

TRACKIT Project:

Tracking learners' and graduates' progression paths

“Tracking the higher education student lifecycle” conference
5-6 June 2012, Copenhagen

TRACKIT Project



TRACKIT Consortium:

EUA, HIS, Lund University, University of the Peloponnese,
Aarhus University, Irish Universities Association

Co-funded by the **Lifelong Learning Programme of the
European Union**



Project goal

- Analysing the systematic approaches that HEIs put in place to follow students' and graduates' progression paths in 31 European countries
- “Tracking” – progression paths of students during their studies, and on graduation into work or further education

Why this project?

TRENDS 2010 Report: A decade of change in European Higher Education



- *“At this stage, it is not possible to gain any helpful picture of the prospects of Bologna first-cycle graduates, as long as systems to track graduates of all cycles are not in place.”*
- *“Tracking graduate employment is still not done systematically by all institutions (37%) or on a national level ...”*
- *“Institutions that expect most of their first cycle graduates to enter the labour market are more likely also to have a tracking system in place.”*

Changing context of and conditions for higher education learning

- growing participation
- larger and more diverse studentship
- learning outcome orientation
- labour market relevance – employability
- growing competition
- technical development

Changing study structures

- student-centred approach
 - modularisation
 - flexibilisation of study paths: mobility (place), lifelong learning (time)
 - growing importance of student services
- ➡ increased division of tasks within the institution
- ➡ responsibility of the institution for student success

Why tracking?

Higher education institutions need to know how their students and graduates fare.

External pressures to the institution

- growing and diverse societal demands
- providing a skilled workforce/growing focus on employability
- accountability and transparency
- general trends in public management: outcome orientation, assessment
- quality assurance
- funding allocation

Institutions' internal pressures

- implement the new study system, and assess its impact – also with regards to employability
- enhance study programmes and provision
- ensure quality
- ensure societal relevance
- develop strategic goals for learning and teaching

Motivation for the TRACKIT project

- tracking not discussed in the Bologna Process
- examine what HEIs know about their students, and how they come to know
- Identify good practices, and challenges
- Launch an informed debate on tracking
- a European dimension for tracking?

The TRACKIT Project

The TRACKIT project is supported by

Main Focus and key questions

- **Mapping:** What tracking initiatives exist?
- **Drivers:** Why is tracking done tracking?
- **Methods:** How is it done? Who does it?
- **Relation between levels:** How do national and institutional initiatives complement each other?
- **Use:** What is it used within the institution?
- **Challenges:** What are the challenges of carrying out tracking initiatives?
- **What is tracking?**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Tracking can refer to:

[Animal migration tracking](#) by attaching a tag to the animal.

[Tracking \(education\)](#), separating children into different classes according to their academic ability

Tracking, in computer graphics, a vital part of [match moving](#)

Tracking, in portfolio management, matching or comparing with a [stock market index](#)

Tracking, in automotive engineering, a synonym for [Toe \(automotive\)](#)

Tracking, a subject of [dead reckoning](#), concerning setting up a track on other objects momentarily viewed from the observer's own location

[Tracking \(typography\)](#), the process of uniformly increasing or decreasing the space between all letters in a block of text

The purpose of a [satellite tracker \(disambiguation\)](#)

[Tracking \(commercial airline flight\)](#), the means of tracking civil airline flights in realtime.

[Tracking \(hunting\)](#), the science and art of learning about a place via animal trails and other environmental evidence

[Tracking \(Scouting\)](#), a Scouting activity

Tracking, an electrical pre-breakdown phenomenon, see [Electrical treeing](#)

[Tracking shot](#), a filming technique also known as a dolly shot

In **logistics**

[Track & Trace](#) concerns a process starting with determining the current and past locations and other status of property in transit. Tracking and tracing is the completion of this process with uniformly building a track of such property that are forwarded to, processed for, applied in or disposed of usage.

[Asset tracking](#) provides regular information about objects of an inventory or any stock of mobile entities

In **sports**:

[Tracking \(freelying\)](#), in skydiving, the technique of moving horizontally while in free-fall

[Tracking \(dog\)](#), the act of a dog following a scent trail

[Tracking trial](#), a dog competition

In **technology**:

The TRACKIT project is supported by

[Optical motion tracking](#)

Tracking can refer to:
Animal migration tracking by attaching a tag to the animal.

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The purpose of a satellite tracker (disambiguation)

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What is tracking?

- “tracking” – no commonly agreed notion
- not just data collection on students (since the late 60’s, early 70’s national surveys)
- changed situation – Bologna Process
 - way of teaching (modulised, learning outcomes)
 - shared responsibility for student success: teaching staff, support services, but also the institution’s management
 - responsibility of universities for the success of students

Tracking: necessary steps



Project approach

- broad understanding of ‘tracking’
- all types of **data collection, monitoring and assessment processes** in place – at **national and institutional** level
- deskstudy (literature & internet)
- survey: questionnaire to national rectors conferences and selected universities
- follow up through
 - phone interviews
 - focus group meetings

background report

- overview on tracking activities at national & institutional level in European HE as regards...
 - existence & spread
 - methods of data collection
 - drivers & motives
 - use of tracking results

Description: Tracking ...

captures information on students in the learning process,

and/or of graduates in their personal lives, learning and working careers,

in relation to the learning that they underwent and the qualifications and skills they acquired.

It does so by following individual cases or cohorts

in considering their developments (with regard to learning progress, skills acquired, perceptions, positions etc.)

between at least two points in time,

through aggregated or individual level data collected via administrative processes and through surveys.

It serves as an enhancement of learning provision and related services and processes

and/or the formulation of learning policies, at the level of systems or institutions or their substructures and elements.

Site visits

- 23 higher education institutions in 11 countries
- In addition:
 - national rectors conferences
 - ministries, statistical offices
 - research organisations

➡ Institutional context

➡ “tracking practice”

Institutions hosting site visits

Belgium: Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Université Catholique de Louvain;
KU Leuven

Ireland: Dublin City University; University College Dublin

Spain: Autonoma de Madrid; University Carlos III de Madrid

Estonia: Tallinn University of Technology; University of Tartu

Hungary: Semmelweis University; King Sigismund College

Turkey: Istanbul Technical University; Sabanci University

France: University Lille1; Paris Creteil University

Sweden: Lund University; University of Gothenburg

UK: University of Surrey

Romania: University of Bucharest; Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University

Germany: Technical University of Berlin; Free University of Berlin;
University of Applied Sciences Leipzig

Today: Preliminary results

- new topic – at European level
- not on “hard” data but information provided by experts, observations
- some instruments or aspects may have been overlooked
- not all ambiguities could be clarified
- validate results by national rectors conferences (ongoing)
- report in autumn 2012
- dissemination events

Tracking methods

Results of mapping study

(Based on expert interviews in 31 LLP countries)

1. Student tracking by HEIs
2. Student tracking at national level
3. Graduate tracking by HEIs
4. Graduate tracking at national level
5. Main findings

1) Results: Student tracking by HEIs

- Done by at least some HEIs in all 31 countries (except LI)
- In 22 countries all HEIs collect tracking data (for 10 of these countries it remained unclear whether all HEIs are tracking in the sense of using the data)
- Often obliged to deliver to central database
- In 4 countries (CY, DE, EL, FI) many but not all HEIs
- In 4 countries (BE/fr., IT, PL, RO) only some HEIs

1) Results: Student tracking by HEIs

- Main method of data collection: administrative procedures (constantly or occasionally)
- Additional and/or combined surveys
- Used by HEIs for:
 1. General admin. & management, stats. & analyses
 2. QA
 3. Study reform, resource allocation, marketing, student counselling

2) Results: National student tracking



2) Results: National student tracking

- 23 countries regularly track their students (~75%)
- 8 countries without national data on student progression (BE fr., BG, CY, EL, LV, LI, RO, TR)
- main method: admin. procedures at HEIs and central database (often additional surveys; DE, IT: surveys only)
- different scope of data
- used by national level actors for:
 1. stats. & analyses, policy planning & development
 2. funding allocation: BE fl., CZ, DK, EE, FR, IE, LT, NL, NO, UK.

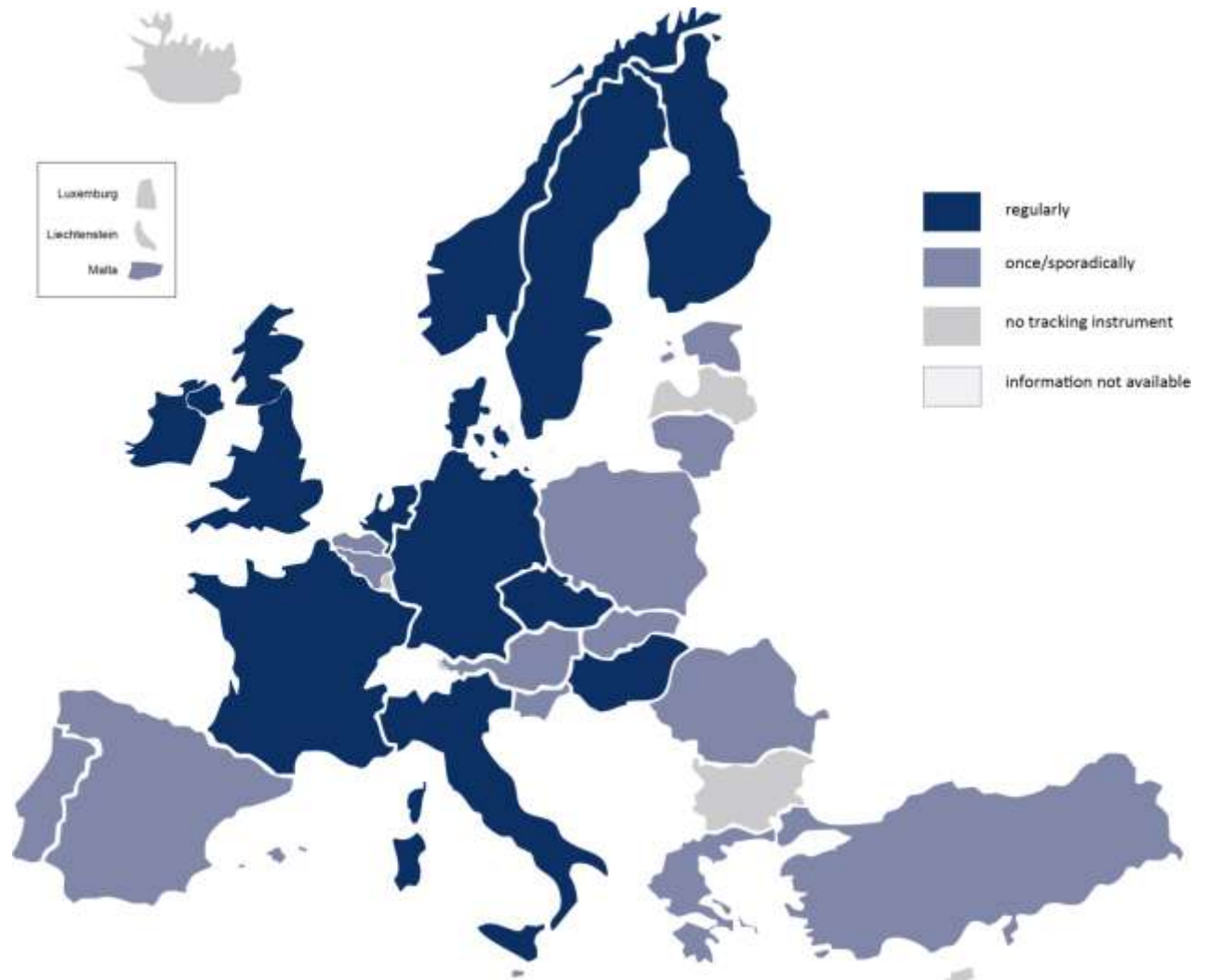
3) Results: Graduate tracking by HEIs

- Done by at least some HEIs in 28 countries
- Majority (16): many but not all HEIs
- 7 countries all HEIs: CZ, DK, EL, IE, MT, NL, SK, UK
- sometimes related to national level tracking (e.g. IE, NL), sometimes independent (DK, EL)
- 4 countries single HEIs: EE, LT, PL, SI
- 3 countries no grad. tracking: IS, LI, LU

3) Results: Graduate tracking by HEIs

- Main method: surveys (typically conducted every 1-3 years); rarely admin. data
- Used by HEIs for:
 1. General admin. & management, stats. & analyses
 2. QA
 3. Study reform, resource allocation, marketing, student counselling/career guidance
 4. Public funding (CZ, IT, SI, UK) or (re-)accreditation (AT, BG, DE, DK, NL)

4) Results: National graduate tracking



4) Results: National graduate tracking

- National level graduate tracking in 25 countries (no national level tracking: BG, CY, IS, LI, LT, LU)
- 12 countries sporadically or onetime, 13 countries regularly (typically 1-3 years)
- Main method: surveys; admin. data additionally (CZ, EE, HU, IT, NL, SE, UK) or only (DK)
- used by national actors for:
 1. stats. & analyses, policy planning & development
 2. QA
 3. funding allocation: CZ, IT, UK.

5) Main findings of mapping

- Student & graduate tracking at both levels quite widespread in European HE
- Considerable country differences (spread, use, focus)
- Methods:
 1. admin. data for student tracking, surveys for graduate tracking
 2. regular conduct of student tracking
 3. central-decentral approach to student tracking
 4. combined software for study org. & data collection

5) Main findings of mapping

- Use:
 1. Student tracking at HEIs often used for QA
 2. “Close” student tracking for counselling
 3. Pub. fund. alloc. based on admin. student tracking
- Main challenges mentioned:
 1. Demand of resources for data gathering
 2. Potential of tracking data not fully exploited

Tracking Trends - some assumptions

Overall development

- No common understanding of tracking in Europe
- Many do tracking without calling it so
- Overall more initiatives considering **student life-cycle**:
 - during studies – focus on first years
 - after graduation - focus on employment – little attention to further education
 - growing importance of alumni
 - increasing attention to potential students – before/
at entry

National differences

- national context matters during studies – focus on first years
- some countries mandatory – or strong incentives
 - growing and diverse societal demands
 - accountability and transparency
 - part of external quality assurance, accreditation
 - funding allocation
- existence of comprehensive national data collection systems
- data protection regulations

Why tracking – institutional demand

- enhance study programmes and provision (incl. student services) & assess impact
- develop strategies for learning and teaching
- contribution to internal quality assurance
- provide information to the institution

Information, yes ... but no easy answers

- drop-out rates: a multitude of courses and reasons
- graduates surveys: employability
- quality and significance of data
 - low participation – in particular in regular surveys
 - who answers, how reliable are the answers e.g. different assessment of learning by students and graduates
- numbers do not talk

... the right tracking approach

not the “one” right approach/ method

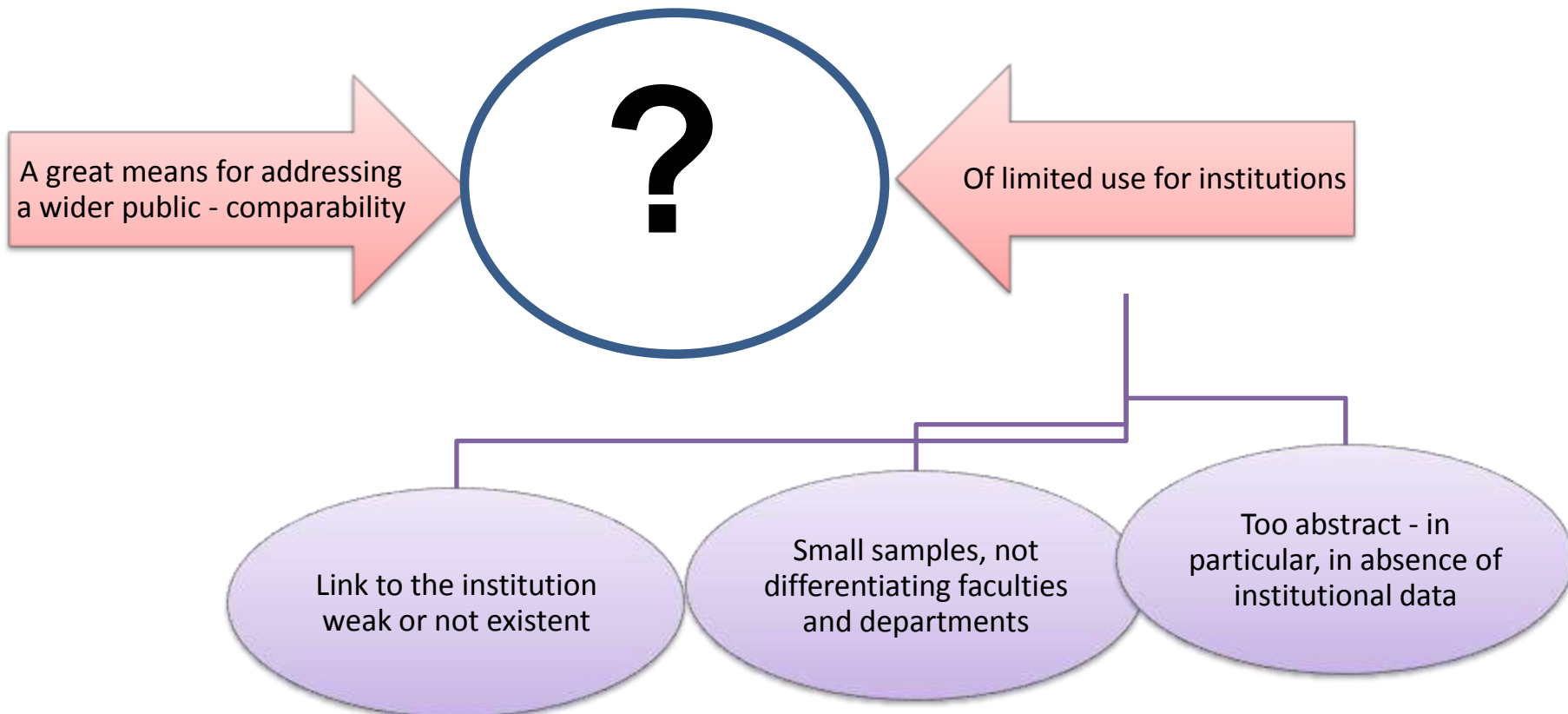
multitude of measures and initiatives in combination

carefully deployed and coordinated

professional capacity for data evaluation and management

basis for discussion within the institution (within and between faculties and departments , and leadership)

National and European surveys



Emerging approaches?

Institutions
need data -
QA

Shared initiatives

Strike a balance between
standardised and tailor-
made approaches

Within the
institutions

Between
institutions and
national/
European
approaches

Standardised
questionnaires
and processes

Supplementary
questions,
additional
surveys

Challenges – and open issues

- Growing pressure for ‘transparency’
- Resource intensive: Careful investments in data collection/ tracking
- Growing flexibilisation of study paths: mobility (place), lifelong learning (time)
 - International students: how to keep track?
 - Lifelong learners: flexible study paths – time to degree?
- technical development – data collection + management
- New social media?
- Commercial initiatives?

Your questions & comments

Why should HEI track students and graduates?

What should HEI track?

How should the information be used?

Who should be responsible for tracking – how to create tracking systems that are inclusive?

How to ensure that the results of tracking is used to enhance the higher education sector?

Tracking at different levels:
European, national and institutional
– do they interact, and should they
interact, and if they should, how can
they best do that?

Upcoming

workshop with visited universities, 6 June 2012

publication available from September 2012

www.eua.be/trackit

dissimination events September 2012