



Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The register of quality assurance agencies An occasion for better European synergies (?)

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Outlines of the presentation

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 - The purposes of the register today
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Foreword

- My vocabulary
 - Evaluation: an organised process ...
 - With different possible purposes
 - Recommendations for improvement
 - Judgement about reliability
 - Accreditation
 - Accountability
 - Licensing
 - State approval ("French habilitation")
 - ...
 - Accreditation: a decision that engages the responsibility of the accreditation body towards society (students, stakeholders, ...)
- My viewpoint
 - A free speech
 - ... dialogue as the engine of progress

The official order

In Bergen in May 2005, the ministers took stock of the achievements and set the objectives of the next step:

*“ We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA. We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria. **We welcome the principle of a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review. We ask that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group.** We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions. ”*

“The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals”

Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education,
Bergen, 19-20 May 2005

The method:

Searching for a consensus among the E4 and making proposals to the BFUG

The deadline:

London May 2007

ENQA

- What is ENQA?
 - The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

- An association of QA agencies
 - An open question: Why do we have QA agencies in Europe?
 - Clarification of roles between State and universities
 - Peer review as a corner stone

- The origin of ENQA
 - EU recommendation (98/561/EC)

- The issues of ENQA
 - To protect agencies ... (?)
 - To develop the European dimension of QA
 - To become a reliable partner within the E4 and the BP

The register: the reasons behind

An idea that emerged in 2003, took shape in 2005 and should be approved in 2007

- To protect HEIs against invasive QA agencies
 - The balance between internal and external procedures;
 - The balance between enhancement and control.

- A tool that will facilitate mutual recognition
 - ... of accreditation results, degrees, ...
 - ... and will make mobility easier.

- A way to clean up the accreditation market
 - The risk of having accreditation mills, bogus agencies, operating in the EHEA;
 - Stakeholders and “society” information issues.

The register: the purposes today

The Register will help to:

- ❑ promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among the higher education institutions;
- ❑ reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility;
- ❑ provide a basis for governments to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- ❑ provide a means for the higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- ❑ serve as an instrument to improve the quality of the quality assurance agencies and to promote mutual trust between them.

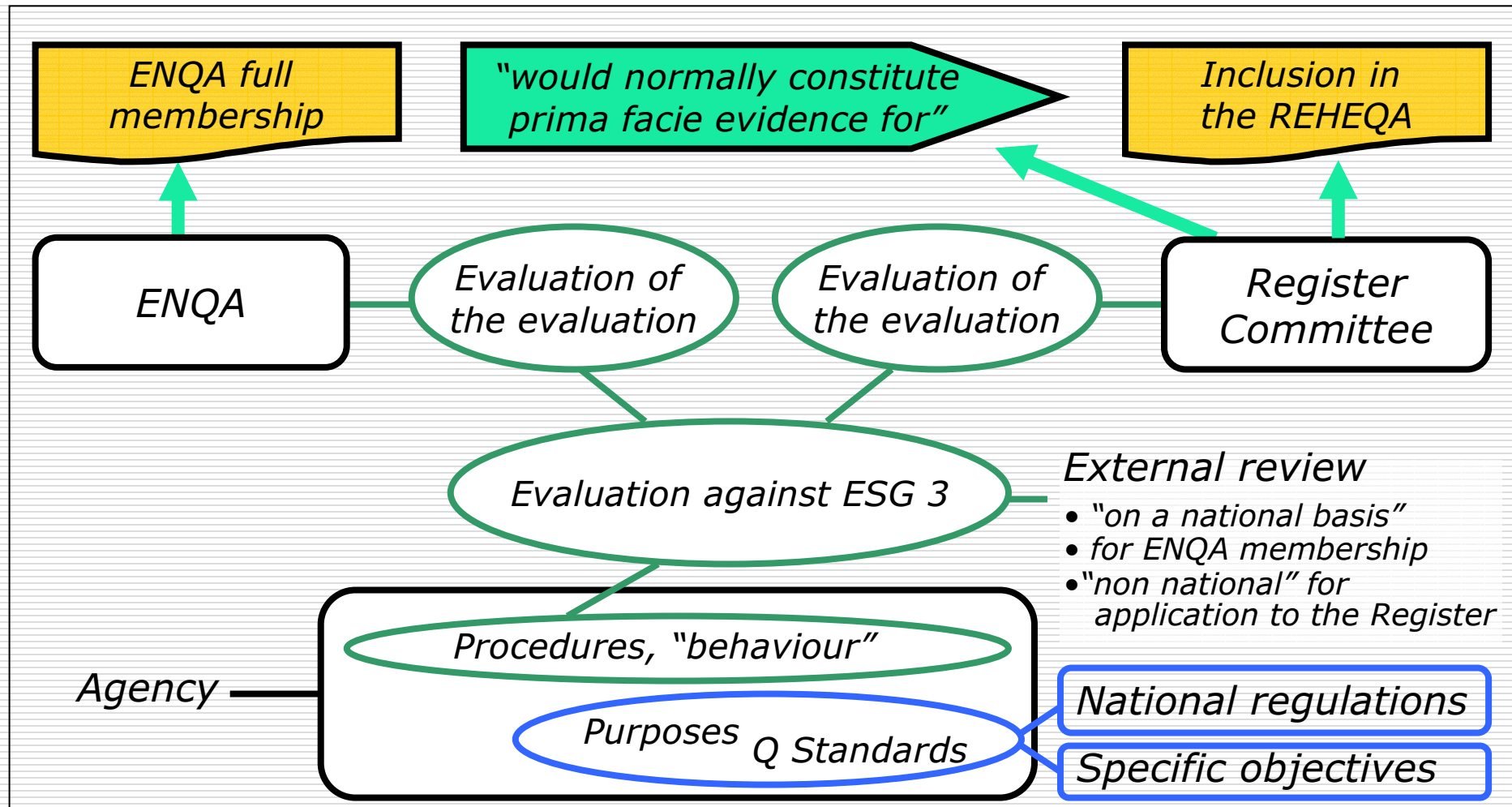
The present situation

- The E4 has reached a consensus that:
 - Preserves ENQA capacity to act as a political organisation;
 - Avoids the risks of duplication, competition, incoherence between ENQA and the register (link between ENQA membership and the register);
 - Ensures the independence of the Register Committee

- In brief:
 - The technical feasibility is demonstrated;
 - The political dimension of the question is under debate.

- It will be a new step for the Bologna process
 - Until now the process has produced tools for interrelations (BMD, ECTS, DS, ESG, ...);
 - The register + the EU (2006/143/EC) recommendation are a first step in touching HE steering mechanisms.

That said, what are we taking about...



The register: the stakes (1)

Getting to the bottom of things

- The original proposal was an inclusive information-based publication;

- The project is now an exclusive list.
 - The list of the agencies that fulfil the requirements of the ESG ;
 - Not only the ENQA agencies but all the agencies that would like to operate in the EHEA.

- **The register will be a kind of accreditation;**
- **To some extent, it will be an assessment of national measures.**

The register: the stakes (2)

From theory to practicalities : the Register Committee will have a huge responsibility

- Compliance or substantial compliance with the ESG?
 - Recognition shouldn't be automatic;
 - A need to take into account specificities and localism, but how far?
- The nature of the decision is challenging
 - The issue of independence
 - The appeal procedure
- The responsibility of the Register Committee will be important and might (will) have legal consequences;
- The composition of the committee and the decision making processes will have to be fine tuned (and accepted by all).

A new context after London 2007

Some possible issues for the European QA dimension:

- A new dimension of the Bologna process:
 - As regard the steering of HE (EU recommendation + register);
- The register: A license to practice abroad
 - That will meet the needs of HEIs for:
 - “image” (signs of communication);
 - Independent assessments.
 - The beginning of a competition between agencies.
- A dissociation between terms of reference and evaluation processes:
 - States or decision makers being in charge of the definition of the terms of reference of evaluation;
 - Agencies proposing their capacity to run independent procedures.

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Inclusive grid proposed in Bergen (2005)

PROPOSED REGISTER STRUCTURE		Reviewed		Not reviewed
		Compliance with European Standards	Non-compliance with European Standards	
European national agencies	National operators			
	Cross-border operators			
European non-national agencies				
Extra-European agencies Operating in Europe				

