CHAPTER 10

The Eastern European Region

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1 Introduction

A large part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) consists of 26 countries spanning the Eastern European region, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

Geographically, the Eastern European region's landscape includes countries from the Baltic Sea area in Northern Europe to Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, as well as those in Central and Western Asia. Politically, economically, technologically, socially, and culturally, the region is highly diverse. More policy cohesion and development are observed among the European Union member states (11 of the countries listed above[1]), followed by those in the accession process (eight countries[2]), and to some extent, other countries covered by EU neighbourhood policies (five countries[3]). While some trends, such as the digitalisation of tertiary education, are common, other developments point in different directions, including the ability to exercise academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as well as demographic trends where the number of students is rising in some countries but declining in others. Therefore, generalizations are difficult and should be approached with caution. Participation in the EHEA remains the most significant unifying educational policy factor, along with shared efforts to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and initiatives by the Council of Europe.

The Eastern European region faced a series of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, armed conflicts in the Caucasus countries, the migration crisis, a surge in the cost of living, dynamic political developments characterised by concerns over the democratic future of societies, efforts to curb corruption, and the development and implementation of artificial intelligence and other new technologies. Additionally, various manifestations of the climate emergency pose significant societal challenges and have had a profound impact on the tertiary education sector. In response, digitalisation

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generally – and of quality assurance specifically – increased; questions regarding academic integrity and ethics in education became more urgent and focal; mental health issues were actively discussed and required attention and intervention; mobility of students and staff both increased and diversified; the role of tertiary education in society was questioned, prompting efforts to redefine university missions; initiatives related to a green economy and resilience improvement influenced research agendas and the flexibility of study options. In quality assurance, efforts to find solutions for major risks caused by external factors led to innovations, expanding the functions of quality assurance agencies and increasing procedural flexibility; fostering intensified dialogue among public authorities, tertiary education institutions, and quality assurance agencies, and extending evaluation cycles – or at least debates around them – are among recent developments.

The further development of the EHEA, and consequently the Eastern European region, depends on adopting both flexible and strong quality assurance policies and procedures, creating an environment that supports their implementation, and monitoring the results and impacts at the level of the tertiary education system, individual institutions, and quality assurance agencies. Achieving full compliance with ESG remains a challenge for many QA agencies and countries. Strengthening cross-border cooperation and expanding activities in quality assurance are expected to help improve this region's and the entire EHEA's global standing.

2 An Overview of the Eastern European Region

The total population in the countries that comprise the Eastern European region is 436.7 million people, with Montenegro having the smallest population at 638,479 residents, and Russia having the largest, with over 144 million. Seventy percent of the region's population lives in four of these countries (Russia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Poland).

According to the European Demographic Data Sheet 2024 (Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2024), most Eastern European countries experienced a decline in population from 2000 to 2023. Data show that the 15 countries with the highest decline rates are Bulgaria and Latvia (-21%), Lithuania (-19%), Romania (-15%), Croatia (-14%), Serbia (-12%), Kosovo (-11%), Albania (-10%), Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia (-9%), Armenia and Belarus (-8%), Hungary (-6%), Poland (-4%), and Estonia (-3%). Countries with population growth include Azerbaijan and Türkiye (+27%), Slovenia (+7%), the Czech Republic (+5%), Montenegro (+2%), and Slovakia (+1%).

Most Eastern European countries are not members of the EU (15 out of 26). Only Kosovo was not part of the EHEA, while Russia and Belarus were suspended from the EHEA in 2022 due to the war inflicted upon Ukraine. All Eastern European countries have established National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), except for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Eastern Europe, only Kosovo did not ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention, reflecting a broad commitment to recognizing qualifications across borders within the European continent. Seven countries (Armenia, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia) ratified the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, indicating a step toward global mobility and recognition of academic credentials.

As shown in Annex 10A, this region has 165 external quality assurance providers (EQAPs), of which many (135) are based in the Russian Federation. Only three countries have more than one QA agency: Russia with 135, Kazakhstan with six, and Bosnia and Herzegovina with two. In total, there are 3,136 tertiary education institutions (TEIs) in the region. The countries with the largest number of TEIs are Russia (724), Ukraine (633), and Poland (426), which collectively account for 56.86% of all tertiary education institutions in the area.

3 Methodology

This chapter employs a multi-method approach, including a literature review, the collection of baseline data on the regional tertiary education and quality assurance landscape from official sources, written surveys, and focus group discussions, aligning with the overall methodology of the II Global Study. Its goal is to offer a thorough understanding of quality assurance trends and practices in the region. The literature review provides an overview of the trends and challenges in quality assurance that are typical of the Eastern European region. Along with the INQAAHE survey results, this serves as the foundation for gathering more detailed information about experiences in implementing the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), other QA standards, existing QA practices, and their influence on the development of national tertiary education systems through focus groups.

3.1 *Literature Review*

The literature provides a broader overview of the regional tertiary education and quality assurance landscape during the period analysed (2020–2024), as

well as specific issues identified concerning the improvement of quality assurance in the countries of the region.

Among other things, these include data available at the following websites:

- European Commission, specifically the Eurydice website
- Council of Europe
- EQAR
- ENQA and CEENQA, and each of their members' and affiliates' websites
- EUA
- EURASHE
- ESU
- UNESCO

Relevant policies, statements, analyses, and projects are listed in the references and notes. Basic data collected on the tertiary system and quality assurance in each Eastern European country are represented in Annex 10A.1.

3.2 *Surveys*

The second phase of the Global Study involved administering a standardised questionnaire developed by the working group of INQAAHE to both TEIs (via their Quality Assurance units) and EQAPs. The field work was conducted between September 2023 and February 2024. As shown in Table 10.1, the EQAP response rate was relatively strong, accounting for 74% of the population. The TEI sample was significantly lower, with a response rate of 12%; however, this is still considered a good response rate compared to other global studies. The surveys provide valuable data for cross-regional analysis, especially when complemented by information from other sources.

TABLE 10.1 The INQAAHE's survey responses overview of the Eastern European Region

Group	Population	Sample	Number of countries	% Response
EQAPS	35*	26	26	74%
TEIS	2363*	288	24	12%

Note: Data on the EQAP Population (35*) include five EQAPs from the Russian Federation, which were ENQA members or affiliates (currently suspended), and are also members of INQAAHE and other networks.; Data on the TEI population (2363*) does not include the number of TEIs in Russia (724) and Belarus (49).

3.3 *Focus Group Discussions*

In the final phase, six focus groups were held in September 2024 to explore the survey findings more thoroughly. Three focus groups included representatives from 29 TEIs across 23 countries (out of 26 in the region). Albania, Belarus, and Poland were not included due to a lack of responses. The other three focus groups involved 25 representatives from 20 EQAPs across 19 countries (out of 26). Albania, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Russia could not be included for the same reason. However, the data for Russia and Belarus were collected with the support of the INQAAHE secretariat and incorporated into the analysis by the lead authors of the manuscript.

3.4 *Analytical Context*

The extensive literature review, combined with data from surveys and focus groups, enables the identification of key trends and challenges through the lens of the efficiency, relevance, and transformative power of quality assurance in Eastern Europe. It also allows for comparison of these findings with data from other regions and with the information presented in Global Study I (Karakhanyan & Stensaker, 2020).

4 History of Accession of the Eastern European Region Countries to the EHEA

In many Eastern European countries, higher education reforms started before the Bologna Process. The introductory chapter on the European region discusses the context of Eastern European countries joining the EHEA and how quality assurance systems have developed. Enhancing the quality of higher education, with the aim of improving teaching and learning, was a goal shared by all states and higher education institutions in the Eastern European region, even before they joined the EHEA. The experience gained from applying various methods and standards in external evaluation procedures used by national authorities was utilised to develop a new, common European model of external quality assurance. This model is based on the substantial implementation of ESG at the national level, as well as on the development and delivery of cross-border activities.

The signing of the Bologna Declaration and accession to the EHEA mark a step forward in reforming various higher education systems, harmonizing them, and promoting further development to meet the established standards for quality assurance – the ESG.

Research conducted as part of this study has helped deepen understanding of new development trends in external and internal QA in the Eastern European region. Notably, the lack of information from surveys and focus group interviews was partly addressed by other literature sources, especially data from the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report (Eurydice, 2024), which offers an analytical overview of EHEA countries' achievements, challenges, innovations, and trends, presenting them through key performance indicators across six areas.

There was no delay in the creation of the first EQAPs in Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe; agencies were established around the same time in both regions. Data from the INQAAHE survey shows that quality assurance agencies (EQAPs) in Eastern European countries have been operational for an average of almost 15 years.

However, there are significant differences in the experience and maturity of external quality assurance systems across different countries. In this region, agencies like the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB, Hungary) and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC, Lithuania) are celebrating their 31st and 30th anniversaries, respectively. There are also relatively new agencies, such as the Azerbaijan Education Quality Assurance Agency (TKTA) and the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE), which are marking their 5th anniversaries. Data indicate that EQAPs were established in 10 countries before 1999, another 13 countries set up agencies between 2000 and 2005, one country in 2010, and one more during 2011–2015. The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has been operating since 2009 in a country that has not joined the EHEA, but the agency has held ENQA affiliate status since 2022.

Data for 2024 show that most countries (23) in the Eastern European region have established at least one national quality assurance agency that conducts quality assurance procedures at the institution or study programme level, while four countries – Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, and Russia – have established multiple agencies, mostly operating at the national level.

However, there are exceptions, such as the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) of Kazakhstan, which operates across borders in 15 other countries. Data on cross-border activities show that about 4% of EQAPs conduct their cross-border work within a specific region, while 47% of EQAPs operate outside their geographic area. In the past 5 years, 54% of EQAPs performed less than 25% of their external quality assurance procedures outside their home country. According to the official source from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, in September 2024,

135 organizations were able to conduct public accreditation of tertiary education programmes and/or related advanced education programmes. However, only three of these have been reviewed for alignment with the ESG and are members of ENQA (currently suspended). Russian EQAPs active nationally and internationally are listed in the Ranking of Russian Accreditation Agencies.

The key Bologna Process commitment regarding external quality assurance – whether at the study programme or institution level – is that it must be conducted by an independent agency that has undergone an external evaluation process to demonstrate compliance with ESG. The external evaluation and its results are included in an external review report, which can be used to apply for registration on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and full membership in ENQA, as well as membership in other international organizations such as the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). According to the INQAAHE Survey:

- 24 respondents are members or affiliates of ENQA,
- 22 members of CEENQA,
- 20 – of INQAAHE,
- 7 – of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN)
- 6 – of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- Additionally, 3 respondents have confirmed that they are registered on EQAR (some agencies additionally indicated their listing on EQAR, and the EQAR itself contains a list of 16 agencies which are from the Eastern European region[4]), recognised by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME, and WFME itself lists seven agencies from Eastern European region) and three are members of The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), while two respondents are members of Visegrád Four Quality Assurance Forum (the V4QA Forum), The European University Association (EUA), The German Academic International Network (GAIN), and The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and one is also a member of IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence (IREG Observatory), The European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE), Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW/IQA), European Network of Information Centres in the European Region, National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union and Erasmus+ countries (ENIC-NARIC, three EQAPs), and the Asia-Pacific Quality Register.

5 EQAP Reviews as an Accountability Mechanism

Through cyclical external review procedures, EQAPs confirm the credibility of their work, thereby strengthening the trust that TEIs, founders, students, the government, and society at large have in them. External reviews provide agencies with feedback on how well their work aligns with standards. They also help identify both best practices and areas that need improvement.

Survey respondents state 32% of agencies in Eastern European countries are mainly periodically reviewed by regional QA networks. Additionally, 20% are preparing for external evaluation. Twelve percent of respondents confirm they were subject to a review conducted by INQAAHE under Guidelines for Good Practice. According to survey data, EQAPs have undergone several cycles of external reviews provided by regional QA networks such as ENQA and/or INQAAHE.

The Eastern European quality assurance agencies that operate in substantial compliance with ESG are registered in the EQAR and meet the criteria to become full members of ENQA for a period of five years. This status confirms the credibility of their work. It offers opportunities for international collaboration with other QA agencies and higher education institutions, as well as chances to conduct cross-border activities, collaborate on projects, utilise European funding sources, network, participate in benchmarking and learning activities, gain greater visibility and growth, and have a larger impact on the quality and development of higher education.

However, at least 46% of countries in the Eastern European region (12 out of 26) lack a national agency operating in substantial compliance with ESG. There is still room for improvement, either by supporting those falling behind in development, assisting quality assurance agencies, or raising concerns with member governments when the national framework blocks agencies from meeting ESG standards. The 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué (EHEA, 2020) committed to removing the remaining barriers for countries working to achieve ESG compliance.

Recent efforts in the SEQA-ESG 1 project (2020–2022) (ENQA, 2020) have enabled six QA systems in Albania, the Czech Republic, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, and Slovakia to work towards ESG compliance. An important achievement was that the Slovakian agency SAAHE was registered on EQAR in 2023 and gained ENQA membership in 2024.

The new SEQA-ESG 2 project (2022–2025) supports four countries that already have a quality assurance agency – Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Ukraine – but are facing similar challenges in aligning with ESG standards.

Eastern European agencies operate in nations that are younger democracies than those in Western Europe. This difference is also reflected in more frequent changes of ministers responsible for education. Although the ministries technically support implementing the Bologna Process commitments and consider them very important for education, individual development, and the advancement of the tertiary education system and society as a whole, in practice, altering the legislative framework to fully enable the application of the ESG remains a challenge for many countries. Additionally, efforts are underway to shift the focus from the regulatory aspect of the agencies' work to improving the work of TEIs, especially in more mature quality assurance systems.

Based on data collected at the end of 2024, the Czech Republic is the only one of 10 Eastern European countries that joined the EHEA in 1999 whose QA agency has not yet met the requirements to be included in EQAR. Of the 12 countries that joined the EHEA between 2000 and 2005, nine agencies from eight countries – Azerbaijan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine – have still not fulfilled the requirements for EQAR inclusion. Additionally, there are fluctuations: based on cyclical external review results and decisions by the Register Committee, agencies may no longer be substantially aligned with the ESG and therefore lose their EQAR registration (like in the case of Georgia[5] and Kosovo[6]); some manage to be readmitted (like in the case of Bulgaria[7] and Latvia[8]). This suggests that quality is not a constant; it can improve or deteriorate, necessitating ongoing effort and attention.

Since the same panel report regarding the agency's compliance with ESG is used for both EQAR's registration and ENQA membership purposes, conflicting views were observed in some cases between the two organisations. This raises questions about future policy developments in the decision-making processes between the EQAR's Register Committee and the ENQA Board, as well as the implications for the evaluated agencies.

Compared to the previous Bologna Implementation Report, progress is evident for Türkiye and Slovakia following the positive decision by the EQAR Register Committee on the substantial compliance of the national quality assurance bodies (THEQC – Turkish Higher Education Quality Council and SAAHE – Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education) with the ESG.

Over the past five years, agencies have faced numerous external challenges that have impacted their work. According to the INQAAHE survey results, the external factors most influencing EQAP operations over the last 5 years were health and security (68% of respondents), followed by new technologies

(60%), economic and geopolitical issues (48%), and social factors (36%). They were least impacted by environmental factors (12%).

To mitigate the negative effects of external risks on their activities, EQAPs have developed alternative strategies to achieve their goals, revised their operational procedures, sped up their IT transition, introduced hybrid and online assessments, and extended their evaluation cycles. They have also gained support from the government and partners and are now offering more robust assistance to TEIs.

The EHEA ministers call for innovation, creativity, and transnational cooperation to enhance the global standing of European universities. They also encourage collaboration among higher education institutions from all parts of Europe, including capitals and rural areas, as well as all stakeholders who can contribute to improving higher education. In a rapidly changing environment that requires quick responses to risks, it is understandable to question the relevance, efficiency, and transparency of the current European quality assurance system and the ESG as its foundation. Additionally, they emphasise the need to revise legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure smooth implementation of the ESG.

Data on the level of fulfilment of individual ESG standards for EQAR-listed agencies from the Eastern European region show that only the Estonian Quality Agency for Education – HAKA and the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – SQAA are rated compliant with all ESG standards. Likewise, Standards 2.2, Designing Methodologies Fit for Purpose, and 3.2, Official Status, are rated as compliant for all agencies. Areas for improvement include Standard 3.3 Independence (9 out of 16 agencies are rated with partial compliance) and Standard 2.6 Reporting (5 out of 16 agencies have been rated with partial compliance). The information on the Register provides a clear overview of compliance decisions for each standard in ESG Part 2 and Part 3, offering valuable insights into agencies' adherence to these standards. In addition, based on INQAAHE's survey results and focus group feedback, most agencies struggle to meet ESG standards 3.3 Independence and 3.5 Resources.

5.1 *Independence*

According to survey responses, EQAPs have different levels of independence for various functions:

- Defining quality and related policies – fully independent (58%), quasi-independent (38%), other (4%)
- Defining procedures – fully independent (69%), quasi-independent (19%)
- Developing standards – fully independent (73%), quasi-independent (19%)

TABLE 10.2 Distribution of responsibility for decision-making between different EQAP bodies

Decision area	Decision-making body					
	Governing board	Gov't	Funder	Founder	Executive director	Other
Financial matters	31%	8%	4%	12%	42%	4%
Organizational matters	35%				58%	8%
Staffing matters (led/executive positions)	19%	8%	4%	4%	54%	12%

– Recruitment of external reviewers for inclusion in the overall pool of reviewers for the EQAP – fully independent 100%
– Setting up a panel of reviewers, performing the review, production of an external review report, and publication of the report on the external review results – fully independent (96%)
– Final decision-making on procedural and quality matters – fully independent (88%), quasi-independent (4%), the funder has a final say (8%).

Responsibility for decision-making in various areas is shared among different EQAP bodies, as shown in Table 10.2. However, most decision-making authority regarding staffing, organizational, and financial issues rests with the executive director.

5.2 *Resources*

ESG 3.5 considers the adequacy and appropriateness of human and financial resources within quality assurance agencies. It highlights the importance of having the necessary resources to perform external quality assurance work efficiently, ensuring that these resources are sustainable and that the agency can access and utilise them effectively.

QA agencies established in the Eastern European region are mostly public agencies. Therefore, staff recruitment and hiring procedures may be hindered by legal constraints, for example, or additional governmental approval requirements for civil servants. Agencies may also struggle with staff retention due to insufficient and uncompetitive salaries in the public sector, combined with high workloads and elevated expectations for performing tasks at a high level.

External review reports (EQAR, 2021) and feedback from focus groups also highlight concerns related to high staff turnover, a lack of staff training plans, the ad-hoc nature of professional development activities, and an insufficient capacity to perform thematic analyses, as expected by the ESG. As part of suggestions for further improvement and fostering staff retention, expert panels recommend enhancing staff competence and skills, ensuring clear development plans as part of the agency's long-term strategy, and utilizing various staff mobility, peer learning, and training opportunities to support the agency's future work and activities.

To promote further staff development within QA agencies, ENQA established the ENQA Staff Development Group in 2012, which operated until 2016. This working group focused on identifying and supporting the needs of QA agencies regarding the development and professionalization of their staff. In 2014, the work culminated in a report on the findings, as well as a Competence Framework for Quality Assurance Professionals (ENQA, 2014). ENQA and CEENQA continued to support the development of their members' staff competence profiles based on their interests and needs. This is also evidenced by the high level of interest in targeted programs, such as the CEENQA staff exchange program and the ENQA Leadership Development Program, which have been active since 2018.

On average, QA agencies have a total of 30 FTE staff, with ten directly involved in external review coordination, ten administrative staff, seven engaged in developmental studies or research, four in managerial roles, and seven in other categories. EQAPs report that they have sufficient human resources to effectively perform their activities, such as staff to conduct external reviews (96%) and develop policies and procedures for external evaluation (92%). However, only 65% feel they have enough personnel for relevant studies, including systematic or thematic reviews. These figures are similar to data on financial resources needed for planned activities. According to survey results, 92% of EQAPs state they have enough financial resources to conduct external reviews, and 85% to develop policies and procedures for external reviews; however, just over half (54%) believe they have sufficient funds to carry out relevant studies, such as systematic or thematic reviews.

5.3 *Funding*

According to Eurostat data for 2020, countries in the Eastern European region invest less annually in public expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP than the EHEA average. In 2020, median public spending on tertiary education relative to GDP was 1% across the EHEA, indicating a slight

decrease from 2015 (1.2%). The data shows that only Slovenia (1.2%) and Estonia (1.1%) spend slightly more than the EHEA average. In 2020, most Eastern European countries had investments below the EHEA average. Some countries, such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia, recorded a slight decrease compared to 2015 (–1.2%).

The median spending per student (full-time equivalent) across the EHEA increased from EUR 6,890 in 2015 to EUR 8,065 in 2020. The highest spending country in the Eastern European region in 2020 was Slovenia (EUR 9,040 per student), while other countries recorded investments per student below the median. Additionally, there are cases such as Slovakia, which in 2020 saw a decrease in investments (EUR 6,540) compared to 2015 (EUR 6,908). Türkiye experienced the largest decline of over 30%. In contrast, Bulgaria saw the largest increase (110%), from EUR 1,278 to EUR 2,681. Although this was the most substantial increase in the EHEA during 2015–2020, Bulgaria's investments remain significantly below the median spending per student in the EHEA.

In its "Statement on the Future of Education in Europe and a prospective European Education Area," the ESU affirms that education as a public and shared good must be prioritised among sectors in which governments invest. The ESU welcomes the European Commission's proposal to increase the level of investment in education by EU member states and other countries. However, the ESU considers the 5% of GDP investment in education benchmark to be low and unambitious. Education remains an underfunded sector worldwide and is often the first to face cuts during economic downturns.

The ESU emphasises that free and accessible education should be a top priority in Europe. It strongly advocates for a dedicated minimum investment in higher education, recommending that this should be at least 2% of the GDP.

Based on the data from this study, the state budget is the primary funding source for approximately 50% of the agencies. A significant portion of income for 38% of agencies comes from implementing external evaluations. The agencies also report that collecting donations has not become a common funding source in countries in the Eastern European region.

5.4 *Stakeholders*

There is a varying level of maturity among EQAPS regarding the diversity of stakeholders involved in their organizational structures, procedures, and processes. Survey results show how frequently EQAPS have engaged stakeholders in the following areas:

– *defining quality and related procedures*: public TEIS 89%, government 85%, private TEIS 77%, students 77%, professional associations and employers/

industry representatives 73%, invited experts 62%, labour unions 46%, alumni 35%, funding bodies 4%.
- *development of standards*: public and private TEIs and students 81%, professional associations and employers/industry representatives 69%, invited experts 62%, government 54%, labour unions 38%, alumni 35%, other 4%, funding bodies 0%.
- *development of procedures*: public and private TEIs and invited experts 65%, students 58%, students 58%, employers/industry representatives 54%, professional associations 38%, government 35%, labour unions 19%, alumni 23%, other 8%, funding bodies 0%.
- *representation on the panel of reviewers*: students 96%, employers 88%, invited experts 84%, public TEIs 76%, private TEIs 73%, professional associations 50.00%, alumni 30.77%, labour unions 12%, government 8%, other 4%, funding bodies 0%.
- *representation in the decision-making body on the review*: students 92%, public TEIs 81%, employers 77%, private TEIs 69%, professional associations 50%, invited experts 42%, alumni 31%, government 27%, labour unions: 19%, other 4%, funding bodies 0%.
- *representation on the governing board*: public TEIs 81%, employers 73%, students 73%, private TEIs 69%, professional associations 50%, labour unions and invited experts: 27%, alumni 15%, other 8%, funding bodies: 4%.

The trend in the Eastern European region is to change approaches to external quality assurance over time. The systems that previously focused on programme-level reviews are now shifting to institutional reviews, and vice versa. Changing the focus of external quality assurance in higher education between programme evaluation and institutional evaluation is necessary because each approach serves different purposes and offers unique advantages. Different levels of analysis provide varied insights; balancing and switching focus between them ensures a more comprehensive, adaptable, and context-aware quality assurance system. Moving from institutional to programme evaluation improves relevance, accountability, and educational quality. While institutional reviews still have value (e.g., governance, resources, strategic planning), they are not enough to ensure students receive a high-quality education across all programmes. Shifting from programme to institutional evaluation means moving from simply checking compliance to building a quality culture. It empowers institutions and makes quality assurance more strategic and aligned with global best practices.

Most (96%) of EQAPs conduct different types of external reviews based on generic standards, 35% follow standards specific to a discipline or profession, and 12% use other standards, such as the standards of the WFME for master's degree programmes in general medicine, along with national standards.

One of the features of EQAP work is the ability to establish external quality assurance procedures independently. In doing so, they utilise national legislation (100%), regional quality assurance frameworks (e.g., ESG, 88%), national strategies (84%), professional standards (32%), the INQAAHE guidelines, and the UN Regional Convention on Recognition of Qualifications (28%).

Updating standards is also a crucial component of the quality culture. EQAPs state that they update standards as needed (64%), every 3–5 years (20%), and every 5–7 years (16%). The relevance of standards continues to be a focus for EQAPs. When asked how they measure the relevance of their standards, 30% of respondents said they collect stakeholder feedback, 25% focus on continuous improvements and updates, 20% conduct systematic reviews and analyses, 15% evaluate alignment with the ESG, and 10% research and utilise external resources.

Typical steps in providing external quality activities include self-assessment by the applicant (100%), technical review by EQAP designated staff (80%), technical review by the EQAP external reviewer panel (52%), desk review by the external review panel (76%), site visit by the external review panel (100%), decision-making by a designated body (96%), and follow-up actions (96%).

According to survey feedback, most panels (92%) are chosen from the EQAP's external expert database, the executive director appoints 20%, and 12% are nominated by the TEIs.

The composition of evaluation teams was also examined. Regarding the presence of stakeholders on review panels, variations in the makeup have been observed.

- Students – always 88% (Depending on the case, 12%)
- TEI representative (academic staff) – always 75% (Never 17%)
- Discipline-specific expert – always 79%, (depending on the case, 17%)
- International expert in the field – always 46%, (depending on the case, 54%)
- Industry representatives – always 52%, (depending on the case, 44%)
- TEI representative (admin) – never 47, (always 29%)
- EQAP coordinator – always 63% (never 25%).

The accountability mechanisms employed by various agencies are part of each agency's internal quality assurance system. The goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are published, along with a conflict-of-interest policy. A system for handling complaints and appeals is in place, although this area is expected to undergo further improvements. It is essential to protect the rights of TEIs and to ensure that institutions and the public trust these agencies.

The study also analysed the main accomplishments of QA agencies' quality assurance approaches through the standards they have used. Agencies consider international recognition and visibility (36%) and alignment and innovation (27%) as the most significant, followed by accreditation and standards (18%). The QA system and stakeholder involvement, and feedback are less prominent at (9%).

When agencies assess their biggest challenges, they identify expertise and resources (39%), standards and procedures (31%), as well as digitalisation and complexity, along with internationalisation and collaboration (15%), as shown in Figure 10.1.

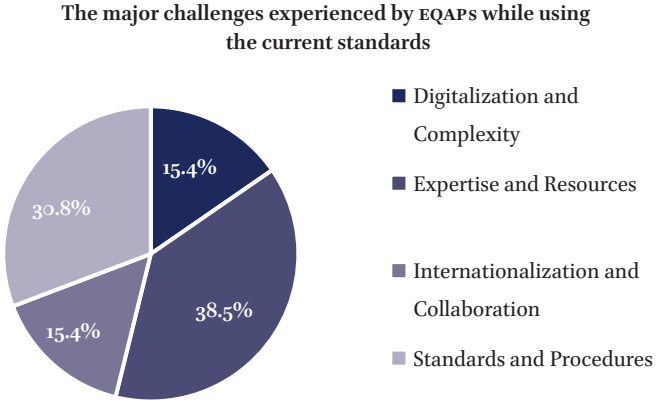


FIGURE 10.1 EQAPs' major challenges

Aiming to make their QA system more relevant to the context in which they operate, EQAPs would like to have more (Figure 10.2):

- flexibility and digitalisation (42%)
- funding and resources; legal and structural changes; procedures and evaluation (17%)
- collaboration and expertise (8%).

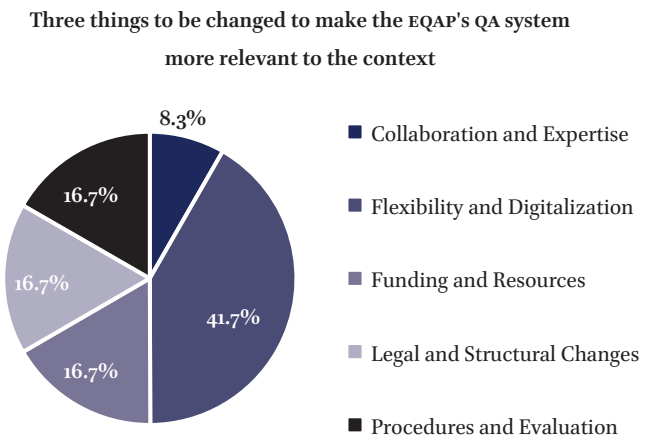


FIGURE 10.2 Types of changes that would contribute to building a more relevant QA system

6 Internal Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education Institutions in the Eastern European Region

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) plays a crucial role in maintaining the excellence and sustainability of tertiary education institutions (TEIs). It encompasses the policies, mechanisms, and processes that institutions implement to monitor, evaluate, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and overall academic performance. In the Eastern European region, the IQA landscape is evolving within unique political, economic, and cultural contexts.

Based on survey and focus group results (see paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3), 29% of the respondent TEIs are funded by governments, 48% from public funds (independent of government but subsidised by public funds or taxes), 14% are private institutions with public functions, and 6% are private for-profit entities.

There is a wide range of degree levels awarded, from 90% of institutions offering bachelor's degrees ISCED level 6 to 11% offering ISCED level 4: post-secondary non tertiary (general or vocational). Most TEIs are small, with two-thirds (67%) enrolling fewer than 5000 students and just 2% enrolling more than 30,000. In terms of faculty, 35% employ fewer than 100 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) faculty/academic staff; 41% have between 101–500; 16% between 501- 1000; and 8% have more than 1000 FTE academic staff.

Most (66%) of the TEIs are not involved in exporting education programmes outside the country where they are legally based (i.e., engaging in cross-border education), while some report offering programmes through local institutions in foreign settings (13%), or delivering programmes jointly with

a local institution abroad (18%), or having a branch campus overseas (3%). However, among those operating abroad, 73% operate in only one country and 18% in 2 to 5 countries, and 94% deliver fewer than 25% of their programmes internationally.

With few exceptions, the study programmes offered at all study levels (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral) align with the national qualification framework (NQF). Regarding short learning programmes/micro-credentials, approximately 8% are not aligned with the NQF.

Most of the TEIs established internal quality assurance (IQA) systems over 10 years ago (60%) or between 5 and 10 years ago (23%). The others have implemented IQA more recently, and only 2% reported not having an IQA system.

All those implementing IQA systems have established dedicated units, 76% of which are centralised at the institutional level, and 82% are coordinated at the institutional level. Therefore, it is somewhat expected that 76% of the IQA units report directly to the president/rector (51%) or the governance board (26%).

Regarding institution coverage, the survey confirmed that most IQA systems (about 75%) are implemented across the entire institution, bachelor's and master's programs. Fewer than half focused on doctoral programmes (47%); and even fewer for postgraduate programmes (1-year degrees), 29%; and diploma programmes (1-year degrees), 17%.

There are also programmes delivered in distance mode, including online (25%) or in e-learning modes (technologically enhanced learning, e.g., hybrid mode, digital means, simulators, virtual reality, etc.) (26%).

Most TEIs (over 75%) regard regular programme monitoring and reviews, faculty/academic staff performance, and student achievement as the most important types of IQA tools.

Regarding the organisation and management of IQA systems, only 52% of respondents report that they regularly update the policies and procedures. In comparison, full implementation is assured for 43% of the TEIs participating in the survey. The percentage increases to about 55% when including both full and partial applications. Similar results are observed concerning policies and procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and review of programmes, student admission, progression, recognition, and diploma awarding, student assessment, and teaching and learning methodologies.

The figures are slightly lower when considering policies and procedures that are regularly revised (less than 50%) and fully implemented (37% to 45%), in areas such as research performance and productivity, teaching and learning environments, student support services, management information systems, public information provision, and community engagement or service to society.

These numbers lead to the conclusion that, although the EQAPs operating in the region are primarily focused on ESG, TEIs should demonstrate compliance

with these standards. However, opinions collected from within the institutions indicate that internal quality assurance systems are still under development and far from being fully implemented. This is further supported by the fact that only 65% of TEIs acknowledge that the IQA recommendations are thoroughly followed up in the institution's annual plans, while 12% say that only prioritised recommendations are followed up.

Reviews of IQA policies and procedures are mainly conducted as needed (42%) or every 3 to 5 years (34%). The main revisions reported relate to the design, approval, monitoring, and review of programmes (55%), IQA at the programme level (37%), student admission, progression, recognition, and certification/diploma awards (31%), and student assessment (30%).

Internal quality assurance of cross-border education does not seem to be widely established in the region: although 42% of TEIs are involved in this type of education (e.g., Estonia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine), less than 20% have specific policies and procedures in place, actively apply them, and regularly review their effectiveness.

Regarding the budget, although 64% of TEIs state that there is no specific budget line for the IQA unit, the majority (60%) believe there are sufficient financial resources to carry out IQA activities effectively.

In the Eastern European region, all TEIs are evaluated externally at the institutional level, either by national regulators, accreditors, or by a national quality assurance body. There is also a substantial number (21%) that are evaluated by international accreditors (e.g., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Türkiye). More than 90% are periodically evaluated within a five-year period. Notably, the main changes made by institutions following external evaluations are related to the same themes reported for IQA: design, approval, monitoring, and review of programmes (47%) and IQA at the programme level (37%). These are then followed by research productivity (27%), faculty teaching methods (19%), and student admission, progression, recognition, and certification/diploma awarding (18%).

The area least affected by the EQA for institutional performance appears to be community engagement and services to society, as recognised by 33% of TEIs.

The programme-level external evaluation by a national regulator, accreditor, or national quality assurance body is applied to more than 80% of respondents, covering at least 50% of the study programmes (72% of TEIs report that they regularly subject more than 80% of their programmes to external evaluation). In some countries, such as Azerbaijan, Croatia, Latvia, Russia, and Türkiye, programme accreditation is linked with professional associations at the national level (13%). In other countries, programme accreditations are sometimes conducted by regional professional associations (5%, e.g., Croatia,

Latvia, Russia) or international ones (10%, e.g., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Romania, Russia).

When examining the main changes in study programmes due to external evaluations, the same themes appear as with institutional evaluations: design, approval, monitoring, and review of programmes (59%), IQA at the programme level (36%), faculty teaching methods (24%). These themes are also frequently mentioned: student assessment (22%), physical and human resources (20%), and research productivity (20%).

The area least affected by the EQA for study programme performance seems to be, again, community engagement, services to society, and the provision of public information (28%).

In terms of efficiency of the external quality assurance process, 63% of respondents state that the recommendations are fully incorporated into the annual plans, 16% handle them separately, and 12% select and prioritise the recommendations for implementation.

Stakeholders' involvement in TEIS' governance, strategic planning, and development of internal quality assurance policies is present in the Eastern European region; however, it remains an ongoing process. Most participants are internal stakeholders (governing boards and top management, over 70%; administrative staff, 51%; faculty members, 49%), and student involvement is significant (40%). External stakeholder participation is lower (17%), indicating room for improvement.

The implementation of internal quality assurance measures mainly involves top-level management, administrative staff, and faculty members (over 60%), while students (35%) and alumni (13%) are less involved. The design, approval, monitoring, and revision of new programmes are key processes of the IQA system, with greater consultation of students and alumni during the design, monitoring, and revision phases. At the same time, student input is more relevant for processes related to student services (over 50%).

Most TEIS publish internal quality assurance policies and processes either fully (73%) or partially (19%). The overall transparency remains high when it comes to internal and external quality assurance reports, which are usually published entirely (52%) or selectively (35%). These reports are mostly distributed internally within the institution (63%) and to the general public (34%), with the primary dissemination channel being the institutional website.

An interesting outcome of the study relates to how quality is defined within the institution. The most common definition is 'excellence' (44%), followed by 'fitness for purpose' (40%), and 'transformation' (33%), while 10% of the TEIS respondents consider quality as 'value for money'.

When discussing the importance of internal quality assurance, the following factors are mainly considered:

- Relevance of study programmes: Relevance is primarily considered (over 60%) in terms of equity of access to programmes, completion and success rates; support for student mobility for all; and employability of alumni. Other factors are also frequently noted (around 50%), including support for students with fewer opportunities, employer satisfaction with learning outcomes, alumni satisfaction with learning outcomes, and responses to learners' needs for knowledge and qualification.
- Relevance of scientific research: Support for scientific publications and research activities for faculty and master students is considered the most important feature by the internal quality assurance system (68%), followed by support to initiate, lead, or join research projects (60%).
- Service to society: Service is measured by scientific and cultural outreach (e.g., events, open house days, collaboration with schools) 64%; meaningful contribution to local, national, or global socioeconomic development (47%); community engagement to examine, identify, and address development issues (46%); specific educational initiatives such as entrepreneurial education and citizenship education (43%).

Respondents indicated major external factors that affected TEI operations over the past five years. They noted economic (56%), health and safety (49%), and social (48%) factors. However, technological development (e.g., AI, Cloud, MOOCs – 39%) and geopolitical issues (34%) should not be overlooked.

This study provides a comprehensive overview of internal quality assurance (IQA) systems across 288 tertiary education institutions (TEIs) in 23 Eastern European countries. As the data show, most institutions (76.74%) are publicly funded, either by governments or through public funds and taxes, with bachelor's and master's programmes being the most common. While many TEIs have implemented IQA systems over the past decade, the data suggest that full implementation remains a challenge, especially in areas such as cross-border education and research management. The findings also highlight the widespread use of external quality assurance (EQA) processes, with a focus on programme design, monitoring, and reviews. Notably, over 75% of institutions regularly review programmes and faculty performance. Stakeholder involvement, especially from faculty and students, is strong, although there is room for improvement, particularly regarding the involvement of external stakeholders. Finally, the data indicate that external factors, such as economic conditions and health issues, influence institutional operations, with technological advances and geopolitical issues also playing a role. Overall, the findings indicate progress, but further work is needed to enhance the integration and transparency of IQA systems.

7 Digitalisation

Quality assurance agencies in the region have been developing digital tools for communication with tertiary education institutions and managing their processes for some time, as part of various local and international cooperation projects and efforts to enhance public administration efficiency. The broader use of IT tools, especially teleconferencing and collaboration platforms, was driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and has become a daily norm.

A common form of digitalisation in the work of EQAPs and TEIs involves various platforms for submitting self-assessment reports and managing processes, including interactions with external reviewers (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia). Connections and interoperability with national registers of educational institutions and study programmes have been established (Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania). The development trend is toward paperless offices, using digital storage of documents, e-signatures, and other e-governance tools. In some cases, to save costs, automated tools are used for translating self-assessment reports and external review reports between the national language and English when EQA procedures are conducted by international panels (Lithuania); however, disclaimers note that in case of doubt, the original version of the reports (i.e., in English) should be consulted.

The vast majority of EQAPs in Eastern Europe have participated in projects supported by the European Union's Erasmus+ program, which aimed to establish interoperability with DEQAR, the European database of external review reports owned by EQAR. As of July 14, 2025, a total of 18 EQAPs in the region have submitted 27108 external quality assurance reports on their various activities, including programme evaluations, institutional reviews, or a combination of both.

Currently, it is not yet widespread for TEIs and EQAPs to have clear, comprehensive policies on AI, and national guidance is also rare. Quality assurance agencies in the region and tertiary education institutions both are experimenting with and exploring AI tools for producing self-assessment reports, conducting thematic analysis, and other applications, as well as exploring the possibilities of using blockchain for issuing tertiary education diplomas and recognizing credentials. The major questions concern the ethical use and security of these tools, both in the educational process and for other purposes. For EU member states, two acts adopted in 2019 and 2024, along with initiatives aimed at enabling a seamless flow of data to respond to public requests and ensuring decisions are always made or at least verified by humans, are decisive.

8 Conclusions

For Eastern European countries, EHEA membership forms the foundation for cooperation in quality assurance among 49 EHEA nations and other countries worldwide. Quality assurance in tertiary education remains central to efforts to create a coherent, compatible, and appealing EHEA in line with the goals of the Bologna Process.

The countries in the Eastern European region are younger democracies, and investment in tertiary education is lower than in Western European countries, which consequently impacts the development of tertiary education and quality assurance. There are significant differences in the maturity of quality assurance systems across the region. Data from the latest Bologna implementation report (Eurydice, 2024) shows that 46% of countries in Eastern Europe do not have a national agency listed in EQAR, indicating that their quality assurance systems are not yet fully compliant with the ESG. However, the establishment and transparent operation of quality assurance agencies, mainly at the national level, have increased stakeholders' trust in these agencies' processes and procedures. With support from international QA networks, efforts are underway to help agencies overcome remaining challenges and better align their work with the ESG.

In terms of efficiency, digitalisation is evolving and influences the reduction of the burden on TEIs as well as the development process of agencies. Stakeholders emphasise the importance of EU legislation and guidance on digital initiatives, such as the Digital Education Action Plan and the EU Cybersecurity Strategy. QA procedures are outcome-oriented and focus on enhancement and impact at the programme, institutional, and national levels. There is a trend of shifting from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation, as well as the reverse, depending on the country. Each country seeks the best internal and external quality assurance model that supports its further development according to its specific national needs. Investments in tertiary education should be increased to ensure relevance, operational efficiency, and transformative potential.

In terms of relevance, the vast majority of Eastern European countries have clear goals to develop fully aligned external quality assurance systems with the ESG, and providing appropriate procedures. Implementing these systems is not only a legislative requirement for each country but also encourages the development of a quality culture that fosters innovation, inclusiveness, transparency, and solutions to social, economic, and technological challenges. Since 2018, digitalisation, the COVID-19 pandemic, increased inter-institutional cooperation, greening, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), and economic developments have been the top five issues impacting institutional strategies.

In terms of transformative power, the development of quality assurance has helped raise awareness that all stakeholders are responsible for quality assurance, with particular emphasis on the role and responsibility of management and public authorities (Governments, Ministries, others) or senior leadership of TEIs. Changing the legal framework can still be difficult. New developments that bring various aspects of internationalization in tertiary education – such as the application of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and the growth of European Universities alliances – create new opportunities, promote cohesion within the EHEA, and help improve the EHEA's global position.

Regarding tertiary education institutions in Eastern Europe, the landscape of internal quality assurance systems is quite diverse.

The efficiency of internal quality assurance is influenced by several factors, including mandatory external evaluations, the need to update accreditation standards, proactive self-assessment, and the growing role of digitalisation. Institutions that take an outcome-focused approach, prioritise stakeholder impact, and regularly monitor progress through action plans and KPI-based reviews tend to have more effective IQA processes. However, challenges still exist, especially in balancing external recommendations with institutional independence and ensuring that programme accreditation criteria adapt to meet modern educational needs. As digitalisation advances and institutions invest in more advanced data collection and analysis tools, the efficiency of IQA systems in the region is expected to improve, supporting a more dynamic and responsive tertiary education sector.

In terms of relevance, Eastern European tertiary education institutions have multifaceted internal quality assurance, and its implementation heavily depends on how institutions interact with External Quality Assurance processes, align improvement plans with strategic objectives, and include stakeholder feedback. Although challenges such as the administrative burden of overlapping EQA procedures and outdated accreditation models persist, ongoing debates about cluster accreditation, increased digitalisation, and the role of quality managers are paving the way for more effective and impactful IQA systems. To enhance the relevance of IQA, institutions must continue to emphasise continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and strategic alignment, ensuring that their quality assurance practices not only comply with external standards but also promote meaningful, long-term improvements in educational quality and institutional performance.

However, the transformative power of quality assurance on TEIs in the Eastern European region is undeniable. EQA has led to notable improvements in IQA processes, fostering a quality culture within institutions and ensuring

that they are well-prepared to face the challenges of modern education. While some institutions may find EQA burdensome at times, its overall influence – in terms of providing guidance, encouraging stakeholder engagement, and supporting continuous improvement – is valued by participants from the TEIS in focus groups. As tertiary education institutions continue to evolve, EQA and IQA must adapt to the changing educational landscape to ensure that both systems stay relevant, effective, and aligned with institutional goals and the four missions of tertiary education in general.

Last, but not least, various aspects of digitalisation in both internal and external quality assurance are widespread in the region, especially driven by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the potential of specific tools, like AI and blockchain, is still being explored. The adoption of new technologies is likely to be significantly influenced by the EC Ethical Guidelines for Trustworthy AI (2019) and the AI Act (2024), which could lead institutions toward compliance-driven policy development, particularly in areas such as data privacy, accountability, and transparency.

Notes

1 Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.
2 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia (currently suspended), Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye.
3 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine.
4 For the up-to-date list, please consult https://www.eqar.eu/register/agencies/
5 NCEQE has been listed between 2019 and 2024, as of 30 April 2024, is not on the EQAR.
6 KAA was listed on EQAR between 2015 and 2017.
7 NEAA was listed in EQAR between 2009 and 2013 and then readmitted to EQAR on 13 June 2018.
8 AIC was listed between 2018 and 2023 and was readmitted to EQAR on 14 March 2025.

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ANNEX 10A.1 Baseline data on Eastern European countries

Code	Country	EU/EHEA	# of EQAPs/TEIs	NQF[a]	Lisbon recognition convention	Global convention[b]	Population (mil.)[c]
AL	Albania	No/Yes	1/40	Yes	Yes	No	2.8
AR	Armenia	No/Yes	1/47	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
AZ	Azerbaijan	No/Yes	1/51	Yes	Yes	No	10.2
BY	Belarus	No/Yes[d]	0/49	Yes	Yes[e]	No	9.1
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	No/Yes	2/42	No	Yes	Yes	3.4
BG	Bulgaria	Yes/Yes	1/51	Yes	Yes	No	6.4
HR	Croatia	Yes/Yes	1/129	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.9
CZ	Czech Republic	Yes/Yes	1/54	Yes	Yes	No	10.8
EE	Estonia	Yes/Yes	1/18	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.4
GE	Georgia	No/Yes	1/64	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.7
HU	Hungary	Yes/Yes	1/64	Yes	Yes	No	9.6
KZ	Kazakhstan	No/Yes	6/119	Yes	Yes	No	20.6
XK	Kosovo	No/No	1/19	Yes	No	No	1.8
LV	Latvia	Yes/Yes	1/48	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.9
LT	Lithuania	Yes/Yes	1/34	Yes	Yes	Yes	2.9
MD	Republic of Moldova	No/Yes	1/16	Yes	Yes	Yes	2.5
ME	Montenegro	No/Yes	1/7	Yes	Yes	No	0.6
MC	North Macedonia	No/Yes	1/21	Yes	Yes	No	1.8
PL	Poland	Yes/Yes	1/426	Yes	Yes	No	36.8
RO	Romania	Yes/Yes	1/88	Yes	Yes	Yes	19.1
RU	Russian Federation	No/No[f]	135/724	No	Yes[g]	No	144.0
RS	Serbia	No/Yes	1/184	Yes	Yes	No	6.6
SK	Slovakia	Yes/Yes	1/33	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.4

(*cont.*)

ANNEX 10A.1 Baseline data on Eastern European countries (*cont.*)

Code	Country	EU/ EHEA	# of EQAPs/ TEIs	NQF[a]	Lisbon recognition convention	Global convention[b]	Population (mil.)[c]
SI	Slovenia	Yes/Yes	1/46	Yes	Yes	No	2.1
TR	Türkiye	Yes/Yes	1/129	Yes	Yes	No	85.3
UA	Ukraine	No/Yes	1/633	Yes	Yes	No	41.0
Total			165/3136				436.7

a Status of NQF in the table reflects the situation whether the framework has been externally referenced to EQF and/or self-certified following EHEA policy;

b For the up-to-date list please see https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=70286#item-2;

c Population figures were extracted from Eurostat, data from 2023 (consulted in 2024), or https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/;

d Population figures were extracted from Eurostat, data from 2023 (consulted in 2024), or https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/;

e Declaration adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee on the restriction of the participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus, Strasbourg 02/03/2023;

f Rights of representation in EHEA suspended as of 11–12 April 2022 because of the war inflicted upon Ukraine;

g Declaration adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee on the restriction of the participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus, Strasbourg 02/03/2023.