

Thematic Analysis on European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes

Introduction

European Approach

Legal framework

Uptake of the EA

Further Q for discussion

Thematic Preparatory Note: European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
Presenter: Melinda Szabo, Brussels, 13/09/2023

Introduction

DEQAR

Preparatory note intended to:

- support de discussion within the third Peer Learning Activity (PLA) as part of the IMINQA project and the Thematic Peer Group on QA of the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

Main sources for the analysis:

- DEQAR data based on 50 EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies (of 55 currently registered)
- EQAR Knowledge Base on legal frameworks
- 31 Joint Programme Reports carried out with the European Approach

Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)

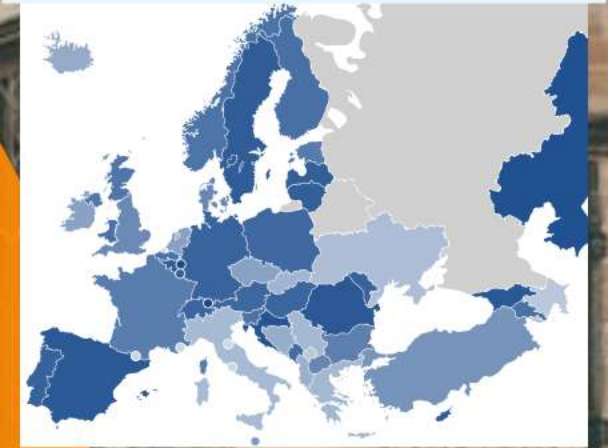
Single reference point for transparency:

- ESG quality-assured higher education institutions and programmes
- use of DEQAR data for the recognition of foreign qualifications from those higher education institution

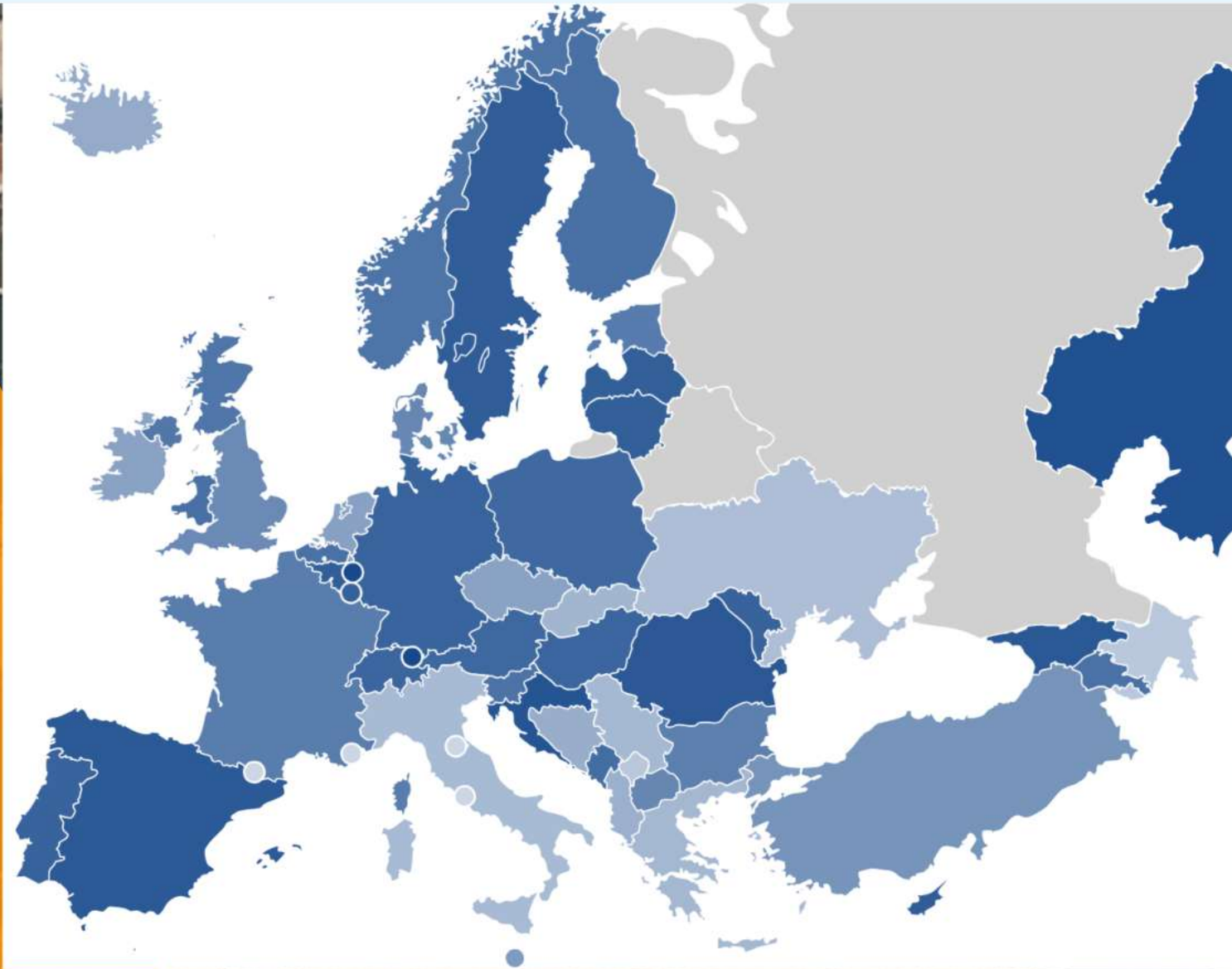
www.deqar.eu

- **over 90 252 quality** assurance reports reviewed against the ESG at programme or institutional level
- **over 75% coverage of HE system:** 26 countries
- 3840 HE institutions with at least one report in DEQAR
- 48 of the 55 EQAR registered QA agencies regularly uploading to DEQAR

DEQAR coverage of EHEA systems



DEQAR coverage of EHEA systems



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The European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes within EHEA

Why a European Approach?

- to address the challenges posed by specific national criteria and varying accreditation processes in European higher education.
- to avoid multiple administrative procedures, clashing criteria, differing accreditation periods and uncertainty and potential conflicting decisions
- facilitate the planning and organisation of such joint programmes

Political commitment in the EHEA

- **Bucharest Communiqué (2012)**, ministers aimed to recognise quality assurance decisions for joint and double degree programmes and encouraged the development of joint programmes within the EHEA framework.
- **Yerevan Communiqué (2015)** the adoption of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes

About the
European
Approach

About the European Approach

Part A. Application

- Can be used by any suitable EQAR-registered QA agency whenever at least one consortium partner requires an external programme accreditation

Part B. Standards for QA of JP in the EHEA

- closely aligns with Part 1 of the ESG
- incorporates agreed EHEA tools, particularly the QF-EHEA and the ECTE

Part C. Procedure for External QA of JP in the EHEA

- self-evaluation, review panel, reporting, reasoning for the accreditation decision, appeals, follow-up
- periodicity of 6 years

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Are legal frameworks supporting the European Approach?

Four types of HE systems and approaches to EA:

- **Fully open (no programme level EQA requirement):**
EHEA systems where EA can be used due to the self-accrediting status of HE institutions: Armenia, Finland, Ireland, Switzerland and UK
- **Fully open (with programme level EQA):**
EHEA systems with no restriction in the use of the EA: Austria, Belgium FL, Belgium FR, Croatia, France, Malta, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Spain.
- **Partially open:**
EA available for only for certain institutions or under specific conditions, as for example: Estonia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Germany, Norway, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia,
- **Not open**
(even if exceptions have been provided: Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Holy See, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino)

Conditions
in the use
of the EA

Some specific national conditions

EA can be employed if:

- the programme has previously undergone an assessment by an EQAR registered agency;
- if the other HE partners have the right to provide instruction in the corresponding study programme group and academic cycle.
- once it was 'pre-approved' by the national QA body.
- the HE is member of a European University Alliance

EA is recognised if:

- the eligibility criteria are met and no substantial shortcomings are identified in the assessment report;
- if the procedure corresponds to the national qualifications' framework;
- if the foreign QA agency carrying out the review has effectively involved students in the review.
- the rules for awarding a joint academic degree and enrolment regulations are met.

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What does the data on EA of JP show us? (1)

- **Small advance in the number of procedures:** EA has been employed at least 31 times in the past 7 years and by 10 EQAR-registered agencies;
- **EA most often employed** by HEIs within countries where the legal framework makes it **possible to replace a national procedure** i.e., France (13 HEIs), Germany (12 HEIs), Spain (11 HEIs), Netherlands (6 HEIs), Portugal (5 HEIs)
- **High share of national JP in some countries**, i.e., Belgium, Germany. Overall 39% of the joint programmes are implemented by institutions belonging to the same HE system
- Preference for JP procedures carried out at the **second cycle** and even higher preference for the use of the EA at the second cycle (29 of 31 procedures at 2nd cycle).

What does data on the EA show us (2)?

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Limitations in the use of the EA

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What does the use of the EA tell us?

- 16 of 31 jointly designed study programmes are part of an **Erasmus Mundus Master for Joint Programmes**
- clear **preference to choose a QA agency** from one of the countries involved in the programme consortium
- the EA procedure covered higher institutions based in **29 of the EHEA members countries and 6 other non-EU countries**
- **the European Approach in 18** (see countries with light blue in the Map) **cannot be use a replacement** of compulsory national or regional QA processes.
- Although no requirement for programme level review, **HEIs in Finland and UK have successfully employed the EA** through their internal quality management system.

EHEA countries in which the EA can be used (2023)

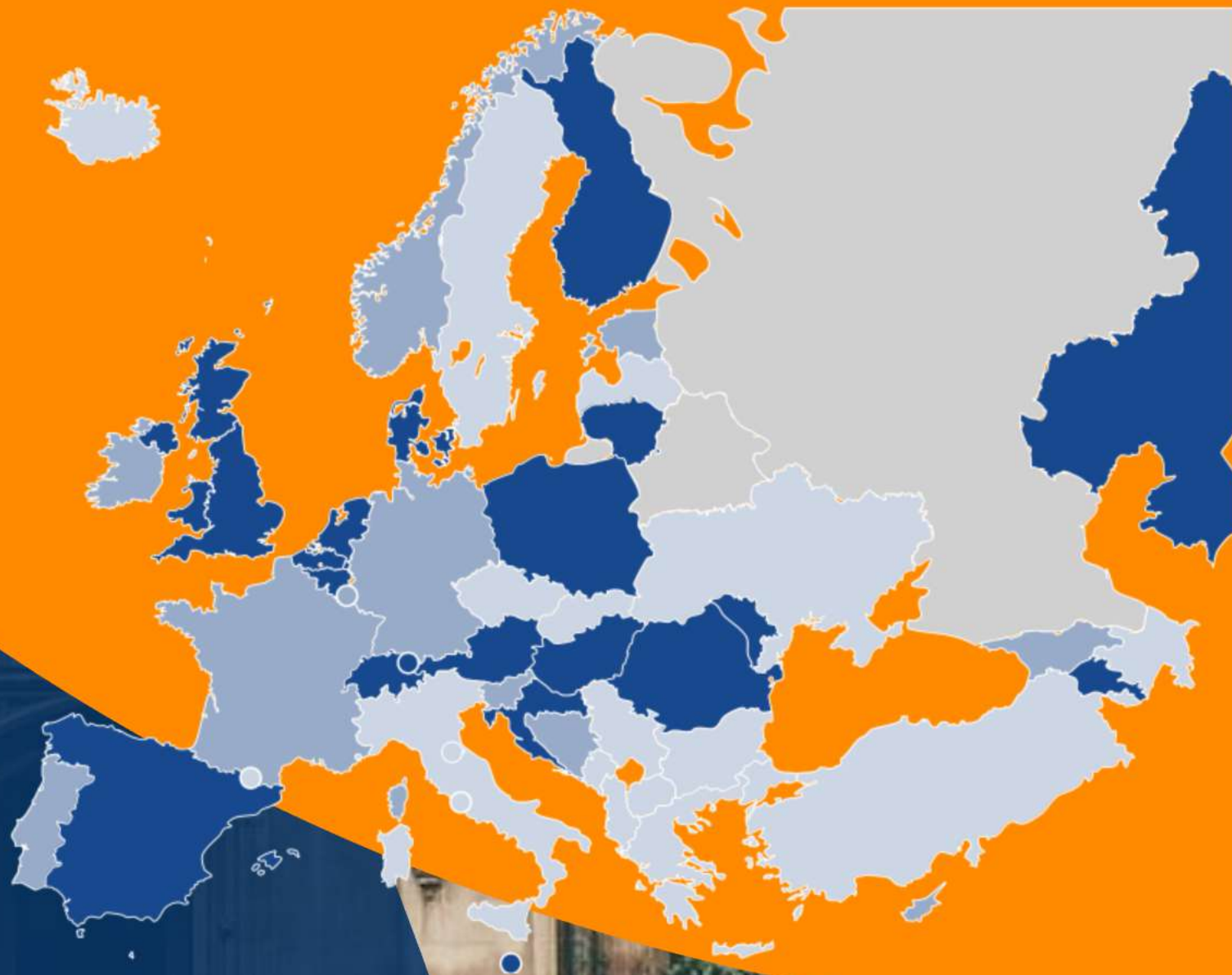


Institutions involved in programmes accredited/evaluated with the EA



EHEA countries in which the EA can be used (2023)

ac



Institutions involved in programmes accredited/evaluated with the EA

used (2023)



Uptake of the EA

EA employed for **2/3 of the total number of international joint programme procedures** carried out between 2016 and 2023 (of reports uploaded to DEQAR)

Number of joint programmes evaluated using the European Approach

QA agencies carrying out JP	Number of JP evaluated with the EA	Total numbers of reviews of JP (DEQAR data)
ACQUIN (DE)	1	1
AEQES (BE-FR)	0	55
AHPGS (DE)	0	2
AQ Austria	2	8
AQAS (DE)	7	7
AQU (ES)	2	2
ASHE (HR)	1	1
ASIIN (DE)	1	65
EAEVE	0	2
HCERES (FR)	2	2
NCEQE (GE)	0	55
NVAO (FL)	3	5
NVAO (NL)	4	No data
SOAA (SI)	0	1
Unibasq (ES)	3	3
ZeVA (DE)	2	No data
VLUHR QA (BE-FL)	3	3
Total	31	n/a

Year	No of EA procedures	No. of <u>international</u> joint programme procedures (including EA)	No of <u>national</u> joint programme procedures
2016	1	2	5
2017	2	6	5
2018	3	3	7
2019	6	13	10
2020	2	2	27
2021	6	9	16
2022	6	6	5
2023/08	5	5	0
Total	31	46	75

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AQU (ES)	2	2
ASHE (HR)	1	1
ASIIN (DE)	1	65
EAEVE	0	2
HCERES (FR)	2	2
NCEQE (GE)	0	55
NVAO (FL)	3	5
NVAO (NL)	4	No data
SQAA (SI)	0	1
<u>Unibasq</u> (ES)	3	3
ZeVA (DE)	2	No data
VLUHR QA (BE-FI)	3	3
Total	31	n/a

Year	No of EA procedures
2016	1
2017	2
2018	3
2019	6
2020	2
2021	6
2022	6
2023/08	5
Total	31

Limitations in the use of the EA

- a limited familiarity with the procedure;
- difficulty in carrying out the EA due to additional requirements that go beyond the EA standards
- exceptions being made for a specific procedure , but no real enabling changes in the legal framework
- differences in the length of the external QA cycle or validity period;
- the misalignment of qualifications across different HE systems;
- requirements for the review report and decision in order to conform with national administrative laws;
- lack of clear and structured guidelines on how to start, continue and end the procedure;
- discrepancies in how different systems may define joint programmes (and thus the eligibility to use the EA)
- differences in the overall purposes of accreditation of joint programmes etc.

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Questions for discussion

Q. Topic 1:

- Is the EA more limited in implementation due to constraints of the legal framework or due to a lack of experience and knowledge?
- What was the incentive for countries to adapt their legislation that would allow higher education institutions to use the EA for the accreditation of their joint programmes?
- What are some actionable recommendations for governments to further ensure the implementation of the EA?

Q. Topic 2

Q. Topic 3

Thank you



Questions for discussion Topic 2

- What are other main challenges institutions are facing in using the European Approach?
- What are the toolkits, guidelines, templates, webinars, activities and other information that higher education institutions could use to ensure a good experience in the use of the European Approach?
- After the joint programme evaluation (with the EA) is completed, what are the next steps, who is responsible for the follow up?

Questions for discussion Topic 3

- Why are not all (non-national) joint programme accreditation procedures carried out following the European Approach?
- What are the main challenges QA agencies are facing in the implementation of the European Approach?
- What lessons can be learned from the implementation of the European Approach by QA agencies?

**Thank you for your
attention**

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 **SCAN ME**

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