

# Quality assurance fit for the future

18 September 2023

# The QA-FIT project

- Main partners: the E4 + EQAR



Stakeholder groups: HEIs, QA agencies, students, ministries of the EHEA

- Main goals:
  - 1) Map the state of play of quality assurance in the EHEA
  - 2) Explore how the ESG have been used by actors at different levels
  - 3) Critically evaluate the fitness for purpose of the ESG and the eventual need to extend their scope



# The QA-FIT survey for HEIs

- 260 valid responses
- Respondents are universities (71%), universities of applied sciences (19%), and other higher education institutions
- 150 responding institutions are members of a university alliance (almost 58%)
- Responses received from almost all countries of the EHEA but coverage is uneven
- Examples: 24 valid responses from Lithuania, 22 from Georgia, 21 from Finland, 14 from Spain, 11 from Germany, 3 from the UK, no responses from France, Albania, Hungary, Malta, etc.



# The QA-FIT webinar

- Results of QA-FIT survey for HEIs: Internal QA
- Results of QA-FIT survey for HEIs: External QA
- Results of QA-FIT survey for HEIs: the revision of the ESG
- Next steps for the QA-FIT project
- Q&A



# Internal quality assurance

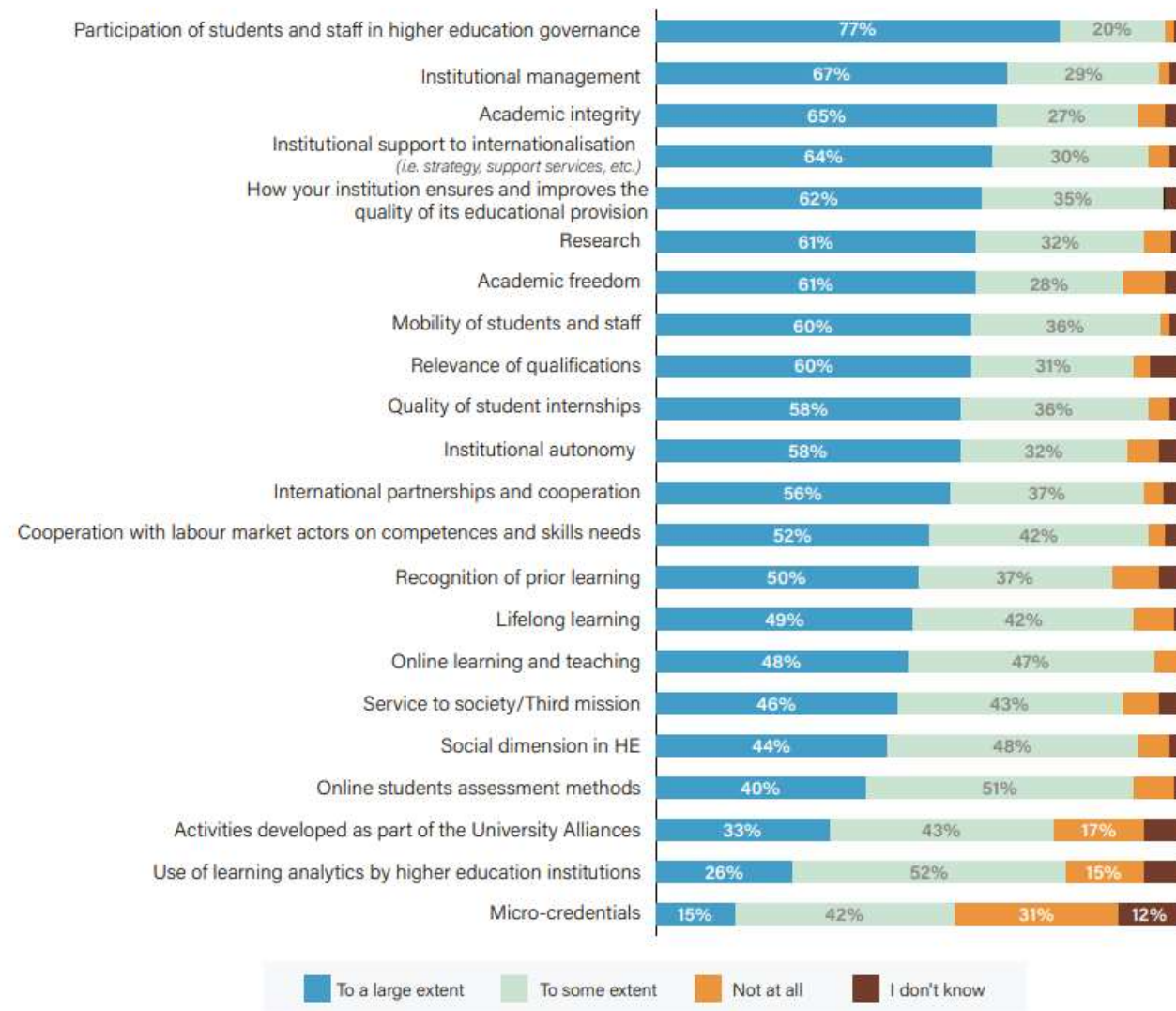
- Internal QA: internal work undertaken by higher education institutions to assure the quality of their provision and processes.
- IQA addressed by all responding institutions, in line with ESG standard 1.1: *Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.*

# Internal quality assurance

- Internal QA is designed with a comprehensive approach
- Even more recent developments in higher education, like University Alliances and micro-credentials, are generally covered



Figure 5: Areas covered by internal QA



# Internal quality assurance

Comments about the impact of the implementation of an internal QA system:

- “it allows the acquisition of a culture of quality and transparency to society in every one of the processes that we carry out”.
- “It allowed us to integrate our processes more and have better feedback from our internal stakeholders (students, academics, researchers, and employees). We have also developed better collaboration with our external stakeholders”.
- “It provided opportunities for self-reflection and responding to student feedback, review of services and academic departments by external peers which all contributed to a cycle of incremental continuous improvement”.



# Internal quality assurance

Planned changes in internal QA:

- improvement of feedback collection and utilisation;
- inclusion of institutional activities not yet covered by internal QA;
- digitalisation of processes.

There is room for improvement in terms of stakeholders engagement, in particular in terms of academic staff and students participation in internal QA processes.

# External Quality Assurance (ESG Part 2) – key observations

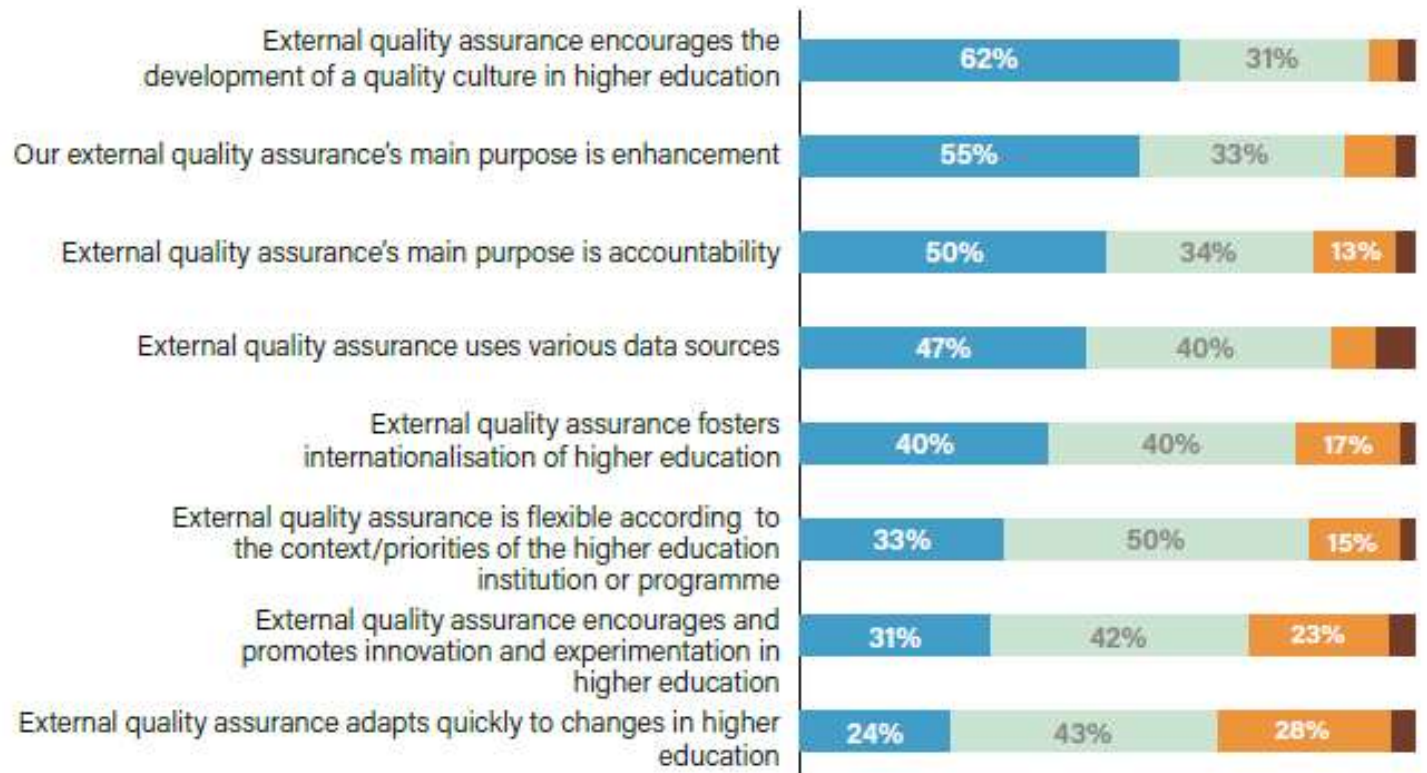
- The EQA processes are the core external mechanisms that assess the functioning of the internal procedures at the institutional level
- Part 2 of the ESG covers the aspects that external QA should address throughout the review processes. There is a general understanding among higher education institutions of its scope and role regarding the functioning of the processes.
- Differences and focus on aspects of the scope and role depending on:
  - The culture in the respective countries
  - Maturity of the QA systems and, thus EQA procedures
  - Orientation towards standards and/or guidelines and accountability vs enhancement approach in the national context.

# External Quality Assurance

Three primary purposes of external QA:

- 1) The development of a quality culture (93% of respondents “highly agree” and “somewhat agree”)
- 2) Enhancement of quality at the institutional level (88%)
- 3) Provision of (public) accountability (84%)

Figure 7: External QA procedures



Agree Somewhat agree Disagree I don't know

# External Quality Assurance

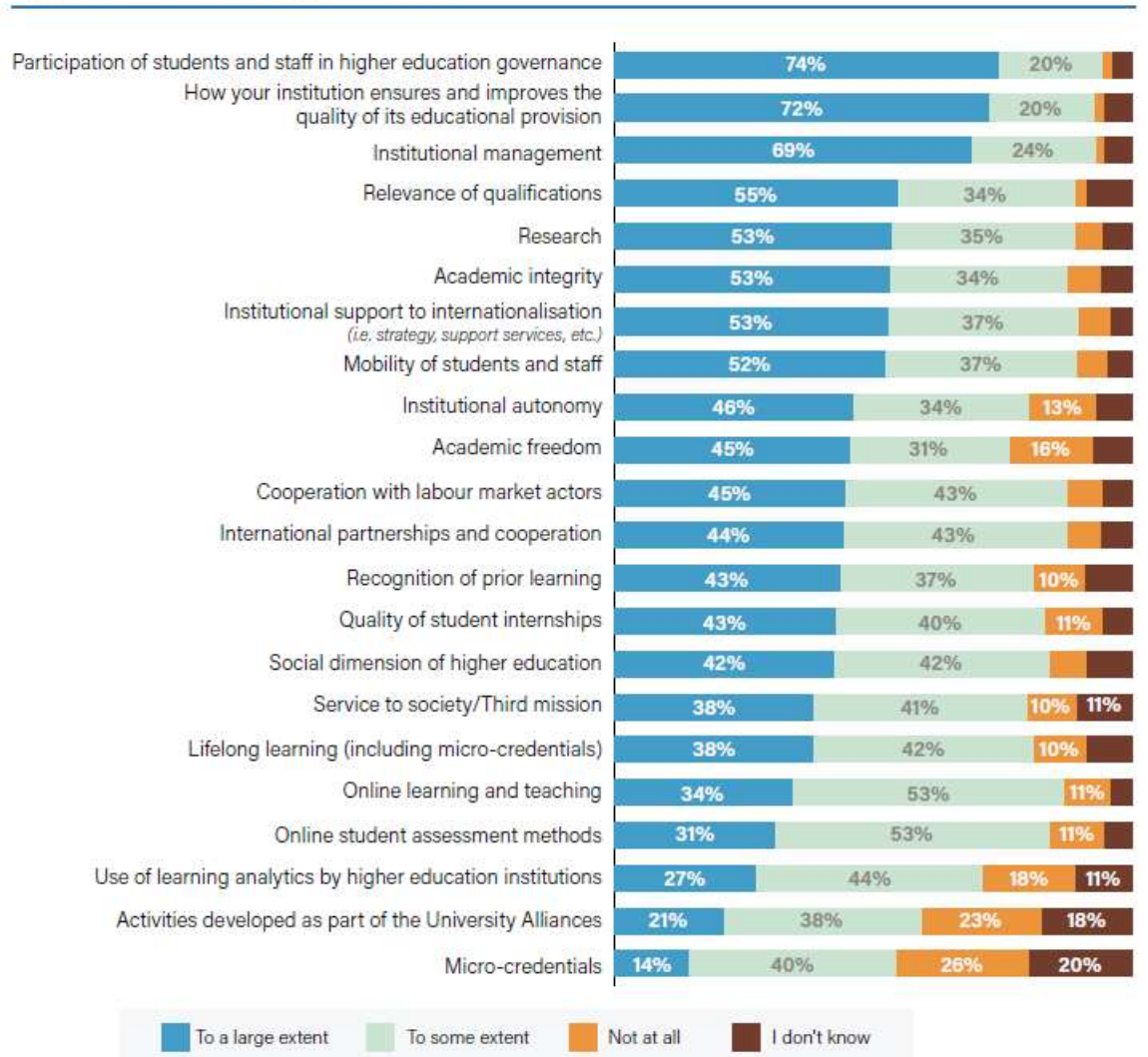
## Highest coverage by the EQA

- Participation of Students and Staff (much higher than other stakeholders, e.g. societal actors and labor market)

## Lowest coverage by the EQA

- Online learning provision and assessment, LLL, Social dimension

Figure 8: Areas covered by external QA



# External Quality Assurance – More opinions

- „QA system is fulfilling its general role of being an “external eye” for institutional reality and, in most cases, the external perspective leads to an evaluation that can guide the institution in implementing their mission and further developing their day-to-day work.”
- „EQA processes were generally enhancement-oriented and well-organised, but they were also demanding for the institutions, being to some extent bureaucratic, rigid and overwhelming for the staff”
- „EQA framework may be too unified and does not recognise the specific needs of different type of the insitutions, either due to the size, capacity or the profile (Applied sciences, online universities etc.)
- „Perception on the EQA depends highly on the maturity of the systems both within the institutions and on the system level”
- „EQA frameworks need to consider innovation and new developments in the education systems (Microcredentials, European Alliances, transnational education)”

# External Quality Assurance – More opinions

- Highest importance for HEIs:
- 1) stimulating enhancement of quality in higher education (78% “very important”)
- 2) Facilitation of degree recognition (78% “very important”)
- 3) promotion of common standards in higher education (77% “very important”)

Figure 9: Importance of purposes

