HAQAA Training Course on a Common Language for Quality Assurance in Africa

OUTCOME REPORT

MAY 2018

HAQAA INITIATIVE
Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation

DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst German Academic Exchange Service

UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

EUA European University Association

ENQA EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The HAQAA Initiative Training Course on a Common Language for Quality Assurance in Africa

Outcome report

May 2018

More information about the HAQAA Initiative available online at:
https://haqaa.aau.org/

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Summary and recommendations from the HAQAA Training Course

Between October 2016 and June 2017, the Initiative 'Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance (QA) and Accreditation' (HAQAA) organised a continental-level Training Course entitled 'Developing a common understanding for QA in Africa'. The Course, which gathered nationally nominated professionals representing quality assurance (QA) bodies across 41 African countries and was conducted in English and French, had the objective of **promoting a common understanding on quality assurance in higher education in Africa.**

This was done by:

- discussing both the example of the European Higher Education Area and developments of quality assurance in different African countries and regions

- exchanging with African and European experts about practices, challenges and lessons learnt

- informing about and discussing the recently launched 'Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF)' of the African Union.

- defining Personal Action Plans for QA development in each participant own country or system

The following summarises the main take-aways that participants agreed upon and the main policy messages:

1. Continental QA training activities for Africa

- There is a general consensus on the relevance and pertinence of 'continental-level' African QA training and sensitisation activities. This has proven valuable for:

  o Bringing together different African linguistic groups and sharing practice/networking across linguistic lines

  o Intra-African capacity building and knowledge transfer in the domain of QA

- There is a will for national QA agencies/bodies to include African experiences and expertise in their own national QA trainings and external quality procedures.

- There is a diversity of QA systems in Africa – some just emerging and some more established. The 'African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance' (ASG-QA) can help to create a common understanding of QA on the continent and reinforce transparency in QA practices. They can also be an objective/benchmark for some emerging systems.

- The European harmonisation experience in higher education and specifically in QA has valuable lessons for Africa. This includes the stakeholder-driven and ministerial-level endorsed European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), which serve as criteria for admission into the European QA Agency Register (EQAR) and guide internal QA procedures developed by higher education institutions, while accommodating a diversity of practices and regulatory systems.

- External quality assurance (EQA) should reinforce internal institutional quality assurance (IQA). Ultimately universities are first in the line of responsibility for their quality culture. This must be promoted more emphatically across Africa.

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2. Continental African activities should reinforce African regional activities and vice versa

- QA agencies and higher education institutions need to work collaboratively on credit systems: TUNING Africa, an initiative of the European Union to support curricular alignment in different disciplines, is advocating this from the bottom up and will be proposing a common credit transfer system for Africa, based on the university and programme alignment experience.

- Regional initiatives, like the well-established one in the East African Community (EAC) and the one started by QA bodies in SADC (Southern Africa), can complement the continental agenda while advancing the regional dimension and regional political priorities. Regional and political developments in credit systems, but also more widely in QA, like the efforts of CAMES in its member states, should align to continental objectives and activities.

3. Taking the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) forward

- Stakeholders needs clarification on the legal ramifications of PAQAF, as PAQAF is still not widely known in the QA community across the continent. The different action lines of the PAQAF, which include the ASG-QA, but also tools like the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM), should be clearly explained and promoted to stakeholders who may utilise and implement them in very different contexts.

- It is essential the governments ratify the Addis Convention for Recognition. Continental harmonisation in QA cannot advance without this.

- The HAQAA initiative is contributing to PAQAF but PAQAF needs a structure and implementing body in order to sustain it. This body should be endorsed and supported by the major African higher education stakeholders and by governments and regulatory bodies, collectively. It should be the guardian of the ASG-QA and can support continental QA training activities and agency reviews.

Presence Phase 2. HAQAA Training Course. Accra, Ghana. 2017

The HAQAA Initiative

The Initiative 'Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance (QA) and Accreditation' (HAQAA) is funded by the European Union in the context of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and is overseen by the European Union and African Union Commissions. A three-year endeavour (2016-2018), HAQAA is implemented by a consortium of the University of Barcelona (coordinator), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European University Association (EUA).

The HAQAA Training Course

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany. 2016

Between October 2016 and June 2017, the HAQAA Initiative organised a continental-level Training Course entitled 'Developing a common understanding for QA in Africa'. The Course, which gathered nationally nominated professionals representing quality assurance (QA) bodies across 41 African countries, reinforced the goals of the HAQAA Initiative, namely to support the development of a **harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and Pan-African continental level.**

The key objective of the Training Course was to develop a common understanding on quality assurance in Africa by discussing the example of the European Higher Education Area and exchanging with African and European experts about practices, challenges and lessons learnt.

The main expected learning outcomes were defined as follows:

• The participants gain a common understanding of the meaning of quality regarding higher education. They can differentiate between institutional quality assurance 'culture' and processes for external quality assurance and accreditation, and understand the important interplay between the two.

• The participants know the QA framework of the European Higher Education Area and are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders within the European system. The interaction between national authorities, higher education institutions, independent QA agencies, students and other stakeholders is studied and analysed.

• Participants can cite good and diverse practices regarding how QA and accreditation can be facilitated at different levels (institutional, national, regional, continental), and how these levels interact towards building a common higher education space

• Participants know the current QA situation in the five African regions and as well common challenges and demands.

• Participants have identified main challenges for QA in their national/regional and potentially continental QA systems and have worked on options for improving their existing national QA system.

• Participants have understood the objectives of the African higher education space and more specifically, The Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework - PAQAF, and have identified ways for disseminating information on these political processes and frameworks.

Methodology

Several methods for developing a common understanding of QA were utilised in this Course:

• a one-week 'presence' phase (study visit) in Europe in October/December 2016. Two cohorts, one Anglophone and one Francophone, were organised.

• a self-learning and investigation phase, where participants defined 'Personal Action Plans', targeting specific themes in quality assurance that matter especially for their countries or regions.

• a second presence phase in Africa (3-day workshop), bringing Anglophone and Francophone course participants together (Accra, Ghana, June 2017).

The training included mixed methods such as presentations by experts, working in small groups, discussions among the participants, case studies and individual feedback and coaching.

Key stakeholders from African regional organisations for higher education were implicated in the Course so as to introduce an African regional perspective. The Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), which has been validated by the African Union, was presented and discussed, as were the recently drafted African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA) – one action line of the PAQAF - which intend to be an important reference document for higher education development and harmonisation across the continent. Other action lines that were discussed included the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) and the proposal for an African Credit Transfer System.

Diagram 1: Themes of the HAQAA Training Course

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Participants

The HAQAA Training Course was the first of its kind to involve strategically nominated individuals from across the African continent. Participants were

- officially endorsed by the Minister responsible for Higher Education

- from ministries, Higher Education (HE) Commissions or Quality Assurance Agencies/ Bodies and, in some cases, universities, and had a clear responsibility for quality assurance (regulation, accreditation etc.) regarding higher education institutions;

- in a senior–level position within the Ministry/HE Commission/QA Agency/Body and, in some cases, a university (if appointed by the ministry);

- in agreement to spread their knowledge within their institution or organisation and beyond;

Diagram 2: Countries represented in the HAQAA Training Course

Discussions in both cohorts benefitted from the diverse composition of the groups, which drew perspectives from both regulatory bodies and higher education institutions, two stakeholders that need to work together for a well running QA system in higher education. The participants appreciated the exchange between colleagues from diverse countries and found this to be a special element of the Training Course.

Participants were highly committed for working together for the aim of harmonising QA structures in higher education in Africa. They expected to take an active role in the future activities of HAQAA / PAQAF, and committed themselves to be PAQAF "ambassadors" to their countries and regions.

Presence Phase 1

The first presence phase, divided into two study visits (one Anglophone and one Francophone), took place in Belgium and Germany on 10 – 14 October, 2016 and 28 November- 2 December, 2016, respectively. Forty-eight selected participants learned about the situation of Quality Assurance in the higher education systems in Europe.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Bonn, Germany. 2016

1. Main topics

a) The HAQAA initiative and the HAQAA Training Course: objectives and expectations (including the conception of a Personal Action Plan);

b) Quality in higher education (meaning and concepts), tools and targets of quality assurance and roles and responsibilities of higher education institutions and regulating bodies;

c) Quality assurance in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): the roles and functioning of institutions involved, like ENQA, EUA, EQAR, ESU[3] , national agencies (Belgium and German examples). The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) were presented and discussed. Also, presentations of case studies on internal institutional quality assurance (in Liège and Cologne) were held.

Presence Phase 2. HAQAA Training Course. Accra, Ghana. 2017

d) The framework for harmonising the higher education system in Africa, specifically regarding quality assurance, accreditation and recognition - 'PAQAF': the HAQAA Initiative and the development of African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), as well as the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) as tool for institutional assessment in the

3 European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European University Association (EUA), European Registrar for Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR), European Students' Union (ESU).

Pan-African context.

The participants were very active, discussing the examples provided and the lessons learned for the African continent and for their national and regional contexts. Insights into internal quality assurance (IQA) was given by a site visit to a Belgium and German university, where quality assurance officers explained in detail their complex QA system and how it was informed by the EHEA.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany. 2016

The French speaking group discussed national QA structures and how to build a QA agency, as many of the countries represented were still without a national agency. The English speaking group focused more on regional harmonisation issues (i.e. establishment of an ECTS[4] -like system) and on common challenges and practices in regulatory bodies.

2. Main results of the Training Course presence phase one

a) Growth of awareness about the continental meaning and importance of QA in higher education in Africa;

b) Discussion with important stakeholders from all over Africa on QA was initiated and a common understanding of diverse QA challenges was gained;

c) Exchange with European experts and representatives and the establishment of important contacts in Europe in the QA field.

d) A high commitment of all training course participants and experts to work together to strengthen the higher education system in Africa was fostered.
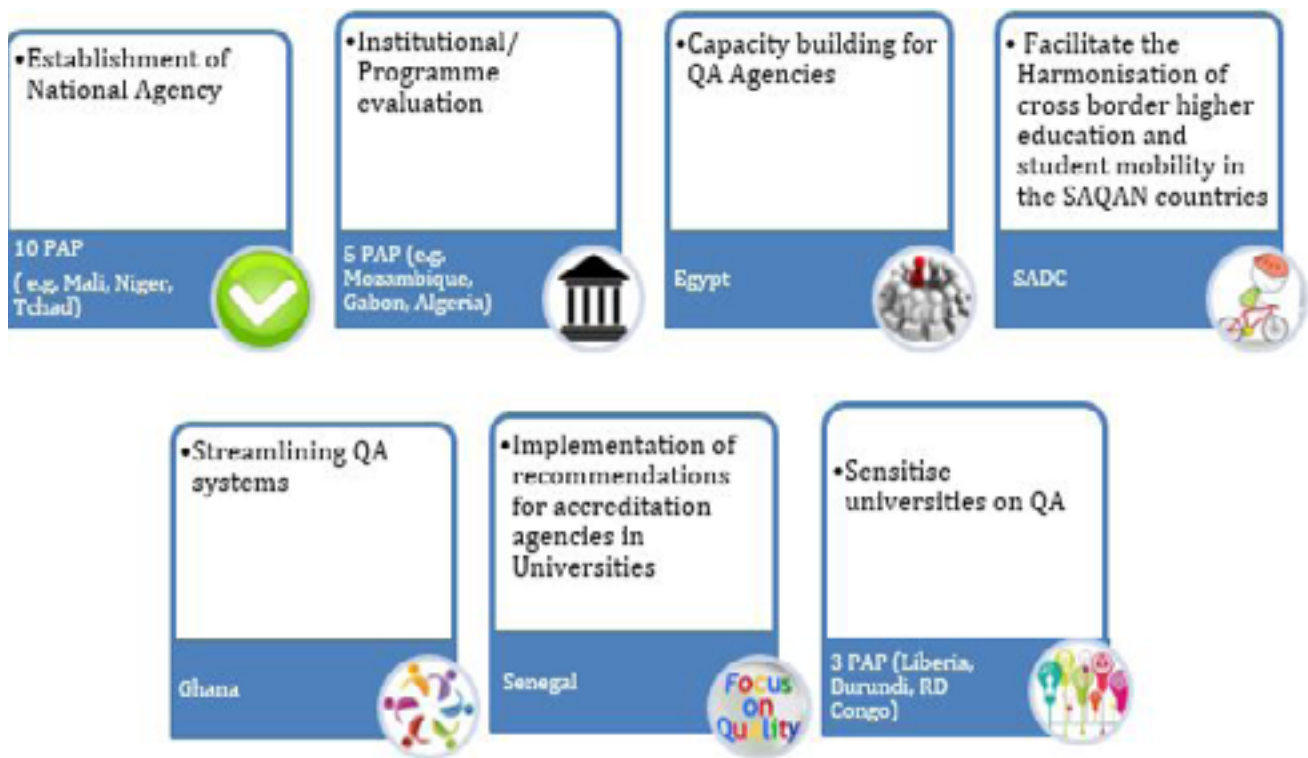
institutional quality assurance (in Liège and Cologne) were held.

e) The framework for harmonising the higher education system in Africa, specifically regarding quality assurance, accreditation and recognition - 'PAQAF': the HAQAA Initiative and the development of African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), as well as the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) as tool for institutional assessment in the Pan-African context.

Personal Action Plans (PAP)

Each participant defined a Personal Action Plan (PAP) as a means to take forward a specific commitment in their own higher education system. Topics of the PAP varied, including: "establishing a national agency on accreditation", "capacity building in institutional evaluation", "sensitisation for quality assurance in higher education", "development of a regional credit transfer system". Work was conducted in between the two presence phases of the Course on the PAP, with peer support.

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4 European Credit Transfer System

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Diagram 3: PAP topics

- Establishment of National Agency

  10 PAP (e.g. Mali, Niger, Tchad)

- Institutional/ Programme evaluation

  5 PAP (e.g. Mozambique, Gabon, Algeria)

- Capacity building for QA Agencies

  Egypt

- Facilitate the Harmonisation of cross border higher education and student mobility in the SAQAN countries

  SADC

- Streamlining QA systems

  Ghana

- Implementation of recommendations for accreditation agencies in Universities

  Senegal

- Sensitise universities on QA

  3 PAP (Liberia, Burundi, RD Congo)

Presence Phase 2

Held in Accra, Ghana on 31 May – 2 June, 2017 and hosted by the AAU, the second presence phase of the Course was primarily aimed at discussing the African frameworks and tools for quality assurance harmonisation in more depth. Participants also shared the results of their Personal Actions Plans and discussed how to maintain a continental network that could promote the HAQAA Initiative and the PAQAF goals more broadly in the future. Regional working groups (EAC and SADC) received an additional meeting day for discussing their joint PAPs.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany, 2016.

1. African Standards and Guidelines for QA in Higher Education (ASG-QA)

One of the major points of discussion of the second phase of the HAQAA Training Course was the first draft of the African Standards and Guidelines for QA (ASG-QA). This was developed by a Technical Working Group representing different African linguistic communities and regions. Participants provided initial reactions and feedback:

• On the whole, the document was widely accepted and participants were positive that it could offer added value to both emerging and established QA systems in Africa.

• Some participants wished to see a stronger distinction between the sections (Internal QA, External QA and quality assessment of QA agencies) and to understand better how they relate.

• It was agreed that sensitisation to the document - what its purpose is and how it should be used - would be critical both within universities and at the policy level.

• The HAQAA consortium announced a formal consultation process that would take place via an online survey, in four languages. The Training Course participants were asked to respond to this and to disseminate it.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany, 2016.

2. PAPs

A number of different PAPs were presented in the Training Course and participants discussed the lessons learned and the potential follow-up. Some of the issues and themes highlighted were:

• Mauritius, amongst several countries, is committed to the process of developing a SADC credit transfer system and utilizing the work done in TUNING Africa[3] to assist with this. Recognition problems regarding degrees (especially in medicine) still need to be resolved.

• Several countries, like Burkina Faso, are working to set up QA units in universities and have an ad hoc committee to support this.

• Sensitisation to the need for QA culture was an important theme in Benin, Egypt, South Africa, Liberia and Ghana, for example. In Algeria, this is also a priority, especially at the level of professors. All of these countries are interested in how best to sensitise diverse QA stakeholders. Establishing national platforms and questionnaires (to internal stakeholders in QA agencies) were two methods mentioned by the participants. It was noted that supporting the development of institutional quality culture and institutional self-assessment is one important aspect of the ASG-QA (Part A) and is also specifically supported by the AQRM – a tool for institutional self-assessment, in the context of PAQAF.

• Creating a national QA agency remains a priority in several countries (Togo, Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso). In the DRC, the agency has been legally created but help is needed to build capacity and create a database in order to channel data for evaluations.

• In other countries that have a national QA agency / body already, reform is being sought. Tunisia has two agencies - one for research and one for teaching – but would like to establish a coherent system that is more credible. In Ghana, QA processes are sometimes differentiated according to the sector and institutions complain about receiving different recommendations from professional bodies versus other agencies. Mergers of QA related bodies are being sought.

3 TUNING Africa is an initiative funded by the European Union in partnership with the African Union to promote the alignment of disciplines across different countries and a shared understanding of learning outcomes in higher education: http://tuningafrica.org/en/what-is-tuning-africa

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3. Regional projects

In the context of the HAQAA Training Course, the countries of SADC developed a concept note for the establishment of an SADC Credit Transfer System. This process was overseen by SAQAN (Southern African Quality Assurance Network) and complemented the work done by the TUNING initiative to establish a continental credit system.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany, 2016.

Harmonisation of higher education in the East African Community (EAC) context refers to the establishment of a common frame of reference to facilitate comparability, compatibility and mutual recognition of higher education and training systems and the qualifications attained among the EAC Partner States, based on shared views on quality, criteria, standards and learning outcomes, for promoting students and labour mobility in the EAC. This has led to a common understanding of quality assurance, encompassed by the Standards and Guideline for East Africa QA (Volumes 1-5). It also entails training of experts and the establishment of quality assurance units in universities. In April 2017 East Africa was declared a common higher education area by the Heads of States of East Africa. The countries of the EAC in the HAQAA Training Course have used the PAP to further their discussions on how to implement these existing frameworks and commitments and how to best integrate the new EAC member, South Sudan into the harmonised higher education system.

4. Future of the HAQAA Training Course

Several discussions were had on future training needs and the future of the HAQAA Training Course in particular. Ideas shared were the following:

• A further needs assessment should be done, perhaps extending the survey that has already been conducted by the Egyptian representatives in the Training Course.

• A future Course should indeed maintain the EU-Africa dimension; The EHEA example is highly pertinent

• The future course should include wide participation from as many African countries as possible as this makes the course unique.

• A future course should also prioritise QA staff training and support for IQA. Training reviewers regarding the ASG-QA, as a general framework for guiding institutional quality culture, could be of added value. Awareness should be raised for other tools that can support institutional self-assessment, like the AQRM.

• Alumni of the training course could become experts for future training courses and for disseminating information in their countries / regions.

• In the interim, HAQAA should facilitate a centralised portal for information sharing. Language barriers should be considered as it is important that different language communities interact.

Follow-up workshop

HAQAA Follow up Workshop. Cairo, Egypt, 2018.

In order to maintain the momentum generated by this Training Course, and provide its 'graduates' with a means to continue the work defined in their PAPs and as HAQAA ambassadors, a follow-up workshop was organised on 24-25 April, 2018 in Cairo, hosted by NAQAAE, the National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of Egypt.

The main objective of this workshop was to strengthen the network of African quality assurance actors and share a common understanding of ASG-QA and other tools that were under development for the PAQAF.

The workshop was attended by 40 representatives from five different regions of Africa and four linguistic groups from the African Union. As in the previous Training Course, the working languages were French and English.

The workshop was dedicated to the detailed study of ASG-QA, which was just being finalized at that time, and the debate on its implementation at the national (and regional) level, especially when it comes to parts B and C, which apply to quality assurance agencies. Participants also learned about the proposed QA Agency review methodology that HAQAA would be piloting in the second half of 2018, as a support and development measure for QA agencies in Africa and to promote the ASG-QA.

There were working groups to share experiences, with the support of experts and professionals from quality assurance agencies in Europe, who helped participants to identify action points. The workshop also provided an opportunity to revise the Personal Action Plans (PAPs) of the Training Course, as to how far different systems had come in the past year, and to discuss follow-up steps.

Presence Phase 1. HAQAA Training Course. Cologne, Germany, 2016.

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Participants learned about a forthcoming proposal for an African Credit Transfer System, one action line of PAQAF and also brainstormed concrete actions for maintaining the HAQAA/PAQAF network going forward. The participants volunteered to continue to support continental harmonisation actions in the future, whether through promoting the ASG-QA or taking part in QA agency review panels in regions different from their own.

Main policy take-aways

The following summarises the main take-aways that participants agreed upon, which can be formulated as policy recommendations for their own regions and countries.

1. Continental QA training activities for Africa

• There is a general consensus on the relevance and pertinence of 'continental-level' African QA training and sensitisation activities. This has proven valuable for:

o Bringing together different African linguistic groups and sharing practice/networking across linguistic lines

o Intra-African capacity building and knowledge transfer in the domain of QA

• There is a will for national QA agencies/bodies to include African experiences and expertise in their own national QA trainings and external quality procedures.

• There is a diversity of QA systems in Africa – some just emerging and some more established. The 'African Standards and Guidelines for QA' (ASG-QA), which are being developed by the HAQAA Initiative, can help to create a common understanding of QA on

HAQAA Follow up Workshop. Cairo, Egypt, 2018.

the continent and reinforce transparency in QA practices. They can also be an objective/ benchmark for some emerging systems. Under the PAQAF framework, other action lines will support quality assurance as well, like the AQRM, which specifically targets IQA. This tool is complementary to the ASG-QA, Part A.

• The European harmonisation experience in higher education and specifically in QA has valuable lessons for Africa. This includes the stakeholder-driven and ministerial-level endorsed European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), which serve as criteria for admission into the European QA Agency Register (EQAR) and guide internal QA procedures developed by higher education institutions, while accommodating a diversity of practices and regulatory systems. Other regions, like ASEAN (South-East Asia), should also be examined as they too have advanced in quality assurance harmonisation.

• External quality assurance (EQA) should reinforce internal institutional quality assurance (IQA). Ultimately universities are first in the line of responsibility for their quality culture. This must be promoted more emphatically across Africa.

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2. Continental African activities should reinforce African regional activities and vice versa

QA agencies and higher education institutions need to work collaboratively on credit systems: TUNING Africa, an initiative of the European Union to support curricular alignment in different disciplines, is advocating this from the bottom up and will be proposing a common credit transfer system for Africa, based on the university and programme alignment experience. Regional initiatives, like the well- established one in the East African Community (EAC) and the one started by QA bodies in SADC, can complement the continental agenda while advancing the regional dimension and regional political priorities. Regional and political developments in credit systems, but also more widely in QA, like the efforts of CAMES in its Member States, should align to continental objectives and activities.

Taking PAQAF forward

• HAQAA is contributing to PAQAF but PAQAF needs a structure and implementing body in order to sustain it. This body should be endorsed and supported by the major African higher education stakeholders and by governments and regulatory bodies, collectively. The 'Continental Agency' foreseen by the African Union under PAQAF should build upon an existing African structure or network that has a regional or continental mandate. This structure should be the guardian of the ASG-QA and can support continental QA training activities and agency reviews.

• Stakeholders needs clarification on the legal ramifications of PAQAF, as PAQAF is still not widely known in the QA community across the continent.

• It is essential the governments ratify the Addis Convention for Recognition. Continental harmonisation in QA cannot advance without this.
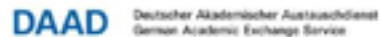
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HAQAA Follow up Workshop. Cairo, Egypt, 2018.

The HAQAA Initiative is implemented on behalf of the European and African Union Commissions by:

The Association of African Universities (AAU) founded in 1967 with an initial membership of 34 universities, currently has 320 member institutions spread across 45 African countries. The Association's mandate as an apex organization for higher education in Africa is to promote cooperation, academic linkages and exchange of information on higher education issues across the continent.

The German Academic Exchange Service is an umbrella organisation of German higher education institutions devoted to international academic exchange and the internationalisation of universities. The DAAD provides students, researchers and instructors the chance to study, work and conduct research at the best institutions in Germany and nearly any other country abroad.

The UB is one of the biggest universities in Spain and is the leading university in terms of research. The UB has a wide experience in participation and in the coordination of European and International projects, not only in the area of research but also in international cooperation.

EUA is a pan-regional university association representing over 800 universities in the European Higher Education Area as well as 33 national rectors conferences. It is the leading university voice at European policy level when it comes to supporting policy development and carrying out European led projects for higher education reform and development.

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education promotes European cooperation in the field of quality assurance. ENQA is a membership organisation which represents 44 quality assurance agencies in the field of European Higher Education operating in all the signatory states of the Bologna Declaration. ENQA also has 47 Affiliates world-wide.