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# **How does quality assurance make a difference?**

**Summing up the 7th EQAF**

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# How do you make sense of diversity?

- More than 30 papers and workshops
- Experiences from 20 countries
- Voices from institutions, researchers, students, academics, agencies, interest organizations...
- Different policy agendas and contexts
- The early and late adapters to quality assurance

## Looking for patterns regarding...

- The content of the papers and workshops
  - The methods and designs reflected upon
  - The scope of papers and workshops (local, domestic or global)
- subjectively interpreted....

# How does quality assurance make a difference?

- We wanted papers and presentations on impact and outcomes of QA, but most papers and workshops were addressing issues concerning:
  - Design and methods of QA
  - QA and governance/management
  - QA and various forms of engagement (students, employers, society)

# The analytical level of papers and presentations:

# Domestic

European (global)

Other

# Institutional

Disciplinary

# But what are the papers really all about (1)?

- Yes, they do address issues concerning audit, evaluation and accreditation – the formal and external approaches to quality assurance
- But there is a substantial amount of papers dealing with the more informal side of quality assurance
  - quality culture
  - student engagement
  - collaboration among stakeholders

## But what are the papers really all about (2)?

- "New" issues being brought forward:
  - Quality assurance at the PhD level (Torres et al., Markowski, Jonsson et al.)
  - E-learning (Ubachs & Mulder)
  - Joint degrees and their recognition (Aerden)
  - Risk-based management (Kristoffersen/McClaran)
  - Learning outcomes (Linde & Sundkvist)
  - Student experience (Ivanova, Leighton-Kelly, McHaney & Lewis)

# What are the learning outcomes we can take home (1)?

- Newton: QA is still a messy business, and we have not yet seen convincing evidence on improvements in teaching and learning following EQA
- Manning: Trust in the US accreditation model is lost – the accountability agenda is driving the development of QA
  - Different context, same agenda??



## What are the learning outcomes we can take home (2)?

- Lukkola: Attempts to link earlier de-coupled policy-initiatives at the European level (QA, QF, and Recognition)
- Land: Given all barriers identified from policy initiation to policy realisation – how realistic is the "implementation of the ESG"?
- Sursock/Vettori (and others): QA is dependent on translators and cultural brokers to be working on the ground

# Where do we go from here (1)?

- The governmental agenda:
  - QA is nice, but employment and labour market links are far more important. Perhaps we should skip the process approach and just go for (learning) outcomes?
  - QA is nice, but we cannot afford to the autonomy any longer – we need QA as a more pro-active instrument

## Where do we go from here (2)?

- The university and college agenda:
  - QA is nice, but we need to align it closer to strategic organizational processes
  - QA is nice, but our concern is about attracting students and improving the student experience
  - QA is nice, how can we use it to improve our external profile and prestige?

## Where do we go from here (3)?

- The agency agenda:
  - QA is nice, why are we the only ones that remain loyal to the original ambitions?  
(ENQA 2012: "Main priority..of agencies..is to develop procedures to enhance HE"..)
  - QA is nice, but since both governments and institutions are moving on, is our future implying privatisation and "consultancy"?

## Questions....

- If QA is "nice" – is the implication that key stakeholders have lost interest?
- Is the "next generation" of QA solely dependent on delivering results regarding learning outcomes?
- Do we see a renewed interest in the "informal" QA processes at the institutional level – how should EQA respond to that?
- What would be the evidence that student engagement and quality culture "work"?