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for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

IBAR

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

**National study: Quality and teaching staff (WP
10)
Czech Republic**

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Introduction and methodology

The work package no. 10 of the IBAR project focuses on exploration and analysis of how quality of teaching staff at selected higher education institutions (HEIs) is assured. At the same time, the quality assurance measures concerning teaching staff in place are compared against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), namely the ESG standard 1.4 dealing with quality assurance of teaching staff. The object of research of this IBAR work package can thus be specified as the procedures of quality assurance of pedagogic staff at HEIs and the extent of their compatibility (fit) with the ESG 1.4. The comparison of the measures in place at individual selected HEIs with the ESG 1.4. is further likely to yield the identification of barriers of the ESG 1.4. implementation in institutional settings as well as the recognition of institution-wide examples of effective practices.

To obtain an adequate insight into the object of research, a qualitative methodology was employed. In particular, the document review and semi-structured interviews were made use of on the sample of four HEIs out of which three were public (HEI A-C), and one private (HEI D). The review of official documentation on procedures of teaching staff quality assurance made at national and institutional level was particularly helpful for making the general description of the corresponding situation and measures in place. In particular, the Higher Education Act and the Labour Code, including amendments in both cases, were reviewed along with institutional documentation comprising mostly internal regulations, strategic policy documents and annual reports. For getting a more nuanced and detailed picture, semi-structures interviews were utilised. Overall, 22 respondents of different categories (9 teaching staff, 5 students, and 8 staff in managerial positions (heads of departments, deans, vice-rectors)) were interviewed for response. The interviews were guided by six research questions. Moreover, to elicit respondents' viewpoints and obtain primary data on what takes to be a good teacher, a panel discussion was held, with five panellists and fifteen discussants.

The combination of secondary and primary data analysis in turn produced the analytical insights (see below Q1-Q6) into how precisely the quality of teaching staff at HEIs is assured, what the major problems and barriers hindering the ESG 1.4 implementation are as well as what practices could be considered inspirational for other institutional settings (examples of effective practices).

Answering the research questions

Q1. What is the institutional policy on assuring quality of teaching staff? How it is related to the national rules concerning QA and employment?

In order to describe and analyse institutional policies of pedagogic staff quality assurance at four selected HEIs, *the corresponding national policy context and its links to institutional situations are outlined first*. The national policy rules concerning the quality of teaching staff at HEIs are set in the clauses of the Higher Education Act no. 111/1998 Coll., namely

paragraphs 70-77. More specific rules, prescribing basic requirements of academic staff along with basic terms of their employment, are given in some detail below.

The Higher Education Act no. 111/1998 Coll. (HE Act) recognises six basic categories of academic staff. These are: professors, associate professors, senior assistants, assistants, lecturers and scientific, research and development workers (researches) (§ 70). The HE Act further stipulates the conditions for obtaining the degree of professor and associate professor. An associate professor in a particular field is appointed by the rector of a given HEI on the basis of the recommendation of the scientific board of the faculty following the positive result of the procedure for conferring “*venium docendi*” (i.e. the habilitation procedure taking place at the faculty level). Unlike associate professors, professors in a specific field are appointed by the President of the Czech Republic upon the recommendation of the scientific board of a given HEI, which is in turn presented to the President by the Minister of Education. As suggested, quality of associate professors is assured by the habilitation procedure comprising in the main the defence of a habilitation thesis¹ before the scientific board of the faculty. Meeting the quality requirements for professoriate is even more demanding, with the rank conferred to an applicant (already associate professor), who proves to be an outstanding and recognized figure in his/her particular field² through the vote of the scientific council of the HEI, following the candidate’s concept of the scholarly, scientific or artistic work and teaching in the relevant field. With respect to the appointment status, it should be stressed that the appointment to the rank of associate professor or professor is the life-time appointment, hence the conferring of the rank is not work-position dependent and/or time-limited, as it is commonly the case especially in West-European countries.

Importantly, not all HEIs are allowed to hold habilitations or procedures for the appointment of professors, as *the rights to hold these procedures are contingent on obtaining accreditation* by the Accreditation Commission (HE Act, § 82). The Accreditation Commission regularly inspects and assesses the quality of these procedures at individual faculties/HEIs that have been granted the respective rights by the Commission. To maintain the adequate (threshold quality) of accreditations of habilitations and professorial appointments, the Accreditation Commission has issued the special set of standards. In case of identification of serious shortcomings by the Commission, the right(s) of the faculty/HEI to hold the respective procedure(s) may be put on hold or terminated.

The Accreditation Commission puts a premium on quality of personnel provision as the major proxy (along with infrastructure) for assuring the quality of study programmes. Apart from the standardised requirements for accreditations of the rights to hold habilitations and professorial appointments, the Commission has also made specific rules on study programme personnel to which every (re-)accredited study programme must comply. To make an example, the Commission requires every Bachelor programme to have at least 40% of all courses be taught by (associate) professors in the corresponding field of study, with the percentage rising to 60 in case of Master programmes. In correspondence to this strategy, the recent Amendment no. 159/2010 Coll. has made it legally binding that the guarantor of every

¹ This has to be a written thesis offering new scholarly or scientific knowledge; or a collection of already published scientific or scholarly papers or technical papers supplemented with a commentary; or a published monograph introducing new scholarly or scientific knowledge; or a work of art or an artistic achievement or a collection of these, for example an outstanding public artistic activity.

² For the procedure to be initiated, the candidate for professor must present documents proving teaching experience; a list of scholarly, scientific, specialist or artistic work; a list of scholarly, scientific, specialist or artistic research fellowships both at home and abroad, and any other documents demonstrating scholarly, scientific or artistic qualifications incl. the degree of an associate professor.

study programme can be only an associate professor or professor who is an employee of the HEI providing the programme. To achieve this goal in practice, the nation-wide registry of associate professors and professors was set up in 2010. The Commission has access to the register, putting in place the rule that guarantors of study programmes (i.e. associate professors and professors) are allowed to have 1.7 of the cumulative workload at maximum³.

Basic qualification requirements for the other positions, i.e. senior assistants, assistants, lecturers and researches, are set in the internal (wage) regulations made up by each HEI or faculty⁴. As a rule, the requirements are a master degree for assistants and lecturers and a doctoral degree (PhD) for senior assistants and researchers.

Further, regardless of the staff category, quality of teaching staff is assured by the nationally regulated terms of employment. These concern *especially the rules for filling the vacancies and the rules for renewing work contracts*. The former rules stipulate that academic posts at public higher education institutions must be filled through competitive selection procedures. Such a procedure *is not required* in the case of the re-employment of an academic employee in his/her current post. Details on competitive selection procedures should be stipulated in the internal regulations of the HEI (HE Act, § 77), and it is up to the faculty/HEI to set the number of positions in individual categories (professors etc.), following its budgetary limits. The rules for *renewal* of work contracts newly follow the stipulations of the Labour Code (not HE Act) which state that fixed-term contracts can be made for three years at most and renewed only twice. This means that after nine years as the maximum, one's contract with faculty/HEI should either be made open-end or terminated.

As far as the student/staff ratio is concerned, *it is not specified but only monitored* at the level of a systemic policy. The ratio in general depends on two factors, i.e. the type and characteristics of a study programme and, correspondingly, the finance that the given faculty/HEI allots to teaching activities within the programme based on the coefficient of resource demand for a unit of study. In this respect, the national rule is that programmes with a high percentage of clinical practice (medicine), laboratory tuition (natural and live sciences) or demanding on study resources and mentoring (arts) obtain higher subsidies from the Ministry than programmes not having such characteristics and taught in larger study groups (social sciences, law, economics). In concrete terms, in 2010, HEIs showed the *average* student/staff ratio of 20.2⁵, with the lowest ratio having been reached at artistic HEIs with the significant amount of individual tuition (4.5-6.2). On the other hand, the highest student/staff ratio (48.8) was reached by one of private HEIs.

Similarly, the systemic policy *does not set provisions for the level(s) of a teaching load* per individual staff category. In this respect, the common rule applied by faculties/HEIs is that senior assistants do most of teaching in Bachelor programmes and some in Masters, with professors and associate professors being involved mainly but not exclusively in teaching in PhD and Master programmes⁶. Some HEIs have this rule institutionalised in internal documentation, some other consider it an unofficial "customary law" to be adopted without

³ In reality, this limits the numbers of workplaces they can be effectively employed at, thus reducing the phenomenon of "flying professors".

⁴ According to the HE Act, paragraph 24, faculties have the right to act in the name of the institution as far as employment relationships at the faculty level are concerned.

⁵ Including students in all modes of study (on-site, distance, combined).

⁶ For this reason, due to varied involvement in teaching activities, all academic staff (professors, associate professors, senior assistants and assistants) are also, to a different extent, pedagogic/teaching staff. Hence, the terms "academic staff", "pedagogic staff", "teaching staff" are treated as synonyms in this study.

further officially made clarifications. Obviously, all this is done whilst following the above stated requirements of the Accreditation Commission (40% of (associate) professors in Bachelor programmes, 60% of in Master programmes). Last but not least, the systemic policy, however, does recommend that HEIs should include further education (such as life long learning courses and programmes aimed at development of pedagogical skills) into their institutional wage regulations (see the Long-term plan for higher education institutions for 2011-2015⁷).

After outlining the national higher education policy provisions concerning the quality assurance of pedagogic staff, the corresponding characteristics of policies at four selected HEIs are presented in the following five paragraphs.

To begin with, job vacancies for academic staff at HEI A are filled through competitive selection procedures whose procedural terms are set in “the Regulations of competitive procedures for academic positions”. More specifically, the regulations set down the qualification requirements for individual staff categories along with the specification of procedural rules (mainly terms of setting up the selection board, decision-making rules and notification of the results). All these regulations are in accordance with the above-stated stipulations of the HE Act and Labour Code. Aside from these regulations for competitive procedures, the making and implementation of the policy on staff quality assurance at HEI A is devolved to the faculty level. This means that more specific terms of employment of academic staff including wage conditions are under the faculty responsibility.

HEI B has its institutional policy on staff quality assurance set in the Long-term plan of HEI B for 2011-2015. In it, HEI B declares to set up the internal system of assessment of academic staff and link the system to the institution-wide strategic planning and evaluation whilst respecting inter-disciplinary differences. Furthermore, the system of further education of academic staff, reflected in the rules for staff career development, should be created and implemented. The prerequisite for two systems are “the Regulations of competitive procedures for academic positions” and the systematic career development of academic staff contingent on staff motivations. To enhance such motivations, the systematic support of post-doctoral positions is declared as a priority. Overall, the corresponding policy goals are to set up the rules for academic staff career development based on proven proficiency, pedagogic competences and language skills, with the development being subject to periodic assessment and linked to salary levels. Given the developmental character of the goals up to the year 2015, for now, only preliminary evidence on goal accomplishment is available. It shows some progress in the making of the rules for academic staff career development and implementation of motivation tools distributing bonus rewards among academics with outstanding results in publications or applications (patents). The rector’s award and deans’ awards belong to motivation tools as well.

At HEI C, recruitment of academic staff for free vacancies is also subject to “the Regulations of competitive procedures for academic positions”. The aim of these regulations is to unite the rules and procedures pertaining to staff employment at faculties, institutes and other workplaces of HEI C in order to select candidates with best qualifications for the position. The regulations, however, delegate the competences regarding specific terms of employment

⁷ In full entitled “the Long-term plan for educational, scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activities of higher education institutions for 2011-2015”. The long-term plans for educational, scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activities made by individual HEI analysed in the text are also shortened in a similar fashion (the Long-term plan of HEI ... for 2011-2015).

(total wage including bonuses, length of contract) to the faculty level (personnel and wage departments) or, in case of rectorate employees, to the personnel department of the rectorate. As far as its personnel policy is concerned, HEI C specifically aims at improving the conditions of employment for outstanding researchers to reinforce their involvement in scientific projects undertaken institution-wide.

As a private institution, HEI D does not show any major differences in recruiting academic staff when compared to public HEIs A, B and C. As a rule, staff selection at HEI D takes the form of a competitive procedure and work contracts are issued for a fixed period as well as on an open-end basis. The administration of personnel contracts along with announcements of new vacancies is under the responsibility of the Department of human resource development organisationally affiliated to the rector's office. With respect to goals concerning staff quality assurance, the policy of HEI D prioritises continual enhancement of personnel qualifications in individual departments especially by attracting doctoral students with a publication records for a longer-term work involvement in HEI D. The policy further aims at strengthening the professional competences of study programme guarantors and seeking ways of active involvement of professionals from practice especially as far as their teaching in elective courses and sitting on examination boards are concerned (see the update of the Long-term plan of HEI for 2012).

Finally, as far as the student/staff ratios are concerned, the four HEIs selected for the enquiry show some differences when compared to each other as well as to the national average (20.2:1). The lowest student/staff ratio (10:1) is at HEI A due to a high percentage of institutionalised laboratory tuition. Comprehensive HEI B has this ratio slightly under the national average (19.2:1), whilst HEI C slightly above (22.3:1). Private HEI D shows the highest student/staff ratio of 37.8:1, which may be due to a substantial proportion of the combined mode of studies within programmes taught at HEI D, putting less demands on in-class tuition.

2. What are the criteria of staff recruitment and appointment procedures? How they assure the quality of teaching?

As suggested, the criteria for staff appointment are, in general, set from the national level through the rules of habilitations and professorial appointments subject to accreditation by the Accreditation Commission (see question 1). At the same time, the 2010 legal rule concerning guarantors of study programmes to be only (associate) professors has to be observed in practice. In reflection of the corresponding national rules, the institutional criteria for staff recruitment further specify the qualification requirements which commonly are: education attained, degree(s) awarded, teaching practice, research expertise and membership in scientific committees/boards/associations. The research expertise has to be proved by the list of publications. Official validation of candidate's documentation submitted as a proof of meeting the criteria is requested. The procedural rules for taking on academic staff follow the internal regulations of competitive procedures for academic positions⁸ (HEIs A-C) or the Labour Code (HEI D). Based on their qualifications, newly employed staff are assigned the wage category⁹ plus the wage tariff according to the years of proved experience. The assignment rules follow the internal wage regulations (HEIs A-C). To give an example, the

⁸ In full agreement with the Labour Code.

⁹ Mostly in the form of a four-degree scale (A1-A4), where A1 belongs to assistants/lectures, A2 to senior assistants, A3 to associate professors and A4 to professors.

linkage between qualification requirements, years of practice and wage tariffs in place at HEI B is shown in Table 1.

Position	Qualification requirements	Practice minimum	Wage tariff
Professor	Appointment of professor	7 years	13
Associate professor	Appointment of associate professor	5 years	12
Senior assistant with scientific degree	Research degree (CSc., Dr.,PhD., ThD.)	3 years	11
Senior assistant without scientific degree	University degree (MA)	3 years	10
Lecturer I	University degree (MA)	3 years	10
Lecturer II	N/a	N/a	9
Assistant	University degree (MA)	N/a	9

As to the possibility of multiple workloads, the Labour Code and the HE Act stipulate that a person may have one workload (i.e. up to a “full” workload of 1.0) per one position in one institution. In practice, this means that e.g. one person may have one workload as an associate professor and another as a vice-dean (but not two associate professor’s workloads at two faculties of one HEI). Nevertheless, there are no other nation-wide limitations for multiple positions at different institutions (different legal persons), not these are limited institution-wide. Still, importantly, the requirements of the 2010 Amendment to the HE Act concerning the qualifications for programme guarantors combined with the Accreditation Commission’s requirements of maximal cumulative loads per a programme guarantor should be seen as the measure for assuring minimal quality of study programmes provided by Czech HEIs (public and private). These accompanying provisions thus aim at promotion of typically one full workload per institution and possibly (one) limited work involvement elsewhere. Therefore, as far as individual HEIs are concerned, some explicitly prefer their staff to have full workloads at the institution whenever possible (HEI A), whilst some do not seem to have such an explicit preference (HEI B). Still, due to short supply of (associate) professors for programme guaranteeing, still some other institutions, i.e. mostly new private HEIs, such as HEI D, have to rely more on a number of less-than-full staff workloads, making most of them.

Q3: How the HEI is supporting the quality of teaching performance?

Specifically to consider:

Q3a: In which way the HEI is supporting development of teaching skills?

The major instrument of supporting the development of staff teaching skills is training courses. Pedagogic courses as part of further education are offered by all four HEIs surveyed. Aside from further education in pedagogy and didactics, there are also training courses in foreign languages and specialised courses improving one’s knowledge of a particular discipline or area of a professional interest. These two types of courses are also commonly offered by all four HEIs under study¹⁰. As to course attendance, the inspected HEIs seem to show very reasonable figures. To illustrate, in 2011, there were 1,704 academic staff of HEI

¹⁰ As to the type of course provision, the courses may either be offered by university itself or by an external body/agency. If held by university, the course participation is free of charge for university staff. If held externally, the university covers a full amount of participation fees, i.e. participating university staff attends for free as well.

B, participating in course training (307 staff enrolled in 36 pedagogic courses), with about 300 academic staff enrolled in more than one course. At HEI D 34 teaching staff members were involved in the courses of pedagogy. In the same year (2011), there were 911 academic staff of HEI C participating in course training (all types of courses), whilst the corresponding participation of academic staff of HEI A was 728 with 16 participants enrolled specially in a pedagogic course.

As far as specific policy measures are concerned, out of HEIs surveyed, HEI A gives attention to staff development explicitly in its strategic policy documents. More specifically, in the institutional Long-term for 2011-2015, HEI A declares giving support to the training of teachers and other selected staff in pedagogic knowledge and skills as well as in the areas of psychological competences and communication skills. The aim is to enhance quality of pedagogic staff and promote their career development through improving qualifications, with the latter especially relevant to young staff. Institutional quality enhancement is thus contingent on enhancing qualifications of academic staff and other staff in direct contact with students. A large proportion of these training activities is the improvement of staff language skills (see also 2012 update to the Long-term of HEI A for 2011-2015). The empirical evidence of course attendance in 2012 indeed shows the highest number of participants (609) enrolled in courses that include foreign language training. The respondents interviewed at HEI A also confirmed the benefits obtained from participation in foreign language courses, with some staff considering the free-of-charge participation (see footnote no. 10) as a kind of an employment bonus.

Different responses were, however, obtained as regards further pedagogic training. Some interviewees at HEI A consider them beneficial; some others are more hesitant in this respect, pointing out time limitations and stressing the importance of discipline-specific knowledge and skills. The importance of these courses (possibly held in more authentic, interactive ways) for young staff members (“post-doc” category) is generally acknowledged at HEI A. The same holds true for differentiation of teaching skills in Bachelor and Master programmes. On the other hand, the system of tutors or peer-evaluations based on in-class observations is not universally supported. Given these somewhat different viewpoints, HEI A has, for now, not reached a full, institution-wide agreement on (compulsory) introduction of pedagogic training for academic staff (and thus the ways of meeting the goals set in the institutional Long-term plan), though agreement exists on offering a course portfolio to every staff showing interests in his/her further education and qualification enhancement. Similar dilemmas on further pedagogic training can be documented at HEI C, which has made participation in these courses (sometimes informally called “pedagogic minimum”) obligatory for PhD students and highly recommended to all other academic staff categories. In this respect, the dissenting voices point out especially the tension between quality-teaching and quality-research, with the latter being given priority by their superiors (as well as in career development, i.e. especially the progression to the rank of (associate) professor).

Q3b: How the HEI is supporting quality of teaching performance by modernisation of teaching equipment, size of students groups, etc.

HEIs surveyed make use of several strategies to support the quality of teaching performance. First, there is modernisation of equipment and library funds which is done at all four HEIs on a regular basis. In case of public HEIs (HEI A-C), the modernisation is supported by different

financial instruments from the systemic level (i.e. mainly the Higher Education Development Fund, the Development Programmes, the Operation Programme “Education for Competitiveness”). More specifically, the modernisation also includes the making of study supports for distance and combined mode of studies increasingly available in electronic forms accessible via the internet applications¹¹ (Moodle etc.). HEI C further gives specific attention to supporting on-site students by the process of converting lecture records into electronic formats available for downloads (once the lecture has been held). Given the large percentage of student in the combined form of study (about 60% of the total), private HEI D has invested, into setting up a multimedia centre responsible for the creation of electronic study supports and multimedia teaching and study aids in general.

Second, there is streaming and support of student population on entry. To this end, HEI A has developed and offers entry tests in maths and chemistry to diagnose the level of student entry knowledge in these major areas of study within the institution. Based on the tests results, students are offered somewhat different study progression paths (with a different amount and sequencing of courses whilst respecting the basic study requirements). The modular course composition behind the scheme, making flexibility of study paths possible, has met with success and is generally considered effective in combating uneven entry knowledge in key areas (maths, chemistry) and reducing drop-out rates. The support to enhancing the quality of teaching activities as well as to updating material infrastructure (e.g. laboratory equipment) are, again, explicitly declared in the Long-term Plan of HEI A. Somewhat correspondingly, HEI D offers a portfolio of compensatory courses before as well as after the study entry, depending on applicant’s levels of knowledge.

Third, there is a close collaboration with secondary schools. In this respect, three HEIs (A, C, D) have their source secondary schools from which they tend to draw talented applicants for study. To enhance their study motivations, HEI C develops the institution-wide system of scholarships to attract the most talented secondary students. Other than financial means (in-class demonstrations, summer schools, promotion events such as “days of science” etc.) are also made use of especially by HEI A and C. These can also be, to an extent, considered instruments *indirectly* promoting the quality of tuition, especially by helping to establish rapport/closer contact between “soon-to-be-students” and teaching staff of a given HEI.

Q4: How the quality of teaching performance is assessed? In which way the assessment is done? How does the HEI use results of the assessment?

Assessment of the quality of teaching performance is in place at all four HEIs under study. In all four cases, the quality of teaching performance is assessed externally through the (re-) accreditation process of the Accreditation Commission along with the Commission’s programme/faculty evaluations including site visits with evaluation of theses (BA, MA, PhD) as well as random meetings with students. Another type of external assessment of tuition comes from the alumni and is also organized, in some form, at all four HEIs studied. To give an example, HEI C runs the institution-wide alumni assessment every two years, with the assessment centred on knowledge, skills and abilities gained during study and their

¹¹ Implementation of e-learning methods and well as a distance mode of study is considered problematic by some respondents at HEI A. This is especially due to the characteristics of the key study area (chemistry) that effectively requires on-site tuition (to a large extent in a laboratory form).

employability in the labour market. The information thus obtained is collected, stored and used in the process of (re-) designing individual study courses, modules or programmes

Internally, the quality of teaching performance is typically assessed through student evaluations. Again, some form of student evaluation of teaching is in place at all four HEIs analysed. Student evaluations are done once or twice an academic year in a purely electronic form (HEI A, B) or in combination of electronic and paper forms (HEI C, D). To design and administer student evaluations, HEI D has set up the Laboratory of empirical studies. There is mostly not a standardised format of the evaluation questionnaires intra-institutionally, though HEI C is taking steps in this direction, involving student chambers of faculty academic senates to coordinate and plan the corresponding activities as well as to secure support of the faculty senior management. The evaluations focus on appropriateness of course content and effectiveness of its delivery (i.e. teaching approaches methods used, level of pedagogic competences of a teacher). The low response rate seems to be a factor in case of HEI A (11% on average), HEI B and HEI C (both 10% on average) limiting the utilisation of evaluation results in practice. For this reason, the results have more of an indicative function, rarely leading to concrete actions (staff dismissal), though some changes of teaching staff responsible for a particular course have been identified (HEI C). Interviewees from HEI C further report limited students' awareness of evaluation results that are mostly studied by heads of departments (and sometimes by faculty senior management, i.e. deans and vice-deans). To enhance the student interest in evaluations of tuition and utilisation of their results at HEI C, the student chambers of the faculty academic senates have newly started to organise "the competition for the best pedagogues".

Despite these problematic areas, HEI A considers student evaluation an indispensable part of evaluation activities taking place within the institution, whilst respondents from HEI B report that there are some supplementary evaluations of tuition organised by teaching staff themselves (typically by in-class distribution of questionnaires) to obtain valid student feedback. In addition to student evaluations, HEI C has implemented a system of teacher peer-evaluations, taking the form of in-class observations and the subsequent analysis and discussion. HEI D declares to set up and effectively develop the system of peer-evaluations in its Long-term plan for 2011-2015.

To help achieve a comprehensive and balanced system of assessment of teaching performance intra-institutionally, HEI A and HEI B run pilot projects. The piloting of a new comprehensive evaluation system of teachers' performance at HEI A is done at one of its faculties. In more detail, the system entails three areas of pedagogic work, i.e. *educational activities*, *creative activities* and *other (standing for activities generally helpful for the faculty such as administrative work, preparation of projects and development of international co-operation)*. All available and relevant data from information databases of HEI A are collected and imported to make the evaluation profile of every staff member. Every staff member is, in turn, asked to verify the data and complement them with the (yearly) plan of his/her development, possibly including requirements for/prerequisites of it. Afterwards, the data and the developmental plan are studied by the head of the respective department, holding an interview with the staff to arrive at fixed plan for the next year. At the same time, the interview is used to discuss the fulfilment of the last-year plan. The discussion finally leads to the grade-evaluation (A-F) of the academic staff member by the departmental head. The evaluation results are made available to the heads of departments (only departmental staff) or the dean (all faculty staff). Importantly, the evaluation is undertaken as *interactive and formative*, not having any impact on salary levels and bonuses or removal of a particular staff

from the course and the like. The aim of this staff evaluation system of teaching activities is to obtain a qualitative picture of the situation, to make teaching more effective and. Overall, to enhance the culture of quality within the institution. HEI A has plans to implement a system like this at all of its faculties (see the 2011 update to the Long-term plan). Similarly, the Faculty of Science of HEI B has been testing the comprehensive system of academic staff evaluation. However, compared to HEI A, this system *includes all activities* of academic staff, i.e. including research as well as management, and is *quantitative* in nature. The three areas subject to evaluation, i.e. pedagogy, research and management, further include a list of the corresponding activities. The scores obtained by every staff (mined from the databases as well as imputed by the evaluated staff) for every category are then standardised, i.e. the score in every category is divided by the points considered a category standard for a particular position (assistant, (associate) professor etc.). In turn, the standardised results are made into oral descriptors and made available to senior faculty management. The management of the Faculty of Science put this system into standard operation (i.e. made it compulsory) for all faculty staff from the beginning of 2012.

Q5: How teachers are motivated by the HEI to assure and improve the quality of teaching?

At four HEIS under analysis, a significant financial motivational tool for academic staff is personal bonuses and financial rewards. The conditions of their payment are set in the institutional wage regulations, with the decision for their granting usually up to the head of a department (or a dean in case of special rewards for faculty management). Another motivation tool is the opportunity to achieve the status of (associate) professor after a successful (habilitation) procedure, which apart from its prestige and job security (due to guaranteeing study programmes) also brings higher salaries and financial bonuses. Regrettably, the corresponding procedure puts emphasis on scientific outputs rather than high-quality teaching. Also at sample HEIs, the bonuses and rewards seem to come predominantly from research-intensive activities and achievements (typically monographs and articles in impact-factor journals generating enough research points for evidence in the national database of research outputs) than from tuition excellence (e.g. excellent student evaluations of the course, excellent supervision of theses and the like). This leads to a well-known drift towards time-demanding research activities, leaving less time for quality tuition (mentioned specifically at HEI C). Still, HEI A takes steps to balance the impact of research and teaching activities on extra financial rewards of academic staff. This is done by specifically differentiating between research outputs (measured by the number of research points generated by one staff) and teaching outputs (number of hours taught), with the personal bonus for the latter activities often also dependent on implementing some teaching innovation (e.g. based on a project with a pedagogic focus). Last but not least, the non-financial motivation for enhancing quality of tuition can come simply as a result of teaching a group(s) of gifted and motivated students, such as in case of courses within a study programmes “Chemistry for talented students ” at HEI A.

Q6: Who is (what does it mean to be) a good university teacher? (in opinion of respondents)

The profile of a good teacher, as outcomes of interviews and a panel discussion involving respondents with different academic ranks (professors etc.) is summarised below. A good teacher at HEI thus must:

- Be proficient in his/her discipline or a field of professional study;
- Have developed pedagogical and didactic skills;
- Have a personal integrity;
- Have developed processual skills (i.e. to be able to facilitate and moderate learning content to students, to provide guidance and to motivate students);
- Be capable of passing knowledge effectively to students and able to create added value in knowledge transfer, i.e. to make especially (below-) average student become above-average;
- Have professional behaviour and be capable of critical self-reflection;
- Have opportunity and will for further education;
- Have loyalty to employer institution.

The extent of these abilities and skills, making a profile of a good teacher, can differ, depending on the type of programme the person is involved in. Typically, a teacher in a Bachelor programme should have developed pedagogic and didactic skills and be able to motivate students, which may be needed to a lesser extent as far as teaching in Master and doctoral programmes is concerned.

Summary and conclusions

The enquiry into the quality of teaching staff at four selected HEIS shows no outstanding barriers to the implementation of the ESG 1.4 Standard. Qualifications, professional knowledge and competences of teaching staff were not subject to criticism and are universally considered more than adequate throughout the HEIs surveyed. The quality of study programmes in personnel terms, i.e. adequacy of staff knowledge, skills and abilities, are commonly assured by habilitations or professorial appointments that are the prerequisite for guaranteeing the programme quality. In this respect, the register of (associate) professors' workloads, though disputed by some, helped to curb uncontrollable mushrooming of new study programme of possibly lower standards than the minimal requirements set by the Accreditation Commission, including the extent of teaching loads of (associate) professors in programme provision.

At four HEIs reviewed, teaching staff have several opportunities to get involved in courses of further professional training and the corresponding attendance figures seem to be mostly favourable. The acquisition of basic (core) teaching skills and competences ("pedagogic minimum") is becoming required especially in case of the new staff, but it is still not a universal standard across all four HEIs (though HEIC made such training obligatory for its PhD students and HEI A is currently discussing the form of further pedagogic training for all its academic staff). The differences in student/staff ratios among the four HEIs are due to different programmatic focus and modes of study applied to study programmes on offer by individual parts of HEIs.

Still, there are some factors preventing implementation of the ESG 1.4 Standard and the corresponding guidelines *to the maximum extent*. Aside from the missing agreement on the (compulsory) implementation of the pedagogic minimum, there is also an untapped potential

in student evaluations as well as staff peer-evaluations done through in-class observations and subsequent discussions. The potential of the former evaluations is limited by low participation rates (around 10%), whilst there seems to be some staff resistance to the latter evaluations, possibly also because of potential spill-over effects on salary levels and bonuses. Such possible fears and dissent might be somewhat toned down by clear rules for career progression and motivation tools for rewarding high-quality teaching, which are still not sufficiently developed everywhere (e.g. missing at some parts of HEI B). Another factor limiting high-quality teaching is the well-known staff research drift due to general higher prestige and financial rewards associated with research (specifically mentioned at HEI C). In this respect, especially the approach of HEI A, piloting formative staff peer-evaluations at one of its faculties and making efforts to implement specific rules for rewarding teaching duties, can be considered an example of effective practice institution- and nation-wide.

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