EIQAS

ENHANCING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

ERASMUS + PROJECT

2014-2016

COUNTRY REPORT:

PORTUGAL

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY ON
PART I OF THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

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FREE PUBLICATION

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines, ESG), developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), provide a common framework for quality assurance of learning and teaching at European, national and institutional levels. They were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education as part of the Bologna Process in 2005. A recently revised version of the ESG was approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, on 14-15 May 2015 (http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf) Like the 2005 version, the revised ESG include three interrelated parts: Part 1 – Internal quality assurance; Part 2 – External quality assurance; Part 3 – Quality assurance agencies.

1.2. EIQAS Project

The survey on Part 1 of the ESG and internal quality assurance systems was a key initial activity in the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project 'Enhancing internal quality assurance systems' (EIQAS), approved for funding in autumn 2014. EIQAS is a joint initiative of national quality assurance agencies and Rectors' Conferences and / or higher education institutions (HEIs) from four countries, Poland (Coordinator), Bulgaria, Portugal and Slovenia. It has two objectives. First, it aims to support HEIs in further development of their internal quality assurance (IQA) systems by enhancing their awareness and understanding of Part 1 of the ESG. Second, it aims to support the national agencies in further development of their methodologies for the external assessment of IQA systems at HEIs, thus addressing one of the standards in Part 2 of the ESG. The two main outputs of the project will be a Guide to IQA based on Part 1 of the ESG and a reference framework for comparative analysis of the participating agencies' methodologies for the external assessment of IQA. More details about EIQAS at: http://www.eiqas.com.

1.3. EIQAS Survey

Pursuing the first objective of EIQAS, the survey focused on IQA in the context of Part 1 of the ESG and was conducted at the institutional level. It aimed to collect data on overall progress that HEIs had made in the implementation of their IQA systems, the extent to which (elements of) Part 1 ESG are integrated into their IQA systems, and the problems they had faced and / or might face when integrating the ESG into their IQA systems. Survey findings will feed into an EIQAS Training Seminar on IQA and the ESG for HEIs to be held in spring 2015. Together with suggestions and conclusions from the seminar, they will also be used to develop the above-mentioned Guide to IQA which will be available to all interested HEIs.

The survey was based on the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) endorsed draft of the revised ESG, which overlaps to a large extent with the 2005 version. As the draft was yet to be approved in May 2015, HEIs were not expected to have the new ESG elements in place, though some might have integrated such or similar elements into their IQA systems regardless of the ESG. Since EIQAS is forward-looking, the main reason for choosing the draft ESG for the survey was that this enabled the EIQAS partners to identify (elements of) Part 1 of the ESG which should be given special attention both at the Training Seminar on IQA and the ESG and in the Guide to IQA which will be based on the revised ESG.

The questionnaire was designed to provide mainly quantitative data as a basis for a more in-depth and qualitative analysis during the EIQAS Training Seminar on IQA and the ESG. It comprised 45 questions. General questions about IQA systems covered, in particular, the period when an HEI started implementing its system and the main motivation behind the decision to do so; the scope of the system; progress in its implementation across the institution and problems encountered; beneficial changes resulting from its operation; general links with the ESG, and activities undertaken to raise internal awareness of the ESG. These were followed by detailed questions about procedures, processes

and / or other arrangements covered under each of Part 1 ESG. HEIs were also requested to identify the ESG which had been or could be most difficult to implement, and those where more detailed clarification and guidelines were needed. (Full questionnaire in Annex B).

The survey was conducted online between 3 February and 3 March 2015 among HEIs in all four countries participating in EIQAS. Depending on the total number of HEIs, the number of those invited to complete the questionnaire varied between the four countries (Bulgaria / Poland / Portugal / Slovenia).

In Portugal there are four types of Higher Education Institutions: universities and polytechnic institutes, public and private institutions (Table 1). All institutions were invited; 108 emails were sent, since some private institutions have been merged and bought by others. There were 42 respondents. About 50% of the answers came from the public system and 50% from universities.

10 from 15 public universities answered. Since the public universities concentrate about 50% of the higher education students in Portugal, the sample is representative of the main segment of the system. The largest university in Portugal has completed the questionnaire (more than 45 000 students) and 30 respondents have less than 5 000 enrolled students. 13 institutions have less than 300 enrolled students. The other respondents have an intermediate magnitude. There are answers from a diversified sample of HEIs and this allows us to take some conclusions and raise important questions on the implementation of IQA systems in the country.

Table 1 - Higher Education System in Portugal

Typologies	Higher Education Institutions	%	Enrolled Students 2011	%	Average size
1. Public Higher Education					
University	15	12,50	182859	48,45	11428,7
Polytechnic Institute	20	16,67	108943	28,87	4034,9
TOTAL	35	29,17	291802	77,32	6786,1
2. Military Higher Education					
University	3	2,50	1051	0,28	350,3
Polytechnic Institute			71	0,02	
TOTAL	3	2,50	1122	0,30	374
3. Private Higher Education					
University	40	33,33	58572	15,52	1464,3
Polytechnic Institute	42	35,00	25893	6,86	507,7
TOTAL	82	68,33	84465	22,38	928,2
TOTAL Higher Education System	**120**	**100,00**	**377389**	**100**	**4147,1**
SOURCE: A3ES (2012)					

17 out of 42 respondents were rectors or vice-rectors and presidents or vice-presidents of the HEIs; 18 out of 42 were directors of quality assurance units or departments (Fig. 1). 26 out of 41 respondents have been working on their functions for 5 or more years. 35 out of 42 respondents filled the questionnaire in consultation with colleagues.

Figure 1 - What is your function / position at your institution?
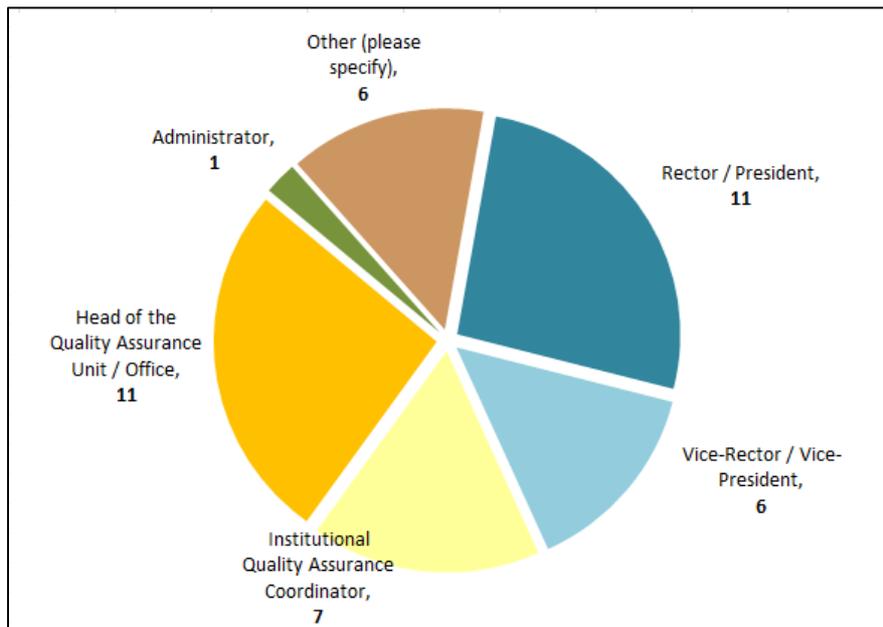
1.4. Basic facts about Internal Quality assurance in Portugal

In Portugal, the initial quality assurance activities were an initiative of the Portuguese Council of Rectors (CRUP) that organised a pilot experiment in 1993 following the Dutch methodology. When the Ministry produced a draft of the Law on the Assessment of Higher Education, the CRUP was able to make a counterproposal based on this pilot experiment. The Quality Assessment Act, Law 38/94, of 21 November 1994, finally passed by the Parliament followed closely the CRUP's proposal. The Foundation of Portuguese Universities, similar to the Dutch VSNU, became responsible for the assessment of public universities after being recognised by the Ministry.

The first assessment cycle was completed in 1999 and included only the public universities and the Catholic University. The public polytechnics and the private higher education institutions have taken some time to join this process. This was the result of the government's decision to define the global coordination of the quality assurance system and to establish the requisites for the recognition of new agencies. This was a long-lasting process that had to wait for the publication of the Decree-Law 205/98 of 11 July, which created an overall coordination council (CNAVES). The new agencies were recognised in 1998 for the public polytechnics (ADISPOR) and in 1999 for the private sector (APESP).

The second assessment cycle began in 2000 and included all institutions, while CNAVES became responsible for ensuring the "harmony, cohesion and credibility" of the overall system and to carry out the meta-evaluation of the system, if necessary using foreign experts. In 2002, a new minister decided to change the quality system. Parliament passed Law 1/2003, clarifying the consequences of the results of assessments and introducing academic accreditation, which was included in the remit of the agencies already responsible for quality assessment. The minister, by forcing the quality agency to produce an accreditation-type conclusion (a yes or no answer), was aiming at having a sounder basis for acting. However, the minister did not stay long in office, the law was never regulated and accreditation was quickly forgotten.

In 2005, a new government commissioned from ENQA a review of the Portuguese quality assurance system. The terms of reference committed ENQA to advise CNAVES and the Ministry on academic and management structures for implementing adequate quality assurance and accreditation practices and to provide a final report including recommendations for improvement and for complying with the ESG. In the final evaluation report, the ENQA panel praised the excellent quality of the CNAVES self-

evaluation report, providing a satisfactory level of critical self-reflection and recognised that, despite some weaknesses (when set against the ESG), the Portuguese model was fit for purpose at the time of its establishment and accumulated a number of positive experiences that should be considered carried over into a new quality assurance system. The major strengths of the Portuguese quality assurance system as identified by the panel were its contribution to the establishment of a self-evaluation culture, its methodological model, which is in principle appropriate and in many respects in compliance with ESG and practice, and its comprehensiveness as it includes all HEIs.

The major weaknesses were its apparently limited independence (like the former Dutch system, there was strong intervention of the HEIs), the lack of sufficient operational efficiency and consistency (limited staff numbers, no efficient training of the reviewers, inconsistencies in reporting, etc.), low internationalisation, and, above all, serious lack of consequences. The report also included guidelines for establishing a new quality assurance system complying with the ESG.

The report of the ENQA panel was used for drafting the legislation framework regulating the new quality assurance system and its compliance with the ESG. In 2007 the Parliament passed a Quality Assessment Act (Law 38/2007) defining the new quality framework, and the government passed Decree-Law 369/2007 defining the statutes of the Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES).

The new Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES) was established as a private foundation, independent both from the government and from higher education institutions. A3ES started its activities in the beginning of 2009 with the design of the new accreditation system and the definition of regulations, procedures and guidelines for programme accreditation. The first accreditations started by September 2009.

Under the new legal framework, the Agency is responsible for the assessment and accreditation of all higher education institutions and their study programmes, taking into account the contribution of internal quality assurance systems. However, some of the legal provisions are not easily compatible with each other. On the one hand, legislation determines that institutions should develop an internal quality assurance policy for their programmes, a culture of quality and quality assurance in their activities, and a strategy for the continuous improvement of quality. It also states that external assessment should take into account the contribution of internal quality assurance systems. On the other hand, it establishes that external assessment may lead to a comparison among higher education institutions, organisational units, study programmes and involve the establishment of rankings according to parameters to be established by the Agency.

The legislation also commits the Agency to complete an initial accreditation of the study programmes that were already in operation, in view of removing those identified as of the poorest quality. Agency formally stated its assumption of the basic principle that the main responsibility for the quality of education lies with each higher education institution. Moreover, the legislation establishes that the institutions should also implement internal structures and procedures appropriate for promoting and assuring the quality of their education. The Agency offered to help institutions to implement their internal quality systems and to promote voluntary audits aimed at certifying institutional procedures for assuring the quality of their programmes.

The Agency, together with its Advisory Council and the bodies representing higher education institutions, promoted debates on internal systems of quality assurance, performance indicators to be used in the assessment and accreditation processes for study programmes, and modes of student participation. It commissioned in its initial phase, a report entitled 'Comparative Analysis of European Processes for Assessment and Certification of Internal Systems of Quality Assurance' (dos Santos, 2011). This report was used to discuss with institutions how to implement their internal quality systems. The Agency discussed with higher education institutions and their representative bodies, as well as with the Advisory Council, the rules for the certification of internal systems for quality assurance. An experimental exercise of certification of internal quality assurance systems was launched in 2012. The processes acronym is ASIGQ standing for Auditing Internal Quality Assurance

Systems. Until present 12 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have their internal quality assurance systems certified and 5 other have their site visits on their way in 2015.

The Agency developed an Audit Manual and the guidelines for the accreditation process based in the study above mentioned that included a proposal of a tailored version of the ESG. The Portuguese standards and guidelines for the certification of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems (ASIGQ) include 10 standards instead of the 7 standards of ESG 2005. The 3 "Portuguese" standards are: Research and development, External relations and Internationalisation.

There is a clear involvement and commitment of the HEIs in the development of an institutional policy of QA. Although some HEIs have started with the introduction of QA systems certified to ISO's management system standards (for example on ISO 2001:2008) most of them have progressed by developing their own systems, designed in the framework of the Audit Manual of A3ES, aligned with the ESG referential and recommendations.

Since its start of operation, the Agency has concentrated its efforts on the evaluation for accreditation of programmes, both ex-ante evaluation for the new programmes and evaluation with site visits for the programmes already running. It has been a huge task for the Agency and for the Institutions and circa 900 programmes have been assessed per year. The first round of programme accreditation will end by the end of 2016. The Agency is already preparing a new system to be implemented by 2017/18.

The audit program, ASIGQ, now running in a voluntary basis, will have more relevance even without knowing exactly how the new system will be structured.

Due to this enormous spend of time and resources in programme accreditation it is understandable that the Portuguese higher education institutions have not yet reached a high level of development in their IQA systems. HEIs are overwhelmed with the programme accreditation and it is possible that most of them did not feel confident enough to answer the questionnaire.

The data collected from this sample is nevertheless significant, and analysis and conclusions that follow will focus essentially on qualitative results. Particular attention will be paid to the open fields with free texts.

From the universe of respondents it's worth mentioning a military higher education institution, easy to identify by the answers, which presents some particularities that will be highlighted. Military higher education in Portugal is going through an alignment process and is developing great efforts on IQA systems. We must take into account that all programmes from this institution are adapted to the professional progression/development within the Military Forces and National Guard careers. Study programmes are not market oriented but specific professional needs oriented.

2. OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

When asked about the stage that the institution reached in the implementation of its internal quality assurance system, half of the respondents stated that the institution has in place a formal internal quality assurance system (i.e. a formally adopted and organised collection of components, including multiple and interrelated procedures and tools). The same number of HEIs declared to have a number of unrelated procedures which do not yet form a system.

Only 2 HEIs declared to have a single procedure (e.g. a programme review procedure) or tool (e.g. a student evaluation survey) and 2 other HEIs referred on-going developments on the implementation of their IQA systems (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 - What stage has your institution reached in the implementation of its internal quality assurance system?

A formal internal quality assurance system (i.e. a formally adopted and organised collection of components, including multiple and…	17
A number of unrelated procedures which do not yet form a system	16
A single procedure (e.g. a programme review procedure) or tool (e.g. a student evaluation survey)	2
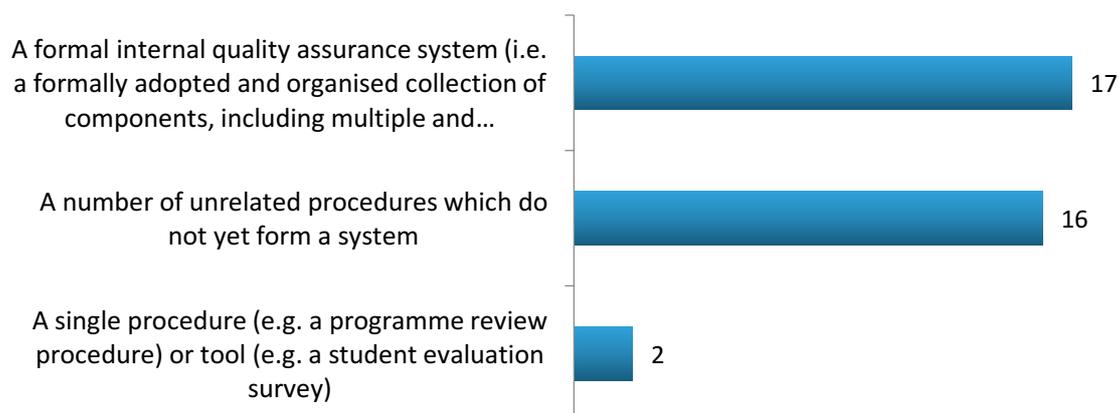
Most of the HEIs that have a formal system started to implement it between 2006 and 2011 (15 out of 19 HEIs). 3 other HEIs started later, after 2012.

The timing of implementation of IQA systems by the HEIs suggests an alignment with the start of operations by A3ES, or at least a strong correlation. It is important to highlight a different behaviour between the different typologies of HEIs in what concerns the starting of implementing a IQA system. Public Universities started a little latter and are using the A3ES audit model while Polytechnic Institutes and Private Institutions started earlier, in most of the cases buying products on the market for example with ISO9001 standards.

As mentioned before, many HEIs have been focused on the Programme accreditation processes that are compulsory and have concentrated there a great amount of human, technical and financial resources, not being able to tackle in depth the development of their IQA systems. That is why most of them referred that, although they have put in place quite all the necessary procedures, those are not yet integrated in a system.

12 out of 19 HEIs recognised that their efforts in the implementation of a IQA system was prompted by a requirement in national legislation and external evaluation criteria of the national quality assurance agency including the alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines.

The IQA systems of 32 HEIs that answered the respective question cover the areas of teaching and learning, while only 24 systems cover the research and 23 the governance activities. One HEI reported that, in complement to the options given before, the IQA System also covers the areas of interaction with society and support services.

Although there were only 32 answered questions and 10 skipped questions about the covered areas, the results confirm what the common sense is. Research and governance are not usually included in the IQA systems.

The Portuguese Audit Program is however more comprehensive than the ESG, with 3 extra guidelines and several references on research, internationalisation and relations with the external stakeholders and society. There is clearly much room for improvement in these axes in most of the HEIs even in those that have their IQA systems more consolidate.
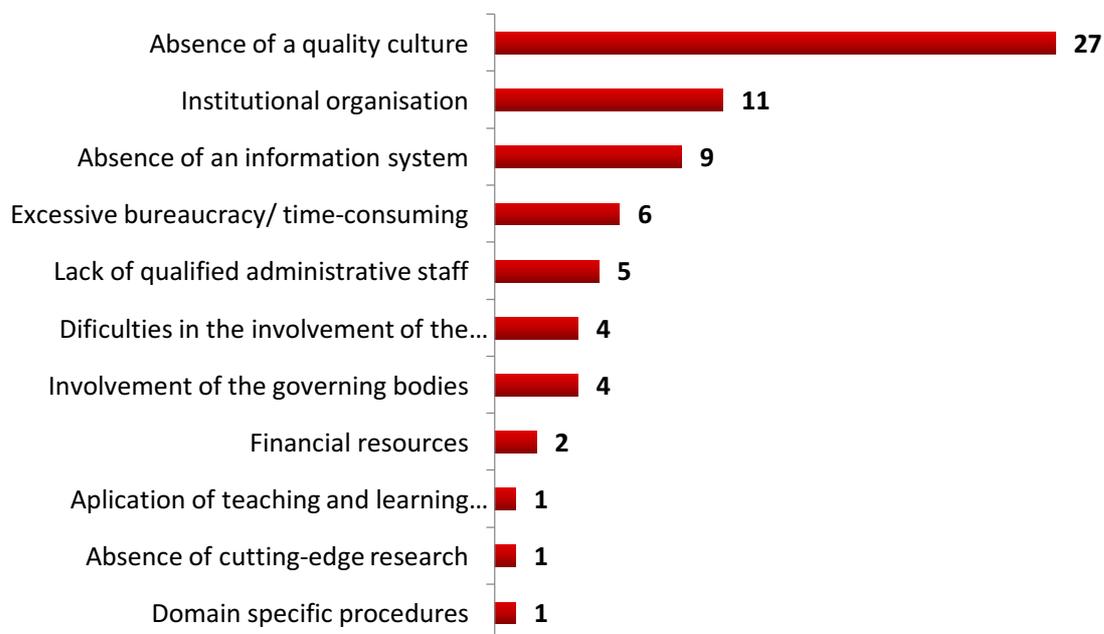
22 out of 32 respondent HEIs on the corresponding question have a Quality Manual / Handbook providing details about its internal quality assurance system, while the remaining 10 do not have.

As for the different units or faculties of the HEIs, 15 out of 31 respondents stated that their IQA system covers all the units, while 16 HEIs are in different stages of development in their different units or faculties.

This is an on-going process and some faculties or units are more aware of the importance of an IQA system than others. For example, engineering and other similar scientific areas are generally more acquainted with quality assurance procedures and processes than others. Overall there is some evidence of a solid and accelerating process of quality culture development in the system.

Institutions encountered different problems and barriers when developing and / or establishing its internal quality assurance system even in the cases where a formal system is not yet in place. When asked to identify the three main problems, HEIs referred in the first place what we can consider the absence of a quality culture. Institution organisation and/or reorganisation can be considered the second most relevant problem or barrier. The absence of an information system was the third most referred problem. In some cases, HEIs answered with different formulations referring identical problems. Thus the results of the content analysis of the corresponding questions must be considered with some limitations (Figure 2 – source table available in Annex 1).

Figure 3 - Main problems encountered when developing an internal quality assurance system

Absence of a quality culture	27
Institutional organisation	11
Absence of an information system	9
Excessive bureaucracy/ time-consuming	6
Lack of qualified administrative staff	5
Dificulties in the involvement of the…	4
Involvement of the governing bodies	4
Financial resources	2
Aplication of teaching and learning…	1
Absence of cutting-edge research	1
Domain specific procedures	1

On the other hand HEIs identified beneficial qualitative and / or quantitative changes or innovative practice introduced on the basis of evidence collected through their internal quality assurance system (or individual procedures if a formal system is not yet in place).

First of all there has been a significant process of enhancement or improvement in quality at different levels; at programme and course level and at department or unit level in different domains. Formulated in different ways, respondent institutions highlighted the results in the teaching and learning processes with evident improvements through a more methodical monitoring. As a second more relevant added value from the IQA system, HEIs related how IQA system brought more information and formal data in order to support better decisions based on better data. Overall a better management can be achieved.

As a third most relevant benefit HEIs referred a communication improvement, more participation of all stakeholders in a collaborative process very positive to the development of the IQA system globally. Again, HEIs formulate sometimes the same idea in different wording. Figure 3 (source table available

in Annex 2) is a proposal of analysis of the results, based on content analysis of the corresponding open-ended fields of the questionnaire.

Figure 4 - Main benefits introduced with the development an internal quality assurance system

Enhacement and effective QA (organization) — 24
More information, formal data, better… — 11
More collaboration/ communication… — 10
Positive impact on teaching and learning… — 9
Update of the Study Programmes /… — 5
Information System/ site/ platform — 4
Transparency — 1
The dissemination of a quality culture — 1
Modern system — 1
Integration between disciplines — 1
Equity — 1
The relationship between teaching and… — 1
Innovation, new knowledge production… — 1

23 out of 30 HEIs refer explicit or implicit the European Standards and Guidelines on their internal quality assurance documents. It is possible that 6 from the remaining HEIs that do not refer explicit to ESG have former systems from the ISO type. Actually some HEIs in Portugal, with particular relevance from the Polytechnic Institutes started to implement ISO9001 systems by 2003-2006.

Most of the HEIS use the ESG as an indicative checklist to ensure broad compliance with the ESG or as broad guidelines for selected elements of the internal quality assurance system. This is the case for 16 out 29 HEIs that answered the corresponding question of the survey. In a similar situation, 4 HEIS integrated the ESG into the institution's own standards and guidelines. In the survey, only 2 HEIs reported that their IQA System used ESG as a strict checklist to ensure full compliance with the ESG and 3 other HEIs, on the other hand, declared that the ESF were not used at all.

It is important however to take into account the reports of other HEIs. One institution wrote, "we are doing our first steps. Nevertheless, we will use the ESG". In other HEIs, since there are no official documents approved, the quality assurance policy cannot be yet defined with its relation to the ESG. However, most of the existing documents on IQA suggest that the future quality assurance systems will be designed in a way that ensures a broad compliance with the ESG (Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Level of adoption of the 2005 version of Part 1 of the ESG in internal quality assurance
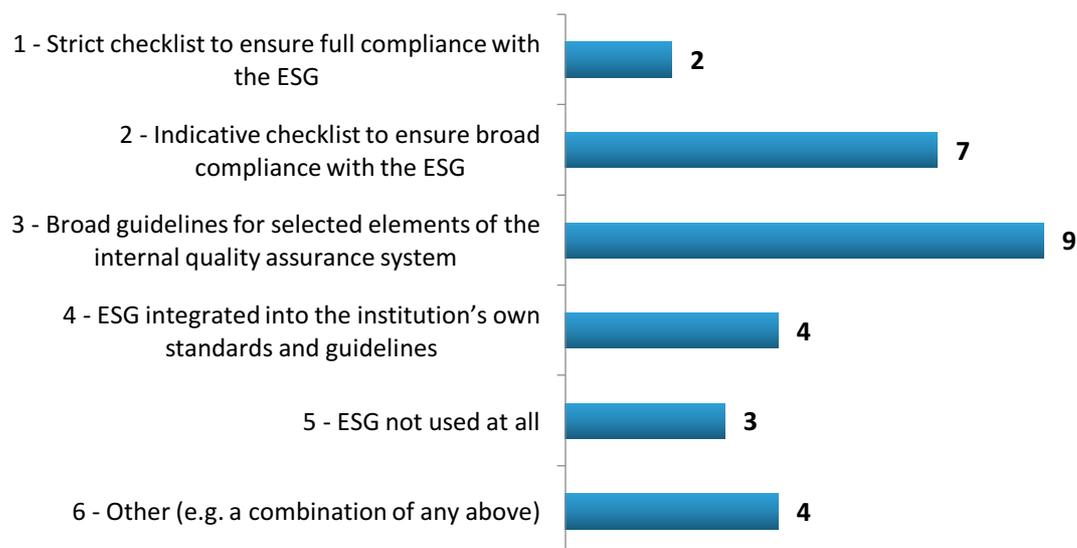
Almost all HEIS are well aware of the importance and stage of development of the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines. We have to bear in mind that the HEIs that have answered the questionnaire are probably those where the process of implementation is more advanced.

In fact, most of the Portuguese HEIs have undertaken several activities to familiarise its internal stakeholders (teaching staff, students, quality assurance coordinators / advisers and others) with internal quality assurance procedures and processes as well as with Part 1 of the ESG. 24 out of 29 respondents to the questionnaire identified the activities undertaken. Training events and / or seminars on internal quality assurance where the ESG were discussed   as well as other meetings with the internal quality assurance committee and teaching staff, were referred by most of the HEIs. Most of them have also published on their websites links and references to the ESG.

3.   INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS AND PART 1 OF THE ESG

This section discusses survey findings according to standards in Part 1 of the ESG.

ESG 1.1: Policy for quality assurance

> **ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance:** *Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.*

Most HEIs in Portugal have made immense efforts to give visibility to their quality assurance policy, in the most recent years, with special relevance after the start of operation of the Agency.

Considering the survey, 19 out of 31 HEIs have a published policy; 5 other HEIs do have a policy that is not published and only 6 institutions recognised that they do not (yet) have a structured quality assurance policy. 11 HEIs skipped the question.

In what concerns the involvement of external stakeholders there is still room for improvement. There were only 25 answered questions on this topic; 17 HEIs skipped this question. From the respondents,

10 expressed a real participation of the external stakeholders in both the development and implementation of the policy, while the others referred a lighter involvement.

It is important to bear in mind that the Portuguese legislation turned it compulsory to integrate external stakeholders at the "Conselhos Gerais" (General Councils), the highest level management board of all HEIs. At faculty or programme level there is some evidence of important developments in order to involve the external stakeholders in a more effective way. This is visible, for instance, on all the site visits both in programme and internal quality assurance system accreditation.

Almost all the HEIs that participated in the survey referred that they review regularly their quality assurance policy: 20 out of 25 HEIs confirmed this review, while the remaining 5 declared that they do not regularly review their QA Policy. 11 out of 20 HEIs review their policy on an on-going basis; 5 HEIs do it every year, 3 HEIs every two or three years and the remaining HEI referred that the review takes place whenever the previously determined goals or time frames are attained. 17 HEIs skipped the question.

3.1. ESG 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

> **ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes**: *Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.*

Almost every HEI has in place procedures for the design and / or approval of programmes. There were 31 answered questions and 11 HEIs skipped the question. Nearly all the respondents have the procedures even though this is true in only some fields of study. In all of the fields of study, 22 HEIs have procedures for the design and 26 for the approval, respectively.

Programmes are designed in line with the institutional strategy, mission and vision and with the objectives set for them in general. 24 out of 30 HEIs confirmed this assumption in the survey. Overall the programmes also define intended learning outcomes to be achieved by students; define the expected student workload in terms of ECTS credits; include student practical placements where appropriate and lead to clearly specified qualifications which refer to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework. In general programmes are also designed so as to enable smooth student progression. In some HEIs this processes take place already in all fields of study while in others this is not yet the case. Considering the answered questions on this topic, there are very light differences between those HEIs for which this applies to all fields of study and those which have those processes in most fields of study.

The weaknesses on this standard lie, first of all, on the participation of students and external stakeholders on the design of the programmes. 9 out of 30 HEIs involve students in the design of programmes in all study fields and 8 out of 30 HEIs involve external stakeholders in the design of the programmes in all study fields.

It is important to note however that most institutions are introducing these processes in various fields of study and we can expect improvements in the short-term.

The involvement of external stakeholders is consistently referred as critical for employability enhancement, for example. Still, students' position expressed recently by a delegate of the European Students Union was very clear: "employers and trade unions can contribute, but internal stakeholders are responsible for all decision-making." (ECA: Winter Workshop. The Hague, December 2014). Those

processes of stakeholders' involvement are very complex and HEIs are improving their own methodologies.

3.2. ESG 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Programmes in almost all fields of study, use a variety of teaching and learning methods, including those which encourage active and interactive engagement of students in their learning, evaluate and adjust the modes of delivery of programmes on a regular basis and evaluates and adjusts teaching and learning methods on a regular basis. This is the case of 25, 21 and 26 out of 30 respondents, respectively, in our survey.

In contrast, there is a clear lack of flexibility at another level. Most of the programmes do not provide different modes of delivery (e.g. full- and part-time, campus-based and distance-learning) or offer flexible learning paths to students (e.g. individual study programmes / paths). There are a few exceptions and it is noticeable an improvement movement forwards.

For example, from the 30 respondents to the question on this topic, 11 HEIs introduced these flexible modes of delivery in some fields of study, 8 in almost all the fields of study and 7 in all fields of study.

In 26 out of 30 HEIs answering this question of the survey, student assessment procedures, methods and criteria are published; only 19 out of the same 30 recognised that they apply procedures, methods and criteria to enable assessing the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved by students; less than the half of the answers, 14 out of 30 have a procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in student assessment in place. In 18 HEIs of the 30 respondents, student performance is assessed by more than one examiner where possible   and in 21 HEIs of the same sample, a procedure for student appeals is in place.

This standard presents some fragility and the need for development in the future. The Agency A3ES is supporting research projects on the students' involvement as well as on learning outcomes development besides the specific projects on the IQA systems that can support some improvements by the HEIs.

When asked about to what extent consistency and fairness are achieved through the procedure of student assessment, only 13 HEIs answered the question; all the other respondents skipped the question. 3 out of those 13 referred that this is true "to a very great extend" while the remaining 10 have selected the answer "to a great extent.

It is not possible to state typical behaviours by HEIs typologies, for this standard. Public Universities are somehow more aware of those processes on students' admission, progression, recognition and certification and publish all information but they do not recognise an advanced situation. Again it is an on-going complex process.

Taking into account military particularities, study programmes are only offered in full-time and there isn't a flexible learning path to students in the military HEI that has answered the questionnaire.

3.3. ESG 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Almost every HEI has in place regulations concerning student admission, progression, recognition and certification as well as regulations on the award of diplomas and certificates. 28 out of 30 HEIs are in this situation, according to the survey's results. On what concerns regulations on the recognition of study periods completed at other institutions in the country and abroad or regulations on the recognition of qualifications (degrees) awarded by other institutions in the country and abroad, the number of HEIs that met this condition is lower. In the first case, 26 HEIs out of 30 are in this situation and in the second case there are 23 out of 30 HEIs.

There are some regulations in the law that impose restrictions to the recognition of previous learning and degrees awarded by other HEIs in the country or abroad. These minimum conditions must be always respected. HEIs may have already developed other procedures.

The most relevant weakness on this topic lies, however on the regulations for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Only 21 HEIs out of the 30 respondents, declared to have these regulations in place in all fields of study and one of them explained that the existing regulations are applied only on the recognition of professional experience. 5 HEIs out of the same 30 have those regulations in some fields of study and 4 do not have the regulations at all.

This is one domain of the implementation of ESG that keeps showing some difficulties. On-going research on learning outcomes and employability at the Agency and other research centres in Portugal and in all the European Higher Education Area will lead to improvements in these processes.

24 out of 31 answered questions on the topic confirmed the existence of procedures to ensure that the regulations concerning admission, progression, recognition and certification are applied consistently in the respective HEIs. Most of HEIs in Portugal, in fact, monitor the admission, progression, recognition and certification of students in the learning process by conducting internal audits of procedures and regulations instituted and report these processes in the programme accreditation carried out by the Agency (see Figure 6 – source table available in Annex 3).

Figure 6 - Published regulations concerning student admission, progression, recognition and certification - by fields of study
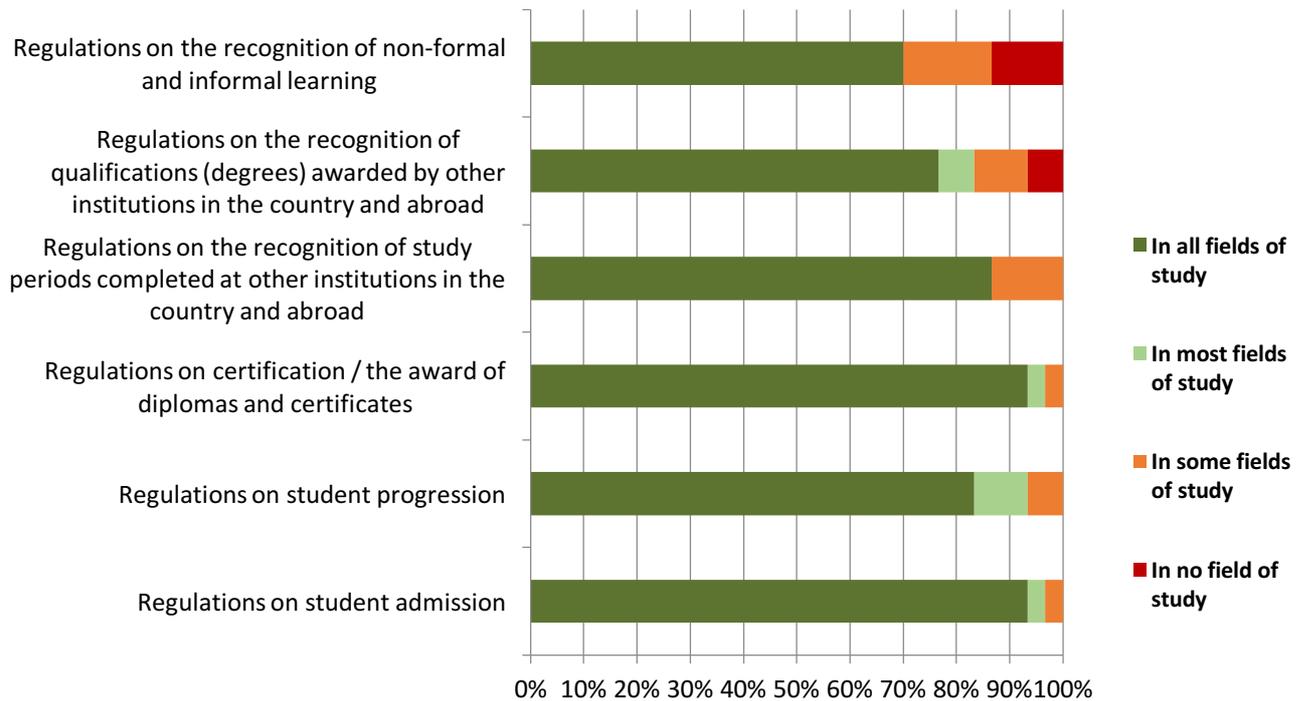
Still, one HEI recognised that these regulations are new and not yet in place. Another HEI referred that there are mechanisms which operate at University level or at School level depending, *interalias* of the nature of the study programme (1st, 2nd or 3rd cycle) and that the students may always apply to the Ombudsman.

In what concerns military higher education regulated at the Government level, in all programmes students are selected and appointed by the Military Forces, National Guard or other Military/Civil National Authorities according to the available slots and complying with admission requirements.

3.4. ESG 1.5: Teaching staff

ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff: *Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

Almost every HEI has in place transparent and fair recruitment process for teaching staff, provides professional development opportunities to teaching staff, offers incentives to encourage professional development of teaching staff, regularly assesses the performance of teaching staff and regularly monitors teaching staff satisfaction. In fact, the law includes some compulsory procedures.

In what concerns incentives to encourage innovation or the use of new technologies in teaching as well as mechanisms for rewarding teaching achievements, HEIs answering the survey evidence a more negative perception, with less HEIs referring to have comprehensive procedures of this nature..

Teachers are regularly assessed as established by the law, but there are no relevant mechanisms of improvement, training or even incentives to innovation in teaching.

Considering the open-ended answers of the HEIs describing examples of professional development opportunities available and / or different types of financial, promotion-related or other incentive or mechanisms used to support teachers, the respondents HEIs presented very similar practices (Table 3). The satisfaction questionnaires are more or less a general practice.

Table 2 - Most referred types of incentives to teachers support

Support for advanced training/ training for teachers (Teaching Staff may enrol to Master or PhD programmes)
Incentives for research and support for participation in scientific and academic meetings and for publications (financial, flexible working hours, carrier progression, rewarding, etc.)
Curricular recognition for career progression
Good practices dissemination - "teaching day". Pedagogical prizes every year. (Each School awards the prize Best Teacher of the Year, Annual reward of the best teaching practics, etc.)
Satisfaction questionnaires.
Workshops on innovation organised at School level
HEI upports ERASMUS mobility and other mobility related to international projects, as well as financially supports self-training
Availability of adequate spaces, laboratories & equipments. Support to the production of courseware based on new technologies. New informatic tools. Support to facilitate the use on IT, like that provided by the distance learning unit.

The military HEI has its own regulation and follows the regular procedures defined to military/national guard institutions. Thus, teaching staff are praised and/or medalled by the different level of the chain of command whenever their achievements are considered to be rewarded.

The private institutions have more room for rewarding teachers than the public ones that are limited by legal regulations. One private institution described in the open-ended answer, how the HEI awards, every year, three teachers who obtained the best performance evaluation, according to the regulation of the teaching staff career plan.

3.5. ESG 1.6: Learning resources and student support

ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support: *Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.*

Almost all HEIs state that they have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

There were 30 answered questions and 12 HEIs skipped the question. For those 30 answered questions, nearly all of them referred the existence of academic support to the students, financial support to the students, advice and support to outgoing and incoming students and mechanisms for informing students about the support and services available.

Besides, almost all the respondents declared to have in place procedures to ensure that administrative staffs are properly qualified to deliver support services to students.

The exception on the overall positive portrait in what concerns this standard, lies on three asked topics.

Less HEIs confirmed to have in place either a mechanism for assessing whether learning resources are adequate and accessible or a mechanism for assessing whether student support is adequate and accessible or to give professional development opportunities to administrative staff providing support services to students.

27 HEIs out of 30 respondents described in an open-ended answer the methodologies that are used to measure the satisfaction of students with the learning resources and / or student support available. With different formulations, almost all the HEIs described their surveys with satisfaction questionnaires more or less detailed. The military HEI has its own methodologies considering the strict regulation of the institution. All the other HEIs have very similar approaches. It seems that there is some learning from others in these processes. Most of the HEIs have their questionnaires public and there is already a longer experience in students' satisfaction assessment. Some Institutions, not to say all, the HEIs started their IQA systems implementation by the students' questionnaires.

One institution has referred that in addition to the periodic surveys (each semester), each School/Faculty has a Pedagogical Council, composed by teachers and students, where matters relating to teaching and learning processes are discussed. The University has also an external individuality to which students can request support on issues related to the teaching and learning processes as well in other subjects.
Even though Pedagogic Councils are compulsory and play an important role. Most of the respondents however focused on the formal processes of the IQA system and disregarded the role of these councils.

One of the answers can state as an example, since all the answers were very similar:

"A survey of pedagogical monitoring is applied each semester concerning the students' perceptions on the Curricular Unit's teaching and learning. This survey includes questions concerning the functioning of the Curricular Unit, the student's self-evaluation and the performance of faculty members, including the support given to the students".

In the special case of the military high school, most of the students are military officers that come from the Military Forces/National Guard to attend the courses and return to the Military Forces/National Guard after finishing the courses. In terms of financial resources, all the students are paid by the Military Forces/National Guard. In terms of administrative staff, they are both military personnel provided by Military Forces/National Guard and internal civil servants, and all the IESM position functions are well defined. There were no references on the application of student satisfaction surveys in this case.

3.6. ESG 1.7: Information management

> **ESG Standard 1.7: Information management:** *Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.*

Higher Education Institutions collect on a regular basis statistics and develop indicators on students population (e.g. age, gender, domicile; level, mode and subject of study); on student progression, success and drop-out rates; on students' satisfaction with their programmes; on learning resources and student support available; indicators of graduates' employability and indicators of internationalisation of the institution, among others and publish them on their websites.

Accordingly, there were 29 answered questions while 13 HEIs skipped the respective question.

6 HEIs referred other special statistics and indicators that they collect in a regular basis and turn public on their websites.

Those examples include the degree to which the offer corresponds to the expectations of the new students; final student satisfaction on all programmes; alumni opinion one year after graduation; alumni opinion on programme suitability one year after graduation; teaching and learning assessment based on students' and teachers' perceptions; students' workload assessment; key performance indicators on research; key performance indicators on interaction with society; user satisfaction in relation to the support services; annual report on the achievement of the institutional strategic plan

goals; annual SWOT analysis for each programme, considering improvement plans, actions and monitoring of implementation; indicators of governance.

Furthermore 21 out of 27 respondents considered that the institution has a formal mechanism for analyzing and using data collected for quality improvement or enhancement purposes. 6 respondents choose "no" and 15 skipped the question.

From the respondents, 19 HEIs described the processes that are in place using the collected data and indicators. Almost all of the answers refer the development of improvement measures. The starting point for the analysis is, in general, the subject level (Course Unit), since it is at the core of the processes of teaching and learning as well as of the interaction among its main actors (students and teachers). Almost all the respondents referred this first step on the use of the data collected.

We have to bear in mind that by law, HEIs are obliged to collect some data. What is in question in the context of the survey is the use of this data and indicators for IQA procedures.

Using different wording, the described processes are very similar and can be aggregated in 9 main items, raking from the most referred to the less (Figure 7):

Figure 7 - Examples of how the data collected has been used for quality improvement or enhancement purposes
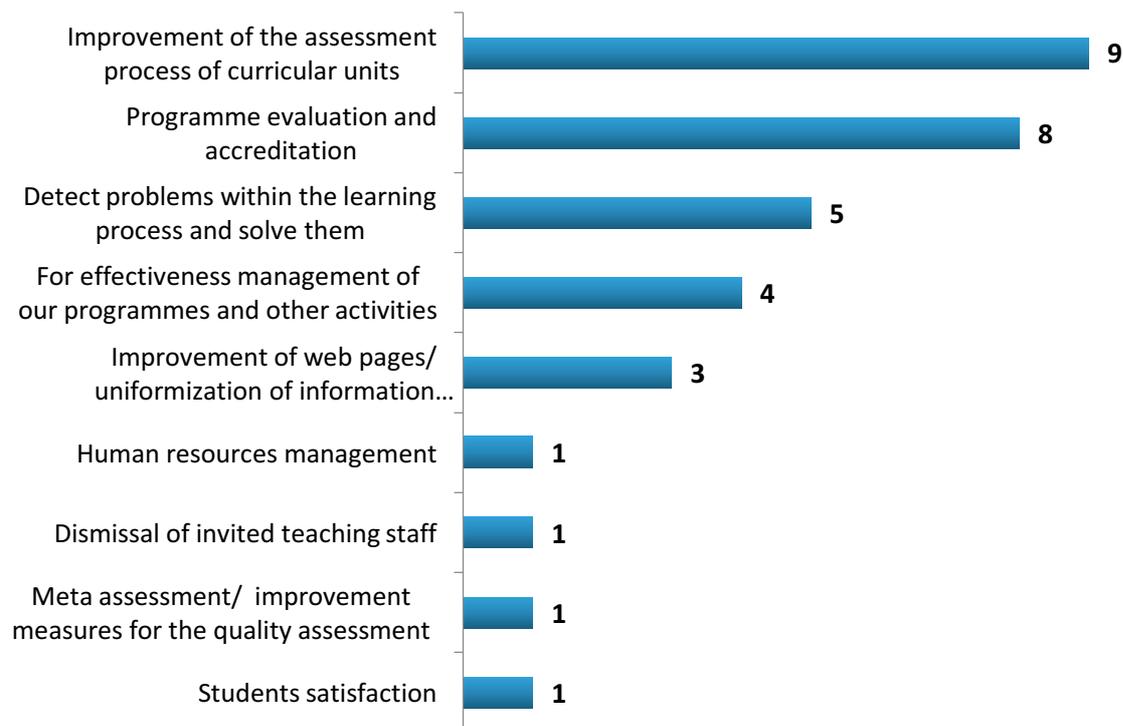
The military higher education institution referred specific procedures on the use of collected data.

ESG 1.8: Public information

> **ESG Standard 1.8: Public information:** *Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.*

Most institutions publish full information about programmes offered, including admission criteria, full curricula, syllabuses with all names and contact details, reading lists, intended learning outcomes, qualifications awarded and student assessment procedures; there are some latecomers HEIs that only publish selected information about programmes offered.

There were 29 answered questions and 13 HEIs skipped the question; from the first ones, 20 HEIs publish full information and 7 did it partly. Only one HEI declared that no information about programmes is published.

Surprisingly only one HEI declared to publish information about graduate employment . There are some legal requirements on this procedure and there must have been some misunderstanding by answering the question.

The military higher education institution referred that all the information is only available for the internal students, in an internal portal, knowing that the information is considered reserved. There isn't any public information available for any other persons. Nevertheless, Military Forces/National Guard Staff are periodically informed about the institution activities as well as national agencies supervising High Education Institutions.

Almost all HEIs publish full information about programmes offered, including admission criteria, full curricula, names and contact details of bodies, qualifications awarded and student assessment procedures; objectives and competences to be acquired, learning outcomes; tuition fees, syllabus, course coordinator, learning methodologies, career opportunities, employability, accreditation, course annual report; research projects, extracurricular activities, etc. There are some HEIs that only publish a summary of the programme but those are exceptions.

It is important to take into account the wave of reproduction or a mainstream movement of following the examples of the others in several procedures; due to the shrinking demand of higher education in Portugal, there is a fierce competitiveness between HEIs and they all try to attract more and better students doing some marketing.

By law, as mentioned before, HEIs must publish some information.

3.7. ESG 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

> **ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes:** *Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.*

Not all institutions have yet in place procedures for on-going monitoring and periodic review of all programmes. In the survey there were 29 answered questions and 13 skipped questions; only 6 out of the former 29 recognised that they do not have those procedures. The remaining 23 do have in place mechanisms of periodic monitoring and review of their programmes either covering all programmes or only a part of them; in 17 HEIs those procedures cover all the study programmes while in the others not yet.

HEIs described some practices in order to give some examples of how the evidence collected through the programme monitoring and / or review procedures has been used.

From the different examples referred, some are more relevant and deserve to be highlighted. This is the case of a HEI where the report of the curricular unit was simplified after the first experience in order to become more operational; some HEIs referred a reorganization of the curriculum to meet the needs of the labour market; the adjustment of ECTS of courses in order to reflect the actual students' workload; some curricula have been altered because of the monitoring and review which resulted in changes to the outline of the programme; evidence has been used for improving programmes. One HEI referred that it has presented suggestions to the National Accreditation Agency.

Programme improvement, in general, is the most important impact of those reviews. Actually, in almost all cases, monitoring has been used for improving programmes; some curricula have been altered and adjusted because of the monitoring and review which resulted in changes to the outline of the programme.

Institutions have similar processes and in nearly all the cases, the first focus lies on the curricular unit final report. The programme coordinator collects the course reports and develops the course report.

Some HEIs declares to have been able to reducing bureaucracy and simplifying processes with the on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes. More efficiency in different institutional bodies has been achieved.

One HEI stated, at this topic, that the students are always consulted in the process, in their on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

It is important to highlight this aspect. It seems somehow contradictory that there were no references of the participation of external stakeholders and students in the on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes, in the open-ended fields of the questionnaire, bearing in mind the answers of the HEIs on this topic before, in the framework of standards 1.1. and 1.2. of the ESG!

Actually not all HEIs find themselves at the same level of development in what concerns their IQA systems. In some cases, the formal procedures are defined and published but not yet embedded in the everyday life of the HEIs. The survey in some sections turns more clear how the perceptions of the respondents reflect a fragmented understanding of the system.

Anyhow, there was a specific question on the students' involvement in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure, in the questionnaire. At this point, HEIs presented more equal answers even bearing in mind that on this standard there were 22 answered questions and 20 HEIs skipped the question (Fig. 8). Almost all of the respondents of the questionnaire stated that students are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and / or review; fill in course evaluation surveys; regularly receive feedback on findings from course evaluation surveys; regularly receive feedback on findings from course evaluation surveys and are regularly informed about measures to be taken as a result of course evaluation surveys.

Students also have the possibility to propose measures to improve curricula and / or teaching / learning methods in some cases (12 out of 21 answered questions).

Figure 8 - How are students involved in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure at your institution?
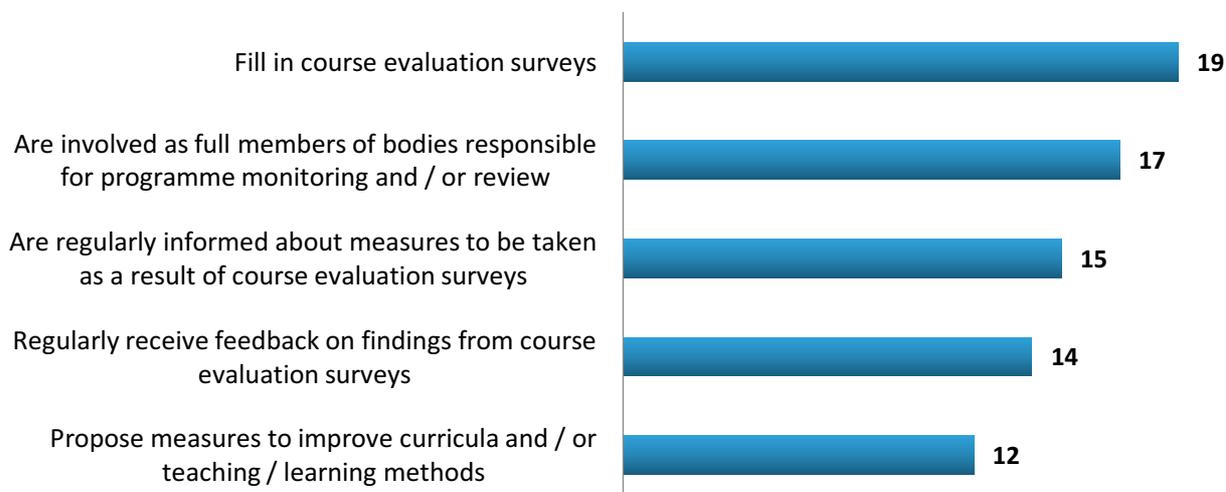
In what concerns the involvement of external stakeholders in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure, there were 22 answered questions as well and 20 skipped questions. At this point, HEIs presented great differentiation (Table 3 and Fig. 9).
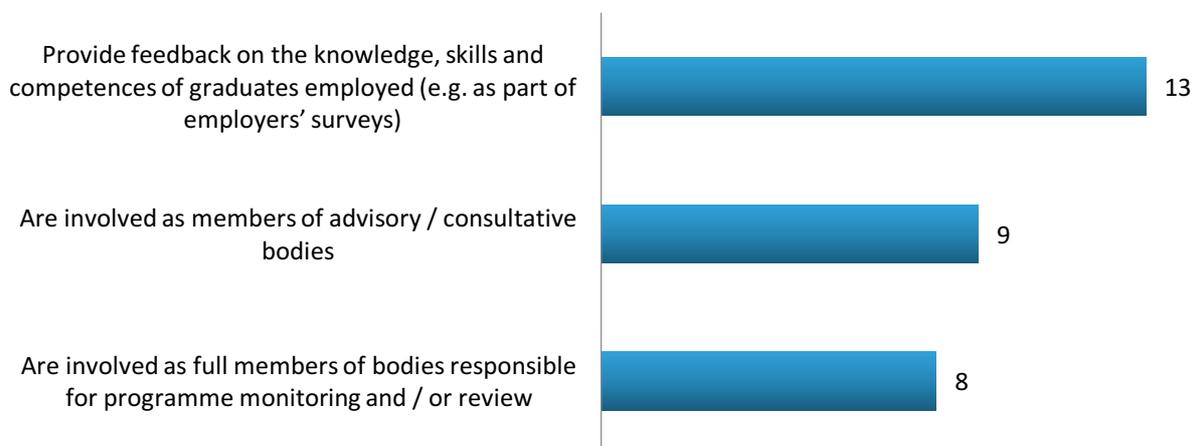
Table 3: Involvement of external stakeholders

How are external stakeholders (employers and / or other partners) involved in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure at your institution?										
Answer Options	In no field of study		In some fields of study		In most fields of study		In all fields of study		Response Count	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
Are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and / or review	8	36,36	4	18,18	2	9,09	8	36,36	22	22
Are involved as members of advisory / consultative bodies	4	18,18	6	27,27	3	13,64	9	40,91	22	22
Provide feedback on the knowledge, skills and competences of graduates employed (e.g. as part of employers' surveys)	4	18,18	3	13,64	2	9,09	13	59,09	22	22

External stakeholders are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and/ or review in all fields of study, in 8 HEIs; on the opposite situation, not being present in any field of study, there were exactly the same number of HEI: 8. Participating in advisory bodies or providing feedback on the qualifications of graduates are the most common forms of the external stakeholders participation.

The case of the military HEI that answered the questionnaire is different since all courses are adapted to the professional progression/development within the Military Forces and National Guard careers. Study programmes are not market oriented but specific professional needs oriented. The military HEI that answered the questionnaire explained the specificity of its situation where the approval process includes Chiefs of Staff of Military Forces, National Guard Chief of Command (where applicable), The Council of Chief of Staff, The Council of High Military Studies, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Internal affairs (where applicable).

Figure 9 - How are external stakeholders (employers and / or other partners) involved in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure at your institution? (Answered questions for all fields of study)

Provide feedback on the knowledge, skills and competences of graduates employed (e.g. as part of employers' surveys)	13
Are involved as members of advisory / consultative bodies	9
Are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and / or review	8

One HEI has a specific Alumni Website for the collection of feedback from alumni and employers.

### 3.8. ESG 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

> **ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance:** *Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.*

This standard differs from the other ones insofar as it refers more to External Quality Assurance (EQA), except that the guidelines state that HEIs 'should ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one. Given the specificity of this ESG which refers to external quality assurance, HEIs were asked in the survey about the possible impact of the national agency's external evaluation methodology on the development / enhancement of IQA, and possible improvements of the agency's methodology.

In the Portuguese case we are carrying out the first round of programme accreditation and the HEIs did not yet have the opportunity to use the results of a previous accreditation when preparing for the next one.

The results of the survey are, however, very positive towards the Agency work. When asked about the impact of the external evaluation methodology (procedures and / or criteria) of the national quality assurance agency, 25 out of 29 respondents considered that it encourages the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance at HEIs; 2 out of 29 considered that the Agency to some extent encourages and to some extent hinders the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance; 1 out of 29 referred that the Agency neither encourages nor hinders the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance and for a last one it was difficult to say or was not able to answer (Fig. 10)

Figure 10 - Does the external evaluation methodology (procedures and / or criteria) of the national quality assurance agency in your country encourage or hamper the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance at HEIs?
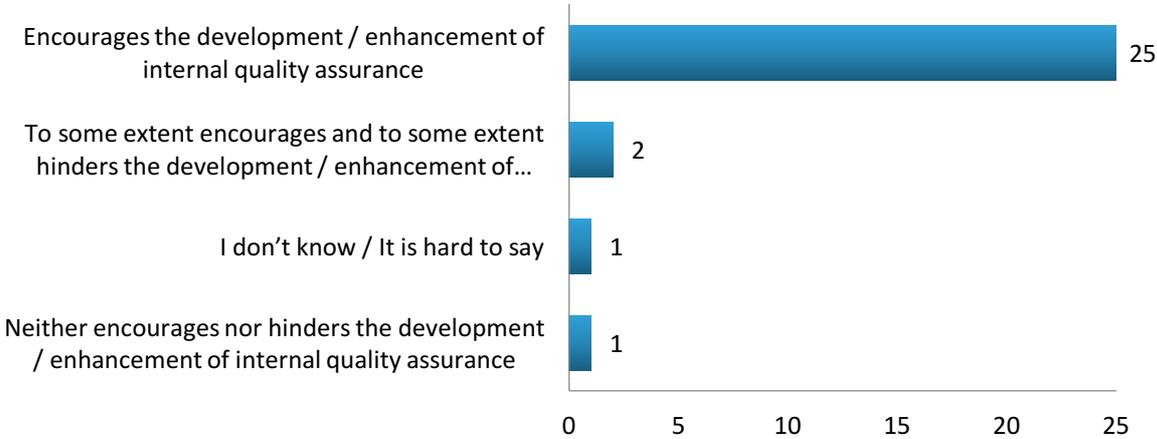
Accordingly to this position, when asked about how the external evaluation methodology of the national quality assurance agency – A3ES - could be improved / enhanced 5 out of 18 HEIs had nothing to suggest. 3 respondents asked for improvements in the electronic platform and there were no other relevant suggestions. It is important to take into account that only 18 HEIs answered this question from the 42 respondents of the survey (Fig. 11).

Figure 11 - How the external evaluation methodology of the national quality assurance agency in your country could be improved / enhanced?
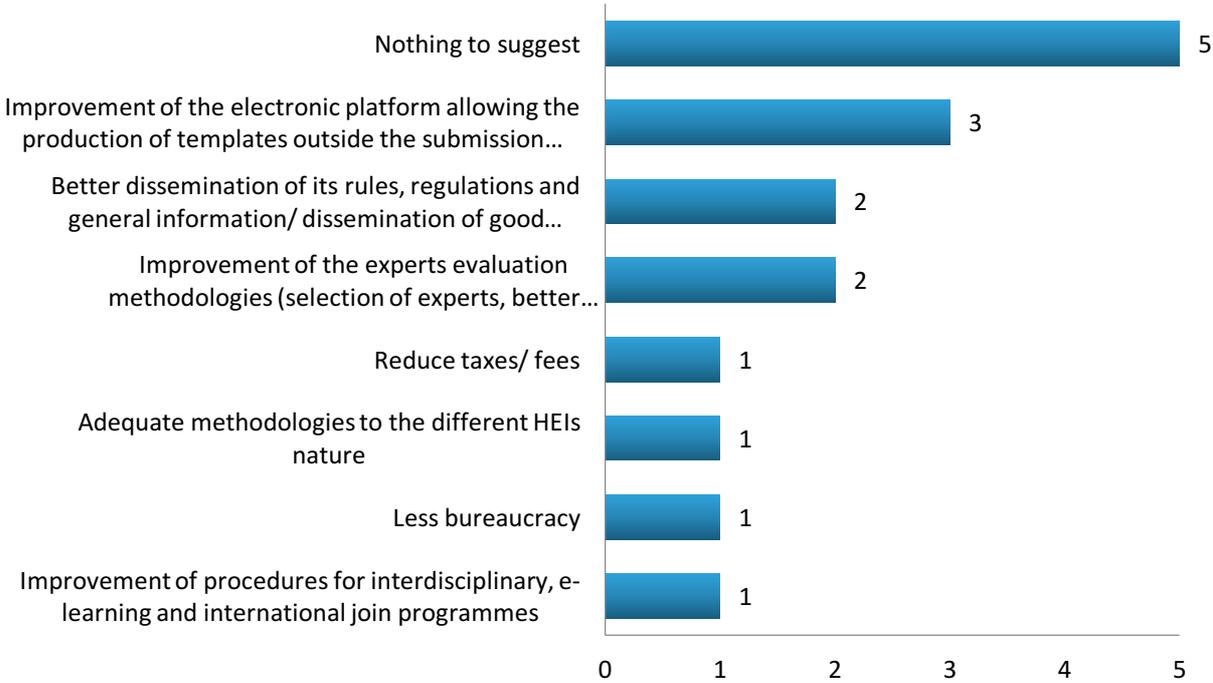
3.9. Most difficult ESG in Part 1

Finishing the survey HEIs were asked to make a balance and identify difficulties in integrating / applying the standards into their system (Fig. 12).

26 HEIs answered this question while 16 other skipped the same question. From the respondents, 16 out of 26 find the ESG clearly and detailed expressed by ENQA, according to their answers. The standards that would need some more clarification are 1.3., 1.9. and 1.2., even though there were only 5 and 4 answers in this direction.

Figure 12 - Which of ESG 1.1 to 1.10 addressed above would require further clarification and / or more detailed guidelines
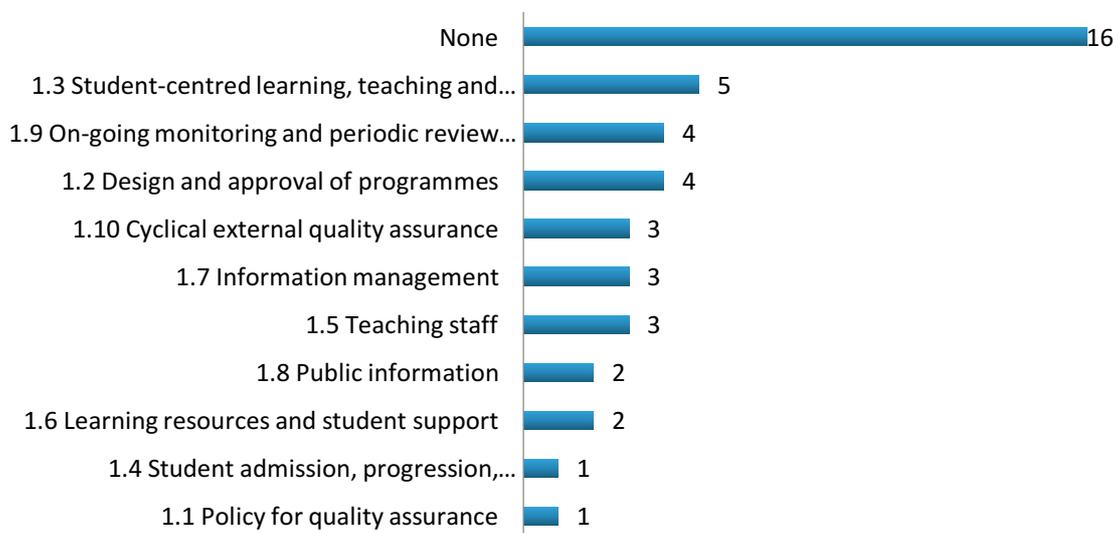
The same applies when HEIs were asked about the difficulties to implement the standards (Fig. 13). 25 HEIs answered the question while 17 other skipped it. 9 out of 25 HEIs found no difficulties in none of the standards; 7 HEIs appointed standard 1.3 as the more difficult to implement and 6 other HEIs selected the standard 1.5.

Standard 1.3. on Student-centred learning is thus the most complex one and needs further development in the HEIs.

Figure 13 - Which of ESG 1.1 to 1.9 addressed above are or would be difficult to apply / integrate into your institution's internal quality assurance system?
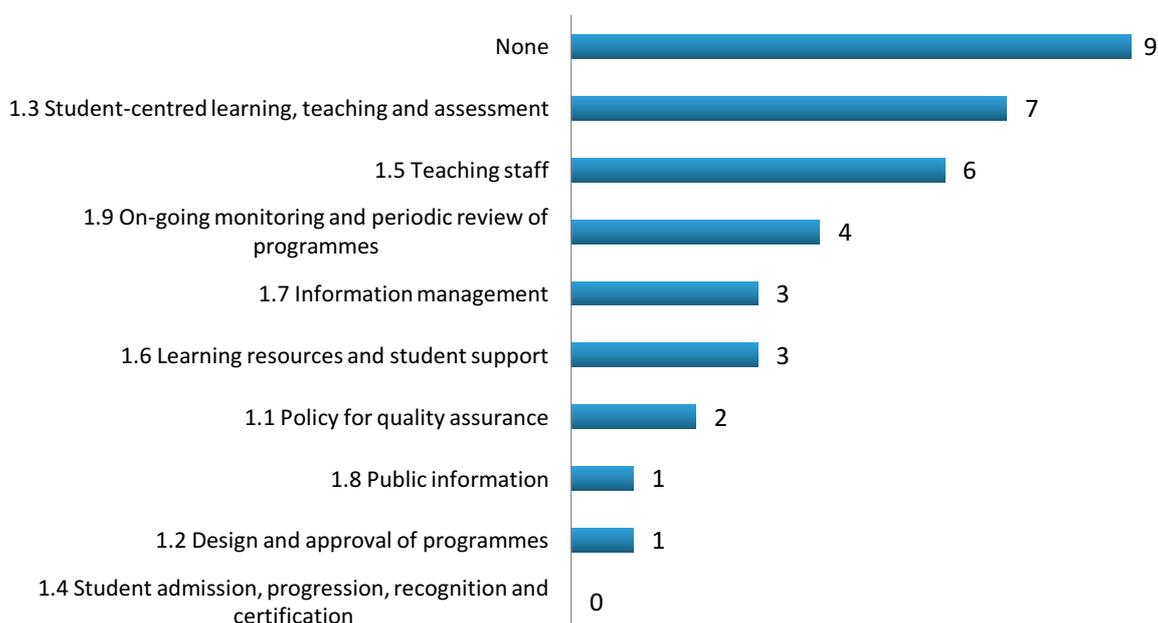
As a last balance HEIs were asked to identify the five main problems which they have encountered or may encounter in integrating or applying the standards into their system in a set of 5 open-ended fields. After a content analysis of the answers it is possible to highlight the main problems in applying the ESG (Fig. 14).

Table 3 – Five main problems which you have encountered or may encounter in integrating these standards into your system / applying these standards

Nothing to refer	*23*
Development of a quality culture/ Internal stakeholders involvement / Complexity of QA processes	8
Information systems/ efficient use of information	6
Funding limitations	5
Human resources (QA staff) limitations	4
Students' assessment (including Learning Outcomes assessment)	4
Military limitations	3
HEI nature (diversity)/ Legal limitations / Internal Regulations	3
Involving students (including in the design of the programmes)	2
Internal and external stakeholders involvement	2
Performance indicators development	2
Teaching staff resistance to changes	2
Academic staff recruitment and career development limitations	2
Limitations of students' satisfaction questionnaires (including in what concerns teachers evaluation)	2
Difficulties to implement ESG 1.8. Public Information	2
External quality assurance in HEIs in Portugal is relatively young	1
Difficulty involvement of external stakeholders in monitoring projects	1

There were only 19 answered questions on this topic while 23 HEIs skipped it. Besides, some HEIs have only referred 2 or 3 difficulties and there were 23 fields with "nothing to refer".

The difficulty to develop a quality culture embedded at all levels and shared by all stakeholders is the most relevant barrier to the implementation of the ESG at the Portuguese HEIs. References to the different nature and diversity of HEIs, legal limitations and internal regulations could be added to the first difficulty since they are related issues.

At a second level of importance HEIs referred the information systems and the related use of information for management support. Funding limitations and human resources (QA staff) limitations are also relevant.

The students' assessment (including Learning Outcomes assessment) is also recognized as an important limitation to the effective implementation of the ESG.

The involvement of the stakeholders could be identified as the most relevant barrier if we sum up all the different formulations connected with it. In fact there are references to the involvement of internal and external stakeholders separate from one another or aggregated. Even the resistance of the teaching staff to changes could be understood as a difficulty in the involvement of the internal stakeholders. Since there were not too much HEIs answering the question, it was decided to maintain the wording of the answers and keep the Table 3 as detailed as it is. It is somehow a portrait of the present situation of the implementation of the ESG in Portugal

4. CONCLUSIONS

One institution wrote in its questionnaire: "we are doing our first steps. Nevertheless, we will use the ESG". This sentence summarizes the process of implementation of ESG in the Portuguese higher education system at the level of the internal quality assurance systems.

The timing of implementation of IQA systems by the HEIs suggests an alignment with the start of operations by A3ES, or at least a strong correlation. It is important to highlight a different behaviour between the different typologies of HEIs in what concerns the starting of implementing a IQA system. Public Universities started a little latter and are using the A3ES audit model while Polytechnic Institutes and Private Institutions started earlier, in most of the cases buying products on the market for example with ISO9001 standards.

Most of the HEIs in the last 3 or 4 years have been focused on the Programme accreditation processes that are compulsory and have concentrated there a great amount of human, technical and financial resources, not being able to tackle in depth the development of their IQA systems. That is why most of them referred that, although they have put in place quite all the necessary procedures, those are not yet integrated in a system.

The involvement of the stakeholders could be identified as the most relevant barrier to the implementation of ESG in the Portuguese HEIs; the difficulty to develop a quality culture embedded at all levels and shared by all stakeholders has been however referred by the HEIs as the most relevant obstacle to the implementation of the ESG. The different nature and diversity of HEIs with universities and polytechnic institutes, public and private HEIs as well as legal limitations and internal regulations could be added to the set of difficulties.

HEIs are however well awarded of the meaning and importance of the ESG and are developing great efforts to implement them.

Individually, ESG 1.3. concerning student-related issues: their involvement in IQA, student-centred learning, and learning resources and student support is referred as the more complex one, to have in place fully.

The results of the survey are very positive towards the Agency work. When asked about the impact of the external evaluation methodology (procedures and / or criteria) of the national quality assurance agency, 25 out of 29 respondents considered that it encourages the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance at HEIs. Most of the HEIs did not present any complain or suggestion to the Agency methodology.

The discussion on the ESG is however a learning process that is in the movement and will be improved in the next future.

Annex A Raw data analysis

A1 - Main problems encountered when developing an internal quality assurance system

	Problem 1	Problem 2	Problem 3	Total
Absence of a quality culture	**15**	**8**	**4**	**27**
Institutional organisation/ reorganisation	**1**	**7**	**3**	**11**
Absence of an information system	**2**	**5**	**2**	**9**
Excessive bureaucracy/ time-consuming	**1**	**1**	**4**	**6**
Lack of qualified administrative staff	**3**	**1**	**1**	**5**
Involvement of the governing bodies	**3**	**1**	**0**	**4**
Dificulties in the involvement and commitment of the academic community	**1**	**1**	**2**	**4**
Financial resources	**0**	**1**	**1**	**2**
Domain specific procedures	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Absence of cutting-edge research	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Aplication of teaching and learning standards	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Total	**28**	**25**	**18**	**71**

A2 - Main benefits introduced with the development an internal quality assurance system

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Total
Enhacement and effective QA (organization)	**9**	**6**	**9**	**24**
More information, formal data, better decisions based on better data. Better management.	**0**	**8**	**3**	**11**
More participation/ collaborative process/ communication improvement	**6**	**2**	**2**	**10**
A positive impact on teaching and learning processes.	**4**	**4**	**1**	**9**
Update of the Study Programmes / updated statistics	**2**	**2**	**1**	**5**
Information System/ site/ platform	**2**	**1**	**1**	**4**
Transparency	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
The dissemination of a quality culture	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Modern system	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Integration between disciplines	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Equity	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**
The relationship between teaching and research in the institution	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Innovation, new knowledge production and research improvement	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Total	**27**	**24**	**19**	**70**

A3 - HEIs formal mechanism for analyzing and using the data collected for quality improvement or enhancement purposes

Improvement of the assessment process of curricular units/ changes in ECTS, upon 3 years of collecting students information/ Changes in avaliation methodology/ Creation of courses/ Elimination of courses	9
Programme evaluation and accreditation/ update/ restructure ; background information for the elaboration of self-assessment reports	8
Detect problems within the learning process and solve them/ improvement of the quality of teaching/ analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the teaching-learning process, and the degree of accomplishment of aspects to improve identified in the previous edition.	5
For effectiveness management of our programmes and other activities/ to diversify educational offer and adapt to community needs at the request of students, ex students and external stakeholders/ to provide alternatives to payment of tuition fees	4
Improvement of web pages/ uniformization of information display/ newsletters	3
Human resources management	1
Dismissal of invited teaching staff	1
Meta assessment/ improvement measures for the quality assessment	1
Students satisfaction	1

Annex B Questionnaire survey on part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Assurance Systems

INTRODUCTION

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines, ESG), developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), provide a common framework for quality assurance of learning and teaching at European, national and institutional levels. They were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education as part of the Bologna Process in 2005. A revised version of the ESG (https://revisionesg.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/esg-draft-endoresed-by-bfug.pdf) was endorsed by the Bologna Follow-Up Group in September 2014 and is expected to be approved by the Ministers in May 2015. Like the current version, the revised ESG include three interrelated parts: Part 1 – Internal quality assurance; Part 2 – External quality assurance; Part 3 – Quality assurance agencies.

This survey is a key initial activity in the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project 'Enhancing internal quality assurance systems' (EIQAS), approved for funding in autumn 2014. It involves Poland as the coordinating country, Bulgaria, Portugal and Slovenia. EIQAS is a joint initiative of national quality assurance agencies and Rectors' Conferences and / or higher education institutions (HEIs). It aims to support HEIs in further development of their internal quality assurance systems based on Part 1 of the ESG and national agencies in further development of their methodologies for external evaluation of internal quality assurance systems at HEIs, thus addressing one of the standards in Part 2 of the ESG. For more details about EIQAS, see the project website at: http://www.eiqas.com.

The survey focuses exclusively on internal quality assurance at HEIs in the context of Part 1 of the ESG. It is being conducted in parallel among HEIs in the four countries participating in EIQAS. As EIQAS is forward looking, the survey is based on the draft of the revised ESG which, however, overlap to a large extent with the current version of the ESG. The survey aims to collect data on the extent to which Part 1 ESG are integrated in internal quality assurance systems at HEIs, and the problems HEIs have faced or may face when integrating the ESG into their internal quality assurance systems. Survey findings will feed into an EIQAS Training Seminar for HEIs to be held in spring 2015. Together with suggestions and conclusions from the seminar, they will also be used to develop a Guide to Internal Quality Assurance based on Part 1 of the ESG available to all interested HEIs.

Aside from introductory questions about the institution and the respondent completing the questionnaire, the questionnaire includes 38 (30 close-ended / multiple choice and 8 open-ended) questions. It is divided into two parts: general questions (Section I) and more specific questions (Section II) about internal quality assurance systems and the ESG. All questions in Section I and a number of questions in Section II refer to the level of the institution as a whole; where differences between fields of study may be relevant in other questions, this is reflected in multiple choice answers. The questions in Section II are structured according to Standards of Part 1 of the ESG; thus, each set of questions begins with the relevant Standard as it is phrased in the draft of the revised ESG. The questions refer only to basic issues covered by Part 1 Standards and are intended to collect mainly quantitative data; each Standard will be discussed in greater depth at the Training Seminar in spring 2015.

QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION AND THE RESPONDENT

1. Where is your institution located?
    a) Bulgaria   b) Poland   c)Portugal   d)Slovenia

2. When was your institution established? ……….. (year)

3. What is the type of your higher education institution? Please tick the boxes that apply to your institution.
    a) University-type   b) Non-university   c) Public   d) Non-public

4. What is the size of your higher education institution? Please tick the appropriate box.
    a) Less than 300 students   b) 300-1 000 students   c) 1 000-5 000 students
    d) 5 000-15 000 students   e) 15 000-25 000 students   f) 25 000-35 000 students
    g) 35 000-45 000 students h) Over 45 000 students

5. What is your function / position at your institution? ………………………………………………………

6. How long have you been involved in quality assurance at your institution? Since ………… (year)

7. Are you filling in the questionnaire individually or in consultation with colleagues at your institution? Please tick the appropriate box.
    a) Individually   b) In consultation with colleagues

8. What stage has your institution reached in the implementation of its internal quality assurance system? Please tick the appropriate box. Our institution has in place:
    a) A formal internal quality assurance **system** (i.e. a formally adopted and organised collection of components, including multiple and interrelated procedures and tools)
    b) A number of unrelated procedures which do not yet form a system
    c) A single procedure (e.g. a programme review procedure) or tool (e.g. a student evaluation survey)
    d) Other. Please explain: …

    If you ticked "b", "c" or "d", please go to Question 6.

9. When did your institution start establishing a **formal internal quality assurance system** (as defined in the previous question, and **not only** individual and / or unrelated procedures or tools)? Please tick the appropriate box.
    a) Before 2000
    b) Between 2000 and 2005
    c) Between 2006 and 2011
    d) Between 2012 and 2014

10 What prompted your institution to establish a **formal internal quality assurance system**? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) The system had been established entirely on our own initiative before relevant requirements or evaluation criteria were introduced at national level.
b) The decision to establish the system was prompted by a requirement in national legislation.
c) The decision to establish the system was prompted by external evaluation criteria of the national quality assurance agency,
d) The decision to establish the system was prompted by a requirement in national legislation <u>and</u> external evaluation criteria of the national quality assurance agency.
e) Other. Please specify: ……………….

11 What areas of activity does the internal quality assurance system (or, in case a formal system is not yet in place, do the internal quality assurance arrangements) at your institution cover? Please tick all boxes that apply to your institution.

a) Teaching and learning
b) Research
c) Governance

12 Does your institution have a Quality Manual / Handbook providing details about its internal quality assurance system? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) Yes   b) No

13 How would you describe the progress in the implementation of the internal quality assurance system (or, in case a formal system is not yet in place, in the implementation of individual procedures) across your institution? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) All units (faculties, departments, etc.) are at the same stage of implementation.
b) Progress in the implementation varies to some extent among units.
c) Progress in the implementation varies considerably among units.

14 Please describe briefly three main problems that your institution encountered when developing and / or establishing its internal quality assurance system (or individual procedures in case a formal system is not yet in place).

1. ……….
2. ……….
3. ……….

15 Please give three examples of beneficial qualitative and / or quantitative changes or innovative practice that have been introduced on the basis of evidence collected through your internal quality assurance system (or individual procedures if a formal system is not yet in place).

1. ……….
2. ……….
3. ……….

16 Do internal quality assurance documents of your institution refer to the ESG? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) Refer explicitly to the ESG
b) Refer implicitly to the ESG as they are based on national legislation / national external evaluation criteria in which the ESG are integrated
c) Do not refer explicitly or implicitly to the ESG
d) Other. Please explain: …….

17 How does your institution use the current version of Part 1 of the ESG in its internal quality assurance? Please tick the appropriate box.

   a) As a strict checklist to ensure full compliance with the ESG
   b) As an indicative checklist to ensure broad compliance with the ESG
   c) As broad guidelines for selected elements of the internal quality assurance system
   d) ESG integrated into the institution's own standards and guidelines
   e) ESG not used at all

18 What activities has your institution undertaken to familiarise its internal stakeholders (teaching staff, students, quality assurance coordinators / advisers and others) with internal quality assurance and / or Part 1 of the ESG? You may choose one or more answer(s).

   a) Training events and / or seminars on internal quality assurance where the ESG were explicitly discussed
   b) Training events and / or seminars on internal quality assurance where the ESG were not explicitly discussed
   c) Training events and / or seminars specifically devoted to the ESG
   d) Link to the ESG provided on the institution's (quality assurance) website
   e) Explicit reference to the ESG made in internal quality assurance documents
   f) Other. Please specify: …..
   g) No activities undertaken

PART II: SPECIFIC QUESTIONNES ON ESG PART 1

ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance: *Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.*

19 Does your institution have a policy for quality assurance that is published and specifies structures and processes through which it is implemented? Please tick the appropriate box.
   a) A published policy that specifies structures and processes
   b) A published policy that does not specify structures and processes
   c) A policy that specifies structures and processes but is not published
   d) No policy / Policy not yet developed
   e) Other, please explain: ………………………………..

If you ticked "d", please go to Question 23.

20 Were / are external stakeholders (employers and / or other external partners) involved in the development and / or implementation of your institution's quality assurance policy? Please tick the appropriate box.
   a) Involved in both the development and implementation of the policy
   b) involved in the development of the policy but not involved in its implementation
   c) Not Involved in the development of the policy but involved in its implementation
   d) I don't know / It is hard to say
   e) Other. Please explain: ….

21 Does your institution review its quality assurance policy? Please tick the appropriate box.
   a) Yes   b) No

If you ticked "No", please go to Question 23.

22 How often does your institution review its quality assurance policy? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) On an on-going basis
b) Every year
c) Every two years
d) Every three years
e) Other. Please specify: ……….

> **ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes**: *Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.*

23 Does your institution have in place (a) procedure(s) for the design and / or approval of programmes? Please tick the most appropriate answer in points "a" and "b". Our institution:

a) Has in place a formal procedure for the design of programmes
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
b) Has in place a formal procedure for the approval of programmes
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

24 To what extent do the statements below apply to your institution? Please tick the most appropriate answer In each of the points below. Programmes at our institution:

a) Are designed in line with the institutional strategy, mission and vision
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
b) Are designed in line with the objectives set for them
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
c) Are designed by involving students
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
d) Are designed by involving external stakeholders (employers and other partners)
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
e) Are designed so as to enable smooth student progression
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
f) Define intended learning outcomes to be achieved by students
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
g) Define the expected student workload in terms of ECTS credits
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
h) Include student practical placements where appropriate
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study
i) Lead to clearly specified qualifications which refer to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework
In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

> **ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment:** *Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.*

25 To what extent do the statements below apply to your institution? Please tick the most appropriate answer in each of the points below. Our institution:

a) Provides programmes in different modes of delivery (e.g. full- and part-time, campus-based and distance-learning)

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

b) Offers flexible learning paths to students (e.g. individual study programmes / paths)

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

c) Uses a variety of teaching and learning methods, including those which encourage active and interactive engagement of students in their learning

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

d) Evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery of programmes on a regular basis

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

e) Evaluates and adjusts teaching and learning methods on a regular basis

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

26 Which of the statements below apply to your institution? You may tick <u>no, one or more</u> answer(s). If you tick "c", please additionally choose one of the answers available.

a) Student assessment procedures, methods and criteria are published
b) Procedures, methods and criteria enable assessing the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved by students
c) A procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in student assessment is in place
   In your opinion, to what extent are consistency and fairness achieved through the procedure in place?
   To no extent – To a little extent – To some extent – To a great extent –To a very great extent
d) Student performance is assessed by more than one examiner where possible
e) A procedure for student appeals is in place

ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

27 Which of the regulations concerning student admission, progression, recognition and certification listed below are published by your institution? You may tick <u>no, one or more</u> answer(s).

a) Regulations on student admission
b) Regulations on student progression
c) Regulations on certification / the award of diplomas and certificates
d) Regulations on the recognition of study periods completed at other institutions in the country and abroad
e) Regulations on the recognition of qualifications (degrees) awarded by other institutions in the country and abroad
f) Regulations on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

28 Does your institution have in place (a) procedure(s) to ensure that the regulations concerning admission, progression, recognition and certification are applied consistently? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) Yes   b) No

ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff: Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

29 Which of the statements below apply to your institution? You may tick <u>no, one or more</u> answer(s). Our institution:

a) Has in place a transparent and fair recruitment process for teaching staff
b) Provides professional development opportunities to teaching staff
c) Offers incentives to encourage professional development of teaching staff
d) Offers incentives to encourage innovation in teaching
e) Offers incentives to encourage the use of new technologies in teaching
f) Has in place mechanisms for rewarding teaching achievements
g) Regularly assesses the performance of teaching staff
h) Regularly monitors teaching staff satisfaction

30 If you ticked "b", "c", "d", "e", "f" and / or "h" above, please give at least one example of professional development opportunities available and / or each type of (financial, promotion-related or other) incentive or mechanisms used.

a) For "b" above: ……….
b) For "c" above: ……….
c) For "d" above: ……….
d) For "e" above: ……….
e) For "f" above: ……….
f) For 'h" above: ……….

> **ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support:** *Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.*

31 Which of the statements below apply to your institution? You may tick <u>no, one or more</u> answer(s). Our institution:

a) Provides academic support to its students
b) Provides financial support to its students
c) Provides advice and support to outgoing and incoming students
d) Has in place mechanisms for informing students about the support and services available
e) Has in place a mechanism for assessing whether learning resources are adequate and accessible
f) Has in place a mechanism for assessing whether student support is adequate and accessible
g) Has in place procedures to ensure that administrative staff are properly qualified to deliver support services to students
h) Offers professional development opportunities to administrative staff providing support services to students

32 If you ticked "e" and / or "f" above, please explain briefly how you measure the satisfaction of students with the learning resources and / or student support available? ….

> **ESG Standard 1.7: Information management:** *Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.*

33 What kind of data does your institution collect on a regular basis? You may tick <u>no, one or more</u> answer(s).

a) A defined set of key performance indicators for the institution
b) Profile of the student population (e.g. age, gender, domicile; level, mode and subject of study)
c) Student progression, success and drop-out rates
d) Students' satisfaction with their programmes
e) Learning resources and student support available

    f)   Indicators of graduates' employability

    g)   Indicators of internationalisation of the institution

    h)   Other, please specify:

        1) ……….

        2) ……….

        3) ……….

        4) ……….

        5) ……….

34 Does your institution have a formal mechanism for analysing and using the data collected for quality improvement or enhancement purposes? Please tick the appropriate box.

    a) Yes   b) No

If you ticked "No", please go to Question 36.

35 Please give some examples of how the data collected has been used for quality improvement or enhancement purposes …..

ESG Standard 1.8: Public information: *Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.*

36 Does your institution publish information about its programmes and graduate employment? Please tick the answer(s) that apply to your institution.

    a)   Full information about programmes offered, including admission criteria, full curricula, syllabuses with all names and contact details, reading lists, intended learning outcomes, qualifications awarded and student assessment procedures

    b)   Only selected information about programmes offered

        Please specify: …….

    c)   No information about programmes

    d)   Information about graduate employment

ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: *Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.*

37 Does your institution have in place (a) procedure(s) for on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes? Please tick the most appropriate answer.

    In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

    If you ticked "In no field of study", please go to Question 41.

38 Please give some examples of how the evidence collected through your programme monitoring and / or review procedure(s) has been used …

39 How are students involved in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure at your institution? Please tick the most appropriate answer in points "a" to "e" below. Any additional ways of student involvement can be briefly described in point "f".

    a) Are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and / or review

        In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

b) Fill in course evaluation surveys

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

c) Regularly receive feedback on findings from course evaluation surveys

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

d) Are regularly informed about measures to be taken as a result of course evaluation surveys

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

e) Propose measures to improve curricula and / or teaching / learning methods

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

f) Other. Please specify: …..

40 How are external stakeholders (employers and / or other partners) involved in the programme monitoring and / or review procedure at your institution? Please tick the most appropriate answer in points "a" to "c" below. Any additional ways of external stakeholder involvement can be briefly described in point "d".

a) Are involved as full members of bodies responsible for programme monitoring and / or review

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

b) Are involved as members of advisory / consultative bodies

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

c) Provide feedback on the knowledge, skills and competences of graduates employed (e.g. as part of employers' surveys)

In no field of study– In some fields of study– In most fields of study– In all fields of study

d) Other. Please specify: …..

ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance: *Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.*

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41 In your opinion, does the external evaluation methodology (procedures and / or criteria) of the national quality assurance agency in your country encourage or hamper the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance at HEIs? Please tick the appropriate box.

a) Encourages the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance
b) Hinders the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance
c) To some extent encourages and to some extent hinders the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance
d) Neither encourages nor hinders the development / enhancement of internal quality assurance

42 Please explain briefly how the external evaluation methodology of the national quality assurance agency in your country could be improved / enhanced?

_____

43 In your opinion, which of ESG 1.1 to 1.10 addressed above would require further clarification and / or more detailed guidelines (in addition to those provided by ENQA under each Standard; full text of the ESG available at: (https://revisionesg.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/esg-draft-endoresed-by-bfug.pdf) to be entirely clear and easily understandable to teaching staff and students? You may choose <u>one or more</u> answers:

a) 1.1 b) 1.2 c) 1.3 d) 1.4 e) 1.5 f) 1.6 g) 1.7 h) 1.8 i) 1.9 j) 1.10 k) None

44 Which of ESG 1.1 to 1.9 addressed above are or would be difficult to apply / integrate into your institution's internal quality assurance system? You may choose <u>one or more</u> answers:

a) 1.1 b) 1.2 c) 1.3 d) 1.4 e) 1.5 f) 1.6 g) 1.7 h) 1.8 i) 1.9 j) None

45 Please indicate five main problems which you have encountered or may encounter in integrating these standards into your system / applying these standards …..

      a.   ………..
      b.   ………..
      c.   ………..
      d.   ………..
      e.   ………..

OTHER COMMENTS (any other additional comments that you may wish to make regarding the questions in Section I and / or II of the questionnaire or related issues): …..

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME!