



With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union

**„Identifying Barriers in Promoting the European Standards and Guidelines
for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

IBAR

Agreement number – 2010 – 4663/001 - 001

WP9
Quality and Stakeholders
Cross-Country Comparative Study
2012

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Comparative Report WP9: Stakeholders

*Project “Identifying barriers in promoting European Standards and Guidelines
for Quality Assurance at institutional level” (IBAR)*

Don F. Westerheijden (rapporteur)
Elisabeth Epping
Marika Faber
Liudvika Leisyte
Egbert de Weert

Final Version, '13-02-18

Contents

- 1 Introduction** **3**
 - 1.1.1 Place of the report in IBAR: Stakeholders in the ESG 3
 - 1.1.2 Stakeholder concept 3
 - 1.1.3 Stakeholder coordination? 4
- 2 Research methods** **4**
- 3 Findings** **4**
 - 3.1 *National rules for representation?* 4
 - 3.2 *Institutional and lower-level rules in addition to national ones?* 6
 - 3.3 *Actual stakeholder influence, in particular on curriculum and standards?* 7
- 4 Conclusions** **8**
 - 4.1 *Barriers* 9
 - 4.2 *Recommendations* 10
- Appendix** **12**
- References** **23**

1 Introduction

1.1.1 Place of the report in IBAR: Stakeholders in the ESG

This comparative report on IBAR's Work Package 9 focuses on the issue of stakeholders in quality assurance under the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in higher education (ESG for short) as they were agreed in the Bergen follow-up conference in 2005 (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2005; European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2005). The comparative report is based on seven national reports derived from 28 institutional case studies of the countries participating in the IBAR project (CZ, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK and UK). The work package was coordinated and reported by the Dutch team.

The ESG emphasize the role of stakeholders in internal quality assurance. In ESG's Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, these themes relate to the policy and procedures for quality assurance, broadly standard 1.1, and on the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards as stated in standard 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5:

Standard 1.1: Policy and procedures for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

The ESG 1.1 notes that internal quality assurance 'should also include a role for students and other stakeholders'. Further, the stakeholders such as *students* and *employers* are mentioned in the guidelines belonging to ESG 1.2, which states that periodic reviews of programmes and awards should include external panel members, feedback from *employers*, *labour market representatives* and *other relevant organizations* should be solicited. It is also underlined that the participation of students in quality assurance activities should be ensured.

In looking at the implementation of Standards 1.1 and 1.2, national and institutional policies and practices related to governance of and especially stakeholder involvement in internal quality processes have been analysed. Our analysis focuses therefore less on the formal quality assurance processes and more on the continuing internal arrangements that influence the quality of education. The report aims to highlight on the one hand barriers and on the other hand examples of good practice observed in the implementation of the standards across the higher education institutions studied in the IBAR project.

1.1.2 Stakeholder concept

We borrow the concept of stakeholders from the management literature. We start with Freeman's definition of stakeholder: 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives' (1984, p. 46). Based on the theory of stakeholder identification (Mitchel et al. 1997) we use a broad definition for the purposes of this project so that no stakeholders, potential or actual, are excluded from analysis a priori. However, we want to focus on a specific category of stakeholders, i.e. those that have a 'stake' following (Brenner 1992), that is, those that have an ability to influence the university's behaviour, direction, process or outcomes. In the case of the IBAR project the 'stake' means the ability of a particular actor/group to influence the university's definition of quality of teaching and learning and the internal quality assurance processes.

Stakeholders, from their different positions regarding the higher education system, are expected to hold different opinions of what higher education, and quality in higher education, mean for them. As we phrased it a long time ago: 'there are (at least) as many definitions of quality in higher education as

there are categories of stakeholders (such as students, teaching staff, scientific communities, government and employers), *times* the number of purposes, or dimensions, these stakeholders distinguish' (Brennan, Goedegebuure, Shah, Westerheijden, & Weusthof, 1992, p. 13). Stakeholders could, therefore, bring different perspectives, expectations and requirements (the latter in the case of professional organisations with some control over access of graduates to the profession) to bear on quality work in the higher education institutions. In that way, they might enrich the debate on quality in the institution. If they focus on a single dimension, however, their contribution would be less enriching; think of the archetypal (caricature of) employers focusing only on immediately usable skills, or the archetypal (caricature of) students focusing only on gaining a degree at minimum effort. But without stakeholders having guaranteed access to higher education institutions, the possibility of an enriched conception of quality being actually used 'on the ground' are lowered—hence the ESG's insistence on this point.

1.1.3 Stakeholder coordination?

In terms of the famous triangle of coordination (Clark, 1983), the question is if involvement of stakeholders in decision-making bodies influences the way in which decisions in higher education institutions are made: do they bring a new, more socially-oriented outlook to higher education institutions or are they mainly co-opted into a system dominated by the academic oligarchy and the state? The state usually is the main funder of higher education and thus has the power of the purse (Hood, 1983). The academic oligarchy has the power of expertise and they are in fact controlling and implementing the primary processes in higher education institutions: teaching and research. The 'policy theory' is that including stakeholder representatives from outside academia will lead to a more market-oriented coordination of higher education.

2 Research methods

The research design, as in the IBAR project overall, consists of comparative case studies. In 7 countries, 4 higher education institutions each, for a total of 28 higher education institutions, are studied. Besides, the national (higher education policy) context is taken into consideration, while the European level developments, in particular of course the ESG in the framework of the Bologna Process, form the overall framework.

In each participating country, a nationally-located research team is responsible for data collection. The task of devising the comparative research report is distributed to one of the participating teams, depending on the subject (work package). National and European contexts are studied descriptively, primarily through document analysis, complemented with interviews if necessary. The local case studies are prepared through document analysis, but the core of empirical study is made up of interviews with experts/participants in higher education institutions. Interviews are semi-structured, following guidelines and research questions coordinated and elaborated for the whole study, but translated both linguistically and conceptually by each national research team. Interviews have been transcribed and analysed qualitatively and brought together into national reports. The analysis of national reports (plus the attached local case studies) following the previously agreed research questions makes up this comparative report.

3 Findings

The findings will be reported here according to the research questions that guided the work package. However, where possible, questions will be treated together if the case situations are closely interrelated. Detailed information, summarising the national reports, can be found in the table making up the Appendix to this report.

3.1 National rules for representation?

What are the national rules that govern higher education institutions' inclusion or exclusion of stakeholders in/from decision-making or advisory bodies that have a say about quality-relevant issues

and have they changed in the past five years? If so, which stakeholders, which bodies, which numbers/proportions of total members?

The way this research question was phrased presupposed that taking account of a stakeholders' category's viewpoints necessitates their physical presence in decision-making bodies through formal representation. This assumption holds for most countries but not for the UK, where the *QAA Code of practice* is phrased in terms of stakeholders' *requirements*, not necessarily by way of representation. How stakeholders' viewpoints are accommodated in higher education institutions' quality assurance, is left to their autonomous decisions—though the QAA will check it during its institutional audits.

Latvian regulations mention that the composition of the Councillors' Convent, an advisory body that all public higher education institutions must have, is to be regulated by the higher education institution (similarly in PT). This is a regulation that puts even more autonomy in the hands of the higher education institution than the British regulations do, but in all other cases the national authorities are more prescriptive (the latter statement includes the composition of the university senate in Latvia). In all countries except the UK, accordingly, one category of stakeholders was included in the national regulations on quality assurance decision-making frameworks of higher education institutions: the students. In Poland and Slovakia every other stakeholder representation was explicitly excluded; there, academic freedom and institutional autonomy were strictly protected from all kinds of external influence in reaction to the too great influence of the political party during communism. In all other countries, external stakeholders were given a position in institutional decision-making regarding quality assurance as well.

Other stakeholders are not always specified; for instance, in PT the general council of public higher education institutions must have at least 30% of external members: 'and they should be persons of recognizable merit, external to the institutions but with knowledge and experience relevant for it. These members are co-opted'. Sometimes employers are mentioned, academics from other higher education institutions, alumni, or the profession. Thus, teaching staff from other higher education institutions, according to some other countries' reports with the role of external examiners (UK, NL), are represented in faculties' scientific councils or programme committees (CZ, NL, UK). Also in CZ, a non-exclusive list gives examples of stakeholders expected in boards of trustees: 'in particular' coming from public life, municipal and regional authorities and the state administration'—it is remarkable that public sector representatives are given so much emphasis. Mostly, stakeholders are invited/co-opted individually. In some cases, though, employers' *organisations* play a role in examination boards (CZ).

Representation of stakeholders in all cases is organised at the level of the university as a whole. Rules applying to units within, such as faculties, are also quite generally laid down. In most countries, proportions of stakeholders are specified. Sometimes, a majority of votes for academics from within the institution is guaranteed in this way; in other cases, it is specified that students and external stakeholders together form the majority (e.g. programme committees in UAS in NL).

In all countries, stakeholder representation takes place in the general, supreme democratic body, the senate (or equivalent). In more task-oriented forums, e.g. education and quality committees of the senate, programme management or examination boards, academics make up the major part of the forum and only students or fellow-academics are mentioned as stakeholders in them. Research-oriented boards, e.g. the Scientific Boards of faculties in the Czech Republic, also contain fellow-academics, from other higher education and research institutions, as stakeholders. And in Latvia national regulations state that higher education institutions must have internal regulations for stakeholder representation on other decision-making bodies.

In countries where higher education institutions are not part of the state apparatus, boards of trustees or similar councils play a role in setting or guarding the strategy of higher education institutions. It is common for such boards to be lay-dominated (NL, SK).

In most countries, all higher education institutions are treated similarly. The Netherlands, with its binary system, has separate expectations on universities of applied sciences (UASs): employers, the profession and alumni (sometimes people have double roles: alumni are profession members at the same time) are to be represented on programme committees. In the CZ report, it is mentioned that e.g. technical universities may include representatives of key industries in the scientific boards (next to external faculty).

In most country reports, most attention goes to public higher education institutions—probably in line with the proportion of public higher education in the country. However, in CZ and PT private higher education is mentioned specifically: in CZ it is left to the institution (or its founder/owner) to regulate the composition of its decision-making structure, while in PT private foundations must have an administrative governance body fully made up of external stakeholders.

The national regulations concerning stakeholders in quality-related decision-making are usually part of higher education laws (except in the UK). In some countries, the quality assurance agency's bylaws also play a major role (mentioned in NL, UK reports) in this respect. Not much attention was given in the design of this work package to national bodies of stakeholders that influence curricula, competency requirements, access to a profession, etc., because this project is about institutional arrangements rather than national ones. Nevertheless, the importance of professional and chartered bodies in the UK in this respect ought to be mentioned, as well as the sectoral committees in NL that operate on the national level and that are important actors in defining the programme requirements, the quality framework at the institutional level and the competence profiles for each individual programme in the UAS. The sectoral agreements contain guiding principles for all the institutions that provide those programmes, this is done to guarantee the 'HBO level'. Stakeholders, e.g. from the professional field, have an important say in these committees. Institutions have some flexibility to bring in their (local) specificities, but only within this overall framework. In other countries a similar structure can be found regarding professional fields.

Recent changes in the national rules about representation of stakeholders in higher education institutions were not noted in any of the countries involved.

3.2 Institutional and lower-level rules in addition to national ones?

What are the institutional rules that govern higher education institutions' inclusion or exclusion of stakeholders in/from decision-making or advisory bodies that have a say about quality-relevant issues and have they changed in the past five years? If so, which stakeholders, which bodies, which numbers/proportions of total members.

Do different units in the institution (faculties) or programmes have stakeholder representation on decision-making or advisory bodies that have a say about quality-relevant issues, beyond what is prescribed? If so, which stakeholders, which bodies, which numbers/proportions of total membership?

As a rule, higher education institutions apply the national rules. Additional 'openings' to stakeholders are however, far from rare. All national reports mention cases of good practices, where higher education institutions have thoughtfully considered which external stakeholders are most relevant to them, and in some cases are given seats on nationally prescribed decision-making bodies or on institution-specific councils with a role in education quality work.

Thus, in the Czech Republic, examination boards in faculties of both public and private higher education institutions mostly host some stakeholders, especially beyond first cycle degree (bachelor) levels.

Amongst other reports, the CZ and LV reports emphasise that the selection of stakeholders may reflect the strategy and character of the higher education institution: the more it is professionally-oriented, the more representatives of the profession or business life are involved in councils and boards (CZ, also NL, UK). Or the more it is in a regional location (i.e. not one of the main cities of the country), the more regional public authorities have seats on boards (LV).

In Latvia it is also customary that academics from other higher education institutions are involved in committees that oversee professorial appointments. Similar arrangements of academic self-regulation apply in higher education institutions in other countries as well as safeguards against ‘inbreeding’ and other forms of nepotism. An additional mechanism against nepotism and other forms of corruption in LV is also that there are students on boards involved in academic ethics: ‘2 students out of 7 members of Academic Ethics Committee, 1 student out of 6 members of Court of Arbitrage’. The (small) minority of students is meant to give the safeguard of publicity in case of necessity.

One Latvian university was reported to have stakeholders represented on its Advisory committee on quality, which evaluates both new study programmes and the ones to be accredited, after the Faculty Board has given its consent and before they are submitted to the Senate. Stakeholders involved in this case are students, experts on quality of education, employers, and social partners.

At the level of institutional regulations and practices, often more clarity is gained about criteria for external stakeholders to become eligible: social partners must be ‘significant’ (SK) or ‘qualified professionals’ (LV), have ‘recognizable merit’ or ‘knowledge and experience relevant for the HEI’ (PT). Similarly, external academics should be ‘senior’ (CZ) or have ‘recognizable scientific competencies’ (PT).

In the Slovak report, the usefulness of Alumni Clubs for gaining feedback on curricula was emphasised.

One of the Latvian higher education institutions showed a good practice of being outgoing to gain better feeling of regional labour market needs, by engaging actively in the regional employers union. This practice started because the institution was one of the main employers in the region, but the central management appreciated the chance to establish strong links with other employers for the benefit of practical placements, for graduate employment and for getting direct feedback on enhancement of quality of curricula and graduates. The university’s involvement is fully institutionalized, and although the rector participates in formal gatherings most often, the involvement of particular persons is dependent on the agenda.

Another good practice case was shown in a case in Poland, where the higher education institution has wide-ranging engagement with its working field for graduates: ‘The cooperation takes place at three levels: general school level, field of research level and chair level – at the general school level there are 9 organisational units entirely or partly focused on cooperation or stakeholder relations. A significant growth in the activities of these units has been observed over the last 2 – 3 years.’

3.3 Actual stakeholder influence, in particular on curriculum and standards?

What is nominal and real stakeholder’s representation in institutional decision-making bodies? Has it changed and why?

To what extent are stakeholder’s views (and from which stakeholders?) taken into account and why? Are stakeholder viewpoints filtering into the standard undergraduate curriculum and requirements?

Requirements of accreditation organisations play a steering role in the answers to this research question. Regularly, quality assurance agencies demand that higher education institutions take stakeholders’ points of view into account in regular quality assurance processes (all countries), or during curriculum design or revisions (NL, PL, UK) even if they do not specify that stakeholders should hold positions on councils or decision-making bodies. Clearly then, quality assurance and curriculum review are major occasions for stakeholder influence.

Stakeholders from the business world also have ‘some influence on thesis foci and course content, especially through their involvement in teaching activities’ (CZ)—as intended, of course, by appointing professionals as part-time teaching staff to make student learning more immediately

relevant. Similar types and levels of modest influence on student learning were mentioned in all country reports; channels of influence included the traditional ones (e.g. guest lectures by persons from the professional field, excursions and field trips), internships and projects or final theses in the field, etc. This type of influence often involves informal contacts between external parties and teaching staff, who reflect on the points of view of externals, and use the ideas in their individual and collective decisions regarding course content, teaching methods (including involvement of external teachers or internships), etc. As a consequence, this type of influence is hard to trace except through time-intensive research methods such as participant observation, which were beyond the means of our study.

On a system-wide level, organisations of professions (e.g. medical association, bar association, but also trade unions) play a role in external quality assurance (mentioned for e.g. the UK and NL in the previous section), but also through contacts with ministries which in their turn influence arrangements in ‘their’ higher education institutions—the latter practice is reported from CZ, LV, SK.

Nevertheless, in the PT report there were clear signs that respondents in the higher education institutions were not all in agreement. Some said that external stakeholders had no influence and lack of knowledge as source of authority was given as a reason: ‘External stakeholders may not have sufficient knowledge about the specificities of a HEI’). This view was mirrored in the UK report, where it said that in the case higher education institutions some data were perceived as “unhelpful” because of “lack of understanding” amongst some stakeholders.

The UK report also pointed to another reason for external stakeholders not always being seen as influential: ‘consultations can feel “tokenistic”.’ This suggests, in other words, that in some cases stakeholder consultation rules are complied with, but that they do not affect the ‘inner life’ of higher education institutions; this phenomenon has been called an (unhealthy) ‘culture of compliance’ (van Vught, 1994). A similar (internationally present) attitude trying to limit the influence of stakeholders is exemplified in the PT report, where it refers to academics who want to limit students’ involvement to pedagogic matters.

Other respondents in the Portuguese cases asserted that if external stakeholders had influence, it was on strategy and finance rather than on the primary process. Besides focusing on the subjective experience that is behind many of the responses that we received (that is why we engaged in case studies), this passage also gives a healthy reminder of the fact that institutional design matters: fellow academics or professionals from the field, engaged in feedback for curriculum review will influence higher education institutions differently than businessmen on a board of trustees or a general, university-wide advisory council—and both types of feedback may be useful to the higher education institution.

4 Conclusions

In summary of the comparative analysis of WP9, we may say that throughout all countries and higher education institutions studied, stakeholders are included in education quality work. National regulations seem to form the most important ‘filter’ in this regard: higher education institutions comply with the national regulations and do not often develop internal regulations going much beyond the national frameworks. To a certain degree, then, governments and quality assurance agencies have been successful in establishing ESG-conform practices regarding the involvement of stakeholders in higher education institutions’ processes around quality of education.

Saying this, it has to be noted at the same time that according to the national reports, there had been very few changes in regulations in recent years. In that sense, there seems to be little influence of ESG on higher education institutions—or perhaps the ESG codified what had already become practice through earlier quality assurance schemes (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). However it is also possible that the main effects of the ESG with regard to stakeholders have been on external quality

assurance, making a common practice out of representation of students and international (external, that is!) peers on quality assurance agencies' boards, evaluation committees, etc.

Notwithstanding the relative stability of *regulations*, actual *practices* of involving stakeholders in education quality work in higher education institutions have changed in recent years: the translations of regulations into organisational practices have changed. Thus the SK report maintained that 'Even though the changes over last 5 years in regard of influence of stakeholders on internal QA didn't take place on level of policy documents, Slovak HEIs increase ad-hoc involvement of external professionals in evaluation of their pedagogical processes and internal processes of QA.'

In internal as well as external quality assurance, students appear in all national reports of this work package as the most prominent group of stakeholders. A 'health warning' from the UK report in this regard is worth stressing: overseas students and part-time students remain widely under-represented. Student representatives hail mainly from the relatively privileged group of young, full-time students studying in their home country.

Academic self-regulations remains strong even though it includes 'stakeholder' colleagues: 'The HEI research samples showed that more than 50% of external stakeholders come from other HEIs (Slovak as well as foreign ones)' (SK). Yet in most country reports, the evidence of increasing involvement of non-academic external stakeholders is so strong that it is almost impossible that, in Clark's (1983) terms, the coordination mechanism has not inched a bit towards the market. Quality assurance agencies' requirements of stakeholders opinions being consulted in curriculum review processes may well be an important avenue for the actual movement towards market influence. Although the previously quoted remark that some stakeholder involvement may be mainly 'tokenistic' should warn against too great expectations of change.

It is remarkable that especially in some of the Central European countries involved in this study, state and regional public authorities are seen as stakeholders (CZ, LV, SK reports). This contrasts with the more prominent position of private sector representatives in the West European country cases. Whether this situation in Central Europe is to be interpreted as a smart step of higher education institutions to enlist public authority support in a regional strategy, or an attempt of public authorities to regain control relinquished in official higher education policies, cannot be decided on the basis of the current studies—in the former interpretation, Western universities might learn from this practice.

A final caveat is of course that changes are always driven by a number of coinciding factors, and it is difficult to point out which changes exactly have been caused by the implementation and translation of the ESG.

4.1 Barriers

On the whole, the findings in the case studies are fairly positive regarding the lack of barriers: stakeholders were included in decision-making structures and processes relevant to education quality work in all countries. There were, however, different interpretations of which categories of stakeholders—beyond students—should be involved, at which levels (institution, faculty, study programme) and in which committees or procedures. Diversity of stakeholders seems to be too low in some cases: alumni, profession, regional public partners, regional or national private sector partners (employers), etc. Similarly, diversity of levels and committees/procedures where stakeholder opinions are input into institutional decision-making seems to need further broadening in some cases as well.

There were a few signs in the findings, though, of stakeholder involvement not always influencing decisions in higher education institutions, but being 'tokenistic', leading to superficial compliance. The barrier in such cases would seem to be the local academic culture, which is inward looking. The argument that external stakeholders lack knowledge and understanding about the higher education institution may be true, yet it may also be a way to deny legitimacy to outsiders' points of view.

The warning from the UK report about under-representation of non-traditional students (adult, part-time, international) points to a barrier for them to become actively involved within higher education institutions' education quality work: they lack time to attend meetings, or access to student unions that are the main avenues to being appointed or elected into student representative positions.

Recruitment of external stakeholders often works through either personal networks of higher education institutions' staff (teaching staff and/or management), in which case research connections to companies may play a role, or alumni networks. Alternatively, recruitment may go through formal organisations. These all are examples of co-optation, which seems to be a more important method of recruitment than election—probably because it is a more efficient way to find persons who are knowledgeable as well as interested enough to spend time. Whether through individual networks or through formal organisations, establishing connections to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may be a weak link. It should be noted that SMEs have proven to be very important for innovation and for job creation, yet a telling counterexample of current practice is given in the PL report about one of the universities: 'The group of external stakeholders of individual faculties includes, above all, large and medium size businesses, e.g. Philips, ABB, and other companies of comparable size.'

The PT report pointed out that it is unreasonable to count on stakeholders devoting much time and effort to involvement in higher education's quality purely for intrinsic reasons: the report noted a lack of incentives—financial as well as reputational—for external stakeholders. Such a situation, which we know to exist also in the other countries in our study, may lead to low or intermittent participation by external stakeholders. The argument of lacking incentives applies also to teaching and research staff from other higher education institutions, but applies most forcefully to representatives from the private sector (employers, professions).

Students' response rates to questionnaires, which are often the main instrument to gather their feedback on teaching, are often deplored as being low, but the higher education institutions are not very good at organising incentives for students' contributing to questionnaires. Or they are constrained in their options, being public organisations under strict budget rules. Yet, even without additional means, it ought to be possible to give student prompt feedback about actions taken on the basis of their evaluations. Prompt feedback, showing students that their opinions are taken seriously, is a sort of incentive and could thus help to improve student involvement in quality assurance.

4.2 Recommendations

At the European level, there might be room for more showcasing of good practices of genuinely involving diverse categories of stakeholders, in different roles and for different purposes (from curriculum feedback in self-evaluation processes, to strategy setting in a board of trustees). Such good practices should be searched especially at the institutional level, to counteract possible negative local cultures. EUA and EURASHE might be the most appropriate actors to undertake such a task, for instance in connection to the EUA's quality culture projects.

Especially, attention might be given to the different roles for fellow academics and social partners from the public and private sectors. The former might conceivably concentrate on maintaining academic standards (against nepotism) and keeping curricula up to date with developments in the field. The role of social partners seems to be divided into two: on the one hand employers and members of the profession (partly alumni) can act usefully in committees or ad hoc processes to give feedback about curriculum, student learning, etc. and to provide learning opportunities (guest lectures, internships; part-time teaching staff). On the other hand, social partners may act as strategic partners in a board of trustees or similar councils, to connect the higher education institution and its (quality) strategy to its regional environment.

Obviously, the mix of external stakeholders should reflect the character of the individual higher education institutions: some benefit more from feedback by teaching or researching colleagues (e.g. if the institution has a more academic orientation), others more from feedback by employers and professionals (e.g. if the institution has a more professional orientation). Usually, regulations for

different sectors of higher education adapt to such differences. However, in current views on the role of higher education, each higher education institution ought to benefit from feedback by both categories. National regulations should therefore leave room for a mix fitting the individual institution's specifics—though perhaps with minimum quota for both employers/professionals and fellow teachers/researchers. At the same time, the issue of organising sufficient incentives (financial and/or reputational) for external stakeholders' participation ought to be given attention.

Appendix

• Question 1: National rules on stakeholder representation?

Country	Stakeholder category	Represented at level of ...	Represented on/in ...	Remarks
CZ	Students	Public university	Senate: 1/3 – 1/2 of members	
CZ	Students	Faculty in public uni	Senate: 1/3 – 1/2 of members	
CZ	Academics from other higher education institutions	Faculty in public uni	Scientific Board: $\geq 1/3$ of members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly senior teaching and research positions (i.e. professoriate) at the Academy of Sciences, other faculties, other HEIs. • In technically-oriented HEIs, they may be representatives of key industries for graduates
CZ	Unspecified	Public university	Board of Trustees	Representatives from ‘in particular’ public life, municipal and regional authorities and the state administration
CZ	Unspecified	Private HEIs	Board of trustees and similar (typically)	Law requires there to be internal rules; Appointed by founder. [See also question 2]
CZ	Unspecified	Private HEIs	Scientific board and similar (typically)	Law requires there to be internal rules; typically like public university’s Scientific boards
CZ	Unspecified	Public and private HEIs	Examination boards for Ba, Ma, PhD	Not required, but allowed. Most do, especially at Ma, PhD levels
LV	Students	Public HEIs	Senate: $\geq 20\%$ of members	Law also requires there to be internal rules for further stakeholder representation in other decision-making bodies: Constitutional assembly, Arbitration Court.
LV	Unspecified	Public HEIs	Councillors’ Convent (an advisory body)	Law requires there to be internal rules
LV	Students, alumni, employers	Public HEIs	[viewpoints]	Accreditation: ‘e.g., there are questions on regular gathering of information from stakeholders in the self-assessment report; representatives of stakeholders (students, alumni, employers) are also questioned about the quality of study programmes by external evaluations directly.’
NL	Unspecified	Public HEIs	Board of Trustees: fully external	Example Case C: ‘bankers, political figures, industry’
NL	Students	Public HEIs	University and faculty councils: ca. 1/3 – 1/2 of members	University council: 50%
NL	Students	Public HEIs, faculty level	Programme committees: $\geq 50\%$	
NL	Employers, profession, alumni	Public UASs, faculty level	Work field committee	Required in all study programmes (through new accreditation rules) Advisory role [see question 4 below]: ‘crucial role’ (case B) Case C: mainly alumni (who also double as profession representatives etc.)
PL	Students	Public HEIs	All official decision-	Students are represented. [What

			making councils	<i>proportion? Question on student situation put to PL team @ Warsaw seminar]</i>
PL	[None]	Public HEIs	All official decision-making councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The amended Act of March 18th 2011 maintains purely academic composition of decision-making bodies of a school, at the same time binding schools with the responsibility of obtaining external stakeholders' opinion as regards key education-related matters’ (barrier!) • ‘Polish Accreditation Commission in its standards of institutional and programme evaluation requires their participation in formulating opinions regarding educational programmes and other forms of cooperation with them’
PT	Unspecified, students	All higher education institutions	Quality assurance scheme	External stakeholders are present both in the external assessment commissions, and during the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases of the process, as representatives of the external community’s opinions about the study programme under accreditation. Students’ participation is also assured through: their integration in the self-evaluation phase, namely by the mandatory involvement of the pedagogic councils and the students’ association; students’ participation in surveys about academic staff and courses; their audition in the external evaluation phase; and the nomination of their associations’ representatives in an A3ES body.
PT	Unspecified, students	Public HEIs	General council: $\geq 30\%$ of members, 3-4 elected students	General councils have ca. 20-25 members in total.
PT	Unspecified	Private foundation HEIs	Administrative governance body: 5 members, all external to HEI	
SK	Unspecified	Public HEIs	Board of Trustees: 12/14 unspecified + 1/14 student	‘Public life including representatives of business sector, local and regional municipalities, regional governmental bodies who are responsible for education, finances, economy and social affairs in the region. Two members are nominated from HEI - one is nominated by representatives of Academic Senate among employees, other member is nominated by representatives of students of the Academic Senate.’
SK	Students	Public HEIs	Senate: $\geq 33\%$	No external stakeholders.
SK	Profession?	Faculties in	Scientific boards: 25-	At least 1/4 and at the most 1/3 of the

		public HEIs	33% of members	Scientific Board's members has to be composed from the representatives of other than academic community: "Significant <u>professionals of the appropriate study fields</u> are generally included into the State Exam Commissions. They should represent other HEIs, legal entities realized research and development in Slovak Republic or legal entities representing other fields of practice" It's mostly suppliers, though: 'The HEI research samples showed that more than 50% of external stakeholders comes from other HEIs (Slovak as well as foreign ones).'
SK	Students	Faculties in public HEIs	Faculty senate: ≥ 33%	
SK	Unspecified (includes employers)	Faculties in public HEIs	State examination committees	'participation of representatives of business in State Exams Commissions'
SK	...	Diverse committees		<i>[asked the SK team if these were relevant for Quality—e-mail 12-09-28]</i>
UK	Government and its various agencies Regulatory and professional bodies Students Staff Employers Alumni			<i>QAA Code of practice</i> gives most national rules/guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders first, Europe later • Requirements, not representation

• **Question 2: What are the institutional rules?**

Country	Stakeholder category	Represented at level of ...	Represented on/in ...	Remarks
CZ		Public HEIs		All 3 cases apply national rules [but also see question 4]
CZ	business environment	Private HEI [case D]	Board of trustees	'the board of trustees also exercises the competences of the institutional academic senate, however, <i>with no student representation on the board.</i> '
CZ	Outside academics	University [case B]	Board for doctoral thesis defence	'increasingly applied also to defence procedures of master theses (standard at the faculty of education).'
LV	Employers	Public HEIs: University and/or Faculty	Convent of Councillors, or Examination boards at Faculty level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Employers' presence seems more important in institutions that are with more practical orientation such as Business Higher school Turība (BST) or Latvian Maritime Academy (LMA), less so in the University of Latvia (UL).' • 'BST ... Governing boards of faculties contain ... 50%

				representatives of employers (5-10 out of 10-20 members).’
LV	Regional authorities, society at large	Public HEIs: University	Convent of Councillors	‘Representatives of regional authorities are more involved in Regional universities such as University of Rezekne (UR) and also in regional branches of HEI whose main seat is in the capital city’
LV	Students	Case UL	‘students constitute 25% from 300 members of the Constitutional Assembly, 20% from 50 members of the Senate, 2 students out of 7 members of Academic Ethics Committee, 1 student out of 6 members of Court of Arbitrage, 20% students are represented in Governing boards of faculties (2-4 out of 10-20 members).’	‘Similar percentages are in other institutions under survey’ [goes also for other forms of representation, see immediately under]
LV	Academics outside HEI	Case UL	Professor Councils: 1/3 of members; Promotion Councils	Implies: external academia checks candidates.
LV	students, experts on quality of education, employers, social partners	Case UL	Advisory committee on quality	evaluates both new study programmes and the ones to be accredited – after the Faculty Board has given its consent and before they are submitted to the Senate.
LV	Students, qualified specialists	Case UL	Council of study programme:	
LV	Employers, Academics outside HEI	Case UL	Council of studies of UL	
LV	Profession, employers	Case UL: professional study programmes	≥50% of the examination board members	Case UR: among them the Chair is from employers or profession. Note: Case UR is highlighted in § Conclusions.
LV	Business/industry?	Case BST, faculties	Governing boards of Faculties: ≥50% of members	
NL	Employers	Case B, institution	Represented on Institutional council	
NL	Employers	Case B, D faculty level	Examination boards: include external members	New in Case D, plan in case B.
NL	Students, Employers	Case D, faculty level	Study programme committee: teachers + stakeholders = 50% of members; students = 50% of members.	

PT	Unspecified	Public HEIs' faculties	Several bodies	National law requires that rules be made by each institution
PT	See table below			
PT	Academics outside HEI	Case α	Academic Senate: 3 members from other universities	
PT	Unspecified	Case δ	Advisory Council: majority externals	
UK		University		'Typically, local quality frameworks or guidelines are designed to ensure that the institution and its staff act in a way that is <u>consistent with the QAA code of practice</u> and with relevant <u>funding council directives</u> '
UK		University [Case D]		Plans to review membership of governing body, industry and key employers, <u>in line with its institutional strategy</u>
UK	Students	'lower level' inside university		Student representation is increasingly common Overseas students and part-time students remain widely under-represented
UK	Alumni	University		Underrepresented

• **PT cases: external stakeholders**

Higher Education Institution	Decision-making body	N.º and type of external stakeholders
HEI α	General Council (25 members)	7 members of recognizable merit and with knowledge and experience relevant for the HEI (co-opted by the others).
	Schools scientific councils (maximum 25 members)	Up to 5 members co-opted among academics and/or researchers from other HEIs or from external society of recognizable merit
HEI β	General Council (23 members)	6 members of recognizable merit and with knowledge and experience relevant for the HEI (co-opted by the others).
	Faculty or Department level representatives councils (15 members)	1 or 2 personalities, co-opted by the other members (after a proposal from the organic unit Director and having been heard the unit scientific council)
	Faculty or Department scientific councils (maximum of 25 members)	There is the option of inviting academics and/or researchers from other institutions relevant for the HEI mission (their number cannot exceed 15% of the total number of members)
	Doctoral school external commission (maximum of 25 members)	3 to 5 personalities (national or international), of recognizable scientific competencies
HEI γ	General council (25 members)	7 personalities of recognizable merit, with knowledge and experience relevant for the HEI
HEI δ	General council (21 members)	6 personalities of recognizable merit, with knowledge and experience relevant for the HEI (one for each one of the HEI scientific areas)
	Schools technical-scientific councils	May have up to 4 academics and/or researchers from other HEIs or personalities of recognizable merit

- **PT cases: students**

Higher Education Institution	Decision-making body	N.º and type of internal stakeholders
HEI α	General Council (25 members)	3 students' representatives, elected among their peers by a proportional representation system
	Schools' representatives council (15 elected members)	4 students' representatives
	School pedagogic councils	Students and academic staff representatives in equal number. Election according to the institution electoral regulation
HEI β	General Council (23 members)	4 students' representatives, elected among their peers
	Faculty or Department level representatives councils (15 members)	3 or 4 students' representatives from any study cycle and/or programme
	Faculty or Department pedagogic councils (maximum of 16 members)	Students' representatives from any study programmes
HEI γ	General council (25 members)	4 students' representatives, elected among their peers
	Schools pedagogic councils	Students and academic staff representatives in equal number
HEI δ	General council (21 members)	3 students' representatives, elected among their peers
	Schools pedagogic councils	Students and academic staff representatives in equal number

- **Question 3: Real stakeholder's representation? Influence**

Country	Stakeholder category	Represented at level of ...	Represented on/in ...	Remarks
CZ	Industrial enterprises	Study programme [case A]	Thesis supervision; part-time teachers	'some influence on thesis foci and course content, especially through their involvement in teaching activities'
CZ	Alumni; employers	Private HEI [case D]		Frequently: feedback on quality of studies
CZ	employer organisations	Private HEI [case D]	involved in final state examinations or thesis supervision	
LV	Academics outside; governments; profession	[several cases]	Evaluation of study programmes	'representatives of Higher Education Council or of the Ministry of Education and Science are invited to participate as advisors or observers, e.g. in evaluation of study programmes in Business school Turiba; representatives of municipal authorities participate in a similar way in the University of Rezekne, but Latvian Maritime Academy is closely monitored in all the crucial issues by Latvian Maritime Authority'
PT				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different points of view (interviewees). If stakeholders have influence, then mainly over strategy and finance, not directly on quality-related issues.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘External stakeholders may not have sufficient knowledge about the specificities of a HEI’
SK	Unspecified	[study programmes in several cases?]	Evaluation of study programmes; internal quality assurance	‘Even though the changes over last 5 years in regard of influence of stakeholders on internal QA didn’t take place on level of policy documents, Slovak HEIs increase ad hoc involvement of external professionals in evaluation of their pedagogical processes and internal processes of QA.’
SK	Students	Higher education institution	Academic Senate	‘The results of the research showed a real influence of students as stakeholders on decision-making and governance processes of HEIs. It is caused by a high share of their membership as well as procedural rules concerning approving processes’
UK	Profession	Programmes under professional accreditation	Accreditation procedures [see WP x]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> periodic subject reviews external examiners in annual exam boards external members in subject review panels
UK	key employers and/or alumni	Other areas		<p>Increased focus on graduate employability → increased <u>concern</u> to make contact with stakeholders.</p> <p>Next to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> external examiners in annual exam boards external members in subject review panels
UK				Comment UK team: differences inevitably reflect different institutional missions and differing historical relationships between universities and their local communities.

• **Question 4: Going beyond the rules within higher education institutions?**

Country	Stakeholder category	Represented at level of ...	Represented on/in ...	Remarks
CZ	Students	All public universities, most private HEIs	Rector’s board, 1 student (typically)	Informal body; composition free.
CZ	Students	All faculties of public universities, most private HEIs	Dean’s board, 1 student (typically)	Informal body; composition free.
CZ	Profession	Faculty of law [Case B]	10/18 seats on faculty senate	
CZ	International	University, Faculty	1 foreign member on all Scientific Boards	
CZ	industry or business	University, Faculty [Case	Informal advisory forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘This is especially the board of managing directors established

	representatives	A]		at several institutes’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time teachers with part-time professional/industry positions are mentioned as well
LV	Industry, business	University, case UR	UR is represented in regional Employers’ Union	‘UR is an active member in the regional employers union; such outgoing and rather unusual involvement in external stakeholder organization provides a fruitful basis for cooperation (additional communication platform, an internal view on the stakeholders’ needs).’
PL	Unspecified	Case WSE		‘The cooperation takes place at three levels: general school level, field of research level and chair level – at the general school level there are 9 organisational units entirely or partly focused on cooperation or stakeholder relations. A significant growth in the activities of these units has been observed over the last 2 – 3 years.’
PL	[several categories]	[all cases, mostly at levels of faculty, chair, project]	[several informal channels]	
PT	Unspecified	Case δ	advisory councils of the arts and engineering study programmes	
PT	Unspecified	Case γ	Additional meetings: school with ‘related’ external members of the general council	‘The main goal is to promote a stronger relationship between the schools and the business world. ... collecting opinions about the schools’ development (not only in terms of their study cycles’ portfolio, but also regarding the establishment of relationships with society, namely external organizations and/or business companies). The opinions expressed by the external members are much more of a general nature and not that specific about a study programme curriculum or the scientific content of the different courses.’
PT	Unspecified	Case α faculties	<i>Plan</i> for external representatives in study programme committees	‘possible if the committee feels it would be positive for the study programme. So far some experiments have been made in the Management Department’
SK	Unspecified	Research Centre	Council	participation of minimally 2 professionals from educational or research institutions and 1 professional from other external area (from Slovakia or abroad).

• **Question 5: Are stakeholder views on quality taken into account?**

Country	Stakeholder category	Channel of influence	Influence on ...	Remarks
CZ	business/industry representatives	board of trustees; scientific boards	Graduate profiles, learning outcomes	
CZ	Shared industry/university teachers	Teaching	Graduate profiles, learning outcomes	
CZ	Shared industry/university teachers	Participation in faculty life	Curriculum content and/or exam requirements	Formal and informal
CZ	Alumni	Surveys	Programme design and content	All 4 cases; more so in Case A
CZ	professionals, academics from outside own HEI	boards overseeing final state examination and thesis defence	examination requirements	
CZ	Teachers from secondary education	Informal contacts	[on what?]	Not in Case B
CZ	Pupils from secondary education	Informal contacts	[on what?]	Not in Case B
CZ	Profession	Appointment of teachers	All aspects	Case B [hierarchically controlled profession]
CZ	Czech Medical Association, Czech Chamber of Commerce or Czech Bar Association	through the corresponding ministry; or informally through personal contacts	[Curriculum?]	'seem to exercise their influence rather indirectly (through the corresponding ministry) or informally through personal contacts'
LV	Trade Unions, Industry / Employers	Consultation for legal change	HE policy in general	'The Ministry of Education and Science seeks advice of its social partners when designing or revising the national acts that deal with HE quality issues, such as Regulation on accreditation.'
LV	Employers, profession, alumni	Surveys etc. for feedback	Curriculum, learning outcomes, etc.(!)	Different for each case, but all have some. LMA: strict international regulation!
LV	Work field	Placements, internships	Curriculum	Feedback is used.
LV	Profession / secondary education	Case UR, teacher training	Curriculum	'also acting as the employer of graduates and as the provider of practical placement for students'
NL	Profession, employers, alumni	Case A, work field committee	Curriculum	'serious' advisory role, during accreditation + in between to keep informed about with employers' needs
NL	Alumni, employers	Surveys		All cases
NL	Employers / profession	Consultation by faculty management	New teachers' job descriptions	Case D
PL	[several]	[several]	[several]	Host of good practices mentioned in <i>Report</i> .

Country	Stakeholder category	Channel of influence	Influence on ...	Remarks
PT	Academics outside HEI	Informal contacts	Curriculum development	Esp. new joint PhD and master programmes
PT	Business/industry	informal and indirect mechanisms	curriculum and requirements	Informal and indirect mechanisms = internships, competitions (in the arts' study programmes), contacts with businesses and other organisations in the framework of applied research, consultancy projects and dissertations conducted in a business environment
PT	Profession	Accreditation	?	Engineering
PT	Unspecified	Accreditation	?	A3ES + self-evaluation process
SK	Academics, alumni, profession?		?	The following additional areas of influence of stakeholders in regard of profile of graduates and learning outcomes were identified within our research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alumni Clubs - Discussions with external professionals realized within conferences - Discussions with external professionals realized within State Exams Commissions - Discussions with actual graduates realized within state exams.
SK	Employers/profession	Internships etc.	Acquisition of soft and entrepreneurial skills	
SK	Employers (public sector)	?	Creation of new study programmes / subjects, esp. professional development courses	'e.g. study program called "Safety and health protection" was initiated by the Labour Inspectorate of Slovak Republic, other study program "Museology" was encouraged by two libraries'
SK	Employers?	National committees	Definition of national graduate profiles/ learning outcomes	'Profile of graduates and learning outcomes are defined based on description of the study fields on national level. They are obligatory for all HEIs. Stakeholders – chosen representatives of HEIs enter to the process of their establishment on national level as individuals. Process of description of study fields is not enough flexible and doesn't reflect the changes ongoing on level of individual HEIs in the last period.'
UK				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ further challenges face student bodies in institutions that offer large numbers of partnership courses with other providers. ▪ consultations can feel

Country	Stakeholder category	Channel of influence	Influence on ...	Remarks
				<p>“tokenistic”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some data perceived as “unhelpful” because of “lack of understanding” amongst some stakeholders
UK				‘Some academic staff in professional areas will commonly combine academic work with professional practice.’
Several country reports	Employers, profession	Guest lectures, excursions, internships, external projects/ theses	General feedback on performance of students in practical situations / professional requirements on curriculum	

References

- Brennan, John, Goedegebuure, Leo C.J., Shah, Tarla, Westerheijden, Don F., & Weusthof, Peter J.M. (1992). *Towards a methodology for comparative quality assessment in European higher education: A pilot study on economics in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom*. London/Enschede/Hannover: CNAA/CHEPS/HIS.
- Brenner, S. N. 1992 The Stakeholder Theory of the Firm. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 2(2): pp. 99-119.
- Clark, Burton R. (1983). *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. (2005). Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Helsinki: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
- European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education. (2005). The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals: Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005 Retrieved from http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf
- Freeman, R. E. 1984. *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.
- Hood, Christopher C. (1983). *The tools of government*. London: MacMillan.
- Mitchel, R. K., Agle, B.R., Wood, D. J. (1997) Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*. 27(2), pp. 853-866.
- Schwarz, Stefanie, & Westerheijden, Don F. (Eds.). (2004). *Accreditation and Evaluation in the European Higher Education Area*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- van Vught, Frans A. (1994). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspects of Quality Assessment in Higher Education. In Don F. Westerheijden, John Brennan & Peter A.M. Maassen (Eds.), *Changing Contexts of Quality Assessment: Recent Trends in West European Higher Education* (pp. 31-50). Utrecht: Lemma.