

From study programme accreditation to study programme group assessment

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Agenda



- Higher education and quality assurance systems in Estonia
- Principles of the new type of assessment - implementation and lessons learnt

Estonia 2013: some indicators



Population: 1,29 million

45 000 sq km

1500 islands

Forests 52,3 % of land area

Average monthly salary 957 EUR

Unemployment rate 10,2 %

GDP at current prices 16 998 mil EUR



Higher education in Estonia



Higher education institutions (HEI)	No of HEIs
public universities	6
private universities	1
state institutions of prof HE	9
private institutions of prof HE	11
state institutions of VET	2
Number of students	67 607



Main activities

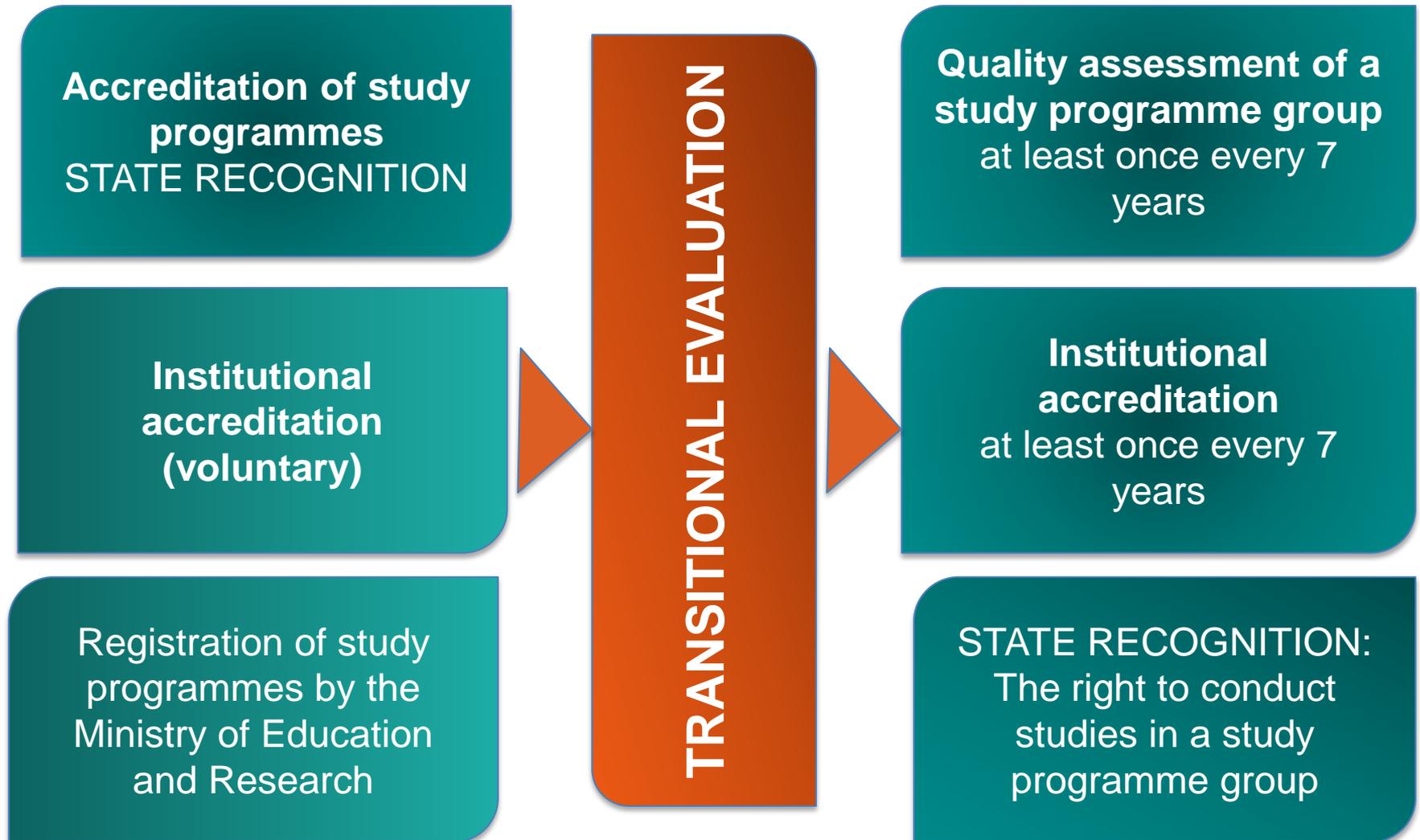
- Development of principles and procedures of external evaluation
- **Assessment of the quality of a study program group (SPG) in HE**
- **Institutional accreditation (IA) in HE**
- **Accreditation of study program groups in VET**
- Training and counseling
- Publications
- International cooperation

Higher Education Quality Assessment System in Estonia

1997-2009

2009-2011

2011 ...



The need for the shift



- The existing system was resource and time consuming for both HEIs and the state
- Did not have much impact on the organizational learning and development of the university as an organization
- The focus of the accreditations was too broad – they were simultaneously focused on controlling and on giving recommendations for further development
- In the case of a negative decision, the result of the accreditation could be closure of the study programme, thus the honesty in analysing development needs was strongly challenged

Principles of study programme group assessment



- All principal stakeholders of HE provided their inputs during the process of developing the evaluation policies and procedures; educational institutions in particular were included in the development process.
 - Focus group interviews
 - HEI vice-rectors

In autumn 2012, the guidelines were tested by pilot assessment of the Informatics and Information Technology SPG at two public universities.

Study programme group assessment



- The new system of QA is developed to give feedback on study programme groups, in this way supporting their development. This approach enables assessments of a more general nature than the evaluation of a single study programme.

Major challenge: to find a balance between two conflicting realities: on the one hand, HEIs expect feedback on every single study programme and; on the other hand the experts' limited time resources, which do not enable them to deal with all study programmes in depth.

Tailor-made assessment



- The external quality assessment system goes hand in hand with internal work on quality in universities.

The quality agency proposes the areas of assessment and (minimum) standards as well as questions to ask within each standard.

The questions in the standards are not compulsory

The HEIs are asked to specify the areas where they expect to receive more thorough feedback from experts

The study programmes to be assessed within an SPG are chosen in cooperation with the quality agency and the HEI.

Less extra work



- The HEI is expected to provide as little extra data for evaluation as possible, and experts are provided with direct links to the available information sources.

The challenge is to find a balance between universities' workloads in preparing their self-evaluations and additional documentation for assessment, and assessment experts' workloads in analysing and contextualising that information.

In traditional or electronic format?



A tailor-made assessment - structure of self-analyses varies as does that of the experts' assessment reports.

The more diverse the structure and content of the reports are, the harder it is to fulfil (even describe) or foresee future requirements while developing an electronic environment.

The electronic evaluation platform that was intended for the SPG assessment was not that well perceived by HEI nor by experts.

Summary



- The format and procedure of the SPG assessment was well perceived by piloting HEIs. The reports were considered to be helpful in planning the development of SPGs
- Experts` workloads in processing the information as well as training of experts should carefully be planned
- The information (and cooperation) needs of HEI, quality agency and experts should be thoroughly studied to continue with the development of electronic assessment platform.

