

## SOUTHERN EUROPE

*Change is coming – not yet, but soon*

**Jose Luis Anton**

Vice President, MU Head, Sogeti Spain

**Giancarlo Tomasig**

Managing Consultant, Capgemini Italy

# WORLD QUALITY REPORT

14th Edition | 2022-23

THE CLOSER  
YOU LOOK

# THE MORE YOU SEE

In last year's World Quality Report, we noted that Southern Europe needed more maturity in its approach to quality engineering (QE) and that various skills gaps were slowly shrinking.

A year has passed and, unfortunately, we must say that not that much has changed. In Spain, the transition to the digital economy is taking longer than expected and QE is being pushed back as a result. Help is requested from service providers, not just by small businesses, but by major enterprises such as banks and retail chains. For instance, in Spain and Italy alike, progress is being made in the quality assurance and testing of mobile apps.

In Italy, we've seen an increased willingness to invest in QE, but change is slow. Agile and DevOps approaches are gradually being adopted but, for many, the default development environment is still waterfall-oriented, especially for strategic projects. It's only among more advanced teams – those using agile and DevOps – that we see QE being embedded, rather than operating discretely.

### Challenges

In both countries, just like last year, one of the greatest issues has been the need for skills and, in particular, the need for people with hybrid talents in both development and testing. Progress won't be made unless this need is met.

In addition, time-to-market pressures aren't helped by ineffective test data and test data management practices. Test automation can accelerate outcomes, but it's predicated on the availability of robust test data.

In Spain, we find this is especially a problem in DevOps environments. Test automation is a goal – especially the smart automation of quality gates – but it's happening in a piecemeal fashion across functional and non-functional testing. What's more, there are unrealistic expectations of what it can deliver, and by when. The result is a nightmare of different tools and approaches, operating in siloes, and working within small budgets. In our view, it's time for organizations to stop, stand back, take stock, and think about the coherent strategy they need. Value stream mapping, which is covered in this year's survey, addresses this need for a holistic approach because the notion of a staged path from starting point to the desired destination is inherently comprehensive. Simply throwing tools and people at problems is not the answer.

Implicit in the challenges Southern Europe faces in test automation is a skills gap. It's not just the ability we've described of being able to think strategically through to a target endpoint. It's also the ability to think like a customer. Some organizations in the region find that hard, which is why they often turn to service providers who can offer the objectivity needed, as well as quality expertise.

### Customer concerns

In Italy, customer experience (CX) is becoming a more important incentive for quality. Organizations are being driven by online customer reviews of performance issues because they know that, ultimately, it's not just a CX matter – it's something that will impact the bottom line. In fact, in Europe, one aspect of customer

experience is now enshrined in law: the European Accessibility Act (EAA) aims as much as possible to remove the barriers faced by disabled people in the EU to the use of computers and mobile devices. Measures contained in the Act must be implemented by June 2025.

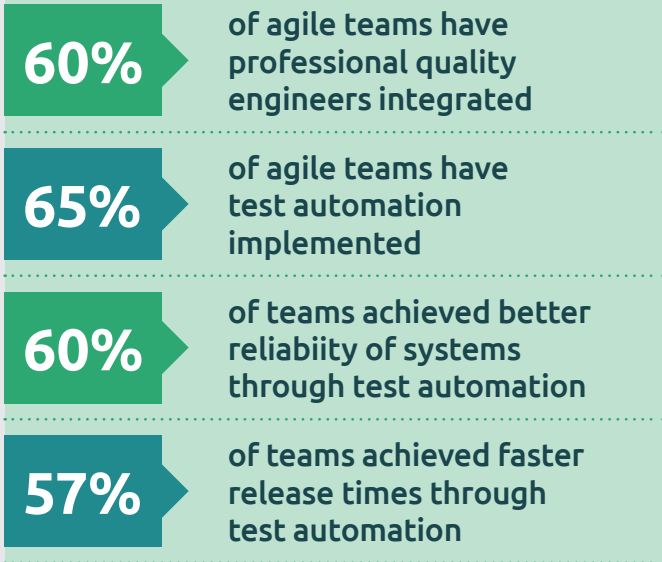
Customers don't just have concerns about performance and accessibility issues. They also care about security and, with the increased visibility of and access to personal data these days, it's a concern that's growing in importance. Organizations must constantly address these matters, while at the same time ensuring that usability isn't compromised. It's a hard balance to achieve.

### The long view

In Spain and Italy alike, we feel there is still a long journey ahead to achieve real value from quality engineering. As the world emerges from the pandemic, and as technology continues to evolve, everything is in a state of flux. The business landscape is changing, and so are technology approaches, customer expectations, and relationships between organizations and their service providers.

That said, the world is now moving more to the cloud, and in general, we feel there is more optimism in Southern Europe that improvements will continue to be made. As new technologies emerge and consolidate – Web 3.0, the metaverse, quantum computing, and more – we need to learn to acclimatize ourselves to them. We need to move forward – and we need to be ready for what tomorrow brings.

## Survey watch: Agile Quality Maturity of Southern European organizations



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**Mark Buenen**  
Global Leader, Quality Engineering & Testing, Capgemini & Sogeti  
[mark.buenen@sogeti.com](mailto:mark.buenen@sogeti.com)

**Contact Micro Focus**  
If you desire more information about testing tools, please contact:

**Carlos Gutierrez**  
EMEA ADM Leader, Micro Focus  
[carlos.gutierrez@microfocus.com](mailto:carlos.gutierrez@microfocus.com)  
+34 672 266 855

