


The Role of EQAR in the Evolving Landscape of European QA: Contemporary Trends in External Quality Assurance and the Integration of Micro-Credentials

Aleksandar Šušnjar
EQAR Director

VIII Eurasian Forum on Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Strategies Under Pressure: New Technologies and Challenges for Universities
25 September 2025

Four blue diagonal slashes pointing downwards and to the right, located at the bottom right of the slide.

EHEA Key Commitments



- 1) **A Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS**
- 2) **Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)**
- 3) **Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**

*Institutions granting degrees assure the quality of their programmes leading to degrees within the three-cycle system **following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015).***

*External quality assurance (be it at programme or institutional level) is performed **by Agencies that have demonstrably complied with the standards and guidelines stipulated in the current ESG.** This is best ensured where only those agencies registered on the **European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)** are allowed to operate in the country.*

European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)



Mission:

Enhance transparency and trust, promote international recognition

Role:

Official register of QA agencies that comply with the ESG

- Established by and for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Founded by the E4 organisations (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE), jointly governed with HE ministries
- Non-profit, independent and acting in the public interest

Governance of the organisation



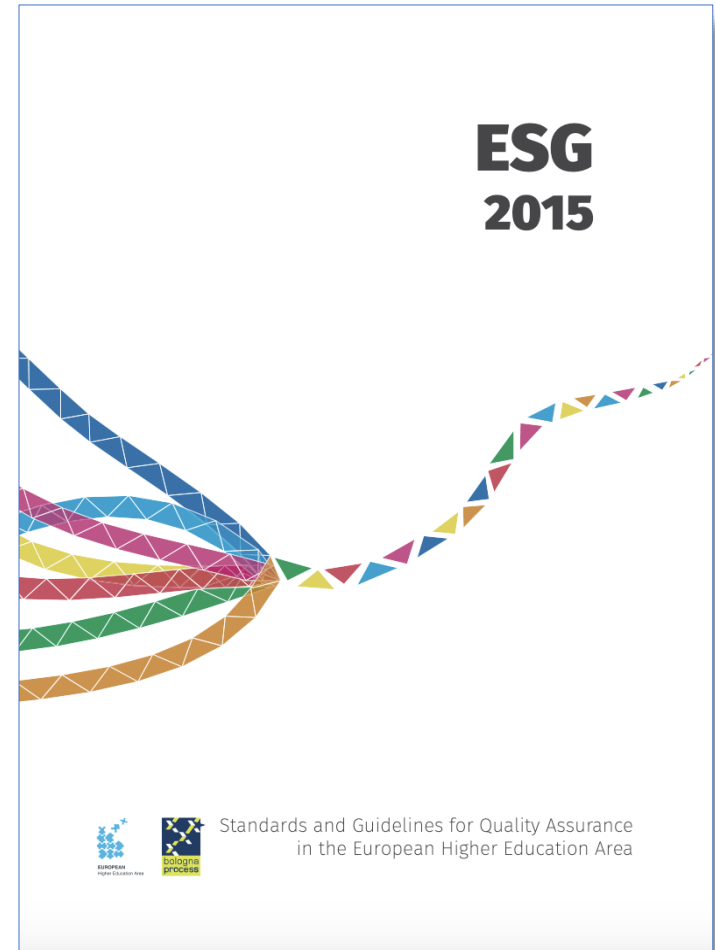
Register Committee
Independent QA experts,
nominated by stakeholders

Decides on compliance & registration

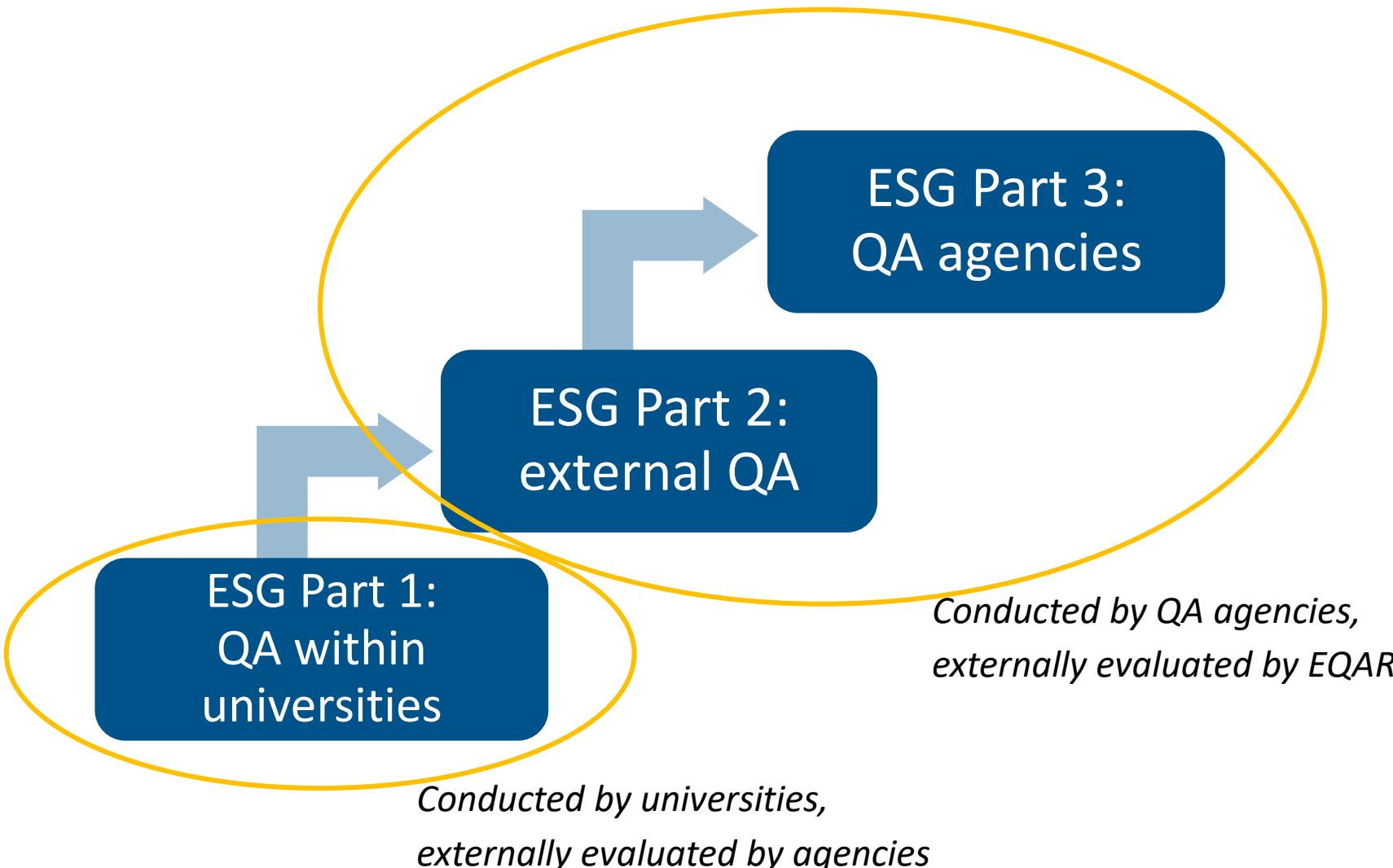
Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)



- Common framework for QA
- Developed by stakeholders (E4) and adopted by ministers responsible for higher education
- Initial version 2005, revision adopted in 2015, next revision planned for 2027
- Three parts:
 - 1) Internal quality assurance
 - 2) External quality assurance
 - 3) Quality assurance agencies



Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)



Registration and monitoring



Initial application & review against ESG



Annual updates on activities



Substantive Change Reports



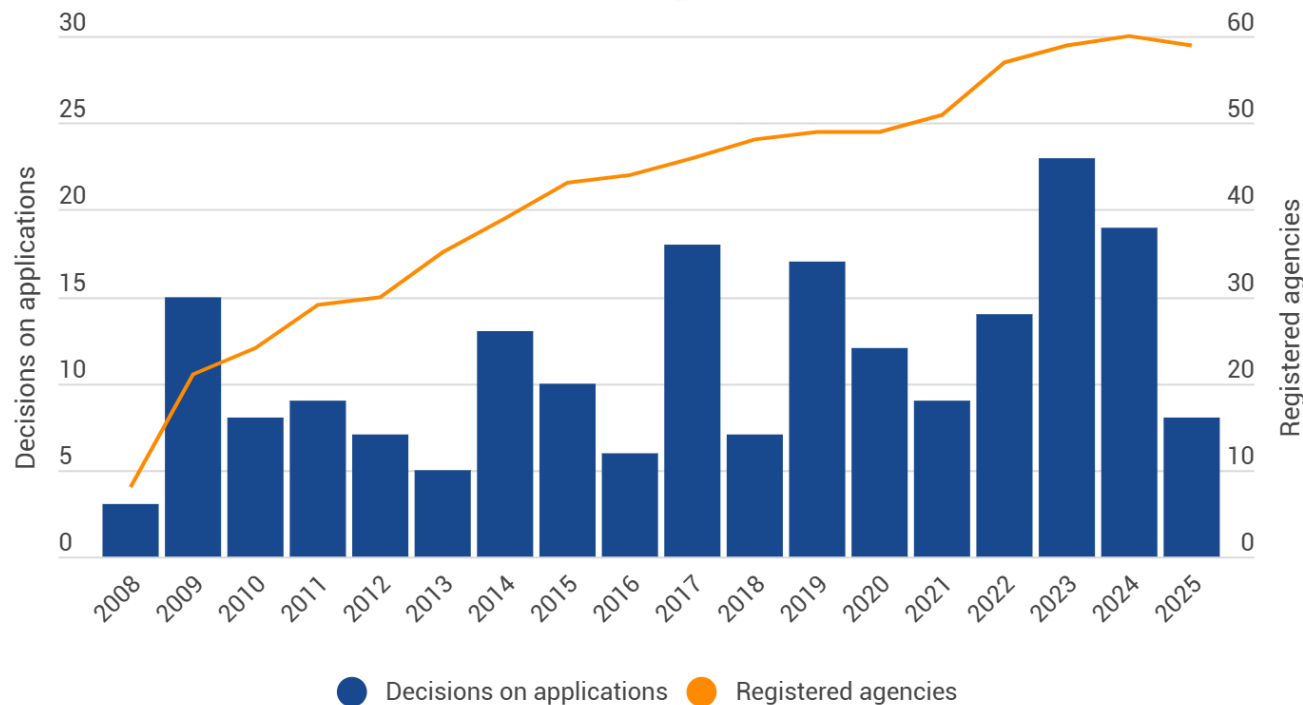
Third-party complaints



Periodic renewal every 5 years



Registered agencies & evolution of applications



Source: EQAR website

Total applications (with a final decision): 208

Approved applications (2008-2025): 170

82% approval rate of which:

- Initial appl. 71%
- Renewal appl. 92%

EHEA Key Commitment on QA

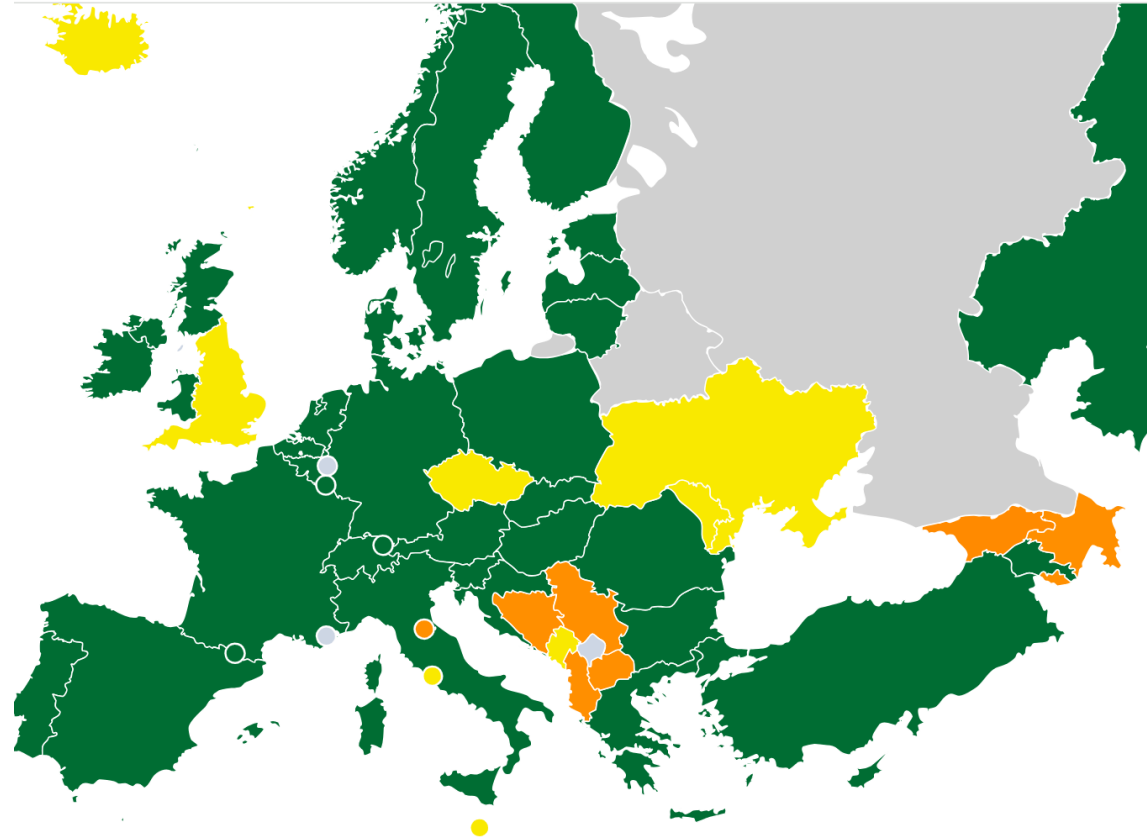


- 34 EHEA countries **fully realise** commitment

- Remaining countries:

Yellow: only some HEIs with external QA by an EQAR-registered agency

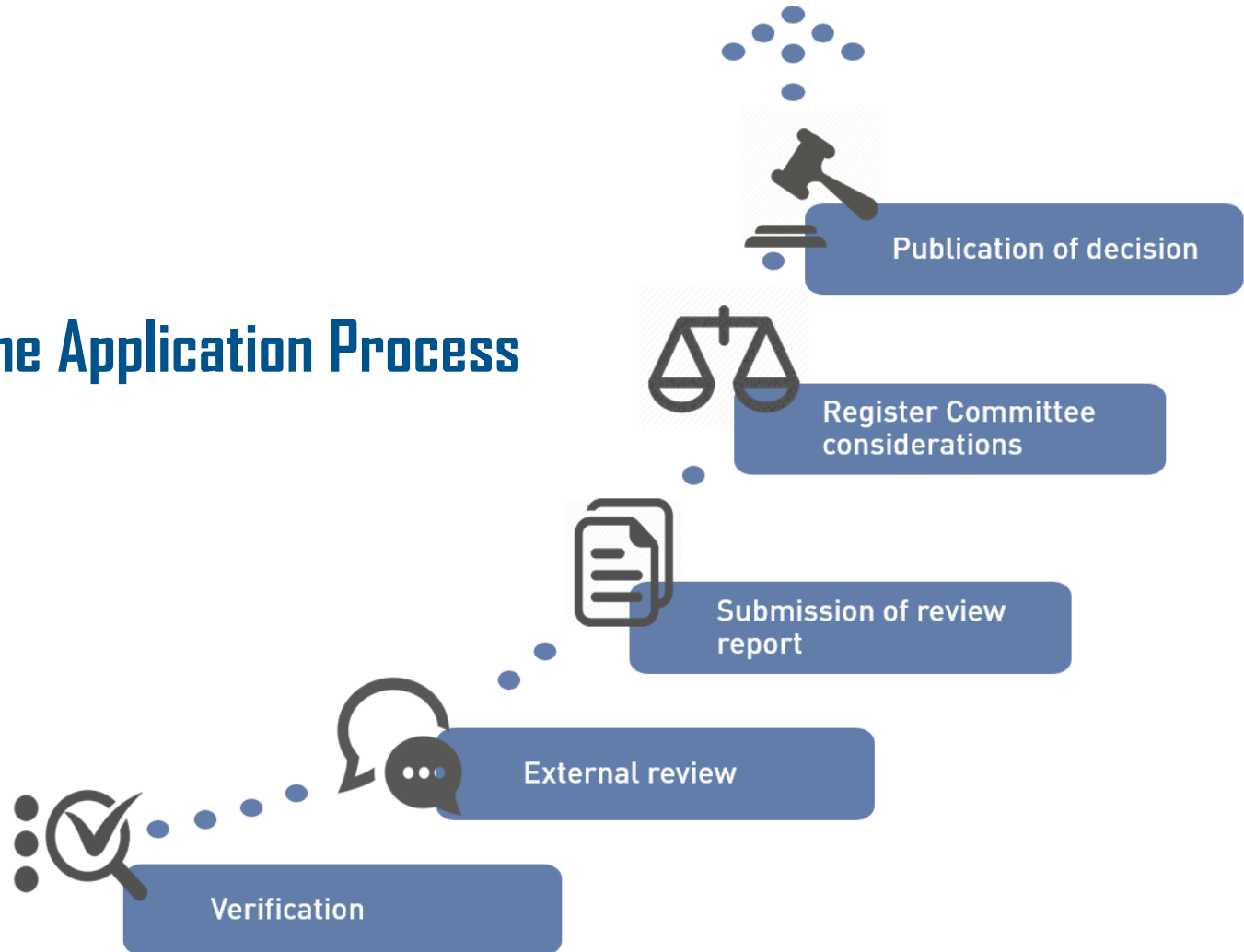
Orange: national QA agencies not fully aligned with ESG yet



Source: EQAR website

Registration process and EQAR decision-making

Steps of the Application Process

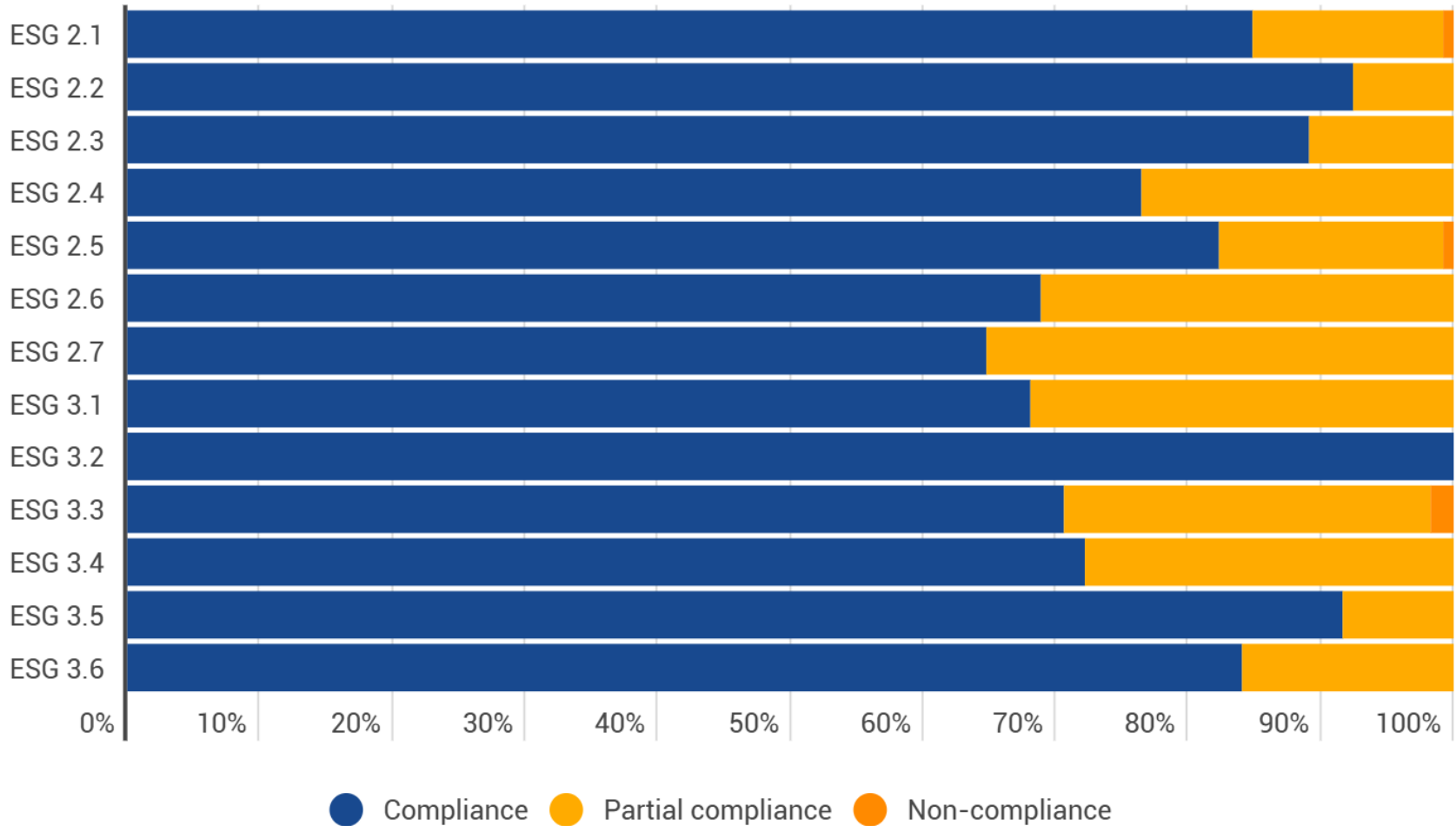


Register Committee



- **Independent** body composed by individuals nominated by the **non-governmental members of EQAR**.
- The Committee **receives, evaluates and decides upon** applications for inclusion on the Register or renewal of registration
- The work of the Committee is **transparent** and all decisions are being **published** on EQAR's website
- Tool for **analysis of decisions**: [EQAR database of precedents](#)
 - Provides an overview of EQAR's past decisions and the grounds for them by standard
- Tool for enhancing **consistency and transparency**: [Policy on Use and Interpretation of the ESG](#)

ESG Compliance: what do the numbers show?



Source: EQAR website

Information provided through the Register

European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)



Register Database Knowl

Register

Registered agencies

— Suspended entries

— Former entries

Applications

Decisions

Analysis of Decisions

Database of Precedents

Complaints

Guide for Agencies

Explaining the Register

Filter agencies

Country all

Armenia (1)

Austria (2)

Belgium (3)

Bulgaria (1)

Croatia (1)

Cyprus (1)

eqar.eu > Register > Registered agencies

Registered agencies

The following quality assurance agencies are registered that they have demonstrated their substantial compliance with the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA ([ESG](#))

- More on the meaning and purpose of the Register in [Explaining the Register](#)
- We aim to keep information on the register as accurate as possible. [Inform us](#) should you note any inaccurate or misleading information. See also our [Complaints Policy](#). Show the full [Terms and Conditions](#).

PT **A3ES** - Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions

[VIEW 3426 REPORTS ON 146 INSTITUTIONS](#)

CH **AAQ** - Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance

[VIEW 164 REPORTS ON 70 INSTITUTIONS](#)

ES **ACCUA** - Agency for Scientific and University Quality Assurance

[VIEW 5004 REPORTS ON 193 INSTITUTIONS](#)

ES **ACCUEE** - The Canarian Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation

[VIEW 143 REPORTS ON 5 INSTITUTIONS](#)

Register

Registered agencies

— AI

— Suspended entries

— Former entries

Current applications

Decisions

Analysis of Decisions

Complaints

Guide for Agencies

Explaining the Register

COVID-19 consequences

eqar.eu > Register > Registered agencies > AI

AI - The Danish Accreditation Institution

Danmarks Akkrediteringsinstitution

[SUBSTANTIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE ESG](#)

[VIEW 62 REPORTS ON 36 INSTITUTIONS](#)

www.eqar.eu

Registration valid until

30/06/2026 (listed since 01/07/2010)

Website

<http://www.akk.dk>

Reports by the agency

<http://akkrediteringsraadet.dk/database/>

EQAR registration decisions and reports on the agency

15/10/2021 Renewal of Registration

15/10/2021 External Review Report

08/12/2016 Renewal of Registration

08/12/2016 External Review Report

15/11/2010 Admission to the Register

Permalink

<https://data.deqar.eu/agency/10>

Information on the agency's work

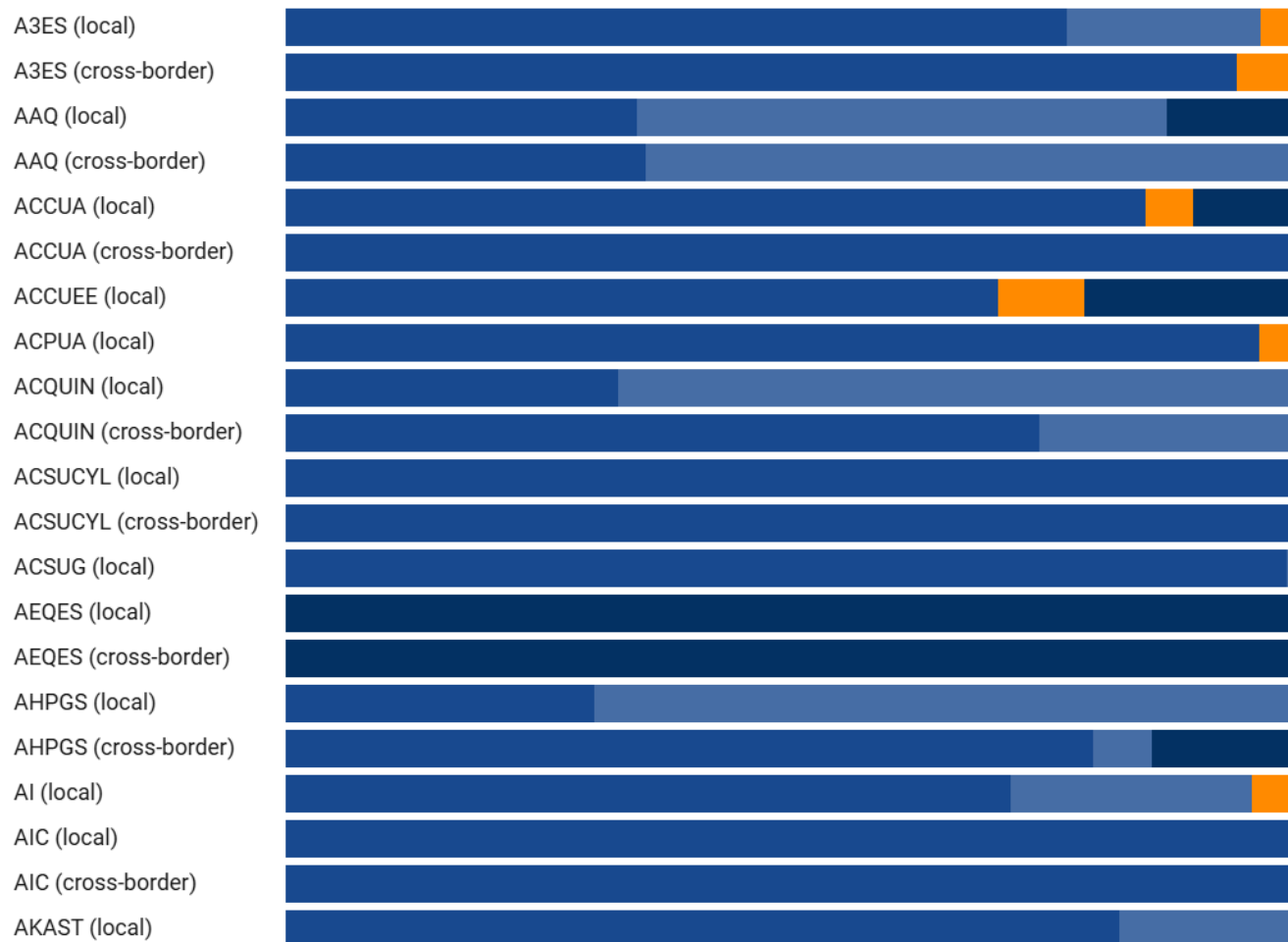
The Danish Accreditation Institution is an independent agency founded by the Ministry of Higher Education. The primary assignment of the agency is to accredit HEIs as well as existing and new higher education programmes. Furthermore, the institution is producing summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of the accreditations as well as thematic reports on topical issues concerning higher education.

European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

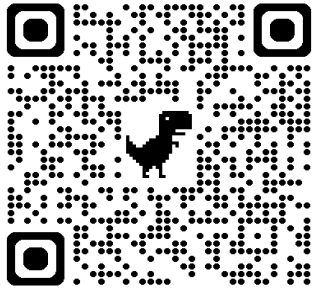


Decisions

■ positive ■ positive with conditions or restrictions ■ negative ■ not applicable



DEQAR – “Quality at your fingertips”



<https://www.deqar.eu>

Easy access to external quality assurance (QA) reports and decisions

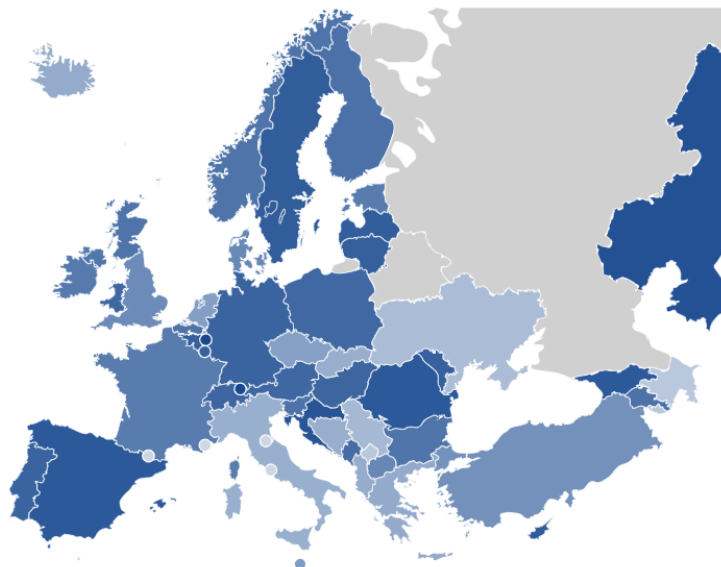
- Enhances **transparency and visibility** at the European level
- **Facilitates trust and automatic recognition**, based on robust QA in line with the ESG
- Responds to information needs of various stakeholders, in particular ENIC-NARICs and admission officers

Filter providers

Provider name, city, country, ETER ID or DEQARINST ID

search

Currently available: 113 795 reports on 4 467 institutions



Education providers in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Albania	5	Georgia	59	Poland	373
Armenia	30	Germany	428	Portugal	100
Austria	59	Greece	11	Romania	89
Azerbaijan	6	Hungary	63	Russia	SUSPENDED 67
Belarus	SUSPENDED 5	Iceland	1	Serbia	3
Belgium (Flemish Community)	37	Ireland	16	Slovakia	3
		Italy	23	Slovenia	51

Database

Refine your search

Agency

MAB

X

Country

Status

Cross-border review

Report level

Activity

Accreditation of medical schools based on the WFME 2020 standards

X

Decision

Report language

eqar.eu > Database > Search > By report

Sort by

4 reports

Upload date

« < 1 > »

Report date - valid to / Uploaded / Changed

Agency / Type

Institution / Programme

Country

24/11/2023 - 15/12/2031 uploaded 07/02/2024 changed 07/02/2024

MAB ACCREDITATION OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS BASED ON THE WFME 2020 STANDARDS

University of Szeged

Hungary

30/06/2023 - 30/06/2031 uploaded 17/07/2023 changed 17/07/2023

MAB ACCREDITATION OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS BASED ON THE WFME 2020 STANDARDS

Semmelweis University

Hungary

03/03/2022 - 03/03/2030 uploaded 17/01/2023 changed 17/01/2023

MAB ACCREDITATION OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS BASED ON THE WFME 2020 STANDARDS

University of Pécs

Hungary

22/04/2022 - 22/04/2030 uploaded 17/01/2023 changed 17/01/2023

Sort by Name ⌵ | 1 - 20 of 98 providers | Results per page: 10 **20** 50 100

"Babes-Bolyai" University Cluj-Napoca DEQARINST2200 IIETER R00010	
Universitatea "Babeş-Bolyai" din Cluj-Napoca Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	
"Bioterra" University Bucharest DEQARINST2268 IIETER R00082	
Universitatea "Bioterra" din Bucureşti Bucharest (Romania)	
"Bogdan-Voda" University of Cluj Napoca DEQARINST2249 IIETER R00061	>
Universitatea "Bogdan Vodă" din Cluj-Napoca Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	
"Constantin Brancoveanu" University of Pitesti DEQARINST2246 IIETER R00057	>
Universitatea "Constantin Brâncoveanu" din Piteşti Pitesti (Romania) Further location: Ramnicu Valcea (Romania) Further location: Braila (Romania)	
"Constantin Brancusi" University of Targu Jiu ("Constantin Brancusi" University DEQARINST2212 IIETER R00022	
Universitatea "Constantin Brâncuşi" din Târgu Jiu Târgu-Jiu (Romania)	
"Danubius" University of Galati DEQARINST2271 IIETER R00085	>
Universitatea "DANUBIUS" din Galaţi Galaţi (Romania)	
"Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University DEQARINST2840 IIETER R00073	>
Universitatea Creştină "Dimitrie Cantemir" din Bucureşti Bucharest (Romania)	

**List of HEIs per country
(e.g. Romania)**

**List of agencies per country
(e.g. Germany)**

Refine your search ⌵

Search term

Provider name, city, coun

Category ⌵

- ✓ Agency
- ACQUIN (1)
- AHPGS (1)
- AQ Austria (1)
- AQAS (18)
- ASIIN (32)
- FIBAA (23)

Report level ⌵







Institutional level

4 reports

« < 1 ▾

List of all accreditations per HEI

↓

-    Institutional evaluation/accreditation, "Eftimie Murgu" University of Resita ▾
-    Institutional evaluation/accreditation ▾
-   Institutional evaluation/accreditation ▾
-   Evaluation of institutions organising doctoral study programmes (IOSUD) ▾




Programme level

1 - 20 of 500 programmes

« < 1 ▾ > »



Results per page

10 **20** 50 100

-    Accountancy (second cycle degree) ▾
-    Accountancy (second cycle degree) ▾
-   Accountancy (third cycle degree) ▾
-   Accounting (second cycle degree, 120 ECTS) ▾

Details per accreditation

↓

Accounting (second cycle degree, 120 ECTS)	
Qualification/award	
Level	second cycle (NQF 7)
Programme type	Full recognised degree programme
Workload (in ECTS credits)	120
DEQAR Report ID	102981
Agency	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)
Type	Study domain accreditation (second cycle)
Status	part of obligatory EQA system
Formal decision	positive
Date	04/07/2024
Valid until	08/08/2029
Report and decision	 Periodic evaluation report (reaccreditation) (Romanian)
Permalink	https://data.deqar.eu/report/102981
Agency's identifier	EM2641-2024-07-04
External link	View record on agency's website
Verifiable Credential 	 DEQAR format

External QA of micro-credentials

Overview of the current landscape of micro-credentials



- **The number of micro credentials**, measured by number of courses at 6 main learning platforms, **rose for more than 200% between 2018 and 2022** (OECD, 2023)
- Cedefop (2023) shows that **variety of actors** such as public organisations, companies and employment services, offer programmes at higher education level
- Employers surveyed (N=384) had a **stronger preference for micro credentials offered by accredited providers** (62%) and to the ones being **offered as part of the national formal offer** of education and training (48%) (Cedefop, 2023)
- No comprehensive mapping of micro credentials across the EHEA yet

Overview of the current landscape of policies related to micro credentials (OECD, 2023)

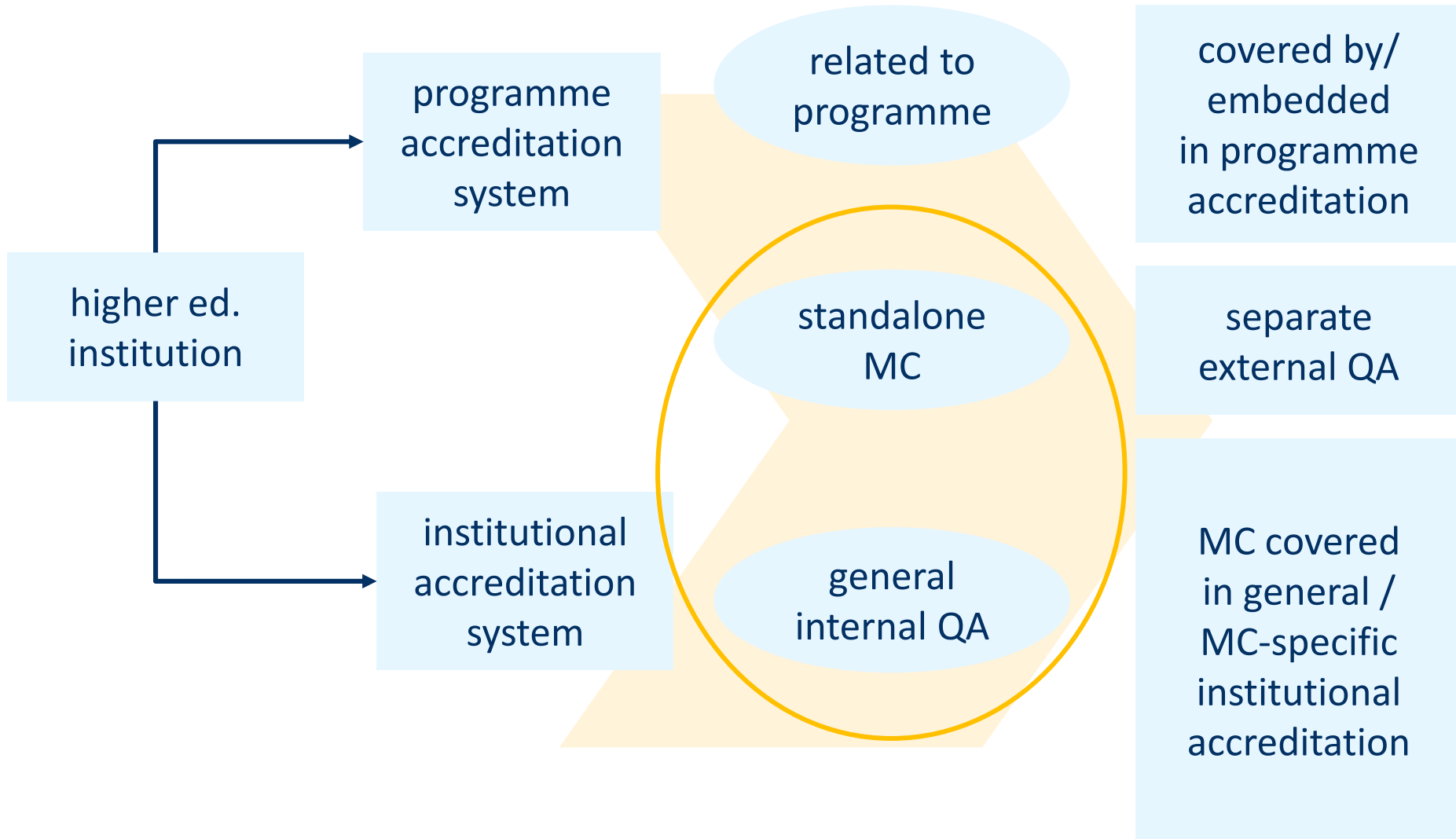


16 | No. 85 – Public policies for effective micro-credential learning

Table 2.1. Recent examples of the use of regulations and guidelines in shaping micro-credentials provision

	Country	Initiative and leading organisation	Launch year	Workload	Level	Inclusion in the National Qualifications Framework	Reference to industry and social relevance	Reference to stackability and portability	Providers that operate under the legislation / guideline
Public authorities have made legislative changes	Hungary	"Amendments made to the Adult Education Act No. LXXVII of 2013" by the Parliament	2022	Not specified	Not specified	No	No	No	All types of providers in the higher education, vocational education and training and adult education sectors (including alternative providers)
	Spain	"Royal Decree 822/2021" set by the Ministry of Universities	2021	Less than 15 ECTS	Not specified (but university education is given at ISCED level 6-8)	No	Partially yes (but it applies to all programmes offered by universities, including degrees)	No	Universities
Public authorities have supported stakeholders' collaborative efforts to standardise designs	Austria	Recommendation made by the national Bologna Follow-Up Group	2023	3-15 ECTS	Not specified (but higher education is given at ISCED level 6-8)	No	Yes	Yes, through academic recognition	Higher education institutions
	Ireland	"MicroCreds" initiative led by the Irish Universities Association	2020	1-30 ECTS	National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 6-9 (equivalent to ISCED level 5-7)	No	Yes	Yes, but optional	Seven public universities
	Netherlands	"Microcredentials Pilot" run as part of the Acceleration Plan	2021	3-30 ECTS	Not specified (but higher education is given at ISCED level 5-8)	No	No	No	32 higher education institutions

QA of micro-credentials: scenarios



Key challenges for external QA



- Education structured in smaller units of learning
- So-called "*unbundling*" of educational offer and the learning and teaching process
- (in most contexts) Lack of formal framework as the ones that exist for full, official degrees
- Correct and transparent referencing to qualification frameworks

The ESG and micro-credentials

ENQA (2023): Quality assurance of micro-credentials *(working group report)*

D1. How do you review the relevance/applicability of individual ESG (Part I) for QA of MC? (Mean)



Figure 6. Relevance/applicability of the ESG (Part I) (1 to 5 least relevant/applicable to most relevant/applicable).

Integration in DEQAR

Types of providers

Refine your search

Search term

Provider name, city, coun 

✓ Category

Higher education institution (4319)

Other provider (27)

Country

Status

Cross-border review

Report level

Sort by

Institution name

1 - 20 of 4346 providers

« < 1 > »

Espoo (Finland)

 Aarhus School of Architecture

Arkitektskolen Aarhus

Aarhus (Denmark)

 Aarhus School of Marine and Technical Engineering

Aarhus Maskinmesterskole

Aarhus (Denmark)

 Aarhus University

Aarhus Universitet

Aarhus (Denmark)

 AA School of Architecture


London (United Kingdom (England))

 A.Baitursynov Kostanay Regional University


А.Байтұрсынов атындағы Қостанай өңірлік университеті


Kazakhstan


Types of educational provision


Refine your search 


Search term


Provider name, city, coun 


Agency 


Country 


Status 

Cross-border review 

Report level 

Activity 

Decision 


Report language 

Programme type

- Full recognised degree programme (108058)
- Micro-credential (23)
- Other provision (17)

Sort by

1 - 20 of 111625 reports

Upload date 


« < 1 > »

Results per page

10 20 50 100


AQU MODIFICATION

IQS School of Management - Marketing (first cycle degree)
Spain

28/06/2024 - 19/07/2025 uploaded 17/03/2025 changed 17/03/2025 


ASIIN EURO-INF REVIEW

Astana IT University - Computer Science and Engineering (second cycle degree)
Kazakhstan

06/12/2024 - 17/01/2026 uploaded 17/03/2025 changed 17/03/2025 


ASIIN EURO-INF REVIEW

Vinh Long University of Technology Education - Information Technology (second cycle degree)
Vietnam

06/12/2024 - 17/01/2026 uploaded 17/03/2025 changed 17/03/2025 

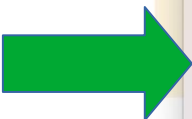
ASIIN EURO-INF REVIEW

University of Technology Education - Information Technology (first cycle degree)

30/09/2030 uploaded 17/03/2025 changed 17/03/2025 

ICE REVIEW

University of Belgrade - Инжењер грађевинарства (second cycle degree)
Serbia



Accreditation of a micro credential (HEI)

Health Care Management

University of Freiburg

 **EVALAG: Certification for Conti
Higher Education Institutions with-in
Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only fo
procedure**

DEQAR Report ID

113144

Agency

[Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg \(EVALAG\)](#)

Type

Certification for Continual Professional Development Offers of Higher Education Institutions with-in the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shorten procedure

Programme

Hea

Status

voluntary

Qualification/award

Formal decision

positive with conditions or restrictions

Level

sho

Date

03/12/2024

Programme type

Mic

Valid until

31/12/2032

Workload (in ECTS credits)

18

Report and decision

 (German)

Assessment and certification

Ass

Permalink

<https://data.deqar.eu/report/113144>

Learning outcomes

(inf

[Verifiable Credential](#) 

 DEQAR format

Field of study

(inf

Education provider

[University of Freiburg](#)

Certification of a micro-credential (other provider)



IBM

Qualific

Level

Progra

Worklo

Assess
certific

Learnin

Field of

DEQAR Report ID

111301

Agency

[Foundation for International Business
Administration Accreditation \(FIBAA\)](#)

Type

Certification of continuing education courses

Status

voluntary

Formal decision

positive with conditions or restrictions

Date

27/11/2024

Valid until

29/11/2029

Report and decision



297712 20250212 0824 4e ZERT 23 117 Coursera
IBM GB publication.pdf (English)

Permalink

<https://data.deqar.eu/report/111301>

External link

[View record on agency's website](#)

Verifiable Credential



DEQAR format

Reflections from the first real case examples



QA micro-credentials in DEQAR (June 2025)

No. of agencies	5
HEI	2
Other provider	3
Number of accredited/certified MC	23
HEI	10
Other provider	13
Certifications including other providers	27
Certifications of other providers	5

Reflections from the first real case examples



- Micro-credentials usually bear up to **20 ECTS**
- MCs are mainly covered through review covering both the provider and the programme (for HEIs), or the single MC (for OPs)
- **Variety of subject areas** – software management to theology studies
- Reviews ending with positive decisions with conditions
- The number of EQA MCs and/or OPs is **low** for now

Reflections from the first real case examples



- Most of the **other providers** were established as **non-governmental organisations**, some as private companies. Rarely public organisations or public-private partnerships
- **Micro credentials** can be **tied to a QF level** (reference – entry level qualification)
- The **use of terminology** “diploma”, “bachelor”, “master” **is not always protected via national legislation** (hence providers can utilise it for own purposes)

Thank you!

Contact:

aleksandar.susnjar@eqar.eu

