

## **New challenges in quality assurance of higher education in Eastern Europe and the Balkans**

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### **Abstract**

Accreditation and quality assurance frameworks are increasingly employing principles of developmental and responsive quality procedures to help improve quality and not just conformity with state requirements. National quality assurance and accreditation bodies across the region have established their procedures in relation to institutions' capacity for self-assessment and internal monitoring of their programmes. These developments are expected to reduce control burden and build trust in the higher education system. But the growing market of higher education in the Balkans and particularly the one of private providers has emphasised the role of accreditation mainly as a license for operation instrument. At present many private providers express concerns that accreditation regimes in their countries have turned into mere inspection seeking compliance rather than quality assurance and are incapable of ensuring the integrity, reliance and genuine European recognition of higher education qualifications. This paper investigates approaches to quality assurance of higher education in selected Balkan countries, and identifies challenges faced by their accreditation agencies in adopting European standards for quality in their work. The insights gained from this study into the accreditation practices in selected countries in the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, FYROM, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey) could be used to inform further research into the development of higher education quality assurance approaches and institutional reform strategies in the respective countries, as well as in the ACEU member institutions.

**Key words:** *quality, higher education, qualification.*

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### **Scope and purpose of the study**

The study aims to identify the specific challenges for quality assurance in the region, consider the relevance of functioning accreditation model and propose ways for further development and enhancement. It is based on desk-research, focused on CEE and Balkan countries' QA and accreditation. Countries selection was determined by two criteria: Relevancy to ACEU membership profile and relevancy of their QA and Accreditation approach to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area, adopted within the framework of the Bologna process.

### **Context**

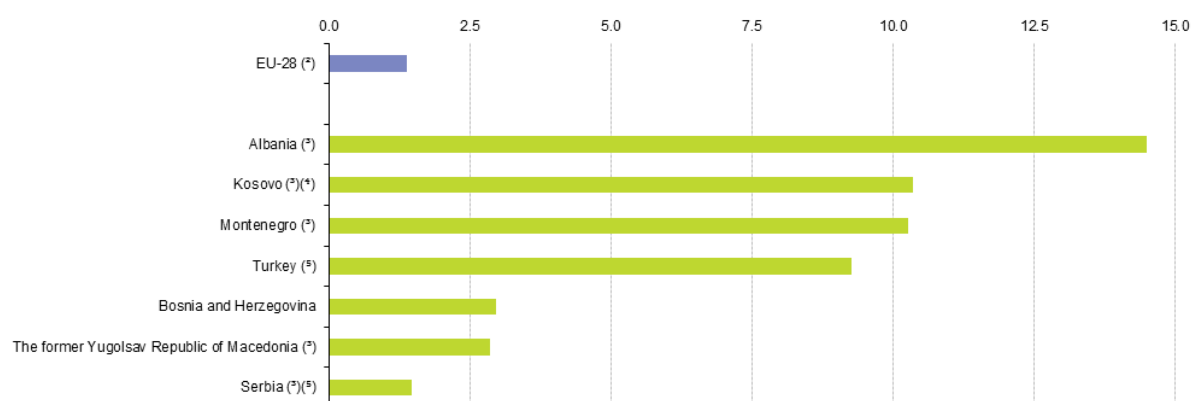
In the last decade the higher education sector in Central and Eastern European countries and those of the Balkan region particularly, has witnessed rapid growth in terms of students, study programmes and institution numbers. In general, these countries recorded higher rates of students' involvement in higher education than those of the EU average in the last decade, despite of the economic crisis. In this group Bulgaria is the only country with continuous decline of students since 2010<sup>1</sup>. The growing demand, liberalisation of the regulation on establishing HEIs and emergence of private providers made way for the number of students enrolled in higher education to rise at high levels. This is particularly valid for the Western-Balkan countries in the selected group. Albania, for instance recorded the fastest annual average growth, the number of (ISCED level 5) students increasing by 14.5% per year on average, while Kosovo and Montenegro also recorded double-digit annual growth.

A closer look into student profile shows that the number of fee-paying students and students in the private sector of higher education is increasing too. In recent years students' contribution to their tuition is constantly increasing even in the public sector higher education. For instance, in the Second Cycle (Master degree) 75% of students in state funded HEI's in Bulgaria are paying for their studies; in Serbia the student contribution in Master programme studies at public universities is 95%. This goes hand in hand with major cutbacks on HE public spending being applied

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<sup>1</sup> Data collected from national statistics institute (NSI) and UNESCO statistics ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

everywhere in the region. These developments have led to changes, manifested by the considerable share of private higher education students in the total student body (see the Table 1).



(\*) Average rate of change in the total number of tertiary students (ISCED levels 5 and 6).

(\*) 2003–12.

(\*) ISCED level 5 only.

(\*) 2004–13.

(\*) 2003–12.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: educ\_enr1tl and cpc\_pseuduc)

**Figure 1. Average rate of change for the number of students in Tertiary education (2003-2013) (% per annum)**

**Table 1. Share of private students (paying 100% of tuition fees) in the student body across selected countries in the region (2013)**

| Country                 | Bulgaria | Croatia | FYROM | Romania | Slovenia | Turkey  |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|-------|---------|----------|---------|
| Total nr. of students   | 283959   | 164623  | 60682 | 618157  | 97706    | 4975690 |
| Nr. of Private students | 49849    | 11132   | 8184  | 215445  | 13988    | 295920  |

Increase in student numbers was not, however accompanied by the relevant rate of increase in academic staff and in many countries there is high demand for teachers in some areas of study. A strong demand for academic staff also comes from the growing private sector of higher education (see the tables below).

**Table 2. Academic staff's increase across the Balkan countries (2008-2012)<sup>2</sup>**

| Country       | Albania | BiH | Montenegro | Serbia | Kosovo | FYROM | Croatia |
|---------------|---------|-----|------------|--------|--------|-------|---------|
| % of increase | 54      | 57  | 67         | 23     | Na     | 12    | 28.5    |

**Table 3. Share of public/private tertiary education teachers in selected Balkan countries (2015)**

| Teachers / Country                     | Bulgaria | Greece | Croatia | Romania | Slovenia | FYROM | Turkey |
|--|----------|--------|---------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| Total:                                 | 23456    | 17877  | 16975   | 27555   | 7189     | 3430  | 130653 |
| In Private HEI's                       | 3018     | na     | 1584    | 3750    | 1980     | 658   | 16904  |
| Share of private academic teachers (%) | 12.8     | -      | 9.3     | 13.6    | 27.5     | 19.8  | 12.9   |

The insufficient comparable data do not allow for a proper analysis, but it is still possible to discern from the data available that in some countries (Croatia), the increase of private sector academic staff (9.3%) is below the overall increase of total academic staff (28.5%) and therefore is part of a general growth of the student body. In others (like FYR of Macedonia), the increase of academic staff in the private sector higher education (19.8%) significantly outruns the total staff increase (12%), which points to the private sector expansion as a major factor for the growing number of academic staff in this country. Such data should be considered cautiously however, as many national regulations in the countries under review allow for academic staff to teach in more than one higher education institution, which means that the real increase of academic staff may be lower.

<sup>2</sup> Data for this table are taken from series of 7 country reports entitled "Overview of higher education and research systems in the Western Balkans", produced in the framework of a project funded through the NORGLOBAL Programme of the Norwegian Research Council. (web: [www.herdata.org](http://www.herdata.org))

The observed differences can be associated with different structure of the respective networks of higher education institutions in the different countries. The table below shows that the national network of institutions in FYROM is strongly dominated by the private sector, while the proportion between private and public HEI's in Croatia is more evenly distributed.

**Table 4. National networks of higher education institutions**

| Country               | Public HEI's | Private HEI's |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Albania               | 15           | 44            |
| Bosna and Herzegovina | 10           | 35            |
| Bulgaria              | 37           | 14            |
| Croatia               | 22           | 31            |
| FYR of Macedonia      | 6            | 21            |
| Kosovo                | 8            | 29            |
| Montenegro            | 1            | 9             |
| Serbia                | 58           | 31            |
| Turkey                | 104          | 62            |
| Greece                | 59           | 40            |

The table displays significant share of private higher education providers in all countries of the Balkan region, where in some cases the number of private HEI's prevails over the public sector. Rapid growth in the range of institutions was accompanied by the growth and diversity of programmes. The process has been accompanied by reforms in degree structures and quality assurance systems, which, however, were at different rapidity and with diverse achievements in each country. The reform initiatives aimed in the first place to involve universities from the region into the European higher education area (EHEA) by adopting the Bologna process as a framework for the new systems and structures. Introduction of quality assurance and accreditation as part of Bologna process has taken place in all the selected countries and currently all of them have established their accrediting bodies. The majority of these bodies have undergone external review from ENQA for compliance of their activities with the European standards and guidelines and are full members of this association, while some are also registered in the European Register of QA agencies (EQAR).

### **Overview of the current accreditation and quality assurance**

It is against this background of rapid growth, privatisation and increased social division that the 12 countries subject to the study have undergone legal reforms to introduce accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms on a regular basis. Some countries have started the process as early as in 1997 (Bulgaria), some others have established their national accreditation and quality assurance bodies in the recent years (Slovenia, Greece), while some others are still in the process of their establishment (BiH, Montenegro). In this perspective the accreditation experiences at different countries vary accordingly.

Although the region offers diversity in accreditation schemes, there are commonalities as well. All countries have established their accreditation systems through governments' initiatives and adopted the necessary legal changes. The majority of countries' approach to accreditation follows the European standards and guidelines for the quality assurance agencies. Some countries' national accreditation bodies have become ENQA full members and part of them qualified for the European Register of QA Agencies (EQAR). Currently 7 out of the 12 countries included in this study are full ENQA members and three of them are also listed in the European Register of QA agencies (EQAR)<sup>3</sup>. Four other agencies (Albania, BiH, FYROM and Turkey) are affiliate members of ENQA, which means their quality assurance arrangements are to a significant level in line with the European standards (see the Table 5).

Not surprisingly, most of the country systems for accreditation share common features. Most countries operate a single accreditation body for both public and private sector institutions, which is also responsible for the regulation of qualifications and the NQF policies. Only a few countries (Albania, Kosovo, Romania) have their quality evaluation structurally separated from the accreditation decision-making body. Although the evidence from the previous paragraph suggests that some national systems are dominated by the private higher education providers, their accreditation frameworks do not provide for equal representation of private and public sectors into the decision-making bodies. On the contrary, it is very rare that private HEIs have their representatives in the review

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<sup>3</sup> For full details go to: [www.eqar.eu](http://www.eqar.eu)

panels, committees or the higher level accreditation councils that make the final accreditation decisions.

**Table 5. Current status of QA & Accreditation bodies from the Balkan region**

| <b>Country- agency</b>            | <b>Founding Date:</b> | <b>ENQA membership status</b>                       | <b>Status with EQAR</b>                |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Albania- APAAL</b>             | 2003                  | Affiliate member (2010)                             | Not registered                         |
| <b>Bulgaria- NEAA</b>             | 1996                  | Full member (2008); Full member under review (2014) | Registered 2008-2013<br>Suspended 2014 |
| <b>Bosnia and Herzegovina-HEA</b> | 2007                  | Affiliate member (2010)                             | Not registered                         |
| <b>Croatia- ASHE</b>              | 2005                  | Full member (2011)                                  | REGISTERED                             |
| <b>FYROM- HEAEB</b>               |                       | Affiliate member (2011)                             | Not registered                         |
| <b>Greece- HQA</b>                | 2007                  | Full member (2015)                                  | Not registered                         |
| <b>Kosovo- KAA</b>                | 2008                  | Full member (2014)                                  | REGISTERED                             |
| <b>Montenegro- HEC</b>            | -                     | -   | -                                      |
| <b>Romania- ARACIS</b>            | 2005                  | Full member (2009; 2014)                            | REGISTERED                             |
| <b>Serbia- CAQA</b>               | 2006                  | Full member (2013)                                  | Not registered                         |
| <b>Slovenia- SQAA- NAKVIS</b>     | 2010                  | Full member (2015)                                  | Not registered                         |
| <b>Turkey-YODEK</b>               | 2005                  | Affiliate member (2011)                             | -                                      |

Common in many of the systems in the region are provisions for initial accreditation or licensing of the higher education providers (including provisional registration or equivalent), institutional and/or programme self-evaluation, combined with external

evaluation, including on-site visits. Most agencies also publish their review/evaluation reports and some are also providing public access to them through their websites.

Another shared characteristic is the four-step' process of accreditation, based on **self-evaluation** of the institution and/or its programmes of study, followed by an **external review, decision for accreditation** or refusal, and a **follow-up** process focused on the implementation of recommendations for improvement. Although different stages of the process are elaborated at different level of complexity and depth, it applies to most of the accreditation systems of the region.

Although different agencies apply different sets of evaluation and **accreditation standards**, the key standards and/or areas of focus in many systems cover similar issues. These include internal quality assurance systems of universities, their mechanisms for design, approval and monitoring of programmes and degrees, adequate resources, appropriately qualified teachers, accurate information for students. There are also moves to increase the transparency of information about the expected outcomes of learning and adopt objective measures that encompass learning and competency outcomes, student and employer satisfaction and graduate destinations.

A closer look into accreditation practices across the region reveals some examples of **good practice** in relation to different characteristics and parts of the accreditation process. The Croatian and Kosovar agencies' experience in building an international pool of review experts and systematically involving them into their evaluation and accreditation processes plays significant role in the transfer of international good practice into the national quality systems and improves public confidence in the accreditation decisions. The project-focused and network-building approach of ARACIS- the Romanian quality assurance agency – proved to be a successful way for integrating good practice from all over Europe into its accreditation policies and procedures. The involvement of students and business representatives in the panels and decision making is also gaining momentum in the recent years. The robust and effective post-accreditation and monitoring process, established by Bulgarian accreditation agency (NEAA) presents another example of good practice.

Alongside the achievements, accreditation frameworks demonstrate fallacies in making their standards and processes work in favour of quality and quality improvements. Governments have been much more successful in introducing legal



changes for accreditation and setting up the respective national agencies than in achieving real reforms and improvements in terms of quality at the level of institutions. While the accreditation systems are widely regarded as paper exercise, rather than as opportunity for development and enhancement of academic standards and quality, disillusionment with the impact of accreditation is getting stronger.

Initially high, public expectations for the accreditation to become a vehicle for quality and international recognition of higher education have not been always sustained across the region. A growing discontent with biased evaluation judgements and deterioration of public confidence in accreditation have forced some governments to look for alternatives to accreditation, such as ranking systems, league tables, different accreditation from an international or foreign body, etc. In Bulgaria, for instance, the Government distributes additional public funding on the basis of annual ranking of universities since 2010 <sup>4</sup>.

But the proper work of the quality assurance and accreditation bodies is challenged almost in every country in the region by a set of shared problems. For instance, most agencies in the region are struggling for **adequate resourcing**, which is a vital condition for establishing their **independence** from both individual universities as well as from the ministry of education or other governmental or non-governmental influences and for their proper functioning.

Only few agencies have developed their **analytical and capacity-building functions** which are closely related to the successful implementation of their purpose and role for quality improvement of the overall higher education system. One of the major roles of the national accreditation bodies is the provision of periodic system-wide reviews that include also an analysis of the impact of accreditation procedures on the HEI's and the national system and provide recommendations for improvement. This is also ENQA membership criterion that requires from national accreditation and QA bodies to produce reports analysing the impact of their activities on the system. A recent analysis published by ENQA shows that only a few agencies tend to produce reports with this aim, likely due to

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on university rankings and their methodology in Bulgaria see <http://rsvu.mon.bg>

the high costs they entail, both in terms of human as well as financial resources<sup>5</sup>. The insufficient capacity for training and guidance to higher education institutions on the other hand, creates obstacles to their proper understanding of accreditation standards and agency procedures and an atmosphere of distrust between the accreditors and the accredited. Such practices build a culture of compliance rather than quality and improvement.

### **The impact of accreditation and QA**

Across the region business sector and governments share concerns that despite of introduction of accreditation and substantial public resources they are provided, there is little progress on the part of institutions and the quality of higher education in general. To support their claims they often use data from the ranking reports and particularly the international rankings, where universities from the Balkan region share unfavourable places. Recent data from Times Higher Education World University Ranking in relation to the 12 countries of the present study show the best universities from Turkey, Greece, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia occupying places between 251 and 602 (from a total of 800 included in the ranking)<sup>6</sup>.

The setbacks described in the previous section are to a great extent responsible for the limited impact of accreditation on quality and associated reforms in the higher education sector. It is clear that in order to achieve results, any quality system need to address through its policies, standards and procedures, the mission and organisation of the higher education institution. This requires from the accreditation body to (a) **have a clear idea** about the intentions behind the standards it applies and the objectives it pursues by applying them to institutions, and (b) ensure that these intentions behind the standards are **effectively communicated** to those who are expected to implement them in a clear and understandable manner. Developing accreditation standards is not however just

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<sup>5</sup> NÚRIA COMET SEÑAL, SANDRA MARCOS ORTEGA, OLE ESPE N RAKKESTAD, MAIKI UDAM, ELS VAN ZELE, (2015) Analysis of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) in External Review Reports: System-wide analysis, resources and independence. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Web-publication. <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/publications/papers-reports/>. P. 7.

<sup>6</sup> THE World University Ranking 2015-2016. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2016/world-ranking#!/>

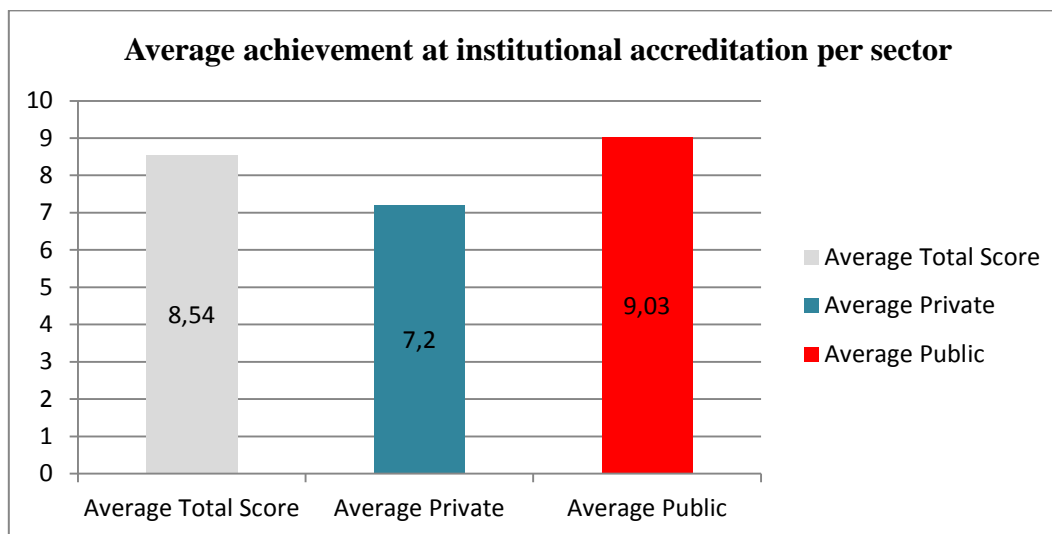
about the language, the prescribed activity or the level of requirement. It is more about identifying what should be addressed by these criteria, so that a real progress can take place. Agencies and accreditation bodies cannot arrive at these decisions easily and it is critical for the credibility of their future work to bring evidence from broad consultations with industry at home and internationally before implementing their standards. The region offers plenty of examples when the accredited institutions, employer organisations, candidate students and their families find it difficult to understand what the accrediting bodies' expectations are and how they relate to the notion of quality and standards in higher education. This also has adverse effect on the quality of self-review processes in HEIs, which are part of the accreditation procedure. Instead of becoming an opportunity for the institution to critically reflect on its achievements and failures, the self-review is often regarded as additional burden for the university, reduced to a paper exercise.

Inconsistent interpretation and implementation of evaluation and accreditation standards is another typical limitation to the impact of accreditation on quality. Many accreditation bodies operate with broadly defined, not well articulated standards, rarely supported with proper policies and guidelines to ensure that accreditation experts and those to be accredited are adequately prepared for their roles. Even when the agencies do have manuals and guidelines, describing their policies and procedures, these are not easily accessible on their websites.

The consistency of evaluation and accreditation judgements across different evaluators and evaluation panels and for different institutions is of key importance for the quality of accreditations. It affects the credibility of the whole accreditation and the behaviour of HEIs during the process and after it. At the end, it affects the overall quality culture at the system level. Consequently, some institutions find it hard to accept the accreditation results and often send their complaints to the court. This is particularly valid for new and for private institutions, which are in addition to it under- or non-represented in the decision-making for accreditation. A brief scan of accredited and non-accredited institutions and programmes across the region shows that private providers encounter more problems in getting accredited than the public ones. In some countries data from accreditation results clearly demonstrate that private sector performs lower than the public (Bulgaria)<sup>7</sup>.

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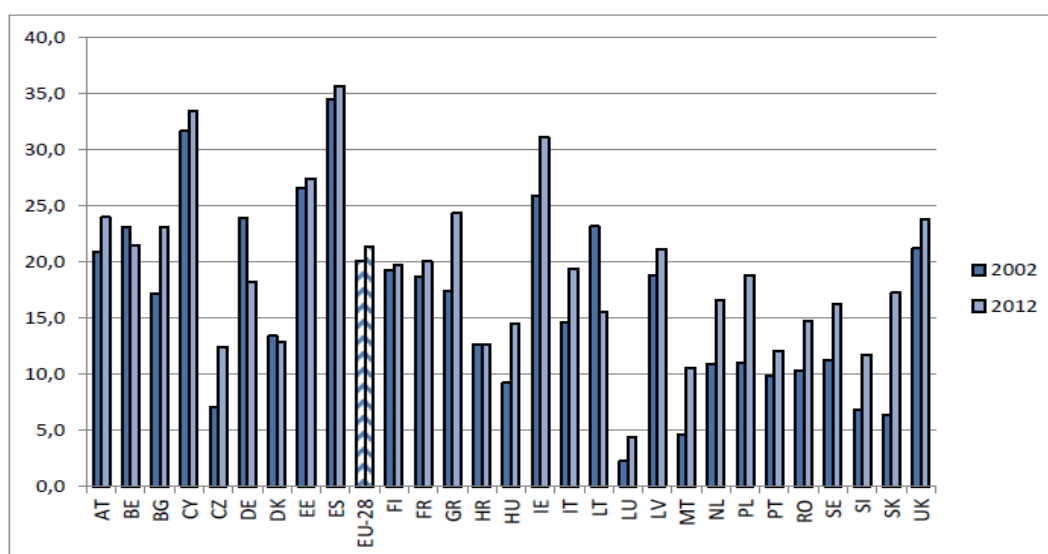
<sup>7</sup> Register of Accredited Higher Education Institutions in Bulgaria. [www.mon.bg](http://www.mon.bg)



**Figure 2. Average achievement at institutional accreditation per sector**

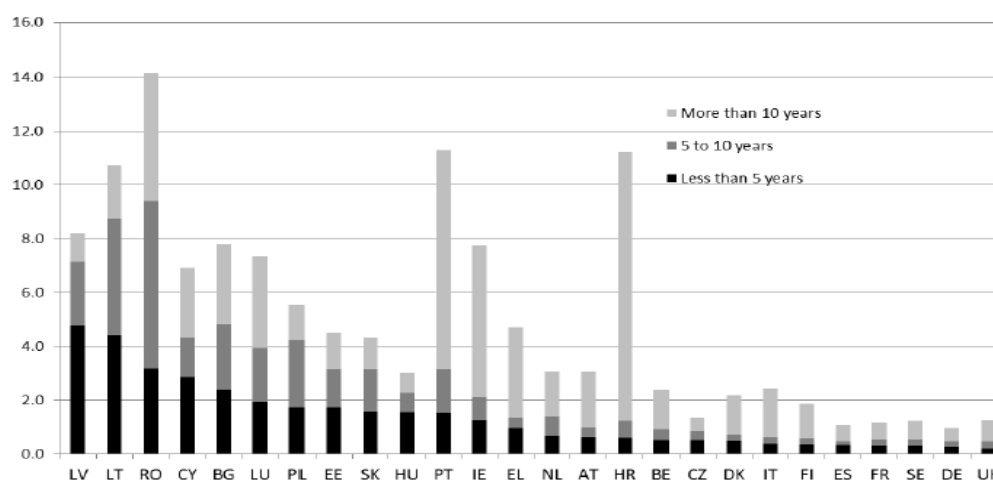
### **Context-driven challenges for quality assurance in HE**

While discussing the insufficiencies of accreditation, one should recognise also that predominantly new and therefore still in a process of their establishment agencies which populate the region have to deal with complex and unprecedented problems their higher education systems are facing. In contrast to the West-European countries tackling the economic crisis with investments into education, the financing of higher education from the state is on a continuous decline in the Balkans. This prompts rapid and unprecedented introduction of fees in both public and private HEI's, combined with declining quality and value for money of education and rising economic and social inequalities. The post-2009 economic crisis reinforced the financial difficulties of the sector and accumulated some negative trends. Statistics' reports show increased skills mismatch and over-qualification in the last decade (particularly in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia). Most of the monitored countries in this group also have shown high unemployment rate.



Source: Eurostat, Crossing ISCED 5-6 and ISCO 4-9 as percentage of people employed with ISCED 5-6.

**Figure 3. Overqualification. High skilled in medium or low skilled jobs**



**Figure 4. Mobility rates by sending country – mobile EU citizens living in another EU member states, by years of residence (age group 15-64, 2013, in % of working age population of country of citizenship)**

Student-drain from the countries in the region is also widespread, with some national systems being badly hit by the fast decline of student applicants in the recent years. According to some available data, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria are recording some of the largest mobility rates by ‘sending country’. While many

talented young people of these countries leave to study abroad, the indicators for higher education attainment of students in general is getting lower. Recent statistics show that higher education attainment rates in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are below the 2020 target of 40%.

Through their policies, standards and procedures, accreditation bodies, together with the ministries and higher education institutions have to address the combined effects of high unemployment, student drain and poor student attainment in the respective countries from that region. Their quality assurance agenda must therefore focus on how can higher education improve employability of graduates, overcome skills' mismatch reported by employers, improve effectiveness of studies for students and reverse the student drain from the region. The national accreditation bodies can play a crucial role in helping their national higher education systems deal with these challenges.

### **Challenges and next steps**

The discussion on accreditation and quality assurance practices in the selected countries from the region helps to identify areas of concern that need to be addressed in order to improve the overall quality and compatibility of higher education. These can be summarised in the following spheres:

1. **Independence and resources:** a large number of accreditation bodies from the region experience governments' and ministries' interference in their processes and management. Review reports of agencies and regularly published analyses of reports' findings by ENQA support this concern<sup>8</sup>. Even the ENQA member agencies are often at risk of underfunding and lack of alternative revenue sources. Often the independence issue is closely related to the insufficient resources of the agencies, which affects the quality of the evaluation process in two different ways: one is related to the fact that the agencies procedures lack appropriate measures for follow-up of the panel recommendations and therefore the link between accountability and improvement of the accreditation process is broken or

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<sup>8</sup> See the reviews and reports section of ENQA website concerning the national accreditation bodies from the CEE and the Balkans, and the analysis of ESG in external review reports (Workshop Report 23) published by ENQA. [www.enqa.eu](http://www.enqa.eu)

incomplete; the other is related to the fact that evaluation panels are largely based on domestic rather than international experts.

2. **Formalistic approaches to evaluation process** – often this phenomenon is due to the automatic transfer of European and/or international standards and instruments, without adaptation to the local needs and circumstances. As a result many agencies' missions are incomplete as they are focused more on accreditation and licensing than on quality assurance. This unfavourable situation is reinforced by the lack of staff development for the expert staff of accreditation bodies and capacity for analysis of institutional and programme quality. The scarcity of capacity building events, especially for students and employers across the agencies from the region supports this finding.

3. **Quality of evaluation reports.** There are strong indications that evaluation reports, even when they are published, are hard to understand by students and employers. A major factor contributing to the insufficient clarity and relevance of the reports is the insignificant role for stakeholders in the accreditation process applied by the majority of the accreditation and evaluation bodies in the Balkan region.

4. **Evaluation of programmes' alignment with NQF's.** Many accreditation bodies in the region are lacking properly developed tools for evaluating the alignment of study programmes to the national qualifications framework and the Bologna framework of qualifications. The very national frameworks are still not aligned with the European Qualifications Framework, which is supported by the fact that none of the national QF's of the 12 countries is certified against EQF so far.

To these major concerns shared by virtually all accreditation bodies in the region, one should add also the insufficient capacity for system-wide analysis, disregard of institutions' self-evaluations by the expert panels, the widespread phenomenon of permanent accreditation with multiple procedures duplicating the work of the agencies, and the lack of transparency of accreditation decisions.

The major challenges the accreditation bodies are currently facing can be summarised as follows:

- Revision of funding approaches and generation of alternative incomes;
- Full account of QAA's double mission: accountability AND improvement;

- Development of NQF, subject specific frameworks and tools for validation of HE qualifications and verification of levels and credits;
- Attention to further development and enhancement measures: QA strategic planning, system-wide analyses, periodic reviews of QA methodologies;
- Development of analytical capacity for QA staff;
- Set arrangements for post-accreditation follow-up process and dissemination of good practice.

### **Key messages to governments and QA bodies**

Many of the challenges described in the previous section would not be possible to address by the quality and accreditation bodies alone, as they are far too complex and require concerted efforts by the national governments, legislative bodies, agencies and institutions. It would be valuable therefore to send to them a number of key messages from the present study:

- The implementation of quality mechanisms addressing improvement of higher education institutions and their study programmes requires accreditation bodies to have access to relevant, robust and reliable data and data collection mechanisms to help them identify failures and risks effectively and establish their review recommendations for each particular case on a solid ground.
- Specific procedures for quality assurance of qualifications need to be developed as part of the national qualifications frameworks; Important part of it would be the development and implementation of the sectorial qualification frameworks.
- It is expected that learning outcomes and ECTS allocation will be revised at the national level and adapted in cooperation with students, industry and other stakeholders.
- The voice of stakeholders must be heard in the development of qualifications, assessment for qualifications, the provision of practical work experience, and validation of assessments.
- External evaluations must be focused on improving institutions' capacity for self-assessment and promoting the quality assurance approach to providers to ensure that trust between regulating accreditation body and university providers is maintained.



### **Key messages to HEI's**

Higher education institutions also have to contribute to the process by implementing a set of measures. The key messages to them include the following:

- The voice of business partners needs to be more systematically involved in institutional decision making procedures related to the alignment of higher education qualifications and study programmes to employers' needs;
- HEI should make the necessary arrangements to make real the contribution of employers and students to programme and curricula design and the practical implementation of national qualifications framework;
- Developing, describing and implementing learning outcomes in the design of qualifications and programmes is one of the main tasks of HE institutions in the near future.
- To increase the quality of students participation in all activities related to programmes learning outcomes and student workload revision;
- The quality of university teaching is becoming more important than ever, so HEI's must focus on designing and implementing mechanisms to improve the quality of teacher preparation and to ensure proper investments into continuing professional development.
- HEIs should use periodic self-assessments for accreditation purposes to imbed internal self-monitoring mechanisms as part of their routine activities, so that they will be helped in achieving real improvements.

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