



# HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF QA

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**VI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

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## What is governance in higher education?

***Governance*** encompasses the structures, relationships and processes through which, at both, national and institutional levels, policies for tertiary education are developed, implemented and reviewed.

Governance comprises a complex web including:

- the legislative framework
- the characteristics of the institutions and how they relate to the whole system,
- how money is allocated to institutions
- how institutions are accountable for the way it is spent
- less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behaviour

OECD, 2008

## Impact on Governance of HE

Governance of HE is impacted by national needs deriving from:

- The State (contribution to economic growth, financial stability)
- Employers (need of high skilled employees)
- Society (need of preparation for a new form of international citizenship)

And by international environment:

- International competition (cross-border provision of HE, rankings)
- Mobility (of programmes, lecturers, students)

## Governance of HE

The State is responsible for creating a **regulatory environment** which helps institutions to meet the expectations of society.

Governments are generally withdrawing from direct management of institutions, yet at the same time introducing new forms of control and influence, based largely on holding institutions accountable for performance via powerful enforcement mechanisms including funding and quality assurance.

# Quality Assurance as a tool of Governance of HE

QA is an important tool:

- to inform the labour market about graduate skills and competencies
- to guarantee that certain minimum standards are met
- to ensure that the qualification awarded meets its stated purpose
- to demonstrate that public funds are spent effectively

# Role of Quality Assurance

- Assure **accountability** of Higher Education Institutions
- Promote continuous **enhancement** of higher education

## Role of Quality Assurance

- Institutions are accountable for their use of public funds and are required to demonstrate value for money
- Countries are seeking to ensure that key stakeholders (students, families, policy-makers and employers) receive better information regarding the quality and cost of higher education
- For institutions, quality assurance helps attract students and secure revenues in increasingly competitive environments

## Quality assurance processes

- The scope ranges from institutional review to system audits
- Many of the quality assurance guidelines drafted by European countries are based on or articulated with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)* created by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

# What is ENQA?

## European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ENQA is a **membership organisation** of external Quality Assurance Agencies and represents its members at the European level and internationally. ENQA members are quality assurance agencies from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that operate in the field of higher education

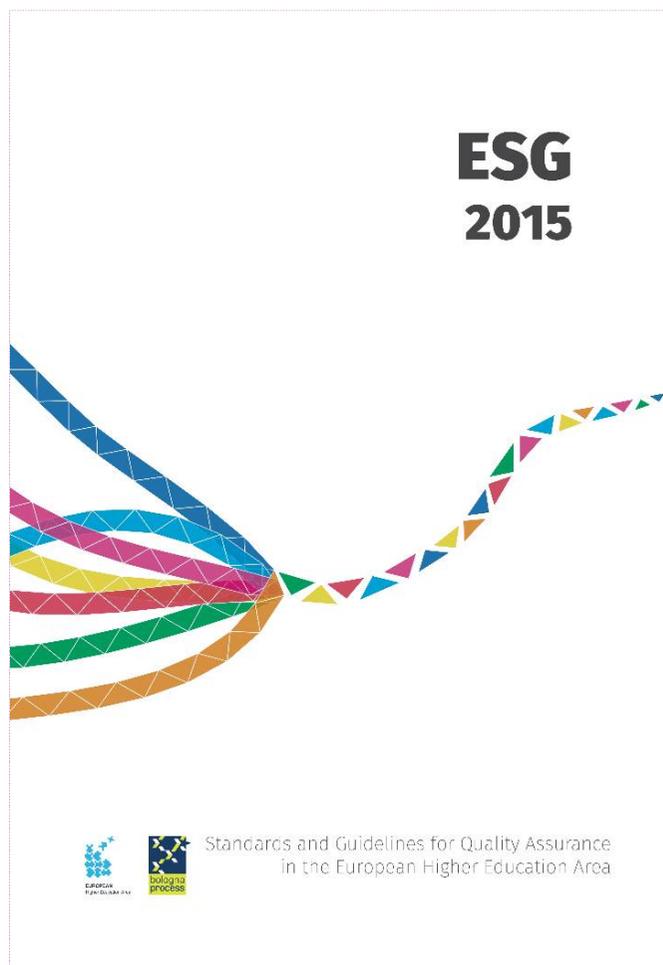
# ENQA

- The criteria for membership of ENQA is that an agency undergoes a successful **external review** against the **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** every five years
- As of October 2017, ENQA has 50 full members, 1 member under review and 50 affiliate and is representative of 41 of the 48 members states of the EHEA

## Scope of the ESG

- Standards and guidelines for quality assurance, not quality as such
- Apply to **all higher education** offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery (TNE, e-learning, short courses...)
- Apply to **all types of QA** activities and agencies (quality audits, programme accreditation, institutional review...)
- Generic, not specific: provide **the framework and common basis** for national and institutional activities

# ESG 2015



Approval by the BFUG,  
adoption by the Yerevan  
Ministerial Conference in  
May 2015



# ESG 2015 principles

- **HEIs have primary responsibility** for the quality of their provision and its assurance
- **QA responds to the diversity** of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
- QA supports the **development of a quality culture**
- QA takes into account the **needs and expectations of students**, all other stakeholders and society

# European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

A key element of ESG is the 3 Part Structure of QA:

Part 1. ESG for **Internal QA** within Higher Education Institutions (10 standards) - the corner stone of QA in HE

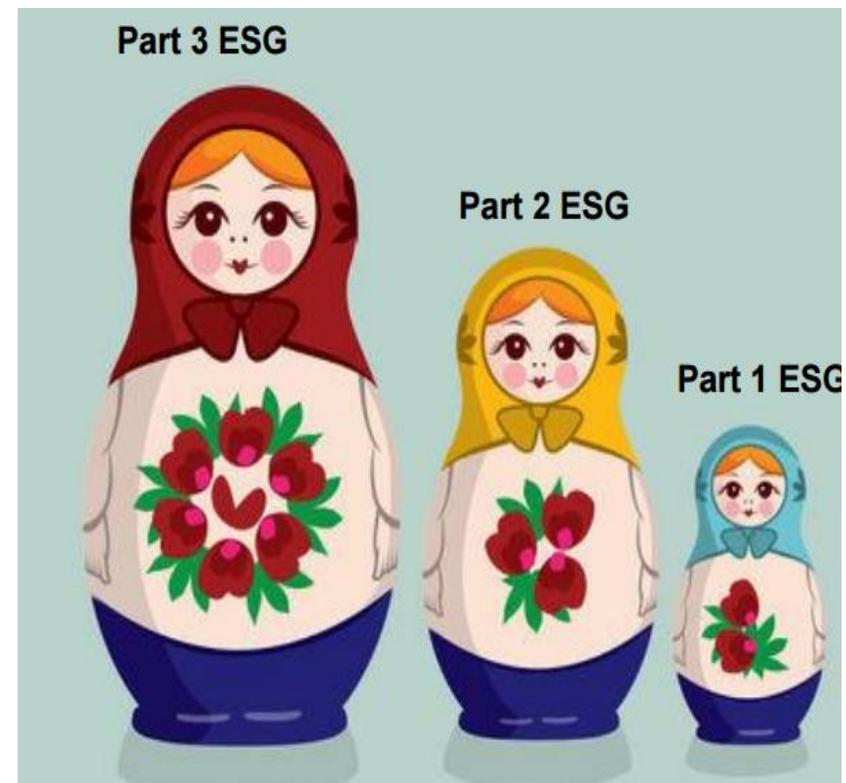
Part 2. ESG for **External QA** of Higher Education (7 standards) - a condition of the credibility of the results of the internal evaluation

Part 3. ESG for **External QA Agencies** (7 standards) - External evaluators (QA agencies) are accountable for the quality of their activities

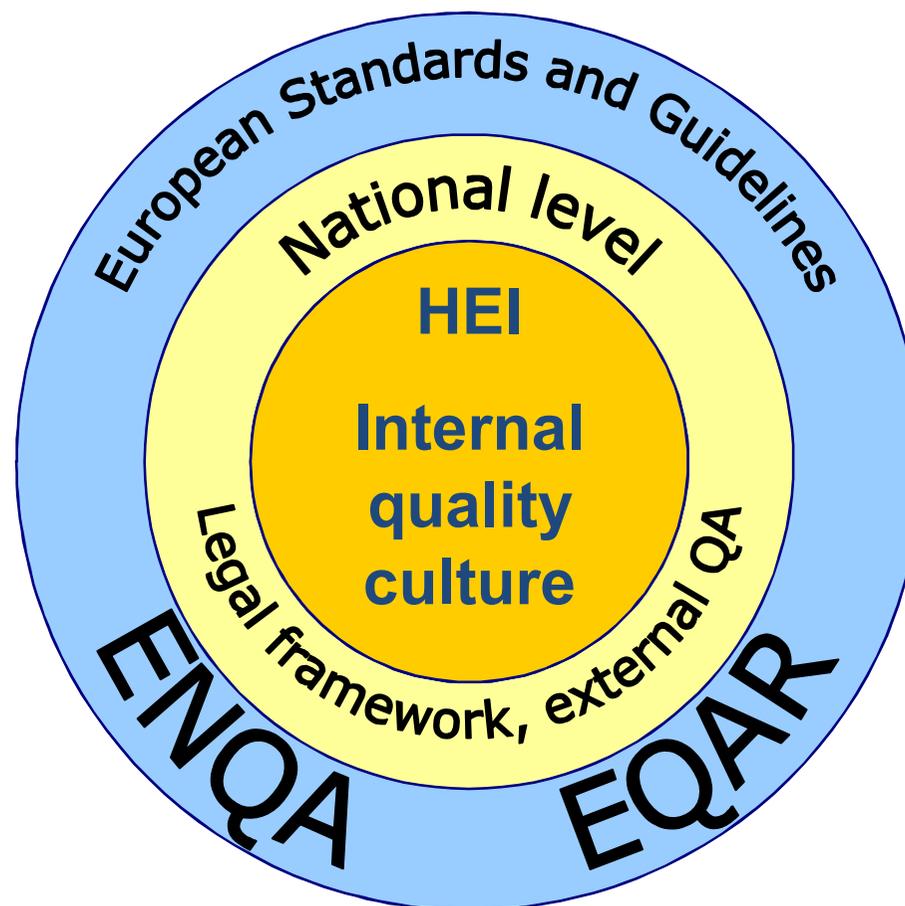
# European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

**ESG 2.1: External QA procedures** should take into account the effectiveness of the **internal QA processes** described in Part 1 of the ESG

**ESG 3.1: The external QA of agencies** should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the **external QA processes** described in Part 2 of the ESG



## Different levels of QA



# What do we mean with quality assurance?

Internal and external process and criteria to:

- Ensure minimum standards (accountability)
- Support quality enhancement
- Provide reliable and transparent information to users and stakeholders (consumer protection)
- Create trust in the HE system and its components
- Ensure, fundamentally, that students (can) reach the intended learning outcomes

# Implementation and Translation

Central Government makes formal HE policy and establishes funding mechanisms

Rectors and their management teams interpret and respond to policy in different ways

Heads of departments balance competing pressures, employ, reject or ignore demands for compliance, encode policy in internal processes

Academic staff in different departments and HEIs apply, ignore or adapt policy as they think appropriate, only some of which reaches them and which they receive and interpret in different – sometimes unpredictable – ways

Students respond in unpredicted ways, changing relationships and practices in teaching and learning situations

**NATIONAL**

**INSTITUTIONAL**

**DEPARTMENT**

**CLASSROOMS,  
OFFICES**

## Implementation and Translation - 2

- Much may depend on, for instance, the country or the academic discipline
- For instance, United Kingdom has different legal policy and economic environments than Lithuania
- Or, in terms of disciplines, in engineering connections with the non-academic world of work play a much larger role than in theoretical physics

## Recent developments

- Declining trust in the ability of higher education institutions to ensure quality
- Movement towards accreditation (the Netherlands, Portugal, Denmark)
- Multi-dimensional ranking system for HEIs

## Trends in QA agency structures

Mergers of agencies across HE sectors:

- AUSTRIA (public universities, fachhochschule, private universities)
- BELGIUM-FLANDERS (Universities, university colleges)
- IRELAND (universities, institutes of technology)

## Trends in agency scope

Wider responsibility for ENQA member agencies:

- FINEEC, Finland (from early childhood to higher education)
- QQI, Ireland (higher education, further education (VET), NQF, NARIC)
- NOKUT, Norway (higher education, VET, NARIC)
- EKKA, Estonia (Higher education, VET)
- SKVC, Lithuania (Higher education, ENIC/NARIC)

## Trends in QA methodologies

- Movement from programme accreditation (only) to a mixture of institutional accreditation and some programme audits/accreditations
- Movement to more risk-based QA

## Trends at Agency level

- More countries establishing agencies and more agencies seeking to become full members of ENQA or listed on EQAR (lately – two new agencies from Kazakhstan)
- 24 of the 48 EHEA countries have agencies that are ENQA members
- A further 16 countries have agencies that are ENQA affiliates

## Trends in QA

- Development of a market in German-speaking Europe – Germany – Austria – Switzerland
- Proliferation of Regional QA agencies in Spain – 7 ENQA members – 3 ENQA affiliates

## Trends in complexity of decision-making

- More separation of responsibility for organising QA evaluations and decision-making
- Denmark (Accreditation Institute(AI) and Danish Accreditation Council)
- Switzerland (AAQ and Swiss accreditation council)
- Netherlands - Flanders (NVAO and agencies organising evaluations)

## Trends in QA

Increasing of Internationalisation of QA :

- Cross-border quality assurance (mobile agencies)
- Quality assurance of cross-border higher education /transnational education (mobile institutions)
- Quality assurance of joint programmes (mobile students)

## Trends in QA

### QA for enhancement

- Greater emphasis on Internal QA and the encouragement of an institutional “Quality Culture”

### Much greater use of Explicit Statements of Requirements

- Qualification Frameworks
- Subject Benchmarks

## Trends in QA

### Greater Focus on Outputs

- Direct – What a student has learnt
- Indirect – Where a graduate has gone

In some countries increasing government involvement

Main QA approaches in the EU include **evaluation, accreditation and audit**

## Consideration of IQA

- Effectiveness of IQA
- ESG – Part 1

## Methodologies fit for purpose

- Clear aims
- Stakeholder involvement

## Process of EQA

- Self-assessment      ▪ Visit by peers
- Report      · Follow-up

## Experts

- Student member      · Employers
- Selection procedure      · Training

## Criteria for outcomes

- Pre-defined
- Published

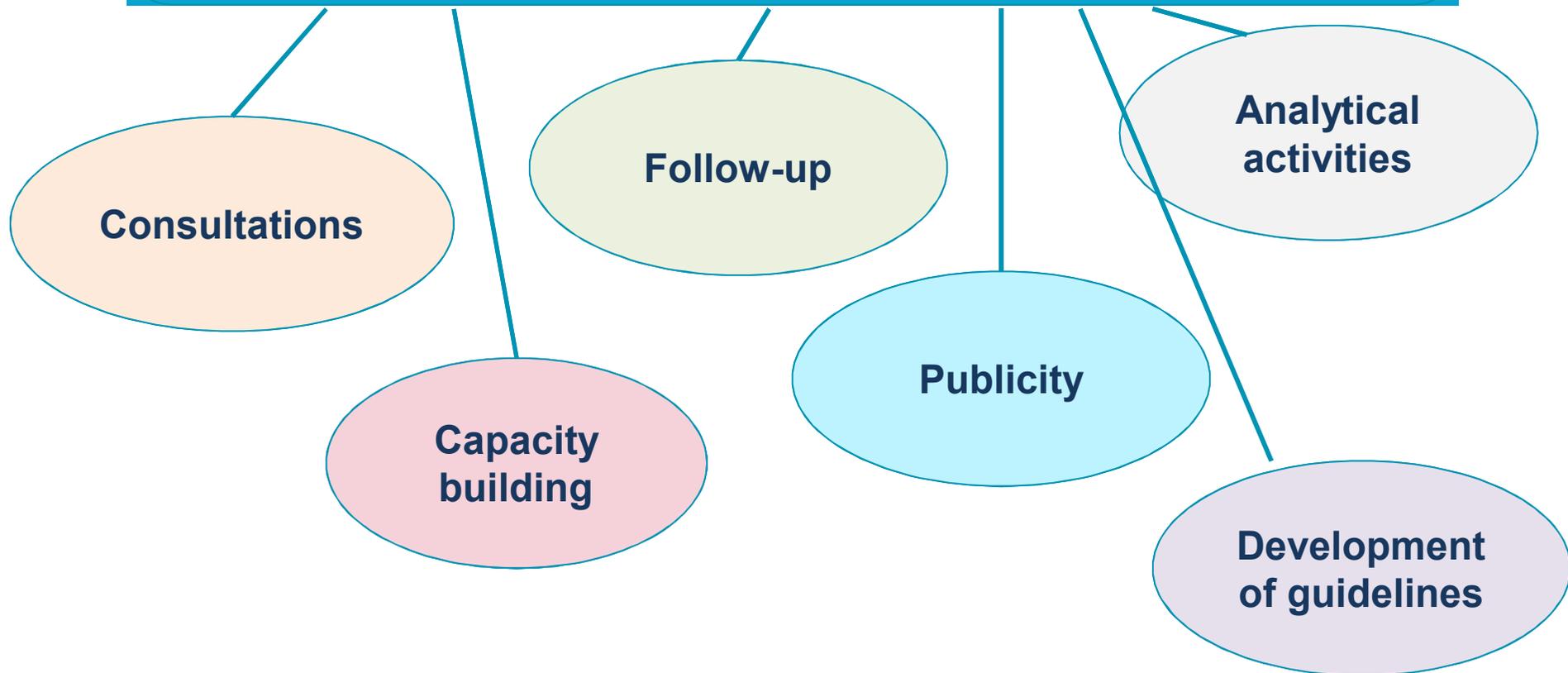
## Reporting

- Full text
- All decisions

## Complaints and Appeals

- Clearly defined
- Part of EQA process

# Quality Assurance ≠ Evaluation of Quality

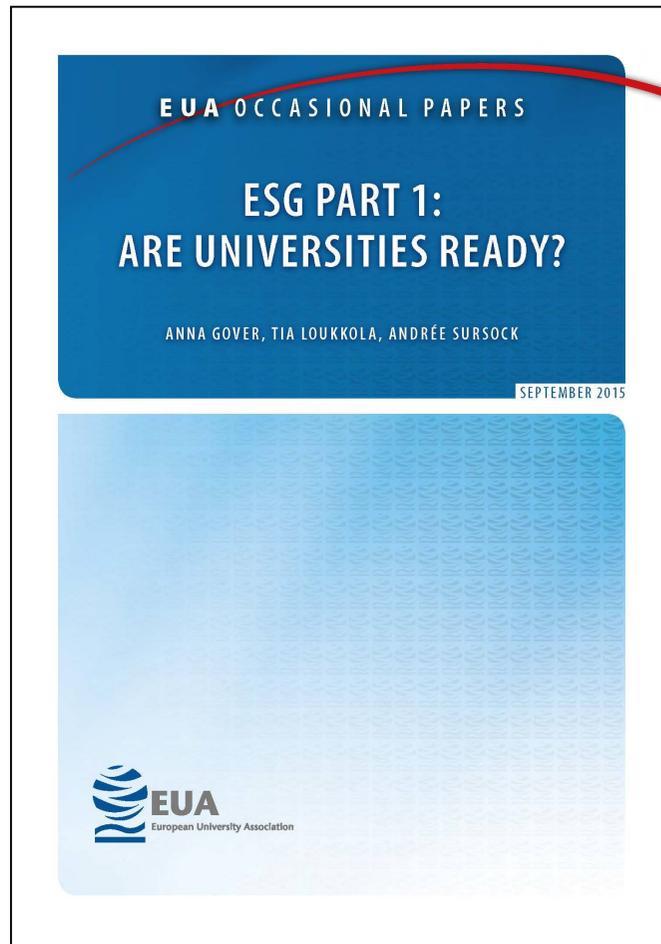


# What does ESG 2015 mean for Higher Education Institutions

Expansion of Part 1 – Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance from 7 to 10 Standards

1. Policy for quality assurance
2. Design and approval of Programmes
3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
5. Teaching staff
6. Learning resources and student support
7. Information management
8. Public information
9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
10. Cyclical external quality assurance

# How HEIs can address internal quality assurance in line with ESG 2015



Helpful guide on how universities can address ESG 2015 (part 1)

Published (Sep 2105) by [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

# Challenges (for some) with ESG 2015

- **1.2 – Design and approval of programmes**
  - Programmes are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work
  
- **1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching:

  - Respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths
  - Flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods
  - Encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner
  
- **2.4 - Peer-review experts**
  - External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s)
  
- **2.6 - Reporting**
  - Full reports should be published

# CONCLUSIONS

When introducing a quality assurance framework to enable mutual national and international understanding, it could be useful to reflect upon:

- The key concepts:
  - What is common understanding of the quality in higher education?
  - How does quality relate to a strategy, leadership and information structures?
  - What should be the prevailing purpose of quality assurance
    - accountability or enhancement?
  - What organizational structure will be used for national quality assurance? Who will develop QA tools?
  - Independence of QAA?

# Support to agencies aiming to become ENQA members

## Affiliation in ENQA



- Access to the ENQA community
- Sharing of knowledge
- Discussion on prominent topics in higher education
- Events, conferences
- Members' Forum and General Assembly
- Same benefits as for members expect for voting and participation in the Board

# Support to agencies aiming to become ENQA members

- Support and guidance when preparing for an external review
- Consultative visits, capacity building
- Publications are freely available
- ENQA has access to a wide network of experts





**Thank you! Gracias!**  
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