

# **IBAR's Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

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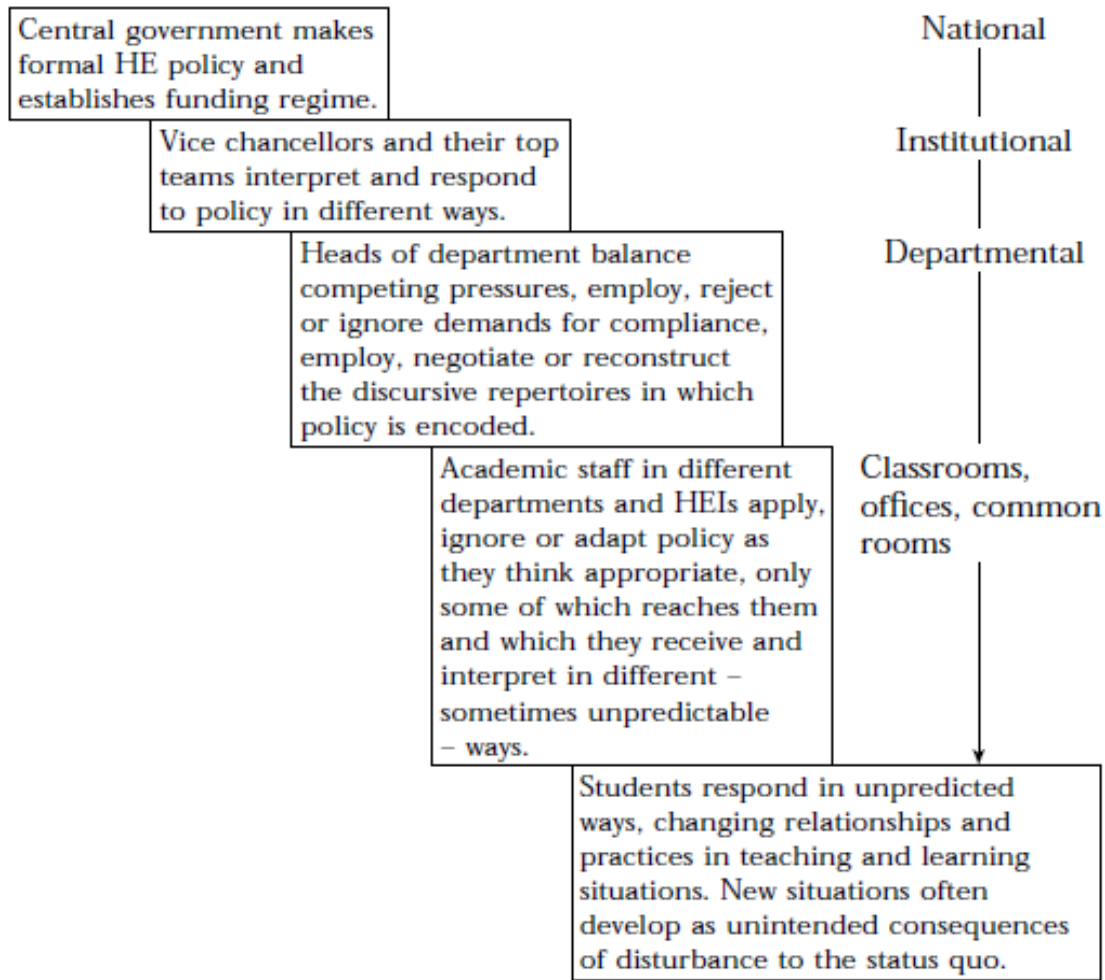
# IBAR Project outline

- IBAR: ‘Identifying Barriers in Promoting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level’
  - EU-LLP funded research project, 2011-2013
- Goals
  - Identify barriers [and drivers/enablers!] to ESG implementation at institutional level
  - Give relevant recommendations for modification of ESG Part 1
  - Investigate impact of ESG on relationship 2ary – 3ary education

# Studying implementation of ESG Concepts and theories

- Translation, not implementation
  - ESG and other norms must be interpreted locally
    - National, institutional, programme levels
  - Interpretation takes place in an existing institutional framework
    - Behavioural logics
      - Rational motivations
      - Social motivations
    - Path dependencies
  - East to West
    - Institutional differences
    - Resource levels
- Instrument theory
  - Choice of instruments influences implementation (sanctions vs. incentives vs. information)
  - Focus on policy as implemented, not as intended

# Implementation staircase



*Adopted from Trowler*



Bologna Process actors

Academic side | Administrative side



National authorities



Higher Education institution

Academic side | Administrative side



Stakeholders  
:  
Students  
Alumni  
2ary education  
Employers  
Professions  
etc.



Department / study programme

Academic side | Administrative side

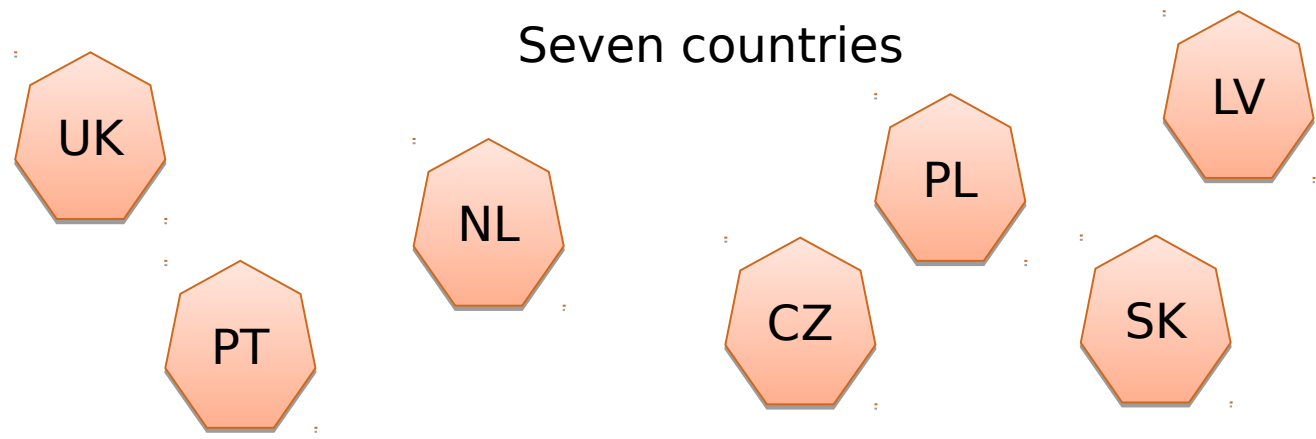


Academic community

barriers  
:  
1...5 = external  
|  
a...b = internal

# Methodology

## Sampling of 28 higher education institutions



Selection criteria:  
institutional size, profile

# Methodology within each work package

- Common research questions
  - Drafted by coordinating team per WP
- Agreed main lines for study
  - Including major data sources
  - But freedom to adapt to national and local circumstances
- Interviews + documentary analysis
  - Over 500 interviews in total
  - We did not count the documents ;-)
- National team task
  - Write case study reports per institution
  - Collate case studies into national report
- Coordinating team of WP task
  - Collate national reports into comparative report
- Together: report + book + articles + presentations

# Synthesis

- Collected reports: 52 barriers, 28 good practices
  - Thin line between barrier and driver: much depends on the context
- Is translation a good or a bad thing?
  - National, organisational, disciplinary, path dependencies and contingencies
- Tensions: good or bad?
- Sense-making
  - Crucial: context, institutional logics and organisational dynamics
- ESG are primarily process-led but many of the findings highlight the significance of context
- We studied only a fraction of all contexts: 28 higher education institutions out of 4000+
- How do ESG engage teachers and students?



# Barrier or driver?

- Depends on context
- Depends on writing up
  - A barrier can be turned into a driver
  - And into a (contextual) recommendation

# Institutional barriers and drivers

## Decision-making & governance

- Variety of top-down and hybrid decision-making cultures
  - Maintain alignment between leadership and shop-floor understanding of quality education
    - Quality culture?
  - Maintain balance short- / long-term
    - Risk of ‘selling out’ education as a (managerial) solution to economic crisis
  - Balance academic and administrative accountability demands
- Leadership should know about ESG
- Stakeholders
  - Include non-traditional students (adult, part-time, physically handicapped) in institutional decision-making bodies
  - Ensure variety of external stakeholders
    - ‘East’: focus on fellow-academics, government
    - ‘West’: focus on business world

# Institutional barriers and drivers Education and quality assurance

- Innovate curriculum and examination
  - Focus on learning outcomes
- Invest in quality assurance
  - Differences in maturity of institutional quality cultures (west – east)
- Create incentives for stakeholders to take active part in QA decision-making, curriculum reform, etc.
  - Students + external stakeholders
  - Feedback on use of input into QA is an incentive

# Institutional barriers and drivers

## Secondary education

- Create links with 'feeder' schools
- Consider what kinds of information could help to effectively enhance activities relating to student transition
  - e.g. benchmarking, informal inter-institutional talks, bespoke first year programmes

# National barriers and drivers ESG implementation

- Deploy instruments to implement ESG
  - Funding
  - Information
    - Include ESG in promotion of Bologna Process
  - Align staff policy with ESG policy
    - Appointment, development, promotion
  - Social dimension / widening access
    - Develop policy: Access & Progression & Completion
    - Collect information about A & P & C of 'minorities'
- Monitor implementation of ESG/quality assurance policies by higher education institutions
  - Share effective practices
  - Leave room for higher education institutions to do more than required
    - 'low fidelity' implementation might be best
- Include private higher education
  - With adapted regulation/policies

# National barriers and drivers

## Adjacent policies

- Concern for transition secondary – higher education differs across countries
- Frequent policy changes create uncertainty in higher education institutions and unwillingness to invest in ESG implementation
  - Raise awareness of side-effects of other policies
    - Tuition fees
    - Budget cuts
    - Visa policy, etc.

# European-level barriers and drivers

- Create common understanding of key concepts
  - learning outcomes, access, widening participation, external stakeholders, etc.
- Support sharing of effective practices in quality enhancement in line with ESG
- Europe-wide work to consider implementation of NQFs from secondary to higher education and their relationship to curriculum delivery models

# Upshot

- Relatively weak drivers in terms of European and national qualification requirements on teaching staff
- Ineffectual institutional drivers in terms of central strategies and policies for teaching quality improvement
  - poor professional development requirements and opportunities
  - lack of student feedback as a quality driver
- Ineffectual translation of ESG statements into national quality assurance policy
- Insufficient resourcing by national level
- ‘Implementation staircase’ gives some stakeholders discretionary power to undermine initiatives
  - Not all translation/interpretation is benign



# Further research ...

- ... could explore what sorts of actions would be helpful to European institutions
  - seek deeper insights into institutional context and practice
  - outline an interpretive nexus, or ‘middle territory’, where top down and bottom up perspectives and initiatives could fruitfully create action to enhance education quality in line with ESG

# Thank you!

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