

# The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and registration on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

Synergies between Quality Assurance, Recognition  
of Qualifications, and Academic Mobility: Adapting European Practices to  
Strengthen Kyrgyzstan's Higher Education System

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Aleksandra Zhivkovikj

# EHEA Key Commitments → Focus on QA



## **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.



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EQAR



# 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

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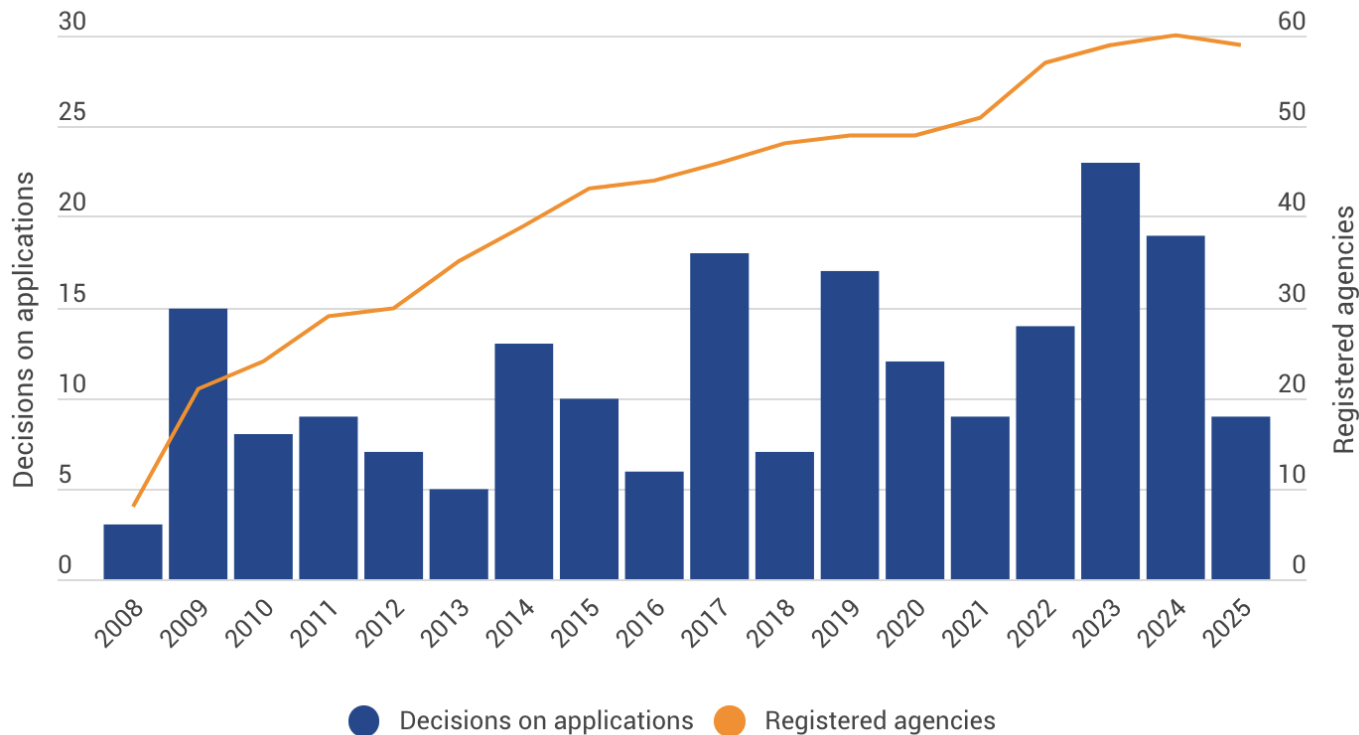
Governance of the organisation



**Register Committee**  
Independent QA experts,  
nominated by stakeholders

Decides on compliance & registration

# Registered agencies & evolution of applications



**Total applications** (with a final decision): 217

**Approved applications** (2008-2025): 170

82% approval rate of which:

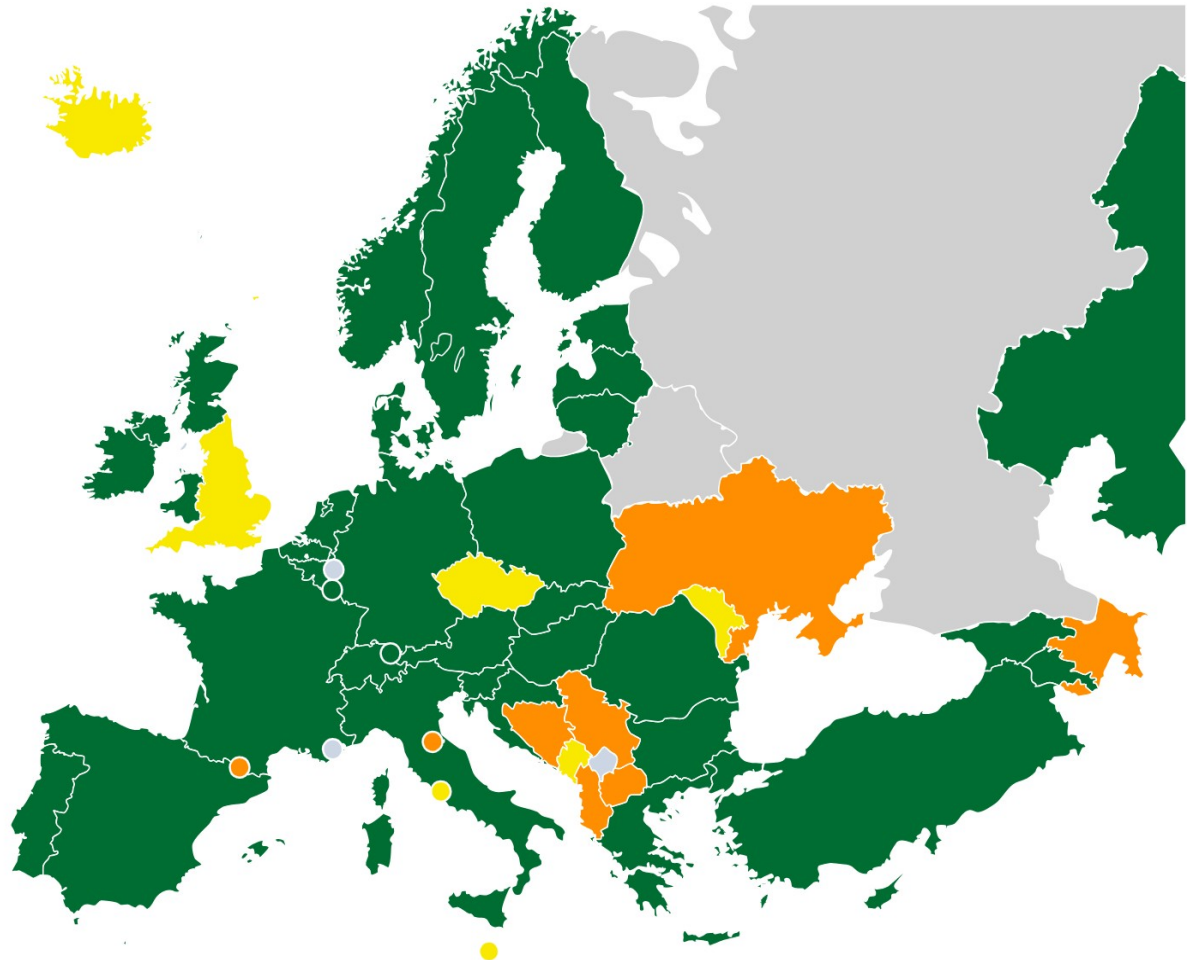
- Initial appl. 71%
- Renewal appl. 93%

Source: EQAR website

# EHEA Key Commitment – external QA

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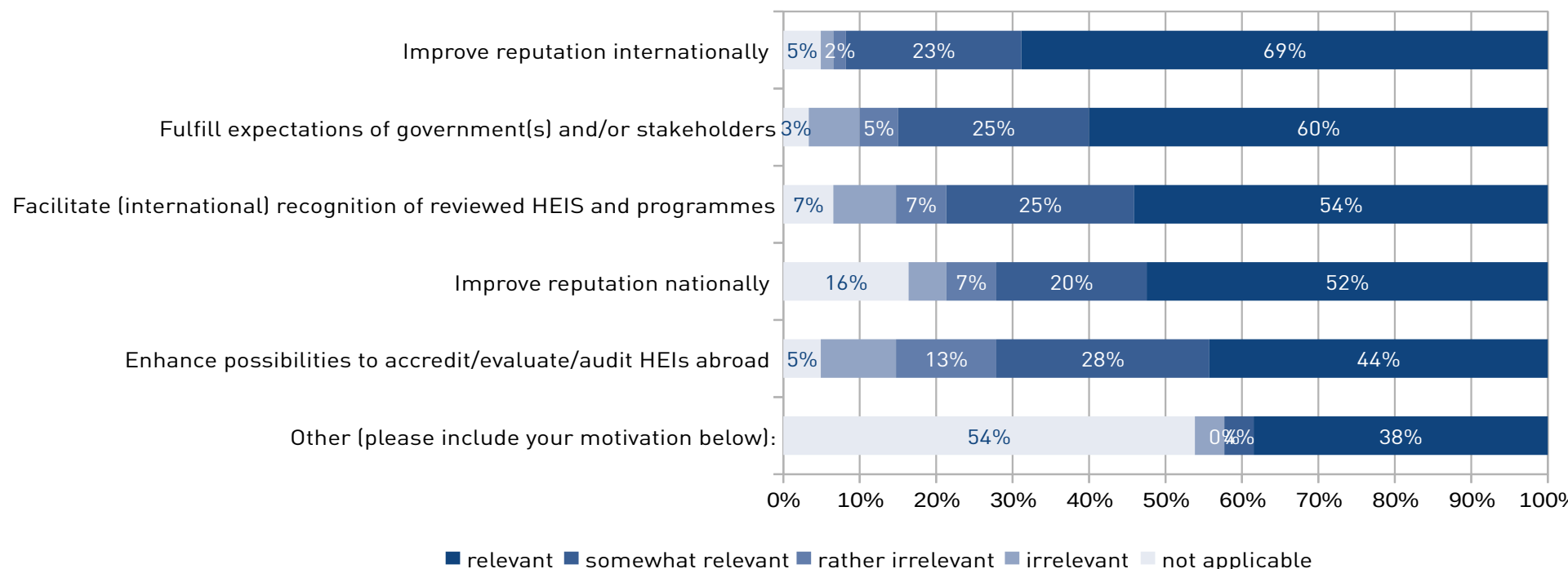
- 60 QA agencies registered on EQAR
- 34 EHEA countries **fully realise** commitment



# Objectives of EQAR registration according to QA agencies



What were/are the main motivations for your QAA to join EQAR ?



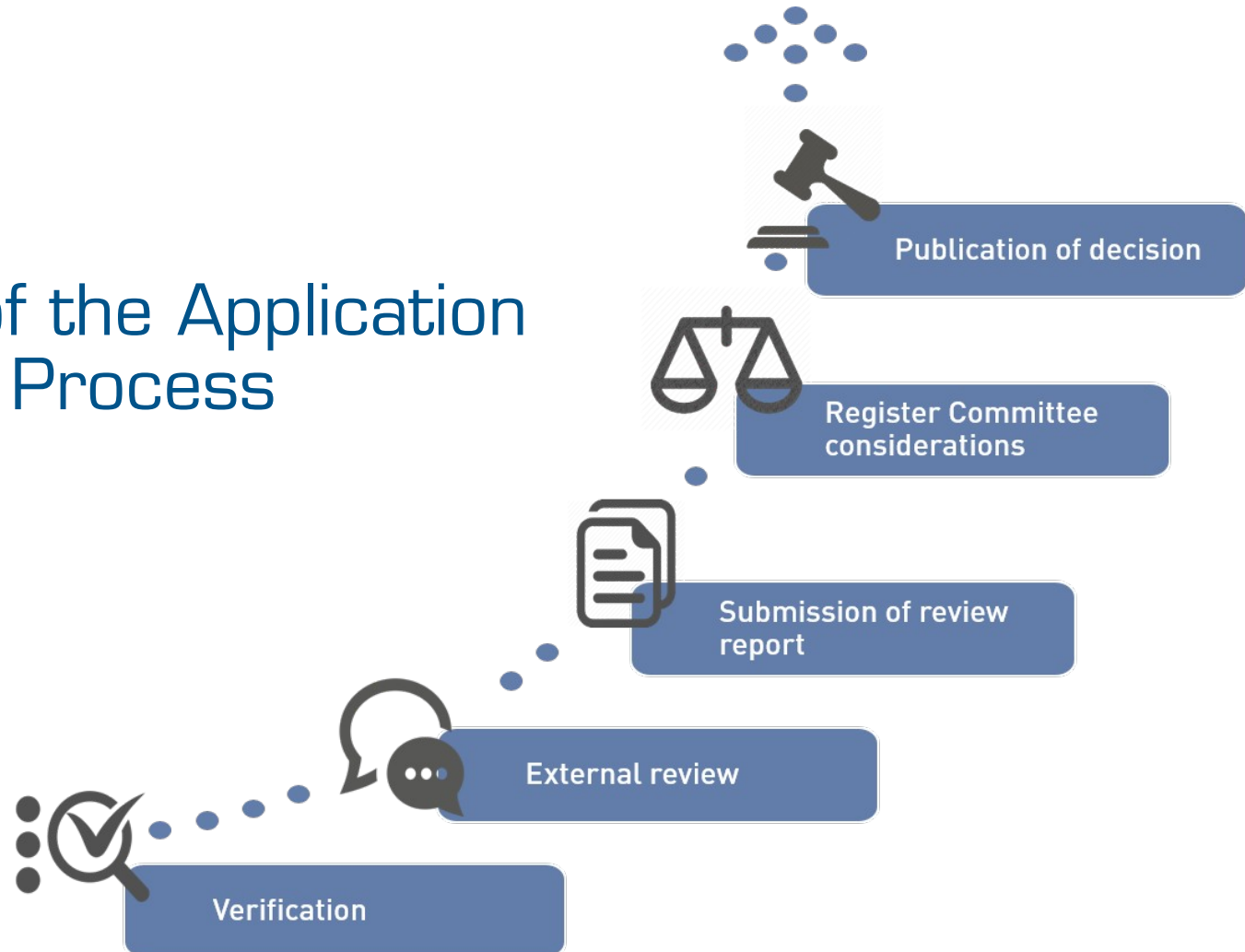
(EQAR Self-Evaluation 2015, Survey of Quality Assurance Agencies, n=61)

## Registration process





## Steps of the Application Process



# Registration and monitoring

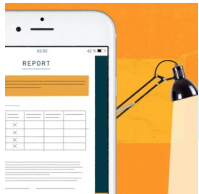
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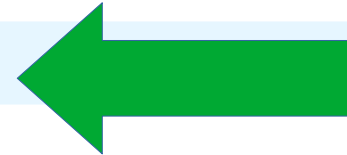
Initial application & review against ESG



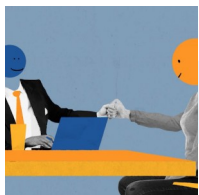
Annual updates on activities



Substantive Change Reports



Third-party complaints



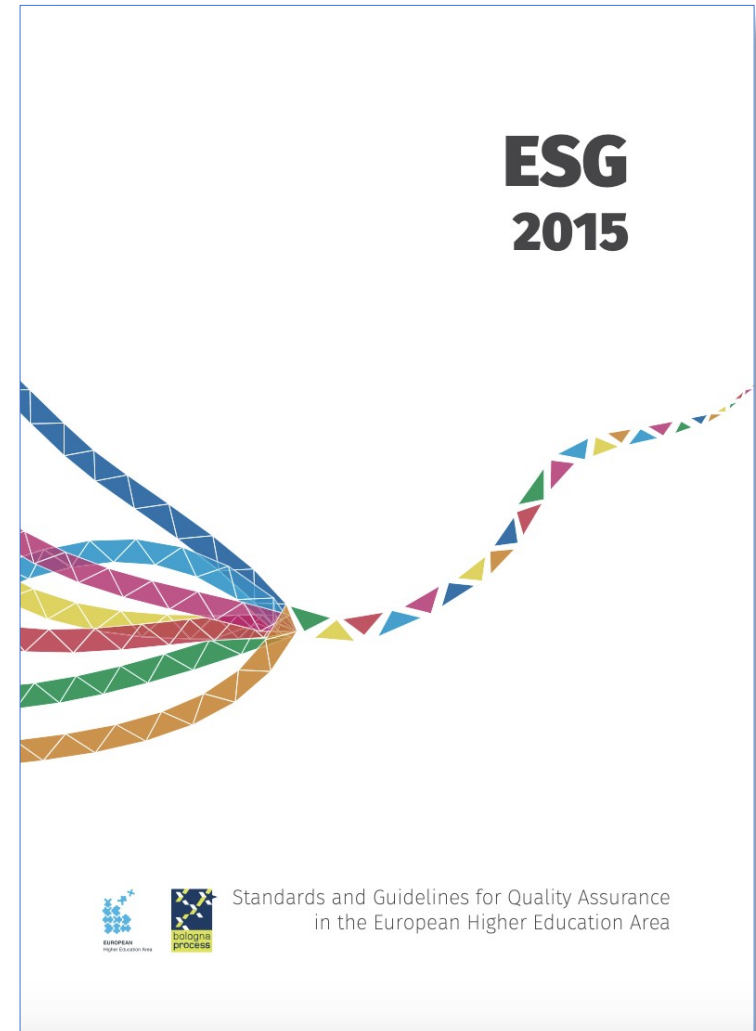
Periodic renewal every 5 years



# Scope and concepts of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

- Set of standards and guidelines for internal and external QA in HE
- Not prescriptions for quality, but provide guidance
- ESG are embedded in a broader context incl. QF's, ECTS, DS
- Focus on learning and teaching
  - \* QA activities: twin purpose of accountability and enhancement
  - \* Trust & quality culture

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# Scope and concepts of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Overview of the ESGs – EQA topics and requirements



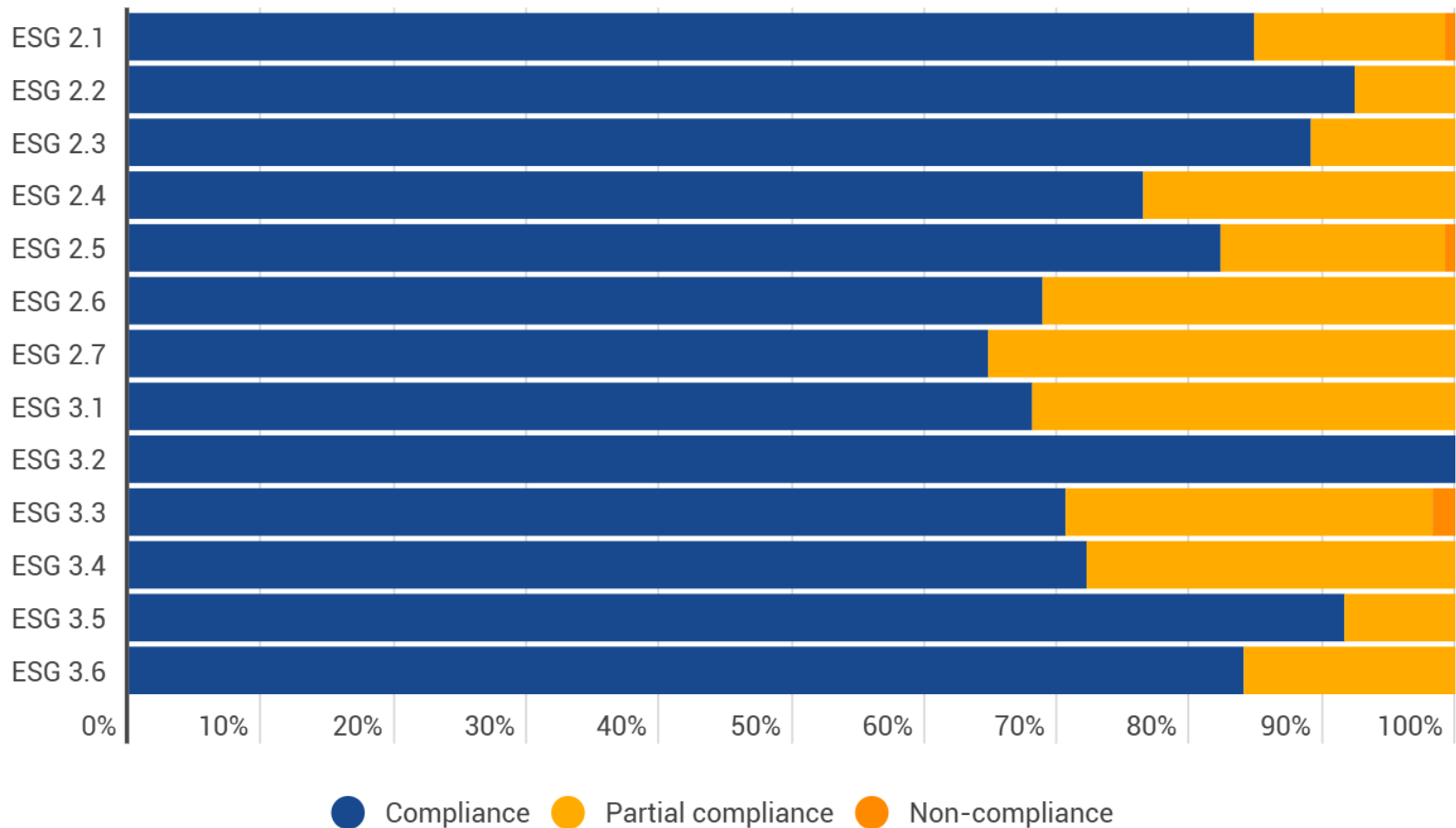
- 2.1 Consideration of internal QA: External reviews must take into account the **institution's internal QA processes** (ESG Part 1).
- 2.2 Designing methodologies: EQA methods must be **clear, fit for purpose, and developed in consultation with stakeholders**.
- 2.3 Implementing processes: EQA should follow **agreed, published procedures** carried out consistently.
- 2.4 Peer-review experts: External reviews must **involve competent, independent experts**—including students.
- 2.5 Criteria for outcomes: Decisions or judgments must be based on **clear, published, and consistently applied criteria**.
- 2.6 Reporting: Reports must be **publicly available, clear, and provide evidence-based conclusions**.
- 2.7 Complaints and appeals: Agencies must have a **formal, fair process for complaints and appeals**.

# Scope and concepts of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Overview of the ESGs – EQA topics and requirements



- 3.1 Activities, policy, and processes: Agencies must have a **publicly available mission and conduct activities aligned with ESG**, as well as **involve stakeholders** in its governance
- 3.2 Official status: Agencies must be **officially recognized by competent authorities**
- 3.3 Independence: Agencies must be **independent from governments and institutions**.
- 3.4 Thematic analysis: Agencies must **regularly produce analyses of their QA activities** to support system improvement.
- 3.5 Resources: Agencies need **sufficient human and financial resources** to operate effectively.
- 3.6 Internal QA and professional conduct: Agencies must have their **own internal QA and professional integrity mechanisms**.
- 3.7 Cyclical external review of the agency: Agencies must undergo **external review every five years**

## ESG Compliance: what do the numbers show?



Source: EQAR website

## ESG 2.6 (Reporting) → Common issues



- Publication of summary reports but **not of full reports**
- The agency did not publish all of its reports (for e.g. those with a negative outcome)
- **Lack of quality reporting:** inconsistency in the content or structure of reports, shortcomings in the reporting format, reports provide only, limited qualitative insights etc;
- **Accessibility of reports:** discrepancies between the information (published reports) available in the local language and the English language version of the website.

## ESG 3.1 (Activities, policy, and processes) → Common issues



- A **lack of stakeholder involvement (e.g. students)** in the governance of in the decision making processes
- **Unclear classification** of activities within and outside the scope of the ESG or
- Lack of **separation between external QA activities from other (non- ESG) activities**, such as consultancy or support of other QA agencies
- **Lack of strategic planning**, mission statement not translated in the daily work of the agency.



## ESG 3.3 (Independence) → Common issues

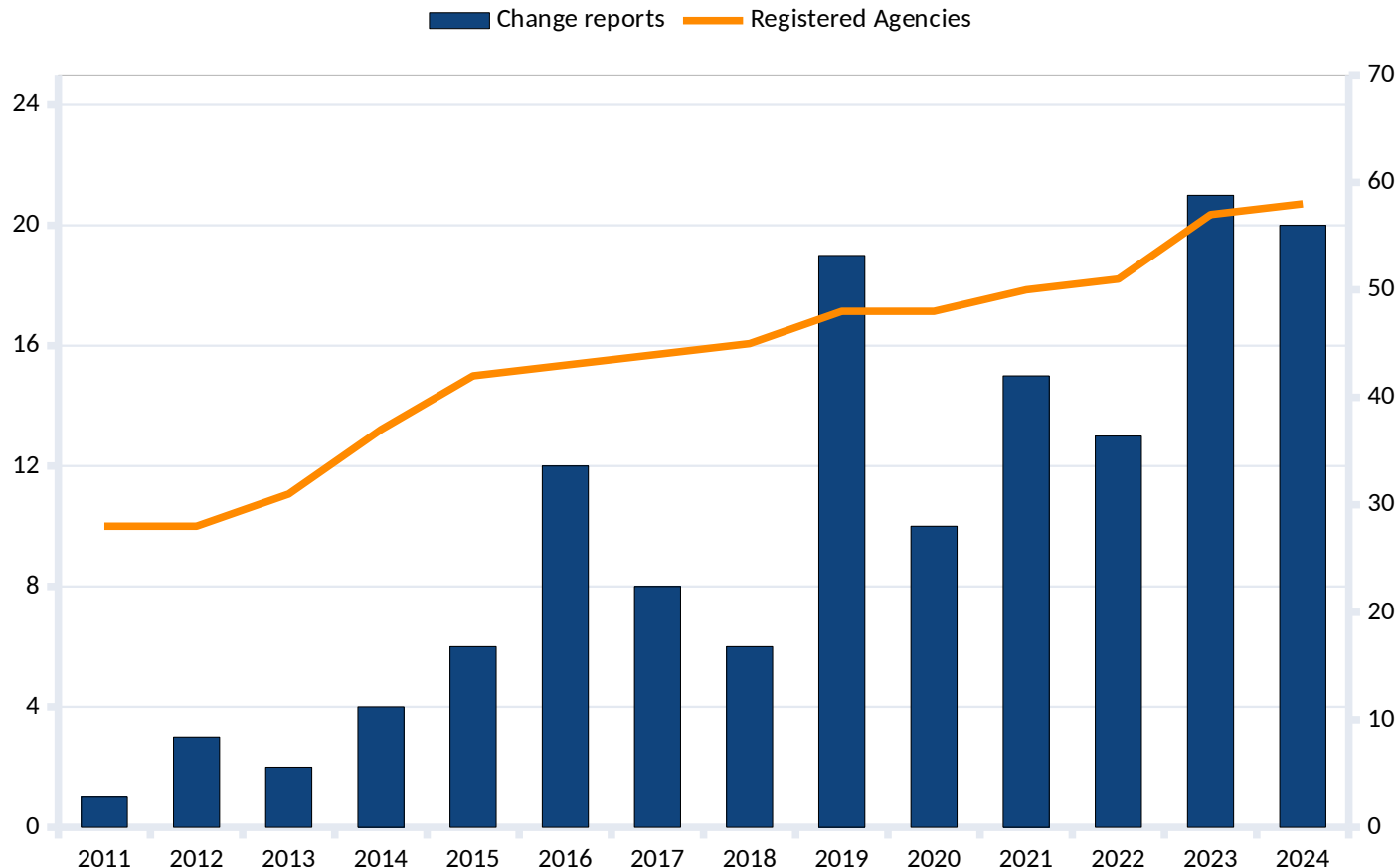


- **Appointment of the members** in a way that allows **unrestrained influence** by government, ministry, a specific stakeholder or founding organisation
- **Potential for conflicts of interest** that may arise regarding the **different roles played by the agency's members within different committees**
- **Lack of transparency in the nomination and dismissal** of the Board members of the organisation
- **Independence of formal outcomes, measures to prevent undue influence of some actors in the findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the agency.**

## Substantive Change Reports



# Substantive change reports in numbers



- Increase in substantive change reports over the years (although stabilised over the last few years)
- Almost all EQAR registered agencies have submitted at least one change report

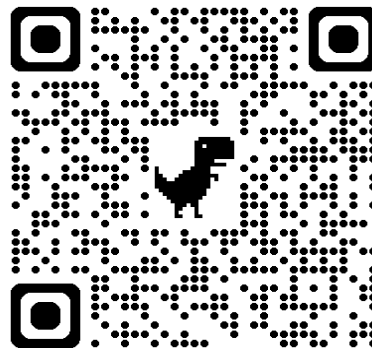
# Substantive changes: main topics



- Changes reported most often:
  - Changes in external QA activities (e.g. sustainability, short learning courses, connections to labour market)
  - **New external QA activities**
  - **Discontinuing an external QA activity** (e.g. programme accreditation)
  - Changes in **organisational structure, status or identity**
- Dynamic external QA landscape: agencies are becoming **more diverse in their organisational structure and in their external QA activities.**
- But also **changes in the national HE systems** → substantive changes in environments in which the agencies operate impact the agencies themselves.

# Database for External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)

# DEQAR – “Quality at your fingertips”

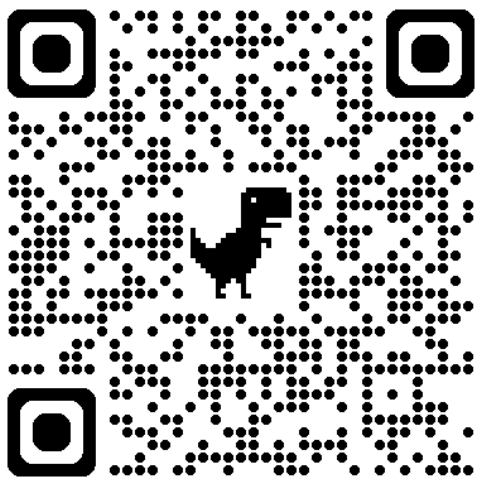


<https://www.deqar.eu/>

- Easy access to external quality assurance (QA) reports and decisions by EQAR-registered agencies
- Enhance **transparency and visibility at the European level**
- **Facilitates trust and automatic recognition**, based on robust quality assurance in line with ESG
- **Responds to information needs** of various stakeholders, in particular ENIC-NARICs and admission officers

# Kyrgyzstan in DEQAR

- **5 EQAR registered agencies** (ACQUIN, ASIIN, IAAR, IEP, IQAA) and one former one (NCPA) have evaluated some KGZ HEIs
- **17 providers** have been evaluated
- Mix of program and institutional evaluations



 Ala-Too International University **DEQARINST5933**

Ала-Тоо Эл аралык Университети  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

 American University for Central Asia **DEQARINST5226**

Kyrgyzstan

 Eurasian International Medical University **DEQARINST7377**

Евразиялык эл аралык медицина университети  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

 I.K. Akhunbaev Kyrgyz State Medical Academy **DEQARINST7293**

И.К. Ахунбаев атындагы Кыргыз мамлекеттик медициналык академиясы  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

 International Higher School of Medicine **DEQARINST5932**

Эл Аралык Жогорку Медициналык Мектеби  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

 International Medical University **DEQARINST7378**

Эл аралык Медициналык университети  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

 International University of Kyrgyzstan **DEQARINST5847**

Международный университет Кыргызстана  
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

## Q & A



Thank you!

[aleksandra.zhivkovikj@eqar.eu](mailto:aleksandra.zhivkovikj@eqar.eu)

