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- Quality Assurance - Current perspectives

Ensuring Worldwide Competitiveness of
Master's and PhD Programmes at
European Universities of Technology

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Conference of TU Rectors/Presidents, ParisTech, 22/09. 2005



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Structure of the Presentation

- I- The Bologna process provides the European context for HE issues
- II- QA and the growing role of internal processes
- III- External evaluation and the importance of moving beyond the national level



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I. The Bologna Process - developments since 2001

- Prague (2001) “...(Ministers) emphasized the necessity of close European cooperation and mutual trust in and acceptance of national quality assurance systems...” => **National Agencies**

- Berlin (2003) “...(Ministers) stress
 - ✓ the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance,
 - ✓ consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself...” => **Universities**



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I- The Bologna Process - The Bergen Communiqué

Bergen (2005) "...(Ministers)

We adopt the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA...We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria." =>

European organisation

II. The growing importance of internal processes

- These types of process already exist in some parts of Europe:
 - ✓ Trends IV shows progress in commitment
 - ✓ Obstacles still exist: limited autonomy and lack of experience in internal quality processes for many institutions
- On QA issues the point of departure is a robust internal quality culture
- How to develop quality culture
 - ✓ EUA launches project (3rd Round is ongoing)
 - ✓ About 150 HEIs in the three rounds

II. Recommendations for internal processes

■ Processes:

- ✓ No bureaucratic, uniform or mechanistic processes but adapted to specific activity
- ✓ Processes to promote creativity and innovation

■ Actors:

- ✓ Engagement of students and academic and administrative staff
- ✓ Importance of leadership in developing and embedding the process

■ Structure:

- ✓ Rotate leadership of quality units and ensure academic staffing
- ✓ Use inter-institutional cooperation (i.e., Rectors' conference) for discussion and benchmarking

III. The diversity of processes in external evaluation

- Evaluation versus accreditation: is it a problem?
 - ✓ Is it neutral to have a growing role of one or the other? Accreditation might provide more standardisation and uniformity and less support to innovation
- What future for evaluation of programs?
 - ✓ In many countries QA agencies working on programmes are suffering from overload and looking for changing their scope
 - ✓ Therefore it would mean that it is the responsibility of HEIs to evaluate and monitor their own programmes
- Could evaluation of teaching be separated from evaluation of research?
 - ✓ They need to be at least thought through together and articulated at the level of discipline or institution
 - ✓ This could be achieved in many ways



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III. The diversity of processes in external evaluation

- The trend for going beyond national evaluations:
 - ✓ Due to globalisation and to progress in building EHEA, demand for international (or European) evaluation is growing from either universities or funding agencies or governments
 - ✓ The EUA's institutional Evaluation Programme is answering such demand
- The need for common standards at European level:
 - ✓ For external quality assurance of higher education (i.e., processes fit for purpose)
 - ✓ And for quality assurance agencies operating in Europe (i.e., to submit to a cyclical review within 5 years)
- Bergen Communiqué has adopted standards and has welcomed the principle of a Register

III. QA Bergen follow-up

- The EC recommendation on QA
- Continuing the 'E4' work with ENQA – implementation of the European Register:
 - The register will provide information on QA agencies working in Europe and whether they comply or not with the QA standards adopted in Bergen, based on national reviews.
 - The register will be the responsibility of the main stakeholders: HEIs, students, QA agencies and social partners.
 - Its main added-value is to provide an instrument for evaluating QA agencies *via* a process based on a system of checks and balances.