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## Quality Assurance and Greek Higher Education: Two decades efforts for the establishment and implementation of a quality assurance system

### Abstract

During the last decades the regular function of Greek universities has been disrupted several times due to various governmental educational reforms often related with European education policies. In this paper we focus on efforts for an establishment and implementation of a quality assurance mechanism in Greek higher education, which is a policy theme that always reinforced the conflict in the specific policy arena. Relevant data is drawn by a larger scale research on this particular educational policy issue, in which, we consider higher education as a policy arena where actors form networks that share common policy core beliefs and values, engaging coordinated action in order to translate these into public policy. The paper intends to light up the Greek case where policies concerning a quality assurance system in universities have always been confronted with great resistance by networks acting in the specific policy arena. It also tries to understand the fact that even when relative legislation has been voted it is not thoroughly implemented or, in some cases, not implemented at all.

### 1. Introduction

In the present paper we intend to analyze the efforts (and the difficulty) in the establishment and implementation of a quality assurance mechanism in Greek higher education in combination with corresponding "European education policies<sup>2</sup>". Our analysis will be divided in two sub-periods that are related with considerably occurrences so much of European educational policies in higher education in general what more specifically for policies on quality assurance.

The interest and pastime of European Union with the field of education policy is relatively recent and substantially is enacted with the signature of Maastricht Treaty, especially with the articles 126-127 (Stamelos and Vasilopoulos, 2004: 59-64). The first sub-period for the quality assurance policies it is completed in 1998. This year is very important for the policies of quality assurance in higher education, at European

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<sup>2</sup> By the term "European education policies" in this paper are comprehended education policies formed so much in EU level what in the wider European Area. The former are emanated by European Union bodies and exclusively concern the member-states. The later result with the cooperation of European states, not necessarily member-states, and these policies and actions influences the higher education systems of participating states in a wider European Area. "Bologna process" is an example of such a process in the sector of higher education that shapes the developments at the higher education systems of 47 states.

level for two reasons: Firstly, the first Recommendation on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education is published (Official Journal of European Communities, 1998) and secondly begins at Sorbonne the process that one year later has been named "Bologna Process". With this second development begins a formation process of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where quality assurance is a central action line.

## 2. Quality assurance and Greek universities until 1998

### *2.1 Developments on Quality Assurance of higher education at European level*

Education policy as a field of concern in EU has small history. From 1958 until 1976 ministers of education of member-states were meeting informally, usually at the Council, with the occasion of European meetings. At the decade of 1980 slowly begins an activation of EU in the field of higher education policy. Succinctly the main official documents related with the quality assurance at European level in this sub-period are:

- *Commission's document: "Education and Training in the European Community. Guidelines for the Medium Term: 1989-1992"*: In this document seven major action lines were analyzed and the "*Improving of Quality of Education through cooperation*" was one of them (Commission of European Communities, 1989: 15-16).
- *The paper of European Commission on November 1991: "Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community"*. The European Commission proposes that the European higher education should take actions in five specific fields<sup>3</sup>. It also supports that there are certain *horizontal subjects of fundamental importance*. The accent for the maintenance and improvement of quality of higher education is one of these horizontal subjects (Commission of European Communities, 1991).
- 20 days later, on 25 November 1991, the meeting of ministers of education in Council lead to some proposals related with the quality assessment on higher education. It is concluded that: "*Improving the quality of teaching in higher education is a concern shared by each Member. [...] The increasing importance of the European dimension in general and more particularly the introduction of a single market will widen the range of interested parties concerned with quality in higher education in each Member State. [...] In line with recent conferences at Community level on higher education [...] arrangements for quality assessment in higher education on a national level could be examined at Community level, with a view to reinforcing national quality assessment systems and to providing a way to improve the mutual recognition of diplomas and periods of study. Given the diversity of method used for quality assessment on the national level, national experience could be complemented by European quality assessment experience, without affecting existing responsibilities and powers in the Member States and the autonomy of higher education institutions*" (Official Journal of European Communities, 1991).

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<sup>3</sup> The attendance and access in higher education, the collaboration with the economic life, the life-long education, the open and distance education and, the European dimension in higher education

In this period is also takes place the first EU project, named: "*European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education*". This pilot project had two years duration and resulted an enormous impact<sup>4</sup> on the growth of a methodology of an evaluation of quality of higher education institutes based on a double system of internal evaluation and visits of external experts (Thune and Staropoli, 1997, Mora and Vidal, 2005).

Another important evaluation programme of higher education begins in 1994. The "Institutional Evaluation Programme" (IEP) were designed and implemented by the European University Association (EUA). This programme has been designed to ensure that higher education institutions gain maximum benefit from a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a team of experienced European higher education leaders. The initial aims of the Programme were the consolidation of the belief that quality assurance procedures are necessary for universities and that higher institutions should by themselves entered the programme. The long-term aims of the IEP were to strengthen institutional autonomy and support institutional change in universities (Hofmann, 2005: 6 and 9).

## *2.2 Efforts of establishment and implementation of an evaluation system in Greek universities until 1998*

### *The Law 2083/1992*

The first law that enacted evaluation processes for every activity of a higher education institution was voted in 1992 from a conservative government (New Democracy administration - ND). More specifically, the 24th article of law (2083/1992) titled: "*Evaluation of activities of Higher Education Institutions*" was promoting the enactment of a system of evaluation of Greek universities. The legislator settled that in the evaluation should "*be taken under consideration the official planning of each Higher Education Institution (HEI)*" (article 24, paragraph 1, Law 2083/1992). It has to be mentioned that in the second article of the Law has been determined that the Senate had the responsibility for the preparation of the official planning of the university. The law also had a connection between the results of the evaluation process with the extra public funding of the university. The legislator regulated the creation of an "*Evaluation Committee*" determining its composition. The evaluation method, the criteria and indicators were not determined, although the law forecasted the procedure under which the research for the best international practices would take place (Law 2083/1992).

Universities had traditionally a generalized mistrust towards the Ministry of Education (MoE). This mistrust was intensified by the general philosophy in the law, according to which the result of the evaluation could have unfavorable repercussions on the evaluated institution, since it could influence a part of the public financing. It was therefore considered that the particular law enacted an evaluation process with "punishment" repercussions and as a result, actors (individual and collective) inside universities were activated and reacted in the implementation of the provisions of article 24 of the Law 2083/1992.

The analysis of Parliament proceedings results that the representatives of the governmental conservative party (ND) were in favour with the belief that the result of an evaluation process should lead to the ranking of Universities and/or Departments.

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<sup>4</sup> 47 higher education institutes on 17 different countries participated in this programme.

Furthermore, in their effort to particularise the possible criteria of the evaluation process the representatives of the ND party gave importance in the connection between the statuses of academic studies with the success of graduates in the job market. They also promoted the significance of competition between universities and/or departments. The representatives of the majority opposition, at that time, the social-democratic party (PASOK) criticised the possible total dependence of the evaluation process to the MoE. They supported that the specific article of the law created dependent bodies and institutes. They also considered as a better choice the sensitive evaluation process to be assigned in international bodies that are not part of the Greek higher education system. The representative of the minority Left-wing opposition party (SYN) focused his critique on the fact that with the specific article "[the minister] has the absolute majority of the Evaluation Committee which has 9 members. Since he has 4 naming members it is very likely one from the 5 rectors will be with the side of the minister and consequently acquires the necessary majority (...) This Evaluation Committee will determine the specific criteria, the performance indicators, the necessary time for evaluation to take place, and in general the evaluation process and the distribution of public financing of HEI". The representative of Greek Communist Party (KKE) in the discussion about the principle of the law supported that he cannot analyze and discuss the specific regulations of the law's articles and comprehend the notion of evaluation. He stated that the confrontation of the acute problems of Greek university and the insurance of the essential resources for its operation should precede and only then someone could discuss and analyse the notion and the methods of evaluation (Parliament Proceedings, 1992a-f).

Substantially, under the weight of reactions inside but also outside university the provisions of article 24 were not activated and the proposed evaluation system of universities was never applied.

#### *The legislative efforts period 1993-1998*

The particular article was suppressed by the next government (PASOK) with the law 2327/1995 that enacted the *National Council of Education* (ESYP). This suppression was accompanied by a legislative effort to combine an evaluation system with wider planning processes in Greek higher education system. Thus, evaluation processes were under the responsibility of ESYP. However, ESYP never functioned effectively with the form that acquired in 1995 and therefore there was again no implementation of an evaluation process in Greek higher education.

#### *Greek Higher Education Institutes and Evaluation Programmes*

The Greek MoE realising the difficulty and the intensities that had been caused in Greek universities tried progressively to promote a positive evaluation climate and a quality culture in Greek higher education. Thus, MoE tried to promote the involvement of higher education institutions and/or Departments into international evaluation programmes, so that actors inside universities and social partners begin to acquire a background of knowledge and experiences on evaluation processes in higher education.

Therefore, in the European pilot programme "*European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education*", implemented in 1994-95, two Greek institutions were

participated (MoE, 1996). This was a significant point while it was the beginning in the attendances of Greek institutions in international programmes of evaluation. It has also to be mentioned that after prompt by the MoE, 8 Greek higher institutions, until now, have taken part in the optional institutional evaluations of the EUA's programme (IEP).

### 3. Quality assurance and Greek universities from 1998 up to now

#### *3.1 Developments on Quality Assurance of higher education at European level*

On 1998 at EU level there was the "*Recommendation of Council of 24th September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education*". This document was the first European step (the second was the foundation of ENQA<sup>5</sup>) for the entrance of quality assurance of European universities at the top of European education policy agenda. In this official paper it was recommended that transparent evaluation systems of quality should be supported and be created. The aim of these actions was not only the safeguarding of quality in the European higher education but also the growth of co-operations between both at states-members and at European-supranational level (Official Journal of European Communities, 1998: 57-58).

In the fundamental for European education policies in higher education text, the "Bologna Declaration" at 1999 quality assurance was mentioned in one sentence consisted with 16 words: "*Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies*" (Bologna Declaration, 1999: 3). However, in combination with the *Recommendation of Council on 1998* many European states decided the creation of national independent quality assurance agencies. This development is also stated on the "Trends I" report: "*Apart from the quality assurance mechanisms which are in force or are developing at the institutional level, more and more countries establish external evaluation or quality assurance bodies or agencies [... but] the level and scope of the evaluation procedures vary from country to country*" (Haug, Kirstein and Knudsen, 1999: 36).

In 2000 ENQA is founded by the European Commission. The idea of ENQA's establishment is connected so much with the conclusions by the pilot programme of quality assurance in 1994-95, what by the specific proposals in the Recommendation 98/561/EC of the Council of European Communities.

In the next ministerial communiqué of the Bologna Process at Prague 2001, there was an extensive mention on quality assurance. Specifically, the ministers: "*recognized the vital role that quality assurance systems play in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. They also encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks. They emphasized the necessity of close European cooperation and mutual trust in and acceptance of national quality assurance systems. [... they] called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in cooperation with corresponding bodies from countries which are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice*" (Bologna Process, 2001: 2).

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<sup>5</sup> The present name of the association (initially network) of ENQA is: "European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education"

In 2003 on Berlin 40 ministers of education decided that they should focus their efforts for the next two years in three out of nine action lines, with quality assurance to be one from them. They proposed, that all Bologna signatory countries should form national quality assurance systems with common features<sup>6</sup> up to the next meeting on 2005 (Bologna Process, 2003, 1 and 3).

In October 2004 is publicized another Recommendation related with the quality assurance of European higher education. This Recommendation leads to five concrete measures that, as it is declared, contribute in the mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and of evaluation efforts in the European higher education. Succinctly:

- a) all institutions should import or develop internal quality assurance mechanisms,
- b) national quality assurance agencies that already exists should apply the specific elements of quality assurance that are reported in the Council Recommendation of 1998,
- c) Quality assurance agencies should cooperate with the ENQA so that a "European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies" to be formed,
- d) the institution should have the possibility to select by the Register the Agency that will perform their evaluation, and
- e) higher institution should accept and use the results of the evaluation by the quality assurance agencies as the base for their future decision-making (Commission of the European Communities, 2004: 10-11).

In Bergen 2005 ministers of education adopted the proposals of the report "*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area - (ESG)*" for the three levels of standards and guidelines on the quality assurance that was submitted by the E4 group<sup>7</sup> (ENQA, 2005). They also decided to investigate on the progress during the next two years in the implementation of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the ENQA report (Bologna process, 2005: 5). The three main levels of standards and guidelines in the report was the *internal evaluation*, the *external evaluation* and the rules that will condition the creation and operation of the independent national quality assurance agencies. Therefore, in this paper there has been an effort to specify the processes of quality assurance in three levels: in the level of higher institution (internal quality assurance), in the systemic level (external quality assurance) and finally in the level of the "controllers" (evaluation of quality assurance agencies and proposal for the establishment of European Quality Assurance Register - EQAR).

The next year (on 15 February 2006) the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council "*on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education*" was published in the Official journal of the European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 2006). In this Recommendation all

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<sup>6</sup> "a) A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved, b) evaluation of programs or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results, c) a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, and d) international participation, co-operation and networking" (Bologna Process, 2003: 3).

<sup>7</sup> E4 group: ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, EUA (European University Association), EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) ESIB, now-days ESU (European Student Union)

the proposals that had resulted by the previous EU developments, but also many parts of the ministerial communiqué in Bergen of Bologna process was promoted.

The ministers of education in their statement at London 2007 declared about the model for the EQAR proposed by the E4 group: *"We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities"* (Bologna Process, 2007: 4).

Two years later on the ministerial communiqué at 2009 the progress on the quality assurance action line, so much with the extensive implementation of ESGs what with the creation of EQAR was positively commented (Bologna Process, 2009: 2). At the same time however some objectives on the quality assurance in the EHEA were set for the next decade: *"We ask the higher education institutions to pay particular attention to improving the teaching quality of their study programmes at all levels. This should be a priority in the further implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance"* (Bologna Process, 2009: 4). For the next three years (until 2012), the ministers asked the E4 group *"to continue its cooperation in further developing the European dimension of quality assurance and in particular to ensure that the European Quality Assurance Register is evaluated externally, taking into account the views of the stakeholders"* (Bologna Process, 2009: 6).

### *3.2 Efforts of establishment and implementation of an evaluation system in Greek universities from 1998 until today*

#### *EPEAEK<sup>8</sup> I*

At the beginning of this period, more specifically at 1998-99, apart from the attendance of Greek universities in European evaluation programmes, it also have taken place evaluations in Greek Institutions and Departments in the Energy *"Evaluation of Higher education Institutions"* that had been financed by the 1st Operational Program of Education and Initial Training (EPEAEK I). Due to this Energy evaluations of Universities and Technological Educational Institutes (TEI) were financed and realized during the years 1998-99. These evaluations were at both Institution and Department level. The main objective was the assessment of both the educational activities in HEI and TEI and the provided services by them. Totally 12 proposals of Institution evaluation and 73 proposals of Department evaluation were approved. Consequently, during these two years evaluation took place in 14 out of then 18 HEI and 11 out of 14 TEI (Kladis, 2000).

#### *EPEAEK II*

In 2000 started in cooperation with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Framework Programme (2000-06) the Greek Operational programme, EPEAEK II, which was signed in Athens on 29 March 2001. At the presentation of EPEAEK II it was reported that: *"the priorities and*

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<sup>8</sup> EPEAEK I (1994-1999): The Greek "Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training". This programme was operated inside the frame of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Framework Programme of the European Community.

*measures that are developed, are found in affinity with the wider policy of growth of human resources, the National Action Plan for the employment, the National education policy and the direction lines of European Union" (MoE, 2001).*

By the previous experiences in Greek education system it appeared that for the establishment and implementation of an evaluation system in higher education there are some necessary prerequisites. First, a quality culture should have been developed on actors (individual or collective) inside and outside universities. And second, infrastructures should have been placed so that the MoE would be able to use the scientific and political mechanisms in order to allocate the essential elements for the quality assurance as well as the suitable structures for the future planning of higher education institutions (MoE- Special Management Service of EPEAEK, 2002).

#### *Draft Law for a National system of quality assurance and evaluation of higher education on 2003*

At the same time, as it has already been shown, important developments in quality assurance took place at European level. This fact put extra pressure at national level for the establishment of a quality assurance law in Greek higher education system.

Therefore, the MoE had prepared a complete Draft-Law for the enactment of a quality assurance system. This Draft Law had determined that a National Council for Quality Assurance and Assessment (ESDAP) would have the responsibility and implementation of this system (Moe - Draft Law, 2003). However, this Draft-Law was not promoted in the Parliament to discussion during the period until the next national election in which the governing party lost and the neo-liberal conservative party of New Democracy (ND) returned in country's governance. It is very likely that this happened because MoE knew that it would meet difficulties and would cause reactions<sup>9</sup> and intensities in actors mainly inside the Greek university. Thus, the likely political cost could have resulted the postponement of ministry planning and the Draft-Law never became a Greek Law.

#### *Law 3374/2005 and the Parliament Proceedings*

The new leadership of MoE began a new circle of consultations for the establishment of quality assurance system, since, Greece as a member of Bologna process, had already undertaken the commitment to enact a national quality assurance system up to the next meeting of Bergen in spring 2005. The public discussions however, were again very intense<sup>10</sup> and the official dialogue was inevitably contrasting, especially during spring 2005 when the draft-law was published for further social consultation. The law was finally voted in July (Law 3374/2005).

From *the analysis of Parliament Proceedings* it appeared that the government recognizes that the role of universities in the modern environment is complex

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<sup>9</sup> Indicatively few papers of that period can be reported. These texts were written with the occasion of the public dialogue about the specific draft-law and reflections, questions, arguments and intense criticism have been developed: Prokou (2003), Theotokas (2003), Apekis (2003), Mplironikolaki (2003), Strevina (2003)

<sup>10</sup> A collection of relative articles from Greek daily newspapers can be reported: Theotokas (2005), Venieris (2005), Koumantos (2005), Lavdas (2005), Markatos (2005), Milonakis (2005), Maistros (2005)

because the widening of access and participation should be combined with reduction in public financing, international competition at educational services and the graduates' need for efficient entrance in job-market. The representatives of the conservative government (ND) also believed that through the implementation of an evaluation under the specific law and the resulted improvement of quality in higher education, the Greek university would become a place of "*academic excellence, scientific vanguard, innovation and attractiveness*". Beside excellence it was also reported the notion of social accountability of the university. In general the rationales presented by government representatives put forth the quality in university as "*excellence*" and "*value for money*"<sup>11</sup> (Parliament Proceedings, 2005a, b).

The speakers of the majority opposition party (PASOK) supported the need for an institutionalized quality assurance system in Greek higher education since it is useful because: "*it is inalienable right of state, which in the name of taxed citizens provide financial resources to the public higher education institution, to evaluate efficiency*". Also by the reported proposals of different representatives of PASOK appeared to be in favour of a quality as "*value for money*" and as "*fitness for purpose*" (Parliament Proceedings, 2005a,b,c).

The representative of the minority (left wing) opposition party (SYN) supported that the Draft-Law in general "*has no relation nor with the quality of higher education neither, much more, with quality improvement and assurance*". According to his rationale the problems in higher education are already known and it is most likely that there is unanimity between actors and networks in Greek higher education so much for their existence, as long as for their hierarchy. During the discussion for the analysis of draft-law's articles the representative of the left-wing opposition party (SYN) supported notions of quality that adhered more to a concept of a "*transformative*" approach to quality, and therefore he believes that quality is not measurable. Consequently, through this rationale there is no meaning in enacting an institutionalized evaluation system (Parliament Proceedings, 2005a, b).

The speakers of Greek Communist Party (KKE) appear to espouse the belief that any form of quality assurance would connect universities with economic interests and

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<sup>11</sup> Harvey and Green (1993) in their discussion of the relationship between quality and standards in higher education identify different aspects of quality: Quality as *excellence*, as *fitness for purpose*, as *value for money*, and as *transformation*. These different notions of quality obviously have different implications not only on the methods used to measure quality but also on the beliefs and values for the role of University in the modern society:

*Quality as excellence.* This notion of quality underpins the elitist view of the high quality of an "Oxbridge" education, which equates it to excellence and high standards. (Harvey and Knight, 1996).

*Quality as fitness for purpose.* This requires that a product or service fulfil customer's needs, requirements or desires. In a university's mission of statement its goals are clarified, and at a lower level these goals are defined in the programme's aims. In this notion of quality universities are required to say what they do, do what they say and then prove it to an external assessor.

*Quality as value for money.* It is a popular notion for quality which equates quality with value for money. Since all public sectors ought to be accountable this notion gives the right to the state, the major financier of higher education, to demand for efficiency and effectiveness.

*Quality as transformation.* In the context of quality in higher education transformation is not restricted to apparent of physical transformation but also to cognitive transcendence with the provider "*doing something to the customer rather than just doing something for the customer*" (Harvey and Green, 1993: 24).

finally lead to their degradation and their decomposition inside the frame of capitalism. More specifically, for the particular draft-law it was stated that: *"in general [the law] tries to convert higher education in a body that will ensure a narrower dependence of university from economic, political or ideological needs of capital. Therefore, [the law] promotes the more effective control of universities by the capitalistic market"* (Parliament Proceedings, 2005a,b).

From the previous analysis appears that generally the two big Greek political parties, with some differentiations, accept that a type of institutionalized evaluation should be implemented in universities. It has to be mentioned though that majority opposition party (PASOK) proposed many changes in the law which were in agreement with the main philosophy of draft-law 2003 with actualized positions due to so much the EU developments of what the E4 group report about quality assurance at the Bologna process in Berger. The two left political parties, with different arguments, were opposed to the specific law and to an institutionalized quality assurance system in Greek higher education.

The difficulty in the enactment of a quality assurance in Greek universities is, by the up to now analysis, well established. However, it is important to be pointed out the existence of difficulties in the implementation of quality assurance procedures after the voting of a law. A recent proof of this constitutes the referred difficulties and bureaucratic problems that ADIP<sup>12</sup> has met in the begging of its operation. As ADIP states in two different reports, these problems, many times, were not emanate by actors who were against to the philosophy, structures and implementation of the law, but from the political leadership and the government itself (ADIP, 2008: 1-4 and ADIP, 2009: 10-12).

#### 4. Few thoughts instead of conclusions

In this paper an analysis of Greek efforts relative with the establishment of a quality assurance system on Greek higher education took place. We believe that it is essential few thoughts instead of conclusions to be mentioned in this last section of the paper.

*Firstly* it appears that different administrations of Greek MoE have tried to enact and implement evaluation mechanisms in higher education that was closely connected with the related developments at European education policies. More concretely:

- The Law (2083/1992) established an evaluation mechanism of HEI with criteria that would have been decided by an independent committee. This external evaluation should have also taken into consideration the official planning of each HEI. At European level at that time the Memorandum for higher education 1991 had been preceded, which determined the improvement of the quality of European universities as an important horizontal action line. Moreover, in the conclusions of ministers of education meeting in 1991 the improvement and evaluation of quality in the European higher education was also reported as an action line for EU states-member with a prompt that they should follow methods that could be used and analysed in a future comparative study.
- From 1994 until 2004 the MoE besides the efforts of higher institutions' participation to national and international evaluations, in 2003 tried, unsuccessfully, to enact a Law for the quality assurance of Greek higher education.

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<sup>12</sup> ADIP: *Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education*

The evaluation was intended to be organized into 3 stages and the total responsibility was intended to be given at an independent council (ESDAP). Every evaluation should have started with the internal evaluation phase by *Internal Institution Units of Quality Assurance*, followed by an external evaluation of a group of experts (possibly with international attendance) and would accomplish with the final institutional evaluation report. It was forecasted that every 2-3 years another round should have taken place in so that every higher institution could understand and analyse the possible progress from the previous evaluation procedure. Respectively, at EU level, the Recommendation 1998 has placed in the top of European education policy agenda the quality assurance and promoted not only the evaluation of universities at national level but also promoting the cooperation between states-member giving an international dimension in the evaluation of European higher education systems. Also in the Bologna process the quality assurance also became one of the central action-lines. At the Prague communiqué in 2001 was clearly stated the engagement on narrower cooperation so much between higher education systems what in at European level with the cooperation of the independent national quality assurance agencies and national higher education systems with ENQA. The final objective was the configuration of common framework (with internal and external phases in evaluation) for the quality assurance in the European higher education.

- The Law (3374/2005) established a quality assurance system in Greek higher education. At EU level one year before there was the Recommendation for the further cooperation in quality assurance of European higher education systems and the proposal for the establishment of EQAR. In the Bologna process at Bergen the ministers accepted the "ESG" report of E4 group. The proposed evaluation system by the Greek law is in general in line with the ESG report for both internal and external evaluation. It also establishes an independent agency (ADIP) which has same structural characteristics with the ESG guidelines.

*Secondly*, as it was appeared by the analysis, all the different efforts of an enactment of an institutional evaluation mechanism in higher education gave birth to intense reactions mainly by actors inside the university during the period of public dialogue upon each draft-law. And the result of these reactions was by no means negligible: The 24 article of law 2082/1993 was never been activated. Ten years later, although important developments in the European educational policies that promoted actions for quality assurance in higher education had been taken place, the draft-law in 2003 afterwards the intense reactions that caused was never deposited in the Greek Parliament. Finally, Law 3374/2005 has difficulties and outstanding delays in its implementation since only 5 evaluations have been completed as it is stated in ADIP's official report on 2009.

*Thirdly*, parallel with these difficulties many Greek higher institutions and/or Departments have chosen to participate in national (specific actions in programmes EPEAEK I and II) or international (as for example International Evaluation Programme by EUA) evaluation programmes. This argument is clearly proved by the fact that in the period from 1993 up to today 93 international or national evaluations of higher institutions and Departments have been completed.

As a final thought it is important someone to insists in this central contradiction of Greek reality. On the one side, it appears that the State, irrespectively of the governmental schema, has exceptional difficulties of enacting and implementation a legislative framework for the institutional evaluation of higher education. On the

other side, when the State prompts indirectly, without being a protagonist, the evaluation of Greek higher education by international programmes or national not institutionalized procedures the picture if it is not reversed it changes substantially: the majority of higher education institutions have already accepted to participate and completed evaluation programmes. What it will happen in the near future it cannot be forecasted with the up to now analysis. It has to be mentioned though that during the last year emerge indications which might imply the existence of certain positive changes in the stand related to the implementation of the quality assurance system in Greek higher education. However, simultaneously, what appears to be a fact is that the intensities, crises and some times conflicts in the area of Greek universities due to the existence and implementation of a quality assurance system are expected.

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