

# SUHF KVALITETSKONFERENS 2025

## The ESG and their future

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**Date**

## Diversity in HE and the importance of trust and QA



Yellow snow is also snow.

- **Quality and excellence** inherent values in academic communities
- Massification of higher education, increasing number of HEIs, new providers (cannot know everyone → QA as proxy)
- Recognition: mobility, prior learning, LLL, microcredentials...
- Increased international cooperation → different cultural contexts, histories, and traditions

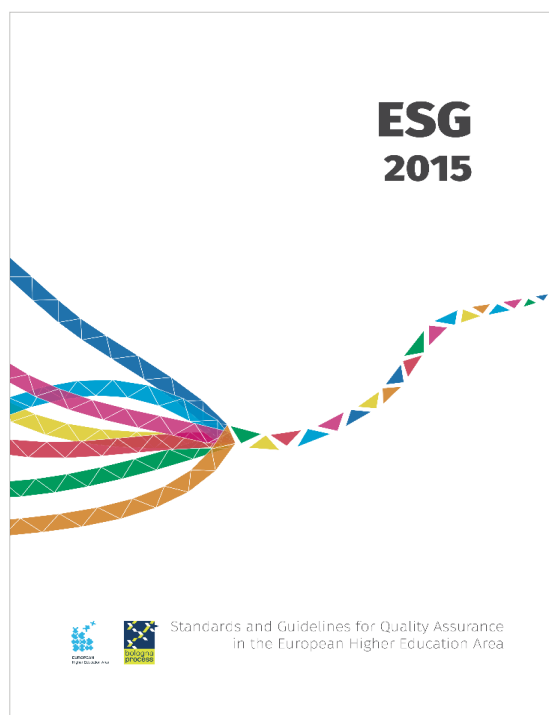
### → Need a common framework

- Shared system of rules
- Shared value base
- Reliable, fair, and transparent processes to demonstrate trustworthiness and respect of the common rules of the game

## Key elements of the EHEA QA framework

- **The ESG (Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA)**
  - Since 2005, revised in 2015
  - Written by the stakeholders, approved by ministers
  - Generic standards provide a shared framework for QA in Europe, including internal quality assurance
  - A success story of the Bologna Process, powerful tool to implement policies
- **European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)**
  - Since 2007
  - Independent register of ESG compliant QA agencies
  - Database of accredited programmes **DEQAR**





## Reference framework for agreed practice in QA in Europe

### Introduction, followed by three parts:

- Part 1- Internal QA within HEIs
- Part 2- External QA carried by QAAs
- Part 3 - Internal QA within QAAs

Focus on quality assurance of higher education, scope: teaching and learning

## What are the standards and guidelines?

- **Generic principles**
  - allow for diversity of implementation
  - need to be “translated” into different contexts
  - apply to ALL higher education (cross-border, elearning, micro-credentials, doctoral education...)
- **Standards** “set out agreed and accepted practice... and should be taken account of and adhered to by those concerned”
- **Guidelines**
  - “explain why the standard is important”
  - “describe how standards *might* be implemented”.
  - “set out good practice ... (but).. Implementation *will* vary depending on different contexts”
  - can also do things in another (good) way



## ***Part 1: Standards for internal quality assurance***

**1.1 Policy for quality assurance**

**1.2 Design and approval of programmes**

**1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**

**1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

**1.5 Teaching staff**

**1.6 Learning resources and student support**

**1.7 Information management**

**1.8 Public information**

**1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**

**1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**

## **1.7 Information management**

### **Standard:**

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

### **Guidelines:**

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- Key performance indicators;
- Profile of the student population;
- Student progression, success and drop-out rates;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Learning resources and student support available;
- Career paths of graduates.

Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.



## Impact of the common framework

- **Spreading good practice** → becomes “norm” (e.g. student participation, independence of agencies, student-centered learning)
- **Improvement of quality** through shift from (pure) quality control to quality enhancement and support
- **Strong cooperation** with and involvement of different stakeholders
- **Responsibility to institutions** → ownership, accountability
- **Better understanding and trust** in different systems is possible: dialogue, cooperation, mobility, recognition
- **Powerful policy implementation tool**





## Extensive consultations 2022-2024

## What do we agree on?

- A European QA framework is important for
  - Promoting common standards, creating quality culture
  - Stimulating enhancement of L&T quality
  - Facilitating recognition, trust in qualifications
  - Mobility, international cooperation
- ESG are successful and support policy implementation
- Strongly agree that the ESG are still needed
- Agree that some revision is needed BUT ... HEI < 50%, agencies 75%, students 90%



## Where do we agree less?

Majority of students think that **scope** of the ESG is too limited, but QA agencies and HEIs disagree

Half of QA agencies would like the ESG to be reduced to **fewer core standards**, but HEIs and especially students disagree

Most stakeholders agree that **fundamental values** should be evaluated through QA, but students are very keen (95%) while QA agencies and HEIs are more cautious

**Flexibility** – students, even at the cost of some diversity and innovation; HEIs more concerned; agencies want to develop their activities more flexibly



## Main messages of stakeholders

**HEI:** flexibility, autonomy in implementation, allow for innovation in L&T, smooth international cooperation - **“Less is more” (but want more guidance)**

**QA agencies:** clarity, consistency, comparability, less scope for interpretation. Allow for different approaches to QA. **“We need to make it work”**

**Students:** student-centered learning, diversity and support needs, fundamental values, social dimension... – **the longest wish list!**  
**“More is more”**

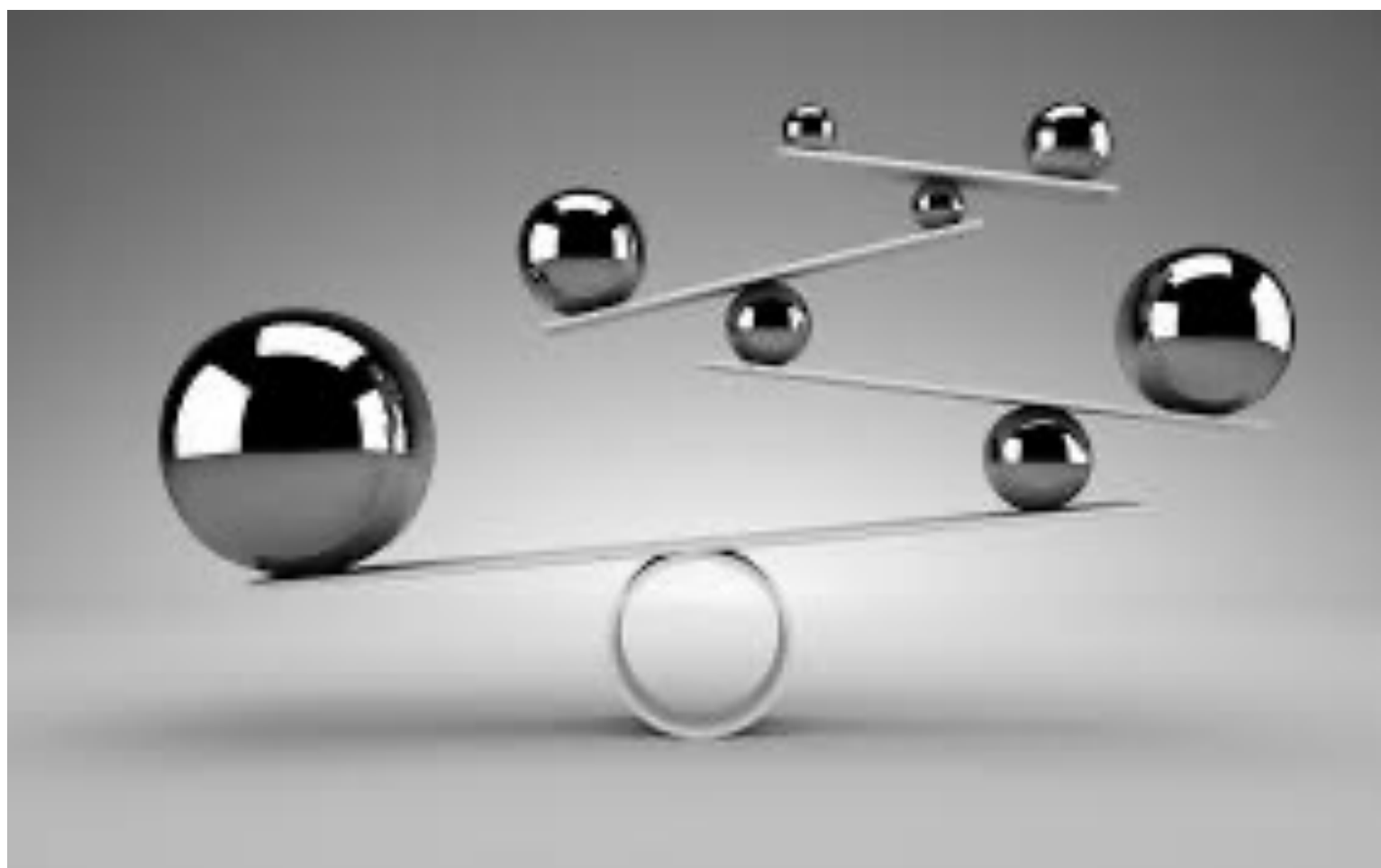
**Ministries:** internationalisation, AI, call for respect of **national frameworks and diversity**

3rd mission  
management  
micro-credentials  
learning and teaching  
alliances  
research greening  
social dimension  
digitalisation  
values

ARE WE STILL ARGUING  
ABOUT WHAT'S IN IT?!



2024  
Maaike  
Hartjes  
COMICHOUSE.nl





## What happens next?

### **ESG Steering Committee**

- Representatives of ENQA, EUA, EURASHE, ESU, EQAR, Education International & Business Europe
- Coordinate the overall process, including main directions and consultations

### **ESG Drafting Group**

- Representatives of ENQA, EUA, EURASHE & ESU
- Prepare drafts and identify issues for further discussion

**Consultation rounds with all key stakeholders – influence also via EUA and Swedish Bologna rep.**

**Final version in 2026, ministerial approval in 2027**



## Key questions for you

- What should be **kept**?
- What should be **cut**?
- What should be **added**?
- What should ***not*** be added?





# Thank you for your attention

