

New Developments in the European Higher Education Area – New Approaches to Quality Assurance?

International Online Forum “Global in the Regional:
Kazakhstan in the Bologna Process and EU Projects”

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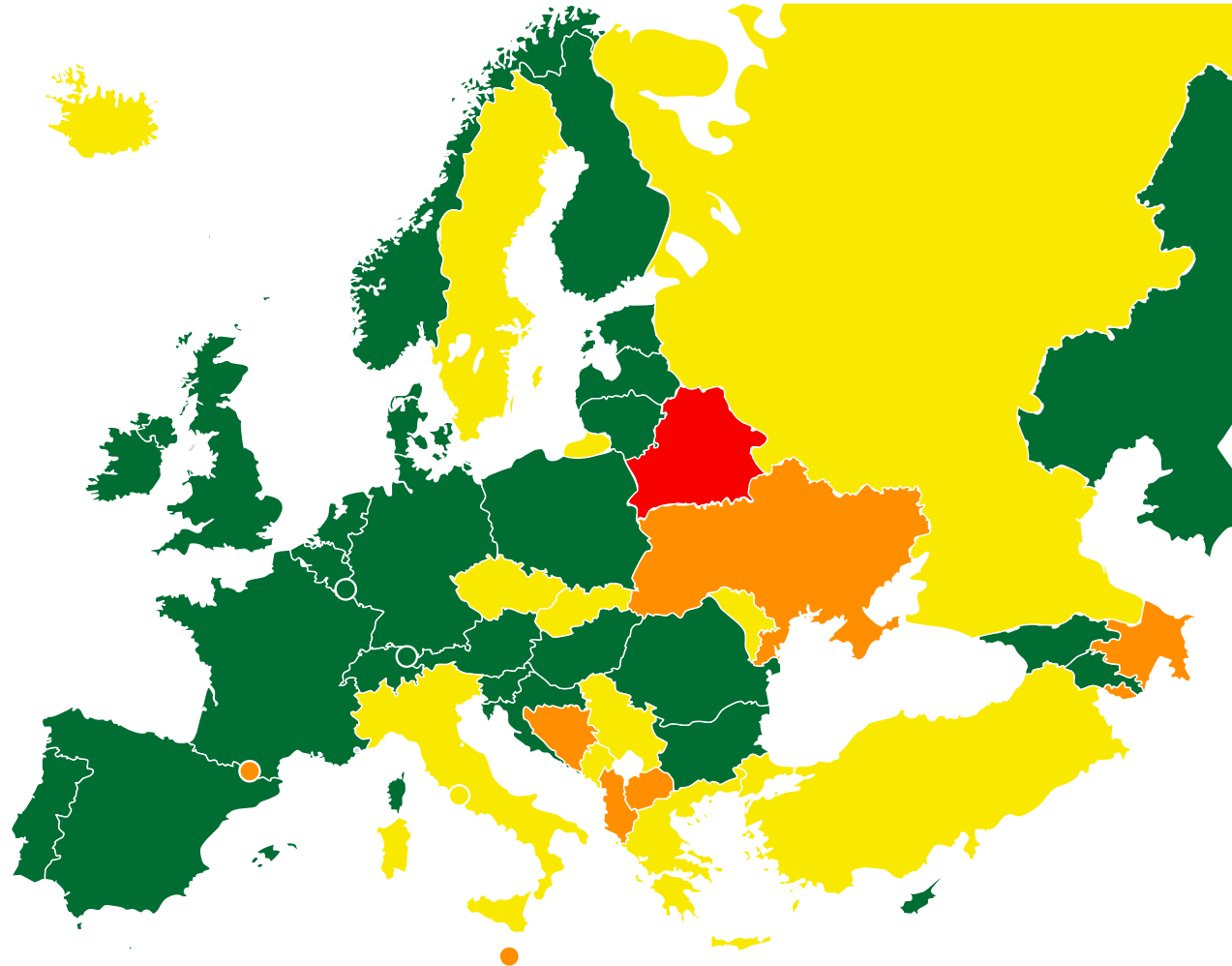
Building blocks of the European quality framework



ECTS	common credit system based on learning outcomes and student workload
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework: learning outcomes and ECTS credit ranges for the three cycles
ESG	common standards for quality assurance (QA)
EQAR	official register of agencies that substantially comply with ESG
DEQAR	higher education institutions & programmes quality-assured in line with ESG

EHEA Key Commitment – external QA

- 49 QA agencies registered on EQAR
- 28 EHEA countries **fully realise** commitment

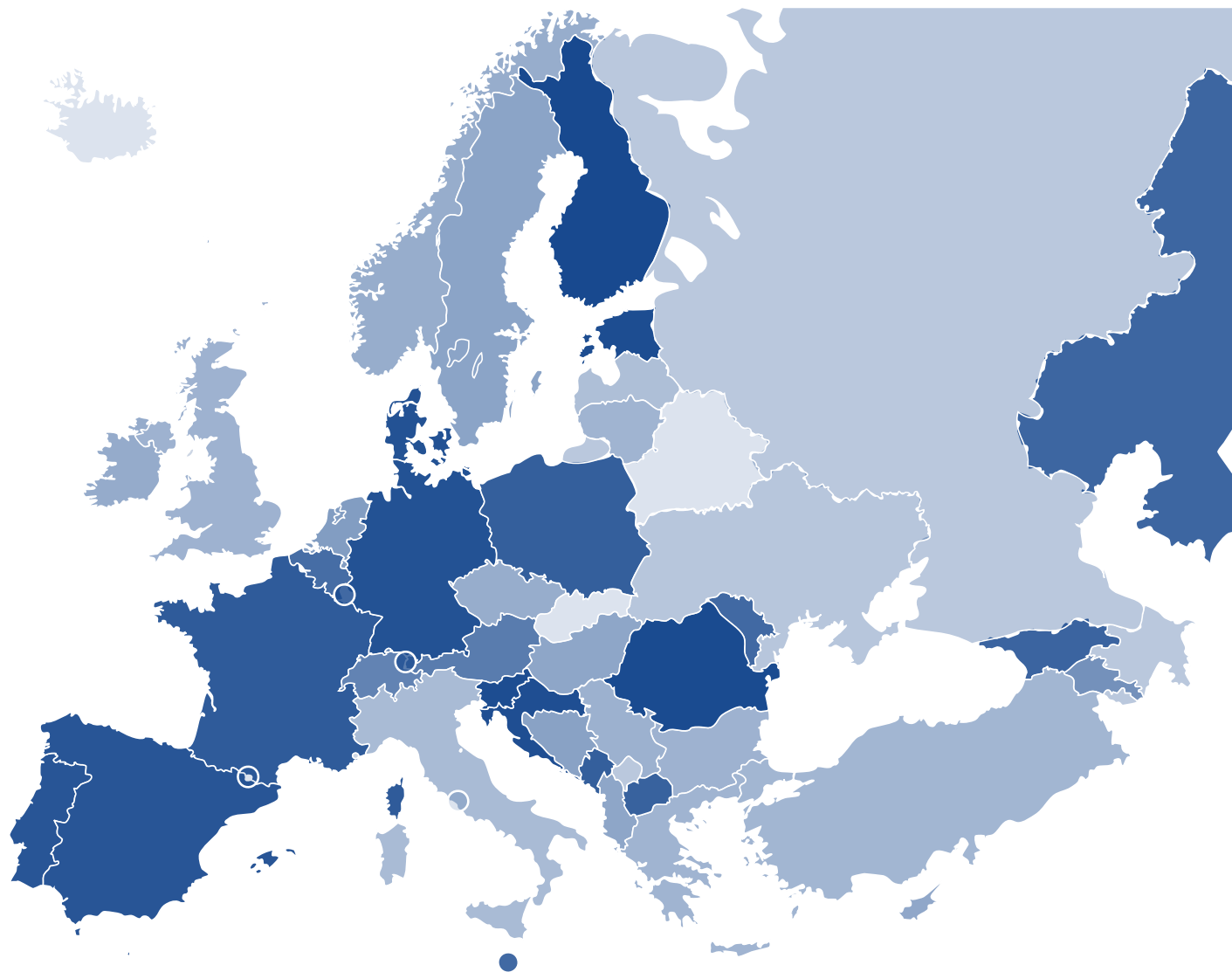


DEQAR Key Figures



	September 2020	Target 2022 (DEQAR CONNECT)
Reports	52 320	50 000
Higher Education Systems Covered (≥ 50% of HEIs in DEQAR)	18	23
Agencies	34	39
Institutions with reports	2 535	n/a

DEQAR Coverage



Challenges and Current Trends in HE



Sustainability,
climate change

innovation in education content, new interdisciplinary partnerships, European Universities, etc.

Inclusiveness,
accessibility

social dimension, diversity of learners and provision (e.g. short cycle, micro-credentials, etc.)

Digitalisation (not only,
but also due to Covid-19)

changes in the way we teach and learn, organisational challenges for HEIs, ...

Change in skills need

new approaches (e.g. micro-credentials), new providers or partnerships

Micro-credentials – Definitions



- “A micro-credential is acquired on the basis of the learning outcomes that a learner has **achieved following a short learning experience**, according to transparent standards and upon assessment. [...]” (EU consultation group, report forthcoming)
- “A micro-credential is a **small volume of learning** certified by a credential. In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them [...]. A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials have explicitly defined learning outcomes at a QF-EHEA/NQF level, an indication of associated workload in ECTS credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are **subject to quality assurance in line with the ESG.**” (MICROBOL project)
- “Any credential that covers **more than a single course, but is less than a full degree.**” (Picard 2018)

Policy Framework



- EHEA/Bologna used to focus on three cycles (+ short cycle) so far
- Some tools already more open to other HE provision, others less
- Draft Rome Communiqué (November 2020):

“In addition to full degree programmes, many higher education institutions are offering or may offer smaller units of learning, which enable learners to develop or update their cultural, professional, and transversal skills and competences at various stages in their lives. We ask the BFUG to **explore how and to what extent these smaller, flexible units**, including those leading to micro-credentials, **can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tools.**”
- Not fully embraced yet, but expected to be soon

European Standards



- What the ESG state:
 - “Higher education institutions themselves also become more diverse in their missions, mode of educational provision and cooperation, including growth of internationalisation, digital learning and new forms of delivery.”
 - “The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA **regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery.**”
 - “In this document the term “programme” refers to **higher education in its broadest sense, including that which is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree.**”
- Fully applicable to HE provision outside traditional degrees
- Several ESG-based approaches exist in practice ...
 - Institutional audits including micro-credential offer
 - Certification at credential level, e.g. KIMEP Mini MBA by FIBAA
- ... but number of cases is still limited

Quality Assurance Systems



ESG, linked with ECTS & QF-EHEA

Institutional audits or accreditation

Micro-credentials etc. within scope – or not

Probably quite often does not yet (fully) cover m-c

Institutions should drive this, not QA (agencies)

Programme accreditation/QA system

Need to extend to micro-credentials etc.

Conceptually not very difficult, examples exist

Do we lack demand by HEIs or offer by QAAs?

Other providers (e.g. private company)

ESG-based or not?

Not difficult either for the some quality dimensions: skills, ECTS, EQF level, ...

But: who is eligible?

How about issues such as academic freedom, freedom of research, ...

ESG vs National Standards



- ESG – applicable to different types of provision
 - Principles-based
 - Not too prescriptive in detail, flexible (e.g. Covid-19 adaptation)
 - Developed with flexibility in mind
- Most agencies use own standards, not ESG directly
 - Need to articulate with ESG Part 1 (see standard 2.1), but ...
 - ... can be principles-based, but can also be more prescriptive
 - ... detailed operational or quantitative requirements tend to be less flexible
- Depends on each national/regional system

European infrastructure



- Fully embrace micro-credentials, other new types of provision
 - ESG and EQAR register are completely open
 - DEQAR so far focused on traditional degree programmes
- Tools need to be future-proof and scalable
 - Cope with increase in number and diversity of provision
 - Need for machine-readable & embeddable data on QA of providers & provision (e.g. DEQAR-Europass link)
- Easily understandable for diverse audience

Scenario – How the Future Might Look



- Digital credentials will become the norm, including for traditional degrees
- All EHEA tools fully extended or adapted to micro-credentials & similar new types of provision
- QA mandatory only for credit-bearing provision, but facilitates recognition towards traditional degrees as well as on the labour market
- A combination of:
 - Extension of existing QA systems to micro-credentials & co.
 - New methodologies for QA under the umbrella of the ESG
 - Other specific methodologies next to the ESG framework for non-HEIs
 - Non-HEI providers choose what framework they align to
- Credentials include/link to digital info on QA of the awarding body

Thank you. Questions?



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