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# The future of the ESG: reflections based on the findings from the QA-FIT project





## European Quality Assurance Framework – State of play

- Overview of stakeholder groups: National student unions, higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, ministries
- Ongoing discussion on the relevance and need for revision of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
- Highlight the unified support for maintaining a joint European framework for quality assurance.



## Stakeholder Perspectives on ESG Relevance

- Strong agreement on ESG's role in promoting common standards and enhancing learning quality.
- Key benefits supported by ESG:
  - Facilitates degree recognition.
  - Supports international cooperation.
  - Promotes student mobility and the development of quality culture.
- General consensus on the necessity and ongoing relevance of the ESG
- Continuous debate on their extension



## Structure and Compliance of the ESG

- Current structure: Separation between standards and guidelines.
- Majority supports the inclusion and expansion of guidelines.
- mixed opinions on compliance requirements and compulsory nature of guidelines being considered. or potential reduction to fewer core standards



## Opinions on Expanding the Scope of the ESG

- Varied stakeholder views on extending the ESG scope (General view):
  - Students and QA agencies favour a broader scope.
  - HEIs and ministries are less inclined towards significant changes.
- Different relevancy expressed by various groups:
  - Fundamental values and social dimension of higher education.
  - Institutional management and autonomy
  - Digitalization, lifelong learning, and research.
  - links between ESG and labour market relevance.

# Social dimension and fundamental values



# Social dimension

- All stakeholders agree that social dimension is already part of QA procedures to some extent;
- Most common indicators: ‘increasing completion rates’, ‘access for students with disabilities’, ‘psychological counselling and wellbeing’ and ‘antidiscrimination policies’;
- Least common indicators: ‘training on equity and inclusion for both students and staff’;
- Most keen on inclusion of social dimension in ESG are students, least keen are QAAs;
- If social dimension included in ESG, what aspects should be prioritised ?

# Fundamental values

- QAAs see fundamental values as already covered by external QA activities while students are not equally satisfied;
- Students and ministries are most keen on fundamental values being addressed by external QA;
- Aspects of fundamental values are often handled through the national legal framework, and should not fall within the scope of QA agencies to assess’;
- Challenges for QAAs evaluating fundamental values: translating values into measurable criteria, decide what HEIs can control, different types of agencies and their roles, distinction between evaluating and safeguarding fundamental values.





# Conclusion

- Social dimension and fundamental values are somehow already incorporated into national-level quality assurance procedures in many states;
- Important to consider the implications of incorporating additional topics into the ESG standards or guidelines.

