

This project is funded by the
European Union



This project is
implemented by



Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Quality Assurance

Twinning partnership
between Bosnia and
Herzegovina and Austria

*Final Project
recommendations to relevant
stakeholders*

September 2015

Twinning Project Facts

Twinning Contract Number	BA11-IB-OT-02
Project Title	<i>Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Quality Assurance</i>
Twinning Partners	<p>The project is a partnership between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria</p> <p>Contracting body in the Beneficiary Country: Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance in Bosnia and Herzegovina</p> <p>Contracting body in the Member State: Agency for European Integration and Economic Development (AEI) in cooperation with the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria)</p>
European Union Funds	The project is funded by the European Union under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA 2011) with 1 million Euro
Project Duration	27 months overall duration 24 months on-site implementation: September 2013 - September 2015
Project Leader, Member State (PL MS)	Alexander Kohler, Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Vienna, Austria
Project Leader, Beneficiary Country (PL BC)	Husein Nanić, Director, Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA), Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Resident Twinning Advisor, Member State (RTA)	Maria E. Weber, Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (AQ Austria), Vienna, Austria
Resident Twinning Advisor Counterpart, Beneficiary Country (RTA counterpart)	Maja Macan, Senior Quality Assurance Officer, Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA), Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
On-site Twinning Support	Suzana Trubajić, RTA Language Assistant Sanda Topić, RTA Assistant

All project activities are conducted in close cooperation between



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria



Agency for Development of Higher
Education and Quality Assurance

Proofreading of the document

Suzana Trubajić

Translation of the document into local language

Suzana Trubajić

Banja Luka, September 2015

Key purpose of the Twinning partnership and the present Recommendations	5
Twining partnership mandatory results (expected outcomes)	5
General achievements of the Twinning partnership.....	8
General recommendations of the Twinning partnership	8
Achievements and recommendations on the expected outcomes	9
Expected outcome: Legal provisions.....	9
Project achievements	9
Recommendations	10
Timeline for implementation	10
Expected outcome: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area	11
Project achievements	11
Recommendations	11
Timeline for implementation	11
Expected outcome: Institutional accreditation in BiH	12
Project achievements	12
Recommendations	12
Timeline for implementation	13
Expected outcome: Study programme accreditation in BiH	13
Project achievements	13
Recommendations	13
Timeline for implementation	14
Expected outcome: Thematic analyses	14
Project achievements	14
Recommendations	14
Timeline for implementation	14
Expected outcomes: Development, upgrading and implementation of internal quality management systems in higher education institutions in BiH	15
Project achievements	15
Recommendations	15
Expected outcomes: Strengthening institutional and HR capacities	15
Project achievements	15
Recommendations	16
Timeline for implementation	16
Expected specific outcome for HEA: An internal quality system of HEA developed	16
Project achievements	16
Recommendations	16
Timeline for implementation	16
Expected specific outcome for HEA: A system of strategic planning of HEA developed	17
Project achievements	17
Recommendations	17

Timeline for implementation	17
Expected specific outcome for HEA: Links with two similar agencies in the EU have been established.....	17
Project achievements	17
Recommendations	18
Timeline for implementation	18
Annex 1 - Overview project deliverables	19
Annex 2 - Analysis of Legal Provisions - Recommendations to Relevant Stakeholders (Recommendations to the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina) .	20
Annex 3 – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area	24
Annex 4 - Relevant legal provisions concerning quality assurance in BiH.....	39
Annex 5 – Relevant links	42
Annex 6 - Glossary of acronyms	43

Key purpose of the Twinning partnership and the present Recommendations

The key purpose of this Twinning partnership between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria was to **strengthen institutional capacities in order to implement quality assurance in the Bosnia and Herzegovina higher education system** in line with the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The progress of the Project was continuously monitored during the two years of its implementation (September 2013 – September 2015) in order to strengthen and adapt its activities to current developments and progress. At the very end of the Project, all activities were reviewed with regard to their achievements and the present overview of achievements as well as general and specific recommendations were developed.

The achievements and recommendations outlined in this report are based on individual project activities that took place throughout the Project. In particular, they reflect the detailed operational recommendations and follow-up measures that were established in each individual mission that took place and which are outlined in the respective mission reports.

The recommendations in this report need also to be understood in conjunction with the mandatory results (expected outcomes) of the Project. The *general recommendations* are drawn from an overarching assessment of project achievements and what is required to further strengthen the capacity of quality assurance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The *individual recommendations* which follow the general recommendations outline detailed the actions to be taken by the various stakeholders¹ in higher education and should encourage them in assuming their respective responsibilities with regard to quality assurance, as well as in following the set timelines.

Twinning partnership mandatory results (expected outcomes)

The Twinning Project started its on-site implementation with a view to achieving a set of mandatory results (MRs) which were outlined in the initial Project Fiche. After the first period of project activities and due to unforeseen developments, the Beneficiary Country (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Member State (Austria) and the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUD) agreed on a slight revision of the MRs and benchmarks, while maintaining the overall intentions of the Project.

After the amendment² of the MRs, the results to be achieved were the following:

- The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are the reference document for all levels (higher education institutions, higher education authorities and quality assurance agencies);

¹ Whilst there are several important stakeholders that have a role in quality assurance, this Project addressed primarily HEA, competent education authorities (CEAs) and higher education institutions (HEIs). HEAARS in this context is understood in the framework of the Project as the CEA with regard to quality assurance in the Republika Srpska. The role of other stakeholders that are not directly addressed in the Project (especially student organisations or representatives of the labour market) is nevertheless of crucial importance, as their involvement in and contribution to higher education generally and quality assurance in particular is a significant element of the principles and values of the EHEA.

² Issuance of an Addendum to Twinning Contract 2013/325-024 BA11-IB-OT-02, approved April 2015. The change of the MRs did not cause substantial change in the articulated components and project activities assigned.

- HEA is prepared to undergo an external review with a view to becoming a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- 75% of 30 public and private higher education institutions have internal quality management systems developed, upgraded and in implementation;
- A first cycle of accreditation of all higher education institutions and a selected number of study programmes in BiH is done in accordance with the ESG,
- A quality analysis with recommendations for the removal of shortcomings in the quality of studies and higher education institutions, after the first cycle of institutional accreditation;³
- The accreditation criteria are revised;⁴
- The provisions in legislation, as well as procedures of the competent education authorities related to the quality assurance of higher education, were analysed.

The MRs and benchmarks alike were designed to support the achievements within the Twinning Project. The MRs are considered as outcomes expected to be achieved. In order to realise this, the Project was working along four components:

Component	Content
Component 1	Analysis of legal provisions
Component 2	Strengthening the capacities of HEA
Component 3	Implementation of quality management systems in higher education institutions
Component 4	Support in organising reviews of higher education institutions and selected study programmes

Twinning Project Content-Related Components

During the 24 months of on-site implementation more than 50 missions including over 580 expert days with 12 MS short-term experts took place in BiH. In addition, seven missions with BC participants were scheduled in the MS, Austria, where AQ Austria took a lead in hosting various events. The short-term experts from MSs who conducted activities and missions in the BC were as follows:

Component	Short term experts
Component 0	Alexander Kohler (BMWFW, PL MS)
Component 1	Bastian Baumann (Independent Higher Education Consultant), Peter Findlay (AQ Austria Board), Roland Humer (WUS Austria), Achim Hopbach (AQ Austria), Veronika Nitsche (WUS Austria), Dietlinde Kastelliz (AQ Austria), Alexander Kohler (BMWFW), Almir Kovačević (WUS Austria), Nora Skaburskiene (SKVC), Vanja Perovšek (University of Ljubljana)
Component 2	Bastian Baumann (Independent Higher Education Consultant), Roland Humer (WUS Austria), Achim Hopbach (AQ Austria), Dietlinde Kastelliz (AQ Austria), Alexander Kohler (BMWFW), Anita Kruisz (AQ Austria), Veronika Nitsche (WUS Austria), Nora Skaburskiene (SKVC)
Component 3	Marinka Drobnič-Košorok (University of Ljubljana). Annina Müller-Strassnig (AQ Austria), Vanja Perovšek (University of Ljubljana), Stefan Ludwig Weiermann (Mozarteum Salzburg)
Component 4	Achim Hopbach (AQ Austria), Dietlinde Kastelliz (AQ Austria), Almir Kovačević (WUS Austria), Alexander Kohler (BMWFW), Almantas Šerpatauskas (SKVC), Aurelija Valeikiene (SKVC), Agnes Witzani (AQ Austria)

Twinning Project Short-Term Experts

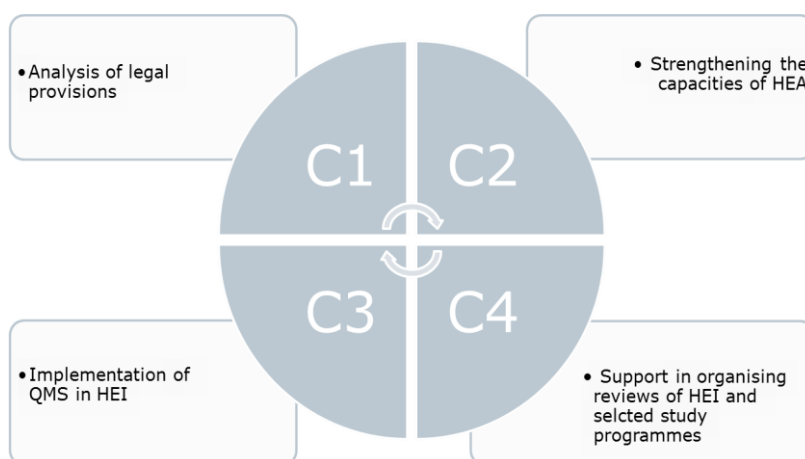
³ In the course of the concrete on-site implementation, the notion of quality analysis was translated into system-wide/thematic analysis.

⁴ The focus was laid on the criteria for institutional accreditation, hence HEA should follow up with the revision of criteria for study programme accreditation, using the same approach as for the institutional accreditation criteria.

Each of the four components consisted of a number of project activities of various kinds, such as on-site work of experts with HEA staff and management, providing advice on implementing good practice in the BiH context, workshops with HEA, HEIs, CEAs, study visits and internships in Austria. The activities were addressing HEA, all CEAs and all HEIs. All project activities were conceptualised in agreement with HEA and according to the working principles of twinning projects. It was additionally assumed that the project activities require a joint commitment of all involved in order to achieve sound results and create awareness on the need and responsibility for implementing quality assurance in line with the principles of the EHEA which is shared by the various stakeholders.

Therefore, each component and its corresponding activities implemented by various missions was following a comprehensive methodology. Each single mission in the BC or MS was starting with an in-depth analysis of the context and current situation of quality assurance in the country and drew attention to the needs and objectives to be addressed. Concrete goals/benchmarks were defined and a working method was agreed in detail. Every mission was closing with clear operational recommendations on follow-up measures to be taken. Subsequent activities were starting with an assessment of the follow-up since the prior activity.

The Twinning Project always considered the four components as being strongly interrelated. Activities, methods and expected outcomes were referring to each other. Therefore, the components were parts of the same complex matrix, in order to put a meaning on the notion of shared responsibility for quality assurance in higher education in BiH in line with the principles of the EHEA.



Twinning Project Components Interrelated

All achievements, results and outputs of the Twinning Project are the result of joint work between the partners. Hence, the Twinning Project has also identified challenges with regard to a sound implementation of quality assurance in higher education in BiH in line with the above mentioned principles.

In order to be able to issue recommendations, the experts involved assessed thoroughly the set expected outcomes against real project achievements. Thereafter, recommendations were outlined for each particular quality assurance stakeholder in higher education in BiH. The recommendations are addressing fields of action, which again follow the structure of the expected outcomes.

General achievements of the Twinning partnership

Based on the review of all activities and particular mission outcomes in detail, the experts highlight the following achievements:

1. A stronger **awareness of the importance of quality assurance** in line with the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was **raised** in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).
2. The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (**HEA**), competent education authorities (**CEAs**), public and private higher education institutions (**HEIs**) **benefited** from the Twinning partnership through **learning from European practice** in quality assurance.
3. **Core aspects of quality assurance were developed further** in accordance with European practice and in particular with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (**ESG**). This supported the first cycle of institutional accreditation.
4. The **different roles of HEA, CEAs and HEIs** with regard to implementing quality assurance were clarified.
5. **Organisational capacities of HEA** to fulfil its mission were enhanced.
6. **Knowledge and competences of HEA staff** were **increased** and **strengthened**.
7. **Formalised dialogue and co-operation** between stakeholders in higher education were supported.

General recommendations of the Twinning partnership

Based on the analysis of the achievements, the experts drew the following recommendations. The **relevant stakeholders** (HEA, HEIs, CEAs, MoCA) need to **assume their specific responsibilities** in a coordinated and consultative manner. They should make further efforts towards establishing a **consistent and well-functioning system for quality assurance in line with the FLHE and the ESG**.

Outcomes and recommendations from all activities that took place during the Twinning Project should be **incorporated** at various levels of responsibility in order to enhance the quality of higher education provision in BiH, which is a common concern. Detailed recommendations are laid down in all mission reports.

1. **HEA has a leading role** in further developing the system of quality assurance and needs to underpin this through employing effective activities, including the **provision of informed advice and expertise**, as well as **fulfilling its responsibilities** in external quality assurance processes. In order to fulfil this role, HEA needs to develop a coherent **organisational culture** with a common understanding of HEA's mission. This requires leadership, effective management of tasks, competent staff and consistent internal and external communication. All outcomes developed within the Project should be incorporated in HEA's operations, thus embedding the ESG. Undertaking these activities will also contribute to HEA's better fulfilment of the development of the higher education system generally in BiH.
2. **HEIs have the main responsibility** for the quality of their activities. Therefore, they need to continue working on **establishing and enhancing their internal quality assurance systems**, including appropriate structures and support mechanisms, with a view to creating a quality culture.
3. **CEAs are ultimately responsible for licensing** on the basis of HEA's recommendations and relevant documentation, **thus ensuring minimum standards**. In addition, they have to assume their **responsibilities in the accreditation**

processes which serve a different purpose by aiming at quality improvement. CEAs need to assume their tasks **in an effective and competent manner.**

4. **The MoCA** has a **crucial role in coordinating and supporting a consistent implementation of the FLHE** in order to foster the development of a coherent quality assurance system in BiH in line with European practice. The MoCA should thus regularly convoke the Conference of Ministers of Education, foster amending the FLHE in line with developments in the EHEA, including the recommendations from February 2014 based on HEA's initiative. Due to its role as the representative body of BiH in international higher education, it should support the exchange of information between the local and European levels.
5. **Internationally funded projects** play a significant role in supporting development in higher education in BiH. However, there is little coordination between different projects, both at the stage of their development and their actual implementation. Often they duplicate activities and in some cases also contradict each other. Therefore, **more coordination between funders needs to take place**, based on an assessment of actual needs and requirements.

Achievements and recommendations on the expected outcomes

Expected outcome: Legal provisions

(1) The provisions in laws, as well as procedures of the competent education authorities, related to the quality assurance of higher education were analysed.

Project achievements

An **analysis of the legal framework** was conducted at the beginning of the Project, based on an assessment of existing reviews and interviews with stakeholders (competent education authorities, higher education institutions). This analysis resulted in the following recommendations, which were publicly presented in February 2014.⁵ The *Analysis of Legal Provisions – Recommendation to Relevant Stakeholders (Recommendation to the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, February 2014)* provided a reference for all further activities (esp. dialogue between HEA and its stakeholders, specification of accreditation procedures and revision of accreditation criteria). This analysis led to various recommendations:

The **purpose of accreditation and licensing**, as well as the ultimate responsibilities, should be clarified. Article 48 and Article 49/subparagraph 6 of the FLHE should be amended accordingly.

The **relationship between CEAs and HEA** should be determined and described, with a specific attention to independence of any organisation carrying out external quality assurance. Accreditation procedures carried out by ministries cannot be recognised as being independent and are in conflict with the ESG (ESG 3.3).

Regulations and procedures for quality assurance should be harmonised in order to ensure consistency and coherence. The MoCA should take lead, assisted by HEA. (ESG 2.3)

⁵ See the full document issued in February 2014 in the annex enclosed.

The **leading role and the authority of HEA** given by Articles 47 to 51 of the FLHE should be strengthened. This includes that HEA pro-actively assumes assigned competences on the basis of consistent accreditation procedures, coherent communication and impartial decisions.

The **understanding of the purpose of accreditation** in line with the FLHE and the ESG was improved, especially through the implementation of accreditation procedures and the revision of institutional accreditation criteria.

HEA provided cantonal ministries (Sarajevo, Herzegovina Neretva, Central Bosnia, Zenica-Doboj, Una-Sana) with recommendations to **review cantonal accreditation rulebooks** in line with the FLHE, based on needs identified.

Recommendations

Since the progress was slow in following up the recommendations from February 2014, **HEA** should **proactively foster the consistent and effective implementation of recommendations** from this Twinning partnership by all addressed stakeholders (**CEA/HEI/MoCA**).

Formalised communication and dialogue (e.g. round tables, official meetings with minutes) between **HEA, CEAs, HEI** and the **MoCA** should take place on a regular basis, with the objective to further develop higher education and to implement external quality assurance in line with the FLHE (Articles 48 and 49), reflecting the principles of the EHEA and the ESG (ref. approved version May 2015, Yerevan).

CEAs should ensure that their **legal provisions and procedures for the accreditation** of institutions and study programmes **are in line with the FLHE and other applicable provisions**, and that they are applied consistently.

CEAs should ensure that **licensing** of new institutions and study programmes **and accreditation** of existing institutions and study programmes **are applied** in accordance with their distinctive purposes and that their consequences are evident.

CEAs should, by their legal provisions, define the **periodicity of accreditation** and stipulate the **consequences of the lack of accreditation** on the basis of the FLHE (ref. esp. ESG 2.2, 2.3).

Timeline for implementation

The **MoCA**, jointly with the CEAs and on the basis of the proposal by HEA, should **ensure the consolidation of legal provisions** at the BiH level and entity/cantonal levels and guarantee the compliance with rulebooks for accreditation, as well as with the ESG, **by the end of 2016**.

Expected outcome: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

(2) The ESG is the reference document for all levels (higher education institutions, competent education authorities and quality assurance agencies).

Project achievements

The **ESG** were guiding all activities of the Project, being a **core reference for quality assurance in higher education**. The revised ESG were taken into account at a very early stage, e.g. in the revision of institutional accreditation criteria. The ESG were distributed to all stakeholders in the local language.

HEA has prepared a draft for a **self-evaluation report** with a view to applying for membership in the ENQA, indicating shortcomings. Some of them have been overcome, other need to be further addressed.

Tailor-made **workshops with CEAs** were organised in order to present and to reflect European practice in the implementation of accreditation (e.g. selection and training of panel experts, preparation of expert panel reports). These meetings provided knowledge about the practical implementation of accreditation and raised awareness of barriers (e.g. challenges of a comprehensive accreditation process for all study programmes of a HEI).

A certain number of **CEAs** started with the **implementation of recommendations** issued during the workshops and activities conducted (e.g. revision of rulebooks by the ministries of Central Bosnia Canton and Una-Sana Canton).

The awareness that **HEIs** have the **primary responsibility for quality assurance** was raised, appreciating diverse approaches within a common framework.

Recommendations

HEA should **foster a common understanding of the nature of the ESG**, which do not prescribe how quality assurance processes are implemented, but rather provide guidance.

HEA should **discuss the findings** from the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) **with external stakeholders** concerned.

HEA and other relevant stakeholders should give **priority to work on those areas, where compliance with the ESG is still problematic** (e.g. CEAs have to develop further adequate procedures for the selection of expert panel members and demonstrate independent conduct of this procedural step.) (ESG 2.2, ESG 2.3, ESG 2.4, ESG 2.7, ESG 3.3).

HEA should subsequently **finalise the SER**.

Also in the future, **HEA** should use the SER as a **tool for monitoring and governance**.

HEIs should **review their internal quality management systems** against the revised ESG, in particular **ESG Part 1**.

Timeline for implementation

HEA should **finalise the SER** until the **end of 2015**. The self-evaluation exercise should be repeated on a periodic basis, at least once every five years (ESG 3.7).

HEIs should, by the **end of 2015**, **review their internal quality management** against the revised ESG (Part 1).

Expected outcome: Institutional accreditation in BiH

(3) The first cycle of **accreditation of all BiH higher education institutions** is done in accordance with the ESG.

(4) The accreditation criteria were revised.

Project achievements

A **dialogue with relevant stakeholders** on the implementation of accreditation and quality development took place through workshops and meetings on site.

A number of **CEAs** (Zenica-Doboj Canton, Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, Una-Sana Canton and Republika Srpska) have **gained experience in implementing institutional accreditation** procedures.

16 out of 47 licensed HEIs have completed the accreditation process since September 2013. All of them have been accredited and listed in the National Register for Accredited HEIs. 14 HEIs are in the process of accreditation.

HEA has gained experience in implementing accreditation procedures thereby identifying good practices and shortcomings. On this basis handbooks and guidelines addressing various steps in the accreditation process are at different stages of preparation (e.g. HEA Quality Manual, Expert Training Manual).

The **criteria for institutional accreditation were revised** in line with the (revised) ESG and in consultation with external stakeholders and are ready for adoption.

The **supporting guidelines** for criteria for institutional accreditation are **in the process of development**.

Recommendations

Those **HEIs** who have not yet undergone **accreditation** should **apply** for it. CEAs should inform HEIs about the consequences of not being accredited.

HEA should **put in force** the **manuals** that have been prepared (e.g. Expert Training Manual).

HEA should ensure the **participation of a staff member in site visits through agreements with CEAs**. This will ensure more consistency of the site visit procedures. In addition, this will enhance individual competences of HEA staff and also institutional capacity of HEA. Furthermore, it allows for HEA to have a better overview of the de facto situation on site, thus contributing to HEA's responsibility for developing the system further.

HEA should ensure that the **revised criteria** for institutional accreditation and supporting guidelines will be **adopted** by the HEA Steering Board and implemented thereafter.

HEA should further **develop** and finally **endorse the supporting guidelines for the revised institutional accreditation criteria**. The supporting guidelines and the criteria should be disseminated together.

Timeline for implementation

CEAs, HEA and **HEIs** should work towards the **finalisation of the first round of institutional accreditation** of the currently licensed HEIs by the **end of 2016**.

HEA and **CEAs** should agree on the **participation of HEA staff in site visits** until the **end of 2015**.

HEA manuals should be **presented to the HEA Steering Board** in **autumn 2015**.

The **revised criteria for institutional accreditation** should be **adopted** by the HEA Steering Board by October 2015, and the supporting guidelines for the institutional accreditation criteria should be drafted by the same date. They should be applied **from November 2015 onwards**.

Expected outcome: Study programme accreditation in BiH

(5) A selected number of study programmes in BiH are accredited in accordance with the ESG.
--

Project achievements

Upon invitation to all stakeholders, a series of **thematic workshops and on-site meetings** with **CEAs and MoCA** took place, with the aim to identify possible approaches to the implementation of programme accreditation. **HEA provided a proposal on how to start with the process of study programme accreditation**, indicating the steps to be taken by various stakeholders and the timeframe to be followed.

So far, **no programme accreditation procedures** have been carried out.

The **different purposes of study programme licensing and accreditation were clarified**. Licensing constitutes a permit to operate on the basis of statutory minimum criteria and accreditation is a quality assurance procedure with a comprehensive approach and it demonstrates the quality of a study programme and provides recommendations for enhancing the quality of the programme. A licensing process will always be followed by an accreditation process and not vice versa.

The **need for revision of study programme accreditation criteria** (developed with the support of the ESABIH Tempus Project) has been identified in light of the revised criteria for institutional accreditation and the revised ESG.

Recommendations

HEA should initiate the **revision of the study programme accreditation criteria and the drafting of supporting guidelines**, involving relevant stakeholders.

CEAs should **ensure that their legal provisions** allow for the **implementation of study programme accreditation**.

HEIs should **apply for study programme accreditation** once they have obtained institutional accreditation.

Timeline for implementation

The **criteria for study programme accreditation** should be **revised** and adopted; the supporting guidelines should be developed by the **end of 2015**. The revised criteria for study programme accreditation should be applied immediately thereafter.

Expected outcome: Thematic analyses

(6) After the first cycle of institutional accreditation a **thematic analysis**, with the purpose of issuing recommendations for the elimination of shortcomings in the quality of studies and higher education institutions, is conducted.

Project achievements

HEA developed a **concept**, including a methodology and topics, for conducting the **thematic analysis**⁶ for the review of expert panel reports.

The **analysis** of certain aspects of the submitted expert panel reports **was initiated**.

Recommendations

HEA should **analyse institutional accreditation procedures** on a permanent basis with regard to their findings about the quality of HEIs and their operational implementation. HEA should **use the findings for the improvement** of accreditation procedures.

HEA, in cooperation with **CEAs**, should **initiate thematic workshops** that address common shortcomings identified by the expert panels.

CEAs should thoroughly consider the expert panel reports and recommendations issued by HEA when **monitoring the implementation of action plans** by higher education institutions.

Timeline for implementation

The **thematic analysis of institutional accreditation** should be finalised by **mid of 2016** and the outcomes should be disseminated. Further topics for analysis should be defined in this context.

⁶ The revised ESG 3.4 refers to the notion of *thematic analysis*. According to this, agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Expected outcomes: Development, upgrading and implementation of internal quality management systems in higher education institutions in BiH

(7) 75% of 30 public and private higher education institutions, have **internal quality management systems developed, upgraded and in implementation**

Project achievements

16 HEI (55% of 30 HEIs) completed the process of **institutional accreditation**, which **proves that a quality management system is in place**. 14 HEIs are in the process of accreditation.

The understanding of the **complex role and responsibilities of QA coordinators** with regard to the internal quality management **was clarified** and broadened for the QA staff themselves.

Recommendations

HEA should organise **meetings and workshops with HEIs** in order to jointly reflect developments in the area of quality assurance in line with principles of the EHEA.

Expected outcomes: Strengthening institutional and HR capacities

(8) Institutional and HR capacities with regard to **quality assurance in higher education** in BiH have been strengthened.

Project achievements

A selected number of **HEA staff** took part in a two-week **internship at AQ Austria**.

A selected number of **HEA management, CEA staff members/ministers, staff from HEAARS and staff from HEIs** took part in a **study visit to Austria**. All activities conducted in Austria were aiming to provide possibilities for mutual learning about governance and operations of quality assurance (agency, HEI, ministry) in the spirit of the ESG.

During the Project, **HEA staff** gradually increased **their proactive involvement in all project activities**, which demonstrates the strengthening of their capacities and which results, among others, in the development of manuals, revision of criteria, etc.

Six **thematic workshops for all HEIs** in BiH about quality management in HEIs were organised, aiming at **strengthening the capacity of the QA coordinators** and developing a deeper understanding and critical reflection of diverse quality systems. The capacity of the participants was built by training relevant skills for their work (e.g. (self)reflection, communication, cooperation). The workshops provided concrete support for the further development of QA systems, as well as for building the trust between HEA staff and HEIs.

A **network of internal QA staff from HEIs** was **initiated** as a spin-off of the series of workshops conducted with this particular stakeholder group.

Recommendations

HEA should foster **staff development** through permitting and encouraging participation of **its staff in internships, projects and conferences**.

HEA should ensure that the **human resource capacities are used to the best possible extent**, using various existing assessment tools.

HEA, CEAs and **HEIs** should systematically **share knowledge from workshops, conferences and European projects**. They should reflect valuable practice in their own context and jointly engage in developing quality assurance in line with the ESG, by organising meetings, round tables and workshops.

CEAs should **assign sufficient and qualified staff** dealing with licensing and accreditation in higher education.

Cooperation and capacity building of **QA coordinators from HEIs** should be further supported and developed through their **network** which has been initiated within the scope of the Twinning Project.

Timeline for implementation

Institutional and HR capacities should be strengthened on a continuous basis.

Expected specific outcome for HEA: An internal quality system of HEA developed

Project achievements

The **HEA Quality Manual** on its internal quality management was **drafted**. The Quality Manual is a tool for quality management, but not a quality management system in itself.

The **HEA Quality Policy** expressing the **commitment of the HEA management** towards promotion of quality of higher education in BiH and constant development and improvement of HEAs' activities was drafted.

Recommendations

The **Quality Policy**, as well as the **Quality Manual**, should be **adopted** by the HEA management and **presented** to the HEA Steering Board, as well as **published** on the HEA website.

The managerial focus should be on assurance of **coherent implementation of processes on a day-to-day basis**. Regular monitoring, revision and improvement of processes are needed.

Timeline for implementation

The **Quality Policy and Quality Manual** should be **adopted** by HEA in the **autumn of 2015** and published on the HEA website.

Expected specific outcome for HEA: A system of strategic planning of HEA developed

Project achievements

A **review of the existing Development Strategy** was carried out with regard to its operationalisation.

The **development of the mid-term plan** was supported, with a specific focus on its applicability and ensuring that strategic objectives are measurable.

Approaches and tools for consistent external communication towards various stakeholders were further developed.

Recommendations

HEA should make its **strategy and the subsequent documents operational** by using the already existing tools, such as the mid-term plan, annual action plans, monitoring form, Quality Manual.

Evidence-based and expertise-driven management, as well as **strategic planning**, should be applied systematically. The HEA management should constantly **monitor** the implementation of the strategic plan and use the results for **enhancement of activities**. The existing resources should be made available for monitoring.

HEA should ensure that **communication towards different stakeholders becomes consistent** and moves away from individual provision of information. This can be done by i.e. organising round tables and workshops providing the same information to a larger group of stakeholders.

Timeline for implementation

HEA should mutually align different documents that concern external communication, such as the respective rulebooks and the Quality Manual by the **end of 2015**.

Expected specific outcome for HEA: Links with two similar agencies in the EU have been established

Project achievements

HEA has, through missions and workshops, **learned about the provisions and practice** for quality assurance **in several European countries**. Closer links were established with **AQ Austria** and **SKVC (Lithuania)**.

HEA staff and management, representatives from **CEAs** and **HEIs** participated in **study visits** and **internships** in Austria and worked on specific questions (e.g. operational implementation of accreditation procedures, performance of thematic analysis, internal quality management at HEIs, ministerial governance of quality assurance).

Recommendations

HEA should use its existing membership in agencies' networks to establish, by its own resources, **links with other QA agencies and to cooperate** on concrete themes with relevance for its own operations.

Timeline for implementation

HEA should prepare, **by the end of 2015**, a **plan for its international cooperation** by using participation in networks (CEENQA, ENQA, INQAAHE) and its current participation in different projects.

Annex 1 - Overview project deliverables

The Project deliverables are the following:

Deliverable	Comments
Analysis of Legal Provisions – Synthesis of Legal Provisions and Compilation of Existing Reviews (Report)	Published on HEA Website
Analysis against the ESG Part II / III and Selected Legal Frameworks for Quality Assurance (Conclusions on the workshops on ESG Part II and Part III) ⁷	Published on HEA Website
Analysis of Legal Provisions – Recommendations to Relevant Stakeholders (Recommendations to the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina)	Published on HEA Website
Concept and methodology for conducting thematic analysis	
Final Project recommendations to relevant stakeholders	Full set of experts recommendations addressing all relevant stakeholders. This document presents key recommendations intended for CEAs, MoCA and HEA that are extrapolated from the full set of expert recommendations addressing all relevant stakeholders.
Key recommendations	
Report on Study Visit to Vienna	
Deliverable	Comments
HEA Self-Evaluation Report – Pre-Final Draft	Pre-Final Draft, still not submitted to ENQA with the application for ENQA full membership.
HEA Mid-Term Work Plan	Draft document, still not adopted.
HEA Quality Manual	Draft document, still not adopted.
Revised Criteria for Accreditation of HEIs and supporting guidelines	Revised criteria underwent a public consultation procedure and the supporting guidelines are being developed by HEA, the documents are not approved by the HEA SB.
Individual Internship Reports	Participants of the first internship provided a joint report and the participants of the second internship provided individual reports.
Deliverable	Comments
Individual Study Visit Reports	Participant of both study visits provided their individual reports.
Deliverable	Comments
HEA Expert Training Manual and annexes	HEA Expert Training Manual and annexes are being developed, STEs and HEA staff have been working on them, the documents needs to be endorsed by the HEA SB.

Project deliverables as defined

⁷ The report was based on the ESG version before the revision in 2015.

Annex 2 - Analysis of Legal Provisions - Recommendations to Relevant Stakeholders (Recommendations to the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina)⁸

The recommendations ensuing from the analysis with regard to aligning regulations and practices with the Framework Law on Higher Education in BiH **were issued in February 2014**. That work on this first set of recommendations has included an in-depth analysis of the legal frameworks and the alignment with the ESG.

Analysis of legal documents

The external experts found that the Framework Law on Higher Education (FLHE) provides a good basis for the development of quality assurance and accreditation in line with the ESG. Articles 48 and 49 are a valuable step in creating a general system of accreditation for the whole country. In particular, good European practice is demonstrated by the two main responsibilities accorded by the FLHE to HEA.⁹ They are accreditation and development of higher education.

However, the analyses by the experts identified regulatory gaps in the FLHE relating in particular to the *implementation* of accreditation.¹⁰ This analysis shows that these gaps have been addressed in the higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks of the Republika Srpska, the cantons and the Brčko District. But these additional laws and regulations are in parts inconsistent and incoherent, thus creating substantial problems for all concerned in realising the intentions of the FLHE. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that in many cases these subsidiary regulations are not in line with the ESG.¹¹

In their consideration of the current external quality assurance arrangements in BiH, the experts identified the following **deficiencies** as most significant:

- There is generally a lack of understanding among stakeholders regarding the purposes of accreditation and the difference between accreditation and licensing.
- Roles and responsibilities within the accreditation system are not sufficiently well defined in Articles 48 and 49 of the FLHE. As a result, there is no common understanding of authority, roles, responsibilities and procedures.
- HEA has only partly fulfilled its responsibilities assigned by the FLHE.
- Very few accreditations of institutions and none of programmes have taken place.

These weaknesses bring serious **consequences** for BiH in both the national and international contexts:

- As the vast majority of higher education institutions have not yet been accredited, they cannot legally award qualifications.
- Qualifications obtained by graduates of non-accredited higher education institutions will not be legally recognized within BiH. As long as none of the higher education institutions had been accredited, this might not have been problematic in practice. However, since the first accreditations have now been completed, serious problems

⁸ The recommendation provided a reference for **all further activities** (esp. dialogue between HEA and its stakeholders, specification of accreditation procedures and revision of accreditation criteria), irregardless its formal adoption by relevant BiH authorities.

⁹ The competences of HEA are provided for in Article 48, 49 and 50 in the FLHE.

¹⁰ Kovačević, Adi/Baumann, Bastian/Nitsche, Veronika: Activity 1.1: Analysis of legal provisions – Synthesis of legal provisions and compilation of existing reviews (report).

¹¹ Kovačević, Adi/Findlay, Peter/Hopbach, Achim/Kastelliz, Dietlinde/Humer, Roland: Activity 1.2: Analysis against the ESG Part II / III and selected legal frameworks for quality assurance (conclusions on the workshops on ESG Part II and Part III).

concerning the recognition of graduates of non-accredited higher education institutions are predictable. Firstly, these graduates might not find employment opportunities in the public sector. Secondly, should these graduates gain employment, legal disputes might then arise as graduates from accredited higher education institutions could claim that only they should be eligible.

- There has now been considerable progress in implementing the Bologna Reforms in other countries in the region. The danger here is that BiH will fall further behind.
- This situation will also have a serious impact on the mobility of students, and on the reputation of BiH higher education institutions in Europe and the region.
- HEA is not likely to be recognised as a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)¹², and/or to be listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)¹³. Besides non-compliance with parts of the ESG, a further reason for this is HEA's lack of experience in carrying out accreditation.

Recommendations by the experts issued in February 2014:

Recommendation: Legal Provisions

(a) Framework Law on Higher Education

The most suitable and sustainable way to address the deficiencies identified above, and to support a common understanding and consistent practice in accreditation would be to clarify the relevant parts of the FLHE. This would then in turn require some revision of existing subsidiary higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks at the level of the Republika Srpska, the cantons and the Brčko District. The purpose of such a revision would be to improve the clarity and applicability in line with the ESG and common practice within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It should be noted that a transfer of competencies is not necessary to reach this aim.

Such revision should make clear that the ultimate responsibility for the whole accreditation process lies with HEA, in particular defining and carrying out the accreditation process. This would not exclude the possibility for other agencies to carry out accreditation processes under the overall responsibility of HEA. In addition, Article 47 should clarify the distinction between accreditation (evaluation of the quality of an institution or a programme against predefined standards and decision about the compliance) and licensing (permission to operate) by defining these processes. More specifically, the review and revision of Articles 48 and 49 of the FHLHE should seek to clarify the following points:

- Article 48: The list of stated competences of HEA should include "the carrying out of accreditation processes" (This is not intended necessarily to be an exclusive responsibility.)
- Article 49, subparagraph 6: An active verb should be included at the beginning of this sentence which makes it clear that in the area of accreditation HEA has the responsibility for overseeing and ensuring the consistency and quality of the processes and decisions whereas the competent education authorities have the sole responsibility for the licensing decision. It could then read e.g.:
- "(In the area of accreditation, the Agency shall be competent for) developing and conducting accreditation processes and deciding on accreditation,"

¹² ENQA: www.enqa.eu. In order to become a full member, agencies have to undergo an external review against the fulfillment of ENQA membership criteria.

¹³ EQAR: www.eqar.eu. According to the EQAR, quality assurance agencies, whether based in Europe or outside, that have demonstrated their substantial compliance with the ESG through an external review by independent experts can apply for inclusion on the Register.

- An additional subparagraph should be added after subparagraph 6:
 - “ensuring consistency of accreditation processes carried out in BiH,”.

Such amendments would then permit HEA to take responsibility for addressing the other identified areas for clarification.

Harmonisation of accreditation processes

Apart from desirable clarifications in the FLHE, it is highly advisable to immediately review and amend many of the higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks at the level of the Republika Srpska, the cantons and the Brčko District in order to fully realise the intentions and the spirit of the FLHE. The higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks need to be consistent with each other and with the FLHE in order to support a common understanding and a transparent accreditation system. Important areas for attention amongst others are:

Independence of accreditation processes and decisions

The ESG place a particular emphasis on the independence of the body carrying out quality assurance “*from higher education institutions, ministries and other stakeholders*” (ESG Standard 3.6).¹⁴ This independence from both institutions and political authorities relates to processes and decision-making. Consequently, HEA has been established with this standard in mind. However, currently competent education authorities play a decisive role in the accreditation processes, which is clearly in contradiction with the ESG. For example, it would be expected that the quality assurance agency autonomously selects the panel of experts. It follows that, as a priority, it needs to be determined and described that HEA conducts accreditation processes and decides upon accreditation and that the interests and activities of the competent education authorities cannot prejudice the independence of the accreditation processes and judgements. A failure to do this will impede any future European recognition of accreditation in BiH.

Mandatory nature and periodicity of accreditation

The mandatory nature of accreditation follows the stipulation that only accredited higher education institutions can legally award degrees. This needs to be clearly determined in the higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks at the level of the Republika Srpska, the cantons and the Brčko District. In accordance with the ESG, accreditation of institutions and programmes has to be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle must be clearly defined.

In order to achieve the above mentioned aim, HEA should make a proposal. Based on this proposal, the Ministry of Civil Affairs should take the lead in ensuring the harmonisation of the higher education laws and accreditation rulebooks at the level of the Republika Srpska, the cantons and the Brčko District.

Recommendation: Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA)

HEA must now take a strong lead in all areas that are within its remit in the FLHE. HEA must assume full authority and responsibility for leading on all aspects of accreditation, in a proactive manner, taking the initiative wherever necessary. In accordance with HEA’s remit

¹⁴ As of February 2014, the references have made to the valid ESG (www.enqa.eu/wp-content/.../ESG_3edition-2.pdf). In the revised ESG, approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in May 2015, ESG 3.3 Independence (www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/).

under the FLHE, this responsibility includes ensuring that all accreditation carried out in BiH fulfils the requirements of the ESG. To address the above priorities, HEA will need to:

- work on its internal structures, clarifying the relationships for governance, management and strategic planning, and in particular determine a clear role for the Steering Board,¹⁵
- develop a procedure for ensuring that accreditation decisions are taken in an independent and coherent manner,
- produce more user-friendly guidelines to support the accreditation processes,
- ensure good communication and co-operation with all stakeholders, namely higher education institutions, competent education authorities, HEAARS and other interested stakeholders, in particular students.

Taken together, these measures will support the wider recognition of HEA, and consequently of the national quality assurance system, at the European level.

It is important for action to be taken without delay on the most important points in these recommendations. Therefore, HEA should propose the necessary steps to ensure the introduction of accreditation processes in line with the above principles. This can be done on an ad hoc basis in order to remedy the most severe shortcomings, whilst not delaying any further the implementation of accreditation in BiH.

¹⁵ Article 51 of the FLHE refers to the notion "Governing Board". Since HEA always uses the notion "Steering Board", the experts will be using this term whenever the governing body of HEA is referred to.

Annex 3 – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

(Approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in May 2015)

Foreword

The *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005 following a proposal prepared by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in co-operation with the European Students' Union (ESU)¹⁶, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA). Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other Bologna action lines such as qualification frameworks, recognition and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes, all these contributing to a paradigm shift towards student-centred learning and teaching.

Given this changing context, in 2012 the Ministerial Communiqué invited the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE) in cooperation with Education International (EI), BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) to prepare an initial proposal for a revised ESG 'to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope'.

The revision included several consultation rounds involving both the key stakeholder organisations and ministries. The many comments, proposals and recommendations received have been carefully analysed and taken very seriously by the Steering Group (SG). They are reflected in the resulting proposal to the Bologna Follow-up Group. Moreover the proposal also reflects a consensus among all the organisations involved on how to take forward quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and, as such, provides a firm basis for successful implementation. Being confident that the revised version of the ESG will be useful and inspirational, we invite Ministers to adopt the proposal.

- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- European Students' Union (ESU)
- European University Association (EUA)
- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
- In cooperation with:
- Education International (EI)
- BUSINESSEUROPE
- European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

I. Context, scope, purposes and principles

Setting the context

Higher education, research and innovation play a crucial role in supporting social cohesion, economic growth and global competitiveness. Given the desire for European societies to become increasingly knowledge-based, higher education is an essential component of socio-economic and cultural development. At the same time, an increasing demand for skills and competences requires higher education to respond in new ways.

Broader access to higher education is an opportunity for higher education institutions to make use of increasingly diverse individual experiences. Responding to diversity and growing expectations for higher education requires a fundamental shift in its provision; it requires a more student-centred approach to learning and teaching, embracing flexible learning paths and recognising competences gained outside formal curricula. Higher education institutions themselves also become more diverse in their missions, mode of educational provision and cooperation, including growth of internationalisation, digital learning and new forms of

¹⁶ ESU was formerly known as ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe.

delivery.¹⁷ The role of quality assurance is crucial in supporting higher education systems and institutions in responding to these changes while ensuring the qualifications achieved by students and their experience of higher education remain at the forefront of institutional missions.

A key goal of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. They have played and will continue to play an important role in the development of national and institutional quality assurance systems across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and cross-border cooperation. Engagement with quality assurance processes, particularly the external ones, allows European higher education systems to demonstrate quality and increase transparency, thus helping to build mutual trust and better recognition of their qualifications, programmes and other provision.

The ESG are used by institutions and quality assurance agencies as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems in higher education. Moreover, they are used by the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), which is responsible for the register of quality assurance agencies that comply with the ESG.

Scope and Concepts

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG are not standards for quality, nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented, but they provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education. The ESG should be considered in a broader context that also includes qualifications frameworks, ECTS and diploma supplement that also contribute to promoting the transparency and mutual trust in higher education in the EHEA. Revised ESG approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, on 14-15 May 2015.

The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. In addition institutions have policies and processes to ensure and improve the quality of their other activities, such as research and governance.

The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery. Thus, the ESG are also applicable to all higher education including transnational and cross-border provision. **In this document the term “programme” refers to higher education in its broadest sense,** including that which is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree.

Higher education aims to fulfil multiple purposes; including preparing students for active citizenship, for their future careers (e.g. contributing to their employability), supporting their personal development, creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation¹⁸. Therefore, stakeholders, who may prioritise different purposes, can view quality in higher education differently and quality assurance needs to take into account these different perspectives. *Quality*, whilst not easy to define, is mainly a result of the interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose.

At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of *accountability* and *enhancement*. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement

¹⁷ Communication from the European Commission: Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources, COM(2013) 654 final, http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/doc/openingcom_en.pdf

¹⁸ Recommendation Rec (2007)6 by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on the public responsibility for higher education and research, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/News/pub_res_EN.pdf

are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a *quality culture* that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management. The term 'quality assurance' is used in this document to describe all activities within the continuous improvement cycle (i.e. assurance and enhancement activities).

Unless otherwise specified, in the document *stakeholders* are understood to cover all actors within an institution, including students and staff, as well as external stakeholders such as employers and external partners of an institution.

The word *institution* is used in the standards and guidelines to refer to higher education institutions. Depending on the institution's approach to quality assurance it can, however, refer to the institution as whole or to any actors within the institution.

ESG: purposes and principles

- The ESG have the following purposes:
- **They set a common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level;
- **They enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of higher education in the European higher education area;
- **They support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders;
- **They provide information on quality assurance** in the EHEA.

These purposes provide a framework within which the ESG may be used and implemented in different ways by different institutions, agencies and countries. The EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. This makes a single monolithic approach to quality and quality assurance in higher education inappropriate. Broad acceptance of all standards is a precondition for creating common understanding of quality assurance in Europe. For these reasons, the ESG need to be at a reasonably generic level in order to ensure that they are applicable to all forms of provision.

The ESG provide the criteria at European level against which quality assurance agencies and their activities are assessed¹⁹. This ensures that the quality assurance agencies in the EHEA adhere to the same set of principles and the processes and procedures are modelled to fit the purposes and requirements of their contexts.

The ESG are based on the following four principles for quality assurance in the EHEA:

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

II. European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education

The standards for quality assurance have been divided into three parts:

- Internal quality assurance
- External quality assurance
- Quality assurance agencies

It should be kept in mind, however, that the three parts are intrinsically interlinked and together form the basis for a European quality assurance framework. External quality assurance in Part 2 recognises the standards for internal quality assurance in Part 1 thus ensuring that the internal work undertaken by institutions is directly relevant to any external quality assurance that they undergo. In the same way Part 3 refers to Part 2. Thus, these three parts work on a

¹⁹ Agencies that apply for inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) undergo an external review for which the ESG provide the criteria. Also the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) relies on compliance with the ESG when it comes to granting quality assurance agencies full membership status in the organisation.

complementary basis in higher education institutions as well as in agencies and also work on the understanding that other stakeholders contribute to the framework. As a consequence, the three parts should be read as a whole.

The standards set out agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education in the EHEA and should, therefore, be taken account of and adhered to by those concerned, in all types of higher education provision.²⁰ The summary list of standards for quality assurance is placed in the annex for easy reference.

The *guidelines* explain why the standard is important and describe how standards might be implemented. They set out good practice in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved in quality assurance. Implementation will vary depending on different contexts.

Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standard:

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Guidelines:

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. Such a policy supports

- the organisation of the quality assurance system;
- departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;
- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;
- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;
- the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.

The quality assurance policy also covers any elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Standard:

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

²⁰ The standards make use of the common English usage of "should" which has the connotation of prescription and compliance.

Guidelines:

Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Programmes

- are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;
- benefit from external expertise and reference points;
- reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts);
- are designed so that they enable smooth student progression;
- define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;
- include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;²¹
- are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

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

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

²¹ Placements include traineeships, internships and other periods of the programme that are not spent in the institution but that allow the student to gain experience in an area related to their studies.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Standard:

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Guidelines:

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.

It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.

Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on

- institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

1.5 Teaching staff

Standard:

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Guidelines:

The teacher's role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3).

Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. Such an environment

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching;
- offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff;
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;
- encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Standard:

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Guidelines:

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

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.

1.8 Public information**Standard:**

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Guidelines:

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

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

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme.

Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Guidelines:

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. They include the evaluation of:

- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;
- The changing needs of society;
- The students' workload, progression and completion;
- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;
- The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;
- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Standard:

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Guidelines:

External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.

Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).

Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Part 2: Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Guidelines:

In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders.

The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes will

- bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions;
- take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality;
- allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement;
- result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.

The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.

2.3 Implementing processes

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- **a self-assessment or equivalent;**
- **an external assessment normally including a site visit;**
- **a report resulting from the external assessment;**
- **a consistent follow-up.**

Guidelines:

External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact.

Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material including supporting evidence. The written documentation is normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit. The findings of the assessment are summarised in a report (cf. Standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).

External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.

2.4 Peer-review experts

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

Guidelines:

At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.

In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they

- are carefully selected;
- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.

The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest.

The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Guidelines:

External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.

In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on pre-defined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based. Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes may take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.

2.6 Reporting

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Guidelines:

The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution. In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover

- context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context);
- description of the individual procedure, including experts involved;
- evidence, analysis and findings;
- conclusions;
- features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution;
- recommendations for follow-up action.

The preparation of a summary report may be useful.

The factual accuracy of a report is improved if the institution is given the opportunity to point out errors of fact before the report is finalised.

2.7 Complaints and appeals

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Guidelines:

In order to safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance is operated in an open and accountable way. Nevertheless, there may be misapprehensions or instances of dissatisfaction about the process or formal outcomes. Institutions need to have access to processes that allow them to raise issues of concern with the agency; the agencies, need to handle such issues in a professional way by means of a clearly defined process that is consistently applied.

A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.

In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.

Part 3: Standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Guidelines:

To ensure the meaningfulness of external quality assurance, it is important that institutions and the public trust agencies.

Therefore, the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published along with the nature of interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the scope of the agencies' work. The expertise in the agency may be increased by including international members in agency committees.

A variety of external quality assurance activities are carried out by agencies to achieve different objectives. Among them are evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities at programme or institutional level that may be carried out differently. When the agencies also carry out other activities, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and their other fields of work is needed.

3.2 Official status

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Guidelines:

In particular when external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions need to have the security that the outcomes of this process are accepted within their higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public.

3.3 Independence

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Guidelines:

Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts. In considering the independence of an agency the following are important:

- Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations;
- Operational independence: the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertaken independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders;

- Independence of formal outcomes: while experts from relevant stakeholder backgrounds, particularly students, take part in quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of an agency (e.g. as expert) is informed that while they may be nominated by a third party, they are acting in a personal capacity and not representing their constituent organisations when working for the agency. Independence is important to ensure that any procedures and decisions are solely based on expertise.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Standard:
Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Guidelines:

In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.

A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.

3.5 Resources

Standard:
Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Guidelines:

It is in the public interest that agencies are adequately and appropriately funded, given higher education's important impact on the development of societies and individuals. The resources of the agencies enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, the resources enable the agencies to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard:
Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Guidelines:

Agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable. The review and improvement of their activities are on-going so as to ensure that their services to institutions and society are optimal. Agencies apply an internal quality assurance policy which is available on its website. This policy

- ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;
- includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;
- guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;
- outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;
- ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;

- allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Guidelines:

A periodic external review will help the agency to reflect on its policies and activities. It provides a means for assuring the agency and its stakeholders that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.

III. Annex: Summary list of standards

Part 1: Standards for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.²²

1.2 Design and approval of programmes²³

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

1.7 Information management

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

1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

²² Unless otherwise specified, in the document stakeholders are understood to cover all actors within an institution, including students and staff, as well as external stakeholders such as employers and external partners of an institution.

²³ The term "programme" in these standards refers to higher education provision in its broadest sense, including provision that is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Part 2: Standards for external quality assurance

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

2.4 Peer-review experts

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2.6 Reporting

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2.7 Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Part 3: Standards for quality assurance agencies

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

3.2 Official status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

3.3 Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

3.5 Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Annex 4 - Relevant legal provisions concerning quality assurance in BiH

Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH OG Nos. 59/07 and 59/09

4. Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance

Article 47

Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (hereinafter: the Agency) shall be established by this Law. The Agency is an autonomous administrative organisation.

Article 48

The Agency shall be competent to:

- set clear, transparent and accessible criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions and adoption of norms setting minimum standards in the field of higher education,
- determine criteria for selection of domestic and international experts to provide assessment and conduct quality reviews and give recommendation on accreditation of higher education institutions,
- give recommendations on criteria and standards to the ministry of Republika Srpska, cantonal ministries and the Brcko District BiH, for establishment or termination of higher education institutions and for restructuring of programmes of study,
- give recommendations on criteria for licensing of higher education institutions and programmes of study,
- give recommendations on the lowest fees for all students at higher education institutions, aiming at securing that the lowest fees are harmonised throughout BiH;
- give recommendation to the ministry of Republika Srpska, cantonal ministries and the Brcko District BiH, on work and development policy;
- provide advice and information on issues within its competence to all parties concerned,
- set quality standards, quality analyses, give recommendations for removal of shortcomings in the quality of studies and higher education institutions,
- represent Bosnia and Herzegovina in international organisations for quality in higher education,
- propose general guidelines and criteria based on which funds from the budget of the institutions of BiH may be allocated to higher education institutions for the purpose of scientific research.

4.1 Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions

Article 49

In the area of accreditation, the Agency shall be competent for:

- publishing a public competition for election of domestic and international experts for quality assessment and audit and giving recommendations on accreditation of higher education institutions, i.e. their programmes of study (hereinafter: the experts),
- establishing committees for determining a list of experts who meet the criteria referred to in Article 48, subparagraph 2, of this Law: the committee shall have five members, of whom one is a representative of the Rectors' Conference, one cantonal ministry, the ministry of Republika Srpska, the Brcko District BiH, and one representative of the Agency,
- submission of the set list of experts for adoption by all the ministries of education in BiH
- and the competent department of the Brcko District BiH,

- appointment of a committee of experts, on the basis of a proposal by the competent education authorities in relation to selection of experts from the set list of experts,
- giving recommendations to competent education authorities on accreditation of a higher education institution, i.e. a programme of study, on the basis of the opinion of the committee of experts,
- procedure and decision on accreditation and licensing of higher education institutions issued by the ministry of Republika Srpska, cantonal ministries and the Brcko District BiH, in compliance with Article 48, subparagraph 1, of this Law,
- assessment of harmonisation of decisions on accreditation with norms and criteria set by article 48, subparagraph 1, of this Law and, in case of lack of harmonisation found, giving recommendation to the Governing Board to take further measures, up to the measure of annulling the accreditation decision; such a decision on annulment of an accreditation decision may be appealed by the competent education authorities before the Governing Board of the Agency,
- maintaining a state register of accredited higher education institutions,
- permanent access, through its web site, to a list of accredited higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its publication in the Official Gazette of BiH no less than once per year, and no less than twice per year in three widely distributed daily newspapers.

4.2 Format and General Content of Diploma and Diploma Supplement

Article 50

The Agency shall issue an instruction on the format and general content of Diploma and Diploma Supplement issued by accredited higher education institutions.

4.3 Statute and Bodies of the Agency

Article 51

- The work of the Agency shall be regulated by its statute.
- The Council of Ministers shall give agreement to the statute of the licensing and accreditation agency.
- The Agency for Development of Higher Education shall be managed by a director.
- The director and his/her deputies shall be appointed by the Council of Ministers of BiH, following a public competition procedure.
- The term of office of the director and his deputies is four years.
- The director and deputy directors may not be from the same constituent people.
- The Agency shall be governed by a Governing Board, comprising ten (10) members.
- The Governing Board shall comprise three members from each constituent people, and one representing others.
- Members of the Governing Board of the Agency shall be elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH for a term of office of three years, with a possibility of re-election, provided that initial appointment is in stages, so that each year only one third of the members comes up for election or re-election.

The Governing Board shall decide by majority vote of the total number of members, provided that such a majority includes at least two thirds of votes by representatives of each constituent people. The Governing Board shall comprise no less than 50% full university professors.

4.4 Financing of the Agency

Article 52

The Agency shall be financed from the budget of the institutions of BiH.

Relevant legal provisions concerning quality assurance – referring to the FLHE BiH:

- Republika Srpska Law on Higher Education, RS OG Nos. 73/10, 104/11 and 84/12
- Brčko District Law on Higher Education, BDBiH OG, No. 30/09
- Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde Law on Higher Education, BPC OG No. 2/10
- Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Law on Higher Education, HNC OG No. 4/12
- Central Bosnia Canton Law on Higher Education, CBC OG No. 4/13
- Posavina Canton Law on Higher Education, PC OG No. 1/10
- Sarajevo Canton Law on Higher Education – Consolidated Text, SC OG No. 22/10
- Tuzla Canton Law on Higher Education, TC OG Nos. 8/08, 12/09 and 13/12
- Una-Sana Canton Law on Higher Education, USC OG No. 8/09
- West Herzegovina Canton Law on Higher Education, WHC OG No. 10/09
- Zenica-Doboj Canton Law on Higher Education, ZDC OG No. 6/09
- Herzeg-Bosnia Canton Law on Higher Education, HBC OG 9/09

Rulebooks on accreditation:

- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (CBC OG 6/14 i 14/14)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (NC OG 4/14)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (LC OG 2/13)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (SC OG 26/13)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (TC OG 18/13 i 9/14)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (USC OG 17/14)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions in Zenica Doboj canton (ZDC OG 4/12 i 13/13)
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions (Adopted at HEARS Steering Board on 29/06/2012 and entered into force on the day of adoption)

Annex 5 – Relevant links

	Link
AEI	www.aei.at/home/
AQ Austria	www.aq.ac.at
EUD to BiH	europa.ba
EU Twinning	ec.europa.eu/enlargement/tenders/twinning/index_en.htm
EHEA	www.ehea.info/
ENQA	www.enqa.eu/
ESG	www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/
EQAR	www.eqar.eu/
HEA	www.hea.gov.ba/
MoCA	www.mcp.gov.ba

Relevant Links

Annex 6 - Glossary of acronyms

	Acronym
Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions of the Republika Srpska	HEAARS
Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of BiH	HEA
Agency for European Integration and Economic Development	AEI
Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Austria	AQ Austria
Beneficiary Country	BC
Bosnia and Herzegovina	BiH
Central Eastern European Network for Quality Assurance	CEENQA
Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education of Lithuania	SKVC
Competent education authority	CEA
Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina	EUD
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	ENQA
European Higher Education Area	EHEA
European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education	EQAR
European Union	EU
Expert Training Manual	ETM
Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina	FLHE
Higher education institution	HEI
International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education	INQAAHE
Mandatory results	MR
Member State	MS
Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina	MoCA
Ministry of Science, Research and Economy of Austria	BMFWF
Project Advisory Board	PAB
Project Leader	PL
Project Steering Committee	PSC
Quality assurance	QA
Quality management system	QMS
Quality Manual	QM
Quality Policy	QP
Resident Twinning Advisor	RTA
Self-Evaluation Report	SER
Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area	ESG

Glossary of acronyms