

Worldbank Project

Assistance to the
Armenian National Centre
for Professional Education
Quality Assurance (ANQA)

Inception Report

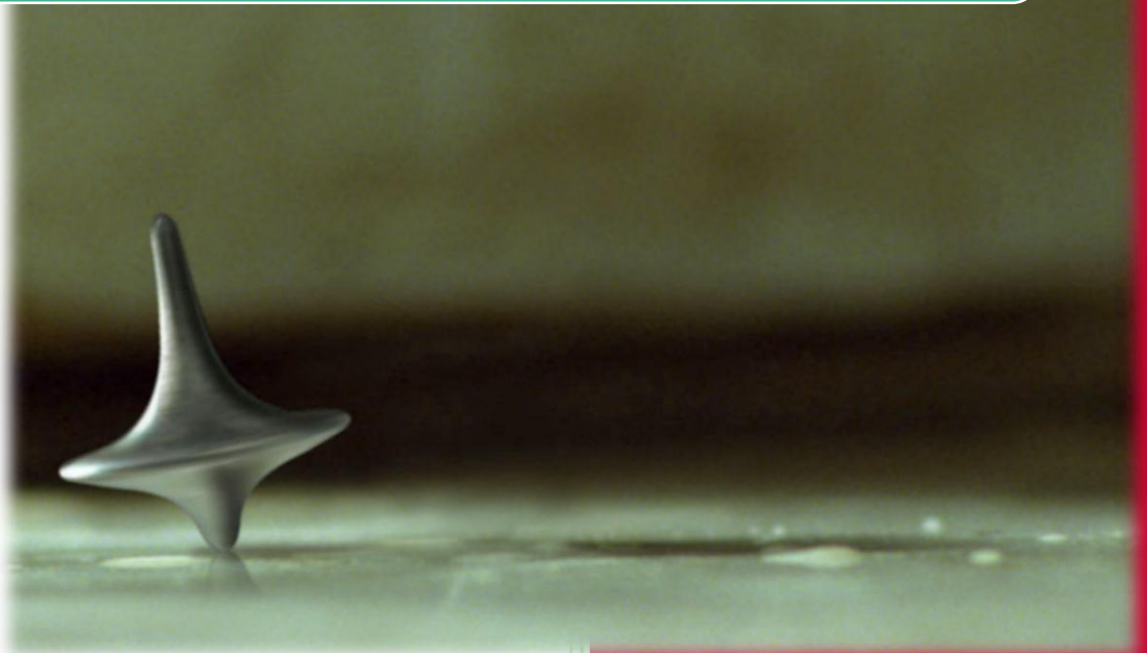


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1. Summary of the visit results

1.1. Introduction

During the kick off visit, the representatives of NVAO have been able to meet with the ANQA management, the ANQA staff, the Minister of Education and Science, with representatives of the universities and with PIU/CEP.

These meetings have provided the essential information that has been used to produce the inception report. The results of each of the meetings have been included in this chapter and in the chapters with the needs analyses and implementation plans per action line of the project.

1.2. A context of change

The rapidly changing quality assurance and accreditation approaches all over Europe have direct impact on current developments in Armenia. Therefore, the broader perspective of the Bologna Process needs to be taken into account when reviewing Armenian quality assurance (QA) developments. Most European countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 already had a system of external QA (North and Western-Europe) or accreditation (Central and Eastern Europe) in place. The Bologna Declaration intended to add a European dimension to these national QA systems. That seemed to be one of the more straightforward original Bologna objectives. The existing QA systems would have to be modified and this led to a strong improvement-led policy discussion among higher education (HE) stakeholders.

Countries that joined the Bologna Process after 1999 were confronted with a process in which “quality of higher education [had already] proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area” (Berlin Communiqué 2003). And most of these countries were also undergoing substantial changes in their political, cultural and economical systems. Generally speaking, the introduction of major changes in their higher education systems would have to coincide with the introduction of quality assurance approaches.

The Armenian situation seems to fit that general description: a higher education system confronted with a high-level of system-wide change. These changes are seen to impact all higher education stakeholders at both organisational and individual level.

1.3. The policy context

The Bologna Process should not be considered the start of redrawing the Armenian tertiary education (TE) system. Even before Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 an overhaul of the system had

already started in the 1990s. The biggest change seemed to be from a centrally planned higher education system with government controlled universities towards a more devolved, university managed higher education system.

The current discussions seem to indicate a tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches. Most changes in the higher education system are the result of top-down policy-making. The fast pace of these changes seems to have a tendency to cause misunderstanding and uncertainty. In West European higher education systems this would have a tendency to increase the demand for more autonomy and bottom-up change management. Armenian higher education institutions on the other hand seem to be looking for more guidance, more specifically in developing their internal quality assurance systems.

The context of change, especially when referring to the QA debate, underlines the tension between ownership-driven and required internal and external QA. HE staff have made it quite clear that they do not see themselves as owners of the QA system yet. Is the QA system then understood as an added bureaucratic burden without a perceived added value? This is however a statement that would partly be supported in many of the countries included in the Bologna Process. The challenge is therefore to generate support and demonstrate the added value of the Armenian QA system at both system and individual level.

1.4. A context of project-driven activities

ANQA has proven to be an internationally active fund-raiser. It has networked in order to establish project consortia and has been able to receive approval for several projects.

ANQA is involved in two TEMPUS projects that relate directly to the objectives and activities of this project. Both projects will be further explained under the needs analyses of action lines #1 and #2. It is important to note that one project focuses on internal quality assurance and another on external quality assurance. Both projects are more or less related to each other, include the same core partners and run until 2013.

ANQA is also involved in a Worldbank project that provides grants to 22 universities (17 public and 5 private) to establish an internal quality assurance system. Within the framework of this project, ANQA is one of the decision-makers on granting the funding. ANQA will additionally monitor and review the project implementation.

Since projects tend to have prescribed timelines, joint activities and fixed outcomes, ANQA will be tied down in several project activities until 2013. This requires not only a substantial commitment of ANQA's staff but also a considerable amount of coordination by ANQA's management.

1.5. A context of commitment

All stakeholders take the discussions about the QA system very serious. The introduction of the new QA system could have been seen as a purely technical issue. This however doesn't seem to be the case. A handful of actors energetically drive the change process and stakeholders involvement is identified as a key issue.

The fact that ANQA is already well-established supports the overall development of the QA system. ANQA can be described as a small but well-equipped and -staffed organisation able to cope with QA discussions head on. There indeed doesn't seem to be a lack of eagerness or of willingness to move forward.

ANQA also counts on the support of the Armenian stakeholders. This is a valuable asset when driving a process of change, especially in the field of QA.

2. Aims & objectives of the project

2.1. General objectives

The general objectives of the project:

- To provide technical assistance to the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) towards developing the Armenian HE Quality Assurance model;
- To strengthen the professional capacity of ANQA staff (including organization of staff training and study tours to European Quality Assurance Agencies to enrich the professional experience)
- To assist in designing and carrying out a small-scale pilot of the newly developed Quality Assurance Model;
- To support development of QA training materials for ANQA trainings;
- To support expert pool formation

2.2. Starting points

The following elements are essential starting points:

- The core of the project's approach is **to support ANQA and TE institutions** in Armenia to develop a commonly shared Armenian quality assurance culture.
- The project is not about implementing the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The project is about **using the ESG as a framework** to develop a quality assurance system that fits Armenian TE. It does this by taking the current Armenian situation as the basis.
- The project intends to realize a **coherent Quality Assurance approach** towards all elements of the HE-system. This includes:
 - internal QA within the TE institutions,
 - external QA of the TE institutions
 - a QA agency that ties together the whole QA system and contributes to the overall quality culture and ensures the whole system's adherence to the ESG.
 - The integration of the Armenian QA system in the wider international QA context.
- **Intensive stakeholder relations** are essential to develop a shared vision and shared practices on quality culture and on internal and external quality assurance systems. So an important element is to ensure that stakeholders are involved in all activities to develop internal and external quality assurance.

3. Project activities and implementation

3.1. Action lines

There are five action lines in the project:

1. Internal Quality Assurance
Development of Internal Quality Assurance concept by building on existing models and approaches, and including carrying out pilot procedures and training of relevant staff of HE institutions
2. External Quality Assurance
Elaboration of External Quality Assurance concept, policies, standards and criteria for accreditation and audits, including the training of HE institutions' staff and experts for the pilot procedures and for implementation
3. Quality Assurance Agency
Further professionalization of ANQA as an organization, including development of ANQA's accountability mechanisms and training of ANQA staff
4. Overall development of an Armenian Quality Assurance culture:
Builds further on the three first elements and focuses on the organization of two study tours for 4-5 persons each time
5. Implementation of the Internal and External Quality Assurance system;
Evaluation of the application and validation of the overall project result.

These action lines will be further outlined below. Each action line has its

3.2. Action line #1: internal quality assurance

3.2.1. Original objective & goals

Development of Internal Quality Assurance concept by building on existing models and approaches, and including carrying out pilot procedures and training of relevant staff of HE institutions

The following goals were perceived:

- Further develop a concept for internal quality assurance within Armenian Tertiary Education that encompasses general approaches on
 - Policy and procedures for quality assurance
 - Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
 - Assessment of students
 - Quality assurance of teaching staff
 - Learning resources and student support
 - Information systems
 - Public information
- Carry out pilots in three HE institutions
- Develop a consensus among stakeholders on this concept; develop IQA training materials for ANQA; train key persons within ANQA and within institutions of tertiary education in all elements of the IQA-concept.

3.2.2. Needs analysis

Armenian tertiary education is quite an extensive and varied sector for a country with approximately 3 million inhabitants: almost 250 institutions from public universities to private licensed colleges. This size is said not to be matched by available resources. Representatives of the sector point out that most institutions lack the resources to efficiently deal with current developments. This doesn't just present a challenge for institutional management, educational facilities and staff development but also for the overall QA approach introduced in Armenia.

The conventional HE management tradition has led to demands for guidance regarding the introduction of internal quality assurance. Internal QA is conceivably perceived as an external obligation, not as an essential element of (contemporary) higher education. This in turn could lead the top-down introduction of processes and procedures that are experienced as a bureaucratic burden by the teaching staff. Such an approach cannot lead to a full integration of QA into the teaching and learning environment of Armenian TE institutions, let alone to the establishment of a quality culture.

The challenge seems to be to make internal QA part and parcel of the activities of TE staff. They are the people who will need to appreciate and reap the benefits.

It has become clear that the new QA approaches provide an additional prospect of change in the

current HE culture. HE staff comfortable with the QA system should take responsibility for QA and quality of teaching and learning in general. These staff members then have the potential to become institutional administrators in the future. In addition, these new QA approaches could then even impact government approaches to education.

ANQA is furthermore involved in a project that relates to the objective of action line #1. It is a TEMPUS Project called: development and integration of university self-assessment systems (DIUS). The project is coordinated by Koblenz-Landau University (Germany). It involves ASIIN (Germany), Wrocław University of Technology (Poland), Université du Maine (France), Link Campus University of Malta (Italy), six Armenian universities, the Ministry of Education and Science and has received a grant of € 737.368,74. The objective of the project is clear from the title: to develop a university self-assessment system with the aim to establish a culture that values quality in service provisions.

3.2.3. Proposed activities

Activity	Method	Result	When
Analyze present situation of Internal Quality Assurance in TE- Institutions and of the development of internal quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Meetings with ANQA staff • Meetings with TE-institutions • Meeting with government 	Report on the state of IQA in Armenian TE, description of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present situation (SWOT) • needs analysis • performance gaps, implementation plan 	June 2011
Further development of an Armenian IQA- concept	2-day Seminar with stakeholders on IQA models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared vision on concept for internal quality Assurance in Armenian TE • Plan for further development of consensus within Armenian TE on internal quality assurance 	September 2011
Preparation of training materials and training of key persons from 3 TE institutions and ANQA staff on internal quality assurance	3-day training session on all aspects of IQA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed IQA training materials for ANQA trainings of tertiary education institutions • Key persons from three institutions are trained and prepared for pilot IQA 	September 2011
Pilots in 3 TEI's	Pilot on workability, efficacy and efficiency of IQA-model	Report on results of pilots and proposals for adjustment of IQA-concept	September - December 2011
Stakeholder opinions on IQA-model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National stakeholders conference • Written comments by stakeholders on proposed concept 	Report on stakeholders reactions on IQA – concept and proposals for further development	January - February 2011
Training in IQA implementation	Two day training session for key persons from TE institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in TE Institutions have competencies for development of internal quality assurance within their institution • Plan for further training – sessions on implementation of internal quality assurances 	May 2012

3.2.4. Implementation plan

The original proposal had a strong focus on concepts and models. These are the elements institutions and programmes need in order to bring together all activities that can be marked as internal QA. It's both the ribbon around the box that ties everything together and the label on that box that explains the how and the why of every QA activity. This element seems to be dealt with in the DIUS project too, although restricted to six universities.

From the response of the institutions and ANQA, it seems that the rationale behind individual activities and the identification of these activities needs to be the first step. Institutions currently see internal QA in the light of external QA. It is mainly seen as a prerequisite to produce reports to be used by ANQA. Internal QA is therefore essentially not about learning and improving. The lack of ownership is quite apparent and the demand for hands-on approaches to internal QA seem therefore justified.

Shared visions and concepts are only essential if internal QA has found its way deep into the teaching and learning environment. Here we see the contrast between skin-deep introduction of QA and QA that cuts to the bone. Most internal QA experts would say that evaluation is the easy part. To really learn and improve, on the other hand, is a permanent challenge. The implementation of action line #1 should therefore focus more on presenting current examples and approaches, providing hands-on experiences and facilitate mutual learning. The introduction of internal QA manager(s) of institutions into the project would facilitate this approach tremendously.

The 3-day training sessions for key persons from TE institutions, experts and ANQA (September 2011) should therefore be reoriented. A shared vision and consensus within Armenian TE on internal quality assurance seems the last thing on the institution's agenda. There is a need for the presentation of real-life examples. The approach towards training necessarily reflects this reorientation.

The three pilots (Sept. - Dec. 2011) should provide for a shared learning experience. The audits would then have to produce a generic evaluation of the self-evaluation process and resulting report in order to help all Armenian TE institutions with their internal QA. This should include both good, effective and/or exemplary practice and not so good, inefficient and/or avoidable practice. A discussion about these practices among internal QA "coordinators" and facilitated by ANQA could be beneficial to further the QA culture at institutional level.

Work towards a shared vision should however not be taken off the table. The audits might provide the essential elements to work towards this goal. The feedback mechanism on the internal QA project activities, i.e. stakeholder opinions on IQA-model (Jan./Feb. 2012), could provide for the impetus to build a consensus on internal QA.

3.3. Action line #2: external quality Assurance

3.3.1. Original objective & goals

Development of External QA concept, policies, standards and criteria for accreditation and audits, including the training of experts for the pilot procedures and carrying out pilot procedures that include institutional audits and programme accreditation

The following goals were perceived:

- Further development of external quality assurance within Armenian Tertiary Education laid down in documentation (Framework) that encompasses:
 - The use of internal quality assurance procedures (the self-evaluation report)
 - Development of external quality assurance processes (the methodology)
 - Panel composition
 - Site visit
 - Criteria for decisions (the assessment rules)
 - Reporting
 - Follow-up procedures
 - Periodic reviews
 - System-wide analyses
- To gain support for this Framework from all relevant stakeholders
- To carry out pilots
- To train key persons within ANQA and institutions of tertiary education in all elements of this EQA framework

3.3.2. Needs analysis

External QA can be more or less considered a fait accompli. The original objective to develop an external QA concept, including policies, standards and criteria, has been overtaken by recent developments in which the external QA system was legally implemented. One could say that this part of the project has been more or less handled by the minister and his ministry. (See the diagram below for an outline of the Armenian external QA system.)

ANQA is furthermore involved in a project that relates to the objective of action line #2. It is a TEMPUS Project called: Promoting Internationalization and Comparability of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PICQA). The project is coordinated by ASIIN (Germany), involves CIEP (France) and QANU (The Netherlands) and has received a grant of € 994.237,65.

The general objective of PICQA is to enhance the quality of higher education in Armenia and Georgia and to promote voluntary convergence with EU developments. This includes the development and

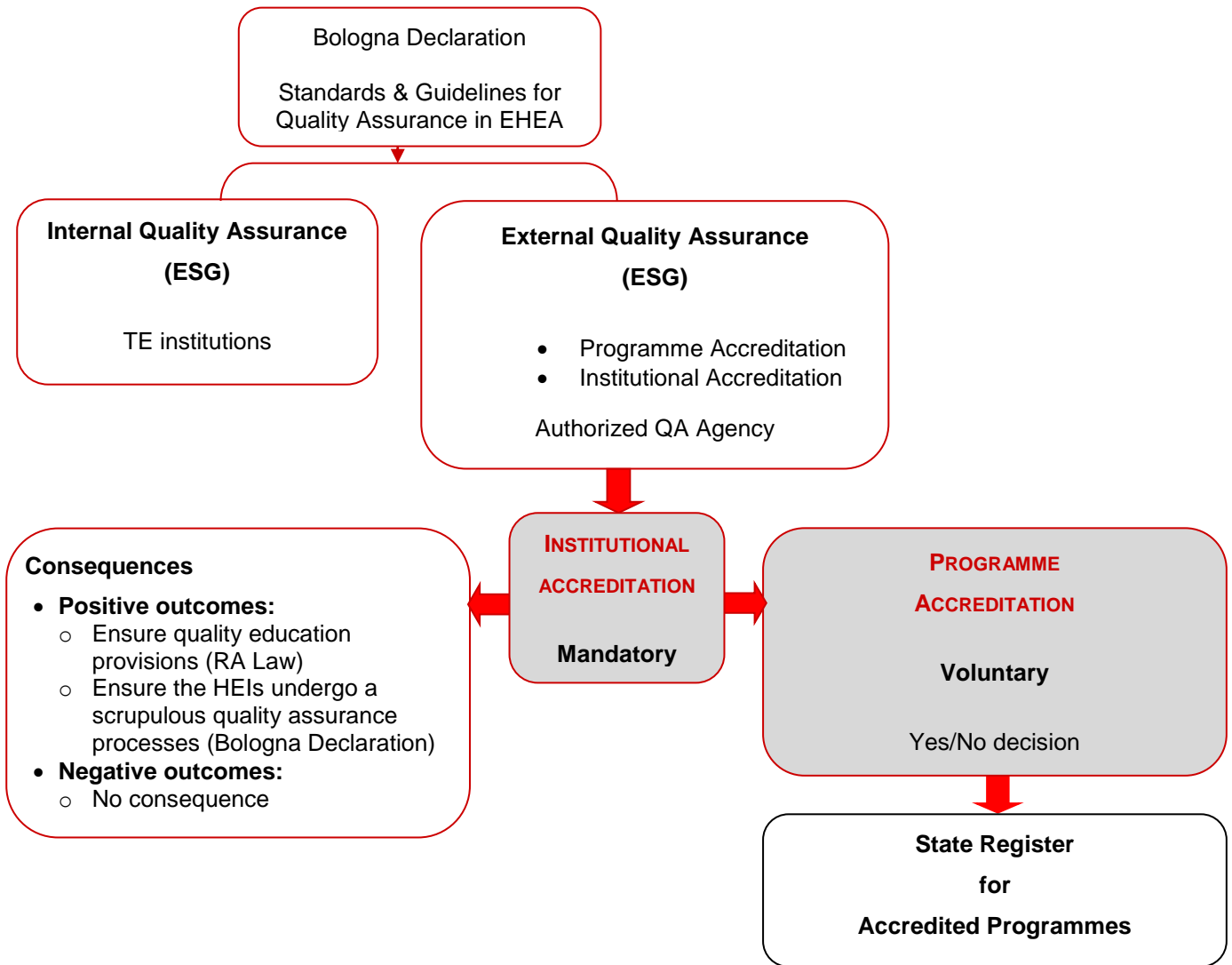
promotion of a model for external quality assurance systems (accreditation) in both Armenia and Georgia.

In addition, ANQA has already planned its testing and implementation stage of the external QA system. A set of pilot procedures is underway and site visits are planned for Autumn 2011. This in essence tests a large set of the underlying goals of this action line. In no way should our project undermine ANQA's activities. To cope with this development NVAO should take into account the fact that its contribution will be mainly in assisting ANQA wherever possible and to provide as much feedback as possible.

The main challenge for this action line seems to be that the setting up the external quality assurance system coincides with the development of a quality assurance culture within higher education institutions. This is quite a precarious balance to achieve. It is no coincidence that the Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area are developed from internal QA up. It is the internal QA system that provides the necessary input for the external QA system and it is the external QA system that should take into account the efficacy of the internal QA system. With a developed external QA system, institutions will readily gear internal QA towards external QA and lose focus on internal QA's objective to learn and improve. Both internal and external QA could therefore become instrumental. An instrumental implementation could further diminish ownership of the QA system at individual level.

This challenge could be reinforced in a HE sector where up until now control was emphasized over the improvement of quality. To change a HE culture normally takes time and includes attention to attitudes, perceptions and relationships. Some of these elements seem to be present but are undermined by a sense of uncertainty. The uncertainty comes from two sides. The external QA system on the one hand is seen as (Bologna and/or governmentally) imposed and in essence external to the HE institutions. The minister on the other hand has indicated that Armenia should move forward as fast as possible but that the whole external QA system is still "amendable". Institutions and other stakeholders could therefore rightly wonder if compliance with the current external QA system would undermine their position to change it to their advantage.

External Quality Assurance Framework



3.3.3. Proposed activities

Activity	Method	Result	When
Analyze present situation of External Quality Assurance in Armenian TE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Meetings with ANQA staff • Meetings with TE-institutions • Meeting with government 	Report on the state of EQA in Armenian TE, description of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present situation (SWOT) • needs analysis • performance gaps, • implementation plan 	June 2011
Further develop the Armenian EQA- concept, policies, standards and criteria for accreditation and audits	2-day Workshop with stakeholders and ANQA staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the Armenian EQA-concept, policies, standards and criteria for accreditation and audits • Plan for validating model (pilots, consultation, decision-making) 	January 2012
Training of key persons from 4 TE institutions and ANQA staff on EQA	3-day training session on all aspects of EQA	Key persons from four institutions, experts and ANQA staff are trained and prepared for pilots EQA	January 2012
Pilots in 4 TEI's (2 on institutional audit, 2 on programme accreditation)	Pilot on workability, efficacy and efficiency of EQA-concept	Report on results of pilots and proposals for adjustment of EQA-concept	January – June 2012
Stakeholder opinions on EQA-model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National stakeholders conference • Written comments by stakeholders on proposed EQA-concept 	Report on stakeholders reactions on EQA – model and proposals for adjustment	September – October 2012
Decision making on Armenian EQA-model	Formal procedure within ANQA and Government	Decision on validated concept, policies, procedures, standards for accreditation and audits	October 2012

3.3.4. Implementation plan

The original proposal had a parallel approach towards action line #1: internal QA and #2: external QA. The activities in both action lines were developed along the same timeline. Some of the elements included in the proposed activities related to each other. Parallel action lines were included to strengthen cross-fertilisation within the project.

From the response of the minister, the institutions and ANQA, it has become clear that all stakeholders prefer to schedule the activities related to external quality assurance after the activities related to internal quality assurance. That would enable the use of the results of the activities related to action line #1: internal quality assurance to feed into the activities related to action line #2: external quality assurance. In the perspective of the Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area this does make perfect sense.

In practice this will mean that the results of action line #1 should contribute to kick-off of action line #2. The results of the activities on internal quality assurance and the feedback on the audits of the QA systems of three institutions should provide ample fodder for the seminar/training planned for January 2012.

In addition, the project will be able to use the results of ANQA's planned testing and implementation stage of the external QA system. Even if there are no definitive results of the planned pilots available, an evaluation of the ANQA's pilots should feed into the seminar/training (Jan. 2012) and into the project's pilots planned for the period January until June 2012. For the seminar/training (Jan. 2012), the project can also make use of the results of the PICQA project since the activity on "defining and adjusting criteria for external quality assurance in higher education of Armenia and Georgia" runs from February 2011 until February 2012. For the project's pilots (January – June 2012) the same cross-fertilisation is not possible. PICQA's testing of the procedure and criteria of accreditation run in April and June 2012 and therefore coincide.

NVAO's pilot can however not focus on the workability, efficacy and efficiency of the external QA concept. The legally implemented system will have to be piloted. This is a different type of piloting than originally proposed and in any case a tricky endeavour for an outside actor. NVAO will need to carefully apply the legal external QA methodology in order to be able to involve the stakeholders and come to a shared feedback report. The feedback mechanism (September – October 2012) should therefore aim to establish a common ground among all stakeholders about the external QA system and, if needed, to propose amendments. This also changes the targeted audience of the feedback report. Where the original goal was to reach the higher education community and its stakeholders, the feedback report should now also include the relevant Armenian policy makers. In order to achieve the greatest impact, any proposals to amend the existing system will need to be thoroughly and, where necessary, legally justified.

A decision on the Armenian external QA system is now planned for October 2012. Given the fact that this action line now focuses on feedback on an existing system, this might actually lead to a very unpredictable final date of the action line since amending the existing legal framework is the responsibility of the government.

3.4. Action line #3: quality assurance agency (ANQA)

3.4.1. Original objective

The further professionalization of ANQA as an organization, including development of ANQA's accountability mechanisms and training of ANQA staff

The following goals were perceived:

- Further development of ANQA as an organization. This includes the following elements:
 - The use of external quality assurance procedures for tertiary education
 - Organisational mission linked to ANQA's official status
 - Provision of documentation (manuals) on all ANQA activities
 - Reporting in the use of available resources (staff and budget)
 - Formalisation of independence criteria (this includes experts involved in procedures)
 - Accountability procedures which also include continuous stakeholder involvement and appeal procedures
 - Aggregate the elements of ANQA's internal quality assurance in an ANQA Quality Handbook
- Contribute to the development of an information system for quality assurance in Armenian Tertiary Education through which ANQA can publish information on QA and which can be linked to TEMIS (Tertiary Education Management Information System)
- Implement procedures for expert selection and expert pool formation (database development)
- Train ANQA staff in required and requested competencies needed for further professionalization of the agency
- Organize an external review of the ANQA organization

3.4.2. Needs analysis

From the Strategic Plan 2010-2015 and the Three Year Action Plan it is clear that ANQA has prepared itself quite well for the implementation of the Armenian QA system. In addition, ANQA takes part in two projects, the PICQA and the DIUS project, which also include some of the objectives under action line #3.

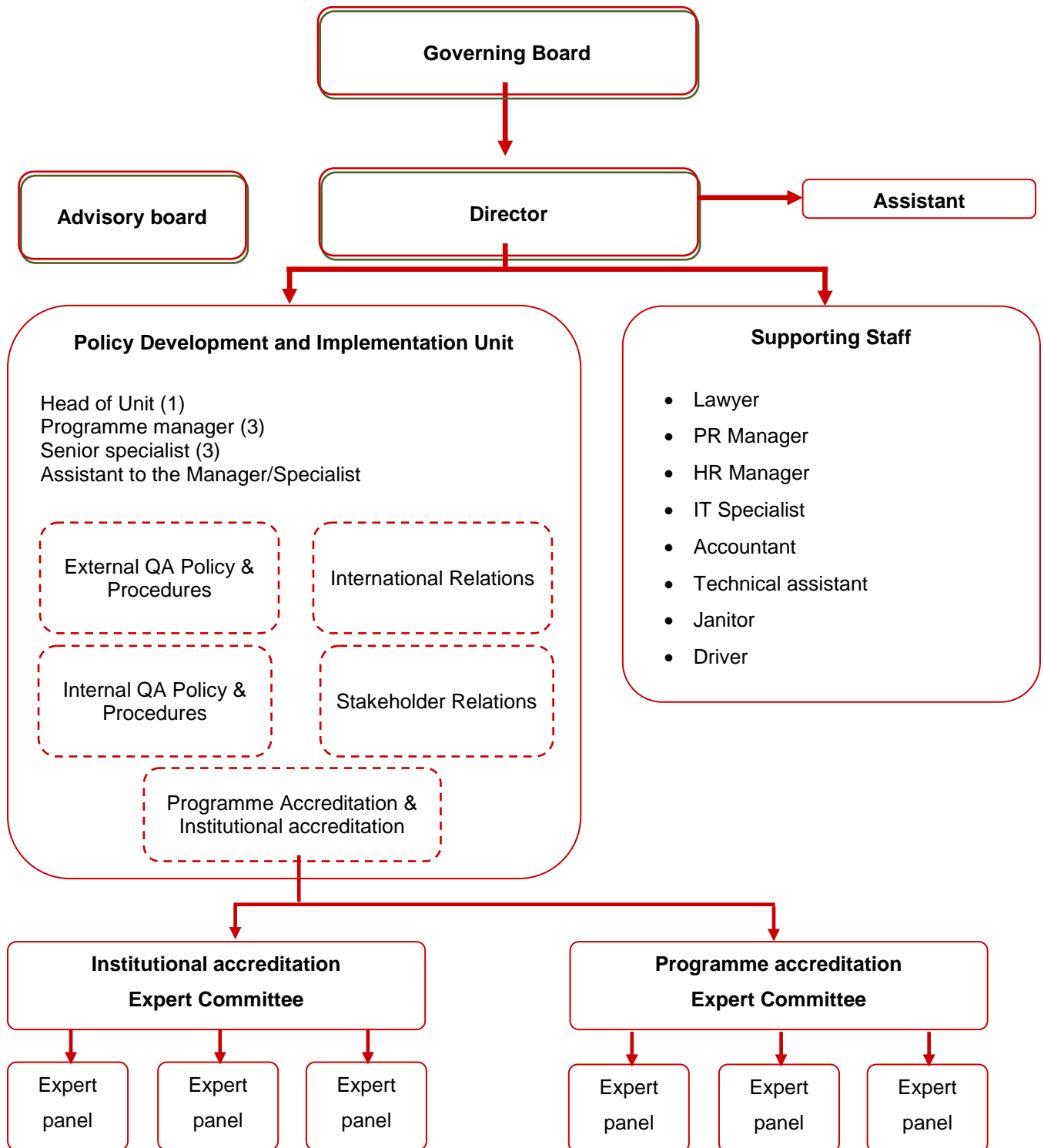
ANQA has additionally extended its international activities beyond these projects. The scope of activities here include ANQA's participation in the yearly European Quality Assurance Forum, the INQAAHE Forums and ENQA workshops. ANQA has associate status at the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). And finally, the deputy director of ANQA was elected as Board member of INQAAHE and started in this position in April 2011.

ANQA has continued its development of documentation on almost all of its activities: on institutional accreditation, on programme accreditation, on expert selection, on conflicts of interest, on its organisational culture. The documentation also includes an organisational structure (see the diagram below).

Armenian TE also already has a collection of data which is managed in an online database. The project's work on applying this information system for QA and the internal workflow of ANQA is already underway. This includes the way experts can be pooled.

ANQA has additionally made a start with the development of its own Internal Quality Assurance system.

Organisational structure of ANQA (May 2011)



3.4.3. Proposed activities

Activity	Method	Result	When
Analyze present situation of ANQA -organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Meetings with ANQA staff 	Report on the state of ANQA quality assurance, description of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present situation (SWOT) • needs analysis • performance gaps • implementation plan 	June 2011
Further development of ANQA as an organization	Workshops with ANQA leadership, ANQA QA-officer and ANQA staff members on all elements of professionalizing ANQA, aimed at reviewing existing procedures and defining shared approach for professionalization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining ANQA internal quality assurance concept • Design of ANQA Quality Handbook • Action plan for professionalizing ANQA 	September 2011
Develop information system for QA in Armenian Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of information used and needed, provided by ANQA • Comparison with the Consultant's data modelling done for the Higher Education Register (www.highereducation.be) and Crossroads (www.grossroads.eu) • Workshops with ANQA and relevant stakeholders on development of Armenian information model • In between: assistance in development system by experts' guidance and advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective and adequate information model that can be used to design a database model for QA • An overview of information that can be communicated automatically between Armenian databases 	November 2011 - October 2012
Further develop criteria and procedures for expert selection and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and validate procedures that ANQA has developed • Develop training materials • Organize experts training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANQA staff is trained in expert selection and training • Trained experts 	November 2011: November 2011, April 2012, and March 2013
Further develop internal ANQA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On line and vis-à-vis consulting sessions with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An adequate ANQA internal quality Assurance 	June 2012 -

QA-procedures and assist in editing a handbook on QA	<p>ANQA leadership and ANQA QA-officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational audit 	system	<p>December 2012</p> <p>September 2012:</p>
Professionalizing ANQA staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training materials for collective training sessions and for individual development Organize collective training sessions with international experts Organize individual training activities (internships, study programs, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANQA staff is trained in required and requested competencies needed for further professionalization of the agency 	<p>November 2011 and March 2013</p> <p>ongoing</p>
Prepare for and conduct external review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge transfer and guidance on the design and preparation of external review (workshop to prepare for external review) Organization and conducting of external review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External review of ANQA, as part of the procedures to join European QA-associations 	<p>May 2012</p> <p>May 2013</p>

3.4.4. Implementation plan

The original proposal already focused on further professionalization. In essence, there is no doubt that ANQA is already quite far in its professional development and in its integration in the international QA community. The Armenian stakeholders seem to share this perspective.

From the discussions with the ANQA management and the ANQA staff, it became clear that this action line #3 covers most of the outstanding issues ANQA is dealing with. The proposed activities therefore quite suit the needs of ANQA's further professionalization.

From the needs analysis it has become clear that the design of the ANQA Quality Handbook (September 2011) should also include a focus on accountability of ANQA as a QA agency. Accountability for QA agencies is generally understood as a requirement to explicitly address the concerns, requirements or perspectives of its stakeholders. This goes beyond the accountability guideline in the European Standards & Guidelines. These refer to accountability as a published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself and documentation which include processes and results (that reflect mission and goals), a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism, mechanisms that ensure the quality of activities and internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism. In addition, we should refer to the official competences of the Advisory Board, the formal communication lines with the stakeholders, and the implementation of appeal mechanisms.

For the development of the QA information system (November 2011 – October 2012) the project can use the existing databases and work backwards to design the information model. Such an information model is an abstract, formal representation of entity types that includes their definition, attributes and relationships. It provides (inexperienced) stakeholders with an understandable, stable, and organized structure of information on all the data available in Armenian TE and applied in ANQA's workflow. Such an information model provides all stakeholders with easy access to the discussion about information management in TE and QA.

3.5. Action line #4: development of a quality assurance culture

3.5.1. Original objective & goals

To build further on the three first elements and includes the organization of two study tours for 4-5 persons each time

The following goals were perceived:

- Representatives of the RA Government, MoES, ANQA, CEP and HEIs on the study-tours
 - get a better understanding of different European TE-systems
 - get to see best practices in European Quality Assurance
 - get to know different approaches and systems of Quality Assurance

- develop competencies to more effectively contribute to development of Armenian QA

3.5.2. Needs analysis

The Armenian QA system includes institutional and programme approaches. The two study tours would therefore better be linked to these two elements of external QA approaches. There are only a limited number of countries that can accommodate a study tour that concentrates on both and where internationally renowned agencies are involved. The following countries would be suitable: Austria, The Netherlands (& Flanders) and Switzerland. Germany and Norway are to a lesser extent suitable since either the institutional approach has not been formally implemented or the institutional approach is a once in a lifetime event.

3.5.3. Proposed activities

Activity	Method	Result	When
Analysis of wishes and needs for the international visit	Meeting with ANQA-staff and with participants from MoES, CEP and HEIs	Program design, including decision about countries to visit. Possibly: Belgium (Flanders)/Netherlands and Switzerland	June 2011
Organizing the visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting in touch with all contributors and making agreements on contributions • Organizing workshops for participants (preparing them for visits and for their individual assignments) 	Visits are prepared	October 2011 - May 2012
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking participants and contributors feedback • Writing evaluation report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits are evaluated • Further actions to develop quality culture are planned 	September 2012

3.5.4. Implementation plan

The following elements need to be covered in the study tour:

- Introduction to the HE system and the NQF
- General introduction to the external QA system
- External QA at programme level
- External QA at institutional level
- General introduction the QA agency
- Internal QA of the QA Agency
- Strengths and weaknesses of the QA system
- Visit to the ministry of education to discuss the QA system
- Visit to an umbrella organisation (ex. Rector's conference) to discuss the QA system
- Visit to a HE institution to discuss external QA at programme level
- Visit to a HE institution to discuss external QA at institutional level

3.6. Action line #5: implementation

3.6.1. Original objective & goals

Evaluation of the application and validation of the overall project results.

The following goals were perceived:

- Put the developed overall QA system into practice
- Evaluate the process and the outcome of the application
- Validate the result of the overall project

3.6.2. Proposed activities

Activity	Method	Result	When
Stakeholders evaluation	Stakeholders survey, interviews, stakeholders workshop and discussions during national stakeholders conference	Evaluation of the implementation process	June – November 2013
Validation of the result of the overall project	Workshop with the Consultant, ANQA, RA Government, Worldbank, MoES, CEP, TEIs on results of the project	Shared vision on results of the project	December 2013

3.6.3. Implementation plan

The specific actions to take in this phase (which will take place in 2012 and 2013) will be a priori agreed with CEP, MoES and ANQA, and will be specified later, depending on the experiences in the development of the system.

4. From inception to execution

4.1. The Armenian TE system is rapidly transforming to fulfil the needs of its society and to comply with international developments. This project is run in a context of change. (See: 1.1. Introduction)

During the kick off visit, the representatives of NVAO have been able to meet with the ANQA management, the ANQA staff, the Minister of Education and Science, with representatives of the universities and with PIU/CEP.

These meetings have provided the essential information that has been used to produce the inception report. The results of each of the meetings have been included in this chapter and in the chapters with the needs analyses and implementation plans per action line of the project.

A context of change) In order to move towards a shared quality culture, several stakeholders need to take ownership of their part of the Armenian QA system. (See: 1.3. The policy context) A major benefit for the execution of the project is the fact that ANQA has organised itself well and is committed to move QA forward. (See: 1.5. A context of commitment) A major challenge might be the concurrent project activities of ANQA. This challenge can relate to both content and staff investment. (See: 1.4 A context of project-driven activities) Then again, this might prove to be fruitful in the development of both the Armenian QA system and this project. NVAO and ANQA can carefully organise co-operation and cross-fertilisation wherever possible.

What should set this project apart is its ambition to have an impact on general educational management. Here, QA can be seen as motor for driving inclusive change in the whole of the TE sector and could cover culture, attitudes, perceptions and relationships.

The project should therefore work firmly on and within the stakeholders model to enhance the sense of ownership of the QA system. The project includes a focus on the internal QA system without linking it directly to the external QA system. The three audits undertaken in action line #1 will use NVAO's model to audit QA systems of institutions. This provides a chance to learn and improve without the element of accountability which is included in the external QA system.

The pilots included under action line #2 on the other hand will use the actual external QA model. But these pilots are intended to include all stakeholders when checking the feasibility of the proposed model in order to improve. It is a means for all the stakeholders to check the model's quality and efficiency and to reveal imperfections. In case imperfections are detected they can be addressed by all stakeholders before time and resources are allocated on a large scale and before an element of accountability is introduced.

From the kick-off meeting it has become clear that the Armenian stakeholders have the intention to transform approaches to teaching and learning by introducing new QA mechanisms. The project will need to fall in line with this endeavor. To be successful the project should therefore opt for a no-nonsense and hands-on approach to QA with a substantial involvement of the Armenian stakeholders.



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