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Organizational and cultural specificities on quality implementation in ODL in 5 European countries

Favorable and blocking factors

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ATTENTION!

- The results are based on 5 countries, they don't necessarily reflect the diversity of situations in Europe
- Data presented here has been gathered in 2004
- Data may be dated 1, 2 or more years before...



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The situation in Finland

- Autonomy and size of universities make change a slow process.
- Some departments are already involved in quality assurance but transfer is difficult within a faculty and even more between faculties.
- Lack of transparency in management decision.
- Teachers feel that quality is time consuming and not enough recognized .



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The situation in France

- Universities are autonomous but they are mainly supported by state funding. They don't manage really human resources.
- Pedagogy is not a criterion to hire or promote teachers.
- Problem of the status of teachers – about time to be spent in face-to-face teaching - is not solved.
- Teachers feel that quality is time consuming and not recognized by their administration nor by their colleagues.
- The national agency plays a role in institutional evaluation but not yet at the level of staff and teachers



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The situation in Poland

- Main issues:
 - the number of High Education institutions,
 - the lack of thorough participants' verification, because of evolving staff, and varying conditions
 - the lack of clear and responsive quality normative body for Higher Education institutions.



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The situation in Spain

- Several changes from governmental decisions in a few years.
- Importance of autonomy for universities.
- Discussion on the role of universities:
 - the appropriateness of the increasing use of ICT,
 - the growth of the university participation,
 - the relationship with the labour market
 - the importance of the ‘professional function’.
 - the role of the teacher: moving from a mere transmitter of knowledge to an academic counselor or facilitator and someone which may fit the students’ needs.
- The role of quality agencies in the evaluation, certification and accreditation processes.



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The situation in Switzerland

- Cooperative Federalism is one of the most important cultural aspects that influence quality evaluation process
- 4 official different languages
- In German part, people are more quality oriented than in French or Italian parts
- Belief: « if every minor task is certified, the whole process will present the best quality »
- Learners are generally considered like any other “product” and pedagogy is not often included in the norm
- ODL has a very short history in this country so quality is oddly not the first preoccupation of ODL course developers and sustainers.





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The facilitating factors in HE (1)

- Quality is a compulsory process in all the countries for HE institutions
- The five states have national agencies in charge of quality, even if they don't have the same status, especially in Finland
- Bergen decision makes ENQA guidelines an official reference



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The facilitating factors in HE (2)

- The new European degree organization (Bachelor Master Doctorate) will lead universities to publicize their training programmes and to facilitate to their students an access to training modules from other universities;
- The ECTS system with possible equivalence of credits will promote student virtual mobility;
- With an easier and faster access to Internet, the universities begin to face concurrence with other European universities;
- ODL appears as a new reality and a means to attract national and foreign students;
- The evolution of technologies, including high-speed access to Internet, development of e-mail communication, forums, videoconferences, streaming video etc., make possible the condition for high level ODL services.



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The blocking factors in HE (1)

- Blocking factors, common to the 5 countries:
 - High focus is put on teaching instead of learning
 - To design quality ODL material is time consuming



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The blocking factors in HE (2)

- Blocking factors, common to 4 out of the 5 countries:
 - Teachers are reluctant to be evaluated
 - Traditional low consideration of ODL and consequently no recognition of ODL teaching
 - Copyright issues are not taken into account
 - Low value of the pedagogical issues: when recruiting new university teachers, the pedagogical skills are not a prerequisite



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The blocking factors in HE (2)

Blocking factors, common to 4 out of the 5 countries:

	Fi	Fr	PI	Sp	Sw
Teachers are reluctant to be evaluated	X	X		X	X
Low value of the pedagogical issues: when recruiting new university teachers, the pedagogical skills are not a prerequisite	X	X	X		X
Copyright issues are not taken into account	X	X	X		X
Traditional low consideration of ODL and consequently no recognition of ODL teaching	X	X	X	X	