



# The European Higher Education Area and quality assurance in that context

**HAQAA seminar, November 2016**

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1. A European Higher Education Area: the Bologna process
2. The European framework for quality assurance (QA)
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# The EHEA: the Bologna process

- Sorbonne Declaration (1998), Bologna Declaration (1999)
- Ministerial conferences
  - ✓ Yerevan, Armenia, May 2015
- Intergovernmental process, not submitted to any international treaty
- Bologna Follow-Up Group and working groups
  - ✓ Representatives from 48 countries
  - ✓ European Commission
  - ✓ “Consultative members” : EUA, ESU, ENQA, EURASHE, Education International, Business Europe
- Voluntary process for converging and coordinating reforms:
  - ✓ Joint decisions on reforms
  - ✓ Implementation at national AND institutional levels

## **The initial concept of the Bologna process: 10 action lines (1999-2010)**

- ✓ 3-cycle system: Bachelor, Master, Doctorates
- ✓ Recognition (of credits and degrees)
- ✓ European credit system (ECTS)
- ✓ European Dimension of QA: Standards and Guidelines for QA in Europe (ESG)
- ✓ Social Dimension: equity and inclusion
- ✓ Mobility of students (and staff)
- ✓ Internationalisation/Attractiveness/Bologna in a global setting

## ... And what happened after 2010?

2010: Launch of the European Higher Area

- ✓ Decision to continue the Process up to 2020
- ✓ Quality, social inclusiveness, internationalisation
- ✓ Implementation of structures and instruments as a condition for better learning
- ✓ “Unfinished business” – no new agenda

But some fatigue & frustration:

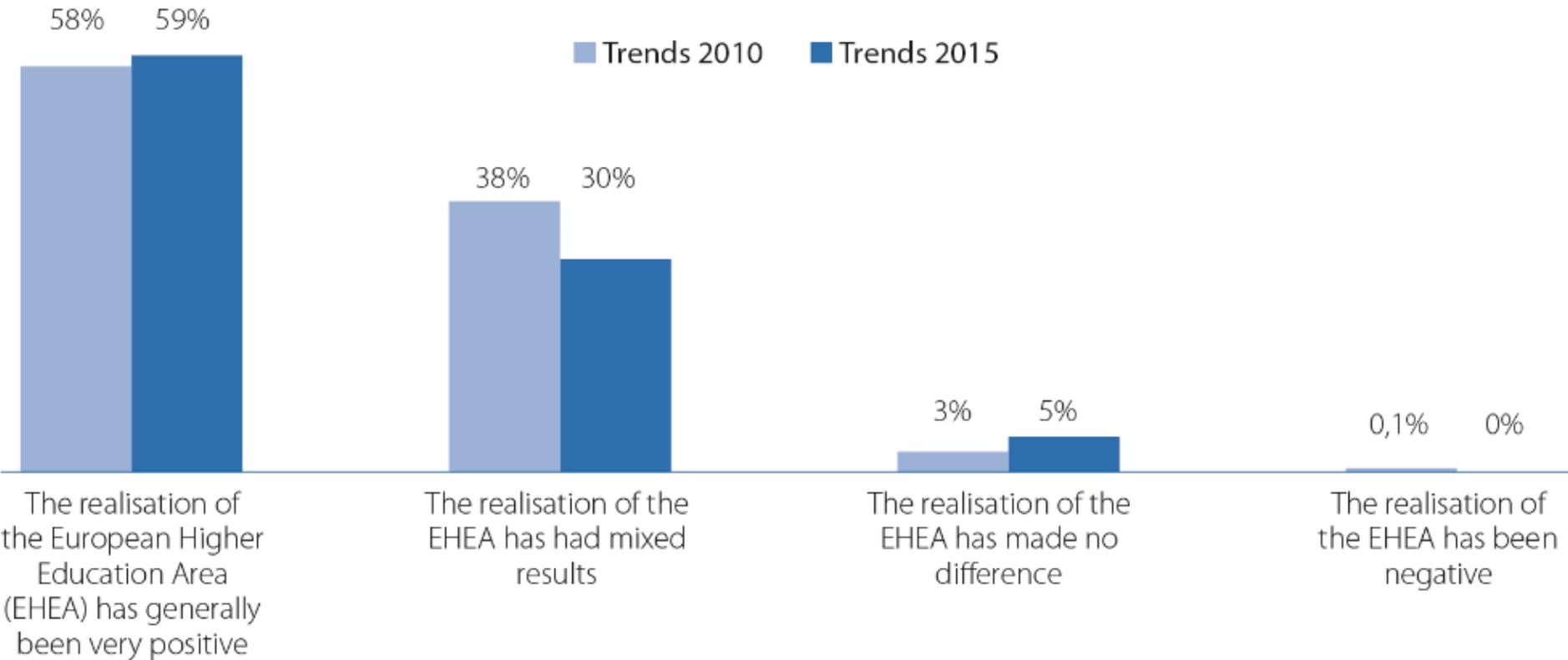
- ✓ Bureaucratic – detached from institutional and social realities
- ✓ Uneven implementation
- ✓ Core goals not reached yet (e.g. recognition and mobility)
- ✓ Lack of vision – back to the original goals

... And the landscape is changing: economic and political crisis, technological evolution...

# Bologna works

## Effect of the realisation of the EHEA

■ Trends 2010 ■ Trends 2015



# Latest Bologna developments in Yerevan

The Ministers defined 4 priorities:

- Enhancing the quality and relevance of teaching and learning
  - ✓ As main mission of the EHEA
  - ✓ Learning outcomes, student-centred learning
  - ✓ Innovation of learning, ICT, teaching enhancement...
- Fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives
- Making HE systems more inclusive:
  - ✓ Peaceful exchange and collaboration among members
  - ✓ Ability of HE to mediate, overcome, bypass conflicts
  - ✓ Social inclusiveness
- Implementing agreed structural measures: Degree system, qualification frameworks, etc.
  - ✓ Pressure on implementation, better information base
  - ✓ Identification of implementation gaps and reasons

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3. Current challenges and discussions

# The European framework for QA: why discussing QA?

QA = one of the most discussed topics at European and global level

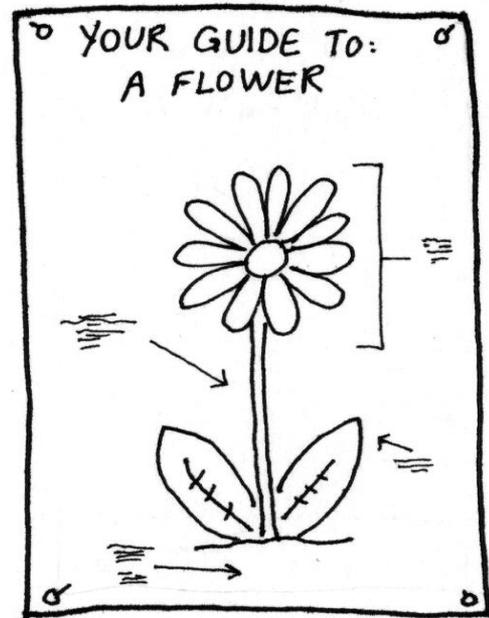
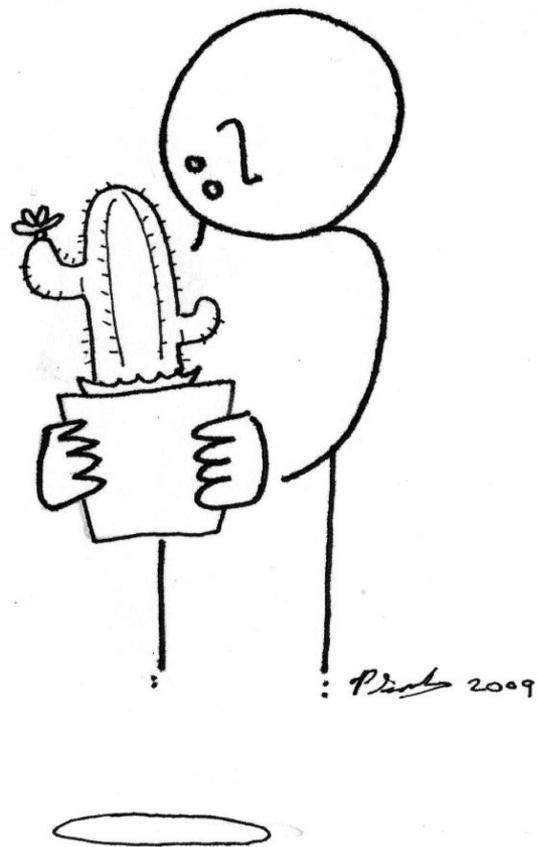
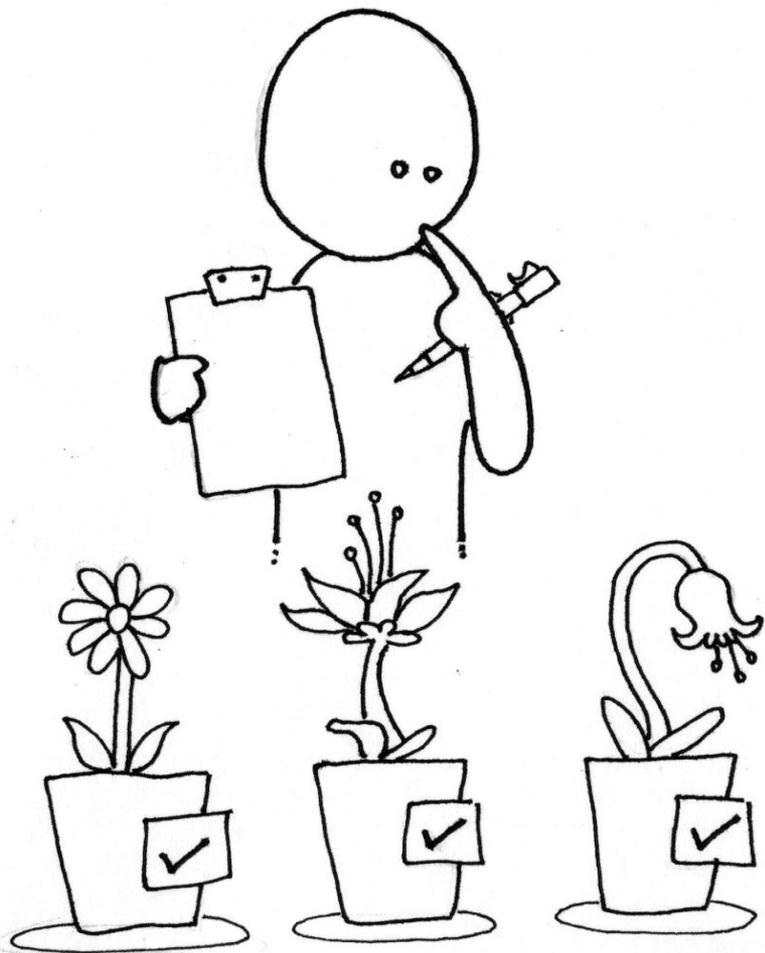
- In a context of increased internationalisation:
  - ✓ Mobility and diploma recognition
  - ✓ Competition and cooperation between HEIs
  - ✓ Rankings
- National requirements for increased transparency and accountability, due to:
  - ✓ Increased costs for higher education and research
  - ✓ Massification of HE, and in some countries, new types of HEIs (private, for-profit, off-shore...)
  - ✓ Increased demands to provide more/clearer information to various stakeholders
  - ✓ Increased institutional autonomy

# The European framework for quality assurance

- 2003: The Berlin Communiqué
  - ✓ stated that *“consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself”*
  - ✓ Invited ENQA to develop – in co-operation with other stakeholders – standards and procedures for quality assurance
- 2005: European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) adopted
  - ✓ Proposed by the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE)
- 2008: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- 2015: Revised version of ESG adopted in Yerevan
  - ✓ Proposed by the E4 Group, EQAR, BUSINESS EUROPE and Education International

## The European framework for QA: the context

- Variety of approaches when creating national quality assurance systems:
    - ✓ (programme or institutional) accreditation
    - ✓ Evaluations
    - ✓ Audits
    - ✓ “Yes/No” approach, enhancement-led, peer-review...
  - Level of institutional autonomy in creating internal QA systems varies.
  - Countries and also institutions are in different phases in implementing institutional as well as national QA systems.
- ESG provide framework for shared objectives and sharing good practice within EHEA: creating a **common understanding**



Prinky 2009

## **EUA's policy position on QA**

- Main responsibility for QA lies with the institutions
- Context sensitive (institutional and disciplinary diversity)
- Fitness for purpose approach
- Enhancement oriented
- Internal and external evaluations or QA processes should be complementary
- Transparency and co-operation

# QA and qualifications frameworks

- European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008): EU tool for communication and comparison between HE systems and degrees
  - To enhance mobility and lifelong learning
  - To make national qualifications more readable
- 8 levels, from compulsory education, described as knowledge, skills and competences.
- Learning outcomes approach: what knowledge, skills and competences the learner has acquired by the end of the learning process.
- National qualification frameworks: how NQ levels relate to EQF

# QA and qualifications frameworks

In the Bologna Process/EHEA:

- Framework for qualifications in the EHEA (2005): corresponding levels with EQF levels 6-7-8 for B-M-D
- Until 2015, QFs and QA developed in parallel but not amalgamated way
- ESG 2015: Programme qualifications should refer to the NQF

ESG 1.2: *“Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and **refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.** »*

- Evolution: some QA agencies now have NQFs into tasks

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## Some conclusions

- Bologna might sound outdated but it is still the platform for discussing and piloting further developments in the EHEA.
- QA = a Bologna success story
  - ✓ Stakeholders took charge and ownership of the reference document at EHEA level
  - ✓ Addressed one of the most discussed topics in HE
- EHEA: diversity and need of a common framework
  - ✓ ESG = framework responding to both
  - ✓ National use, implementation and interpretation: impact of the context
- Aim:
  - ✓ Improved quality levels in HE, not mere compliance with ESG
  - ✓ Development of a **quality culture**

**Thank you for your attention!**

**Do you have questions?**

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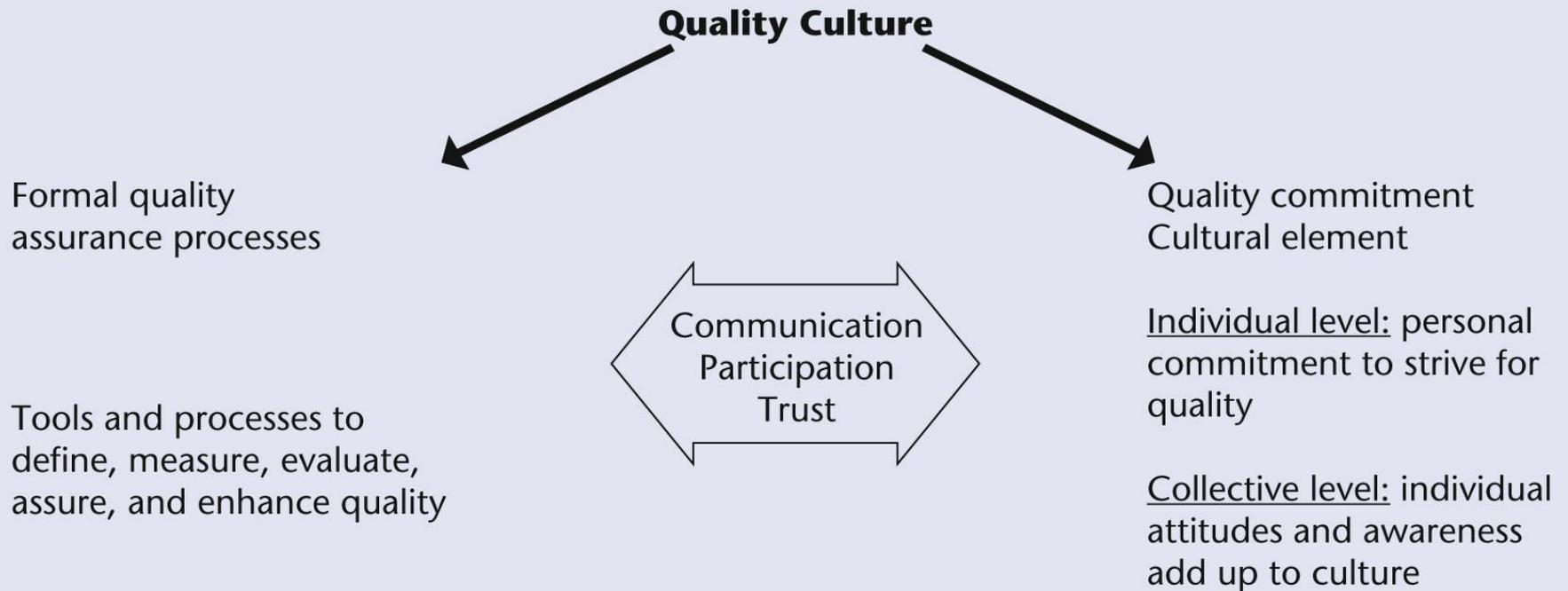
The cartoon is from Patrick Sanders,

<http://www.patricksanders.co.uk/>

(4<sup>th</sup> European Quality Assuran Forum, Copenhagen, 2009)

# Quality assurance / Quality culture

**Figure 3: Elements of quality culture (adapted from EUA 2006: 20 and EUA 2005: 18)**



EQF Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competence	FQ EHEA
6	<p>Advanced knowledge of a field of work/study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles</p>	<p>Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work/study</p>	<p>Manage complex technical/professional activities/projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work/study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</p>	<p>= LO of 1st Bologna cycle (Bachelor)</p>
7	<p>Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</p> <p>Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>	<p>Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>	<p>= LO of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bologna cycle (Master)</p>