

Governing quality in European Higher Education: a comparison of three member states.



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The IBAR project is funded by the European Commission under the EACEA programme to identify barriers in promoting the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) at institutional level.

The research is being undertaken from a sample of 28 higher education institutions in 7 European countries.



Identifying barriers in promoting European Standards
and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at institutional level

Project IBAR

About the project

Assuring quality of teaching and learning activities is the quintessential task that higher education institutions must face in an increasingly competitive national and international environment. Adoption of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) in 2005 has added new momentum to research in the quality assurance policy domain.

So far, the corresponding research has centred on national (quality assurance agencies), not institutional level, and lacked the outreach to secondary education as well as the theoretical base. The project aims to fill in this gap in theoretical and empirical knowledge and to identify barriers to the ESG Part 1 implementation, and, based on that, to provide recommendations to modification of this document. The research will be done on a sample of 28 HEIs in 7 European countries (CZ, UK, LV, PT, PL, SK, NL).

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Project Partners



- **CZ** CHES Centre for Higher Education Studies, Prague
- **UK** CAP Centre for Academic Practice, Durham University
- **LV** University of Latvia
- **PT** CIPES Center for Research in Higher Education Policies
- **NL** CHEPS Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente
- **PL** Warsaw School of Economics
- **SL** Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra

ESG



- Berlin Communiqué 19 September 2003
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
- ESG Part 1 - European Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

ESG Part 1



- 1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- 1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- 1.3 Assessment of students
- 1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff
- 1.5 Learning resources and student support
- 1.6 Information systems
- 1.7 Public Information

Work Packages

WP 5 Internal Quality Assurance Systems (LV)

WP 6 Quality and Access (UK)

WP 7 Quality and Student Assessment (CZ)

WP 8 Quality and Management/Governance (PT)

WP 9 Stakeholders and Quality (NL)

WP 10 Quality and Teaching Staff (PL)

WP 11 Quality and Information (SK)

WP 12 Quality and Secondary Education (UK & CZ)

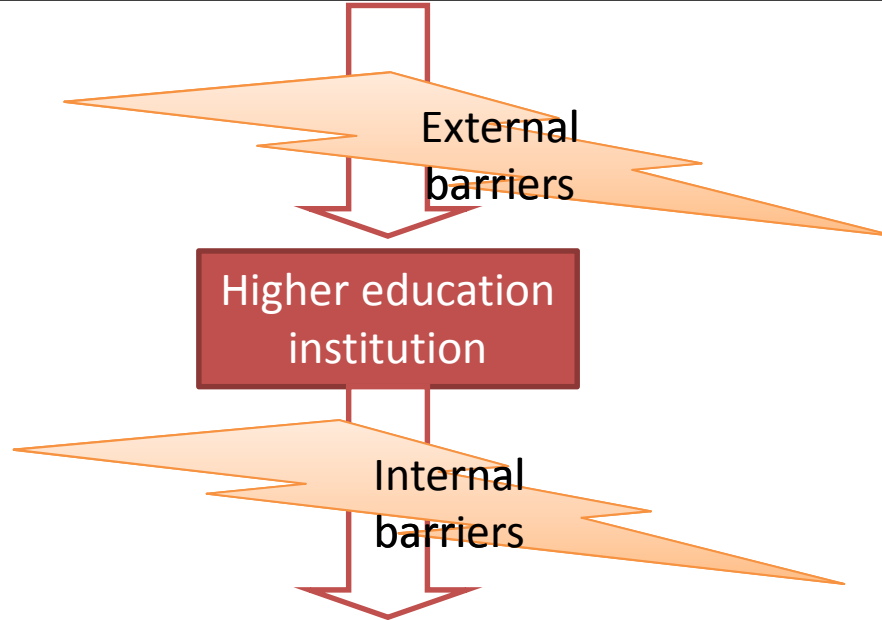
Barriers to Implementation



Context



(Westerhuiden 2011)

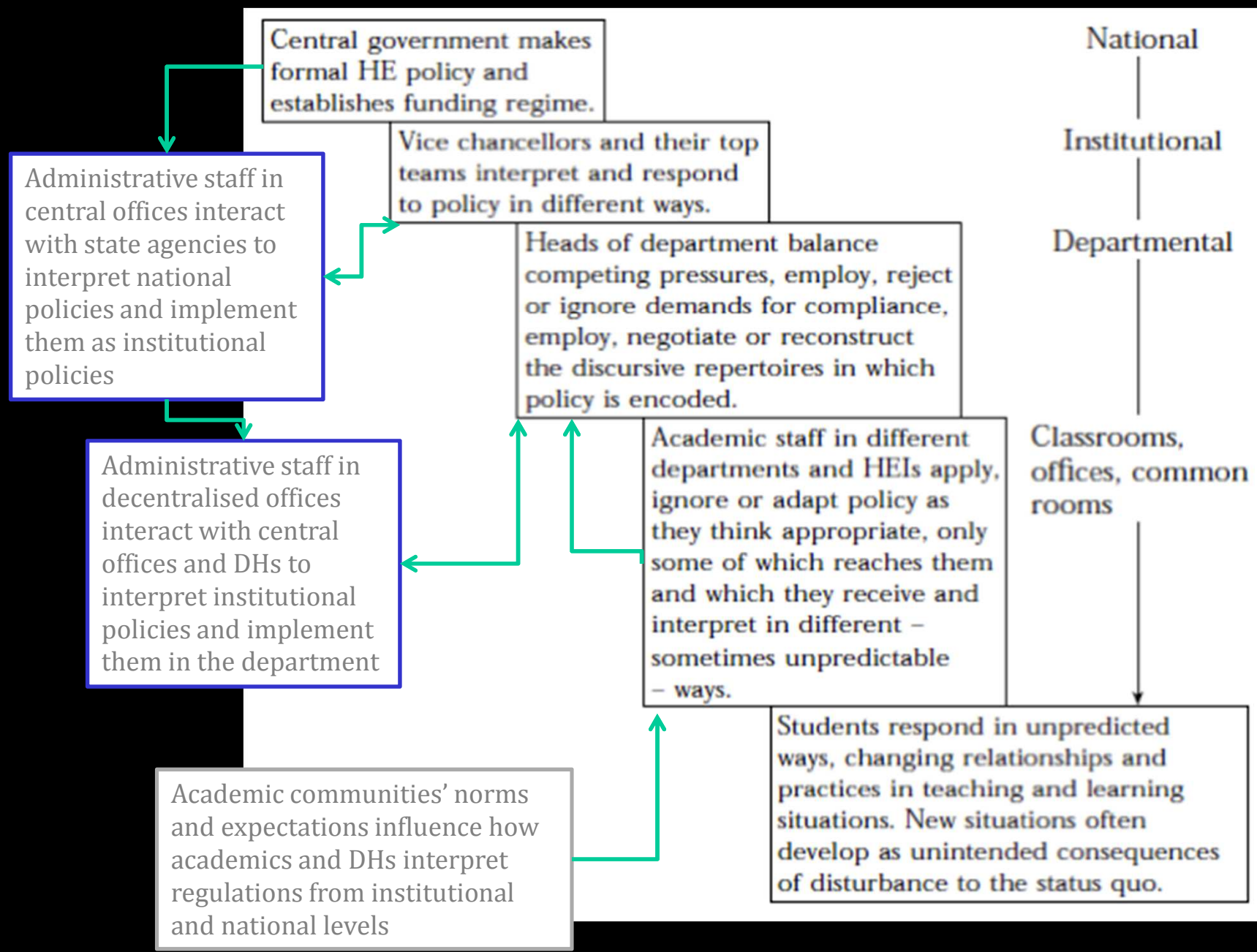


Education quality



Conceptual Lenses

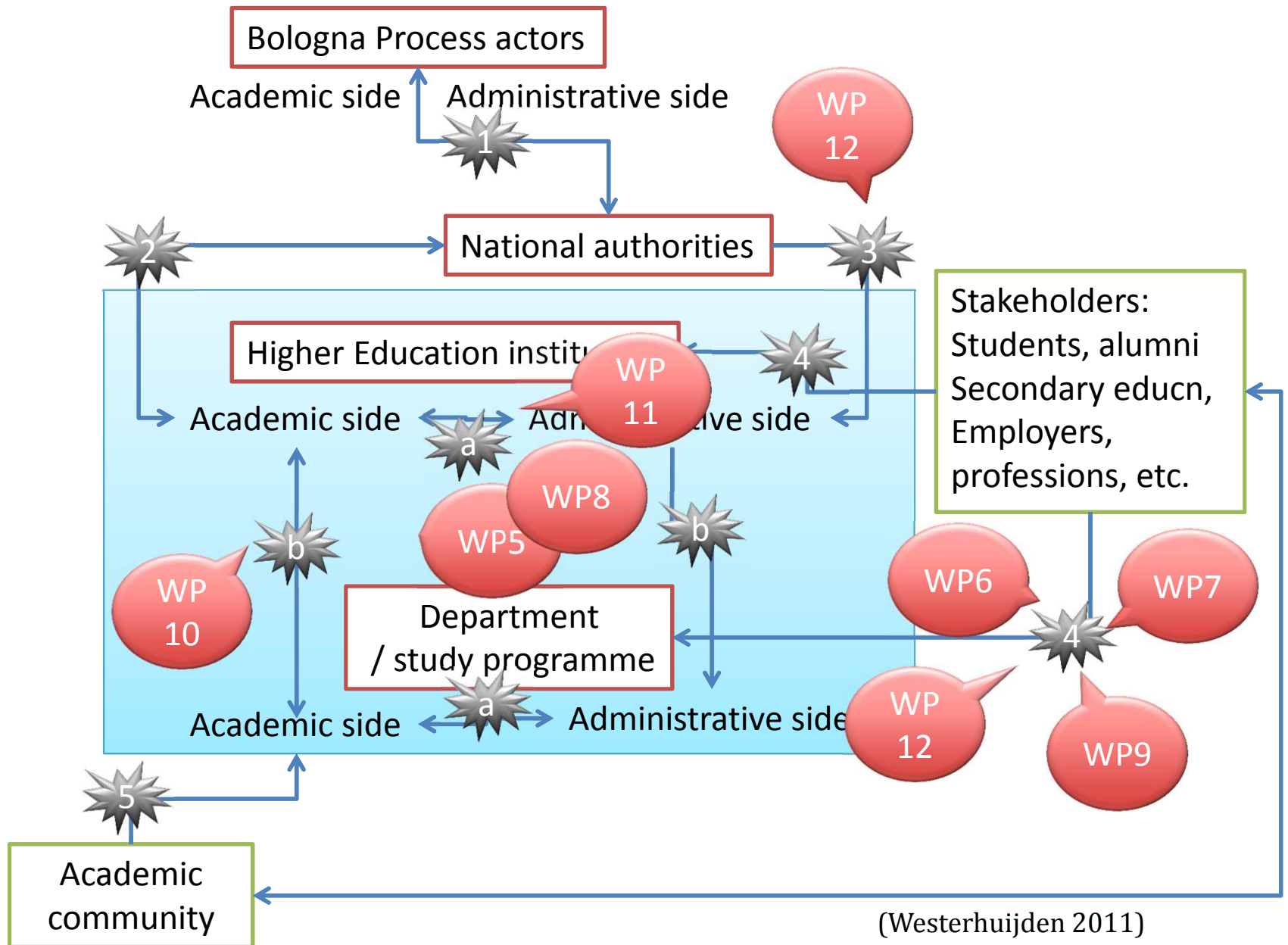
- Implementation theory (Reynolds & Saunders 1985)
- Instrument –context theory (Kohoutek 2011)
- Street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 2010)
- The nature of barriers & drivers - historical, political, social, cultural, ontological, discursive
(Meyer & Land 2005, Westerhuijden 2011)



Academic oligarchy

Government

Market / Society



Barriers

External

1. Bologna Process vs. national authorities
2. national academic vs. institutional academic
3. national administrative vs. institutional administrative
4. stakeholders vs. institution
5. academic community vs. local department

Internal

- a. academic vs. administrative sides
- b. central vs. department / programme



Work Package 8: Quality and Governance

Aim:

To explore the governance and managerial cultures that operate at an institutional level and locate them within a national and European framework.

To explore the governance and decision-making cultures within institutions and the factors which influence these.

To identify the key stakeholders responsible for governance at institutional level.

To explore the role of ESG Part 1 within the governance of quality in European Higher Education

Background: Why Governance?

Governance not specifically mentioned in ESG Part 1 but ...
Increasing global marketisation of Higher Education
(Cardoso 2012) has resulted in:

- A change of managerial style in higher Education and increasing institutional accountability (Westerheidjen, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007).
- Greater external audit and quality assurance frameworks
- No significant improvement in student experience (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

Key Questions

- What national/international policies influence governance of quality in your institution?
- How would you describe decision-making culture in your institution?
- What key stakeholders are involved in governance of quality in your institution?
- Do you have any knowledge of ESG Part One?

Preliminary indications from the three case studies suggest that 'national structures and processes of governance are probably better understood taking into account national and institutional specificities and priorities'.



- ‘at institutional level, it is apparent that there is a tension between the development of a quality culture and centralised control management’.
- ‘In the case of Latvia there generally seems to be a lack of staff motivation, or inertia, and a lack of flexibility to implement changes’.



‘In the UK, there is the potential for tension between the increased ‘marketisation’ of higher education and new pressures on governance systems. These pressures include increased levels of external scrutiny and accountability measures, diversification of business bases (for example through partnerships with other providers) and commercialisation of university assets’.



‘There is little evidence from this study, however, that there has been much serious attempt to rethink governance arrangements to reflect these changes and some concern that certain constituencies of students and other stakeholders may be affected.’



Contexts of enhancement

1. High Fidelity approach
2. Low Fidelity approach
3. Managerial approach
4. Consumerist approach

1. High fidelity approach

Context	Informing notion	Idea of quality	Gains	Risks	Trust
High Fidelity	convergence, and alignment	consistency, conformity to standard	coherence, consistency and reliability	stifles innovation, insufficiently context-sensitive, tokenism, compliance	low trust of variation

2. Low fidelity approach

Context	Informing notion	Idea of quality	Gains	Risks	Trust
Low Fidelity	importance of context, tolerance of variation	engagement, innovation, variation	taps into grain of practice, impact on practitioners, fosters motivation, sense of ownership, relevance	restricted to specific enclaves, practice fragmented	high trust of local practice

3. Managerial approach

Context	Informing notion	Idea of quality	Gains	Risks	Trust
Managerial	effective resource deployment, 'joined-upness'	transformed practice	better matching of resources to strategies, greater efficiencies	resistance, conflict, 'noise', non-compliance, judicious subversion	low trust of local practice

4. Consumerist approach

Context	Informing notion	Idea of quality	Gains	Risks	Trust
Consumerist	market competition, institutional positioning, strong brand, eg excellence	fitness for purpose, value for money	student-centred provision, consumer satisfaction, improvement of student learning	distortion by the market, stifling of innovation, reputational damage	high trust of the market









Implications for ESG



What needs to be High Fidelity?

- Access arrangements to ensure social inclusion?
- Transition arrangements to ensure mobility?
- Student assessment?

What might better be left as Low Fidelity?

- Enhancement of teaching quality? (cf UK PSF)
- Aspects of institutional governance?
- Student assessment?

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