

Shaping or sharing? QA in a value – driven EHEA



*Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara
17 – 19 noiembrie 2022*

Cristina Ghițulică
Director General ARACIS
Vice-president ENQA



Ana Gvritishvili
Executive Committee Member



Meaningful involvement of students in Quality Assurance

CONTENT

1. Context
2. Status of students' involvement in quality assurance processes
3. Recommendations for meaningful involvement of students in the quality assurance processes
4. Conclusions

The fundamental values of higher education

- institutional autonomy
- academic freedom
- academic integrity
- participation of students and staff in higher education governance
- public responsibility for higher education
- public responsibility of higher education

The ESG and stakeholders involvement

- 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 (SH)**.



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 ESG and stakeholders involvement

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.**

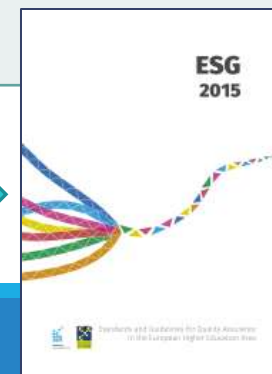


The ESG and stakeholders involvement

Internal stakeholders		External stakeholders	
Internal stakeholders (1.1)	Students (1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.4, 3.3), staff (1.7)	External stakeholders (1.1), external partners (2.6)	Graduates (1.8)
Stakeholders (1.2, 1.8, 1.9, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)		Stakeholders (1.2, 1.8, 1.9, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)	
All those concerned (1.9)		Public (1.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5)	
Academic community (2.6), HE system (3.2)		All those concerned (1.9), third party (3.3)	
HEI (3.1, 3.3)		Interested individuals (2.6)	
		Society (2.6)	
		Institutions (3.1, 3.2)	
		Competent public authorities (3.2, 3.6), state (3.2), governments (3.3)	

Students are mentioned in 6 standards
Stakeholders are mentioned in 15 standards

TOTAL 24 standards



The ESG and stakeholders involvement

- 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 innovation.

⇒ *Stakeholders, who may prioritise different purposes, can view quality in higher education differently and quality assurance needs to take into account these different perspectives.*



Value of Students' Involvement in QA

- Students are experts of their own learning and crucial stakeholders
- Democracy: people should have a say on policies that affect them
- Students become active citizens
- Students are constructive partners
- Develop students' understanding of the HE system
- Develop autonomy and responsibility skills

Students should have control and agency over their learning

- Students have the right to be involved in the design of courses, curricula and their evaluation.
- Students should be seen as active partners who have a stake in the way that higher education functions.
- It is essential to engage students in how their learning is shaped in order to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and a quality system is developed.



ESQA

Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities

CONSORTIUM

APPLICANT

1. Ministry of Education and Research Romania (MoER)

PARTNERS – STAKEHOLDERS ORGANIZATIONS

2. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
3. European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
4. **European Students' Union (ESU)**

PARTNERS - QAA

5. **Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)**
6. The Danish Accreditation Institution (DAI)
7. High Council for the evaluation of Research and Higher education (HCERES) France
8. National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) Bulgaria
9. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) Moldova

CALL

Erasmus+ - KA3 – Support to Policy Reform
Invitation to submit: EACEA/35/2018

"Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms - 2018-2020"

STRAND 1: Support to the activities related to the Bologna Peer Groups

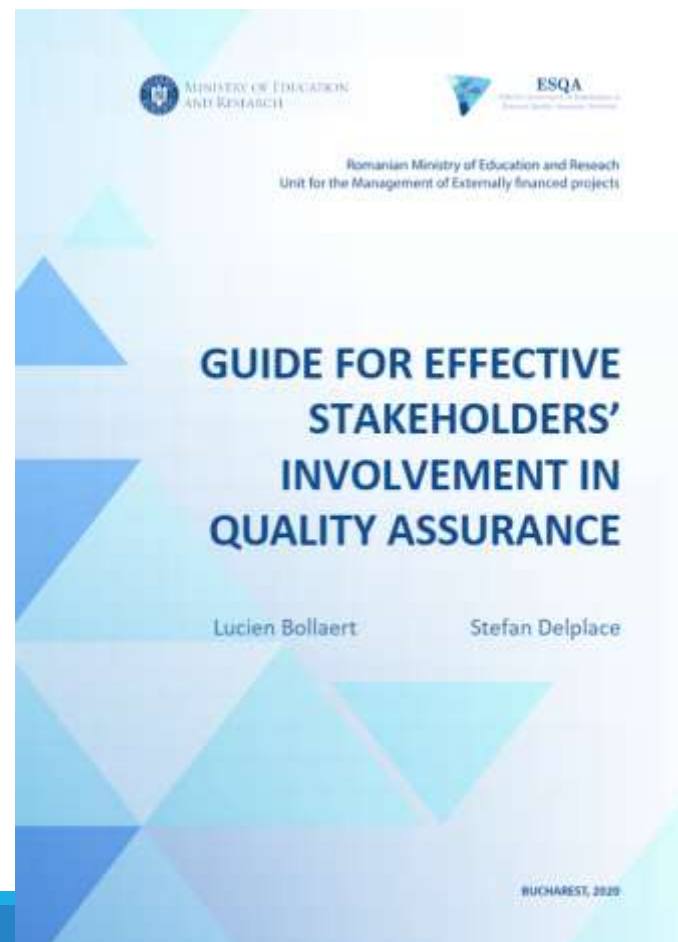
EU grant: 181,028.8 EURO
24 months
(starting 14 June 2018)

<https://esqa.ro>

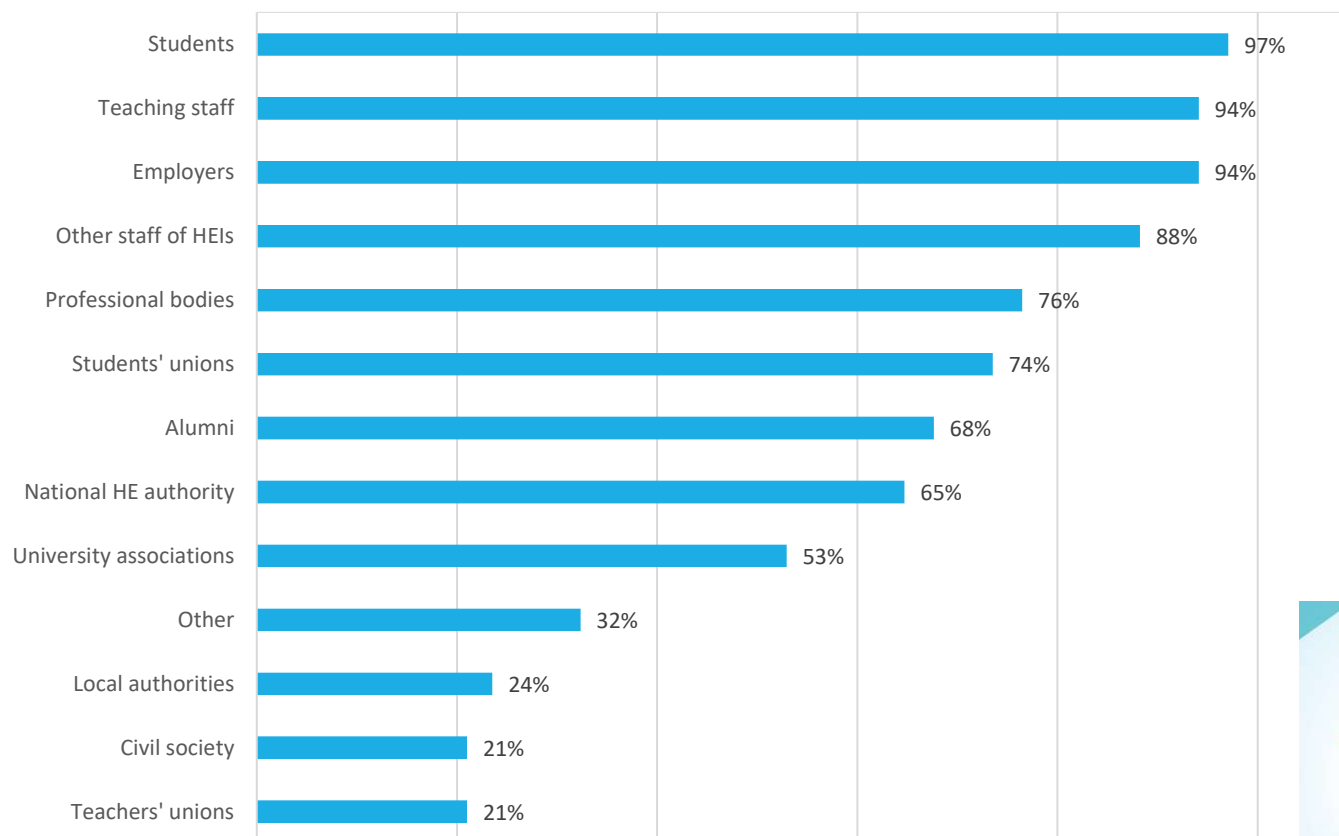


ESQA

Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



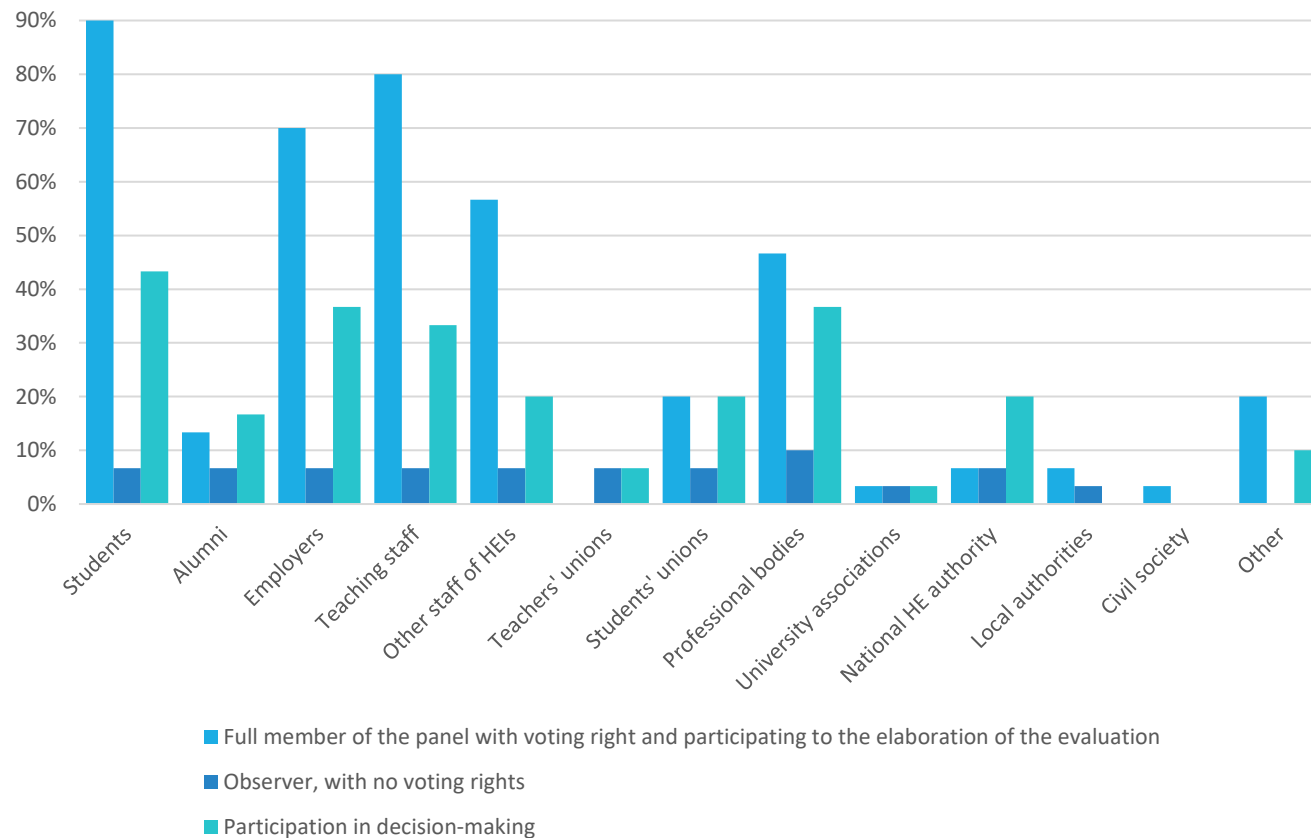
Q5: What categories of stakeholders does your agency involve in external QA processes and activities? Check all that apply. (N=34)



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



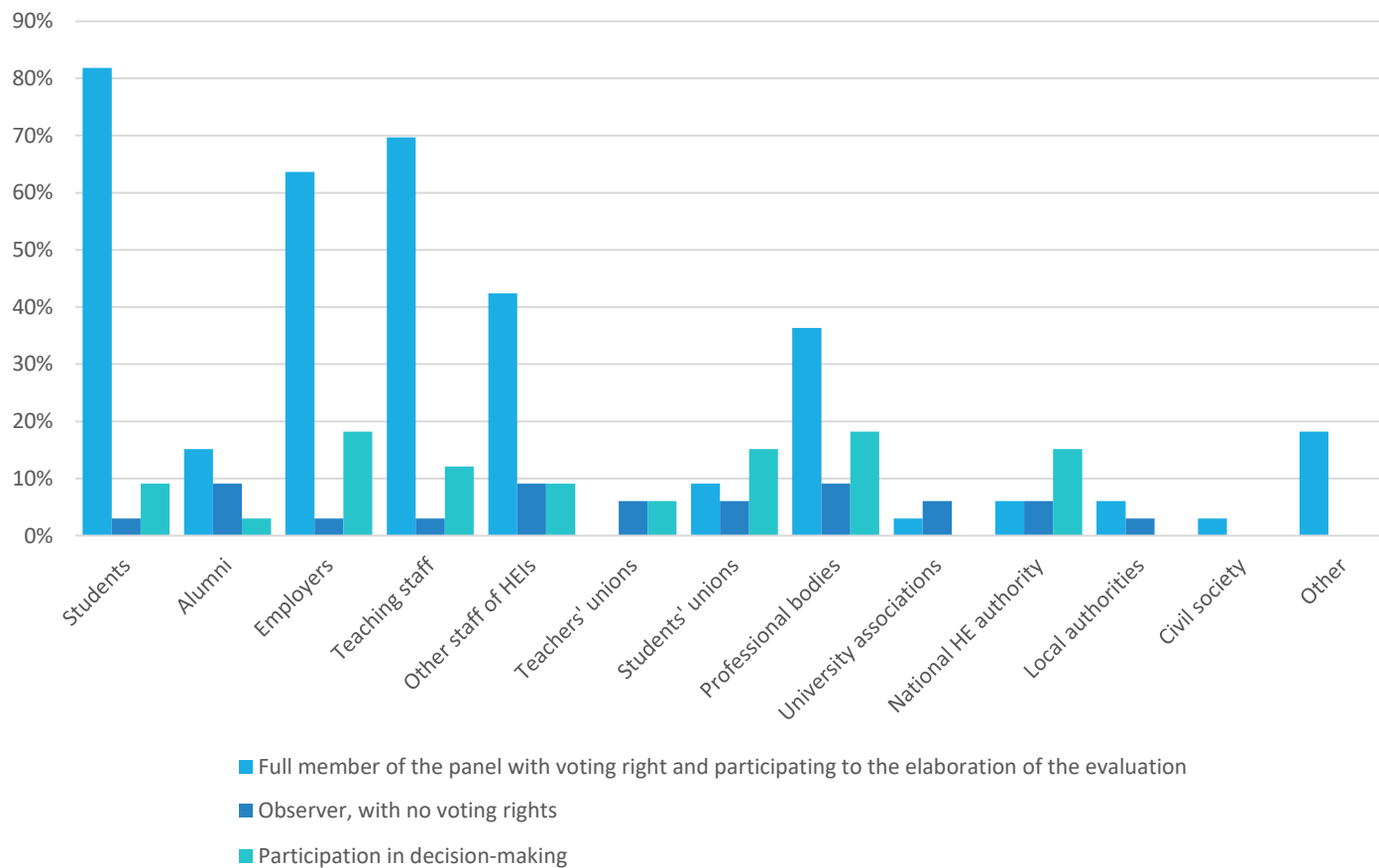
Q8: How are stakeholders involved in the assessment of institutions? Please check all that apply. (N=30)



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



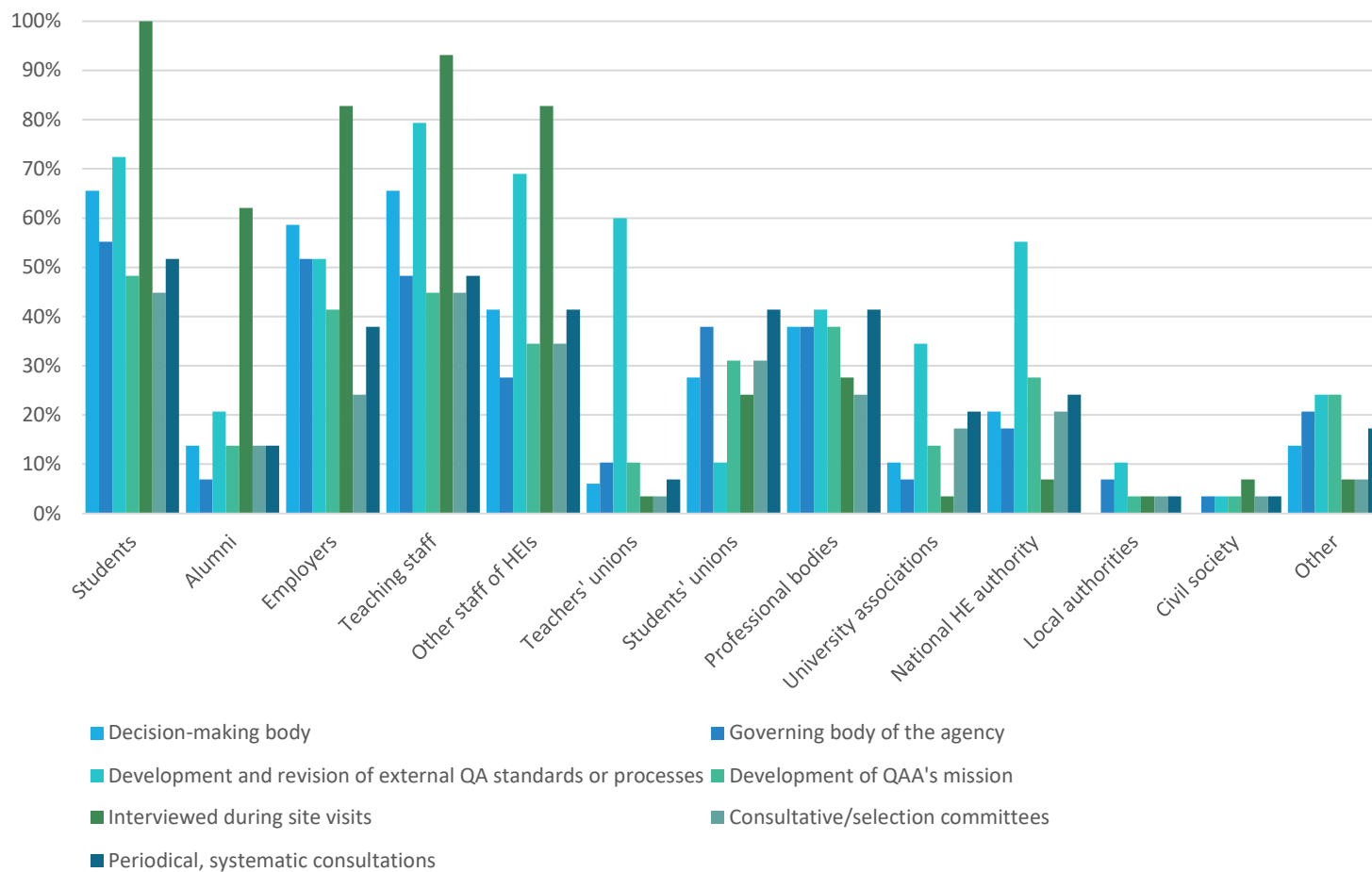
Q11: How are stakeholders involved in the assessment of study programmes? Please check all that apply. (N=33)



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



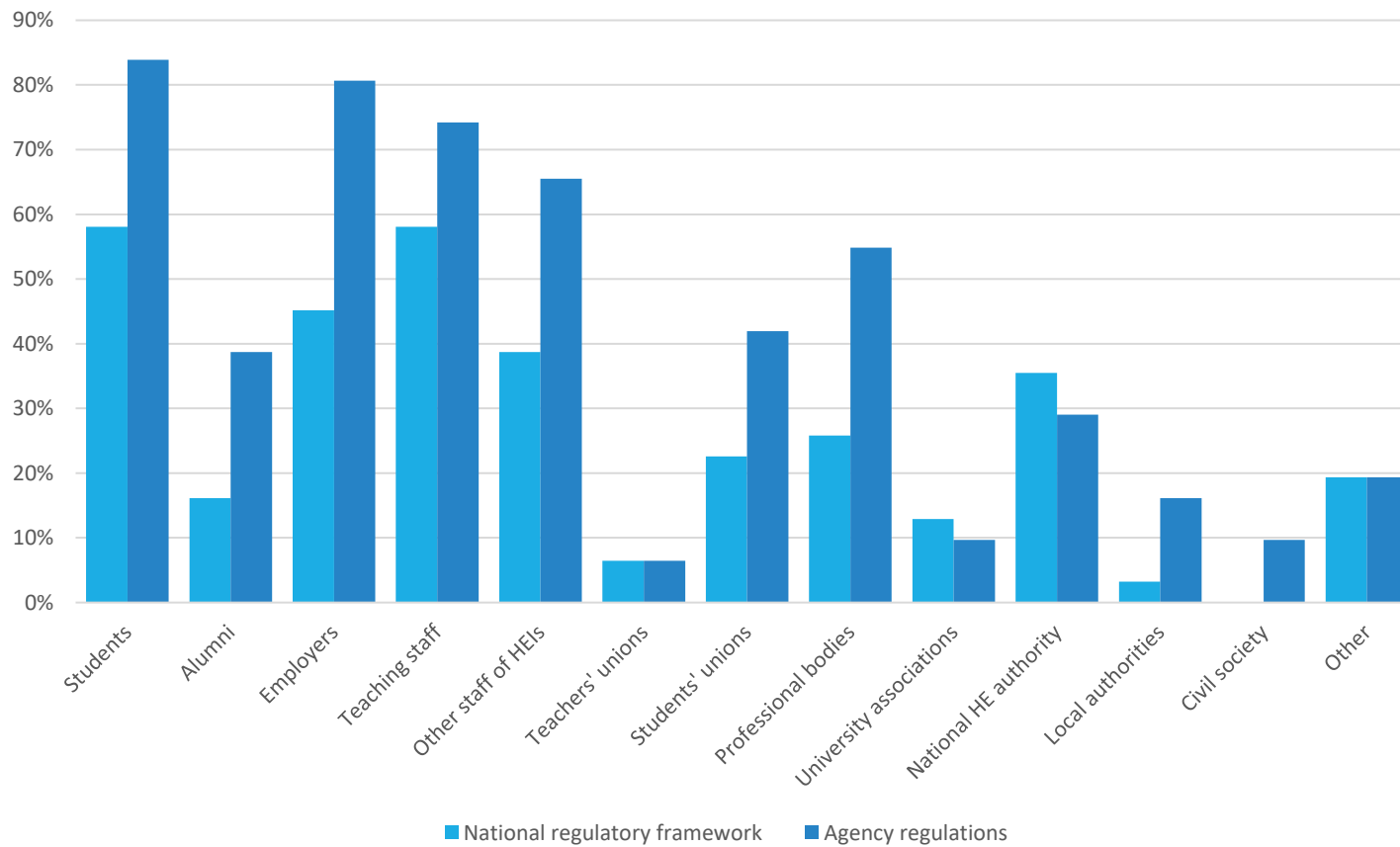
Q12: Which groups of stakeholders are involved in the different type of quality assurance activities? Check all that apply in each column. (N=29)



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



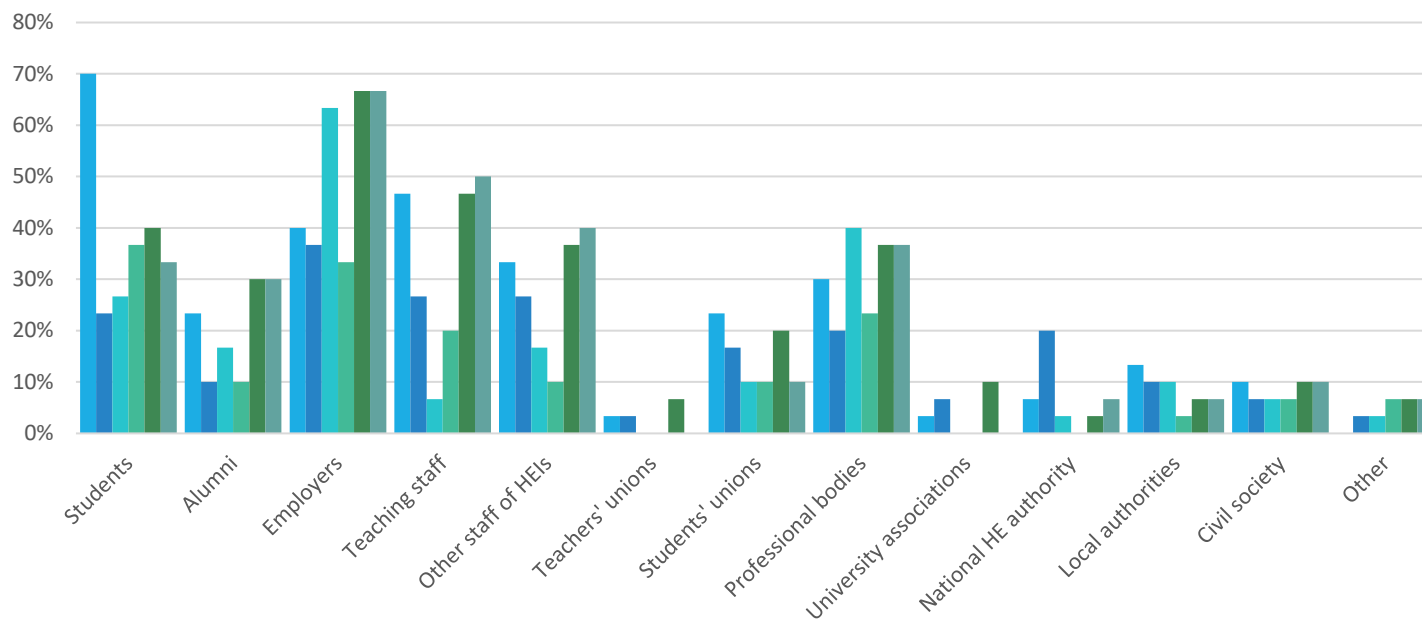
Q14: Is the involvement of stakeholders regulated in the national legislative/regulatory framework or at the level of the agency? Please check all that apply. (N=31)



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



Q25: In your opinion, what are the main barriers for effective stakeholder involvement in external QA? Please check all that apply. (N=30)



- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in QA
- Differences in perceptions of quality by different stakeholders
- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in higher education teaching and learning process
- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in higher education management or administration
- Lack of interest or motivation to be involved
- Lack of time and/or financial motivation

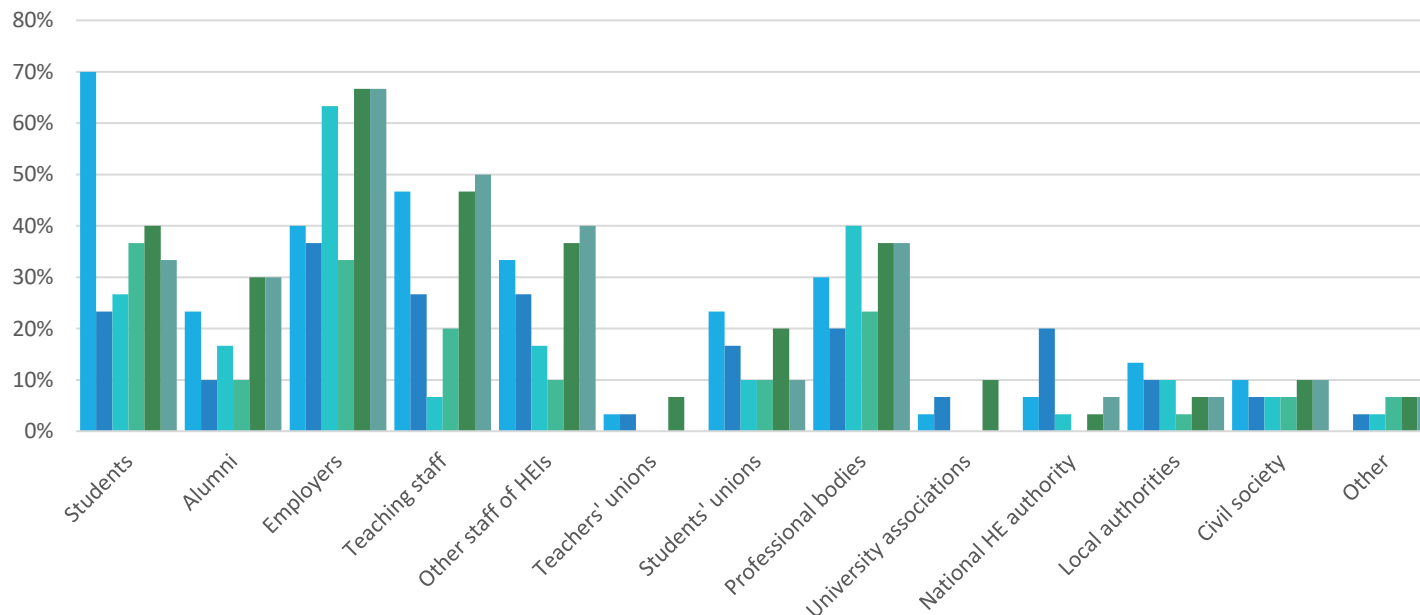


ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



According to your NUS:

Q25: In your opinion, what are the main barriers for effective stakeholder involvement in external QA? Please check all that apply. (N=30)



- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in QA
- Differences in perceptions of quality by different stakeholders
- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in higher education teaching and learning process
- Lack of sufficient knowledge or experience in higher education management or administration
- Lack of interest or motivation to be involved
- Lack of time and/or financial motivation



ESQA
Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities



What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

Valuing Student Participation and ensuring their engagement

- Experience shows that mostly students are treated as “information providers” and not as active members of the academic community in QA processes.
- HEIs need to create a culture within the university where students' voice is valued and they are seen as peers within the academic community. This takes into consideration formation of the attitude among administrative and academic staff.

What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

More Face to Face meetings and active interaction

- Exchanging ideas in person helps to get more meaningful feedback from students and develop an attitude between the HEI and students which is based on trust.

What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

Giving Constant Feedback and impactful follow-up

- Giving feedback regarding the survey results or discussed matters, as well as transparently presenting impactful follow-up decisions taken based on the students' suggestions will help to gain their trust and show that their opinion matters for Higher Education institutions. Also, such an approach will raise the students' involvement in future QA processes.

What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

Explaining the goal and the advantages

- HEIs should provide an explanation of the main aim of the students' involvement in the QA processes, as well as show the importance of their opinion.

What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

Development of a QA Culture

- The more developed are the QA culture and processes in the country, the more students' involvement in all processes is more active, valuable and meaningful.
- However, formation of a strong QA culture requires time, effort and capacity from the country and the institution itself.

What are the mechanisms to support students' active and meaningful involvement in QA processes

Student itself support involvement of other students

- Strong student voice; asking them to spread the information among fellows is also one of the mechanisms of students' meaningful involvement in QA processes. Therefore, increasing students' capacity and educating them on international best practices for student participation in any QA or governing processes will lead to their valuable and active involvement.

Listen, talk and team up! Effective Communication in External Quality Assurance



For whom?

For QA reviewers of all involved stakeholder groups from all levels of experience

By whom?

Multiple stakeholder project (QA agency representatives, QA and Higher Education professionals, academics and student representatives)

What?

Collection of shared considerations in regard to communication in external quality assurance

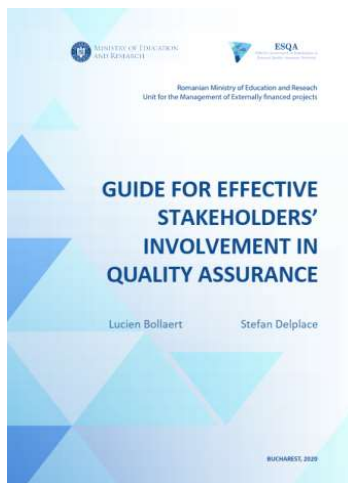
Join the workshop: Sat., 9:30 -11:15 am, room 601



ESQA

Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities

- Effective stakeholder involvement is defined as **stakeholder involvement that has a positive impact on the quality of HE.**
- The Guide give generic **inspiring guidelines and guiding elements** towards the realisation of effective stakeholder involvement.
- The Guide is informed by the **ESQA Study**, other surveys and research as well as practical experience.
- The Guide primarily addresses the **QA agencies and national authorities**, but it may also be inspiring to all stakeholders and outside the EHEA.
- The Guide mainly deals with **External QA.**





ESQA

Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities

Introduction: scope, objective, concepts, methodology and structure

Theme 1: Sharing **underlying concepts** of quality in HE and QA systems

Theme 2: Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their **different roles**, especially in consultations

Theme 3: **Objectives** of stakeholders' involvement

Theme 4: **Recruitment/Selection** of stakeholders

Theme 5: **Training** of stakeholders

Theme 6: Involvement of stakeholders in **reviews**

Theme 7: Involvement of stakeholders in the **governance and organisation** of QA agencies

Theme 8: **Independence** vis-à-vis stakeholders' involvement

Theme 9: **Communication** and transparency towards stakeholders

Theme 10: **Strategic** approach to stakeholders' engagement and supporting activities

Phase identification tool

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
PART I: INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 The ESQA project	6
1.2 Scope, objective and coverage of the Supply	6
1.3 Methodology and structure	8
PART II: GUIDELINES	10
2.1 Theme 1: Sharing underlying concepts of quality in HE and QA systems	11
2.2 Theme 2: Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations	22
2.3 Theme 3: Objectives of stakeholders' involvement	24
2.4 Theme 4: Recruitment/Selection of stakeholders	26
2.5 Theme 5: Training of stakeholders	27
2.6 Theme 6: Involvement of stakeholders in reviews	29
2.7 Theme 7: Involvement of stakeholders in the governance and organisation of QA agencies	30
2.8 Theme 8: Independence vis-à-vis stakeholders' involvement	22
2.9 Theme 9: Communication and transparency towards stakeholders	29
2.10 Theme 10: Strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and supporting activities	25
PART III: SUMMING UP	27
3.1 Final observations	28
3.2 List of guidelines	29
3.3 Epilogue	31
ANNEXES	32
A.1 List of acronyms and abbreviations used	33
A.2 Short CV of authors	34



ESQA

Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
External Quality Assurance Activities

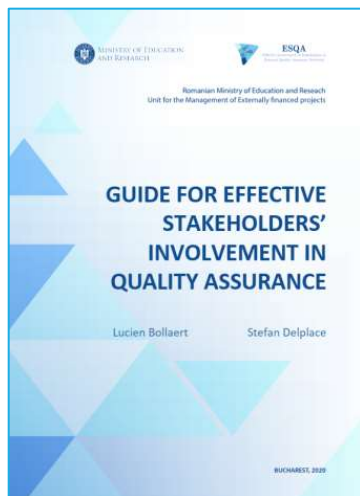
Structure of the 'Guide' under each theme:

Introduction to the guideline describing shortly context and findings

The Guideline is an **inspiring** statement of the **ultimately best situation** and/or a (morally) required **action** to arrive at such an excellent situation in which **the stakeholders' involvement is most effective/impactful** in the **quality of HE, the QA system and/or the EQA activities of QA agencies**.

Guiding elements towards realisation:

- From generic or holistic to **practical**, topical and detailed
- Making clear the **addressee(s)**



Guidelines

- The underlying concepts of quality and QA systems, as embedded in the HE system, should be shared and co-created involving relevant stakeholders.
 - ➔ commitment embedded in a quality culture that is based on trust and mutual understanding.
- The objectives of students' involvement should be **explicit and transparently discussed**.
 - ➔ the approach for students' involvement should be adapted to their profile.



Guidelines

- The selection methods should be clear, publicly known and **used consistently** by the agency and all stakeholders, including the national authorities.

➡ In case of students nomination by the student union is the most common approach.

➡ **Preparatory meetings** should best be held with the nominating stakeholders' organisations in order to **elucidate roles and expectations** of the future representatives.



Guidelines

- Well-prepared knowledge transfer about HE and QA should be organised in order to raise the commitment of stakeholders.
- The opinions of all review panel members should receive equal attention during the review and decision processes, irrespective of their different roles and duties.
- Stakeholder involvement should be integrated in the agency's strategic policy, and should also be linked to other policies, such as structural development, networking, communication and the agency's own internal QA.



Guidelines

- Communication and transparency with all stakeholders should be considered as essential and **strategic building blocks** of a QA that functions as an effective stakeholders' model, in which there is a **culture of co-creating** and **sharing** of knowledge and practice.



Conclusions

- Stakeholders involvement in quality assurance, especially of students, is one of the pillars of the EHEA model of quality assurance.
- Formal involvement is easy to achieve; while an effective, meaningful involvement requires an strategic approach, consistently implemented by all actors and considering the profile, role and interests of each category of stakeholders.

Students, the most
„fragile” stakeholders
group?

Thank you!

For more information:

Ana.gvritishvili@esu-online.org
cristina.ghitulica@aracis.ro

www.aracis.ro
<https://esu-online.org/>
<https://www.enqa.eu/>

<https://esqa.ro/>
<https://esu-online.org/9876-2/>