



Agència  
per a la Qualitat  
del Sistema Universitari  
de **Catalunya**

[www.aqu.cat](http://www.aqu.cat)

# Effectiveness of Quality Assurance: How can we prove it?

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ENQA eqar/// ISO 9001  
ISO 27001

1. Objectives of external QA in HE
2. QAA context
3. Mission of QAA and effectiveness
4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission
5. Measuring the effectiveness of QAA
6. Questions

# 1. Objectives of external QA in HE

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**The main objectives for external QA in HE are:**

- Improving the quality of the HE system
- Promoting accountability of the HE system

## 2. QAA context

### Knowing our own HE system to calibrate the objectives

#### How is our own HE system?

- Is it compacted / heterogeneous?
- Is it in a process of being reengineered?
- Is it in a process of growing?
- Is it under a policy of public budget expansion?
- Is it experiencing budget cuts?
- Is it working under the principle of autonomy for HE?

The nature of our HE system has big influence on how QA should be articulated and what can be expected as results of QA and its effectiveness.

## 2. QAA context

### Political pressure on the work of QA agencies

Stakeholders  
with different  
expectations  
and different  
concepts of  
quality

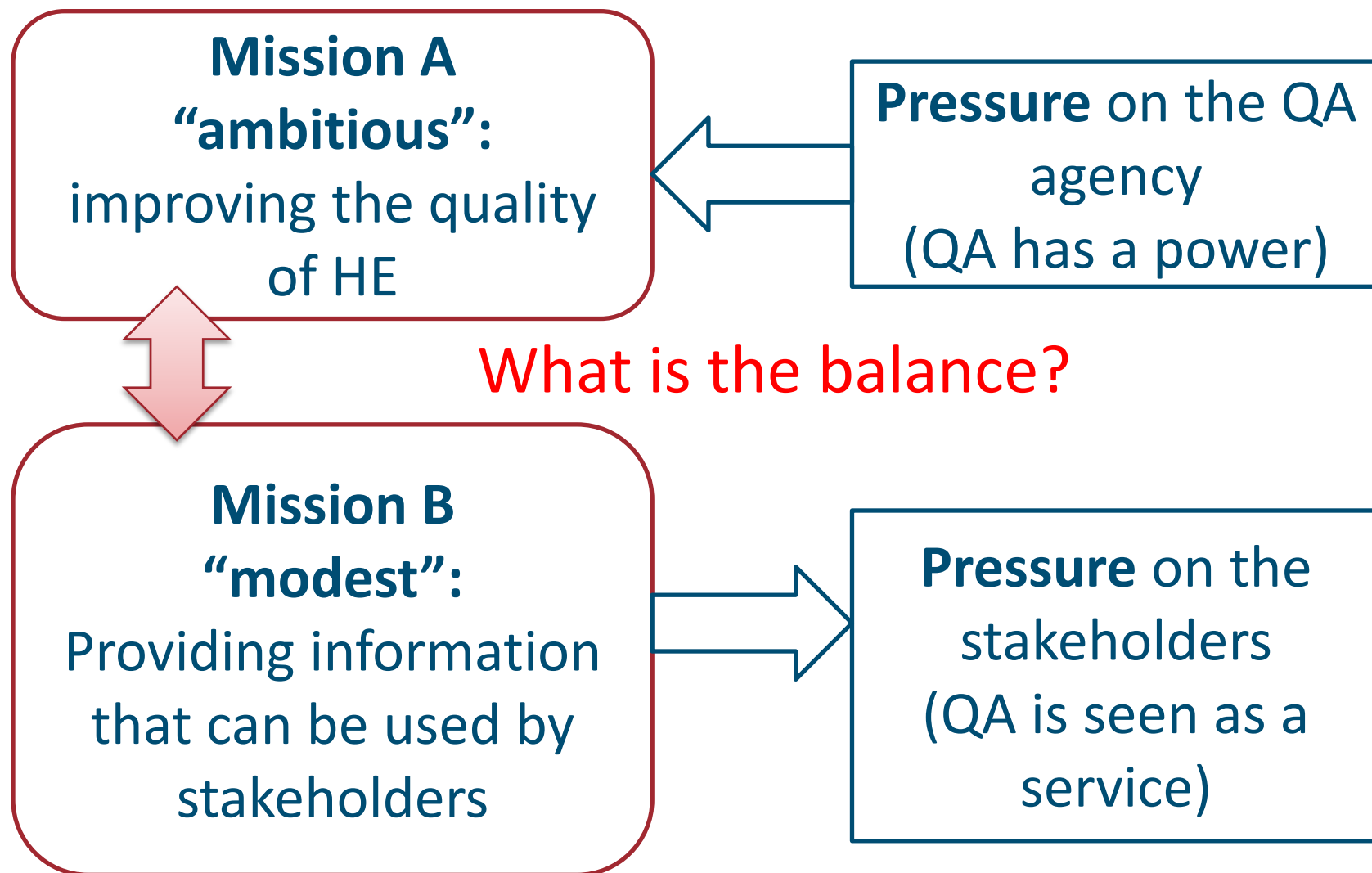
Governments wants to maximise the  
(social and electoral) benefits of their  
public investments

Universities compete for resources  
and talent

Students wants to maximise their  
investment considering HE as a  
private good

Etc....

### 3. Mission of QAA and the effectiveness



### 3. Mission of QAA and the effectiveness

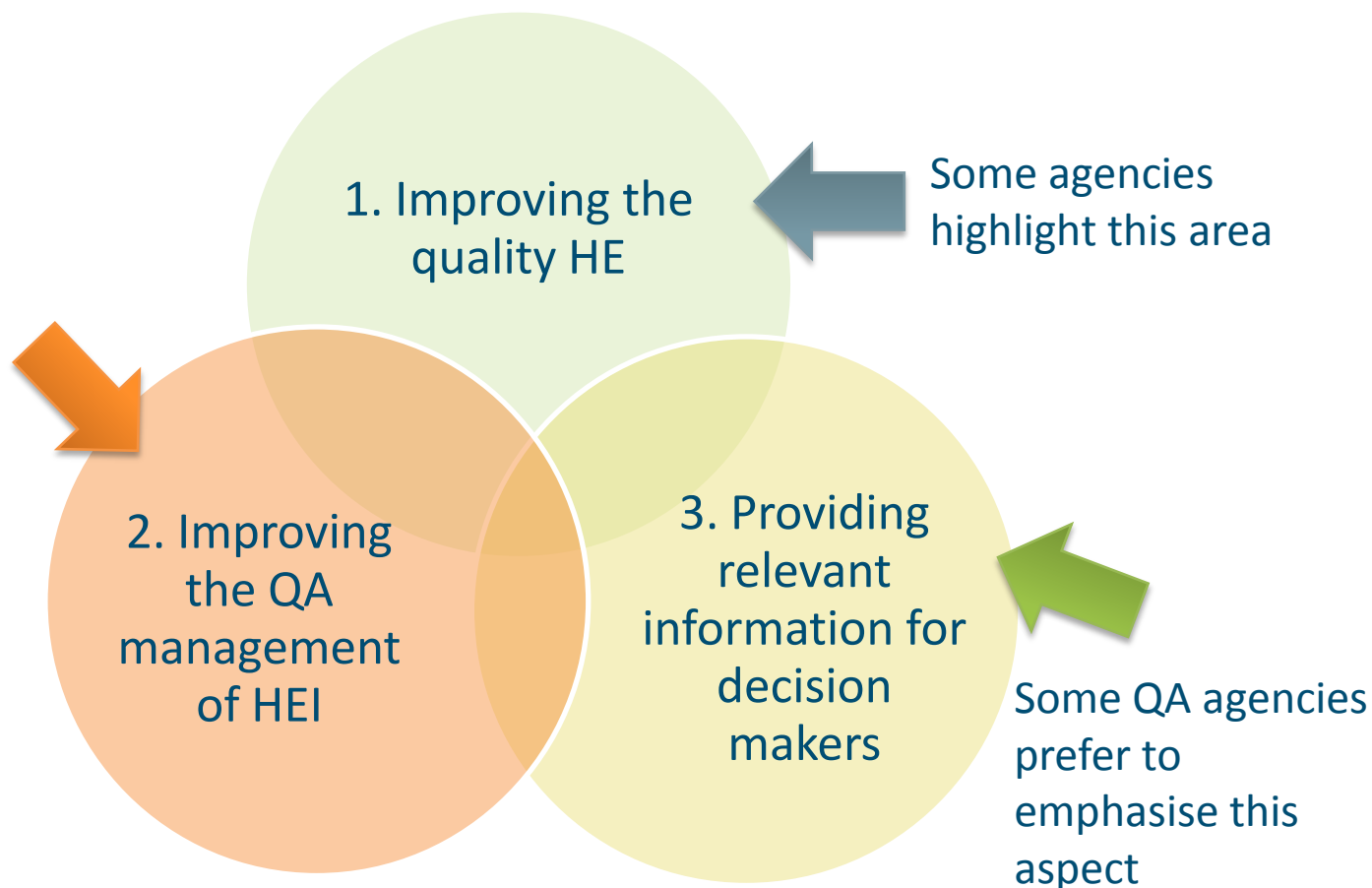
The way in which QA agencies describe their aims and goals is essential to measure the effectiveness of QA.

Expectations in agencies missions should have a reasonable system to measure their achievements.

Missions require realistic expectations, but ambitious wishes should not be underestimated, even if just realistic goals can be measured.

## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

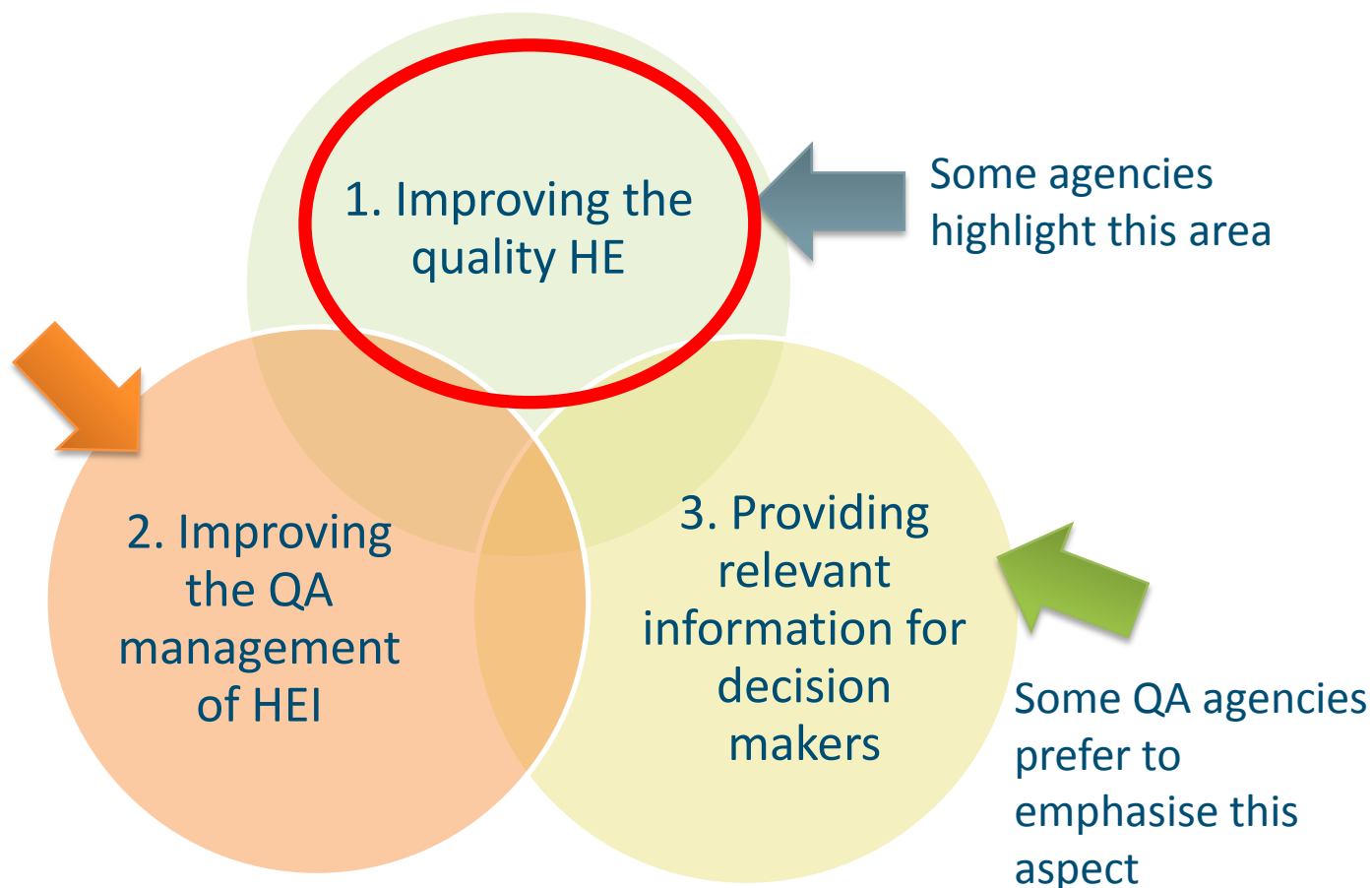
How objectives are incorporated in the missions of QA agencies? What is your balance?





## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

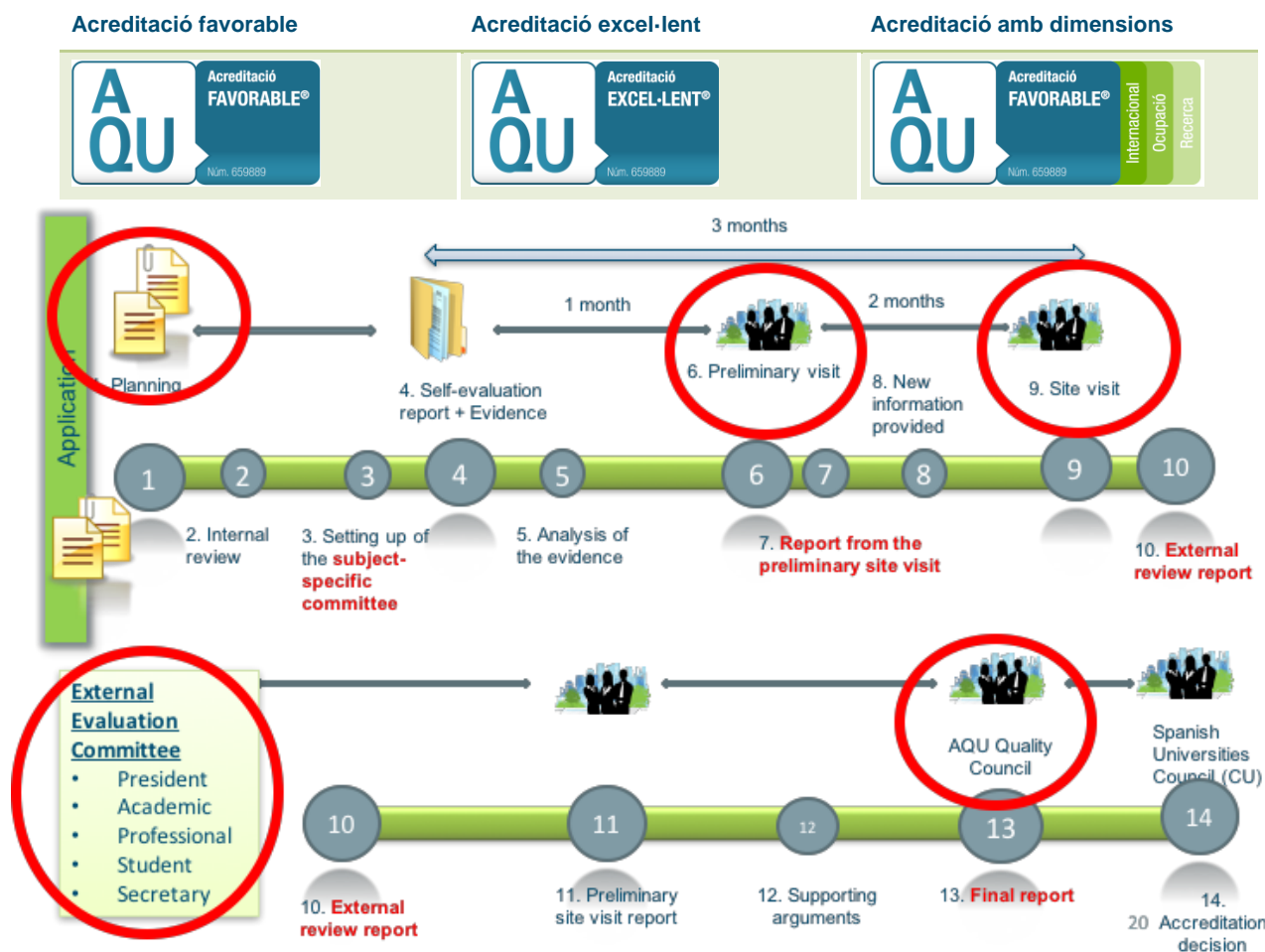
How objectives are incorporated in the missions of QA agencies? What is your balance?



# 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission











Objective 1: Improving the quality HE

Example: Program accreditation



# Accreditation impact: ... there is a wide range of opinions...

## Qualitative results

	<i>ACCES</i>	<i>TEACHING DESIGN</i>	<i>ACADEMIC RESOURCES</i>	<i>GLOBAL PROCESS</i>
QAA				
UNIVERSITY				
ACADEMICS				

From a Survey accreditation process from AQU Catalunya (2015)

# Accreditation impact: ... there is a wide range of opinions...

## Quantitative results

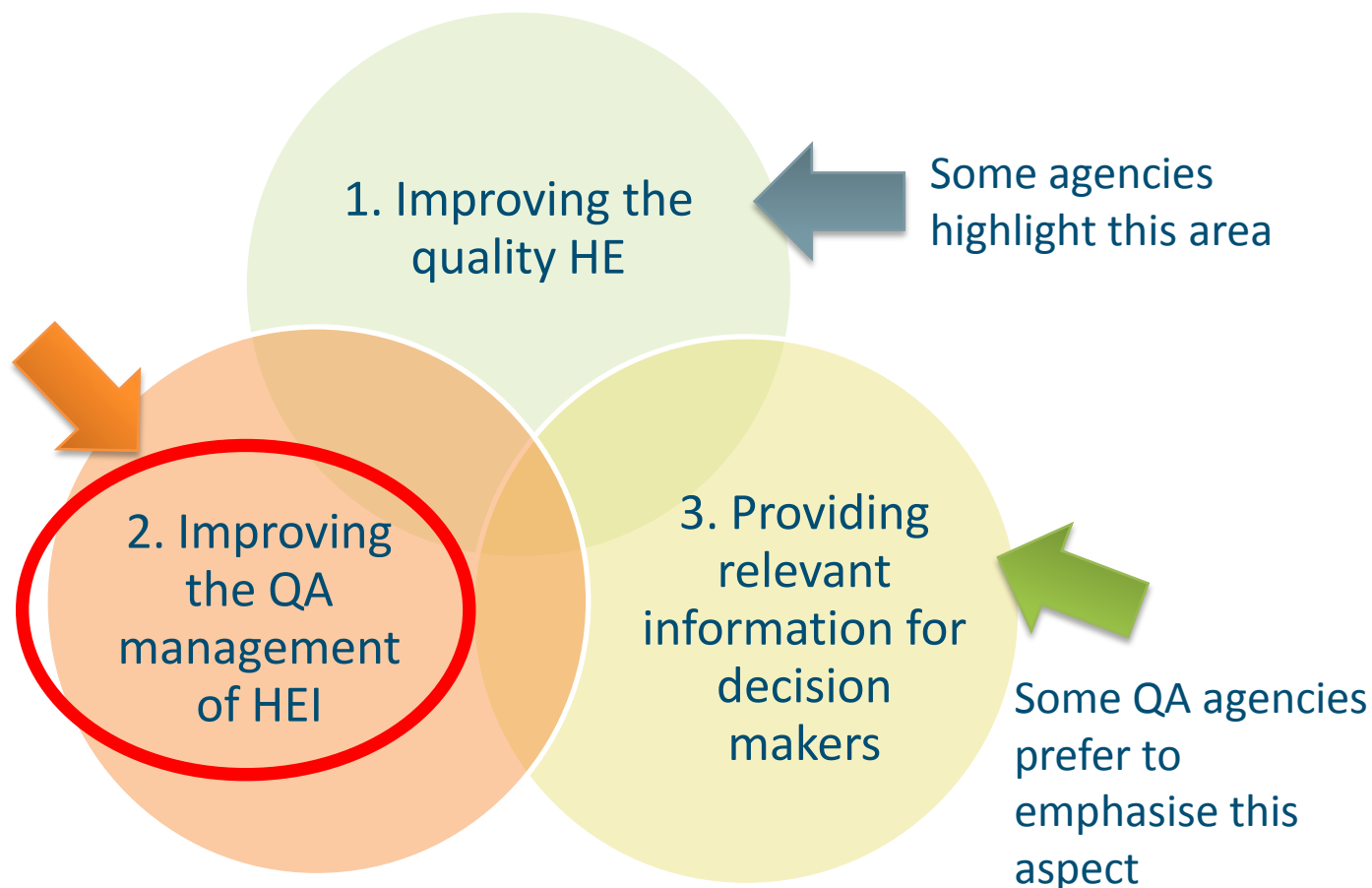
My assessment is positive. This report leads to the conclusion that the commission analysed the proposal in detail and "detected" both specific technical-type deficiencies and more important defects **whose correction substantially improved the final proposal**. The suggestions and requests were very well-expressed and therefore have proved to be useful. (Respondent 1)

It is an **opaque, very bureaucratic process**. The emphasis was always on formal aspects **with no practical importance**, instead of aspects that (at least in my opinion) have a real effect on teaching quality. (Respondent 2)

From a Survey accreditation process from AQU Catalunya (2015)

## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

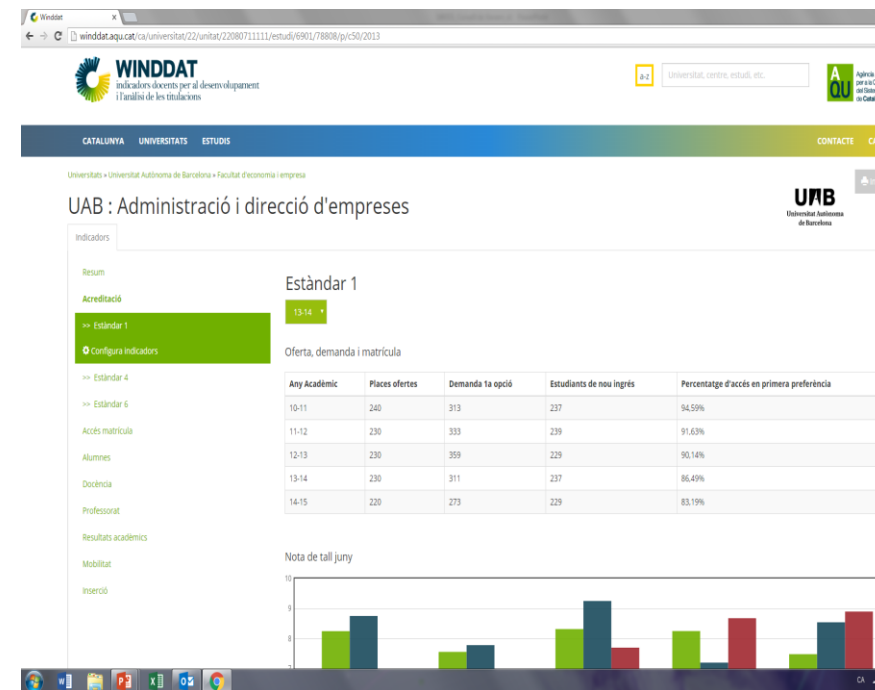
How objectives are incorporated in the missions of QA agencies? What is your balance?



# 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

**Objective 2:** Improving the QA management of HEI

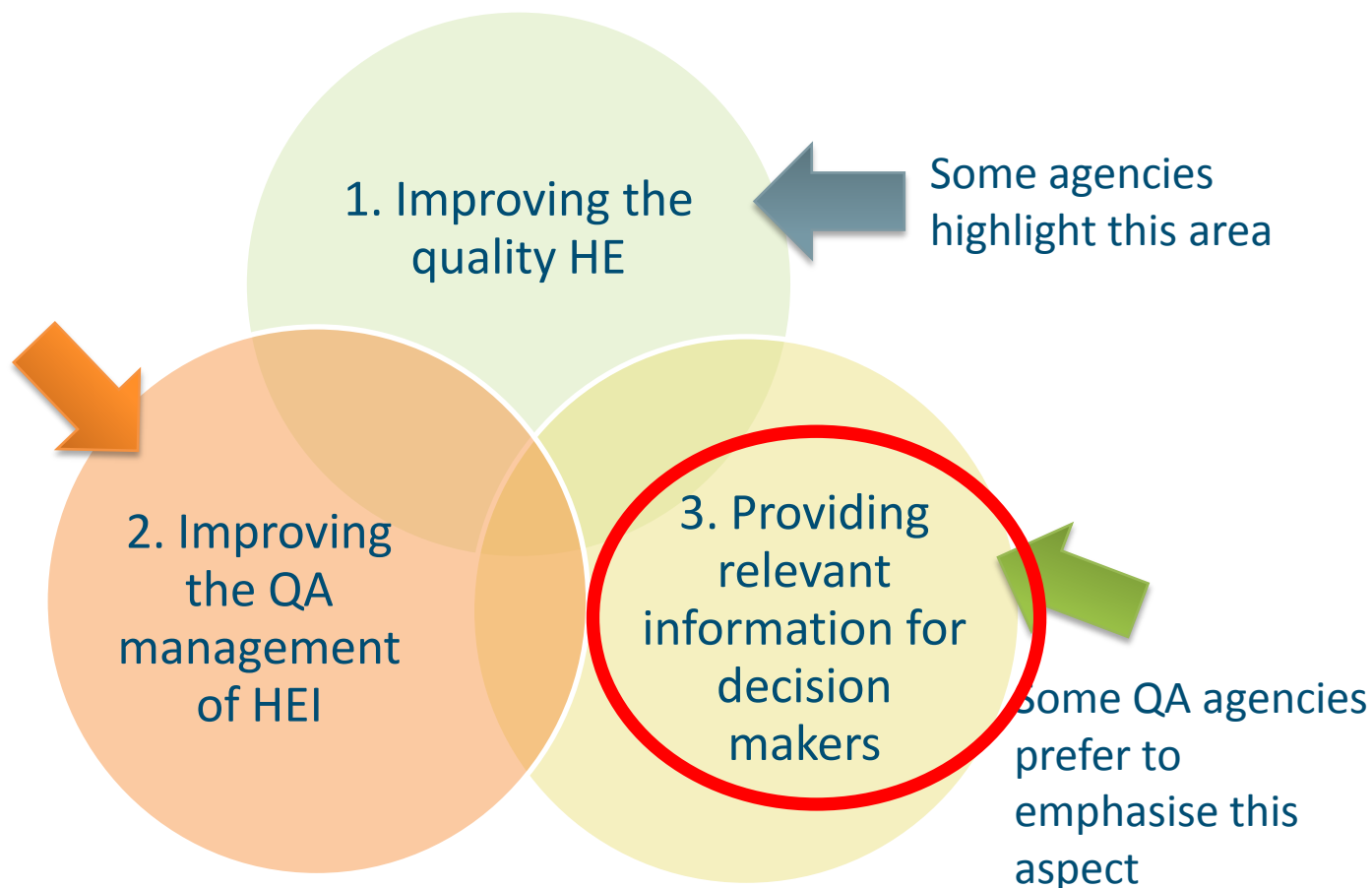
**Example:** WINDDAT: Web-site for HEI system indicators



<http://winddat.aqu.cat/>

## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

How objectives are incorporated in the missions of QA agencies? What is your balance?



## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

**Objective 3:** Providing relevant information for decisions makers

**Example:** Surveys (employability, employers, graduates, ...)

### Study on the labor market outcomes of graduates

- Survey carried out once every three years (2001, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014)
- Graduates, Master's and doctorates
- More than 80.000 surveyed graduates



### Employers Survey

- Employers Survey (2014)



### Graduates satisfaction Survey

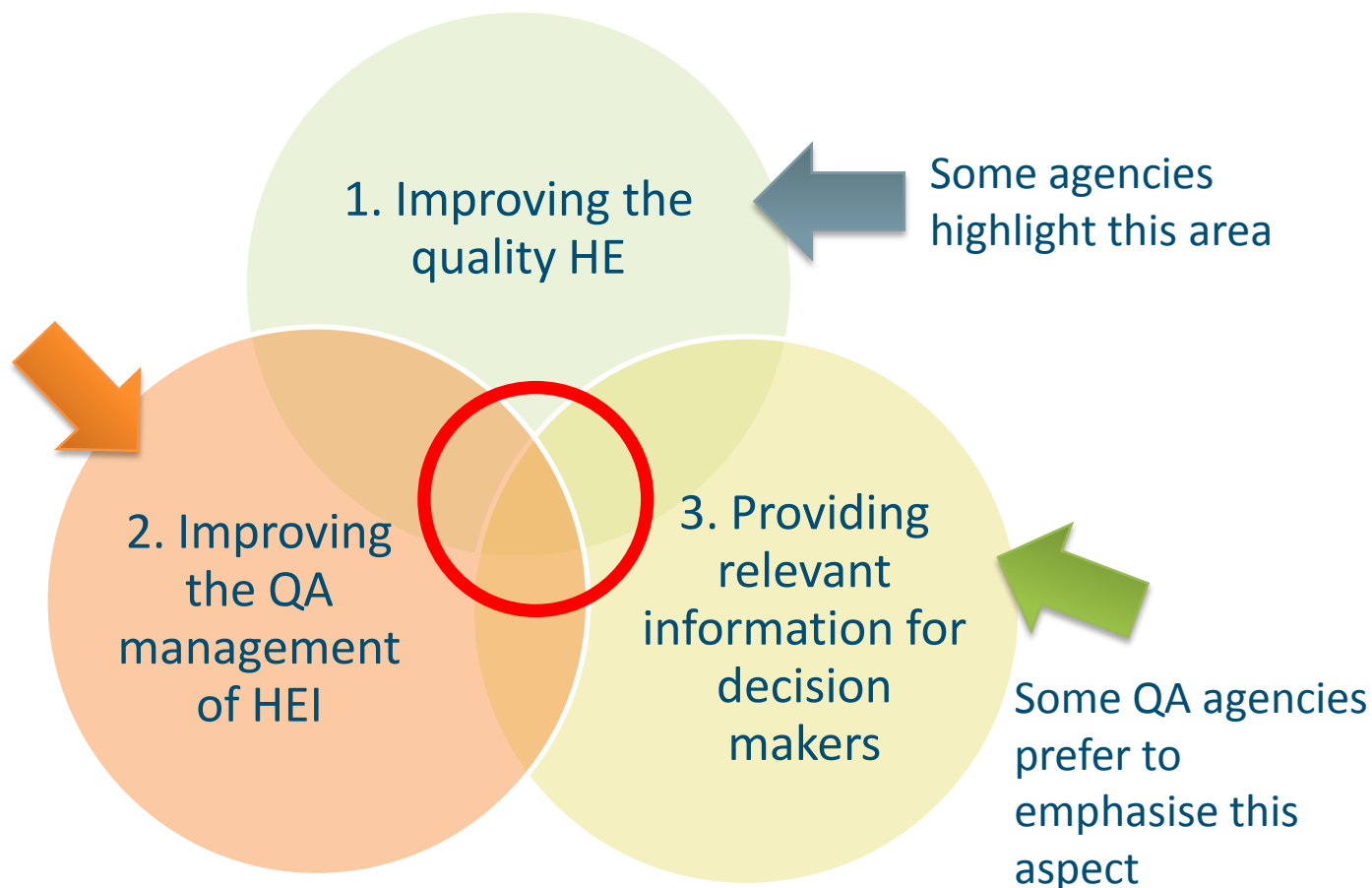
- Satisfaction survey degrees and masters





## 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

How objectives are incorporated in the missions of QA agencies? What is your balance?



# 4. Incorporating objectives to QAA mission

**Objectives 1&2&3: Improving the quality HE & Improving the QA management of HEI & Providing relevant information for decisions makers**

**Example:** **EUC: Website Quality University Programs in Catalonia**



<http://estudis.aqu.cat>

## 5. Measuring the effectiveness of QAA

### How to measure the effectiveness of QAA?

For those agencies looking for their impact on how the quality of HE is improved:

- How to be sure that this is because of QA?
- What is the impact of other factors in that improvement?

Measuring the effectiveness of QAA is not easy!!!

## 5. Measuring the effectiveness of external QA is not easy

Some **direct measures**:

Providing information for decision-making processes seems less complicated:

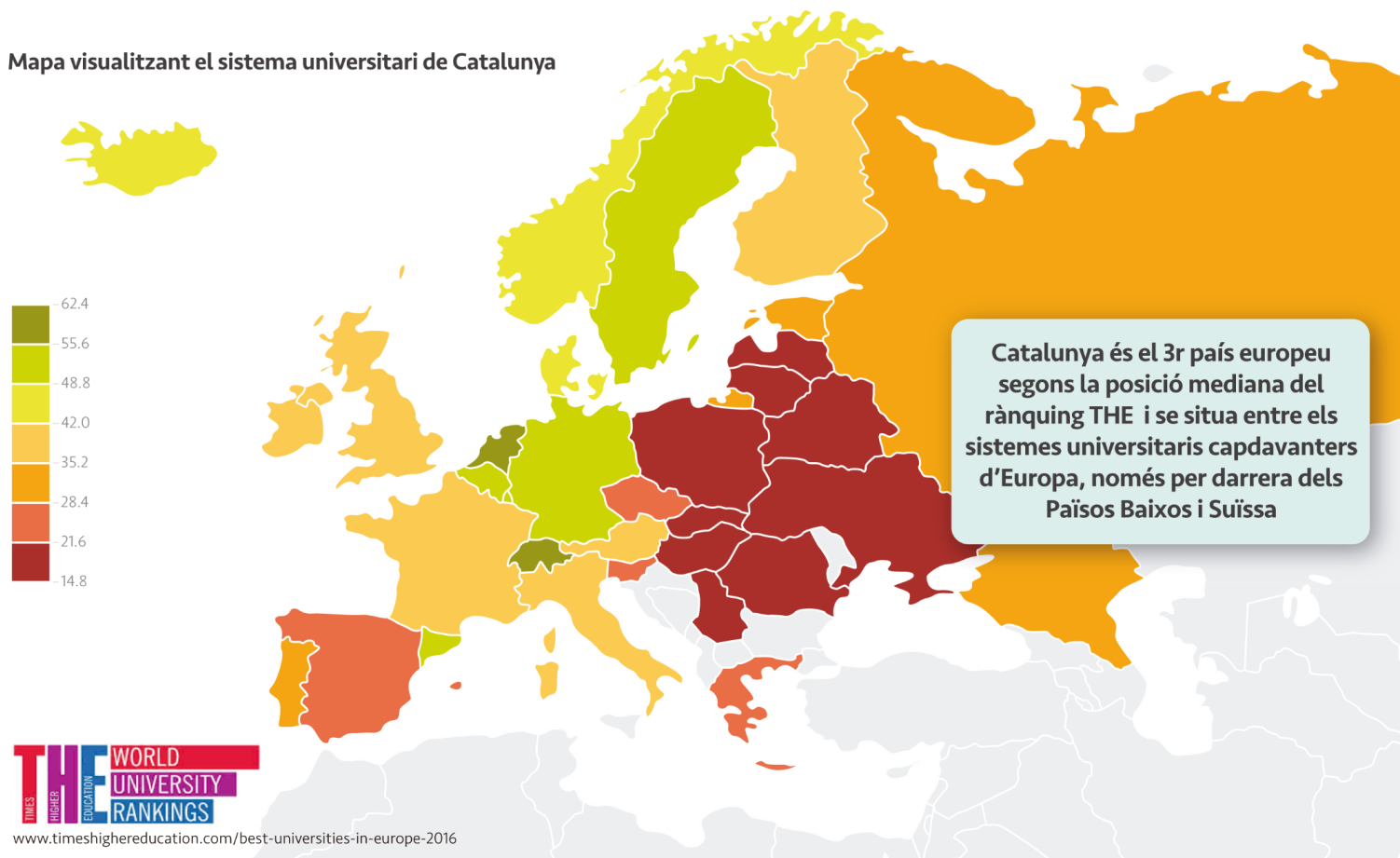
- Use of the reports for taking decisions on HE
- Satisfaction of the users and readers of the reports
- Political decisions related to the evaluations reports
- QAA evaluations
- ....

# 5. Measuring the effectiveness of external QA is not easy

Some **indirect measures**:

Exemple: The Catalan University System in International Rankings

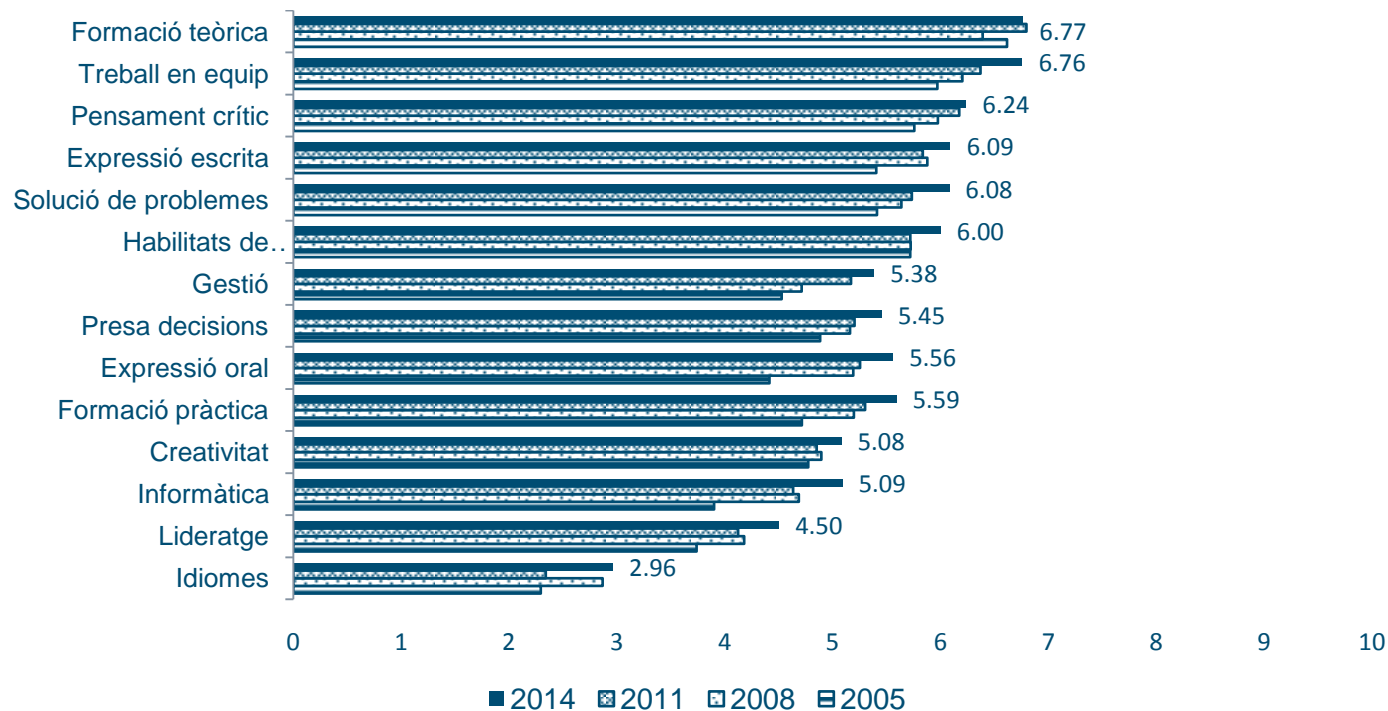
Mapa visualitzant el sistema universitari de Catalunya



# 5. Measuring the effectiveness of external QA is not easy

Some **indirect** measures:

Exemple: HE evaluation, Employees & Graduates



## 6. Question 1: Why do you need external QA in your HE? Although there are different priorities, according each context, we need to measure its effectiveness on the same way?

- QA is required by law.
  - QA is a must in a global market
  - QA is a tool in a national system in expansion
  - QA is used to distribute the use of public funds
  - QA is to support less developed institutions
  - QA is to improve our position in world rankings
  - ....
- 
- QA is needed it just to improve HE
  - QA is needed to improve the QA management of HEI
  - QA is needed to provide relevant information for decisions makers
  - ....

## 6. Question 2: How to make external QA more effective in your context? (with more positive impact)

- Being specialised in a single procedure for all.
- Having a risk-based strategy
- Using a combination of procedures
- Promoting internal QA in HEI
- Using incentives to link quality with greater autonomy or additional funds
- Improving the use of quantitative data in QA
- Internationalisation of QA
- ...



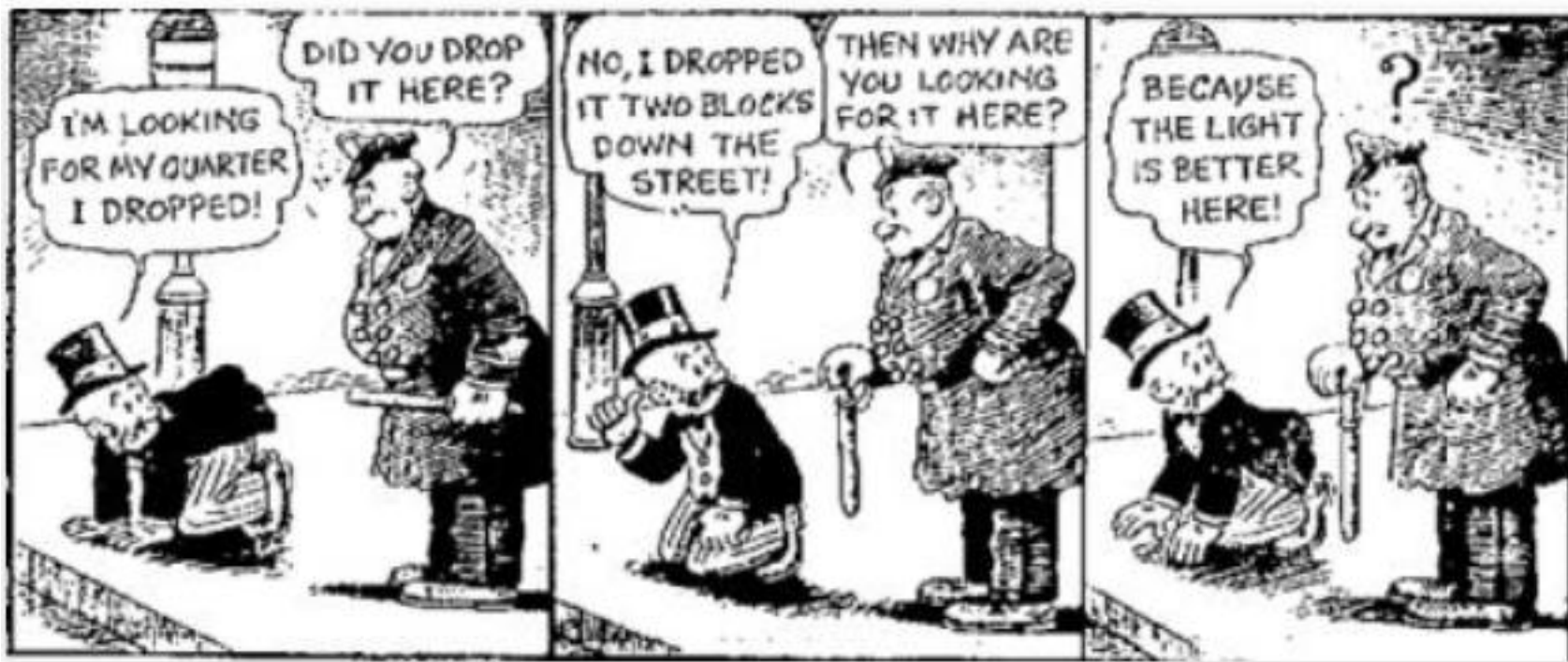
## 6. Question 3: Which are the QAA activities that have more impact? Why?

- Institutional vs Program evaluation
- Ex-ante vs Post evaluation
- Improving the QA management of HEI vs Providing relevant information for decisions makers
- Internal vs External controls
- Reports: Content vs Publication (transparency)
- ...

## 6. Question 4: How could you measure the effectiveness of the main QAA activity (aligned with your objectives)?

- Direct or indirect measures?
- Questionnaires to reviewed units?
- Questionnaires to the stakeholders?
- Research on the impact of QA
- Analysis conducted by independent experts
- Use of quantitative indicators
- Use of qualitative indicators / satisfaction
- Cross-check analysis
- ...

## 6. And don't forget that many times...





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