

**HERE Seminar: The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)
in practice**

Implications for HEIs and higher education systems

19-20 October 2016, Lviv, Ukraine

As the president of the umbrella organization of students of the University of Montenegro and HERE team member, I was one of the participants and panelists in a seminar held in Lviv. 80 experts from the HE area from more than 20 countries took part in a seminar, together with representatives of the ministries, HERE teams, academic community and student organizations. During two-days-long seminar, participants had a chance to get all the relevant information on the QA system in countries where it is well developed, plus all the recommendations how to implement elements and principles of *The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, a document that is adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in 2015, which main focus is the necessity of stronger involvement of HEI in quality assurance.

On a two-days long seminar, representatives of the *Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture of the European Commission (EACEA)*, representatives of the *SPHERE team, European Quality Assurance Registrar for Higher Education (EQAR)* took a floor and on the topic *Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, there was a presentation *Regional collaboration in external QA: The role of agencies*. After that, students were under a spotlight, i.e. their role in the QA process, followed by a presentation by the European Students' Union representative. After the presentation of Mr Gajek, I held a presentation about QA system in Montenegro and the role of students and the Student Parliament of the University of Montenegro in the process, and the representative of the *Student Alliance of Moldova* spoke about the same topic. Especially interesting was the session held after the plenary session where was spoken about how to foster the student involvement in the QA process, the challenges that are ahead of the student organizations in that field, importance of implementation *student-centred learning* principle in both internal and external evaluation.

On the second day of the seminar we spoke about the changes in HE system, the actual challenges in the QA and HEIs' responsibilities in creating "the culture of QA", as the prerequisite for progress in the QA system.

After analyzing all the aspects of the QA system, the presentation of good practice in countries with longer tradition in this area and constructive discussion in both plenary sessions and thematic panels, the conclusion is that HEI should pay more attention in

reaching the goals and principles set forth in *The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Taking into consideration the national and regional needs, HEI shall establish regional and international cooperation to achieve internationalization principles in the QA area. Strengthening its own capacities, the idea of the culture of QA, readiness to implement new principles and dealing with the challenges are just some of the aspects that HEI should bear in mind when creating strategies on HE. Involvement of all stakeholders in the HE will result in higher quality of HE and better results in internal and external evaluation.

As a HERE team member and the president of the Student Parliament of the University of Montenegro, it was a great honour to present the role of Montenegrin students in QA system. The role of students in this area is of essential importance and raising awareness on their further inclusion in internal and external evaluation, plus active contribution of students and students' representatives, are prerequisites for full implementation of the *student-centred learning* principle. Experience and guidelines of the European Students' Union, with the support of the Ministry of Education and other HE stakeholders, should pave the road for all the students' organizations in Europe, to achieve the goal of high standard QA system, considering the fact that it is one of the key priorities in creating the knowledge of a high-quality in European HE area.