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**Abstract**

Looking back at quality assurance in Europe, the author establishes that it has become a fact of life in higher education. It has also become a profession with its own set of practitioners and instruments. With the appearance of the common European standards (ESG), quality assurance anchors its credibility in the public mind. But with compliance of quality assurance agencies with the ESG having become the criterion for both ENQA membership and being listed in the European Register, and the judgment with such compliance being passed by two different bodies, a new divergence between accepted 'quality assurances' is in the making. The author argues that the essence of quality assurance must not be lost, which is to inspire higher education institutions to practise good educating. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)