

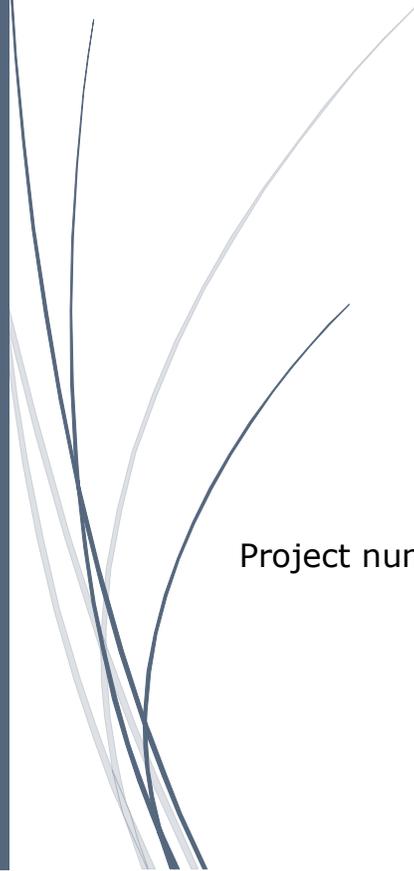


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Comparative analysis of the accreditation procedures between Kosovo and Albania on implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Project name: Strategic Support on Strengthening the Quality Assurance Structures at the Private Higher Education Institutions in Albania (QAINAL)

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Project number: 561510-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

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List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EI	Education International
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
EUA	European University Association
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
KAA	Kosovo Accreditation Agency
QAAHEA	Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education

Project background

The wider objective of the project “Strategic Support on Strengthening the Quality Assurance Structures at the Private Higher Education Institutions in Albania” no. 561510-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP is to establish and support quality assurance processes and mechanisms to ensure effective management and enhance teaching and learning at the private higher education institutions in Albania. The project aims to support the private higher education institutions in Albania to achieve the priorities of the two key documents: “Increasing the impact of EU Development: an Agenda for Change” and “European Higher Education in the World”. The project addresses, the national priority for Joint Project, quality assurance processes and mechanisms, under category C – improving management and operation of higher education institutions.

The project is comprised of the following specific objectives:

- 1) To establish/support the quality assurance structures/offices at the private higher education institutions in Albania;
- 2) To provide capacity building on quality assurance;
- 3) To provide trainings on designing study program based on labor market needs;
- 4) To draft action plans supporting the processes of quality assurance and enhancement in teaching, learning and administration;
- 5) To modernize the infrastructure of Quality Assurance Office;
- 6) Development of QA guidelines;

1. Introduction

Economic growth, and social cohesion are linked to higher education, innovation (property rights) and research. Every country make investments in their education systems, since economic system (society) cannot have a rapid growth if the majority of population does not have appropriate levels of education. In this regard, especially the European Union (EU) is strongly interested in building knowledge-based societies. Therefore, among the very important component in the development of the socio-political and economic growth within the EU is the higher education system. The rapid change in technology, changes in the consumption levels and the need for product differentiation, requires that the higher education prepare graduates with skills that are able catch the changes in the labour market.

Nowadays, the ever-growing participation in the higher education, demands a new ways of adopting to the societies. The contemporary world requires that the students should have centered approach to learning and teaching, adopting flexible learning and taking into account the competences gained outside the curricula. And even the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are trying to diversify their offer by trying to: find new and better ways of educational provision and cooperation, advancing digital learning, etc. By taking into account all these changes experienced in the higher education systems, there is an essential need for well-established quality assurance system, to ensure that the HEIs prepare students for the ever-changing requirements of the labor market.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), is prepared with contribution and inputs by the following institutions: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), in cooperation with: Education International (EI), BUSINESS EUROPE, European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), standardized form of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. This standardized form has important role in the development of national and institutional quality assurance system across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and international cooperation, by increasing the transparency and creating a recognized higher education system for their qualifications, programmes and other provision.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) and quality assurance agencies use the ESG as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems in higher education. Furthermore, the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), agreed to the ESG standards. The standards for quality assurance have been divided into three parts:

- Internal quality assurance,
- External quality assurance,
- Quality assurance agencies.

The standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance consist of: policy for quality assurance, design and approval of programmes, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information management, public information, on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes and cyclical external quality assurance.

The Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance consists, consideration of internal quality assurance, designing methodologies fit for purpose, implementing processes, peer-review experts, criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals.

And lastly the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies consists of: activities, policy and processes for quality assurance, official status, independence, thematic analysis, resources, internal quality assurance and professional conduct and cyclical external review of agencies.

The main purpose of this document is to analyze the requirements and standards that the agencies of accreditation in Kosovo and in Albania, Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education of Albania (QAAHEA) ask for accreditation of public and private HEIs, and analyze whether these standards are in accordance with the ESG. Further to this, in order to strengthen our analysis, we have conducted a survey with 5 HEIs in Albania and 8 in Kosova. The questionnaire comprised of different questions, which were all in compliance to the ESG standards. For comparative analysis, HEIs in both countries were asked the same questions related to the requirements of accreditation agencies, that according to the ESG must be fulfilled.

2. Methodology

For comparing the accreditation procedures among Kosovo and Albania a survey was developed. First part of this report presents figures and results of HEIs in Albania and Kosovo, where results of five HEIs in Albania and eight HEIs from Kosovo.

The survey composed of twelve questions; each of them had sub-questions that were separated in two sub-groups related to: Internal and external quality assurance, that in total thirteen HEIs answered. The survey was conducted during 2018. All the results are presented in the first part of this report.

Another questionnaire was developed to gather information from agencies of accreditation in Albania and Kosovo (the KAA and the QAAHEA), about the accreditation process for higher education institutions. The main purpose was to see whether the requirements from the agencies are in compliance with the ESG. Also this survey consisted of multiple question separated into two groups: Internal quality assurance questions, External quality assurance question. All the results and the comments are presented in the second part of the report. Additionally, the survey was conducted during 2018 with both agencies.

From the results it is made a comparison with the ESG requirements/ standards published in 2015 and standards of accreditation for higher education institutions applied by the accreditation agencies in Albania and Kosovo.

3. Literature Review

Since 2005, there is a strong basis build for the quality assurance standards and processes. The core guiding document was adopted by the Ministers of the Bologna Process signatory states that were responsible for Higher Education by proposing to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), to develop a set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance' and to 'explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Bologna Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005'. This was enabled in cooperation with the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA). By this initiative, was developed the document: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and first released in 2005.

The revised version of the ESG was available in 2015. According to this document, the standards for quality assurance have been divided into three parts (ESG, 2015):

- a) Internal quality assurance
- b) External quality assurance
- c) Quality assurance agencies

The purposes of the ESG 2015 are to provide a common framework for quality assurance in Europe; to enable the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education; to support mutual trust; and to provide information on quality assurance in the EHEA.

The ESG 2015 are based on four principles: that the primary responsibility lies with higher education institutions for the quality and quality assurance of their provision; that quality assurance needs to respond to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes, and students; that quality assurance needs to support the creation of a quality culture; and that quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, other stakeholders, and the society(ESG, 2015).

There are many definitions and understandings for the Quality Assurance. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose(ESG, 2015). According to the European Student

Union, Quality Assurance is understood as: “The means by which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty, that the standards and quality of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced” (Friend Pereira, Lutz and Heerens, 2002). The European University Association: “Quality assurance is usually seen as a key accountability measure introduced as a response to the massification of higher education and the increased autonomy of universities”(Byrne *et al.*, 2013). “First and foremost, quality assurance must be context sensitive and thus individualized. When developing quality assurance processes HEIs and QA agencies need to take into account disciplinary characteristics, various organizational cultures, and the historical position of the institution as well as the national context” (Gover and Loukkola, 2015).

Internal quality assurance: Institutions should follow the standards by also assuring themselves of providing the relevant competence. They should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

External quality assurance: External quality assurance recognizes the standards for internal quality assurance, thus ensuring that the internal work undertaken by institutions is directly relevant to any external quality assurance that they undergo.

Quality assurance agencies: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement.

Therefore, these three parts work on a complementary basis in higher education institutions as well as in agencies and also work on the understanding that other stakeholders contribute to the framework(ESG, 2015).

According to Schindler, et al, 2015, there are four broad conceptualizations of quality (quality as purposeful, transformative, exceptional, and accountable) and a set of quality indicators used to assess each of the broad conceptualizations. Schindler also suggests that there are structural themes in existing definitions of quality assurance, wherein the first element of definitions focus on processes, policies, or actions and the second element of definitions specify aspects of quality that pertain to accountability and/or continuous improvement. In the table, in next page, all the four categories of qualification in higher education are presented, where the first three categories presents desired inputs, such as educational resources available to students. The last category,

student performance, focuses more on outputs, such as gains in learning, which reflects the trends in assessing student outcomes to assure quality (Schindler *et al.*, 2015).

Table 1 Categories of Quality Indicators

Categories	Definitions
Administrative Indicators	A set of quality indicators that pertain to the administrative functions of an institution, including developing a relevant mission and vision, establishing institutional legitimacy, achieving internal/external standards and goals, and procuring resources for optimal institutional functioning[(Cheong Cheng and Ming Tam, 1997), (COL, 2009), (Hill, Lomas and Macgregor, 2003), (Iacovidou, Gibbs and Zopiatis, 2009), (Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996)}].
Student Support Indicators	A set of quality indicators that pertain to the availability and responsiveness of student support services [e.g., the degree to which student complaints are adequately addressed;(Garvin, 1987), (Hill, Lomas and Macgregor, 2003), (Iacovidou, Gibbs and Zopiatis, 2009), (Oldfield and Baron, 2000)(Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996)].
Instructional Indicators	A set of quality indicators that pertain to the relevancy of educational content and the competence of instructors [e.g., programs and courses that prepare students for employment;(Biggs, 2012), (COL, 2009), (Harvey and Green, 1993), (Hill, Lomas and Macgregor, 2003), (Tam, 2014)].
Student Performance Indicators	A set of quality indicators that pertain to student engagement with curriculum, faculty, and staff, and increases in knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to gainful employment [e.g., increased critical thinking skills;(Bogue, 1998), (Cheong Cheng and Ming Tam, 1997), (Harvey and Green, 1993), (Higher, Key and Harvey, 1996), (Iacovidou, Gibbs and Zopiatis, 2009)].

Source: (Schindler, et al., 2015)

These all are taken into account for the quality assurance of the institutions in the ESG, the purpose of which is “to provide a common framework for quality assurance in Europe; to enable the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education; to support mutual trust; and to provide information on quality assurance in the EHEA. 2 The ESG 2015 are based on four principles: that the primary responsibility lies with higher education institutions for the quality and quality assurance of their provision; that quality assurance needs to respond to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes, and students; that quality assurance needs to support the creation of a quality culture; and that quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, other stakeholders, and the society (Gover and Loukkola, 2017).

In the following of this paper we present all the processed results from the surveys conducted by the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania, and also the result of the surveys with the two accreditation agencies in Kosovo and Albania. Firstly, the results with the HEIs are presented, while in the second part results with the agencies.

4. Data Analysis

This report provides a statistical overview of the results of five HEIs in Albania and eight in Kosovo that have been surveyed in 2018, aiming to make comparative analysis with accreditation standards of these countries, and with the ESG standards presented in 2015. In total there were twelve questions, each of them had many sub-questions, separated into two parts: Internal quality assurance questions and the External quality assurance questions. In the last part of this report the results of the survey with the accreditation agencies of Albania and Kosovo is presented.

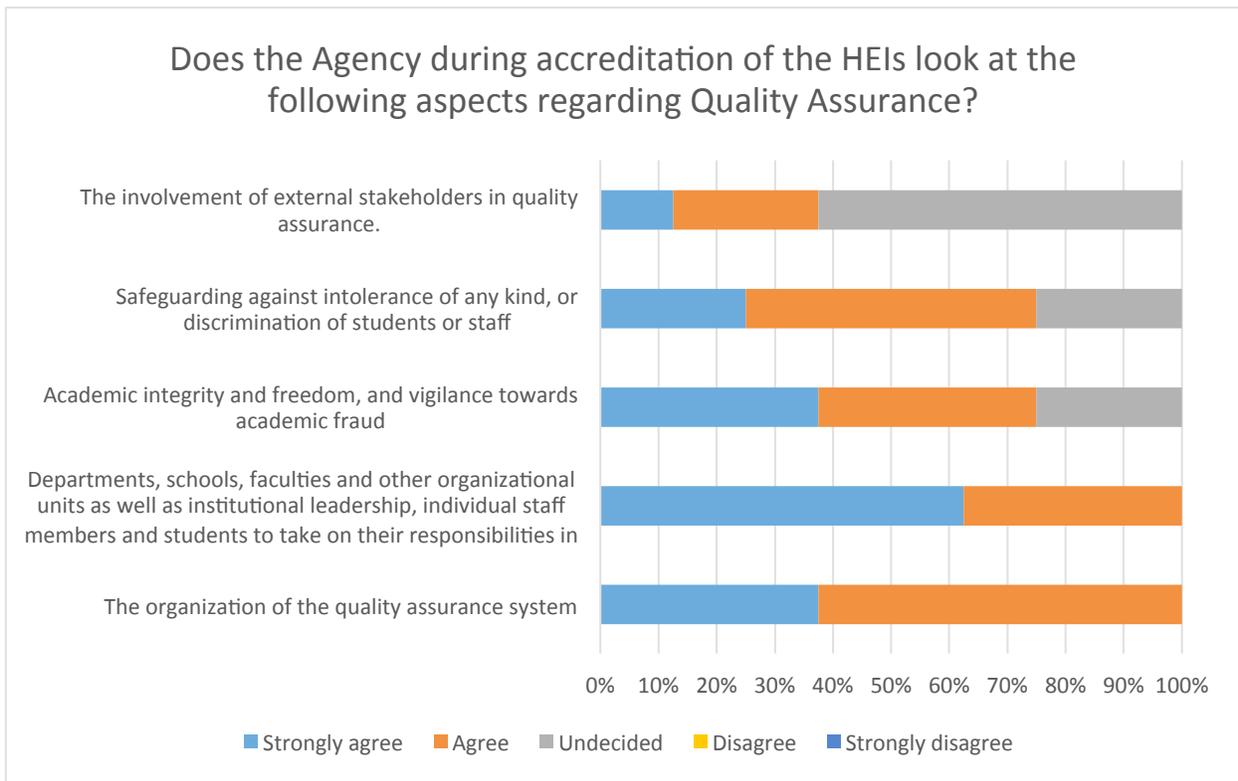
4.1. Analysis of the HEIs

In most of the questions the respondents provided responses, but in few of the question there was no answer provided. The analysis of the HEIs is divided into two groups of questions that are related to: the internal quality assurance and the external quality assurance.

4.1.1. Internal quality assurance of the HEIs

The first question in the survey was: Does the Agency during accreditation of the HEIs look at the following aspects regarding Quality Assurance? The graph in the next page presents all the responds of the 8 HEIs in Kosovo.

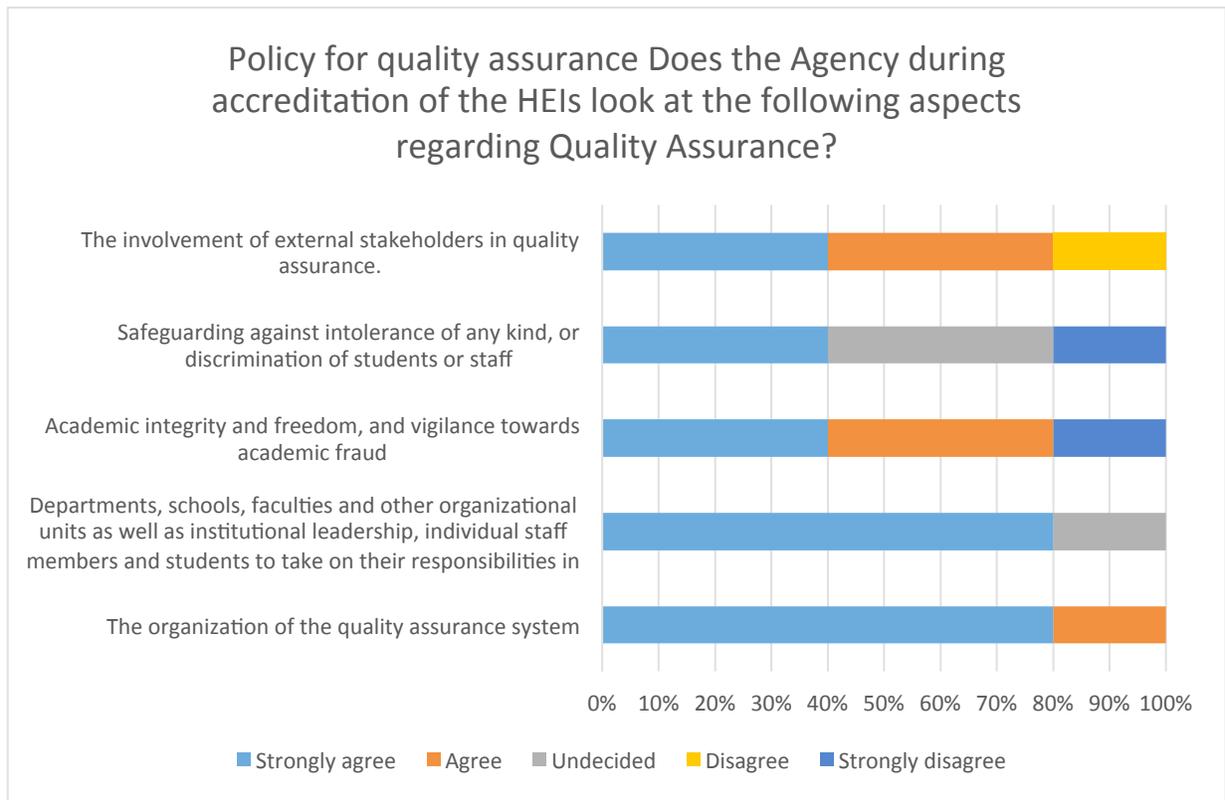
Figure 1 Policy for internal quality assurance in the HEIs in Kosovo



First, regarding the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance, in all the eight HEIs in Kosovo, about 13% or 1 HEI strongly agreed, 25% of them agreed and 63% undecided. As for the second question: Safeguarding against intolerance of any kind, or discrimination of students or staff, 25% of respondents strongly agreed, 50% of them agreed and 25% of them undecided. The third question: Academic integrity and freedom, and vigilance towards academic fraud, results shows the following: 38% of the HEIs in Kosovo strongly agreed and almost the same, so about 38% agreed, in this question there were no HEIs in Kosovo that were undecided or any other categories. The fourth question was related to: Departments, schools, faculties and other organizational units as well as institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance, and the result shows that, more than 63% strongly agreed, and 38% agreed. And finally the last question was related to the fact if the KAA looks on organization of the quality assurance system, 38% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 68% of them agreed.

The graph below shows the results for the same question, but for the HEIs in Albania:

Figure 2 Policy for internal quality assurance in the HEIs in Albania



The results vary quite much more compared to the results in Kosovo. According to the question: Does the Agency during accreditation of the HEIs look at the following aspects regarding Quality Assurance? More specifically, the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance: 40% of respondents strongly agreed, and 40% agreed and surprisingly 20% of them disagreed. The second question of this sub-group: Safeguarding against intolerance of any kind, or discrimination of students or staff, from the five HEIs in Albania, 40% of them strongly agreed, 40% of them are undecided and 20% of them strongly disagreed. As regard to the: Academic integrity and freedom, and vigilance towards academic fraud: also 40% of all surveyed HEIs in Albania strongly agreed, 40% of them agreed, and 20% strongly disagreed, which means that in this part the HEIs in Albania are much diversified. The fourth question was, whether departments, schools, faculties and other organizational units as well as institutional leadership, individual staff members and students take on their responsibilities in quality assurance; 80% of the surveyed HEIs in Albania strongly agreed, and 20% of them were undecided. This is quite a sustainable result, because almost all of them strongly agreed and just

a few of them were undecided. Related to the last question if the accreditation agency in Albania looks for the organization of the quality assurance system, 80% of the HEIs strongly agreed and 20% of them agreed.

According to the results we can see that the HEIs in Albania were much more diversified in this topic compared to the HEIs in Kosovo. In Kosovo we can see that in almost every question respondents either strongly agreed or at least agreed, overtaking all the other categories, while in the case of the HEIs in Albania some of the respondents disagreed and even strongly disagreed. Based on this result we can say that the HEIs in Kosovo think that the KAA follows the ESG requirements for accreditation compared to QAAHEA.

The second question addressed the fact whether accreditation agencies the HEIs to make a reference to the National Qualification Framework for the study programs. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 2 Second question for the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania

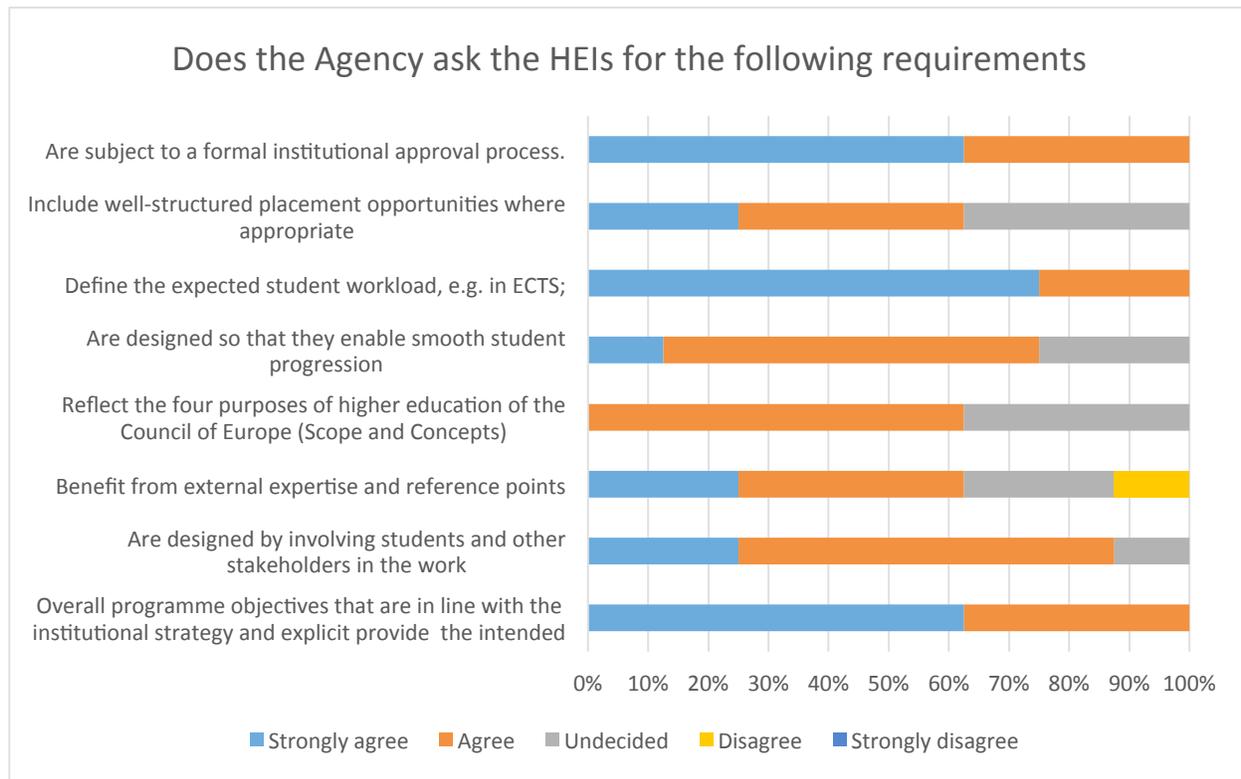
Reference to the National Qualification Framework for the study programs			
Kosovo		Albania	
Yes 75%	No 13%	Yes 80%	No 0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, but only 7 HEIs in Kosovo and 4 HEIs in Albania have responded to this question.

From the table we can see that about 75% of the HEIs in Kosovo admitted to make a reference to the National Qualification Framework, while 13% had a negative response. In Albania the results were clearer, even though only 4 of the HEIs responded to this question, thus 80% of the HEIs said that they take into account referencing the National Qualification Framework, when designing study programs. Both countries stand good enough in this aspect, thus, for their Bachelor, Master, Phd and other short-cycle study programs they make such a reference, which is a very important part in the ESG.

In the third set of questions related to the design and approval of program, we are going to elaborate the requirements in the case for Kosovo first and then in Albania and compare them with each other. In the Figure below we can see the result for the HEIs in Kosovo.

Figure 3 Design and approval of programs in Kosovo HEIs

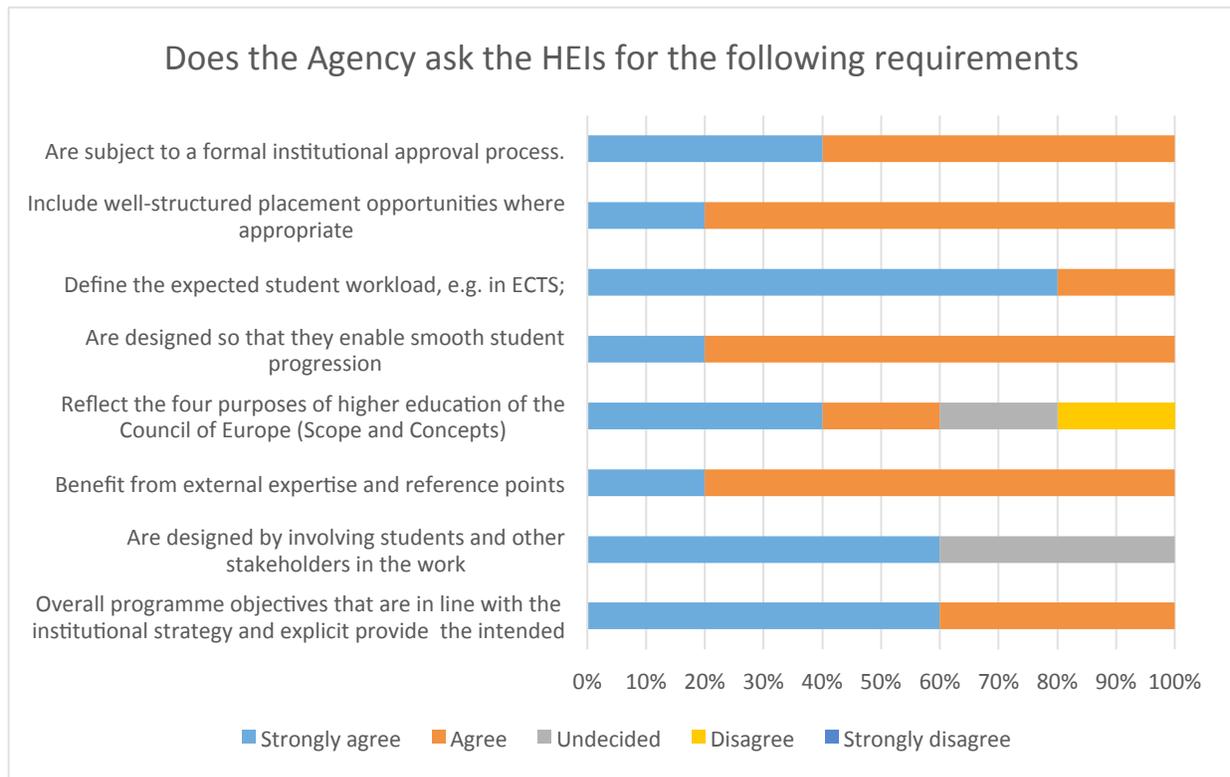


The results from the *Figure 3* shows that the eight HEIs in Kosovo have responded to the question, if KAA ask the HEIs for the following request about design and approval of programs: Are subject to a formal institutional approval process? The 63% of all the HEIs participating in the survey in Kosovo have strongly agreed and about 37% of them agreed. Regarding the inclusion of well-structured placement opportunities in the study programs where appropriate, 25% strongly agreed, 38% agreed and 38% were undecided. 75% of the HEIs in Kosova strongly agreed about the definition of the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS; and 25% agreed. The fourth request was: are designed so that they enable smooth student progression, the results shows that 13% of them strongly agreed, 63% agreed and about 25% were undecided. However, on embracing the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (Scope and Concepts) in the study program respondents gave varied answers: the results shows that 63% agreed and 38% are undecided. We got very diverse answers whether the HEIs benefit from external expertise and reference points, where 25% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 25% undecided and 13% disagreed. Involvement of students and other stakeholders in the curricula and 25% of the HEIs strongly agreed to involve them, while 63% agreed and 13% were undecided. And the last request, in this question was, does the agency ask for the overall program objectives to be in

line with the institutional strategy and explicit provide the intended learning outcomes, the answers of the eight HEIs in Kosovo were that, 63% strongly agreed and 38% agreed.

Figure 4, shows the answers of the five HEIs in Albania. According to our survey 40% of the HEIs in Albania strongly agree that the study program design is a subject of formal institutional approval processes and 60% agree, almost the same result as in the Kosovar HEIs.

Figure 4 Design and approval of programs in Albanian HEIs



Regarding the second point on the inclusion of well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate, the result is as follows: 20% of the Albanian HEIs strongly agreed and 80% agreed here. The results of this request were much more stable than in the case of Kosovo, for the same request, in Kosovo answers were more varying. Regarding the third request 80% of the Albanian HEIs strongly agreed and 20% agreed that for the design of study program have a definition of the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS. This is almost the same result as in the HEIs of Kosovo. However, from the total number of respondents, 20% strongly agreed and 80% agreed that they take into account students workload during study program design, in order to enable smooth student progression. Hence, the results in Albania have less variations compared to the results of the HEIs in Kosovo. The following request was if the institution reflect the four

purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (Scope and Concepts), the results are spread across the categories: 40% strongly agreed, and 20% agreed, 20% are undecided, and again 20% disagreed. As regard to this question, the result shows that the HEIs in Kosovo had less differentiation in their opinion, than the HEIs in Albania. Another question related to this topic was: the benefit from external expertise and reference points. The result related to this part was much close to each other (for the countries subject to the study), where 20% strongly agree to this request, and 80% agreed, If we compare these results with the results of the HEIs in Kosovo, we can clearly see that in the Kosovo case, the answers were much more scattered than in the answers of the HEIs of Albania. The sixth request according to the survey was related to the design of the programs by involving students and other stakeholders: the figure shows that 60% strongly agreed for having involved students and stakeholders and 40% are undecided. These results indicates that the HEIs in Albania are separated into two groups, the one that strongly agree and the one that are undecided according, on the contrary to the results of the HEIs of Kosovo, which are more spread out to the categories and makes it unclear whether this request is fulfilled by HEIs properly or not. The last request for this question was, if overall programme objectives are in line with the institutional strategy and explicitly provide the intended learning outcomes, 60% strongly agree and 40% agree. This result is almost the same as for the HEIs in Kosovo.

If we compare the results of the HEIs in both countries we can notice that the Kosovo HEIs have more spread answers, than the HEIs in Albania. On average more than 41% of the HEIs in Kosovo, strongly agreed and agreed that the agencies in this country fulfilled this requirement presented above. On the other side, on average 45% of the HEIs in Albania, strongly agreed and agreed that the agencies in their country fulfilled the requirement presented above.

Next section elaborate forth question, of the internal quality assurance for the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania relate to student-centered learning, teaching and assessment. This part aims to gather information if the teaching, learning and assessment have a student-centered approach , in the aspects of stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process (ESG 2015). The question that the survey asked the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania was: Does your institution do the following for the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching? The results from the survey are presented in the table below.

Table 3 Internal quality assurance: Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment

Does your institution do the following for the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching?	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Respects and takes the diversity of students and their needs into consideration, enabling flexible learning paths	88%	13%	80%	20%
Considers and applies different modes of delivery, where appropriate	88%	13%	80%	20%
Flexibly applies a variety of pedagogical methods	100%	0%	100%	0%
Regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods	75%	25%	100%	0%
Encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher	100%	0%	100%	0%
Promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship	88%	13%	100%	0%
Has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints	63%	38%	100%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question

If we analyze *Table 3* we can make a clear comparison for the HEIs in Kosovo and in Albania. For the first sub-question, respects and takes the diversity of students and their needs into consideration, enabling flexible learning paths, HEIs of both countries have almost same answers. About 88% of the HEIs in Kosovo responded positively and 13% disagreed, in the case of the HEIs in Albania there are similarities, as well (80% saying yes and 20% responded negatively). The second requirement, on consideration and application of different modes of delivery, the results presented have same degree of similarities in the HEIs of both countries. Regarding the request of flexible application of a variety of pedagogical methods and encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher, the HEIs in both countries claimed 100% yes. On the aspect of regular institutional evaluation and adjustment of the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods: the result show that the HEIs in Albania are doing much better then the HEIs in Kosovo. An important should be paid to the last requirement, where 38% of the HEIs in Kosova do not have appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

In the question “Considering the importance of assessment for students’ progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following?” five HEIs in Albania and 8 HEIs in Kosova. An exception is the first sub-question that one HEI from Kosova did not provide an answer.

Table 4 Fifth question on Internal Quality Assurance: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Considering the importance of assessment for students’ progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following?	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Assessors are familiar with accepted testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field	88%	0%	100%	0%
The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance	100%	0%	80%	20%
The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process	100%	0%	80%	20%
Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner	63%	38%	40%	60%
The regulations for assessment take mitigating circumstances into account	75%	25%	100%	0%
Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures	88%	13%	100%	0%
A formal procedure for students’ appeals is in place	75%	25%	100%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question, except for the first question in the case of Kosovo were only 7 HEIs have respond..

If we make a deeper analyze for the *Table 4* we can see that for the first request in the context of the fifth question of the internal quality assurance, it shows us that 100% of the HEIs in Albania are in accordance with this requirement, while 88% of the HEIs in Kosovo comply with this requirement (only 7 HEIs, out of 8 answered this question). For the second and third requirement, it is clear that the HEIs in Kosovo are ahead of the HEIs in Albania. In both of this request we have the same responds, 100% of the HEIs in Kosovo approved to this two request and only 80% of the HEIs of Albania are in compliance with this two request. Carrying out the assessment by more than one examiner, seem to be not very much applicable. However, in this regard HEIs in Kosova stand in a better position, 68% of the HEIs there claim to do so, and the

rest do not apply such an approach. In Albania 60% of the HEIs do not implement such experiences and only 40% do so. For the last three requirements, HEIs in Albania responded 100% positively, while the HEIs in Kosova provided more diverse answers. If we take an overview of the entire *Table 4*, we can notice that in the first four requests the HEIs of Kosovo have the dominance compared to the HEIs of Albania, but for the last three requirements it is Albanian HEIs that are doing better compared to the HEIs of Kosovo. In general we can conclude that the HEIs of Albania and Kosova stand quite well on implementation of the ESG requirements about student admission, progression, recognition and certification, with the exception of the following standard “where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner”. For this requirement both countries lag behind.

There were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania that responded the two questions on fair recognition of higher education qualifications and institutional practice for recognition, as presented in the *Table 5*.

Table 5 Internal Quality Assurance: Question number 6 and 7 for the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania

	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students’ progress in their studies, while promoting mobility:	88%	13%	100%	0%
Institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention:	75%	13%	100%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this two questions, except for the second question in the case of Kosovo were only 7 HEIs have responded.

For the first question fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students’ progress in their studies, while promoting mobility: 88% of the HEIs in Kosovo implement this request, while the rest do not comply this standard, while the HEIs in Albania 100% claimed to implement it.

The other question presented in the *Table 5*: Institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, were we obtain the results, 75% of the

HEIs in Kosovo agreed with this statement, and the other part of the HEIs in Kosovo do not agreed with this statement (here only 7 HEIs in Kosovo have respond to this question, that's why we have only 13% of the HEIs, which disagreed). However, all the HEIs in Albania responded positively to this statement. Overall, we can say that the HEIs in Albania stand quite well compared to the HEIs in Kosovo, for these two requirements. But in general both of the HEIs of these countries are in a good situation in fulfilling ESG requirements.

The next question is again related to internal quality assurance, more specifically about recruitment and promotion of teaching staff. Eight HEIs in Kosovo and five HEIs in Albania, answered this part.

Table 6 Internal quality assurance: Teaching staff in the HEIs for Kosovo and Albania,.

With regard to teaching does the Accreditation Agency look at the following aspects:	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching	88%	13%	100%	0%
Opportunities offered for and promotion of professional development of teaching staff	75%	25%	80%	20%
Encouraging of scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research	88%	13%	100%	0%
Encouraging of innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies	88%	13%	60%	40%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question

According to the survey results, the first aspect of this question, shows us that the QAAHEA required a more clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching of the HEIs in this country, than the KAA. The second and third aspect of this question is a clear indicator that the QAAHEA asked for more opportunities offered for and promotion of professional development of teaching staff and encouraging of scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research the HEIs in this country, than the KAA asked the HEIs in Kosovo. And the last aspect in this part: does the agencies of accreditation asked the HEIs in each country for encouraging of innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies, 88% of the HEIs in Kosovo approved to statement, and other HEIs in Kosovo disagreed. In the case of the HEIs in Albania, 60% of them approved this statement and 40% disagreed. In general, the HEIs in Albania, with the exception of

the last aspect, thinks that QAAHE have asked and required a more attention to the teaching staff requirement, than the KAA. However, comparing to the request of the ESG, HEIs in both countries thinks that the agencies of accreditation are in line with ESG requirements.

The final question in the internal quality assurance part is does the Accreditation agencies ask the HEIs for the information management. It comprises of twelve sub-questions and results are elaborated below.

Table 7 Internal quality assurance: Information Management in regarding the Kosovo and Albania HEIs

Does the Accreditation Agency ask HEIs for the following information?				
	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Key performance indicators	75%	25%	100%	0%
Profile of the student population	88%	13%	80%	20%
Student progression, success and drop-out rates	75%	25%	100%	0%
Students' satisfaction with their programmes	75%	25%	100%	0%
Learning resources and student support availability	88%	13%	100%	0%
Career paths of graduates	100%	0%	80%	20%
The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date	88%	13%	80%	20%
The changing needs of society	75%	25%	80%	20%
The students' workload, progression and completion	100%	0%	100%	0%
The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students	100%	0%	100%	0%
The students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme	88%	13%	100%	0%
The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme	100%	0%	100%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question

Table 7 shows that in the most of this requirement the HEIs in Albania have responded positively, saying that the QAAHE have made a very good job for almost all of the requirements. An exception is profile of the student population, career paths of graduates, the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date and the changing needs of society, around 80% of the HEIs in Albania approved. In the other requests 100% of the HEIs in Albania admitted to have implemented the requirements. In the HEIs of Kosovo there are more variety of opinions, regarding these requests. Only 75% of the HEIs in Kosovo agreed that the KAA have required to fulfill the criteria such as: key performance indicators, student progression, success and drop-out rates,

students' satisfaction with their programmes and the changing needs of society. Around 88% of the HEIs agreed that the KAA required them profile of the student population, learning resources and student support availability, the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date, the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme. And lastly, 100% of the HEIs in Kosovo admitted that they were asked about the: career paths of graduates, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, the learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Nevertheless, even some differences are appearing, in overall both of the countries have a very well established requirement for the HEIs, meaning that they are in accordance with the criterias requested by the ESG. Next section analyzes the results of the external quality assurance.

4.1.2. External quality assurance of the HEIs

In this section results of the questionnaire on standards and guidelines for external quality assurance of the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania are elaborated. The questionnaire was composed of three parts: criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals; Peer review experts and Implementing process. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 8 External Quality Assurance: Implementing process in the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania

	Implementing process			
	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Does the Agency ask higher education institutions to prepare a self-evaluation report or equivalent?	100%	0%	100%	0%
Does the Agency conduct an external assessment including a site visit?	88%	13%	100%	0%
Does it ask to prepare a response resulting from the external assessment recommendations?	100%	0%	100%	0%
Does it ask the HEIs to conduct consistent follow-up measures?	75%	25%	100%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question

According to the first question, all the HEIs in both countries were asked to prepare a self-evaluation report or equivalent. For the second question: “does the agency conduct an external assessment including a site visit?”, 88% of the HEIs in Kosovo agreed to this statement, and in Albania 100% of the HEIs have approved that the QAAHE conducts an external assessment

including a site visit, as a requirement for accreditation. The third question in this part was, does the agency ask the HEIs to prepare a response resulting from the external assessment recommendations? HEIs of both countries admitted to have been asked to respond after the external assessment and report on the implementation of the recommendations. The last question was, if the agencies have asked the HEIs to conduct consistent follow up measures? Here we can see that 75% of the HEIs in Kosovo have respond positively to this case, where in the other side all the HEIs in Albania have approved this question. It is clear that almost all procedures are similar to both countries. Summing up this part we can conclude that the standards and guidelines of Accrdditation agencies in Albania and Kosovo are in full compliance with the ESG standards.

The second part of the external quality assurance of this survey, related to Peer review experts, is presented the following table. There were 5 HEIs in Albania that participated in the survey, but only 4 HEIs responded to the first three question and only 2 of them have respond to the forth question, and the 8 HEIs in Kosovo have responded to all of the question.

Table 9 External quality assuranc: Peer review experts (HEIs in Albania and Kosovo)

	Peer review experts			
	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is the external quality assurance carried out by groups of external experts?	100%	0%	80%	0%
Does the group include students?	50%	50%	20%	60%
Does it implement mechanisms of no-conflict-of-interest for external quality assurance members?	75%	25%	60%	20%
Are the experts of external quality assurance national or international members?	100%	0%	40%	0%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania. All of the HEIs in Kosovo have responded to these question, but only four of the HEIs of Albania have responded to the first three question, and only two of them have respond to the last question.

The external quality assurance in both countries is conducted by group of external experts. We have a more divergent opinions regarding inclusion of students, in Kosova 50% of the HEIs claimed that the group of external experts includes students, as well, while in Albania only 20% of the HEIs claimed that students are part of the external evaluation team. Regarding the other aspect of the implementation of mechanisms of no-conflict-of-interest for external quality assurance members, 75% of the HEIs in Kosova claimed to do so and 60% of the HEIs in Albania. In Kosova the members of th group of external members are all international. In

summary, we can consider that there is a clear distinction between the HEIs of these countries. If compared with the ESG requirements, it is clear that the HEIs of Kosovo are very well established according these requirements.

The last part of the external quality assurance, and at the same time the last part of the entire survey for HEIs, are the criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals. All the HEIs in Albania and Kosovo have responded to these questions. The main purpose of this part was to understand whether the agencies of accreditation fulfill the criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals in both countries. In the subsequent section we are going to elaborate each question form the table below.

Table 10 External quality assurance: Criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals

Criteria for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals	Kosovo		Albania	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Are the criteria for institutional evaluation and program accreditation published on the webpage?	75%	25%	100%
Are the reports of experts published online on the webpage?	100%	0%	80%	20%
Are they accessible by the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals?	100%	0%	100%	0%
Are the decisions on program or institutional accreditation published online?	100%	0%	100%	0%
Are there clearly defined complaints and appeals processes as part of the quality assurance processes?	88%	13%	80%	20%
Are the complaints and appeals processes communicated to the institutions?	88%	13%	80%	20%

Note: In total there were 8 HEIs in Kosovo and 5 HEIs in Albania, and all of them responded to this question

According to the results from the first question, are the criteria for institutional evaluation and program accreditation published on the webpage? Results shows that 75% of the HEIs in Kosovo have respond positively, but 100% of the HEIs in Albania approved that the criteria for institutional evaluation and program accreditation are published on the webpage. The second question in this part was related to the reports of experts, and HEIs were asked if they publish reports online on the webpage? Results from the respondents shows that 100% of the HEIs in Kosovo responded positively, and only 80% of the HEIs in Albania said that the QAAHE publishes the report online. The results from the third and fourth question, shows us that all the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania approved the two questions. The fifth and last question are more about the complaints of the HEIs in both countries and the ability of the agencies of accreditation

to manage these complaints. There is a balance in responses of HEIs in both of the countries, 80% of the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania thinks that the agencies of accreditation have done a good job in managing the complainants.

To summarize this part, the HEIs in each country thinks that the Accreditation agencies have are doing a great job. The HEIs in Kosovo and Albania have given very good assessments to the KAA and QAAHE on implementation of the ESG standards and guidelins. Consequently, the HEIs in both countries are in a very good position as regard to meet the requirements of ESG, regarding internal and external quality assurance. In the next part of the surveywe analyze the responds of the accreditation agencies in Kosovo and Albania from the survey that was developed specifically.

4.2. Analysis of the responses given by Accreditation agencies

In order to have a comparison among the two accreditation agencies for the accreditation procedures: in Albania and Kosovo, a questionnaire was distributed to the two agencies to have an insight of their requirements and procedures to be followed by Higher Education Institutions and also adherence to the “Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015”. Analysis is divided in two parts:

- a) Internal quality assurance
- b) External quality assurance

Data analysis for both parts is presented in the same table, to easily make comparison among the agencies. There is only one Accreditation Agency for higher education in Kosovo and only one in Albania, respectively we have the responses of the KAA and QAAHEA.

4.2.1. Internal quality assurance for the Accreditation Agencies

In the question for quality assurance policy, if the agency during accreditation of Higher Education Institutions – HEI’s, consider the aspects related quality assurance policy? The following answers were given from the sub questions from both agencies in Albania and Kosovo.

Table 11 Quality assurance policy requested form the accreditation agencies in Kosovo and Albania (QAAHEA and KAA)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
The organization of the quality assurance system	Yes	Yes
Departments, schools, faculties and other organizational units as well as institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;	Yes	Yes
Academic integrity and freedom, and vigilance towards academic fraud	No	No
Safeguarding against intolerance of any kind, or discrimination of students or staff	No	No
The involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

From the answers retrieved by the agencies, we see no difference among the agency in Albania and Kosovo. Both agencies takes in to account the organization of QA system and responsibility

that the internal stakeholders such as: departments, schools, faculties, other organizational units, institutional leadership, individual staff members and students takes for the quality assurance. Additionally, the involvement of external stakeholders is another aspect that agencies take into account. What is not considered by both agencies is academic integrity and freedom, and vigilance towards academic fraud as well as safeguarding against intolerance of any kind, or discrimination of students or staff.

In terms of the requirements, the questions was raised whether the agency ask HEI's for the requirement as following, and again the survey was taken by only two agencies of accreditation for higher education, the QAAHEA and KAA.

Table 12 Internal quality assurance: Requirements of the KAA and QAAHE towards design and approval of programmes

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and explicit provide the intended learning outcomes	Yes	Yes
Are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work	Yes	Yes
Benefit from external expertise and reference points	Yes	Yes
Reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (Scope and Concepts)	Not specifically	Yes
Are designed so that they enable smooth student progression	Yes	Yes
Define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;	Yes	Yes
Include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate	Yes	No
Are subject to a formal institutional approval process.	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

Among the requirements if programme objectives should be in line with institutional strategy and provision of learning outcomes; involvement of students and other stakeholders in the designing study programmes and benefiting from the external expertise were the request that both agencies ask from HEIs in Albania and Kosovo. In the question, reflection on the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe, KAA does ask for it, while QAAHE does not, but it is among criteria. The other requirements by the agencies are related to the design of

the program for smooth implementation and progression of students; definition of the students workload – ECTS, placement when possible and institutional procedures for formal approval. All these requirements are included the list by the agencies.

Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment is another point that agencies were asked, whether they take into account while evaluating institutions. Answers of the QAAHEA and KAA are provided in the table below. The main purpose of this part was to see if there is a healthy collaboration between teachers and students in the higher education institutions.

Table 13 Internal quality assurance: Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Respects and takes the diversity of students and their needs into consideration, enabling flexible learning paths	Yes	/
Considers and applies different modes of delivery, where appropriate;	Yes	/
Flexibly applies a variety of pedagogical methods	Yes	/
Regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods	Yes	/
Encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher	Yes	/
Promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship	No	/
Has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints	Yes	/

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and in Albania surveyed, respectively QAAHEA and KAA

In this section of the questionnaire, only Albanian agency has answered, by confirming to have taken into consideration all the aspects, with exclusion of the engagement on promoting mutual respect within the learner – teacher relationship.

Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is another question raised to agencies with other sub-questions that describes this process and procedures. In this part we have tried to elaborate the construct of assessments that the HEIs apply to evaluate their students. The table below presents the given answers. QAAHE provided its answers, while KAA didn't respond to any of the questions.

Table 14 Internal quality assurance: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Assessors are familiar with accepted testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field	HEI should check this	/
The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance	Yes	/
The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process	Yes	/
Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner	Yes - mandatory	/
The regulations for assessment take mitigating circumstances into account	No	/
Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures	Yes	/
A formal procedure for students' appeals is in place	Yes	/

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

The QAAHEA answered to take into account all of the aspects presented in the table, beside “the regulations for assessment take mitigating circumstances into account”. The rest are being considered while the process is taking place. The KAA did not declare their policies/ regulation for this aspect.

Aiming to have understood whether the promotion of mobility is done by taking into account: Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility? Answers are positive for both countries.

Institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention was another question that results are only from Albania agency that deny to follow the Lisbon Recognition principles.

Information about the teaching staff, the following questions were raised to look whether the accreditation agency asks HEI's for the following aspects. The table below presents all the responds from the QAAHEA and KAA.

Table 15 Internal quality assurance: Teaching staff (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching	Yes	No
Opportunities offered for and promotion of professional development of teaching staff	Yes	No
Encouraging of scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research	Yes	Yes
Encouraging of innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

Albanian Agency declared to consider the aspects of the process of staff recruitment: Clear, transparent and fair processes and conditions of employment that recognize the importance of teaching, while Kosovar Agency does not evaluate such processes. Same approach is for the opportunities offered for and promotion of professional development of teaching staff. Both agencies confirm to have considered the evaluation of encouraging of scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research as well as encouragement of innovation in the teaching methods and the use of technologies.

Information Management is among the aspects that can contribute to the internal quality assurance, therefore agencies have been asked: if they require from the HEIs' present situation about the Information Management. Sub- questions below show the details on what agencies take into account for this aspect.

Table 16 Internal quality assurance: Information (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Key performance indicators	Yes	Yes
Profile of the student population	Yes	No
Student progression, success and drop-out rates	Yes	Yes
Students' satisfaction with their programmes	Yes	Yes
Learning resources and student support availability	Yes	Yes
Career paths of graduates	Yes	No
The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date	Yes	Yes
The changing needs of society	No	No
The students' workload, progression and completion	Yes	Yes
The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students	No	Yes
The students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme	Yes	Yes
The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

Regarding the information management, results from agencies revealed to take into account most of the indicators such as: Key performance indicators; Student progression, success and drop-out rates; Students' satisfaction with their programmes; Learning resources and student support availability; The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; The students' workload, progression and completion; The students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

The profile of the student population and career paths of graduates are only taken into consideration by the QAAHE. Additionally, the KAA considers the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, while the changing needs of society is not taken into account by none of the agencies. In the last chapter of this study we analyze implementation of standards and guidelines on external quality assurance for KAA and QAAHE.

4.2.2. External quality assurance for the Accreditation Agencies

Implementation process for the accreditation, peer-review experts and criteria's for outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals are grouped under this section with other following sub-question that show the procedures that can be followed by the agencies:

Table 17 External quality assurance: Peer-review experts and criteria for outcomes (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Does the Agency ask higher education institutions to prepare a self-evaluation report or equivalent?	Yes	Yes
Does the Agency conduct an external assessment including a site visit?	Yes	Yes
Does it ask to prepare a response resulting from the external assessment recommendations?	Yes	Yes
Does it ask the HEIs to conduct consistent follow-up measures	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

The table above shows that all the requirements that are related to the implementation process are followed by both agencies it means that: they ask for preparation of self-evaluation report; conduct an external assessment and site visit. Additionally, they ask HEIs to prepare a response based on the external assessment recommendation as well as HEIs` are asked to conduct consistent follow-up measures.

Table 18 External quality assurance: Group of external experts (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Is the external quality assurance carried out by groups of external experts?	Yes	Yes
Does the group include students?	Yes- but this is not mandatory	Yes
Does it implement mechanisms of no-conflict-of-interest for external quality assurance members?	Yes	Yes
Are the experts of external quality assurance national or international members?	Yes	International

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

The results show that the external quality assurance is carried out by the group of external experts. The group of experts include students. In the case of Kosovo it is mandatory, while in Albania it is not. Agencies of both countries take in to account the mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest for external quality assurance members. The difference among the agencies of the countries is that experts for external quality assurance in Kosovo are only internationals, while in Albania are mixed: locals and internationals.

Criteria's for transparency, outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals are among the issues that institutions have been asked for. The following questions have been raised, to have more information about the procedure they have to follow:

Table 19 External quality assurance: Criteria's for transparency, outcomes, reporting, complaints and appeals (KAA and QAAHE)

Question	Accreditation agency responsible for country	
	Albania	Kosovo
	Yes/ No	Yes/ No
Are the criteria for institutional evaluation and program accreditation published on the webpage?	Yes	Yes
Are the reports of experts published online on the webpage?	Yes	Yes
Are they accessible by the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals?	Yes	Yes
Are the decisions on program or institutional accreditation published online?	Yes	Yes
Are there clearly defined complaints and appeals processes as part of the quality assurance processes?	Yes	Yes
Are the complaints and appeals processes communicated to the institutions?	Yes	Yes

Note: The accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and one in Albania surveyed., respectively QAAHEA and KAA

From the results we see no difference among agencies of the countries in the study. As regard to the transparency, they both publish on the webpage criteria's for institutional evaluation and program accreditation, and reports of the external experts, as well as the decision on the program and institutional accreditation, that are accessible by the academic community, external partners and other individuals that are interested to see such documents. Furthermore, according to the agencies, there are clearly defined complaints and appeals processes as part of the quality assurance processes and they are also communicated to the institutions.

As a summary, with regard to the procedures that the institution responsible for the accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Albania and Kosovo, the QAAHEA and KAA, there are no much difference among the countries. The major difference is that in Albania the composition of external experts for program and institutional evaluation is comprised of local experts and international experts. In Kosovo, the experts involved in the evaluation and accreditation are only internationals. Group of the experts in Kosovo includes student representative, while in Albania it is not mandatory. Another difference is the reflection on four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (Scope and Concepts), that for Kosovo it is as criteria, while in Albania not specifically mentioned. There are also some other minor differences, that doesn't affect much the procedures for accreditation and evaluation.

5. Conclusion

The survey on comparative analysis of the accreditation procedures between Kosovo and Albania, covered a variety of HEIs in both countries and also included the two accreditation agencies of these countries. The answers they provided for the accreditation requirements and process for the higher education institutions throughout the study we tried to parallely analyze the accreditation requirements in Kosovo and Albania, and if this requirement aligned with the requirement proposed by the ESG. The findings presented on this report can be considered as specific findings for the countries subject in this study (Kosovo and Albania) and cannot be used to cement or predict other countries accreditation processes for higher education. Nevertheless, this study gathered a large range of information on many aspects of quality assurance within the higher education system in Kosovo and Albania.

The analyses in the report, made a distinction between the internal quality assurance and the external quality assurance as they are separated also by the ESG. Additionally, there were developed two different surveys: one for HEIs in Kosovo and Albania, and one for the Accreditation agencies in Kosovo and in Albania.

By analyzing the results regarding internal quality assurance of the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania for the accreditation process, which are sought by the Accreditation agencies, we can conclude that on average 80% of the HEIs in Kosovo responded positively on fulfilling the criteria for the internal quality assurance that the KAA request for Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo.

Further to this, the results shows almost the same situation at the Albanian HEIs and 85% respondents implement the internal quality assurance applied by the QAAHE. The HEIs in both countries placed their accreditation agencies quite well as regard to the requirements of internal quality assurance that the KAA and QAAHE implement for the higher education system, in the targeted countries.

The results shown in the report, gives clearer picture of the implementation of external quality assurance requirements that the Agencies of accreditation, respectively the QAAHEA and KAA, asks HEIs in Kosovo and Albania to accredit their HEIs. In general, on average 88% of the HEIs have responded that the accreditation agency for higher education have requested to take into account processes related to the external quality assurance, and almost the same: 81% of the HEIs in Albania have positive approach for the QAAHEA and their requirement for the external quality assurance. As a summary of this part, the majority of the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania thinks that their agencies of accreditation have made specific requirements for accreditation.

In the context of interconnecting the two analyzed parts: the internal quality assurance and external quality assurance, for all the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania, it can be said, in both cases there is not much a difference what the HEIs in Kosovo and Albania thinks about the agencies of accreditation in each country. Therefore, from the responses, on average 84% of the HEIs in Kosovo admits that the KAA for the internal quality assurance and external quality assurance applies standards to accredit higher education institutions, and on average 83% of the HEIs in Albania thinks the same for the QAAHEA. According to the results the requirements in both countries for the higher education are substantially compliant with the ESG standards.

The second part of the report consists of analyses of the accreditation agencies for higher education in Kosovo and Albania (QAAHEA and KAA), related to the standards and guidelines of the internal and external quality assurance.

In the context of summarizing the results for internal quality assurance questions, the QAAHEA has approved or has answered positively 84% of the 43 questions that where asked via survey. While, in the case of the KAA, 72% of the question for the internal quality assurance where answered positively.

As for the external quality assurance questions, both of the agencies responded positively to all the questions related to. Thus, they both fulfilled 100% of the external quality assurance requirements. According to the results of the surveyed institutions, as the majority of the questions were answered positively by both of the agencies and in this way the requirements for accreditation of higher education system are in accordance with the ESG standards.

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