

Southern Europe

Progress in testing and QA in Southern Europe may have been slower than expected, but the post-COVID signs are optimistic

Carlos Vidinha

Principal Solutions Director, Capgemini Portugal

Claudio Gatti

Lead Skills Group, Testing, Capgemini Italia Spa

Diego Bruzzone

Testing Methodology Expert
Capgemini Italia Spa

Jose Luis Anton

Vice President, Sogeti MU Head, Spain

World Quality Report

2020-21 | TWELFTH EDITION

The three countries comprising Southern Europe in the World Quality Report are Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and watching these markets this year, we have seen signs of change that have put testing and quality assurance (QA) functions under increasing pressure.

In recent months, in particular, business-to-consumer organizations been accelerating the pace of digital transformation. This has largely been driven by market forces, but in addition, lockdown measures have increased the scale of online transactions in sectors including retail and insurance. As a result, we have seen a greater focus on the adoption of agile and DevOps development environments, and an increased focus on data analytics. We've also witnessed a growth of interest in test automation, which seems to be driven mostly by a desire to shorten time to market.

In Italian QA, in particular, we've recently observed the emergence of a center of excellence model in some organizations. Some of these "test factories" are in-house, and some of them are offshore – but what's interesting about this is that it represents a divergence from what we've seen in other markets, where QA is being subsumed into the overall software development lifecycle to the extent that it is beginning to lose its identity as a discrete function.

Business thinking

Let's take a look at what this year's data tells us – and the first thing we see is continuing corroboration of the commercially driven nature of the market in Southern Europe. The testing and QA drivers classed as essential by most respondents in the region included contributions to business growth and improving the customer experience. A further business-oriented objective, quality at speed, also featured strongly.

In last year's report, we noted that Southern Europe needed to focus more on quality, and this shift of thinking does seem to be happening. One of the highest-rated aspects of overall IT strategy this year, with 79% of the region's respondents classing it as essential, was the higher quality of software solutions. We also see a fairly high degree of confidence in the extent to which application development targets are being met. For example, around two-thirds (65%) of our survey participants said their testing always covers everything that is needed, and a similar proportion (64%) said the tools and methods they need for development and test activities are always sufficient and available. In our experience, and as far as Spain specifically is concerned, the tools may well be available, but that doesn't necessarily mean that teams are yet able to take full advantage of them.

A need for consistency

Exactly the same issue is apparent in relation to the adoption of agile and DevOps in a QA context. The most significant challenge noted by Southern Europeans in our survey was the difficulty of aligning the tools that should be used for automated testing, and almost as many people expressed difficulty in deciding what tests are actually needed in general. We do see some organizations employing artificial intelligence (AI) to address this issue, but it's still at an early stage.

Of the various techniques employed to accelerate and optimize testing in agile and DevOps developments, by far the most common approach is test automation, with almost two-thirds (63%) of the region's respondents saying they always maximize its use. That may well be the case, but our own experience in the field suggests that many organizations are automating their testing in a piecemeal fashion. We see no comprehensive and consistent approach, which is why we find it odd that, in response to a later question, comparatively

few (15%) of our respondents said that new test automation skills were lacking. By contrast, twice as many (31%) of the region's survey participants noted a lack of knowledge of business processes, which is something we have ourselves observed in Italy in particular.

Aspirations in AI and test automation

Southern Europe's survey participants seemed to feel that smart QA options would be highly relevant to their organizations this year. For instance, more than half (57%) of them mentioned AI as a means of providing fit-for-purpose test data, and over one-third (34%) said the same of fit-for-purpose test environments. We find this surprising. As we have noted above, the use of AI in testing is still at an early stage in the region, and we know several organizations that are currently facing issues in the areas specified here.

Similarly, AI was mentioned in QA planning to what seems to us be an unrealistic degree. As many as 86% of the region's respondents said they would have more AI proofs of concept in place, and over three-quarters (76%) said AI systems are going to be employed to store and reuse important domain knowledge. We feel more maturity will be needed before developments such as these can take place.

Responses on the theme of test automation were also fairly aspirational. Far more people in the region than we would expect said they always have the necessary automation tools, that they always have enough time to build and maintain automated tests, and that they always have the right automation strategy.

Looking ahead, respondents' plans for test automation are likewise ambitious. It's unlikely that automated test case design, the robotic automation of test activities, and test environment virtualization will be implemented in the coming year to anything like the degree indicated in the survey data, even though in some cases, the need is great. In Italy, for example, test environment virtualization has much significance.

Post-COVID determination

Taking stock here, it may be true that there has been less progress this year than anyone might want or expect, but the picture is not entirely gloomy. Southern Europe displays a greater determination than many other parts of the world to change its QA focus in the post-COVID environment. Responses indicate an even greater emphasis on business objectives, including customer experience validation and usability testing, and performance validation. We see this reflected in the field.

Also, while a negative budget impact is expected in the region because of the repercussions of the pandemic, we have observed a fair degree of optimism in our own experience, particularly in consumer-facing sectors such as retail and insurance. These are markets that know they will need to continue investing in quality assurance.

Among the QA and testing lessons Southern European organizations have learned from the experiences of 2020, we see an understandable commitment to improve team collaboration tools. We also see a firmness of purpose to automate more, mentioned by 68% of the region's correspondents.

That's a sentiment with which we agree. Pursuit of test automation will help support organizations in Southern Europe as they move towards digital transformation – and the changing business climate has made that transition more necessary than ever.



Download the report:
www.worldqualityreport.com
or Scan the QR code

Mark Buenen
Global Leader, Digital Assurance and
Quality Engineering, Capgemini Group
mark.buenen@sogeti.com

Contact Micro Focus

If you desire more information about testing tools,
please contact:

Riccardo Sanna
ADM Presales Manager
riccardo.sanna@microfocus.com
+ 39 346 139 8055

