Looking back – looking forward:
Quality Assurance and the Bologna Process

Dr. Sybille Reichert , Zürich

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Overview

- The Quality Dimension of the Bologna Process -- visions and achievements

- Quality Assurance in the Context of Bologna

- Embedding QA in Institutional Development: Current Examples of Institutional Approaches to QA

- Remaining Opportunities and Challenges

Quality before Bologna: the 90ies

- Multiple national debates on quality problems and lack of accountability in Higher Education, effects of massification, side-effects of increased autonomy

  - ❖ Overloaded classrooms with outdated teaching methodologies, not enough independent learning, not enough options
  - ❖ Not enough enough attention to diversified needs
  - ❖ Lack of coherence in programmes (teacher-centered offer)
  - ❖ Lack of mutual recognition

- Quality Assurance Agencies created and transformed

- 90ies as decade of cooperation: Increasing density of cooperation, increasing need for comparability, mutual recognition

- European Pilot Project on Comparing Quality Assurance Methodologies among five systems (1994, Recommendations 1995)

- Quality (and competitiveness) of European Higher Education increasingly politicised (economic crises, brain drain)

Quality Assurance Methodologies

Accountability / Control and /or Improvement	Accreditation	Evaluation	Benchmarking
Programme (or subject)	new Ba/Ma programmes, receding state authority Ex ante control remains	Increased attention to curricular coherence and quality of teaching	Hopes for more comparability between programmes, picking up good practice
Institution	Rapid expansion of (esp. Private) Higher Education	Increased need for institutional steering and strategic choices (same resources for more tasks, more internat. competition)	Increasing awareness of competition & potential for learning from others

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Putting Quality Assurance into Context

- Quality Enhancement > Formal Quality Assurance
- Qual. Enhancement = Sum of many methods of institutional development: hiring, funding opportunities, facilitating communication betw. disciplines, supporting new initiatives
  ⇨ Example: Added value of Bologna reforms
    - ✓ Opportunity to reflect and review curricula
    - ✓ Opportunity to reform teaching methods (student centred learning, continous assessment, flexible learning paths)
    - ✓ Strengthening horizontal communication and institutional transparency
- Quality Assurance > Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies (e.g. quality expectations of funding agencies, of journals, peer review)
- Most limiting factor for quality enhancement is not nature of internal or external QA but limits to resources when room for improvements identified. (Trends IV)
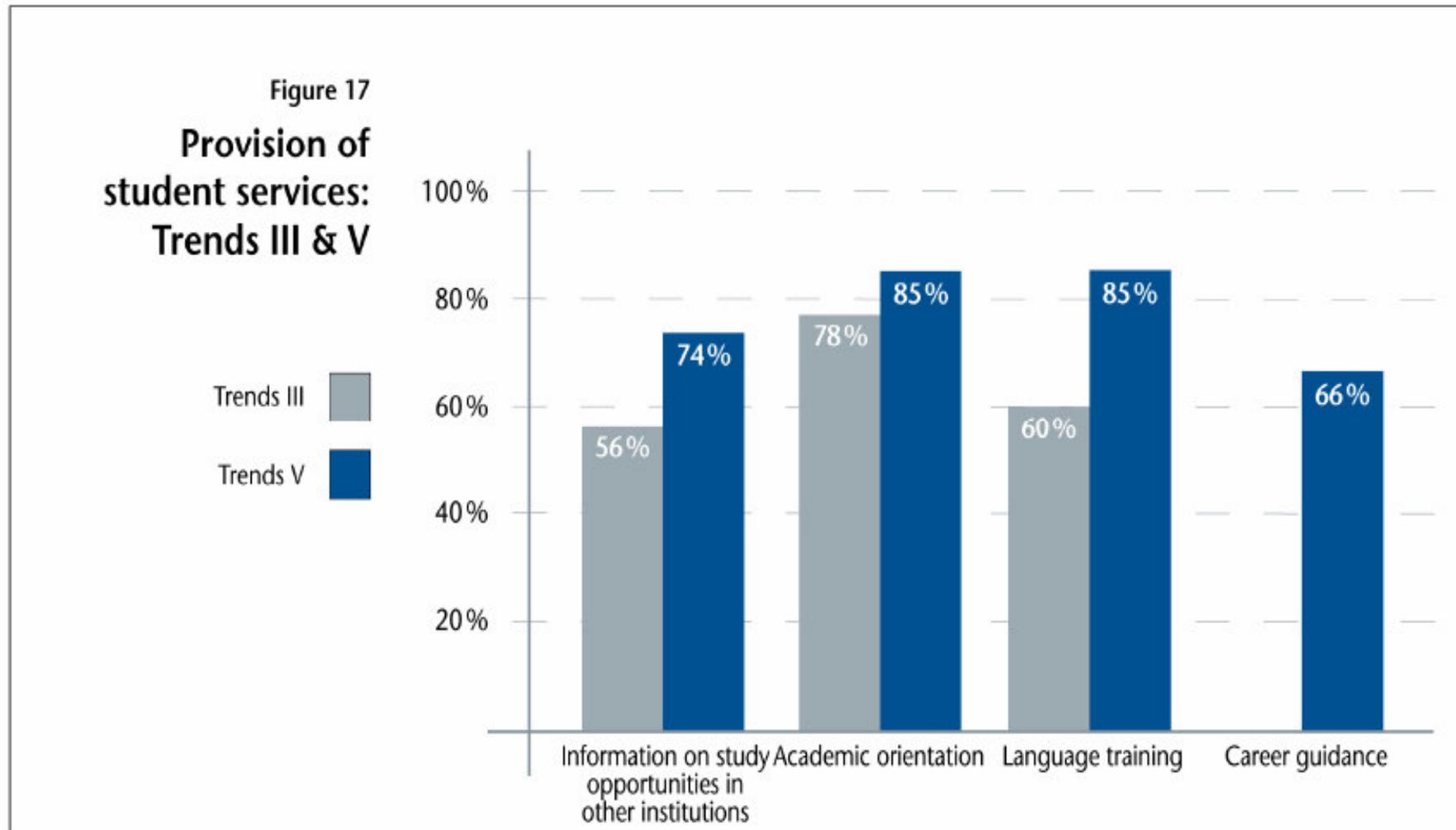
Bologna as a Process of Quality Enhancement: Vision and Hopes

1. International readability of curricular structures and QA systems ⇨ creating more cooperation, more competition, more institutional attention to international dimension and good practice abroad ⇨ Quality enhancement through wider and deeper comparison

2. Mutual trust in each others' quality assurance ⇨ trust in quality ⇨ mutual recognition of QA agency activities

3. Quality enhancement in teaching: Move to outcome-based/ student centered learning and teaching, as new structuring principle of curricula, More coherent approach to teaching, more institutional attention to quality of teaching

4. Bologna as a welcome vessel of national & institutional reform agendas

Quality Implications of
Introduction of Bachelor and Master Programmes

- Employability vs. academic value

- Competence orientation

- Student-centred teaching methodologies

- Diversification of learning paths, more flexibility, more options

- Possibility of disciplinary reorientation

- Transparency and information for students (better choices on what and where to study)

- Hope for more space for independent learning -- reality: programme overload through content compression

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Trends V: More Attention to Student Services

Figure 17

Provision of student services: Trends III & V

Legend: Trends III, Trends V

Information on study opportunities in other institutions: Trends III 56%, Trends V 74%
Academic orientation: Trends III 78%, Trends V 85%
Language training: Trends III 60%, Trends V 85%
Career guidance: Trends V 66%

New Focus on Doctoral Level and Quality of Research Training after Berlin 2003
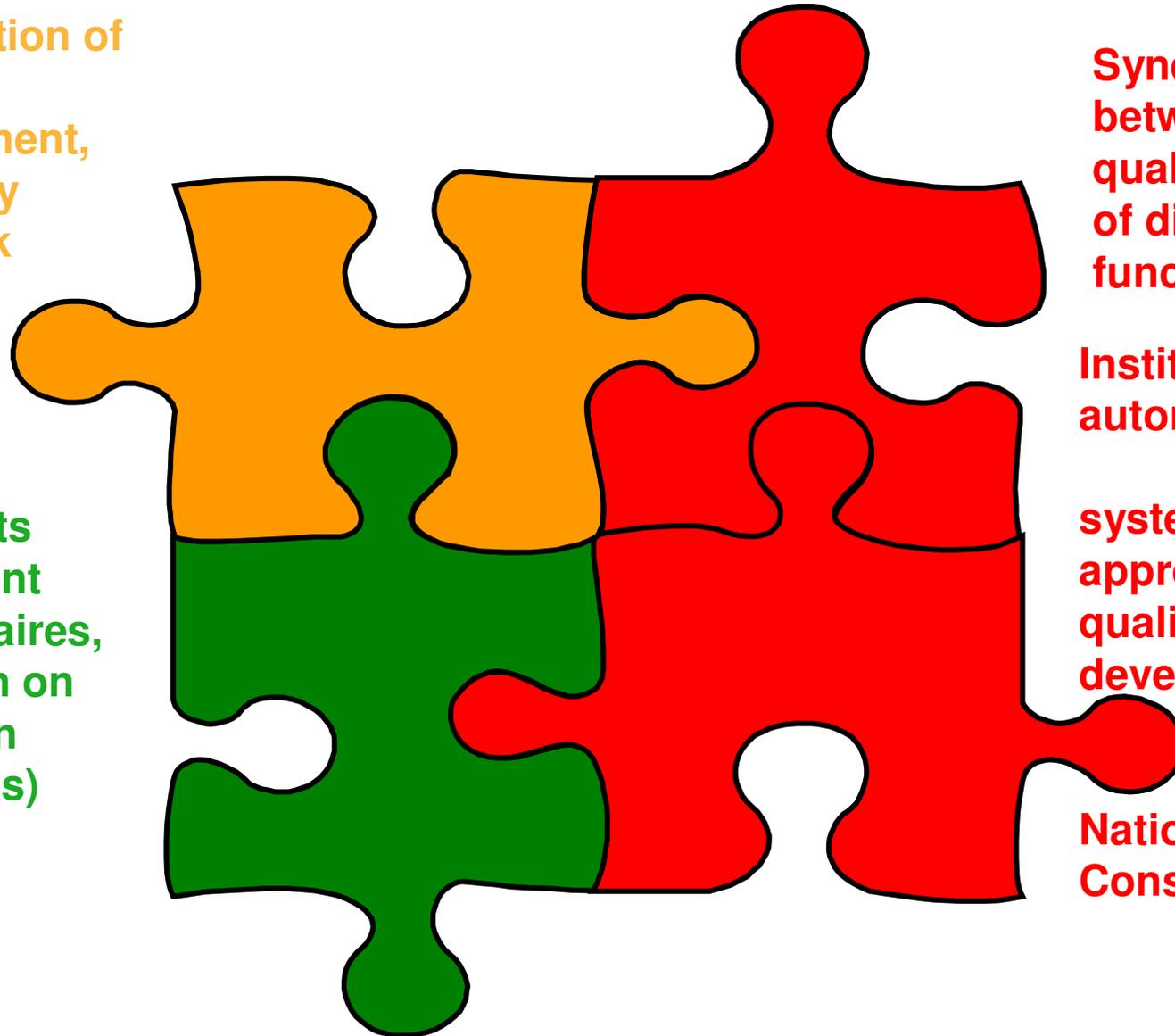
- Impact of new structures and reinforced focus on teaching quality on research training at doctoral level

- Quality of supervision and supporting structures in Graduate Education received increased attention in several national research contexts: national debates moved into European fora (also through ERA)

- Opportunities for more interdisciplinary programmes at master level, new links between master and PhD level

Quality Assurance
in the Context of Bologna

2005: Internal Quality Development - Teaching, Learning, Services

Institutional organisation of quality development, especially feed back

Synergies between qual. dev. of different functions

Institutional autonomy ➔

Instruments (e.g. student questionnaires, discussion on curricula in committees)

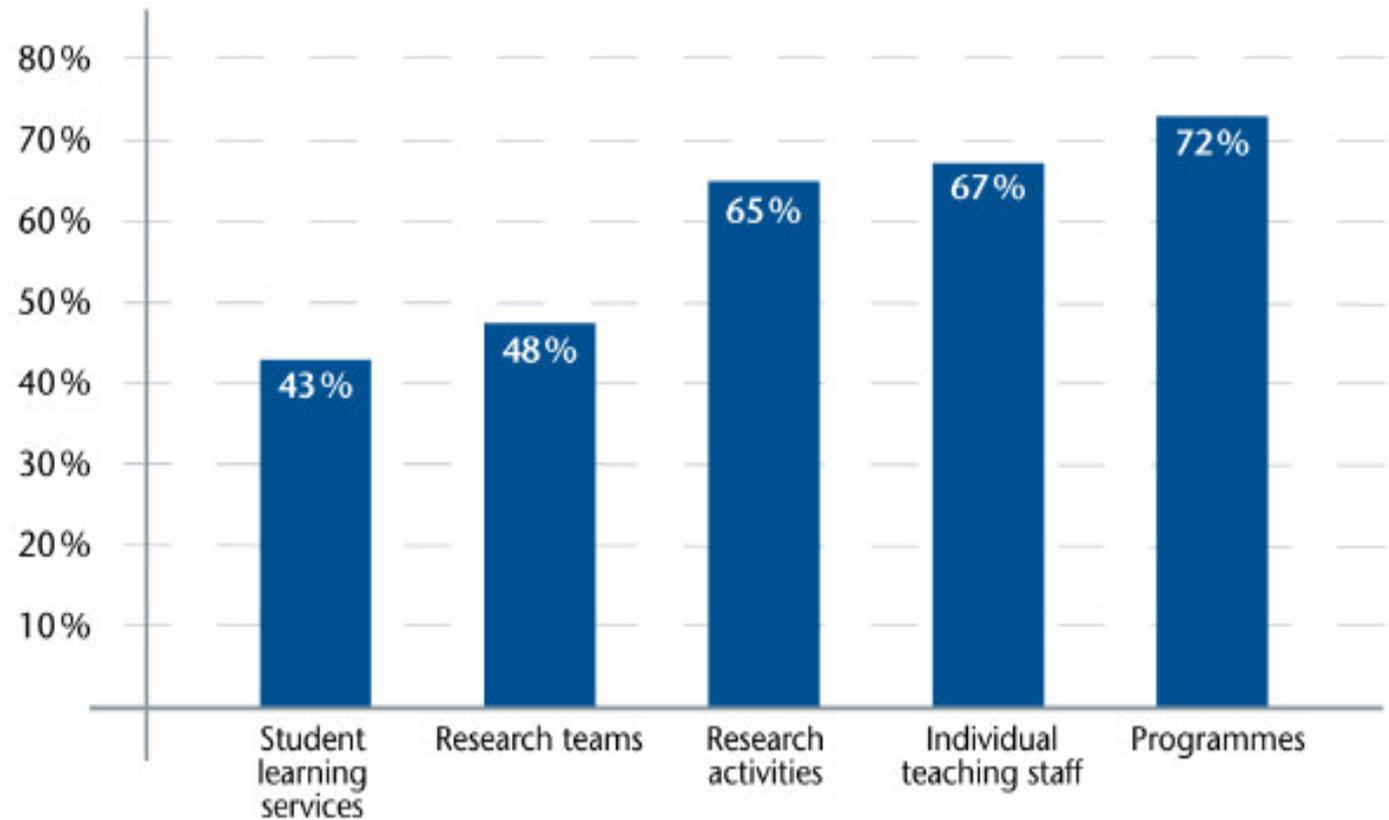**systematic approach to quality development ➔**

National Constraints

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Trends V (2007) on Internal Quality Assurance

Figure 20

Regular internal evaluation by HEIs

2005 (Trends IV):
Relation of Internal and External QA

- External QA more appreciated in build-up of internal QA

- Institutions find that internal quality processes are more improvement oriented and more attuned to institutional goals.

- ⇨ an advanced internal quality culture should be mirrored in a light external quality control.

- Over-intrusive, & over-bureaucratic systems perceived as counter-productive to mission of HEIs

- Mature quality systems moving away from programme evaluation & towards lighter touch institutional audit/evaluation

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2005: European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines

- Developed by ENQA, EUA, ESIB, EURASHE, adopted by the Ministers of Education

- Agreed basis of principles and procedures for European quality assurance: both for external and for internal QA

- relate only to the three cycles of higher education, not intended to cover the area of research or general institutional management

- Quality assurance (Peer review) of quality assurance, toward register of trusted QA agencies, toward mutal recognition and transnational QA practice

- Recommendation (2006/143/EC) by the European Parliament and Council in February 2006 with the recommendation to Member States that higher education institutions are able to turn to any agency listed in the European Register, provided it is allowed by their governmental authorities

European QA Standards for internal quality assurance

- Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- Quality assurance of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information

ESG: External Quality Assurance

- Government commitment to a system of periodic evaluation or accreditation at inst. or programme level

⇨ all EHEA members states that do not have external programmatic accreditation systems have therefore committed themselves to the introduction of institutional (or programmatic) evaluation (or accreditation) according to ESG

- External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal QA processes

- External QA should comprise self-evaluation, external expert review, published reports with recommendations that are easy to find, clear follow-up procedure

Achievement 1:
Primary Responsibility for QA lies with Institutions

- Publically acknowledged by Ministers in Berlin and Bergen – away from sole focus on quality control

- „If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.“

Achievement 2: Focus on Internal Quality Assurance as Quality Culture

- „Institutions should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality and quality assurance in their work. To achive this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality."

Achievement 3: Shift to student and stakeholder interests away from pure supply perspective

- Graduate employability key concern
- Student centered teaching, attention to student work load (as basis for credits) (ECTS)
- Student support and information as important theme
- Students as active participants in QA, even members in agencies' external review teams

European Register of QA Agencies

- May 2007 in London, the Education Ministers agreed to establish a *European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR)*

- Membership of the register requires an external evaluation of an agency every five years

- A successful evaluation requires a judgement of substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

Internal Quality Assurance: Experiences with voluntary improvement-oriented QA

- At the level of a Faculty

- At the level of the institution

    - Strategic development and capacity for change

    - At the level of the institution with a focus on overarching Strategic Thematic Areas

    - At the level of the institution with a focus on structures and processes of graduate education

- At the level of a whole higher education system

⇨ **Internal Quality Assurance is alive and kicking and far from being a merely bureaucratic exercise**

Benefits and Challenges for Internal QA at Faculty Level

- Helpful: subject-specific reflection across a wider number of fields and programmes (synergies), combination of systematic internal reflection with external review,

- Academics get more easily engaged if they expect feed back on scientific development; reflection on institutional development easier if related to scientific development

- How to best connect faculty development perspectives with overall institutional strategy development (non-simultaneous evaluations)?

- Attention to real strategic decisions like hiring policy, restructuring, new interdisciplinary initiatives

- Precondition for effective feed-back: link to institutional strategy and institutional autonomy (recruitment, infrastructural investment)

Benefits and challenges for QA at Institutional Level

- Best way to sharpen strategic reflection, e.g.

  ⇨ How to help the development of beneficial institutional perspectives in de-centralised institutions?

  ⇨ How to best combine disciplinary with interdisciplinary interests and institutional structures?

  ⇨ How to develop fair processes of rewarding performance in non-mechanistic manner, leaving enough space for new intiatives and still grant enough autonomy to de-central units?

  ⇨ How to combine bottom-up development drive with institutional quality standards

- Presupposes sufficient institutional autonomy to be effective

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Challenges for System Evaluators

- Take diversity of institutions and multiplicity of influencing factors into account

- Inspite of complexity of actors and condition, still believe in the possibility of change

- Make sure evaluations offers enough learning possibilities (sufficient attention to institutional perspectives, voluntary participation)

Challenges for the Future

Challenges for QA at Institutional Level

- connect education, research and service in QA (separately managed at most institutions - development comes together at level of individual/ department but not of institution)

- establish improvement-oriented QA without disproportionate costs and administrative burden
  ⇨ look for synergies between different QA without doing away with the learning opportunities

- offer possibilities to benchmark and compare internationally without reducing complexity unfairly
  ⇨ make use of rankings for what they are worth but not limit international comparison to superficiality of rankings

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Challenges for QA at Institutional Level (2)

- keep the will to improve alive (with increasing routine of QA)

- realise the value of interpersonal qualitative dialogue for self-improvement and institutional learning

⇨ Choice and engagement of peers essential

Challenges for Ministries and QA Systems (1)

- Be aware of the quality effects of non-QA steering instruments (funding channels, regulations)

- Don't underestimate the value of improvement oriented quality assurance, don't overestimate the use of labels

- Develop flexible QA (lighter for institutions with solid internal QA)

- Support the development of differentiated non-reductive methods of comparisons for users

- Avoid mainstreaming effects through peer review in quality review of grant agencies and QA

- Include international experts: Reliance on national experts may pose a problem: pool is limited ⇨ considerable familiarity between reviewers and the reviewed ⇨ potentially compromises the necessary independence and objectivity of the external evaluations

Challenges for QA Systems (2)

- Don't overdo it (evaluation fatigue and routine, too much time investment) – let professors also do research and teaching

- Expand institutional autonomy, put aside means for improvement, otherwise QA is hardly worth the trouble

- Look for spaces in which the new, unpredictable and unfamiliar can grow (in funding instruments and quality assurance processes)

Thank you for your attention!

Bon courage