Impact of EQA on academic recognition (results from the ENQA WG on recognition)

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Internationalization and mobility

- International mobility (particularly student mobility) is a core component of internationalisation.

- Low compared to EHEA student population

- Main obstacles to mobility (Bologna Implementation reports, 2012 and 2015): lack of funding, language barriers, lack of information and encouragement, **recognition of qualifications and credits gained abroad**

Recognition poses significant challenges

- After two decades of existence of the LRC, still **problems with implementation** (*Bologna Process Implementation Report, 2015*)

- Recognition is largely within the **hands of HEIs**.

- **Multiplicity of autonomous actors** (not necessarily operate according to LRC principles)

- Recognition processes are **complex and highly diverse** (FAIR project)

What can the QA community do about it? ESG 1.4

Standard:

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Guidelines

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on:

- *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;*
- *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.*
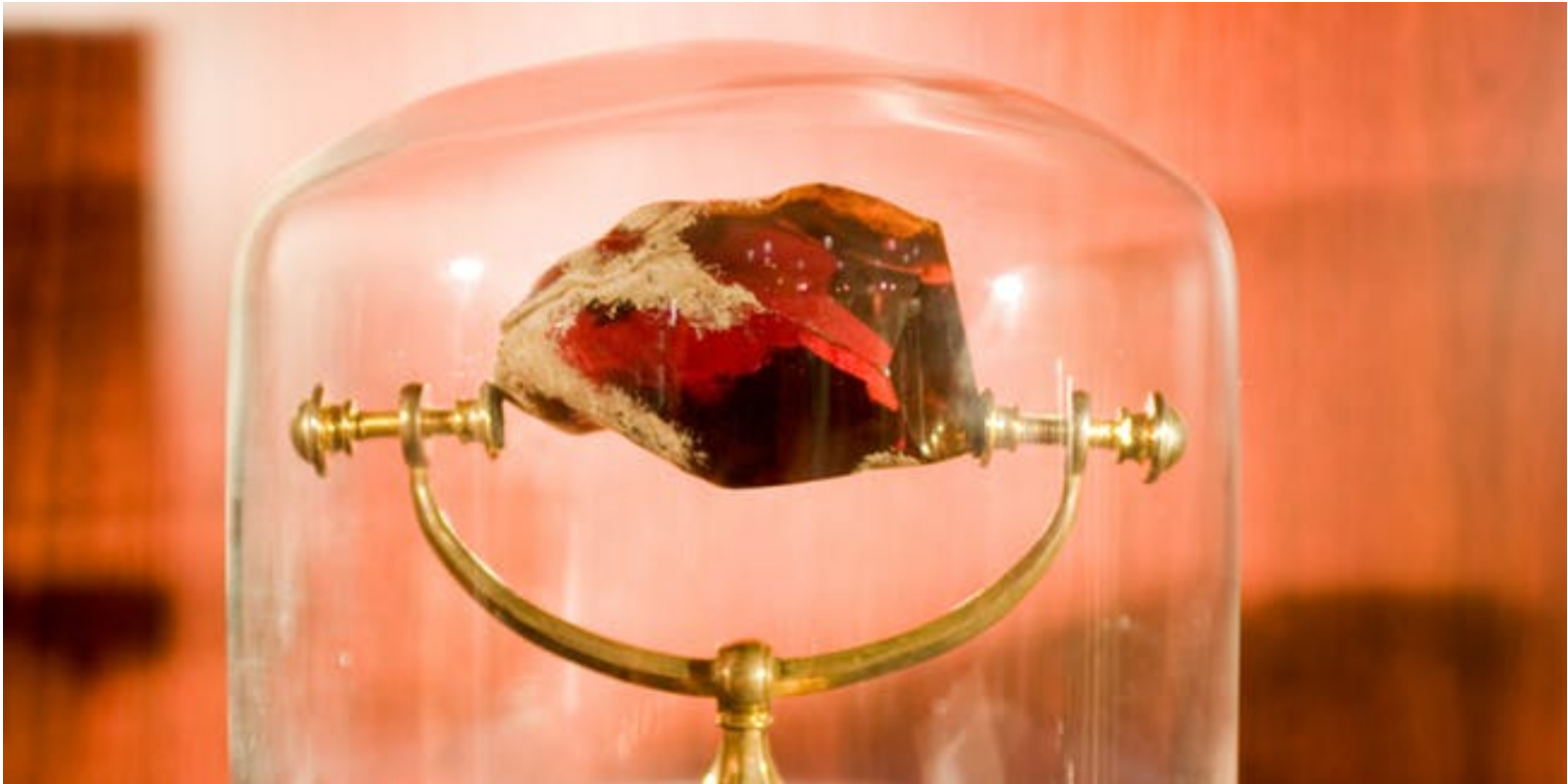
EQA as the "philosopher's stone" for recognition?

Is the EQA community in a position to live up to these expectations?

What are the current practices of QAA regarding ESG 1.4?

Are there any specific difficulties/challenges?

ENQA WORKING GROUP VII ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION. OBJECTIVES

"**Mapping current practices** on external quality assurance of academic recognition among ENQA agencies, **identifying challenges and best practices**, and developing strategies to **disseminate** the group's research"

Meeting in Madrid (ANECA), 16 of January 2017

ENQA WORKING GROUP VII ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION

- Self-funded by members (with support and contribution by ENQA)
- Working from July 2015 to June 2017
- **Report published** at ENQA webpage in September 2017

Members of the working group:
Teresa Sánchez Chaparro, **CTI, France** (chair)
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Under the coordination of **Lindsey Kerber (ENQA)**

Survey results

QAA Typology.Three groups

**No explicit focus/
In transition**

Indirect focus

**Explicit focus
on EQA of
recognition**

65%

12%

23%

No explicit focus/ in transition

No explicit criteria covering institutional recognition practices (implicit under a general section: "admissions", "selection")

Institutional recognition practices are **not central** when conducting their EQA processes:
- No explicit reference to the LRC or associated tools are made in their guidelines/documents.
- Not generally part of the discussion during the on-site visit
- Not explicitly covered in the reports.

1/3 in transition

65%

2/3 do not plan to change the way they handle recognition processes in the medium term

Indirect focus (outcomes)

Show a strong focus on controlling the **outcomes** of the admission or mobility processes. For some "a growing concern".

"detect and eliminate from the system bad practices regarding academic recognition (admission), either inappropriately restrictive or inappropriately lenient".

Focus on the matter **"only if problems are detected"** (risk-based approach)

Recognition process not considered independently of admissions/mobility (general organisation of the recognition process within the institution, the use of the EAR tools and other information resources, the transparency of the process, and the main LRC principles…)

12%

Explicit focus on EQA of recognition

Show good alignment with the aspects that should be covered in their EQA processes according to ESG 1.4.

More **systematic coverage** of institutional practices and explicitly refer to the LRC principles and their associated tools.

Some common **features:**

- **Awareness at the system level** (Germany)
- Some agencies under same organization than **ENIC-NARIC body**
- **High internationalization** of HE sector and focus on QF

23%

Explicit focus on EQA of recognition

Potential good practices, BUT challenges and open questions:

"Even though institutions might formally have "regulations" or IQA procedures covering the LRC principles, **interpretation and proper use in practice are in fact challenging** to the practitioners of these regulations" (difficulties for interpretation, multiplicity of actors and services involved, recognition often not conceptualized as a process different from admissions/selection)

23%

Explicit focus on EQA of recognition

"Recognition is a separate topic and criterion, requiring specific knowledge. **It is really a challenge how to best address recognition matters via external quality assurance** procedures, since recognition is a vast issue, and EQA are very condensed in time, a challenge of integration."

23%

A brave new world…

Conclusions

- Lack of **awareness** of an important part of the QA community

- Lack of **capacity**:
  - Strategy: What is the best approach? (institutional, programme; control or enhancement-oriented; systematic or risk-based)
  - Knowledge and information: Principles of LRC; foreign qualifications (ENIC-NARICs)
  - Resources (time, effort)

Concluding remarks

Key element: dialogue and collaboration among three communities: HEIs, QA agencies and ENIC-NARICs (QA agencies <u>only one</u> among many drivers of change)

HEIs

Distribution of roles?
Interactions?

Dialogue

ENIC-NARICs

QAAs
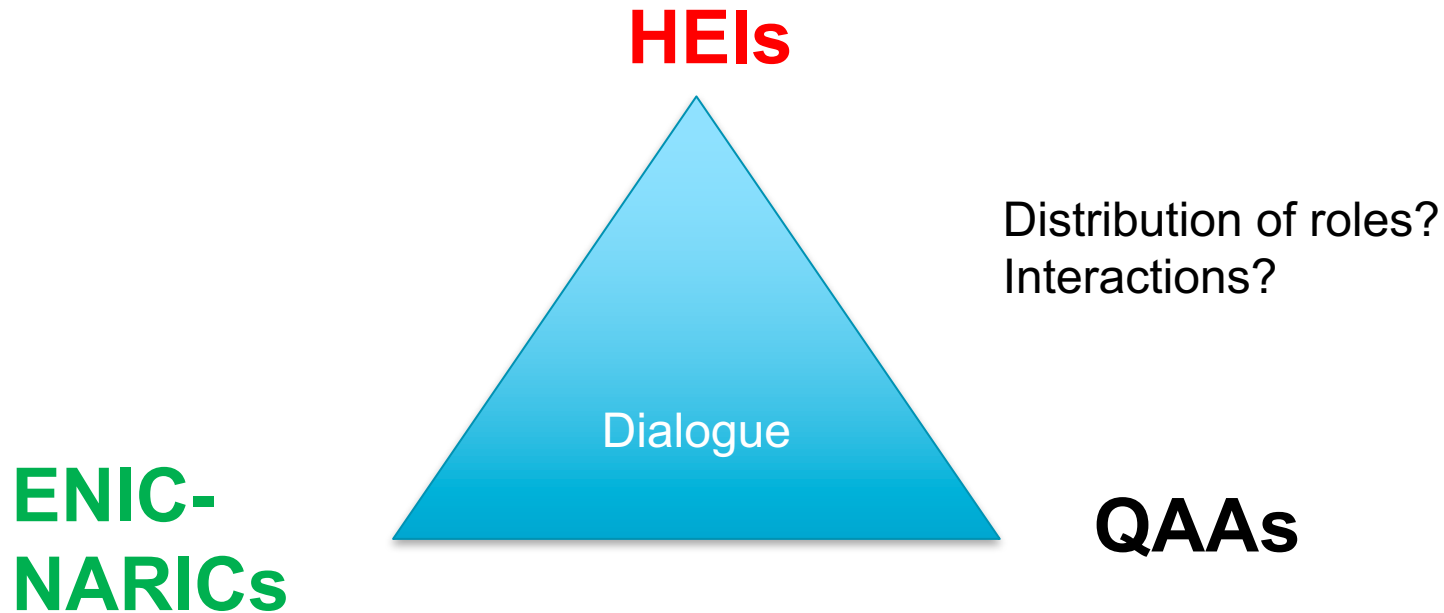
LIREQA Erasmus + initiative (Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance): QA, HEI and ENIC-NARIC communities working together towards the preparation of IQA and EQA guidelines for recognition.

HEIs

Implement effective and efficient recognition procedures that are part of their IQA systems

Liase with ENIC-NARICs for information and capacity

Build community of practice

ENIC-NARICs

Store and facilitate information

Proactively design services addressed to HEIs

Assist QAAs to design/implement assessment processes

QAAs

Set expectations and control/assess procedures (probably incremental approach)

Thematic analysis (initial diagnosis)

Liase with ENIC-NARICs for information and capacity

Help ENIC-NARICs increase notoriety/ reach institutions

Awareness
Dissemination

ENQA

Discussion

Thank you!