

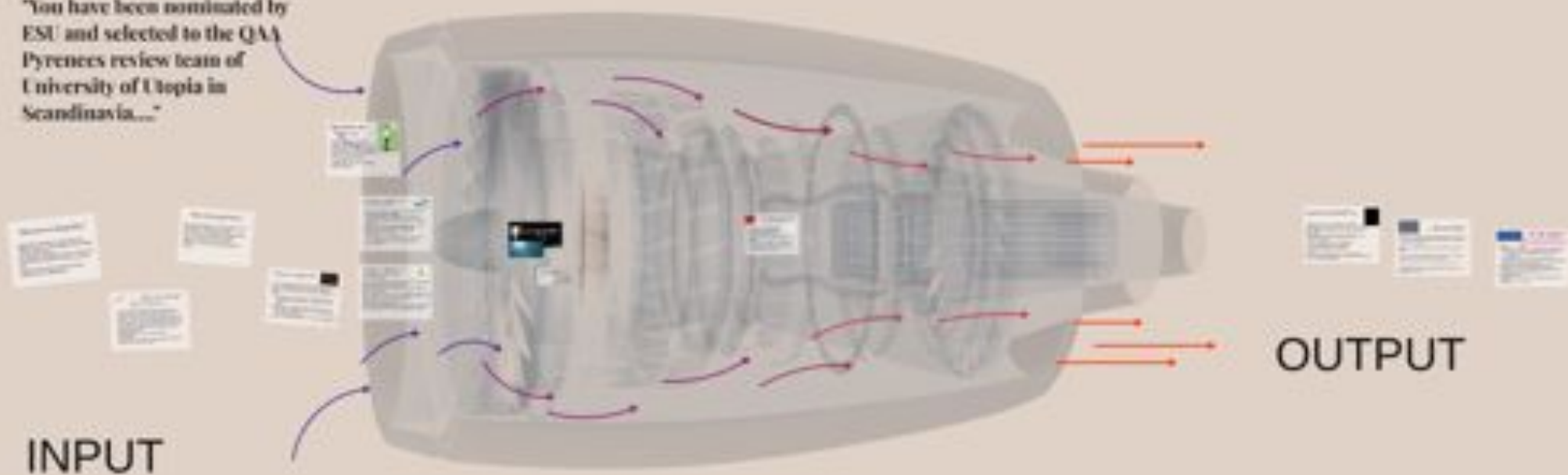
## Stakeholders insight in cross-border External QA: student reviewers' perspective to doing a cross-border QA review

"Cross-Border External Quality Assurance Activities" Bayreuth (29/30 April).  
 Henni Saarela, QA Pool, European Students' Union



*Join me for the journey!*

"You have been nominated by ESU and selected to the QAA Pyrenees review team of University of Utopia in Scandinavia..."



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# What is ESU?



- Umbrella organisation of 47 National Union of students from 39 countries, representing more than 15 million students
- Formed in 1982, previously named as WESIB and ESIB
- Promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level.
- Work towards relevant organisations and processes, for example the European Union, the Bologna process, Council of Europe, UNESCO and OECD.

# QUEST Project



•ARACIS - The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education



• fzs - The free association of local student union bodies



•sparqs - student participation in quality Scotland

**QUEST**

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS

# QUEST Project



- Launched in 2010... finished October 2013
- Co-funded project by the European Commission
- Aims to identify the genuine perception that students have on the quality of higher education from a pan-European perspective

**QUEST**

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS

# QUEST Project



- ESU seeks to define a concept of quality that gives a better answer to the learner-centred high quality model of higher education students in Europe
- ... to bring change in the field of quality in terms of transcending the discussion surrounding quality assurance and information provision to reflect the views of students as the main benefactors rather than main simply as other actors.

**QUEST**

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS

# QUEST outcomes



Lifelong Learning Programme



Lifelong Learning Programme



QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS

# QUEST outcomes



# QUEST

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS



**QUEST**

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS

**QUALITY  
EDUCATION**

FOR EVERYONE!

LOG IN

HOME

QA STUDENT EXPERTS

FOR STUDENTS

FOR INSTITUTIONS

LIBRARY

## QA Student Experts Pool

In 2009, the European Students Union (ESU) established a pool of committed and well prepared students who aim to contribute to improve higher education provision in Europe through quality assurance procedures.

The establishment of this pool is a way how ESU is promoting and developing student participation in quality assurance all over Europe.

The pool is renewed once a year and has an independent **Steering Committee**, which launches the calls and selects the applicants based on public criteria.

ESU organises study sessions, workshops and other events for pool members where they are trained.

The pool brings together students from all parts of Europe, their experience and knowledge, and it is an excellent forum for debating, sharing views and learning about quality assurance.

These students contribute to ESU policy making process, act as multipliers agents in their respective countries, collaborate in several projects, participate in Quality Assurance reviews, etc.

You can contact the Steering Committee of the quality assurance pool at [qaoffice@esu-online.org](mailto:qaoffice@esu-online.org) and download an

#ESU\_QUESTION

**Fernando M Galán**

28 Mar

@fernandomgalan

#ESU\_QUESTION getting a lot of interest at the Seminar on QA in HE in Southern Mediterranean countries... [instagram.com/p/mFZWzUJh0Y/](https://www.instagram.com/p/mFZWzUJh0Y/)  
📍 Sint-Joost-ten-Node, België

**ESU**

28 Feb

@ESUtw

Our February edition of the Student Voice is out! This month #ESC27 #ESU\_SAGE #ESU\_QUESTION #VoteForEducation #EP2014 [archive.constantcontact.com/fs154/11019925...](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs154/11019925...)

Expand

**QLET**

20 Feb

@Q4LET

Great initiative! Engaging students re <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305117027>

Tweet #ESU\_QUESTION

### Principles of the pool:

- Balanced by region and field of studies
- Student-led
- Cyclical renewal
- Bringing student experience together
- Enhancing the role of students in Quality Assurance
- Acting as multiplier

### Cooperation:

- National Students' Pools
- Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of EUA
- ENQA - External evaluation of Quality Assurance Agencies
- Quality Assurance Agencies
- Higher Education Institutions

### Currently there are **over 60 students:**

- 28 different European countries
- first, second and third cycle
- with previous experience
- 55% women, 45% men
- variety of study programmes
- trained

*Join me for the journey!*

**"You have been nominated by  
ESU and selected to the QAA  
Pyrenees review team of  
University of Utopia in  
Scandinavia...."**

"How do we  
this?" (i)

- identify what you CAN
  - criteria, documentation
  - compliance, savings
  - understanding needs
  - getting to grips with it
- TOOK THIS IN AS A...  
conference call, Q & A  
chat, savings

# "Why are we doing this?"

- important for reviewer to understand the rationale behind a cross-border EQA activities and the review itself
- the benefits and challenges of of cross-border EQA depend on level of review (e.g. prog., inst.,
- important for both the reviewer and the reviewed end to understand.

## Challenge

# "Where are we going?"

*"...if the review is an enhancement based review, it takes much time to understand the national background/situation." (and vice versa!) Student reviewer*

- in cross-border EQA understanding the HEI and its context requires significant input from the team
- Things don't come as "naturally" as they do at home.
- If there is not enough local knowledge present, many quality aspects - good and bad - may be overlooked, which may then outweigh the benefits of having a cross-border review.
- KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL HE SYSTEM IMPERATIVE,
- there needs to be basic knowledge of CULTURE and LANGUAGE among the team.

# "Who am I working with?"



- cross border EQA usually means international review team - hopefully with native member/equivalent.
- national vs. international review team members or a mix?
  - what kind of review skills, cultural and linguistic knowledge and experience are present in the team?
- (positive) clash of approaches and to review work -
  - openness to different methods and suggesting own without imposing
- need for intercultural skills from the outset



*"... it is very hard to achieve quality culture with accreditation based procedures and it is hard to assure quality with enhancement based procedures."*

- student reviewer

# "How do we get there?"

- cross-border EQA an act of moving from one EQA system and culture to another
- mix of roles - enhancement and accreditation, rigid conformity to criteria vs. holistic approach, national vs. international.
- need for awareness of own (national) QA Identity.



# "What's my role?" = student reviewer

The student often tasked especially with student issues. However, they should not be limited to this role.



the st

"What's my role?"  
= student reviewer

The student often looked especially with student issues. However, they should not be limited to this role.



- Students have first-hand experience of aspects related to teaching and learning and services, --> as Eur. HE adopts the SCL-approach, the role of students in EQA - including cross-border - is crucial
- Student reviewers often have good experience of working with HEIs across various levels incl. organization level (inst. review) and within HE systems.

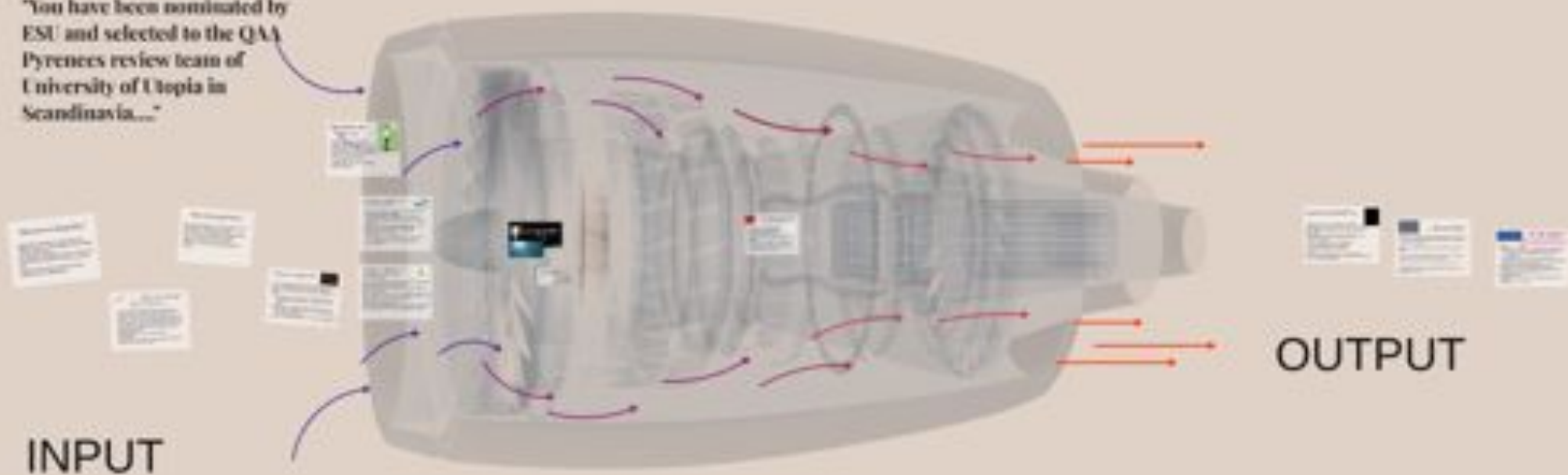
holistic eyes

the student reviewer in transit

The "status" of the student may change when crossing borders. Students may encounter "attitude" in places where student engagement is not *en par*. However, having student experts is in itself an act of sharing good practice and an opportunity. --> added pressure to perform

*Join me for the journey!*

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# "How do we do this?" (1)

- identify what you CAN DO
- criteria, decision-making, what is compliance, trainings
- understanding mandate and ToR
- getting to grips with these TOGETHER as a team - conference call, Q & A sessions, chats, trainings



# "How do we do this?" (2)

## Devising a working strategy



- requires planning and preparation. This preparation also helps reviewers prepare mentally.
- considering the diversity of working cultures within the team, it is important to pick a clear review process strategy in advance.
- SPECIAL: Cross-border EQA - need to develop a working strategy that considers INTERCULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES (INCL. POWER PARADIGMS) and differences
- Different approaches to conducting review - which one to pick, what does this mean in practice in a cross-border EQA activity? What aspects of the approach require special attention?

**On asking a question, you get...**

[Silence.]

"I don't understand  
the question."

answer to wrong question...  
for 10 min



# "How do we do this?" (3)

## Instilling trust and understanding in the review process



- it's not easy being interviewed by a bunch of foreigners who are coming to tell you what to do better
- Crucial to create an atmosphere of trust at the onset and during the interviews.
- Understanding of language barriers, instilling confidence in a person's ability to communicate in another language or in the communication process itself (interpreter).
- understanding own limitations
- put time and effort into formulating clear, effective questions - consider language barriers and use of jargon carefully!



An approximate answer to the right question is worth a great deal more than a precise answer to the wrong question.

(John Tukey)

izquotes.com

*Finding the right question?  
Is often just about looking for the right words*

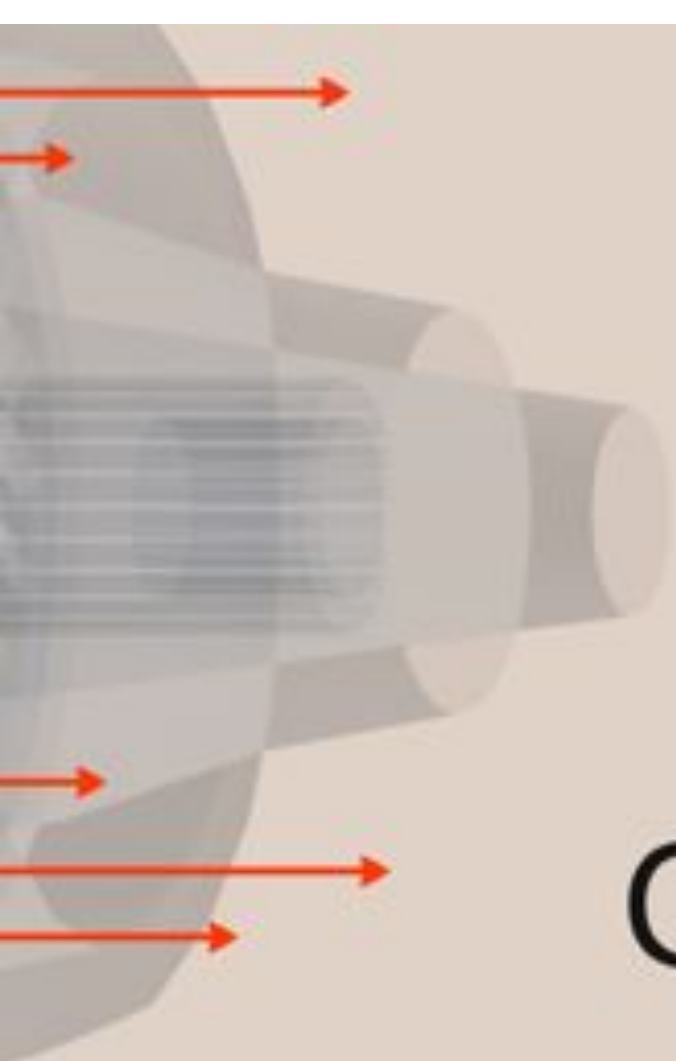




"OMG - a) this plan isn't working and b) we're running out of time..."

- A lot of effort and time may go to understanding how things work and navigating cultural issues.
- Crucial to retain open mind and flexible approach.
- constantly conferring with the team about tactics on how to handle e.g. cultural issues for 2-5 min prior to each session can save time and be more productive.





**a good cross-leader (G) ...**



... is someone who is able to lead a team of people who are not directly reporting to them. They are able to coordinate and manage the work of these people, ensuring that they are all working towards the same goal. They are also able to communicate effectively with these people, providing them with the information and support they need to do their jobs.

**... has an effect**



... is someone who is able to have a positive impact on the people they work with. They are able to inspire and motivate their team, and they are also able to help them to overcome their challenges. They are also able to create a positive and supportive work environment for their team.

**... for the future?**



... is someone who is able to think about the future and plan for it. They are able to identify potential opportunities and challenges, and they are also able to develop strategies to deal with these. They are also able to communicate their vision for the future to their team, and they are able to help them to work towards this vision.

# OUTPUT

# A good cross-border EQA ...



## PROVIDES ROOM FOR LEARNING - BOTH WAYS

- should center on teaching and learning (LO's, SCL), research and strategy, promoting European frameworks, and good administration
- learning different evaluation techniques and gaining new perspectives (what works, what doesn't, where?)
- international exposure
- joint effort between agency and the reviewees.
- heightened awareness of own QA identity
- recognizes its limitations and strengths

**SPECIAL** Does not rely on logic that just-because-it's-international it's automatically good. Or because-it's-international it's out-of-context and superficial.



## ... has an effect

An opportunity for HEI/programme and stakeholders to be heard in a new way... if process and outcomes transparent, accessible and meaningful and engaging.

Cohesion among HEIs and study fields in Europe and fostering mobility

Cross-border EQA complements and provides benchmarking for institutional and national QA system if done well

Fostering mutual assurance towards EQA in European HE

Increasing value of QA at local and int'l levels- to inspire, to be an impetus for change!



# ... for the future?

challenges - steering away from the one-size-fits all, avoiding competition or the rise of a few QAAs

## TRAINING

- Researching the special skills needed to conduct EQA cross-border and addressing them (QA agencies, int'l collaboration!)
  - How to tap into local HE culture most effectively?
  - developing tools
- How to consider multicultural target group train intercultural aspects of review work for cross-border and international IQA and consider them when designing trainings?

## DEVELOPING CROSS-BORDER EQA PROCEDURES

- workload, challenges related to time, funding and expenses
- securing and advancing the role of ESG

## DEVELOPING POLICY

- relationship b/w: cross-border and national EQA, internal QA practices.
- involvement of stakeholders?



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# Thank you!

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