

**Challenges in QA/accreditation**  
**in the EHEA**

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# The HE landscape in Europe: diversity or chaos ?

- 45+ national systems:
  - fragmentation, incompatibilities
  - mostly state-run, state-funded, state-certified
  - horizontal systems, not much deviation
  - no tradition of external QA/accreditation
- EU and subsidiarity:
  - insulated national systems (until 1985)
  - mobility in spite of incompatibility (since 1985)
  - convergence of structures/policies (since 1998)
  - EHEA is a zone of work in progress

## A common priority of Bologna + Lisbon

- The 1998 Recommendation on QA in HE (EU)
  - mandate: Commission to support and report
  - 2004 report: much progress, many agencies
- Bologna process: 45 countries (+ unis + EU)
  - QA issue first marginal, now a core priority
  - Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005, role of ENQA+ ECA
  - concern: feasibility with 45 countries ??
- Lisbon Strategy: Education & Training 2010 (EU)
  - Objective 3.5: compatibility in QA/accreditation
  - 2004: « acute need for modernisation of HE »
  - Commission Communications on EHEA/ERA
  - New Recommendation on QA (Nov 2005)

# Challenge 1: enhance the value of QA/accreditation

## PURPOSE:

- to demonstrate existing quality
  - in support of attractiveness, recognition
  - rejection rate among public univ = low
  - quality vs. excellence
- to indirectly enhance quality
  - setting broad standards to be met
  - respect diversity of systems, HEIs, orientation and the right to be different, better, innovative
  - allowing some time to meet standards
  - working positively: not a system to penalise  
avoid rankings ( $\neq$  scaling)

# Challenge 1: enhance the value of QA/accreditation

## METHODS:

- QA/Accreditation is based on **evaluation(s)**
  - evaluation  $\neq$  measurement
  - not an automatic process: no simple ticking-off using a list of indicators)
  - it requires judgment, respect, tolerance
- QA/Accreditation is a **statement** ( $\neq$  **decision**)
  - it **may** entail consequences
  - consequences depend on actors:  
administrative status, finance (government)  
prestige, image (students, employers, teachers)

# **Challenge 1:** **enhance the value of QA/accreditation**

## **FOCUS:**

- **QA/accreditation applied where most needed**
  - new,
  - private, small,
  - foreign (imported),
  - ODL, etc.
- **compulsory vs. strategic QA/accreditation**
- **accreditation of basic quality vs. of «excellence»**  
(first cycle vs. postgraduate)

## Challenge 2: set in place European articulation

### First stage: from scratch to chaos

- all types of aims, criteria, methods, agencies

### From chaos to cooperation and system (?)

- no supra agency, a horizontal network instead
  - no additional layer of QA bureaucracy
  - no standardisation of standards  
(yet, natural trend towards convergence)
- trustworthiness in Europe is essential
- credibility at home and abroad
  - agencies must be able to **convince** peers
- multiple accreditation (no monopoly)

## **Challenge 2:** **set in place European articulation**

### **Work in progress: Bologna process**

- **3 series of common standards of reference**
  - for internal QA within universities
  - for external QA/accreditation by an agency
  - for QA/Accreditation agencies themselves
- **Register + Register Committee**
- **a new ENQA , + ECA**

## **Challenge 2:** **set in place European articulation**

### **Work in progress: EU**

- **new 5-step Recommendation on QA in HE**
  - QA within HEI: quality radicates in universities
  - trustworthy agencies: criteria  
agency review
  - European Register: categories and structure ?  
control (stakeholders ?)
  - choice of agency by HEI  
(for strategic accreditation only ?)
  - acceptance of all agencies in Register by MS

## **Challenge 2:** **set in place European articulation**

### **Foreseeable consequences:**

- Bologna + Lisbon agenda coincide on QA
- progress in QA linked to progress on EQF
- differentiation EU25+, other countries will grow
- clusters/mergers of agencies
  - regional
  - linguistic
- more sectoral QA/accreditation at EU level
- European « quality seal » ?
  - for joint degrees
  - for external visibility (Erasmus Mundus)

## **Challenge 3:** **interface with other world regions**

- internal coherence of European response
  - treatment of imported courses ?  
→ avoid new source of chaos
- acceptance of European degrees in the world
  - treatment of exported courses ?
  - Bologna/EU countries' external cooperation
    - North America, Latin America
    - Mediterranean Area
    - Southeast Asia
  - much work to do together with CHEA

# Key documents

## 2005 Recommendation on QA

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004\\_0642en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004_0642en01.pdf)

## Standards / Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

<http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso>

## Internal quality culture in European universities

<http://www.eua.be>

## ECA project of mutual recognition of QA outcomes

<http://www.ecaconsortium.be>

## ENQA website

<http://www.enqa.net>

**THANK YOU**

**for your kind attention**