

The European Quality Assurance Register and its Impact for Institutions

2nd International Conference Institutional Strategic Quality Management
(ISQM 2010)

Sinaia, 14 October 2010

Colin Tück

1. **Mission and Objectives**
2. Overview of Registered Agencies
3. Lessons Learned from the First Two Years
4. Relevance for Higher Education Institutions

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)



“EQAR’s mission is to further the development of the European Higher Education Area by increasing transparency of quality assurance, and thus enhancing trust and confidence in European higher education.”

- A register of credible and legitimate QA agencies
 - Substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) as criterion
 - Evidenced through an external review by independent experts (akin to review of institutions/programmes)
 - Open to European and non-European agencies
- Stakeholder-managed
 - Founded (2008) by ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE (E4)

EQAR – main objectives

Providing information

- Identify credible quality assurance agencies, and programmes/institutions they reviewed
- Prevent “accreditation mills” from gaining credibility

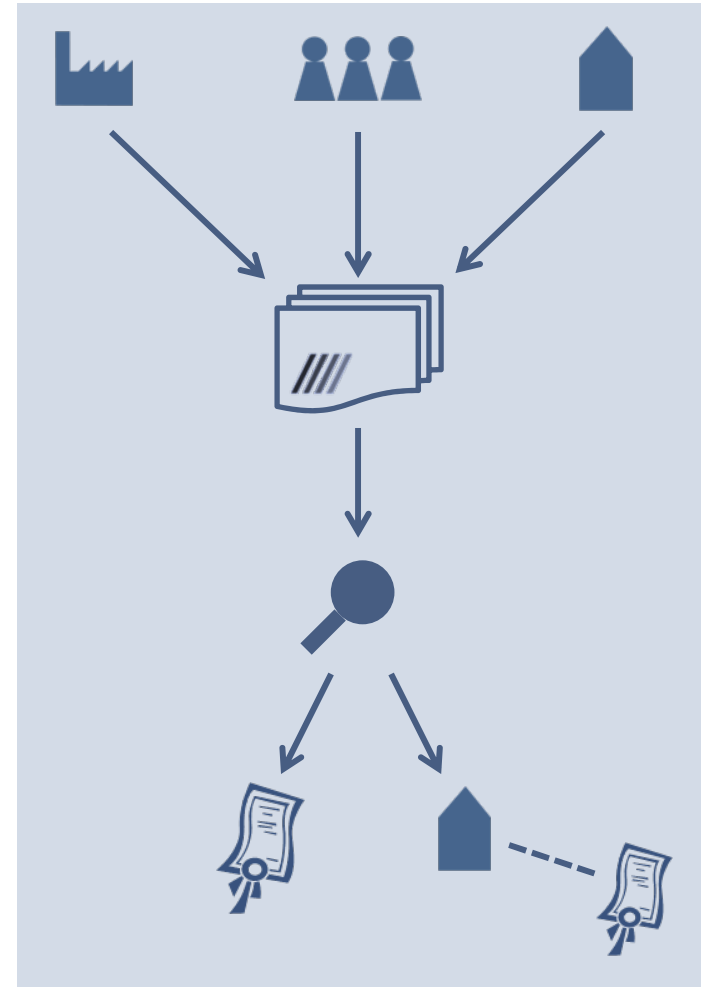
Enhancing trust

- Facilitate recognition of qualifications and periods of study
- Thereby support mobility

Promoting a European dimension

- Allow HE institutions to choose a suitable QA agency
- Fulfil external QA requirements, if national rules permit

eqar



Outline



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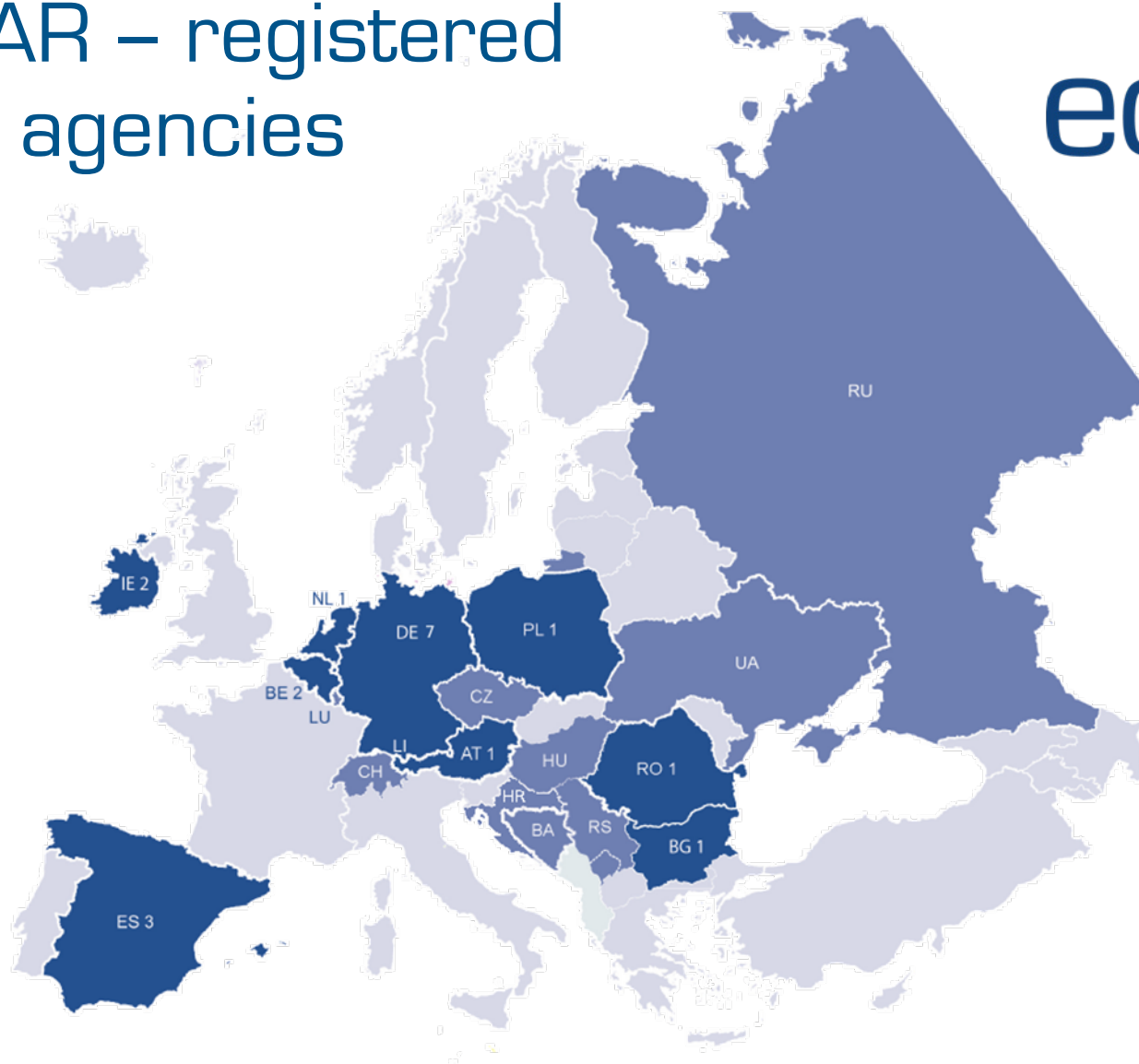
Overview: applications for inclusion on EQAR



	Autumn 2008	Spring 2009	Summer 2009	Spring 2010	Autumn 2010	Total
Applications	10	4	8	4	5	31
- accepted	7	3	8	1	-	19
- rejected	1	0	0	-	-	1
- withdrawn	2	1	0	-	-	3
- pending	-	-	-	3	5	8

EQAR – registered QA agencies

eqar



■ Official seat

■ Where agencies also operate

(Listed agencies have been working with HE institutions in these countries. This does not imply any official recognition or mandate.)

How does
the Register
look like in
practice?

Specimen
entry

About ☐

Application ☐

Register ☒

Publications ☐

Association ☐

SPACE - Specimen Agency for Accreditation in Central Europe

Website: www.space.qaa
Admission valid until: 2013-02-28 (listed since 2008-07-07)
Based in*: Slovenia

Contact details

Address: Celovška cesta 10
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenija
Contact Person: Mojca Mustermann
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Information on the agency's work

SPACE was founded in 1992 as a regional agency for quality assurance in Central Europe. After initially operating in Austria, Czech Republic and Slovenia SPACE has since widened its activities to numerous countries.

Agency operates in**: Slovenia; Slovakia; Switzerland; Liechtenstein;
Hungary; Czech Republic; Croatia; Bosnia and
Herzegovina; Austria; Germany

Specialisation: SPACE is specialised on higher education
programmes in the **sector of aeronautics**.

Types/Methods of quality assurance used: SPACE normally provides accreditation (based on
self-evaluation and peer review) at the level of study
programmes.
For departments or institutions that already had at
least one programme accredited by SPACE it also
provides institutional accreditation.

Review reports: www.space.qaa/review/programme/reports.html

ENQA membership: ENQA full member since May 2008

Report(s): External_Review_SPACE_May2009.txt

Information for:

- Institutions
- QA agencies
- Students
- Employers
- Governments
- Press and media

About

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Admission is valid for 5 years, counted from the external review of the agency

Official seat of the agency

e.qaa

8 (listed since 2008-07-07)

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General description
and information on
scope of inclusion,
where necessary

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Report(s): [External_Review_SPACE_May2009.txt](#)

Basic information
about the agency's
activities

Direct link to reports
on reviews carried
out by the agency

External review
report on which
inclusion is based

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www.space.qaa/review/programme/reports.html
ENQA membership:
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Report(s):
[External_Review_SPACE_May2009.txt](#)

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Lessons Learned



- Summary Report by the 1st Register Committee
 - Account of criteria, procedures and decision-making during the first two years of operation
 - Following up the report published in October 2009
 - Recommendations for external reviews
- Some of the topics addressed
 1. [Scope of inclusion on EQAR](#)
 2. [External review reports](#)
 3. [Using the European Standards and Guidelines](#)



Scope of Inclusion on the Register



- Geographical
 - As a rule, expected that ESG are complied with wherever agencies operate, inside or outside EHEA
 - Anything else would be more complicated and less transparent, and could be misleading
- Activities
 - The ESG are about audit, evaluation, accreditation etc of institutions or programmes - other activities (meta-level, standard setting etc) are not pertinent



External review reports



- External review reports are crucial, as they are the main basis for decision-making
- Requirements are to ensure robustness
- Two steps in decision-making:
 1. Are requirements for external reviews fulfilled?
 2. Does the applicant comply substantially with the ESG?
- Where 1. is not fulfilled 2. is not considered

External review reports (2)



Difficulties encountered:

- Reference to ESG parts 2 and 3
 - Some reports refer to national criteria only
 - Some reports do not address part 2 standards individually, but only as a “package” under 3.1
- Composition of review teams
 - Academic, student and international expert required
- Agencies with various activities/processes
 - ESG 2.1-2.7 & 3.7 relate to activities, not to the agency as organisation – should be addressed for each activity



Using the ESG



- The ultimate criterion is substantial compliance with the ESG
 - No numerical rules, no checklist
 - But: a comprehensive and holistic judgement
- There are a number of challenges:
 - External review teams use different scales (mostly, all or some of the following: no, partial, substantial or full compliance)
 - ...

Using the ESG (2)



- ... challenges:
 - Some teams make overall judgements, others don't
 - Some standards might be interpreted differently
 - National legislation is accepted as “excuse” to different extents
 - Level of detail in analysing differs significantly
- Register Committee has to level out a range of different approaches and interpretations, and might reach a different conclusion than the review team



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Relevance for higher education institutions



“provide a basis for national authorities to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements

provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements”

(E4 Report to Bologna Ministers)

- Opportunity for institutions to work with a QA agency that best suits its mission and profile
- Facilitate quality assurance of joint programmes involving institutions from several countries

How national systems refer to the Register



- **Austria:** plan to allow universities to choose freely from amongst registered agencies for their reviews (proposal)
- **Denmark:** automatic recognition of accreditation by EQAR-registered agencies for ERASMUS Mundus programmes (proposal)
- **Germany:** national regulatory body for QA (Accreditation Council) can ratify decisions from foreign EQAR-registered agencies
- **Liechtenstein:** does not have its own national agency, but the university should choose a registered agency to be externally reviewed (proposal)
- **Romania:** after initial accreditation by national agency, HE institutions can choose from registered agencies freely for periodic evaluation

Thank you for your attention!

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