JOQAR (see Chapter 5).

Additionally, policy officers at NVAO are in close contact with various departments at Nuffic, and the chairman of NVAO is a member of the Supervisory Council of Nuffic.

An active organisational policy towards collaboration and a favourable national context (interest towards internationalisation of higher education, a clear policy, and an active role of the ministry) seem to be the key enabling factors for this collaboration.

Even though some good practices were revealed, all agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres that contributed to this session admitted that ESG 1.4 poses new challenges and opportunities for collaboration, particularly towards higher education institutions, which are currently being explored.

3.3. BREAK-OUT SESSION ON RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND STUDY PERIODS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

The objective of this breakout session was to detect the main challenges associated with the recognition of qualifications and study periods from the perspective of the event's three target communities (higher education institutions - IQA, QA agencies - EQA, and ENIC-NARIC centres) and how they could collaborate to address these challenges.

From an institutional (IQA) perspective, the main challenge seems to be ensuring consistency of practice within and across institutions. Recognition processes involve a variety of actors at different levels and from different categories (academic and non-academic). The "personal" or "judgement" factor plays an important role in recognition decisions, as the notion of "substantial difference" is a matter of interpretation. In this context, the fundamental question posed by higher education institutions are:
- What is the best organisational setting so as to ensure consistent recognition practice within institutions?
- What are the most effective IQA strategies and tools?

The main challenges from the QA agency (EQA) perspective can be summarised by the following two questions:
- Many QA agencies are not actively focusing on recognition procedures and respecting LRC principles. They tend to consider recognition as a bureaucratic or administrative burden and focus more on other aspects (learning outcomes, admissions policy, etc.). How can recognition issues become a priority, how can the general level of awareness among the quality assurance community be raised without overloading their already long, thorough EQA processes?
- Taking into account the complexity of recognition and the variety of institutional practices, what is the best approach to address recognition in EQA processes – programme vs. institutional approach, control vs. enhancement-oriented processes, etc.?

Finally, some specific difficulties were reported by the participants (ENIC-NARIC centres and higher education institutions) regarding recognition practice:
- There is a lack of information and trust (especially outside the EHEA) about foreign qualifications or higher education systems.
- Cooperation with other bodies (QA agencies, professional bodies, etc.) is difficult.
- Ensuring transparent appeals processes is difficult.
- National qualifications frameworks are sometimes not completely consistent with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Participants were asked to think about possible solution strategies, particularly those involving collaboration among the three communities. Some general ideas came from this discussion:

- *Dissemination and building of awareness:*
  The first obvious conclusion is that there is a need to create spaces of collaboration and working groups among the three communities, such as the current event and the ENQA working group on recognition. Recognition issues should be more prominent on the agenda of organisations at the European level, particularly the E4[12]. The European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), an annual event organised by the E4, was judged as a particularly suitable platform to raise awareness and continue the discussion of current issues related to quality assurance and recognition.

- *Exchange of good practice:*
  Participants agreed that, given the complexities and variety of institutional recognition practices, an exchange of good practice among the higher education community was much needed. QA agencies could greatly contribute by undertaking thematic analyses (ESG 3.4) on the issue, thereby providing a valuable basis for comparison. Other organisations (such as national rectors' conferences) could act as facilitators for this exchange at the national level. The case of the German Rectors' Conference and the cases coming from the German higher education institutions presented as part of the content presentation of this event provide examples of good practice in this regard.

- *Establish clear guidelines for IQA and EQA:*
  These guidelines would be much appreciated by higher education institutions and QA agencies. They should be established through cooperation among the QA agency, higher education institution, and ENIC-NARIC communities. Participants agreed that the guidelines should provide some general overarching principles, most probably at the institutional level and with respect to national diversity and other specificities (such as those related to regulated professions). They should be enhancement oriented and focused on building capacity (not so much on control). One particular aspect to be developed within these guidelines could be the establishment of clear and transparent appeal mechanisms.

- *Develop EQA and peer review strategies at the level of the ENIC-NARIC community:*
  This could be an area of cooperation between the quality assurance and ENIC-NARIC communities which could greatly contribute to improving the quality of recognition and building a community of practice. These strategies would most likely be transferable to the institutional level and vice-versa, which would facilitate consistency at the level of all actors involved in recognition. There are some ongoing initiatives in this sense, such as the SQUARE project (see Chapter 5).

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12   The E4 group consists of the main consultative partners of the Bologna Process, representing various stakeholders including ENQA, the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the European Students' Union (ESU).

3.4. BREAK-OUT SESSION ON RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL QUALIFICATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

As an introduction to the exchanges, a representative from the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) presented the conclusions of a study carried out by CIT which took stock of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in Ireland.

The main issues addressed by the CIT study were confirmed by the participants' discussions during the breakout sessions. The discussions highlighted that there is no common position in Europe regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; the situations vary largely according to the country. A few examples include:

- In Belgium and Ireland there is no national regulation, the responsibility lies with the higher education institutions;
- In Spain there is a national regulation which allows for the recognition of a maximum of 15 percent of the credits of a programme;
- In Lithuania, according to a ministerial order, periods of study can be recognised following different formulas – up to 75 percent of credits obtained following studies of another (lower) cycle or different type (university or college of higher education) of programme, but the total amount of credits transferred cannot exceed:
  - Fifty percent of the chosen programme of the first cycle; or
  - Twenty-five percent of the chosen second-cycle or integrated (long cycle) programme.
- In France there is a national regulation which states that a procedure is compulsory for all degree programmes and should allow recognition up to the full degree.

Even in countries where there is a national regulation or institutional procedures in place, the opportunity is not well established or well known. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning does not seem to be a major issue in many countries. Often there is a difference between stated politics and the actual implementation. A lack of comparable data and indicators is also quite common.

For higher education institutions, RPL is not easy to evaluate – neither for the achieved learning outcomes nor for the applicant to demonstrate the achieved skills. The internal processes are often not efficient, and the procedure is time consuming and expensive for the applicants. The implementation of RPL is often carried out without the necessary staff development. Higher education institutions should be able to benefit from specific support for setting up and carrying out RPL procedures and training sessions for the staff. Participants of the breakout session agreed that as RPL procedures are linked to the programmes, the colleges/schools/faculties (i.e. not the central level) should be able to take decisions regarding qualifications.

Participants also stated that the quality assurance of RPL should be based on:
- A clear definition of what is meant by RPL;
- If possible, national/local regulations; in any case, equal standards for each higher education institution;
- Fair procedures and treatment of all learners;
- Fair recognition of the qualifications, independent of how they were achieved;
- Transparent information to the public; and
- Clear role division between institutions, staff, and learners.

Major challenges for quality assurance in the validation of RPL were identified:
- Some institutions have a "business" approach towards RPL, and integrity might not be a priority.
- Quality assurance often deals (sometimes superficially) with the RPL procedure and not the actual implementation.
- Question: should the focus be on EQA or IQA?

Apart from the difficulties identified, the two groups also devised several means for improvement. Stress was put on ENIC-NARIC centres playing a larger role (for instance, in the recognition of qualifications of refugees). Higher education institutions, QA agencies, and ENIC-NARIC centres should work closely together and share good practice – nationally and with other countries. Networking of practitioners, peer learning activities, and disseminating of expertise in this field were identified as key means for improvement.

Beneficial developments were identified:
- the effects of the Bologna Process and the shift from the focus on "programmes" to the description of "learning outcomes";
- the diploma supplement as a key source of information on a particular qualification;
- the national qualifications framework as a central piece of information on the country's educational structure and qualifications attached to it;
- national registers of institutions, certificates, and qualifications, which allow clear identification of legitimate providers and their awards;
- toolkits for higher education institutions; and
- assessment guides for admission officers and other practitioners in the field.

As a general conclusion, it may be stated that discussions during this breakout session showed clear evidence that the implementation of ESG 1.4 on fair recognition of non-formal and informal learning has still a long way to go and that more initiatives are needed.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE STEPS

The different activities conducted by the ENQA working group on quality assurance and recognition have shown that, despite the new formulation of ESG 1.4, the establishment of appropriate IQA and EQA strategies applied to institutional recognition practices is largely under development in many organisations.

Progress in this regard will come from dialogue and collaboration among three communities: higher education institutions, QA agencies, and ENIC-NARIC centres. Higher education institutions and ENIC-NARIC centres need to be able to ensure fast, efficient, and reliable recognition processes according to the LRC principles. A major challenge is the achievement of consistency at various levels: at the intra-institutional and inter-institutional level, and at the level of all agents conducting recognition procedures (ENIC-NARIC centres and higher education institutions in most European countries).

The fact that, in many countries, higher education institutions are autonomous for the purposes of conducting recognition activities provides significant opportunities. The role of QA agencies and EQA is essential as a support to the development of suitable IQA strategies within higher education institutions and also as a facilitator for the dissemination of good practices. QA agencies could also greatly contribute to the establishment of IQA and EQA practices within the ENIC-NARIC community and could act as a link among all actors involved in recognition, in a way that could facilitate general consistency of recognition practices.

However, some work is needed before the quality assurance community is ready to take up this challenge. There is considerable variability among QA agencies with regard to the level of awareness and approaches applied towards the fulfilment of ESG 1.4, but overall, the results of the investigation conducted by the ENQA working group suggest that recognition is not a priority for many QA agencies. At the same time, the development of suitable EQA strategies applied to institutional recognition practices poses significant challenges. The best approach for addressing institutional recognition practices without taxing existing EQA processes is still under discussion.

A clear message for ENQA is that more work is needed on the matter in order to raise awareness and propose suitable strategies among the quality assurance community. The results of the study of this working group indicate that a set of guidelines covering IQA and EQA of institutional recognition practices would be highly appreciated. These guidelines should be established through cooperation among the quality assurance, higher education institution, and ENIC-NARIC communities. ENQA will continue to work on this challenge in the following years[13].

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13 This work will be developed under the framework of the LIREQA initiative (Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance), a recently launched Erasmus+ project led by the Lithuanian QA agency and ENIC-NARIC centre, SKVC. The project, which started in December 2016, brings together ENIC-NARIC centres, QA agencies and their association, ENQA, as well as higher education institutions. The recommendations of the LIREQA consortium are expected to be disseminated by the end of 2018.

CHAPTER 5: SELECTION OF RELEVANT REFERENCES AND INITIATIVES

Selection of reports on recognition and the Lisbon Recognition Convention

- Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 19 (2014), The Lisbon Recognition Convention at 15: making fair recognition a reality.
- ENIC-NARIC Network (2012), European Area of Recognition Manual; available at: http://www.eurorecognition.eu/manual/ear_manual_v_1.0.pdf
- ENIC-NARIC Network and EUA (2013), The European Recognition Manual for HEIs; available at: http://eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR%20HEI.pdf
- Erasmus Student Network (2012), Problems of recognition in making Erasmus: PRIME 2010; available at: http://issuu.com/esnint/docs/prime_report_2010/5?e=1978080/3210526
- ENAEE (2014), Mutual recognition of EUR-ACE labelled engineering degree programmes; available at: http://www.enaee.eu/wp-assets-enaee/uploads/2016/06/EAA-MRA-agreement-A3-signed.pdf
- ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, EQAR (2017), Key Considerations for Cross-border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; available at: http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/associated-reports/Key-Considerations-CBQA-EHEA.pdf
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015), The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report; available at: http://www.ehea.info/
- ENIC-NARIC Network (2016), Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report; available at: http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Monitoring_the_Implementation_of_the_Lisbon_Recognition_Convention_2016.pdf
- UNESCO (2017), Evaluation of UNESCO's Regional Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education; available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002452/245223E.pdf

Selection of relevant initiatives (EU-funded projects)
- ECA: The European Consortium for Accreditation has conducted numerous initiatives and projects related to recognition, such as TEAM (Transparent European Recognition Decisions and Mutual Recognition Agreements), JOQAR (Joint programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of degrees awarded), and CeQuInt (Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation). Currently, working group 1 of ECA is devoted to mutual recognition and joint programmes.
- FAIR: Focus on Automatic Institutional Recognition. Information available at: https://www.nuffic.nl/en/diploma-recognition/fair
- LIREQA: Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance. Information available at: http://www.skvc.lt/default/en/projects/currently-running-projects#LIREQA
- Mastermind Europe Project: Transparency in Master admission. Information available at: http://mastermindeurope.eu/mastermind-europe-final-conference/
- SQUARE: A Quality Assurance System for the ENIC-NARIC networks. Information available at: http://www.enic-naric.net/square-quality-assurance-for-the-enic-naric-networks.aspx

ANNEX 1: SURVEY ON EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF RECOGNITION

Background and objectives of the survey

The ESG 2015 (standard 1.4) considers academic recognition an essential component of the internal quality assurance (IQA) system of a higher education institution:

> *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on:*
> - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;*
> - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.*

As part of their adaptation to the ESG 2015, it is clear that QA agencies now have the responsibility of addressing academic recognition issues in their external quality assurance (EQA) systems.

This survey is the first study launched by the newly created ENQA working group on quality assurance and recognition. The following ENQA member agencies have contributed to the preparation of this questionnaire: ANECA, AQU Catalunya, CTI, NOKUT, QQI, and SKVC. It has the following objectives:

- To determine the role, interest, and mandate of ENQA agencies regarding academic recognition matters;
- To explore the links between ENQA agencies and other recognition bodies or authorities, particularly ENIC-NARICs; and
- To map current practices on EQA of academic recognition policies and practices.

The survey is addressed to all ENQA members and affiliates which are QA agencies in the EHEA and should not take longer than 20 minutes to complete. Please attempt to answer all questions. Where needed, please feel free to consult your colleagues in order to achieve as comprehensive and accurate responses as possible. Please note that you do not have to complete the survey in one sitting. You may exit the survey and you or any other person with access to the same computer (and the same IP address) and the survey link may go back to previous pages in the survey and update existing responses until the survey is completed. You can access the full text of the survey here.

The closing date for the survey is 30 September 2016. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Lindsey Kerber at the ENQA Secretariat at secretariat@enqa.eu.

Please note that your responses will not be used to evaluate or review your agency or for any purpose other than stated above. Your participation in this survey is highly appreciated – we thank you for your time and contribution.

Survey on external quality assurance of recognition: Identification and profile of the agency

1. Name of your agency
2. Please select all of the countries in which your agency operates
3. Agency's relation to ENQA
   – Member
   – Affiliate
4. Focus of external quality assurance carried out by the agency
   – Institutional level
   – Programme level
   – Both
   – Other (please specify)
5. Scope of the agency in terms of subject
   – Generalist agency with no specific approach per discipline
   – Subject-specific agency
   – Other (please specify)
6. Please specify whether the agency is following any other European or international standards (apart from the ESG) (e.g. EUR-ACE, EURO-INF, ISO, EFQM, Engineering Alliance, etc.).
7. Person completing the questionnaire
   – Name and surname
   – Function
   – Email
8. Grant/refuse permission for ENQA to publish your responses
   – I give permission for my agency to be identified with the responses I give in the final report.
   – I do not give permission for my agency to be identified with the responses I give in the final report (your responses will be reported anonymously).

Survey on external quality assurance of recognition: Part 1: Mandate of the agency regarding academic recognition and links with ENIC-NARIC centres

9. Is your agency involved in some way in academic recognition?
   – Yes
   – No
   Please elaborate.
10. Please specify whether your agency has an official mandate regarding this involvement.
   – Yes
   – No
   Please elaborate.
11. Please describe the relationship between your organisation and the ENIC-NARIC centre in your country.
   – The QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre are part of the same organisation
   – The QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre periodically exchange information

- The QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre have occasional contacts
- The QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre do not have any contact at all
- Other, please specify in the "comments" field below

Please elaborate. Among other comments, please specify the main common areas of interest (if any) between the QA agency and the ENIC-NARIC centre.

12. In the near future, in what direction do you see contact between the QA agency and the ENIC- NARIC centre evolving?
    - The relationship is not likely to evolve
    - The relationship is likely to evolve

    Please elaborate. Among other comments, if the relationship is likely to evolve please describe how this might occur (more cooperation, less cooperation, formalisation of contacts, establishment of regular meetings, etc.).

13. Are there any specific actions currently being developed (working groups, policies, dissemination activities, other) in your agency regarding academic recognition issues?
    - Yes
    - No

    If yes, please describe the activities conducted.

14. Are you planning or do you think it would be interesting to develop other activities related to academic recognition in the future?
    - Yes
    - No

    Please elaborate.

15. Please specify any particular topics related to academic recognition in which your agency has a special interest.
    - Recognition of academic qualifications
    - Recognition of study periods (credits) conducted at other institutions (domestic or abroad)
    - Recognition of prior learning (including informal and non-formal learning)
    - Fraudulent providers (diploma mills, accreditation mills)
    - Recognition of cross-border higher education
    - Recognition of professionally-oriented qualifications or VET
    - Recognition of joint programmes
    - Recognition of e-learning qualifications
    - Recognition of MOOCs and other open learning sources, etc.
    - Other, please specify in the "comments" field below

    Comments

Survey on external quality assurance of recognition: Part 2: To what extent and how are recognition practices conducted by higher education institutions

16. Do HEIs in your country currently address academic recognition in their IQA systems and procedures? (Always, Frequently, Occasionally, or Never)
    - Recognition of qualifications
    - Recognition of study periods (credits) conducted in other institutions (domestic or abroad)
    - Recognition of prior learning (including informal and non-formal learning)
    - Other, please specify in the "comments" field below

    Comments

17. Are academic recognition topics covered by the EQA processes of your agency? (Fully covered [systematically in all processes], Partially covered [only in some processes and/or not systematically, etc.], or No)
    – Recognition of qualifications
    – Recognition of study periods (credits) conducted in other institutions (domestic or abroad)
    – Recognition of prior learning (including informal and non-formal learning)
    – Other, please specify in the "comments" field below
    Comments

18. For the topics which are fully or partially covered, does your agency provide any written rules or guidelines? Please select the "N/A" choice if you answered "no" to all of the above items.
    – Yes
    – No
    – N/A
    If yes, please briefly explain the content of these rules or guidelines and to whom are they addressed?

19. For the topics which are fully or partially covered, could you please specify the kind of evidence that is requested/taken into account when assessing the quality of recognition processes conducted by the HEIs?

20. Please provide the web address to some evaluation/accreditation reports produced by your agency that address academic recognition practices. It is also possible to send examples of reports to the following e-mail address: secretariat@enqa.eu.

21. Are you planning or do you think it would be interesting to change the way your agency's EQA processes address academic recognition issues?
    – Yes
    – No
    If yes, in which way?

22. Are these possible changes to some extent related to the adoption of ESG 2015?
    – Yes
    – No
    Comments

Survey on external quality assurance of recognition: Final Reflections

23. In your opinion, is there a need for QA agencies to improve the way in which they address academic recognition issues in their EQA systems?
    – Absolutely
    – To a certain extent
    – Not really
    Please elaborate.
24. What do you think the contribution of QA agencies should be regarding fair academic recognition of degrees, credits, and prior learning?
25. What do you think the role of ENQA should be in supporting better academic recognition?
26. Final comments

ANNEX 2:
PROGRAMME OF THE EVENT

Exploring synergies between quality assurance and qualifications recognition
1-2 June 2017, Dublin, Ireland

Venue:
Radisson Blu Royal Hotel
8 Golden Ln
Dublin
Ireland

Day 1, 1 June 2017

12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
	Registration

Swift Suite 1-2, first floor
Chair: Niamh Lenehan (QQI, Ireland)

13:30 – 13:45	**Welcome**
	Bryan Maguire, Director of Quality Assurance, QQI
13:45 – 14:30	**Keynote: Setting quality assurance and recognition in context**
	Stig Arne Skjerven (NOKUT, Norway)
	Response from QA agency: Emita Blagdan (ASHE, Croatia)
	Response from HEI representative body: Lewis Purser (Irish Universities Association, Ireland)
14:30 – 15:00	**Recognition and quality assurance from the institutional perspective**
	Christian Tauch (German Rectors' Conference, Germany)
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break

Swift Suite 1-2, first floor
Chair: Aurelija Valeikienė (SKVC, Lithuania)

15:30 – 16:15	**How European QA agencies deal with recognition: findings from the ENQA working group**
	Teresa Sánchez Chaparro (CTI, France)
	Questions and answers session

16:15 – 17:30	**Successful QA agency – ENIC-NARIC collaboration: a dialogue** *Mark Frederiks (NVAO, Netherlands)* *Stig Arne Skjerven (NOKUT, Norway)* *Bas Wegewijs (EP-NUFFIC, Netherlands)* *Interactive discussion and Q&A*
17:30	Closing of Day 1 Reception

Day 2, 2 June 2017

Swift Suite 1-2, first floor
Chair: Teresa Sánchez Chaparro (CTI, France)

9:00 – 9:15	**Introduction to the breakout sessions**
9:15 – 10:15	**Breakout session (Round 1)** 1. Group 1: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning *Deirdre Goggin (CIT, Ireland) and Marie-Jo Goedert (CTI, France)* *Fields Suite 1-2* 2. Group 2: Recognition of qualifications and study periods *Eva Fernandez Labastida (Unibasq, Spain) and Carme Edo Rios (AQU Catalunya, Spain)* *Swift Suite 1-2*
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 11:45	**Breakout session (Round 2)** 1. Group 1: Recognition of qualifications and study periods *Eva Fernandez Labastida (Unibasq, Spain) and Carme Edo Rios (AQU Catalunya, Spain)* *Swift Suite 1-2* 2. Group 2: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning *Deirdre Goggin (CIT, Ireland) and Marie-Jo Goedert (CTI, France)* *Fields Suite 1-2*
11:45 – 12:00	A short break for participants to return to Swift Suite 1-2
12:00 – 12:30	*Conclusions from the breakout sessions*
12:30 – 13:00	**Linking internal and external quality assurance with academic recognition – what is the way forward?** *Aurelija Valeikienė (SKVC, Lithuania)*
13:00	Closing of Day 2 Lunch

ANNEX 3:
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE EVENT

1	Gabriele Bajorinaite	SKVC	Lithuania
2	Emita Blagdan	ASHE	Croatia
3	Ivana Borosic	ASHE	Croatia
4	Yolanda Brännström	ENIC-NARIC Sweden	Sweden
5	Carmel Brennan	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Ireland
6	Kenneth Carroll	Institute of Technology Tallaght	Ireland
7	Julien Colle	AEQES	Belgium
8	Mark Coney	QQI (NARIC Ireland)	Ireland
9	David Croke	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	Ireland
10	Elizabeth Donnellan	Trinity College Dublin	Ireland
11	Ciara Dooley	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Ireland
12	Carme Edo	AQU Catalunya	Spain
13	Eva Fernandez de Labastida	Unibasq	Spain
14	María Carmen Fernández Montes	ACSUG	Spain
15	Mark Frederiks	NVAO	The Netherlands
16	Marie-Jo Goedert	CTI	France
17	Deirdre Goggin	Cork Institute of Technology	Ireland
18	Kyrre Goksøyr	NOKUT	Norway
19	Mehmet Hasgüler	YÖDAK	Cyprus
20	Kati Isoaho	FINEEC	Finland
21	Jana Jirsáková	Comenius University in Bratislava	Slovakia
22	Asnate Kažoka	AIC	Latvia
23	Lindsey Kerber	ENQA	Belgium
24	Angela Lambkin	QQI (NARIC Ireland)	Ireland
25	Niamh Lenehan	QQI	Ireland
26	Agneta Lisauskienė	Vilnius University	Lithuania
27	Bryan Maguire	QQI	Ireland
28	Anna-Karin Malla	UKÄ	Sweden
29	Erik Martijnse	The Dutch Inspectorate of Education	The Netherlands
30	Caroline Mellows	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Ireland
31	Maiko Morishima	NIAD-QE	Japan
32	Susan Mulkeen	University College Dublin	Ireland

33	Mirella Nordblad	FINEEC	Finland
34	Barry O'Connor	Cork Institute of Technology	Ireland
35	Sinead O'Neill	Institute of Technology Tallaght	Ireland
36	Nessa O'Shaughnessy	University College Dublin	Ireland
37	Ahmet Pehlivan	YÖDAK	Cyprus
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This report presents the findings of the ENQA working group on quality assurance and recognition's research into determining the state of the art – including roles, interests, mandates, policies, and practices – where QA agencies and issues of academic recognition are concerned.