Sustaining Trust, Higher Education, Quality Assurance and the Political Environment

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One case study—four lessons

1. Accreditation in higher education is a good tool for building and sustaining trust for a multitude of constituencies and stakeholders.

2. An international university faces more challenges in this regard (accreditation and trust building).

3. Universities need a state around them, even international universities.

4. In undemocratic regimes, nothing may help to build trust, not even multiple accreditation.
Central European University

A university for Central Europe
... now going global
CEU: an unusual model

- Research intensive
- Mission driven (open society and democracy)
- Niche institution: graduate only; social sciences and humanities
CEU: an unusual model

- International by design; densely international (1500 students from 110 countries; staff from 40 countries)
- No national agenda
- Private not-for-profit; financial aid for all students (full or partial)
- Funding model:
  - 60% endowment
  - 15% EU
  - 15% fundraising
  - 5% tuition
  - 5% other.
CEU: an unusual model and experience

- An experiment in HE in Central and Eastern Europe (graduate school, international, mission driven, etc.)
- Highly ranked (in the first 50, 100 or 150 in most disciplines)
- “Uncomfortable” (idea) for nationalist and populist regimes.
- Forced to leave its home in Budapest.
CEU: one of the “most accredited” universities in the world

- Institutional accreditation
- Program accreditation in the US (MSCHE, NYSED), Hungary, Austria
- Professional accreditation (AMBA)

European accreditation?
Accreditation of HEIs: a tool for building trust for a multitude of constituencies and stakeholders

- **Students**: recognition of diplomas around the world
- **Staff**: recognition/acceptance; self-confidence; even pride.
- **Employers**
- **Government(s) and government agencies** (*e.g.*, visas)
- **Funding agencies** (*e.g.*, Erasmus, ERC)
- **Peers** (*"art 26" in Austria, accreditation in Hungary).
Multiple accreditation: an answer to challenging political environments

- Initial accreditation: why in the US for a Central European University?
- Why “European” accreditation and how to get it?

*Recent developments: possibility of accreditation for master’s programs in gender studies abolished by government decree in Hungary*
Political environment for HE in Central and Eastern Europe

- **Changing policy narratives** (away from knowledge society, Europeanisation, democratization).

- **Populism and nationalism**: impact on HE (e.g. Hungary: Constitution, regulations, funding, enrollment)

- **The European Higher Education Area still matters** – including in accreditation, internationalization

- **Universities are “pathologically pro-European”**; some governments are anti-European

- **Severe demographic trends**

- **Impact of economic crisis/recovery**
International universities face more challenges with regard to accreditation and in using accreditation as a tool for building trust. But it is a good tool.

Accreditation matters. It helps build and sustain trust.

All universities need a state in order to be able to function.

The State may decide to consider or disregard accreditation (in undemocratic regimes only?)
Public trust and support in difficult political times

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