Cross-border recognition of HE qualifications: the European perspective

Howard Davies, online, October 15 2024

Main points of the presentation

The principal beneficiaries of recognition:

- students; higher education institutions; integrated labour markets; international trade in services

Questions of governance:

- Lisbon Recognition Convention 1997

- Consolidated version (2021) of the EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications 2005/36/EC

- automatic recognition

- quality assurance

The potential beneficiaries of recognition

Students:

- Credit mobility in Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes
- Degree mobility: from Bachelor in country A to Masters in country B...
- Entry to the regional labour market and lifelong adaptation within it

Higher education institutions:

- Recruitment of students, researchers, academic and administrative staff
- Collaborative links with peer partners, e.g. in development of joint degrees
- Acceptance as member of international academic community

Integrated labour markets:

- Matching of labour demand and supply in the internal market
- Facilitation of international trade in services

Questions of governance: the LRC

The **Lisbon Recognition Convention** (1997), formally the 'Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region' (a Council of Europe - UNESCO joint Convention): 56 States Parties, including 12 non-members of the Council of Europe

- A qualification holder from one country has the right to apply to another country's relevant authority for non-discriminatory assessment of the qualification in a 'transparent, coherent and reliable' manner
- Each Party can denounce alleged violations by other Parties, in due process of international law
- In Europe's Bologna Process, there are no formal sanctions; non-compliance is met with peer pressure

Questions of governance: the LRC (2)

Other regional recognition conventions have thus far achieved lower volumes of ratification:

- Africa 'Addis' (2014):   14 States Parties
- Arab States (2022), not yet in force: 2 ratifications
- Asia-Pacific 'Tokyo' (2011):   12 States Parties
- **Europe 'Lisbon' (1997):**   **56 States Parties**
- Latin America and Caribbean 'Buenos Aires' (2019):   6 States Parties

The recent Global Convention (2019) had attracted 33 ratifications by September 2024.

(all include the Holy See)

Question of governance: the EU Directive

Directive 2005/36/EC covers the recognition of all professional qualifications, except those of accountants and lawyers, which have their own EU legislation.

- Initial qualifications in medicine, dentistry, general care nursing, midwifery, veterinary surgery, pharmacy and architecture are automatically recognised (by EU and EEA member states), if the agreed conditions relating to the requirements of basic training have been satisfied.

- Other professions are dealt with in the Directive's General System, which provides mechanisms for identifying substantial difference and for compensating shortfalls in qualifications by imposing adaptation periods or aptitude tests.

- EU member states can recognise third country qualifications, but holders can move across internal borders to other member states only when they have completed three years of professional activity in the member state which first recognised their qualification.

- Member states in non-compliance can be subject to infringement proceedings which can ultimately lead to referral to the Court of Justice of the EU.

Questions of governance: automatic recognition

In the interests of academic mobility and labour market integration, the concept enshrined in the DIR has been extended to the field of **academic qualifications**. The holder of a qualification of a certain level has the right to be automatically considered for entry to a programme of further study in the next level, in any other country in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This does not imply automatic admission to any specific programme. Recognition does not exclude rejection. This raises questions:

Who has authority to recognise degree qualifications? The ENIC-NARIC centres have varying mandates and powers. Many HEIs have international offices with trained staff and rich databases.

Who has the power to admit students to study programmes? There is no Europe-wide system: ministries, institutions at central level, faculties, international office staff on mission…

Who has authority to recognise credits awarded in Erasmus+? HEIs, having been awarded the Erasmus Charter, which commits them to respect learning agreements signed pre-mobility.

Questions of governance: quality assurance

Protectionism exists. It can be found (but not necessarily!) at:

- system level, if recognition is perceived to threaten the integrity of a national culture or to run counter to migration policy

- sub-system level, if the recognition of qualifications across binary divides is not mutual

- professional body level, to ensure quality, to limit numbers, to safeguard prestige and income

- institution and/or faculty level, if a culture of nostrification/homologation persists

European Standards and Guidelines on quality assurance in HE offer a corrective to protectionism:

- by fostering trust and transparency and by enforcing compliance with the LRC

- by imposing a learning-outcomes approach to programme approval

- by *de facto* coverage of professional qualifications in the EU's internal market

- ESG compliance is one of the three pre-conditions for the operation of automatic recognition; the other two being LRC compliance and system-level reference of the national qualifications framework to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Thank you for your attention!

Much of the detail informing this presentation can be found in the 'Materials on African Regional and Continental Integration in Higher Education',

OBREAL, Barcelona, 2022, available at

https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/haqaa2-mooc-series/

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About OBREAL

VISION
Facilitate and achieve sustainable South-South-North cooperation based on reciprocity, mutual knowledge transfer and commitment to common global challenges.

MISSION
Promote dialogue and synergies between the governmental, academic and social sectors, taking into account the specificities and heterogeneity of each region of the world;

Build inter-regional, South-South-North and global bridges to enhance development in the higher education and research sectors specifically through multi-regional collaborative projects, knowledge production and policy dialogue

VALUES
Innovation, Inclusiveness, Diversity and Sustainability + multi-lingualism

Presentation

1. Initial reflections: The higher education integration agenda in Africa: History and context

2. HAQAA: A structural investment in the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework

3. HAQAA3: Beyond quality assurance: A comprehensive approach for supporting the regional integration agenda through the motor of higher education

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa

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Initial reflections: Different integration contexts - *Africa*

- Different economic integration spaces, some with competency in higher education and some without, some with distinct higher education strategies/some without
  - Ex) "East African Higher Education Space"/ East African Community (EAC)

- Linguistic cooperation spaces, with accreditation at the level of the academic professorship, accountable to ministers, whose mandate has spilled over into higher education harmonisation and integration
  - Ex) African and Malagashy Council for Higher Education (CAMES)

- The African Union level
  - Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2025/Agenda 2063 – "The Africa We Want"
    - Quality and relevance of African HE, in the midst of an expanding sector
    - Harmonized education and training systems are essential for the realization of intra-African mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation' page 11.

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa

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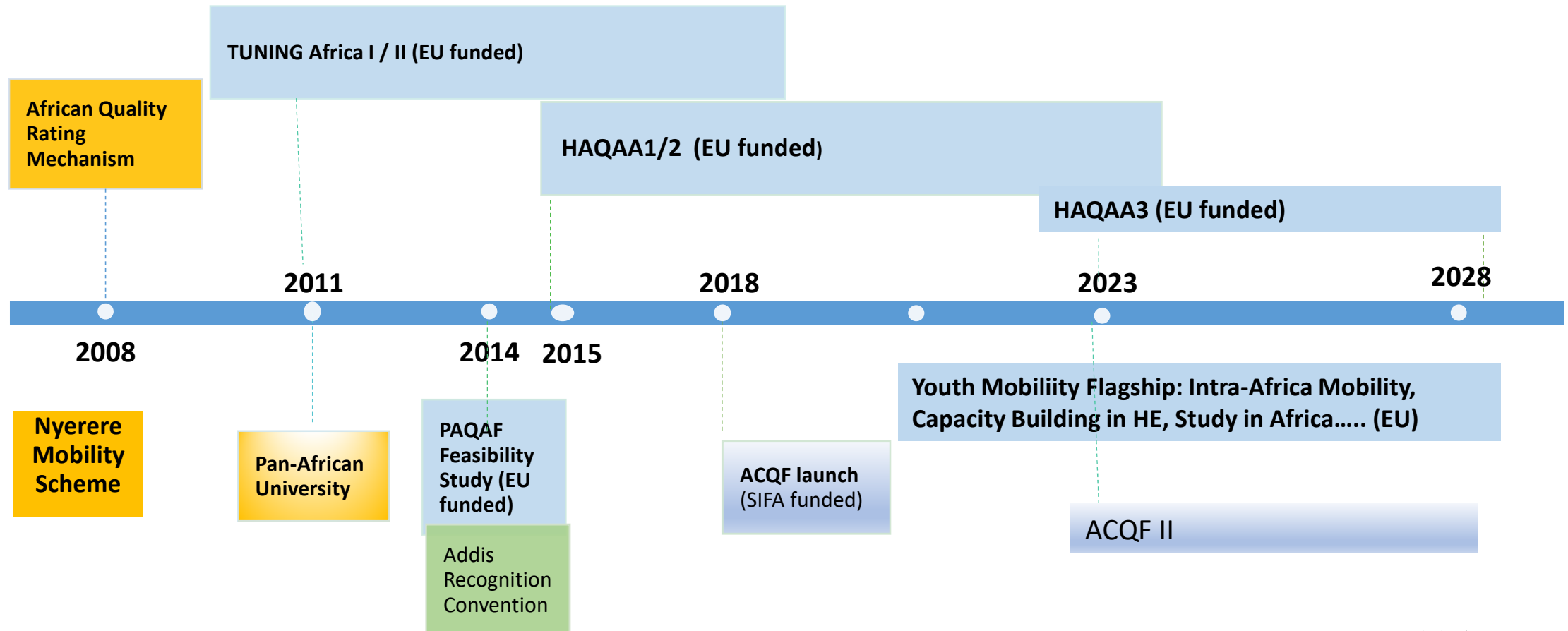# Initial reflections: African Union policy framework

Second Decade of Education Africa Action Plan (2006-2015):

- Importance of HE harmonisation recognised

- Initiatives launched at AUC level: AQRM / Pan African University (PAU)/ Nyerere mobility programme

- Initiatives supported by EU (Africa-EU Strategic Partnership)
  - First phase Tuning Africa
  - Feasibility Study for the PAQAF (2014)

- Addis Recognition Convention (Championed by UNESCO)

Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) (2016-25):

- PAU continues (with some difficulty)
- HAQAA 1 and 2 financed by the EU
  - Resourcing PAQAF and its instruments (ASG-QA, ACTS)
- African Continental Qualifications Framework - ACQF (SIFA funded)
- Other partners fuelling/funding the QA agenda: DAAD, AUF, CAMES, UNESCO, World Bank
- EU Global Gateway and Youth Mobility Flagship (2023-)
  1. HAQAA
  2. ACQF
  3. Erasmus+ CBHE
  4. African Youth Academy
  5. Study in Africa?

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Towards continental harmonisation: Progressive initiatives and programmes

TUNING Africa I / II (EU funded)

African Quality Rating Mechanism

HAQAA1/2 (EU funded)

HAQAA3 (EU funded)

2011

2018

2023

2028

2008

2014

2015

Nyerere Mobility Scheme

Pan-African University

PAQAF Feasibility Study (EU funded)

Addis Recognition Convention

ACQF launch (SIFA funded)

Youth Mobiliity Flagship: Intra-Africa Mobility, Capacity Building in HE, Study in Africa….. (EU)

ACQF II

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Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAA)

PAQAF

HAQAA
- African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA)
- AQRM for Institutional Evaluation/Data
- Capacity Building Trainings in Quality Assurance for National QA Agencies

SIFA
- African Continental Qualifications Framework

TUNING/HAQAA
- African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

UNESCO
- Addis Recognition Convention

HAQAA
- Pan African QA and Accreditation Agency

CESA 25/ First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063

***Tools and action lines for transparency between systems, trust,
a common language for quality, mobility and recognition, embedded in Agenda 2063***

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Harmonisation, QA and evolving policy relevance in Africa

- Higher education quality, and how to ensure and assess it has additional importance in a changing HE context:

  - Digitalisation, internationalisation, post-pandemic recovery…

  - Huge growth in enrollment, but has HE contributed to social/economic development of African society?

- Quality assurance is a piece of a bigger puzzle for African harmonisation/ intra-African cooperation…… trade, science capacity, employment and meeting SDGs.

- Quality assurance as part of the Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want

  - *inculcating entrepreneurial and innovative mind frames and African values in order to contribute to social economic development, job creation and employability… Higher education development should take place in the context of African continental, regional and national needs, and be based on African epistemologies and content (ASG-QA, 2018)*

- <u>HARMONISATION, quality assurance and accreditation in African HE</u> = larger policy scope

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HAQAA structural perspective

- Three phases (2015 – 2028)....long term structural investment of the EU in African higher education and harmonisation

- Grown in stakeholder engagment: Not just as beneficiaries but also as implementers

- Interacts with and complements regional agendas (RECs) and investments of other partners (UNESCO, World Bank, DAAD....)

- Interacts with/synergises with other investments under the Youth Mobility Flagship

  - Intra-Africa Mobility Scheme

  - Erasmus+ CBHE projects

  - ACQF

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Youth Mobility for Africa

The flagship initiative on **Youth Mobility for Africa** promotes opportunities for learning mobility on the continent and between Africa and the EU.

It supports cooperation in higher education and skills development, strengthens regional and continental harmonisation mechanisms, while promoting Africa as a study destination. Thereby, the initiative contributes to youth empowerment for sustainable employability and active citizenship.

The Youth Mobility for Africa flagship initiative is part of the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package.

Global Gateway

HAQAA providing a bridge to different African integration spaces
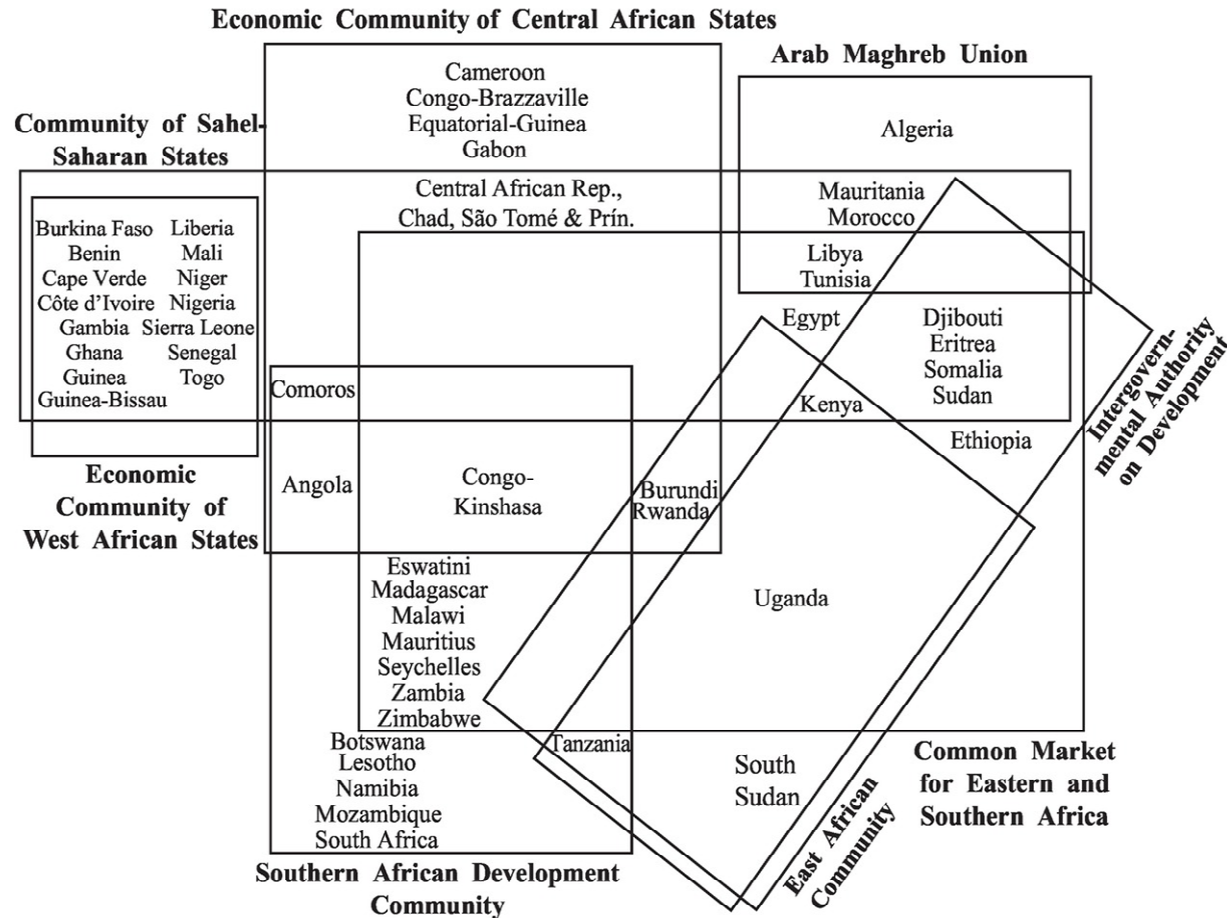
- Each at different speeds
- Evolving membership
- Overlaps
- Different degrees of competency in HE
- Different regional, historic and linguistic bodies that intervene in HE/QA
- Aligning to an African Union agenda

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Strategic partners/ Steering Committee

HAQAA2 Objectives (2019-22)

General Objective

- To improve the quality and harmonisation of African higher education and support **students' employability and mobility across the continent**.

Specific Objectives

Quality assurance culture in higher education institutions is further enhanced

Capacities of quality assurance agencies to implement **African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance** is strengthened and cross-regional coordination are enhanced

Capacities of the AU in implementing the **Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF)** are strengthened

HAQAA3 Objectives (2023-28)

General Objective

- Provide African countries with the skilled workers, managers and administrators they need to foster **sustainable development** and encourage the trade and investment as well as to **enhance citizenship and democratic values**

Specific Objective

QA culture and quality enhancement in HEI and capacities of QA agencies and national/regional authorities are strengthened to develop, implement and use transparency tools such as the ASG-QA and African Credit Transfer System (ACTS)

The capacities of QA agencies and national/regional authorities are strengthened to promote mutual recognition of qualifications and accreditation, use of transparency tools and the setup of the PAQAA is further developed

The capacity of the higher education sector (including policy makers) on issues related to evidence-based and informed policy making and regional integration is built

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance
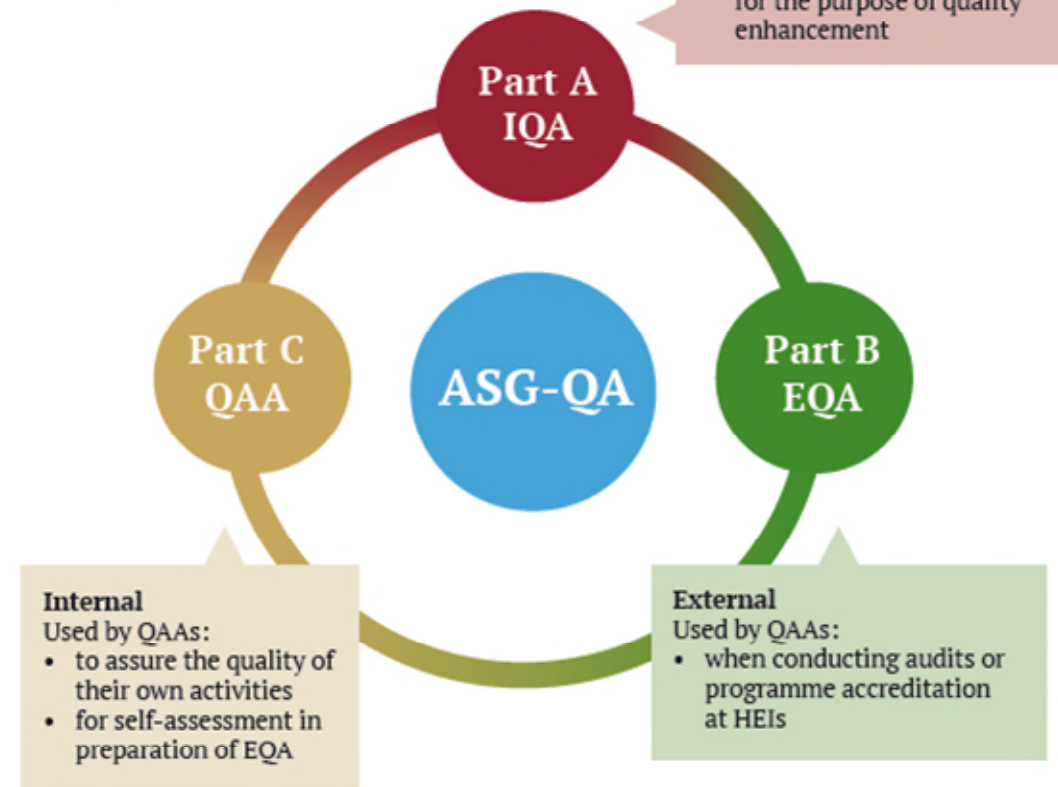and Accreditation in Africa

HAQAA3

HAQAA1/2 major outputs

- The African Standards and Guidelines for QA (ASG-QA)
- The ASG-QA User's Guide
- Continental IQA training Courses and pool of 'ambassaders'
- National and regional dissemination projects
- Technical assistance to 15 African authorities and QA agencies (external evaluations)
- Virtual training on comparative regional integration

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Major output: The ASG-QA
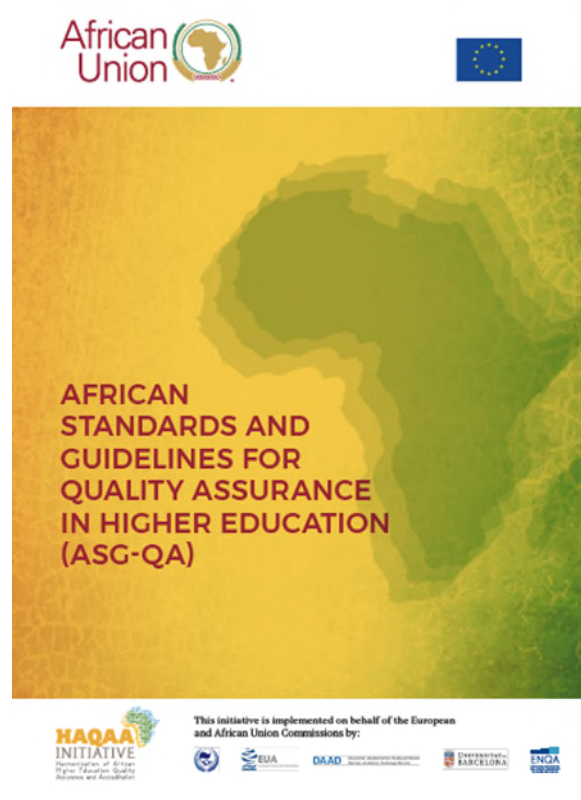
IQA – Internal Quality Assurance
EQA – External Quality Assurance
QAA – Quality Assurance Agency

Internal
Used by HEIs:
- to assure their own quality
- when doing self-assessment for the purpose of quality enhancement

Part A IQA

Part C QAA

ASG-QA

Part B EQA

Internal
Used by QAAs:
- to assure the quality of their own activities
- for self-assessment in preparation of EQA

External
Used by QAAs:
- when conducting audits or programme accreditation at HEIs

*A continental reference document: based on exisiting standards at different levels in Africa and
 internationally, targeting both IQA and EQA
*New feature: National quality bodies assuring their own quality = transparency in QA procedures

ASG-QA User's Guide

- Additional guidance on elements of the standards that have been identified as being particularly challenging for HEIs and agencies,

- Provides illustrative case examples on the different ways in which the standards can be implemented

Supporting the development of national quality assurance systems against African standards

- Methodology to assess agencies externally and ensure that they comply with the ASG-QA

- Improvement oriented/ voluntary

- **6 'QA agency reviews'**
  - Egypt, Mozambique, Senegal, **Zimbabwe**, DRC, Mail

- **9 'consultancy visits' to emergent QA systems**
  - Advice provided on building QA agency, taking into account the ASG-QA
  - Cameroun, Mali, Morocco, Togo, Algeria, Angola, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Guinea,

- **Training sessions for QA agency/ministry staff**

Key factors

✓ Self-assessment by the agency

✓ Expert panel

✓ Site visit (Mixed African and European expert teams)

✓ External review report (Public)

Towards a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA)

- Objective: Guardian body of the PAQAF/ Articulating body at continental level

- Ultimately perform the role of what the HAQAA project has done in the interim*

- Creates a common language for national and regional QA systems in Africa: Transparency/upholding African standards

- HAQAA2 support to PAQAA: Proposition for scenarios for the agency's set-up (progressive options)/ Stakeholder consultations

Situating QA in Comparative Regional Integration in higher education

- ✓ Learning 'Materials' produced by African, European, Asian and Latin American expertise

- ✓ Promote an understanding of regional integration and the role of HE: Impacts on mobility, trade, multi-lingualism...

- ✓ MOOC series – 170 African professionals earn certificate

- ✓ Network

HAQAA3: An overview

-5 years: 2023-2028
-Five Work Areas
-Consolidating, enhancing, expanding

Work Areas

- Transversal Work Area – Policy and Capacity for Regional Integration

- Work Area: African Credit Transfer System - ACTS

- Work Area: African HE Data Capacity

- Work Area: PAQAA/ PAQAA Technical Unit

- Work Area: IQA/EQA Training and Capacity building

Policy Dialogue and Regional Integration

Online course (MOOC Series) on African Continental and Regional Integration and Cooperation in HE launched in PT, FR, AR

Online events organized for the HE Integration Network

HAQAA3 Policy Briefs produced and debated on key topics

Three rounds in three languages of Specialized Private Online Courses (SPOC) organized on thematic issues

Interregional Policy dialogues organized in virtual or hybrid manner

Synergies with the European Higher Education Area*

Contribution of HE to the African Continental Free Trade Area*

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa

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Policy dialogue: Example

"Leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Ara (AfCFTA) for Higher Education Integration"

- 27-28 January, 2025, Yaoundé

- Supported by the Pan-African University, WTO, African Network of the Society of International Law (SIEL)

- Call for Papers

Concluding points

- Distinct origins and impetus for continental integration in the higher education sector in Africa

- Yielding unique mechanisms, but with a strong impulse from international partners, funders and the EU higher education integration experience....

- Without the PROCESS (yet) and juggling different integration spaces, overlapping and moving at different speeds

- The important role of quality assurance, and the development and articulation of national QA systems in Africa when it comes to trust, transparency and recognition across linguistic lines (yet relatively low ratification of the Addis Convention..)

- Questions related to the financing of sustainable cooperation, beyond the instruments of international partners

- Making the case for AcFTA and the role of HE

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How to get information

HAQAA WEBSITE

- The HAQAA3 website is the central hub for information and resources related to the initiative.
- The website will be available in four languages - English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic.

HAQAA SOCIAL MEDIA

- Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter

HAQAA NEWSLETTER

- A regular newsletter will be distributed to stakeholders to provide updates, news, and highlights on the progress and activities of HAQAA.

HAQAA DATABASE

- On the website, anyone interested can register in the HAQAA database to receive information about the initiative.

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Thank you
Merci
Obrigada

More information at

www.haqaa3.obreal.org

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