

# FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF HIGHER EDUCATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE

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**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

**AQAS**

AGENZUR FÜR  
QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH  
AKKREDITIERUNG VON  
STUDIENGÄNGEN I.V.

# Fundamental Values in the EHEA

- Underpinned the **Bologna Process since the outset**
- Spelled out in the **Paris 2018 Communiqué**:
  - (1) institutional autonomy,
  - (2) academic freedom and integrity,
  - (3) participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and
  - 4) public responsibility for and of higher education
- **Rome 2020 Communiqué** reaffirms commitment of “promoting and protecting our shared fundamental values in the entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation as the necessary basis for quality learning, teaching and research as well as for democratic societies”

# WHAT IS THE URGENCY?

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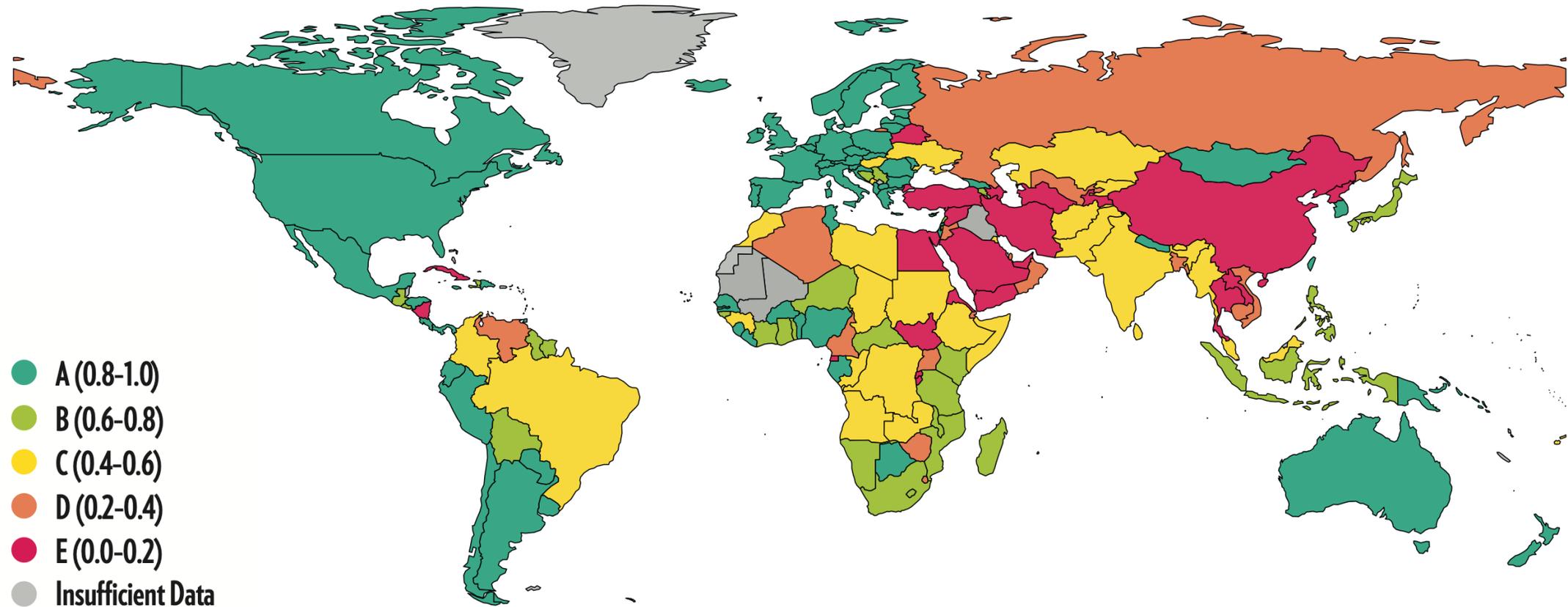
Why are fundamental values on the policy and political agenda?

Why should we care?

“Fundamental Values challenged in recent years in some of our countries” (EHEA, 2021)

“Pressure and discreet (read “anonymous”) advocacy by influential and shrewd stakeholders” (Matei, 2020)

Figure 1: Global Levels of Academic Freedom 2020: Status Groups According to the Academic Freedom Index



Source: AFi status group concept developed by the authors, based on V-Dem data (v11)

## FALSE IMPRESSION 1

Academic freedom is a problem only in non-democratic states

EUROPE

**Democracy – and academic freedom – are under attack**

**Monika Steinel** 27 March 2021

EUROPE

**European Ombudsperson needed ‘to defend academic freedom’**

**Brendan O’Malley** 17 June 2021

HUNGARY

**Stop playing politics and focus on academic freedom**

**Pál Nyiri** 21 June 2021

TURKEY

**Torture, prison, dismissal used to silence academia**

**Brendan O’Malley** 25 September 2021

NETHERLANDS

**Universities offer psychological support to threatened experts**

**NL Times** 16 October 2021

GERMANY

**Defending academic freedom needs decisive political leadership**

**Andreas Fulda** 07 October 2021

NORWAY

**New government seeks to tighten control over universities**

**Jan Petter Myklebust** 20 October 2021

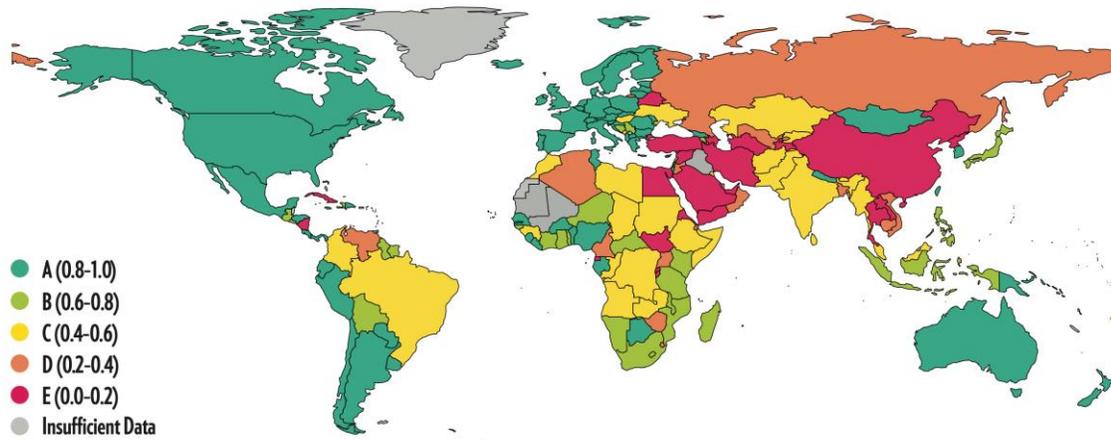
# FALSE IMPRESSION 2

## A narrow conception of Europe

### Academic Freedom Index

### EHEA

Figure 1: Global Levels of Academic Freedom 2020: Status Groups According to the Academic Freedom Index



Source: AFI status group concept developed by the authors, based on V-Dem data (v11)



## Statement on Academic Freedom

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This text, developed by the BFUG in consultation with a range of experts and stakeholder organisations, aims to outline a shared understanding of academic freedom for the EHEA, and to provide a first basis for the future development of indicators.

Academic freedom is an indispensable aspect of quality learning, teaching and research in higher education as well as of democracy. It is a necessary condition for higher education institutions to produce and transmit knowledge as a public good for the benefit of society. It guarantees academics and students the freedom of thought and inquiry to advance knowledge through research and to exchange openly, as well as the freedom to communicate the results of research within and outside of the framework of academic institutions and programmes.

(...)

Although academic freedom is intrinsic to quality higher education, it is not a value that can be automatically assumed. Rather the interaction of the different elements and conditions that ensure that academic freedom is operationalised need to be constructed, regularly assessed, protected and promoted.

**Academic  
freedom as  
central to  
quality higher  
education.**

**... and so are the  
other other values**

*“Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and social responsibility are built into the fabric of what quality assurance does and its vision of quality. Leaders in quality assurance are clear and emphatic. We cannot have quality education without academic freedom. We cannot have quality universities without institutional autonomy. We cannot sustain the quality of our values to students and society without full awareness and commitment to social responsibility. We have built both internal and external quality review on this edifice of values... Quality assurance, working with higher education, has the responsibility for framing and articulating the core values to students, government, to employers and the public” (Eaton, 2021)*

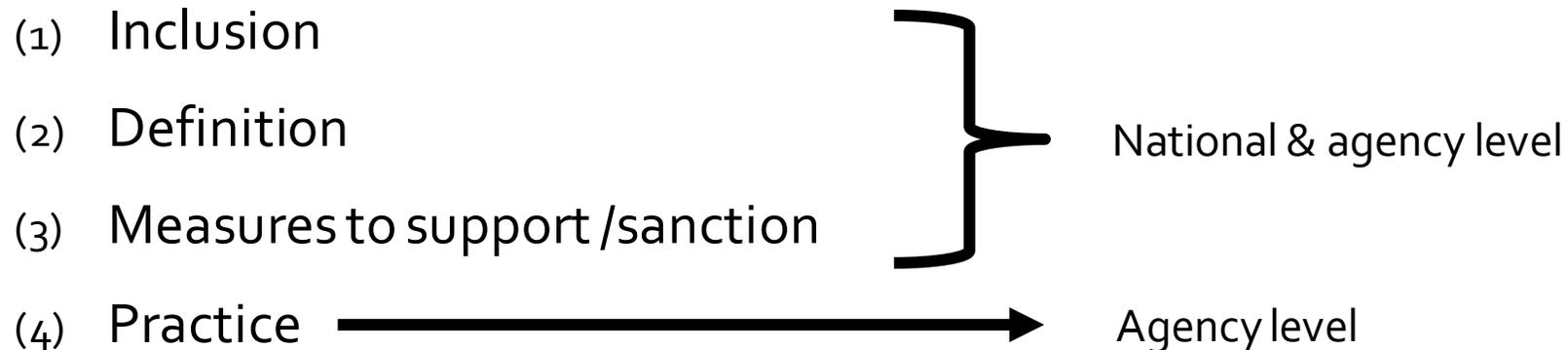
## **SO IF QUALITY & VALUES ARE SO INTRINSICALLY LINKED...**

What role do fundamental values play in quality assurance?

# A study on the relationship between fundamental values of HE and QA

**RQ:** What role do the **fundamental values** of higher education play in the framework and practice of quality assurance in the EHEA?

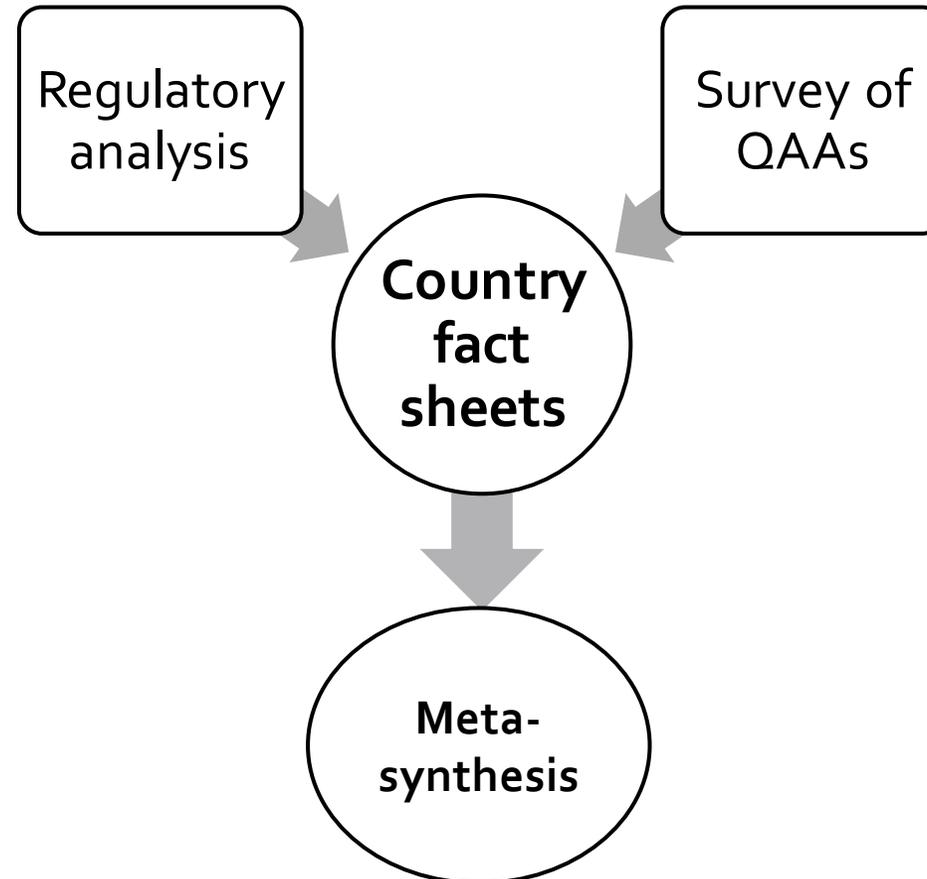
- **Study design:** de jure & de facto review
- **Cases:** 50 QA agencies (EQAR) in the 49 EHEA member states
- **Review focused on:**



# A note on methodology

## De jure review:

- National regulatory frameworks on QA
- Regulatory frameworks of the QA agencies themselves



## De facto review:

- Survey was sent to all 50 EQAR registered QAAs.
- 17 agencies responded

**But the study aims to be a “living archive” to be continuously updated, adapted and enhanced**

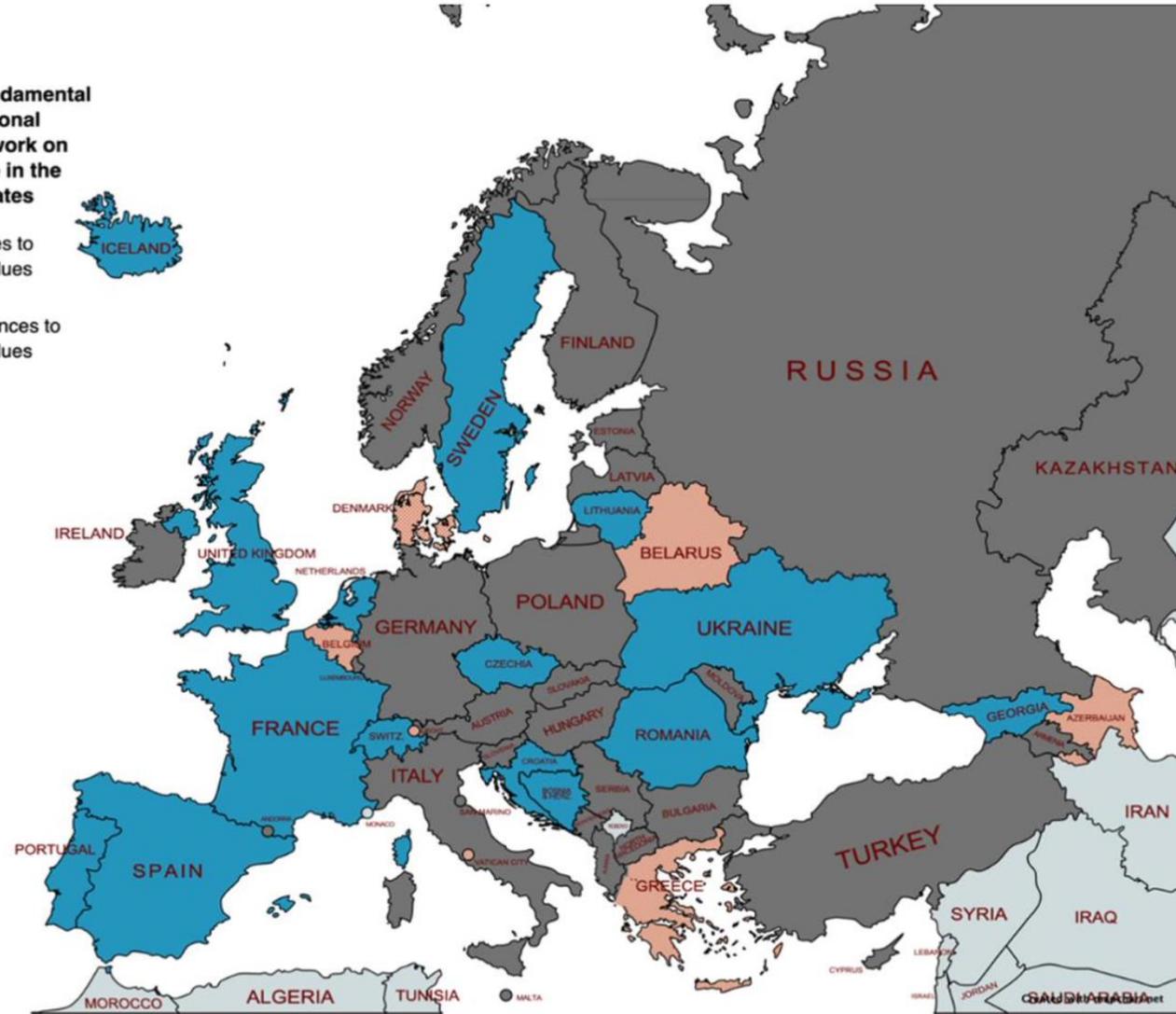
# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De jure* analysis at national level

**Question 1**: Are fundamental values included in national level regulatory provisions for quality assurance?

**Short answer after analysis of country fact sheets**: Yes, in some (n=17).

**References to fundamental values within national regulatory framework on quality assurance in the EHEA member states**

- Direct references to fundamental values identified
- No direct references to fundamental values identified
- No data



Still, this does not mean they make reference to all fundamental values. So lets zoom in...

EHEA member states where direct references to INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY were identified in national QA regulatory frameworks

■ EHEA member states  
■ Institutional autonomy



EHEA member states where direct references to ACADEMIC FREEDOM & INTEGRITY were identified in national QA regulatory frameworks

■ EHEA member states  
■ Academic freedom & integrity



EHEA member states where direct references to PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF IN THE GOVERNANCE were identified in national QA regulatory frameworks

■ EHEA member states  
■ Participation of students and staff in higher education governance



EHEA member states where direct references to PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR AND OF HE were identified in national QA regulatory frameworks

■ EHEA member states  
■ Public responsibility for and of higher education



**1 in 10 EHEA member states make direct reference to a specific fundamental value**

# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De jure* analysis at national level

**Question 1**: Are fundamental values included in national level regulatory provisions for quality assurance?

**Short answer**: Yes, in some (n=17).

**Question 2**: Are fundamental values defined in relevant quality assurance regulatory provisions? If yes, how are they defined?

**Short answer** : None identified.

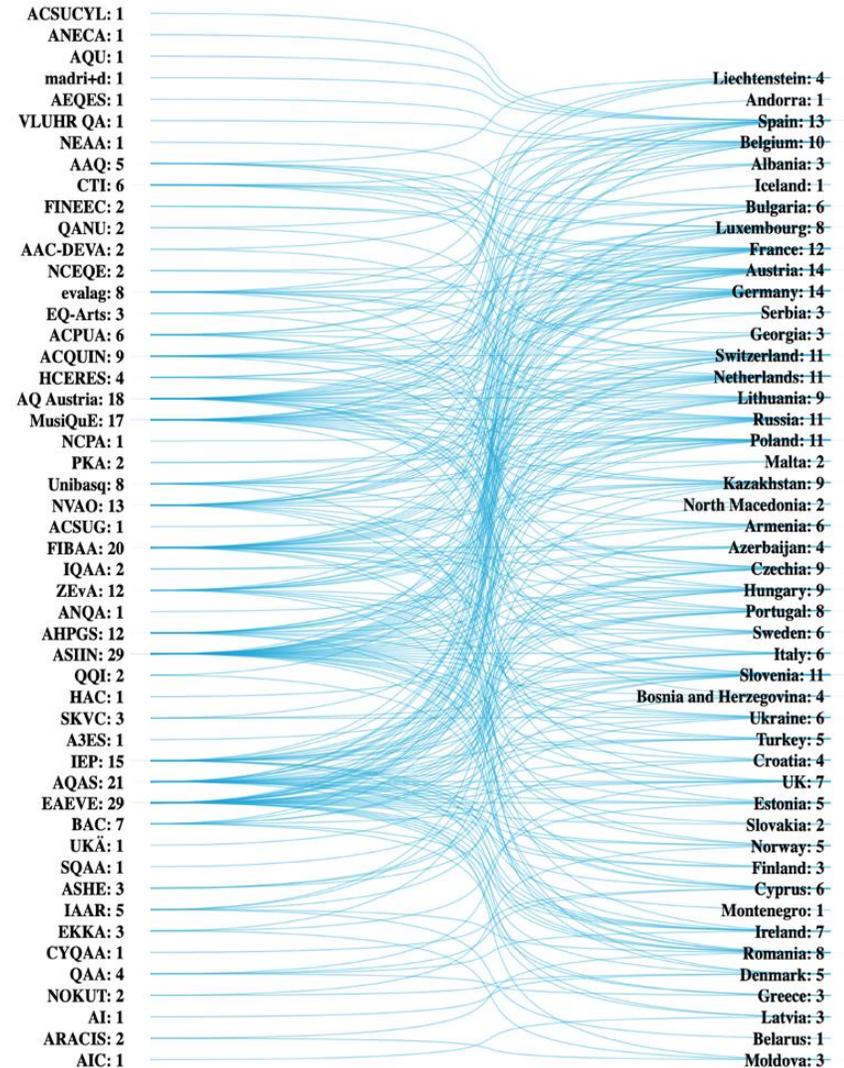
**Question 3**: Are there concrete quality assurance measures to support respect for fundamental values? Are there concrete quality assurance provisions to sanction the lack of respect for fundamental values?

**Short answer**: None identified.

# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De jure* analysis at agency level

Name of QAA:  
# Countries in which they operate

Name of country:  
# QAAs operating in country



# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De jure* analysis at agency level

**Question 1:** Are fundamental values included in agency level regulatory provisions for quality assurance?

**Short answer :** Yes, in many (n QAAs= 27; n member states = 38).

Fundamental values	QAAs where direct references to Fundamental Values were identified in agency regulatory frameworks	# QAAs	#EHEA countries which they operate
Institutional autonomy	AAQ, AEQES, ARACIS, CTI, evalag, FINEEC, HCERES, NVAO, ZEvA	n=9	n=25
Academic freedom and integrity	ACQUIN, AEQES, AHPGS, ARACIS, ASHE, EKKA, evalag, FINEEC, HAC, HCERES, IQAA, NEAA, NOKUT, QQI, ZEvA	n=15	n=29
Participation of students and staff in higher education governance	ACQUIN, AEQES, AIC, ANQA, ASHE, CTI, evalag, HCERES, IQAA, QQI, UKA	n=11	n=23
Public responsibility for and of higher education	A3ES, AAQ, ACQUIN, ACSUCYL, AEQES, ANQA, AQU, ARACIS, CTI, FINEEC, HCERES, IQAA, NEAA, NOKUT, NVAO, PKA, QQI, SKVC, UKA, ZEvA	n=20	n=28

Country of origin of QAAs where direct references to **INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY** were identified in agency level regulatory frameworks

- EHEA member states
- Institutional autonomy



Country of origin of QAAs where direct references to **ACADEMIC FREEDOM & INTEGRITY** were identified in agency level regulatory frameworks

- EHEA member states
- Academic freedom & integrity



Country of origin of QAAs where direct references to **PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF IN HE GOVERNANCE** were identified in agency level regulatory frameworks

- EHEA member states
- Participation of students and staff in higher education governance



Country of origin of QAAs where direct references to **RESPONSIBILITY FOR AND OF HE** were identified in agency level regulatory frameworks

- EHEA member states
- Responsibility for and of HE



# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De jure* analysis at agency level

**Question 1**: Are fundamental values included in agency level regulatory provisions for quality assurance?

**Short answer** : Yes, in many (n QAAs= 27; n member states = 38).

**Question 2**: Are Fundamental Values defined in relevant quality assurance regulatory provisions? If yes, how are they defined?

**Short answer**: None identified

**Question 3**: Are there concrete quality assurance measures to support respect for Fundamental Values? Are there concrete quality assurance provisions to sanction the lack of respect for Fundamental Values?

**Short answer**: None identified

# Meta-synthesis of Findings: *De facto* analysis at agency level

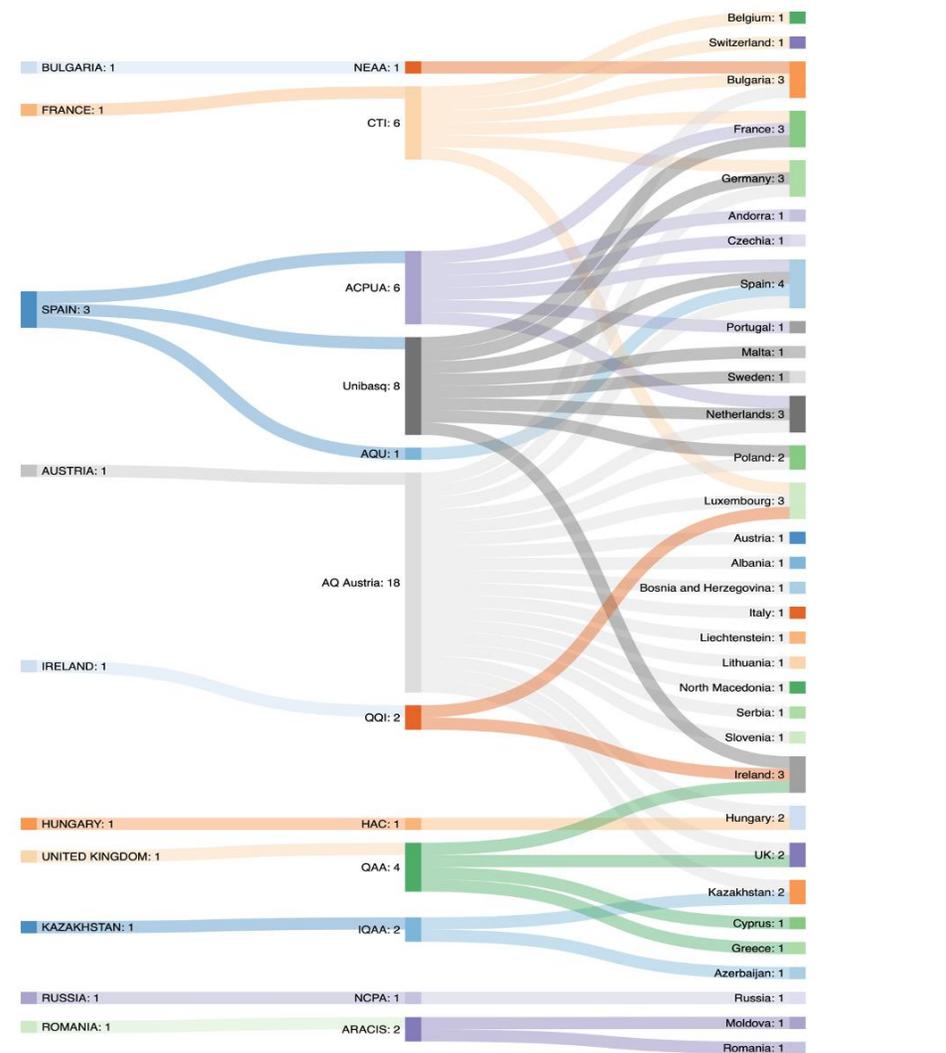
**Question:** Are Fundamental Values included in the accreditation and evaluation practices of quality assurance agencies?

**Short answer:** In some agencies (n=12)

Name of country of origin of QAA: # QAAs which include fundamental values in practices

Name of QAA: # Countries in which they operate

Name of country: # QAAs operating in country



FUNDAMENTAL VALUES	QAAS WHERE REFERENCES TO FUNDAMENTAL VALUES WERE IDENTIFIED IN SURVEY RESPONSES	NUMBER OF QAAS
<b>Institutional autonomy</b>	AQU, NCPA, IQAA, QAA, Unibasq	n=5
<b>Academic freedom and integrity</b>	AIC, AQ Austria, AQU, ARACIS, HAC, IQAA, NCPA, NEAA, QAA, QOI, Unibasq	n=11
<b>Participation of students and staff in higher education governance</b>	AIC, AQ Austria, AQU, ARACIS, QAA, Unibasq	n=6
<b>Public responsibility for and of higher education</b>	ACPUA, AIC, AQU, ARACIS, CTI, Unibasq	n=6

**THIS IS A PICTURE OF HOW THINGS ARE**

But the question remains...

# Should QAAs strengthen the role of fundamental values in their regulations and procedures?

## FOR

“Quality assurance [has the] responsibility to sustain and strengthen these values” (Eaton, 2021)

## AGAINST

Fundamental values in higher education are “not a question for QA but governmental oversight”

(survey response, 2021)

# WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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Is it the role external QA to strengthen fundamental values in the EHEA?

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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## Questions & comments

Contact: [d.craciun@utwente.nl](mailto:d.craciun@utwente.nl)

Craciun, D. , Matei, L., & Popovici, M. (2021) [A Study on the Relationship between the Fundamental Values of Higher Education and Quality Assurance](#). Council of Europe.

Craciun, D. (2022) [The link between quality assurance and fundamental values: Understanding academic freedom in a wider reference framework](#). Th&Ma, Issue 1 /2022, Zorgen voor kwaliteit.