



DEQAR CONNECT - Status Update Report - 2

Covering the period from September 2020 until May 2021

This internal report is intended for all DEQAR CONNECT project partners to keep up to date with all project related developments.

General DEQAR statistics

DEQAR numbers ¹	March 2020	September 2020	30 April 2021	Project target
Reports	47 267	52 533	58 247	50 000
Institutions	2 270	2 532	2 768	N/A
Agencies	31	34	41	39
Coverage ²	18	18	21	23

¹ These numbers reflect work done by all registered agencies

² EHEA systems with ≥50% of HEIs in DEQAR

DEQAR Website visits (unique page views):

between 1/3/2020–31/8/2020: 19 599 (average: 3 929 per month)

between 1/9/2020-30/4/2021: 40 295 (average: 5 036 per month)

[Full DEQAR statistics since the beginning of the project in March 2020](#)

[Full DEQAR statistics from September 2020 until end of April 2021](#)

	Partner agencies uploading prior to the project (i.e. pre March 2020)	Partner agencies uploading during the project (i.e. March 2020-April 2021)
Number	10	14
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACSUCYL • NVAO • ACQUIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVAO • ACQUIN • MusiQuE



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MusiQuE • NCPA • ANQA • IAAR • IQAA • NCEQE • AQ Austria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCPA • ANQA • IAAR • IQAA • NCEQE • AQ Austria • EAEVE • SKVC • CTI • AEQES • HAC
Number of agencies using automatic methods of upload (i.e. API/CSV)	5	11

1. Project management, monitoring and evaluation (WP1)

Done

Reporting: the [Progress Report](#), **summarising achievements and challenges**, was uploaded on the European Commission portal at the end of March 2021. With regard to **financial reporting**, 17 out of 21 partners reported their staff and subcontracting costs for the year 2020.

The [first Status Update Report](#) (internal newsletter for project partners) was sent in September.

Done

The second [Advisory Group](#) was held online on 17 February 2021

The AG meetings start with an overview and summary of the completed activities as well as the latest DEQAR statistics. The main discussion during the **second AG meeting** evolved around the concept note for policy briefs on quality assurance, using data from DEQAR and ETER. The AG also discussed



ideas for updating the data model, the role of EQAR in micro-credentials and involvement of and collaboration with stakeholders.

The relevant meeting documents (agenda, reports etc.) can be found on [Trello](#), as well as the composition of the AG.

2. Technical Peer Support to Enhance Coverage (WP2 – ASHE)

Done

The **Peer Support phase** started in May 2020 and ended in February 2021. Lead partner ASHE and 8 mentors offered continuous support in the implementation of this phase. The [Peer support phase summary](#) was sent to the European Commission in March 2021.

In total 35 virtual meetings took place between mentors and partner agencies. Mentors met six times and discussed agencies' progress, success and obstacles, enabling a continuous information flow about the implementation of the project.

In September 2020, EQAR organised an additional virtual support meet-up, gathering all partner agencies. The discussions revolved around common dilemmas and obstacles faced on the way to establishing automatic connection to DEQAR.

By the end of the peer support phase (February 2021), 11 out of 16 partner agencies had uploaded in DEQAR. Five partner agencies used the API to upload records in DEQAR, 8 partner agencies used the CSV upload and 6 agencies made manual uploads. Out of 6 partner agencies that had never uploaded in DEQAR prior to the project, 3 have done so during the peer support phase.

Approximately 60% of all reports uploaded to DEQAR between May 2020 and February 2021 came from the DEQAR CONNECT project partner agencies.

Started and ongoing

The newcomer **QAAs** are implementing Submission API clients or regular export of CSV files to **upload their reports in DEQAR**. Agencies are expected to upload all of their reports by the **end of May 2021** and [submit the API code](#) by end of **September 2021**.

As set out in the project description, agencies are expected to implement a solution that keeps on feeding their QA reports into DEQAR regularly and (semi-)automatically, also after the ending of the project. One time manual submission of reports will not be sufficient to fulfill the project's tasks. By now, 11 agencies have used advanced methods (i.e. CSV/API) to upload reports in DEQAR.



Still to do !

Initially, the project involved **site visits between mentors and agencies in which the technical aspects** of the implementation of the API would have been discussed. Due to the pandemic these processes were put on hold. Taking in consideration the new developments with the vaccination roll out in many European countries, coordinators are considering organizing visits to agencies that are in need of additional mentoring at some point in late summer/early fall 2021.

Still to do !

The original **Workshop** for QA agencies had been postponed in the hope of having it in person. Since this is still doubtful, the idea is now to organise a **webinar at some point in autumn**.

The webinar will be open to all EQAR registered agencies and not only to project partners. Agencies will be introduced to the newest improvements of the data model and the API. A separate session will be dedicated to (non-project) agencies that have never uploaded reports in DEQAR, introducing them to the different modes of submitting reports. A number of DEQAR CONNECT project partners will be invited to showcase their work to these agencies.

3. Develop DEQAR's Connectivity (WP3 – CIMEA)

Started and Ongoing ◆

After the **kick-off webinar** organised on May 2020 by lead ENIC NARIC partner CIMEA, four other group online and several one to one meetings were held.

Partner ENIC NARICs discussed their progresses and obstacles on the way to establishing API connection to DEQAR. They also discussed the usage of DEQAR visuals on the documents they issue to the students; the type of information that is used from DEQAR to validate information provided by students; search modes etc.

Started and Ongoing ◆

ENIC-NARIC project partners use the Web API to **integrate DEQAR information in their workflow**, with a view of speeding up the recognition process for qualifications from those HEIs present in DEQAR. The software that the centres have created in order to connect to DEQAR should be [submitted in a form of API code](#) by the **end of May 2021**.



Three of the ENIC NARIC centres [have established a connection to DEQAR](#). One centre will be establishing a connection to DEQAR in the second half of 2021.

Three of the centres are currently going through or planning systemic IT restructuring. They will be working on advanced solutions of presenting the DEQAR data in the internal workflows in the following months.

Still to do !

The in-person **Workshop** for all ENIC-NARICs had been postponed in the light of travel restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. The coordinator is considering visiting each ENIC-NARIC separately, if travel restrictions are absent.

EQAR would visit each partner in order to discuss the advanced integration of the DEQAR connection with the centres' web-developer(s). The idea is that EQAR assists, answers questions and discusses integration plans/progress directly with the persons in charge of the implementation of the connection.

Timing to be discussed and confirmed with each centre, taking inconsideration the developments related to vaccinations and travel restrictions in Europe.

Started and ongoing ◆

Creating a **compatibility layer for Europass Digital Credentials** so that DEQAR data can feed directly into Accreditation Database underlying the Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure.

A functioning prototype has been implemented and DEQAR data can be loaded into the Europass Qualifications Dataset Register (QDR) on a per-country basis. It will allow EU Member States to feed information on quality-assured higher education into one single European database, DEQAR, from which it will be used in another application, rather than to duplicate work and feed into several independent European datasets. This will bring efficiency gains for countries using it.

In January 2021, EQAR invited EU ministries and quality assurance agencies registered in EQAR to participate in testing the connectivity interface between Europass database and DEQAR.

In total, 8 countries have expressed interest in participating in this phase. Currently, issuing digital credentials through the Europass platform is delayed by the Commission and this activity is on hold and expected to be re-started once the Commission enables this option. In the meantime, EQAR and DG EMPL are planning to organize a webinar in which using DEQAR as a



trusted source of information for validating information about institutions will be discussed.

EQAR also started to engage with key actors in another European initiative, EBSI/ESSIF, in order to explore how the system could link to DEQAR for information on quality assurance/accreditation.

Done

On 15 September the [Roundtable on higher education data interoperability](#) was held (online).

The Roundtable was organised to start discussions with various European initiatives in the field of HE data in order to identify opportunities to better connect existing systems and data sets and to thus reduce unnecessary duplication of work.

The organisations welcomed the initiative and agreed to continue cooperating on a number of problem domains. There was consensus that higher education institution identifiers are the most pressing problem domains.

Agenda and background documents for the roundtable meeting can be found on the [Trello Board](#).

As a result, HEI identifiers are currently being tackled as the first and most pressing problem domain; a technical group is working out concrete proposal.

4. Enhancing DEQAR's Visibility (WP4)

Started and ongoing

The creation of a **DEQAR label** to enhance the visibility of reports in the database.

Apart from the concerns voiced during the Advisory Group meeting, discussions with ENIC-NARICs showed that they are keen to reference information on DEQAR, but most are not able to actually include a graphical mark. Instead, permanent URIs and digitally-signed (hence tamper-proof), machine-readable DEQAR data were highlighted as more relevant and thus desirable for recognition-related use cases.

EQAR is thus currently looking into possibilities to represent/share DEQAR data in digitally signed form, instead of a graphical mark.



Started and ongoing ◆

Promoting and presenting DEQAR in European and national stakeholder events and dissemination both in stakeholder networks and online, by all project partners.

Events:

Presentation of DEQAR at events has of course been somewhat negatively affected by the pandemic. Still, EQAR and project partners have promoted DEQAR and DEQAR CONNECT at 13 events during the first year of the project, reaching ≈1050 persons.

Online promotion:

From March 2020 until the end of March 2021, project partners promoted DEQAR CONNECT 107 times (of which 43 by EQAR). This includes social media posts (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook), website news items, website project pages and items in newsletters.

Project partners are expected to continue their event and online promotion and fill it in the [Event and Online Monitoring Tool](#).

Started and ongoing ◆

EQAR and ETER team up to produce **Policy briefs of QA policies and practice across Europe**, addressing Bologna Peer Group priorities.

The policy briefs are European-wide and country specific analyses on the implementation of the ESG into national higher education systems, also providing reflections on institutional practice, based on insights gathered through DEQAR. The analysis looks into: approaches towards the design of their quality assurance system, changes in external QA systems and alignment/coverage of higher education systems with the ESG

The first analysis delves into the external quality assurance frameworks and their alignment with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) through an exploration of two combined datasets i.e. DEQAR and the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER).

The analysis will be published later this month (May).

Still to do !

Seminar organised by EQAR for the relevant **BFUG working groups** i.e. Thematic Peer Review Group on Quality Assurance and Recognition by January 2022. After the event, a Seminar Report will be drafted.

The Seminar on QA and Recognition will gather members of the Bologna Follow-Up Group's working structure. Selected outputs of the Policy Briefs will be presented and then discussed.