The future up close

WORLD QUALITY REPORT

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SOUTHERN EUROPE

Waiting for the 'Carpe Diem' moment

Last year's Atomico report revealed that Europe ranked second globally when it came to early-stage investments in the tech space. Interestingly, this growth has not been distributed evenly across the continent.

Southern Europe has had a particularly tough time matching the pace of technological developments compared to other parts of Europe, and this trickles down to the Quality Engineering (QE) trends as well.

Last year's World Quality Report (WQR) showcased how Southern Europe was slowly adopting Agile, Automation, and embracing the changing testing environments in a post-COVID world.

This year, we continue to see an increased focus on enterprise-level integration of these technologies and a renewed interest in overcoming skill gaps through strategic upskilling and leveraging new ways of operating.

New ways of working

The adoption of Agile and DevOps practices is becoming increasingly entrenched, not just in prototype projects but also in large-scale endeavours, especially in Italy.

Organizations are also experimenting with various structures of testing teams to find a balance. Some organizations have maintained independent testing departments, while others have integrated Quality Assurance within development teams. There is a trend of cross-functional teams that can support multiple projects across domains, fostering diversity and expertise. Some are using a hybrid approach of working with local and remote teams to access varied expertise and bring unique global perspectives to the table.

But navigating through these varying structures might also create its own challenges because finding the right mix and ensuring effective collaboration can be a complex task. Though, Southern Europe seems to be thriving using this approach for quality and testing.

The Southern European market is now viewing quality and testing from both "Shift Left" and "Shift Right" lenses. While the former involves early testing to prevent defects in the software development process, the latter focuses on post-release testing, user feedback, and real-world scenarios, both of which improve the overall user experience.

Fine balance of old and new

In addition to this cultural shift in how quality and QE are perceived within organizations, we are witnessing the consolidation of useful technologies, particularly in areas such as web development, metaverse, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence to create intelligent and interconnected ecosystems.

This is also reshaping the way software is developed and tested, offering new opportunities for innovation.

Gen AI (Generative Artificial Intelligence), for instance, is being used to reduce manual labour, provide synthesis capabilities that are generally beyond human capabilities, and provide seamless and continuous integration of data and deployment pipelines. We see similar trends for automation too – like AI, Automation is being used as a tool to collaborate and decrease the errors throughout product lifecycles.

But the growing reliance on technology is not completely free of problems. Issues related to the need for high-quality

training data and interpretability of AI-generated test cases persist. Along with that, the adoption of technologies like AI, Cloud Computing and Reliability Engineering has a direct influence on test environments and test data management, challenging organizations to adapt efficiently.

Another concern in Southern Europe's Quality Engineering (QE) ecosystem is the uneven allocation of resources. Companies often struggle to find professionals with the right competencies, especially those who can bridge the gap between development and testing or possess expertise in emerging fields like Cloud Computing. We have seen similar trends in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, especially in Spain, where many organizations want to strategically prepare for SAP 4/Hana migrations, but are unable to find individuals with the requisite skills and capabilities to match the demand.

Adapting to the constant changes in the market requires continuous learning and professional development, which can be challenging for both individuals and organizations.

This is perhaps why IT in Southern Europe still operates with caution and practices moderation. Here, the preferred approach is to scale and improve on existing technologies, equip, and train professionals rather than jumping onto latest trends for the trends' sake. More and more companies are investing in training and upskilling their employees to bridge the competency gap.

The future of QE

The role of quality engineers and testers is evolving rapidly. They are now expected to possess a broader skill set, including the ability to create automated scripts, explore various testing techniques, and leverage new methodologies like metamorphic testing and visual testing.

The scope of QE has widened to accommodate the growing demands of the market. Even big-picture subjects like sustainability are now being considered as a function that QE can enable. In Southern Europe, organizations are committing to sustainability initiatives, emphasizing recycling, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting a positive social impact, and QEs are playing a key role in ensuring that IT solutions align with these sustainability goals.

We see QE gradually getting the attention it deserves in Southern Europe, despite the slow pace of this transition. Dare we say — we might even witness it taking the centre-stage in the next few editions of the WQR, if we continue to go this way!

Survey Watch

40%	Organizations cite 'lack of privacy' as a roadblock to utilization of AI
44%	Organizations responded that they would consider sustainability as a priority to QE&T in the future
67%	Organizations have adopted QE
82%	Organizations support Agile projects through a traditional Testing Center of Excellence

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