How to get ready for change?

Co-building a future scenario for external quality assurance in the French-speaking community of Belgium

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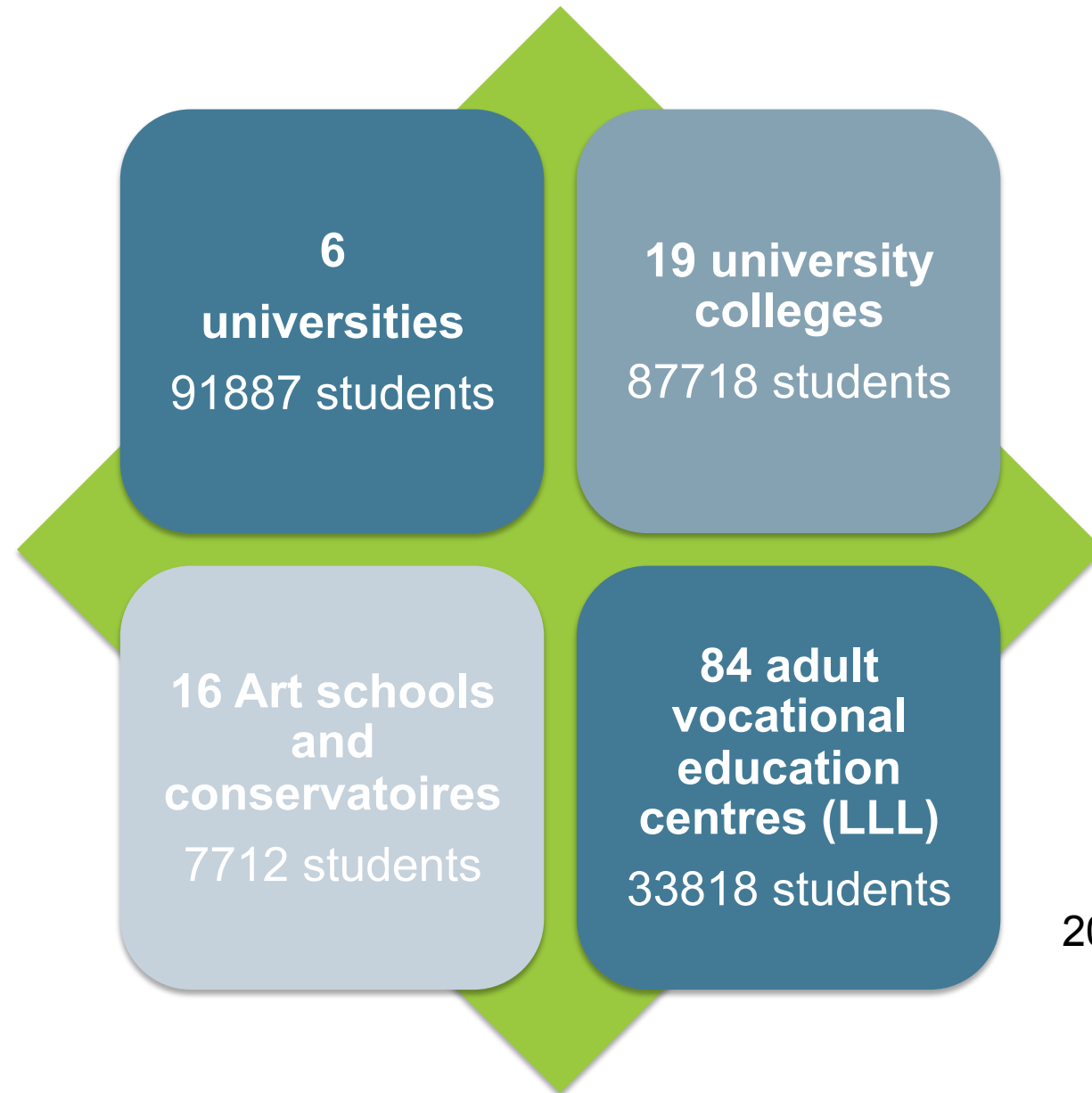**Caty Duykaerts, AEQES, Belgium**
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Outline

- Context data of the present situation : HE system, AEQES main features
- Why changing the EQA approach?
- Overview of the whole process
- Online consultation results
- Consultation, next steps
- The future model and the pilot phase
- Lessons learned so far

the HE system

6 universities
91887 students

19 university colleges
87718 students

16 Art schools and conservatoires
7712 students

84 adult vocational education centres (LLL)
33818 students

2014/2015 figures

AEQES key features

- AEQES established by decree in 2002, revised by decree in 2008

- First ENQA review in 2011 > full membership and EQAR registered in 2012

- Reviewed again in 2016 > renewed ENQA full membership and EQAR registration

  See http://www.aeqes.be/documents/8ExternalReviewReportAEQESFINAL.pdf

  http://www.aeqes.be/documents/20170627RenewalDecisionAEQES.pdf

- formative, enhancement-led programmed-based evaluation process (no formal effects on HEIs funding or authorization to operate)

- public service QAA

- collaboration with other agencies for joint missions
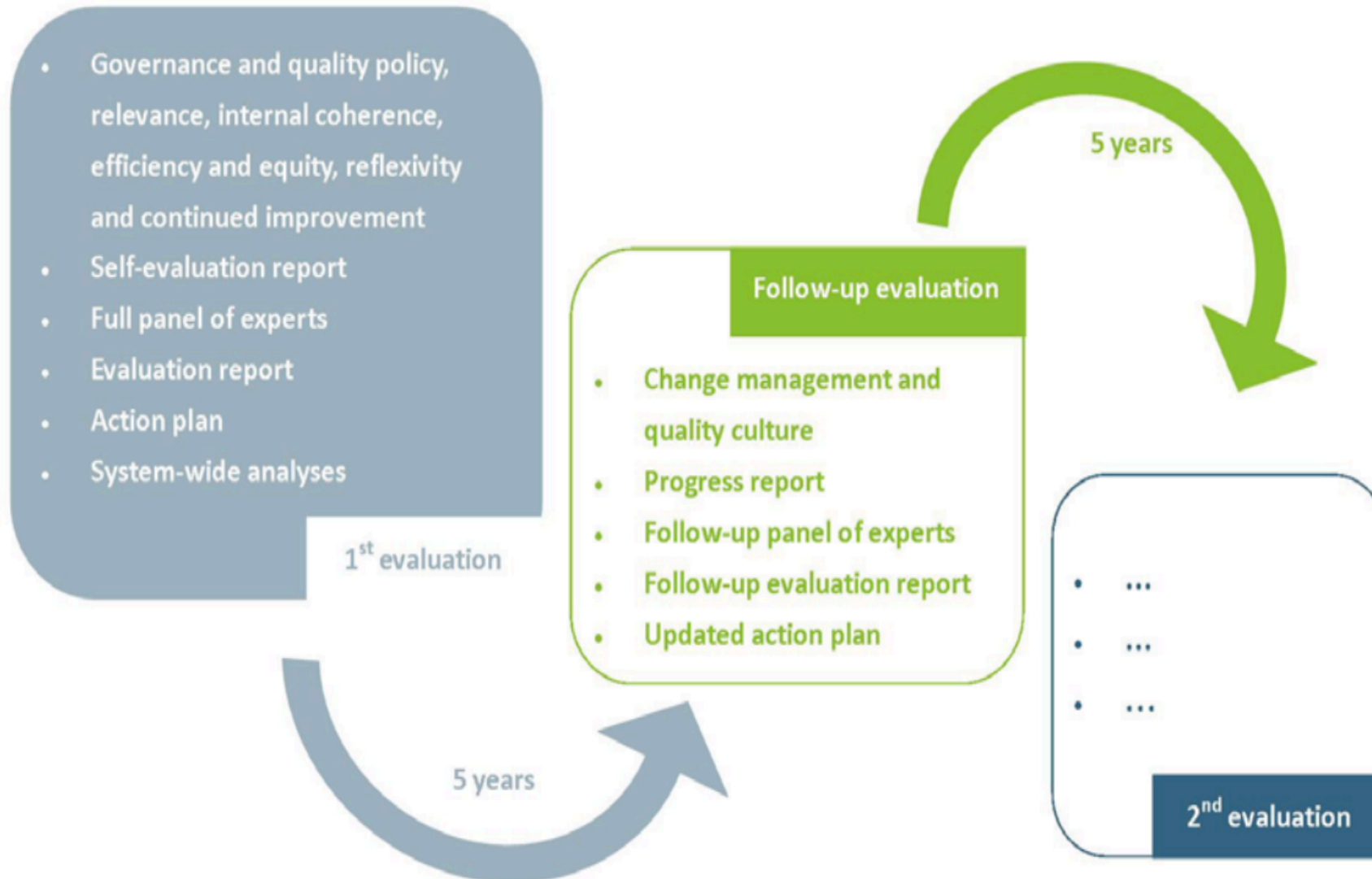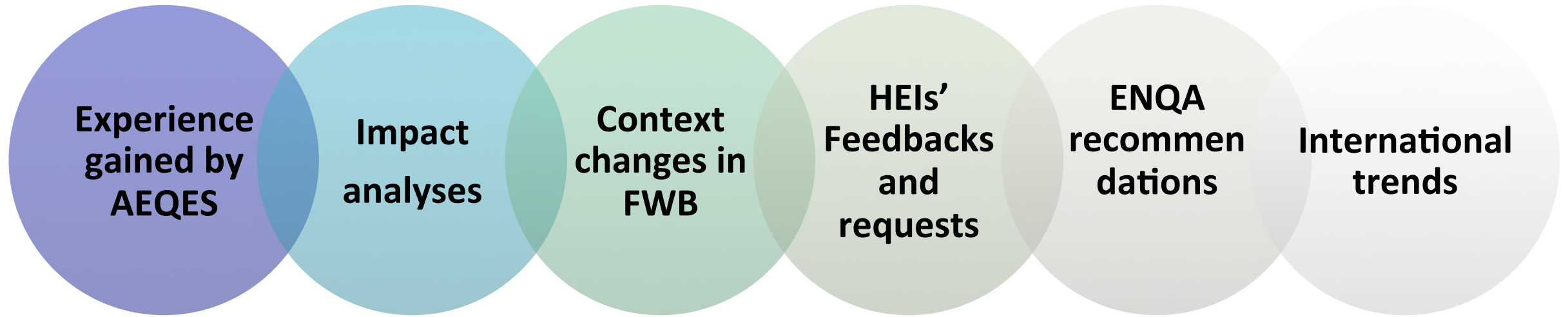
AEQES evaluation framework

Programmatic approach but also institutional criteria

LO, competences, SCL approaches

Impact on the needed expertise for the panel

Why changing the EQA approach?

Experience gained by AEQES

Impact analyses

Context changes in FWB

HEIs' Feedbacks and requests

ENQA recommen dations

International trends

- At the international level → strengthen the reliability and efficiency of the formative approach of FWB

- For the HEIs → support them developing their IQA practices, and therefore strengthening their autonomy and responsibility for the quality of the overall HE provision

towards a new EQA methodology: an iterative and participative process

- **Exploratory desk-research on quality assurance in HE**

  Working Group

  Preliminary report published [May 2016] + Dissemination

- **Wide consultation**

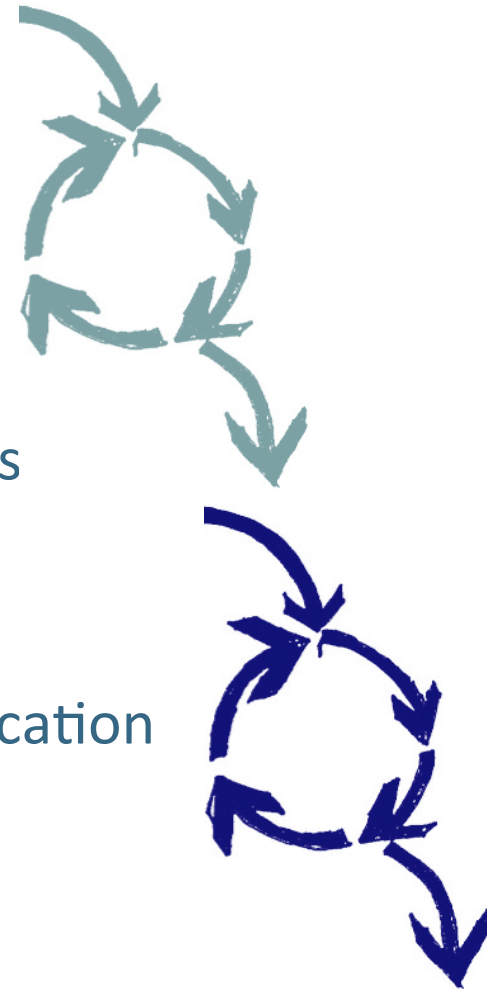 Two online surveys – results published [Feb-Apr 2017]

  Synthesis : context, general guidelines and five principles

  Focus groups + written feedback asked from the main HE bodies international independent experts and QAAs

- **Final report**

  Endorsement by the Steering Committee of the Agency + publication [October 2017]

  Dissemination among stakeholders

Online surveys: 1000 + 48 answers provided food for thought

- 1000 answers from HEIs stakeholders (response rate = 17,6%)

- 48 answers from HEIs authorities (response rate = 38,4%)

- *Statistical representativeness not ensured but the sample demonstrated a wide range of contexts and practices.*

- Main trends :

  Positive feedback on current AEQES methodology.

  Opinions on "pros and cons of 4 prospective methodological scenarios": no clear "trend" + in line with what was discussed in the report.

  Authorities divergent views on institutional evaluations.

- Key issues :

  Workload, risks of evaluation fatigue

  Means and resources (not) available to implement an institutional evaluation

consultation on « the principles note » : context, pre-requisites, desirable changes and guidelines

- <u>Principle 1</u>: towards a better articulation between programmes evaluation and institutional evaluation

- <u>Principle 2</u>: EQA mechanisms are progressively transformed to support the HEIs in developing IQA

- <u>Principle 3</u>: the HEIs autonomy is supported by the Agency within the ESG guidelines

- <u>Principle 4</u>: accountability and quality enhancement are (better) balanced

- <u>Principle 5</u>: workload and cost of EQA to be considered and coped with

consultation on « the principles note » : main outcomes

Trends (+)

- Proposal in line with QA evolutions in Europe and Belgium, with the revised ESG, with AEQES' gained experience and expertise, with stakeholders consultation results.

- Co-construction and reflexive process initiated to revise AEQES' EQA

- Maintaining a formative evaluation approach focused on continuous improvement

- Introducing an institutional evaluation aimed at strengthening all HEIs IQA and Quality culture

- Step by step approach to implement the new methodology

- HEIs autonomy and responsibility

Trends (clarifications?)

- How… *practically and in details*… will "xxx" be done?

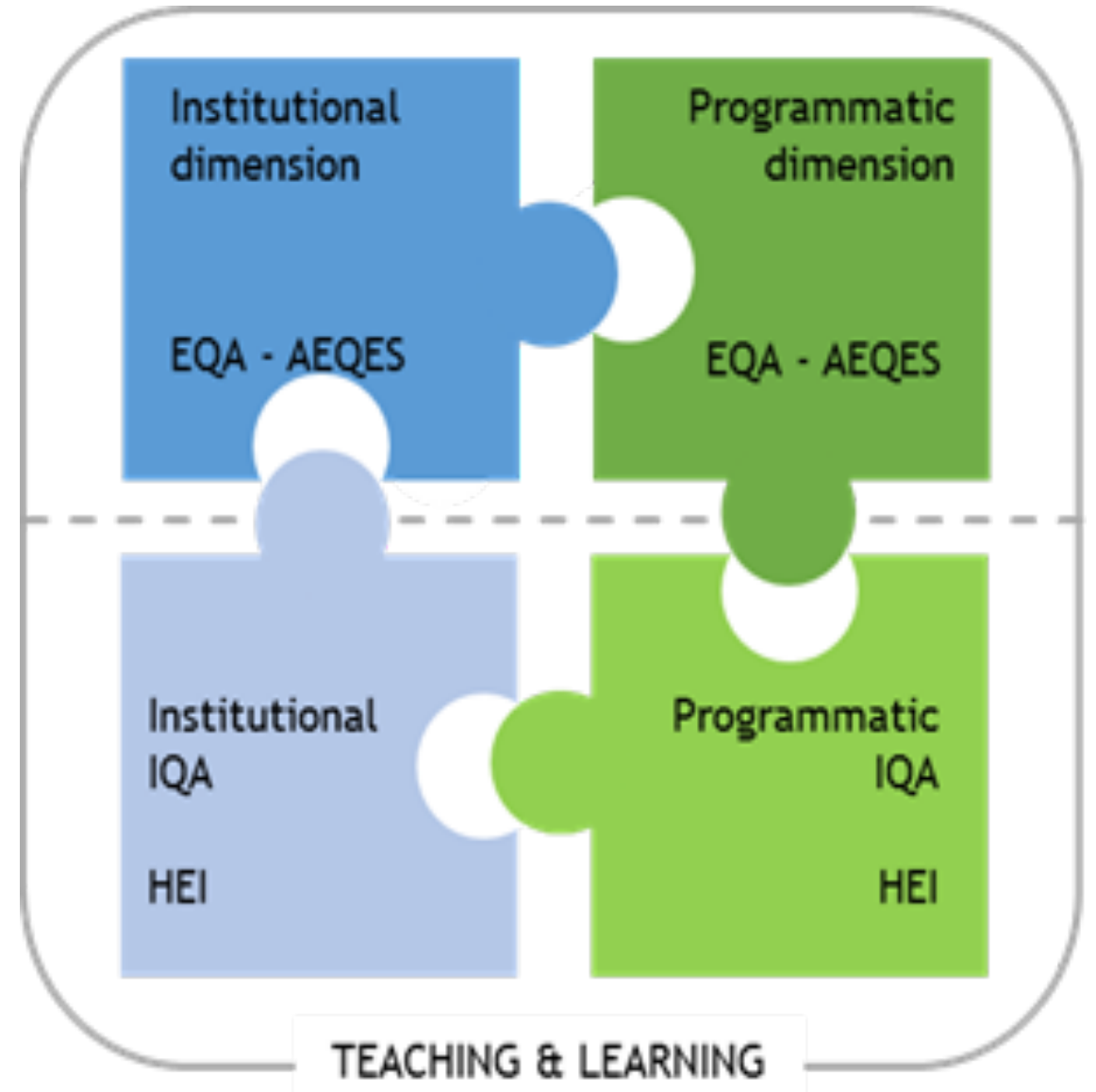- In the long term, what will be the articulation between institutional evaluation and programmatic evaluation?

consultation on « the principles note » : main outcomes (2)
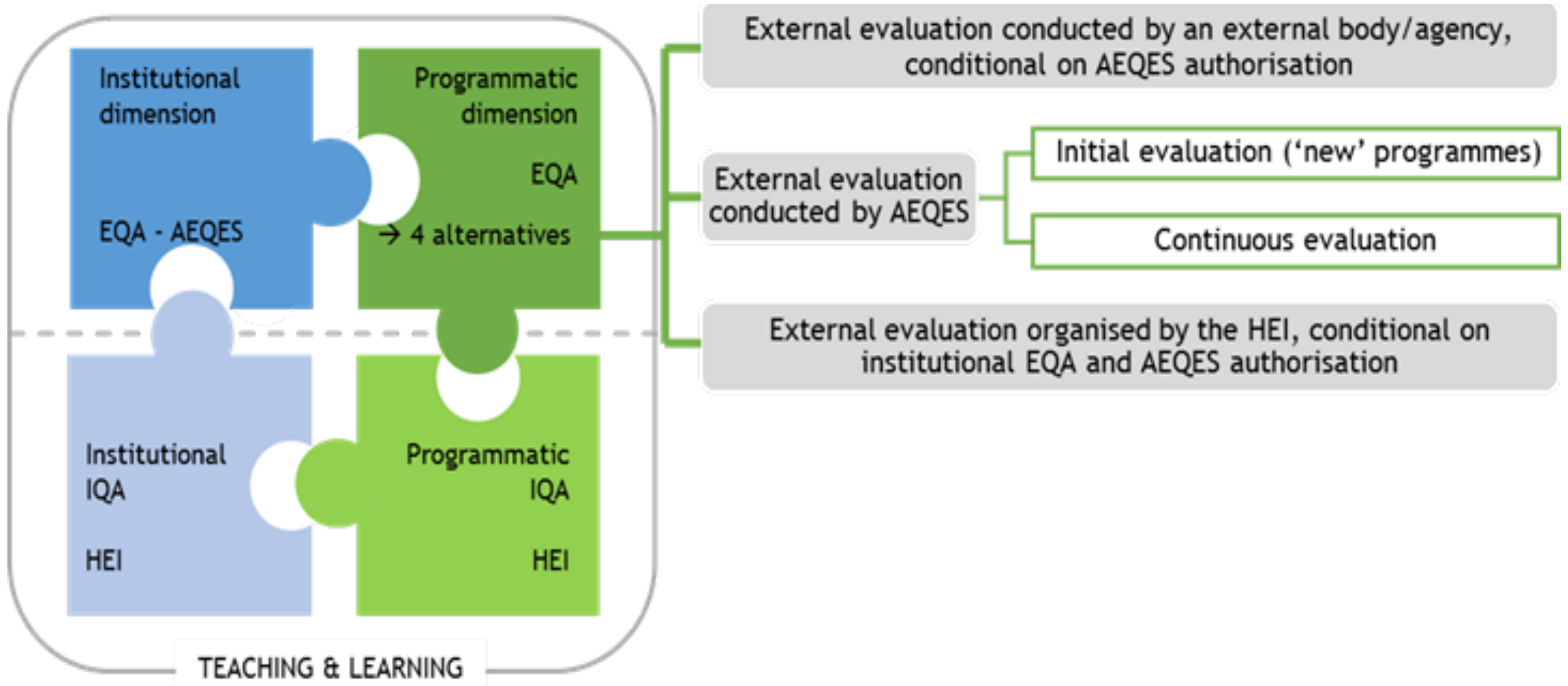
Trends (critical points)

- Balance between, "HEIs autonomy & responsibility" and "AEQES framework and control"

- Principles of equity and equality: of treatment, of context, of outputs….

- What perimeter for institutional evaluation? Focus on teaching and learning vs. holistic approach.

- Balance between "risk-based approach" and "formative evaluation" ?

- Financial and organisational impact; means and resources available

➔ Aim at a "clear and simple" methodological model to take into account the diversity of HEIs and their context, strategy, resources, etc.

**Towards an evaluation approach
that articulates the
institutional dimension
with the programmatic
dimension**

EQA articulated model from 1st cycle on

Institutional dimension

Programmatic dimension

EQA

EQA - AEQES

→ 4 alternatives

Institutional IQA

HEI

Programmatic IQA

HEI

TEACHING & LEARNING

External evaluation conducted by an external body/agency, conditional on AEQES authorisation

External evaluation conducted by AEQES

Initial evaluation ('new' programmes)

Continuous evaluation

External evaluation organised by the HEI, conditional on institutional EQA and AEQES authorisation

from 2019 to 2020: experimental institutional evaluations (pilot HEIs)
2020-2021: taking stock and co-developping the entire methodology

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Fine tune the institutional evaluation features: scope, standards, criteria for robust IQA … in collaboration with the stakeholders (ARES, HEIs, …)
- Elaborate an efficient articulated model IE and PE (avoid overlaps, assure ESG compliance, etc.)
- Special focus on thematic analyses

KEY ISSUES

- Communication (before, during and after the pilot phase)
- The potential selection of pilot HEIs (diversity of profiles)
- Thight timeline to carry out the pilot phase and contribute to the new decree

- Shift in the stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts of QA on the French-speaking Belgian HE sector as well as on the HEI governance and development

- Promoting a coherent system approach rather than a technical point of view → focus on Teaching & Learning, quality culture, strategic management, fitness for purpose....

- Engaging all stakeholders in the co-building process may produce:

- collective awareness of the respective responsibilities of all the partners (HEI, ARES...)

- methodological relevance

- reinforced trust that is needed in the context of a formative approach

Thank you for your attention

Would you share similar experiences with us?

Which obstacles needed to be overcome?

Any success story to tell in terms of stakeholders committment?