Inter-agency cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE: *challenges and opportunities*

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Structure

- The QACHE project
  - The QACHE Toolkit

- The QAA/INQAAHE project
  - Rationale
  - Findings
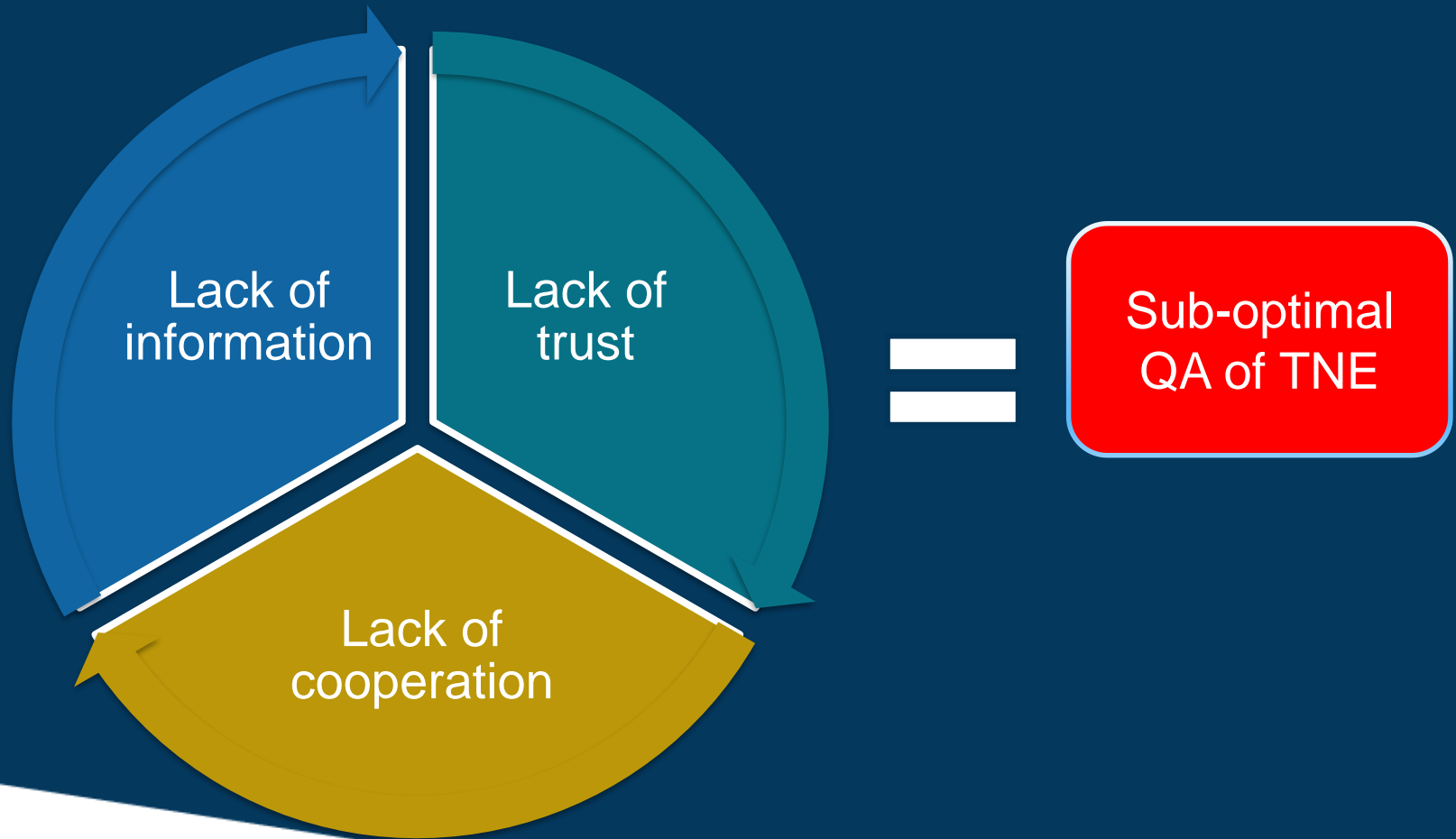 - Recommendations

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The QACHE project (2013-16)

- Funded by the European Commission
- Undertaken by a project consortium led by ENQA:
  - ❑ ANECA (Spain), GAC (Germany), HCERES (France), QAA (UK), TEQSA (Australia)
  - ❑ APQN and ANQAHE
- <u>Main aim</u>: Enhance international practice in the QA of TNE / CBHE
- <u>Main output</u>: A Toolkit for QAAs to enhance inter-agency cooperation in the QA of TNE / CBHE

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QAche
Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education
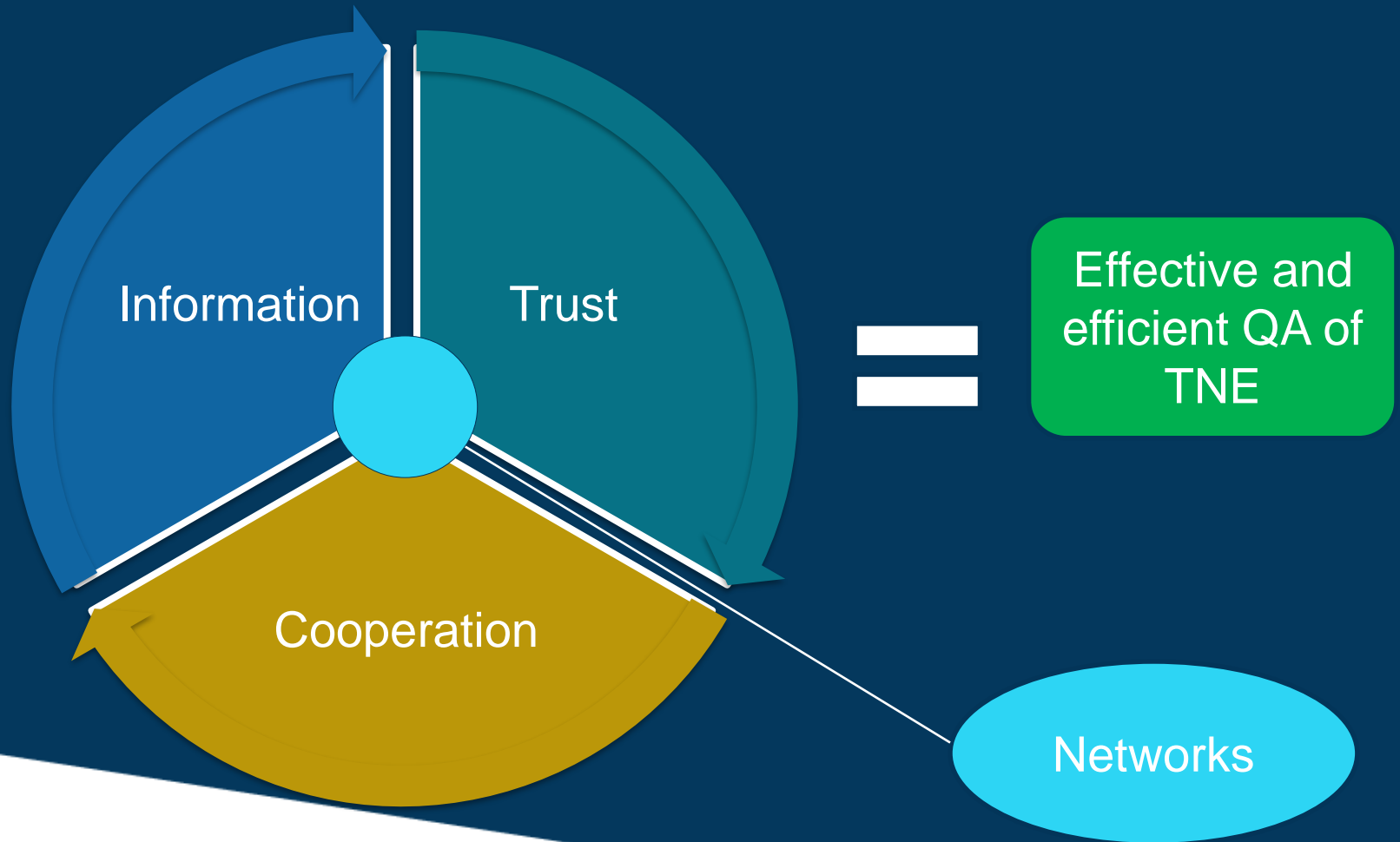
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Key findings

- **Diversity of approaches** and regulatory frameworks for CBHE (in/out-bound)

- **Lack of information** and knowledge of other agencies' frameworks/approaches

- **A 'trust gap'** between home and host countries about the quality of CBHE

- **Lack of cooperation** in the QA of CBHE

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The QACHE vicious circle

Lack of information — Lack of trust — Lack of cooperation = Sub-optimal QA of TNE

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The QACHE virtuous circle

Information · Trust · Cooperation = Effective and efficient QA of TNE

Networks

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The Toolkit

Offers practical guidance on:

(1) **Information sharing**: how QAAs can improve the sharing of information on CBHE

(2) **Cooperation in quality assurance**: how QAAs can enhance cooperation in its quality assurance

(3) **Networks of agencies**: how networks of QAAs can facilitate information sharing and cooperation

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QAA/INQAAHE QACHE follow-up

Aimed at studying the limits and challenges to the implementation of the QACHE Toolkit…

…with a view to helping agencies developing viable strategies for enhanced cross-border cooperation

Based on a survey of QAA's partner agencies (10) in key TNE countries, organised around the QACHE Toolkit's sections

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Surveyed Agencies

China:
- China Academic Degrees and Graduate Academic Information (CDGDC)
- China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE)

Singapore: Council for Private Education (CPE)

UAE, Dubai: Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA),

Hong Kong: Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)

Malaysia: Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA)

Japan: National Institute for Academic Degree and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)

Ireland: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI),

Australia: Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA),

USA: Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)

Survey focus

The extent to which agencies…

- share data, information and intelligence

- have reached formal agreements for the recognition of QA decisions

- engage in any form of joint-review activity of TNE

…their view about limits, challenges and facilitating factors for each type of cooperation

…and their view of how networks of agencies could feasible facilitate cooperation in the QA of TNE

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Information sharing

All agencies share data/information/intelligence
- ✓ usually in the context of formal MoUs and responding to requests

Key limits and challenges:
- ✓ legal restrictions related to data ownership and confidentiality
- ✓ lack of data/information and of established QA frameworks
- ✓ building trust takes time, dedication and resources

Facilitating factors:
- ✓ regular engagement at different levels of agencies
- ✓ MoUs, setting out protocols and terms and conditions
- ✓ clarity on designated contact points

Networks key to facilitate reciprocal understanding trust-building

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Recognition of QA decisions

No agency does yet formally recognise other agencies' QA decisions
- ✓ but all regard it as a desirable goal

Key limits and challenges:
- ✓ lack of familiarity with other countries/agencies' systems
- ✓ differences in quality assurance systems/standards/processes
- ✓ legislative or policy barriers

Facilitating factors:
- ✓ regular engagement to build reciprocal trust
- ✓ strategic long-term commitment to partnership building
- ✓ well articulated TNE QA frameworks and qualification frameworks

Need to link recognition of QA decisions and qualifications

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Joint review activity

Most agencies have some form of experience of joint-review of TNE
- ✓ those who have not are actively seeking to do so

Key limits and challenges:
- ✓ legislative or policy barriers
- ✓ high costs and the amount of preparatory work involved
- ✓ differences in reference points, review processes, and schedules
- ✓ language and cultural issues

Facilitating factors:
- ✓ dedicated resources to benchmark processes/standards
- ✓ training/briefing joint review teams for inter-cultural work
- ✓ ensuring providers understand standards/processes used in JR

JR activities are seen as facilitating recognition of QA decisions

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Networks of agencies

Seen as facilitators of information sharing, good practice dissemination and development of mutual understanding and trust

Suggestions (both within and between networks):
- ✓ create shared information spaces
- ✓ support policy dialogues and the shaping of international policies
- ✓ develop agreed protocols and principles for the QA of TNE
- ✓ support capacity development programmes
- ✓ provide opportunities to cooperate in concrete projects

Challenges
- ✓ diversity among constituents (stages, QA/HE/regulatory systems)
- ✓ national regulatory requirements and national political drivers

Recognition that actual cooperation is a matter for agencies involved

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Strategic recommendations

Adopt a strategic approach and long term commitment to partnership building:

- improving understanding of each other systems
- sharing information/data/intelligence about TNE providers
- benchmarking reference points and processes

Engage with all key stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of the QACHE Toolkit

- with governments to enable policy/legislative change
- with institutions to identify areas of synergy and cooperation
- with students to understand their expectations for TNE

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An emerging shared view

It is essential to cooperate across borders to fully harness the opportunities it offers for meeting demands for quality and relevant higher education provision

Agencies share the view of their role as facilitators of quality and relevant cross-border provision

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Thank you

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