Stakeholder involvement in QA practices: A European overview

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Higher education stakeholders in EHEA

- **Internal and external** stakeholders: teachers, students, administrative staff – employers, businesses, public sector...
- In EHEA policy making and the Bologna Process:
  - Higher education institutions: EUA and EURASHE
  - Students: ESU
  - Quality Assurance Agencies: ENQA
→ The "E4"

- Business Europe, Education International (teachers)
- Stakeholder involvement in the EHEA is well consolidated overall

Bologna Process communiques

Yerevan 2015:

"...we will actively **involve students**, as full members of the academic community, **as well as other stakeholders**, in **curriculum design and in quality assurance"**

"Full and coherent implementation of agreed reforms at the national level **requires shared ownership and commitment** by policy makers and academic communities and **stronger involvement of stakeholders**"

Paris 2018:

"Fulfilling our commitments depends on the **concerted efforts of national policy-makers, public authorities, institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders** as well as coordination at EHEA level".

Stakeholder involvement and the ESG

- Standard 1.1 – "Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance (...). **Internal stakeholders** should develop and implement this policy (...) while involving **external stakeholders**."

- Standard 2.2 – "External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it (...). **Stakeholders should be involved** in its design and continuous improvement".

- Standard 3.1 – "(...) Agencies should ensure the **involvement of stakeholders** in their governance and work."

- In addition, reference to stakeholders and their involvement in the guidelines of most standards.

→ A solid and accepted basis – and a requirement! – for QA to involve stakeholders **at all levels**, and for QA to work for stakeholders and their needs and expectations

Specific role of stakeholders in the EHEA

- Stakeholders are **consultative members** of the Bologna Process

- E4 + Education International + Business Europe + EQAR co-authored the ESG 2015 (consultation of and approval by the ministries)

- Stakeholder organisations (E4) founded EQAR, and manage it; stakeholders nominate members to the EQAR Register Committee (NOT the governments!)

Stakeholders Involvement: challenges

- *Stakeholders* are part of the HE process and have to participate in HE in a regular and regulated way
- Their role depends on the national context:
  - Legal framework,
  - Academic tradition,
  - HE dynamics (public/private balance, role played by the government, professional bodies…)
- Need to structure the relationships among all of them
- QAAs as "catalisers": roles clearly defined (respecting the division of labour)
- Concept of stakeholders <u>co-responsibility</u> in the outcome of QA of HE

Stakeholders Involvement: challenges

Stakeholders participation in QA practices in the QAAs has a big impact in the binomial:

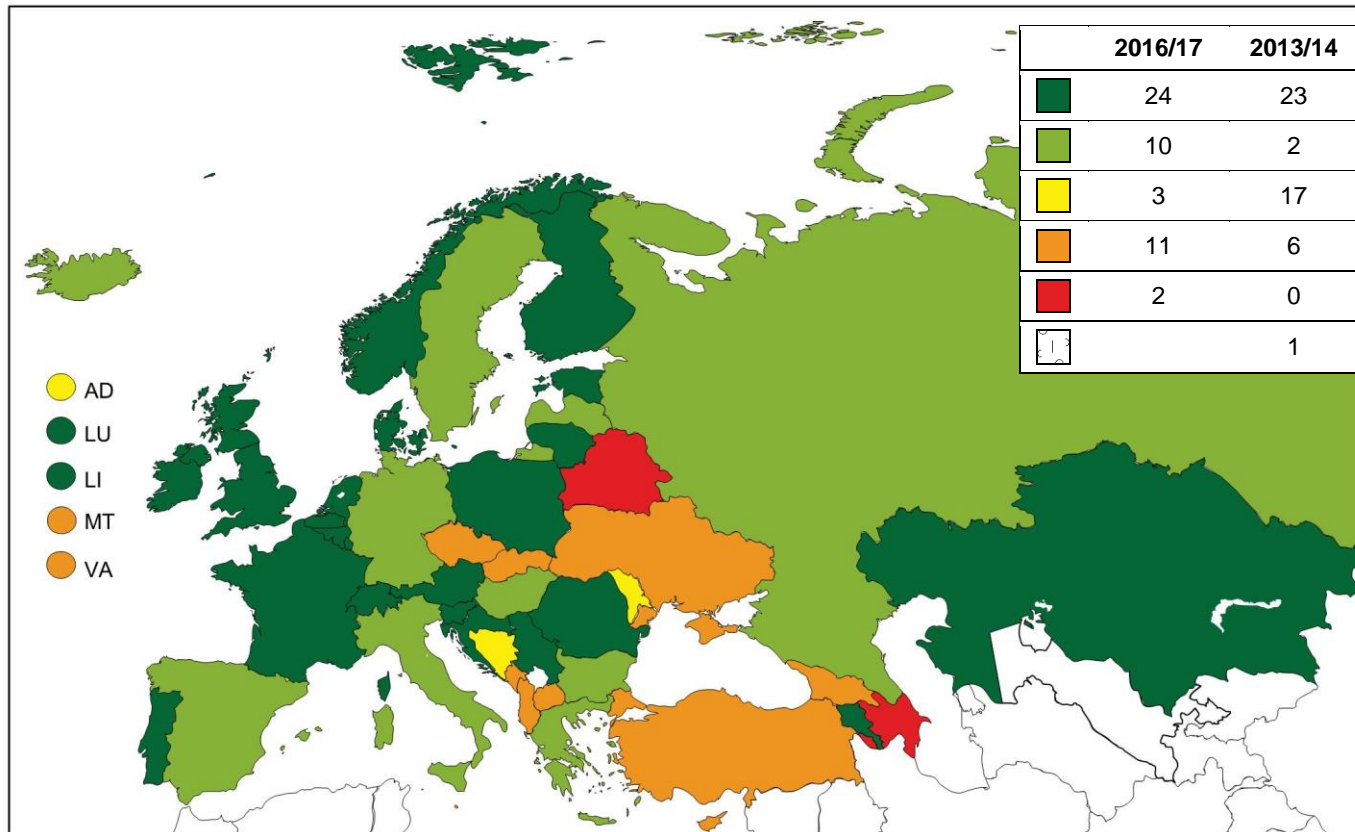**Transparency + accountability (of the QAA)**

Stakeholders participation in the QA policy results in :

Co-responsability and legitimacy of the process (and outcomes) of the QAA and the HE system

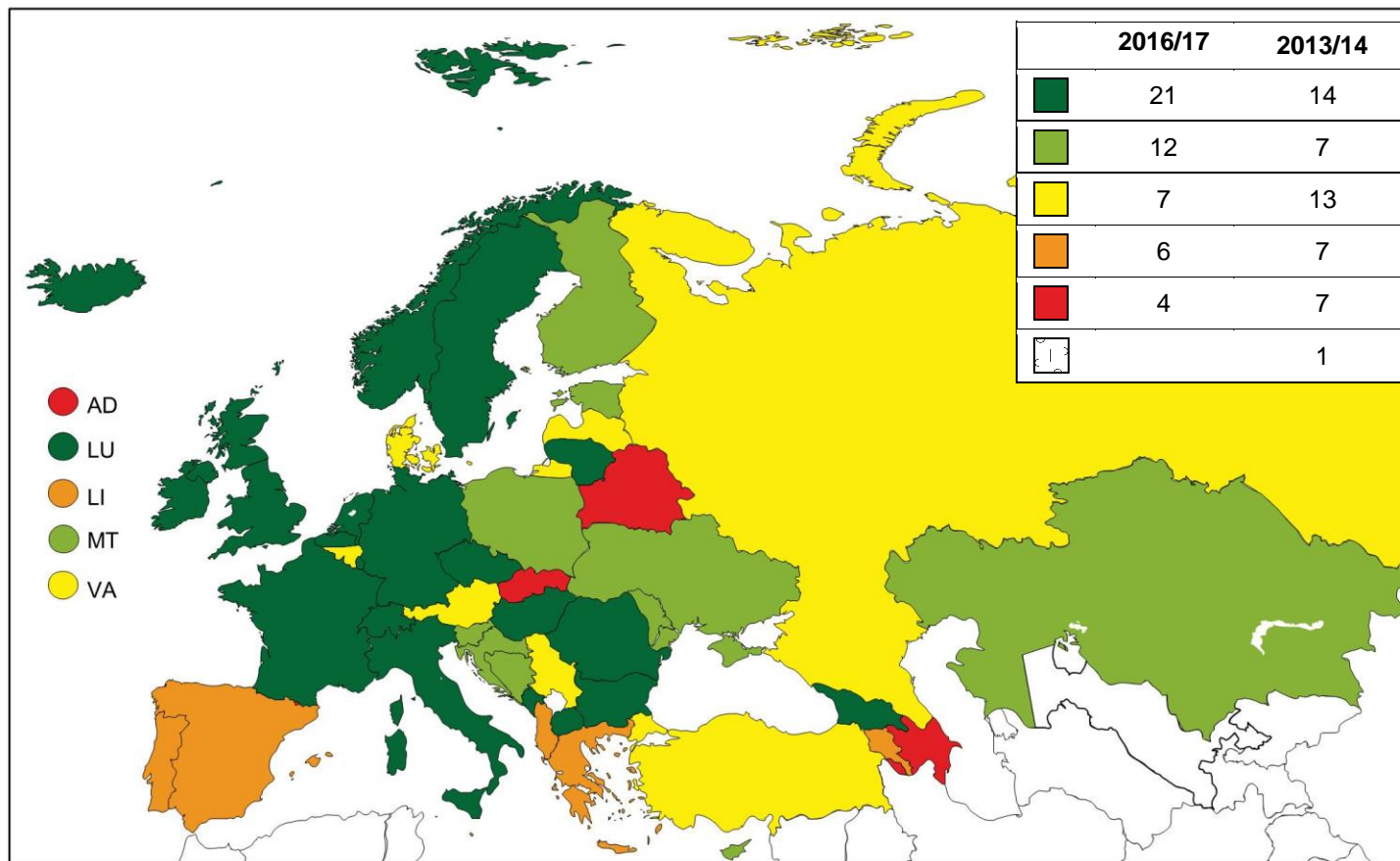# Stage of development of QA system

	2016/17	2013/14
	24	23
	10	2
	3	17
	11	6
	2	0
		1

AD
LU
LI
MT
VA

Student participation in QA

Stakeholder involvement in QA practices

Students: a second stage?

- Students representatives a successful model:
  - Active participation in EQA processes
  - Good practices identified throughout Europe
  - Creation of pools of students for QA processes
  - Is that enough? Is there room for improvement?
- One size fits all possible QA practices?
  - Specific profiles for specialised processes? (postgraduate, doctoral, research-oriented evaluations)

Stakeholder Involvement on QA practices

Students: a second stage?

- Is there life (involvement) beyond graduation?

    – Alumni: a possible *character* to complement the model

    – An intermediate category between student and academic staff and professional practitioner

    – Appropriate for particular contexts: research, doctoral, institutional?

    – Is there any good practices? (France, etc.)

Stakeholder Involvement on QA practices – academics

Academic staff: more than peers

- Is there a policy for involving the academic staff in QA processes internal and externally?
  - Expanding the quality assurance culture
  - How can we go beyond the *true believers*?

- Good practices of mobilising academic staff beyond peer reviews and evaluation committees. Case studies at the agency/national level.

- Education International:
  - Possible ways to involve academic staff representatives in QA

Stakeholder Involvement on QA practices - employers

ENQA

- Identification of good practices at the agency/national level
  - Members of the evaluation panels
  - Other involvements

- Employers as actors in the HE sector: public and/or private
  - Taking part at the programme design level: employability
  - Part of the QF consultant groups

- Professional bodies as stakeholders vs QA practitioners

  - Specialised agencies

ENQA WG survey in 2012-2015 - objectives

- To examine the scope and nature of stakeholder participation in QA

- To identify the various stakeholders in each country and QAA

- To make recommendations to the Board of ENQA and QAAs members for improvement

- Significance of making a contextualised approach in each country

- Results: uneven response in number of stakeholders and depending on the country. In some cases "very expressive silences"

Key patters by stakeholder groups

HEIs

- Very engaged with QAAs and within their structures (executive and advisory boards, etc.)

- Widely involved in QA process (accreditation, audits, bot internal as external)

Academic staff

- Involved but on an individual level (exert in panels) both in internal and external QA procedures

- There is a lack of involvement beyond the group of "true believers"

Key patters by stakeholder groups

Students

- Joined as "experts" in both internal and external

- Members of the board and advisory bodies

- Partners in the development of evaluation procedures

- Developing pools of experts and providing with training

- Definition of a strategy for the involvement of students: training, workshops, social media, etc.

Key patters by stakeholder groups

Labour market

- Low participation in most of the QAAs: need to increase it and give a context

- Need to distinguish between activities for employers associations and professional associations

- Collaborate with discipline/professional accreditors (Quality Labels in Europe)

Key patters by stakeholder groups

Broader audience

- Need to broaden the definiton of stakeholder beyond those identified currently in the EHEA

- Need to adapt the messages sent by the QAAs to different audiences (social media)

- Need to make a contextual analysis in each country.

Thank you!