

Key Issues and International Experiences of Tracer Studies

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Outline

- 1. Introduction: Who and where?**
- 2. Theoretical framework of tracer studies**
- 3. Key aspects of the methodology**
- 4. New Tracer Study developments**
- 5. Conclusions**

High Demand on Tracer Studies

- Tracer Studies are very often a key instrument for monitoring and evaluation in projects of donor agencies (like World Bank, ADB, GIZ, JICA) in the TEVET and HE area
- Accreditation and accountability
- Labor market relevance as a key indicator of the quality of education
- Assessment and further development of study/training programmes based on LM feedbacks (Skills Observatory)

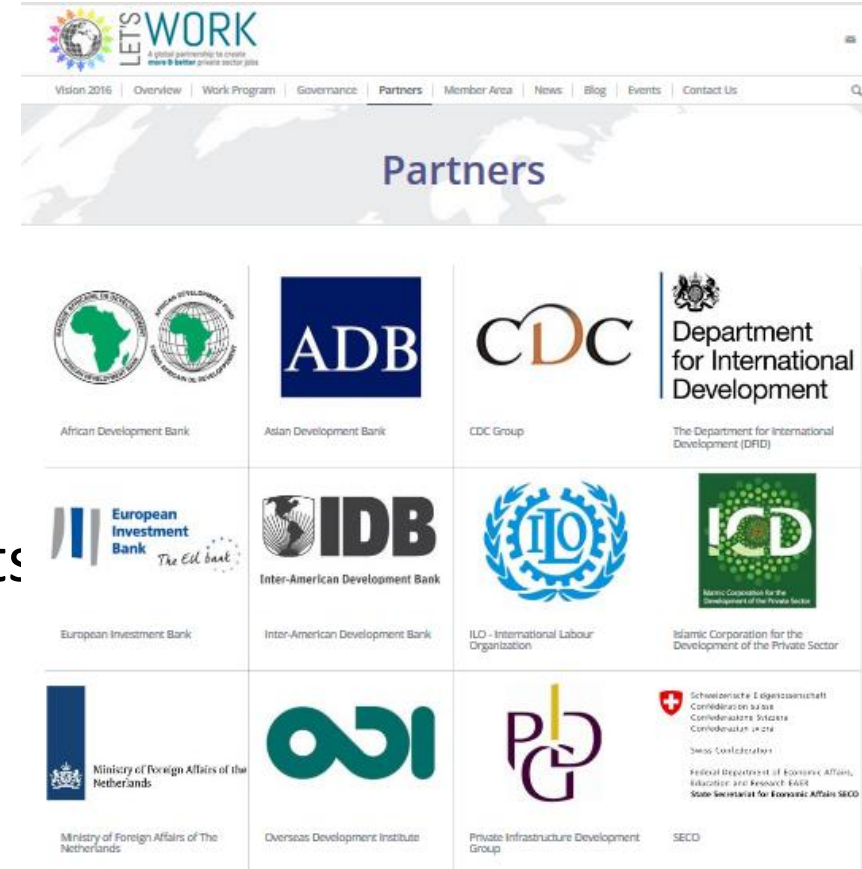
WORLD BANK and other donor agencies project: Let's work (global partnership)

■ New Methods

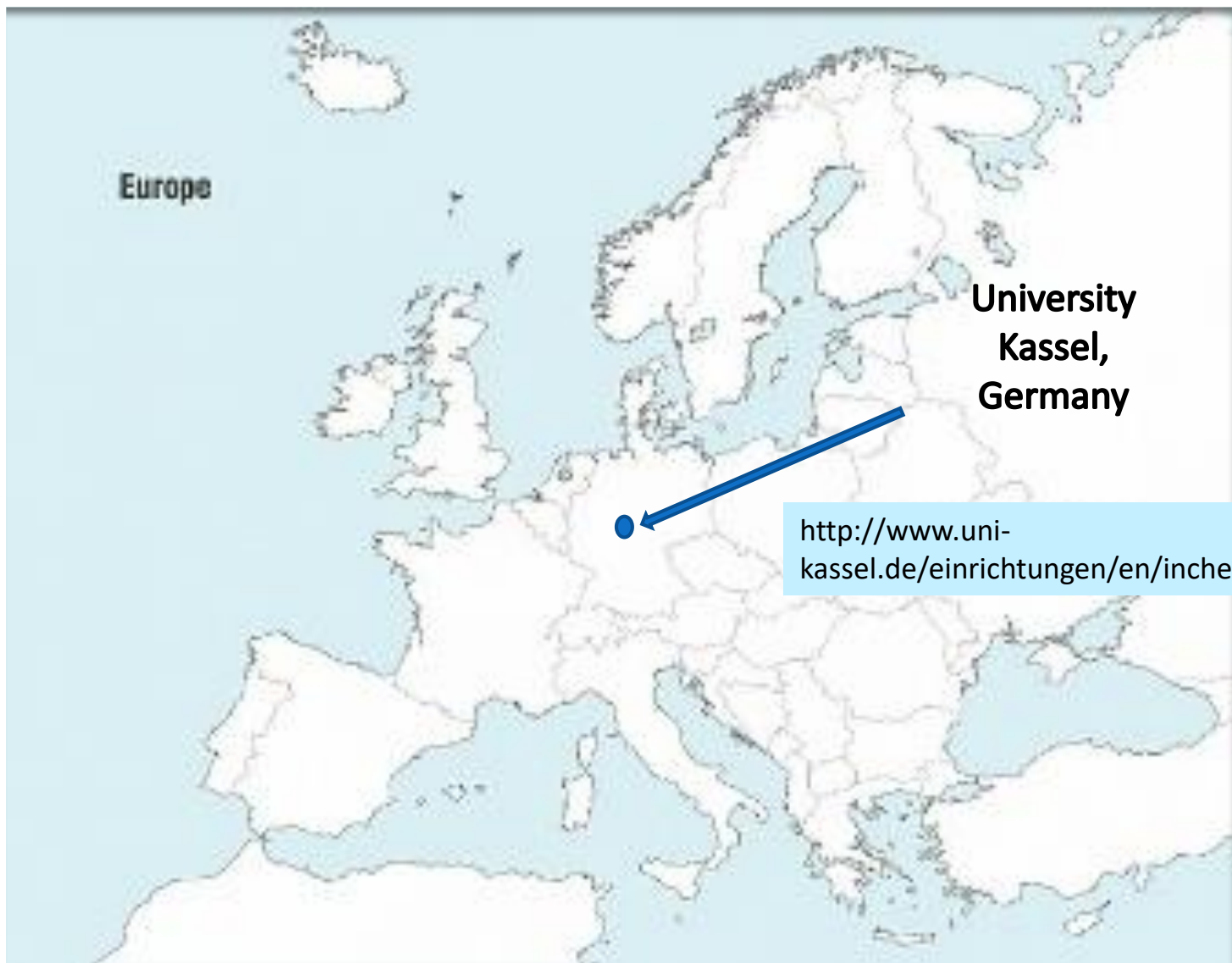
- Generate new methods and approaches to measure, understand, and strengthen the creation of more and better jobs.

■ Measuring the impact of private sector investments

■ Tracer studies is one of three new methods



Source: <https://www.letswork.org/>



**University
Kassel,
Germany**

<http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/en/incher/home.html>

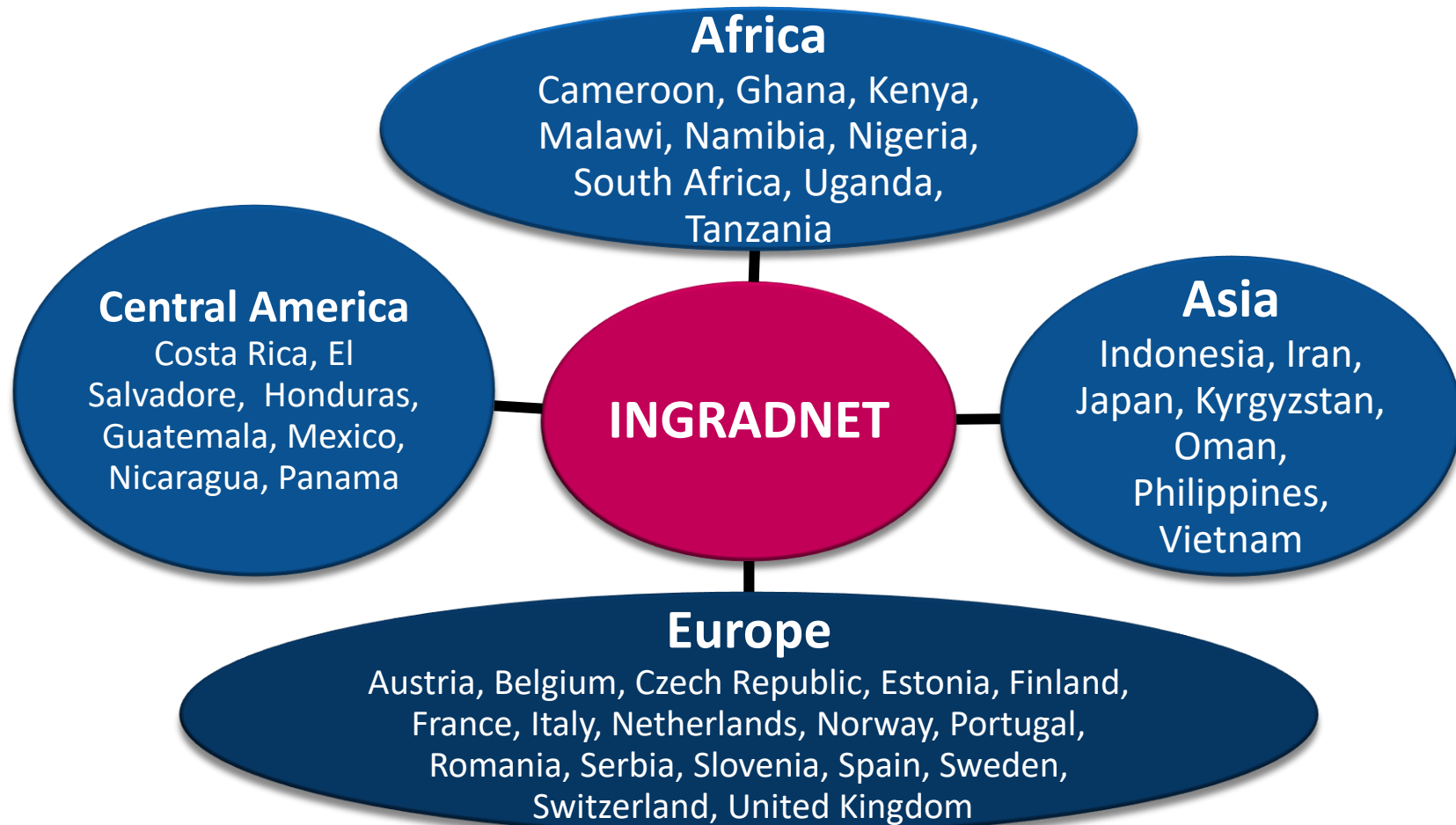
Research at the University Kassel (Germany)

- Research Centre of the University of Kassel (part of the university) since more than 30 years
(International Centre of Higher Education Research-Kassel)
- About 20 researchers, and about 15 doctoral students
- Research focus: *Higher education and work*, HE systems and structures; (international) *graduate surveys* (CHEERS; REFLEX; PROFLEX; HEGESCO)
- *International network of graduate surveys (INGRADNET)*



International Tracer Study Cooperation: INGRADNET

International Network of Graduate Tracer Studies



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What are (Graduate) Tracer Studies?

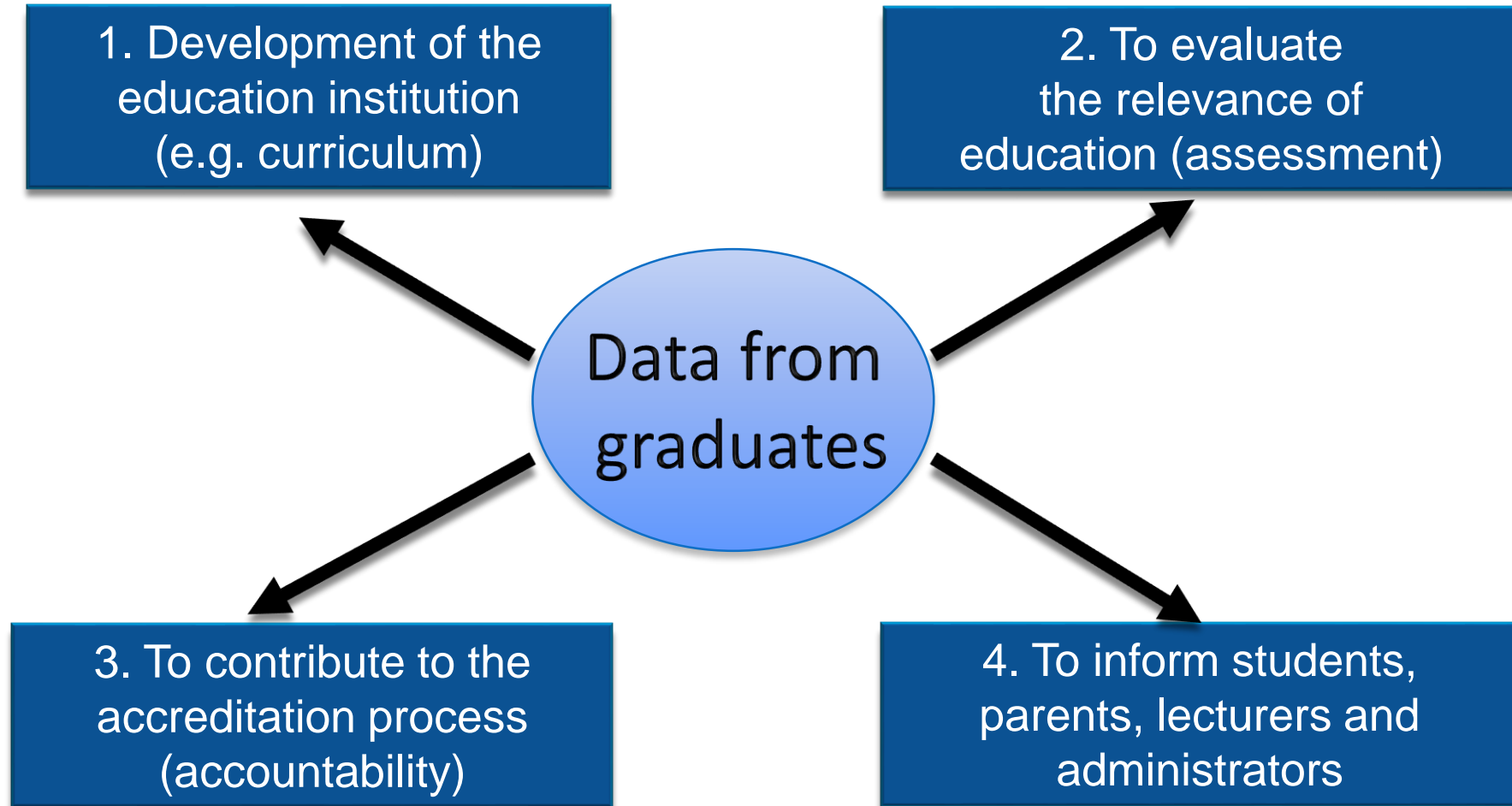
■ Similar terms

- Graduate survey
- Tracer study
- Alumni research
- Follow-up study
- Graduate career tracking

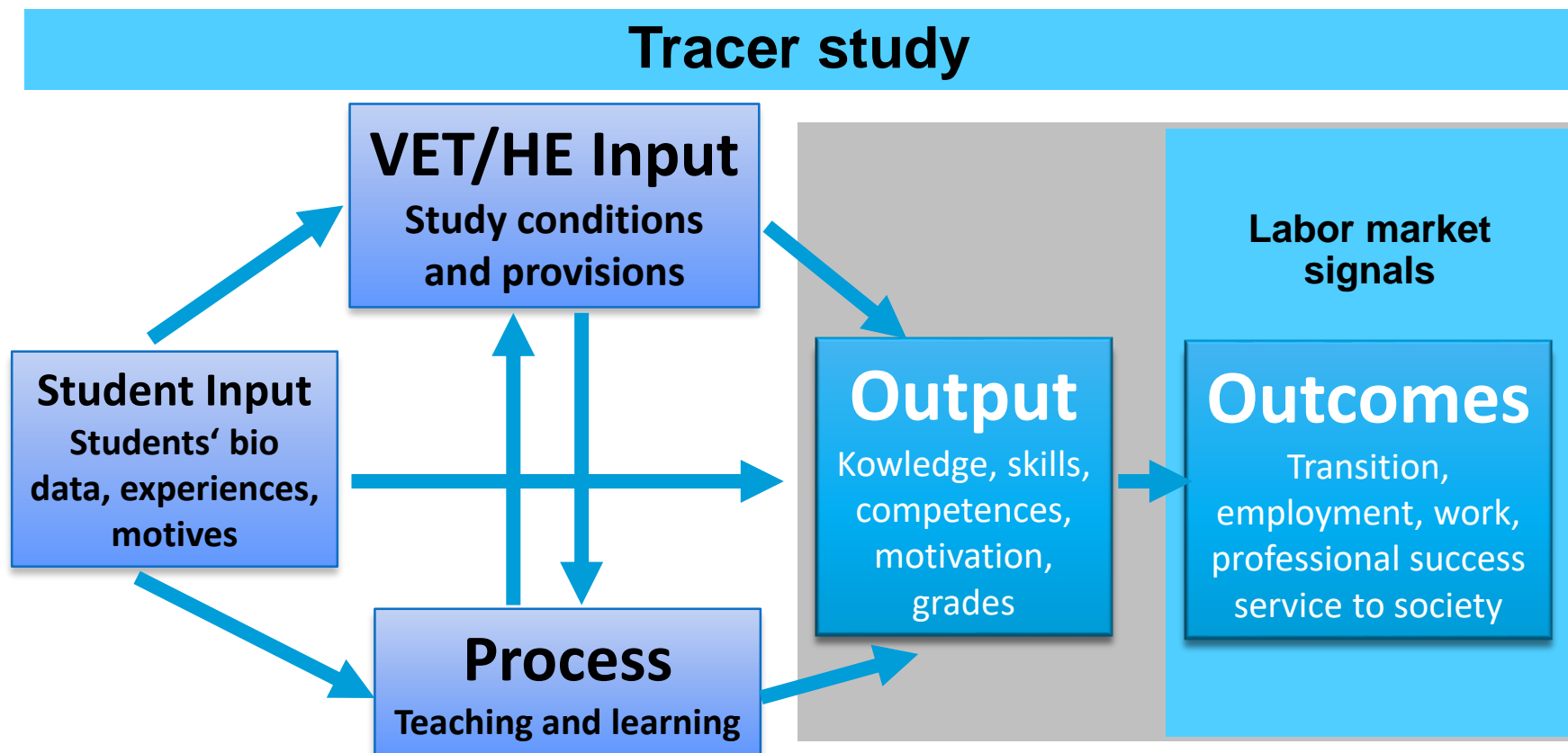
■ Target population

- Graduates of an institution of TEVET/HE (regardless the kind of degree)
- Surveyed after graduation

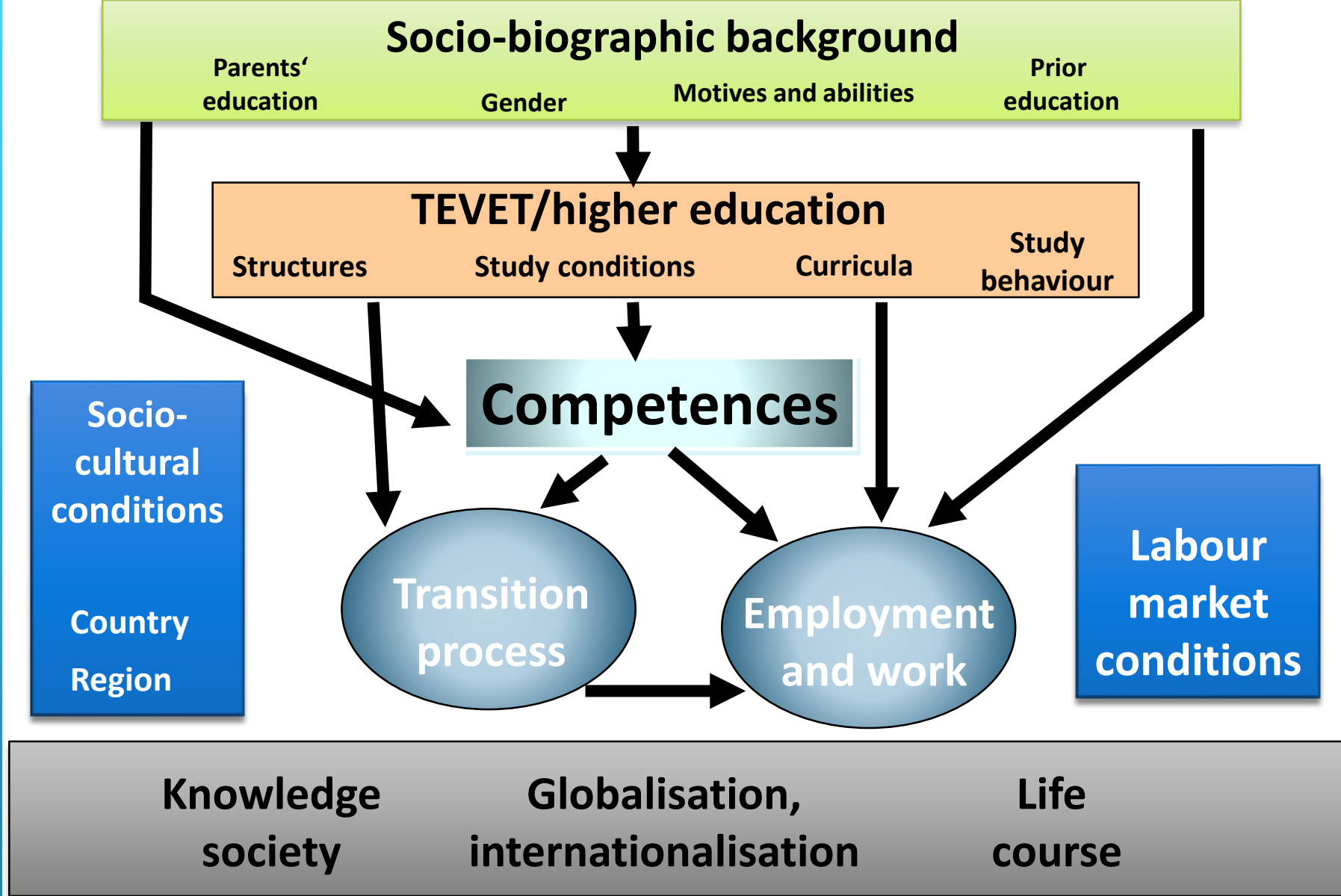
Objectives of Institutional Tracer Studies



The Conceptual Framework of Tracer Studies



Context: Labour market – region – country; socio-economic development and personal development



Key Measurement Problems of Graduate Surveys: the Questionnaire and the Statistical Analysis

- Which indicators do we need?
- How to measure the labour market signals?
- Which factors are relevant to explain the success of the graduates besides higher education?
- To what extent is the professional success/career caused by higher education?
- Which elements of higher education (study conditions and provisions, etc) have an impact?
 - Recommendations for improvements based on Tracer Studies; statistical analysis of the causal links (SEM approach)

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Vast Variety of Tracer Studies

Different Design Elements of Tracer Studies

- The scope (target population)
- Sample or census
- Time after graduation
- Methods of data collection (online survey?)
- Single or mixed cohort approach
- Cross-sectional or panel study
- Questionnaire, questions and answers
- Questionnaire modules for study programmes

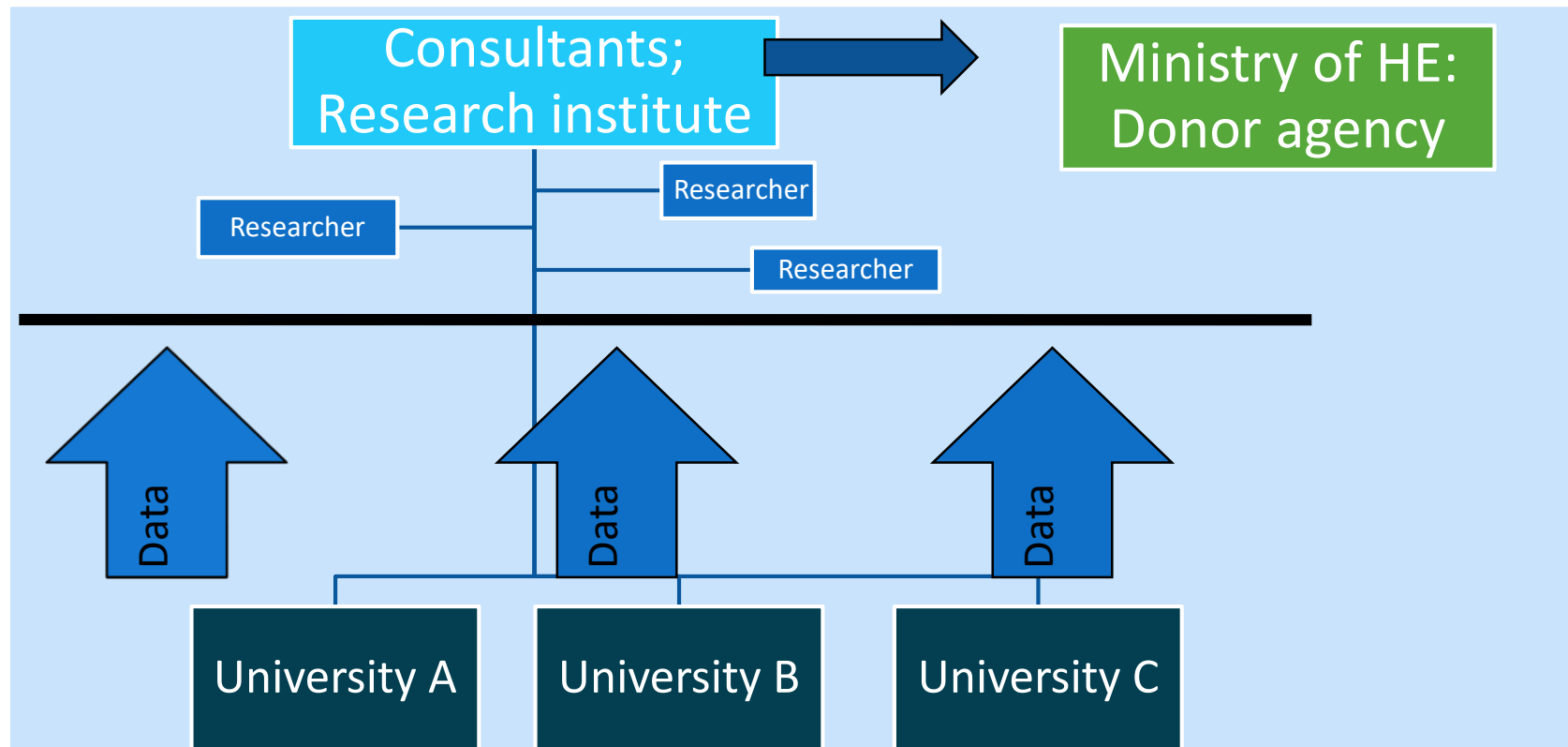
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Traditional and New Type of Graduate Surveys

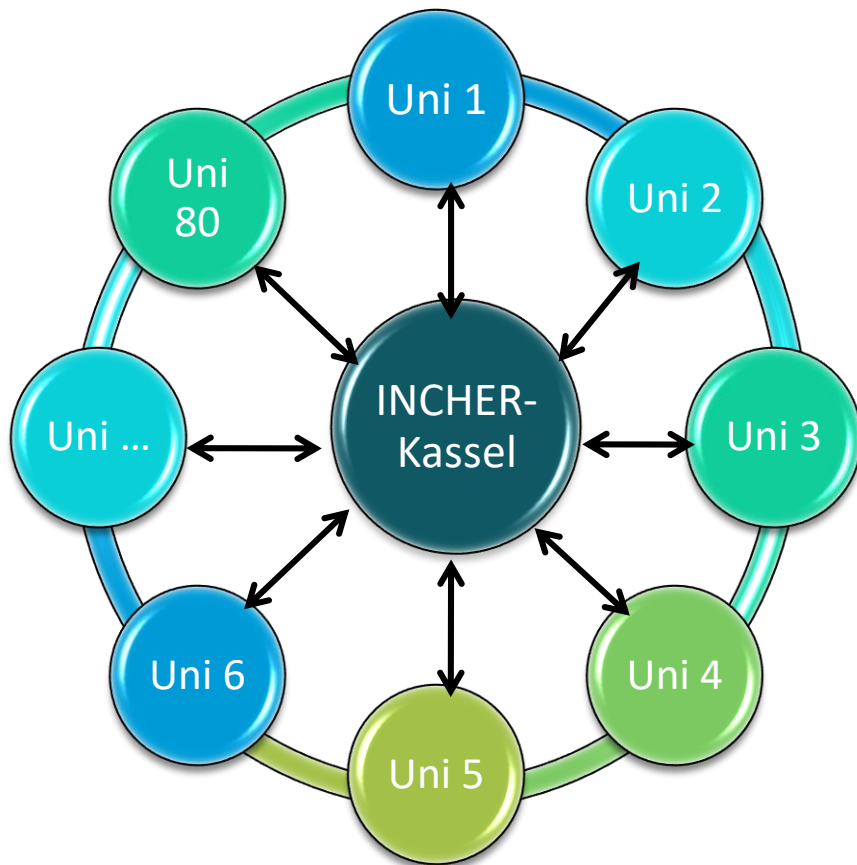
- Traditional type – representative sample survey to inform the Ministry and other key stakeholders
 - Since more than 30 years
 - E.g. France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland
 - Irrelevant for individual institution
 - Relevant for research
- New type – institutional graduate surveys (all graduates from one institution of TEVET/HE)
 - (France), Germany, Hungary, Italy, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Romania
 - Combination of a National Monitor and a feedback instrument for TEVET/HE institutions
 - Relevant for individual institutions (reports for individual institutions, study program level breakdown of results)
 - Relevant for a national monitor and research

The Old Type of (National) Tracer Studies: the School/University Delivers Data (e.g. Addresses)

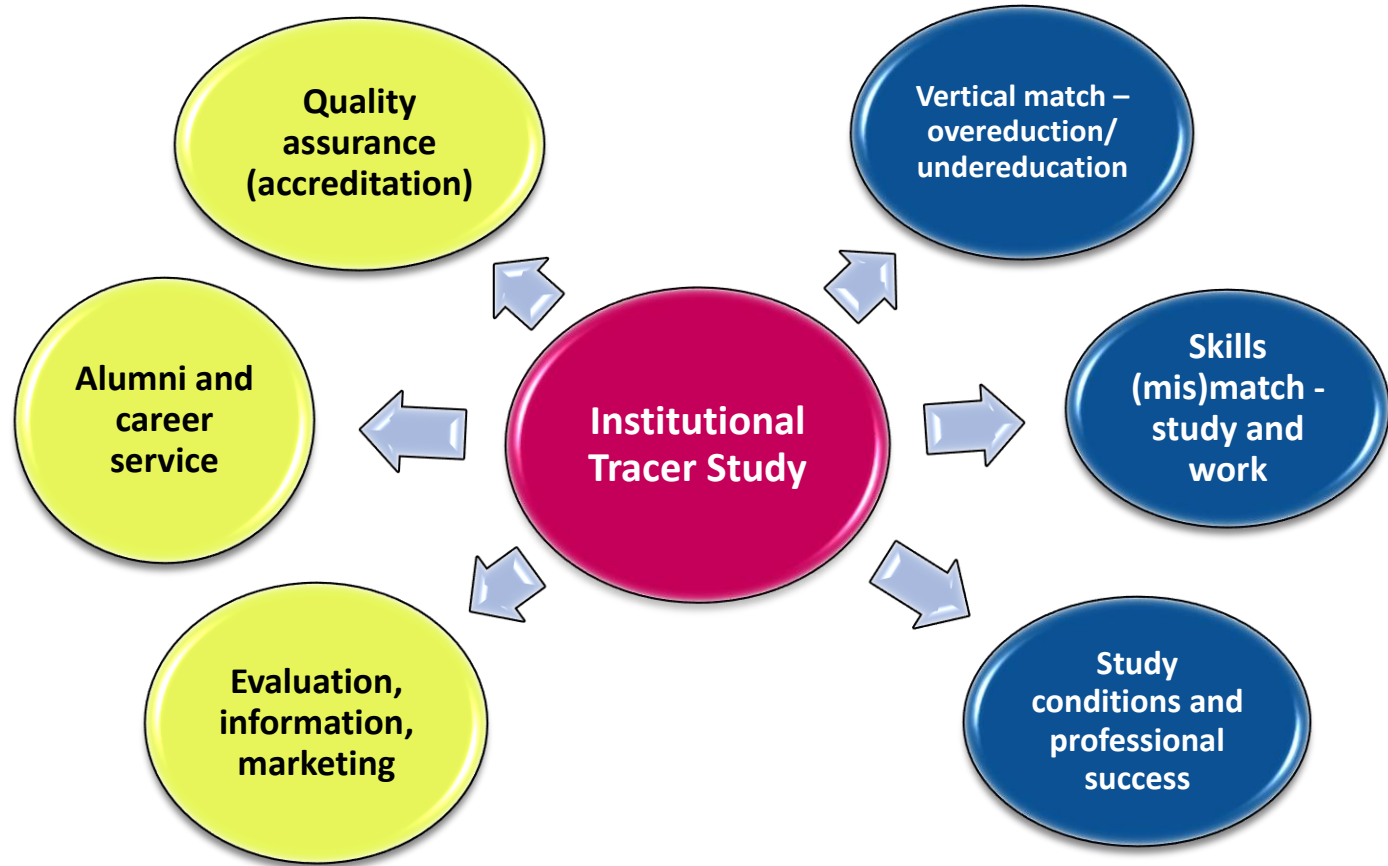


The New Type of Graduate Surveys: the Network Approach (KOAB, Germany)

About 45-70
institutions of HE
in Germany are
cooperating in
conducting regular
tracer studies



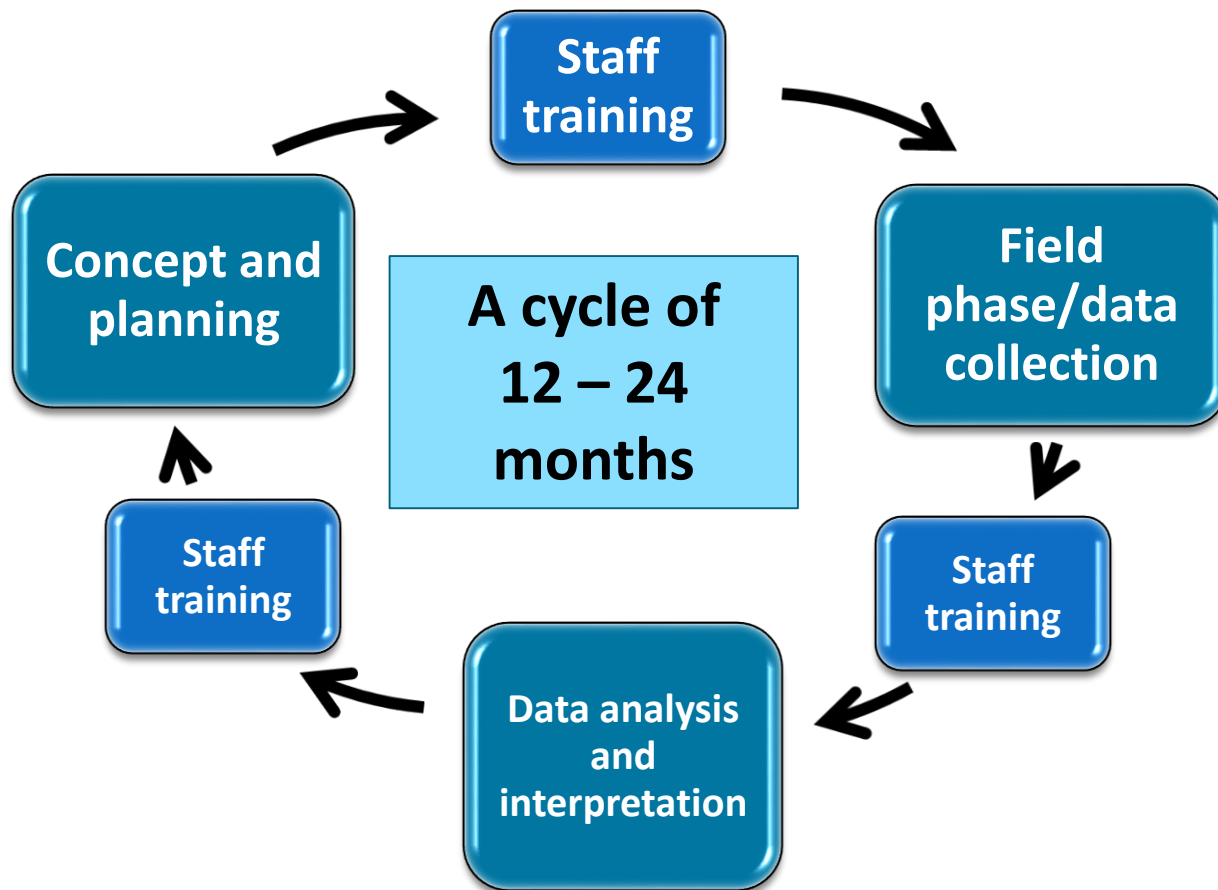
The Bridge Concept – Institutional Development and Research



Key Aspects of The New Approach of Tracer Studies

- Long term perspective: implementation of regular tracer studies
- Capacity building
 - Tracer Studies should be organized as a learning process
 - Training and cooperation (network) is needed
- High quality of data (standardisation of processes)
- International standards (design, use of instruments, comparison of results)

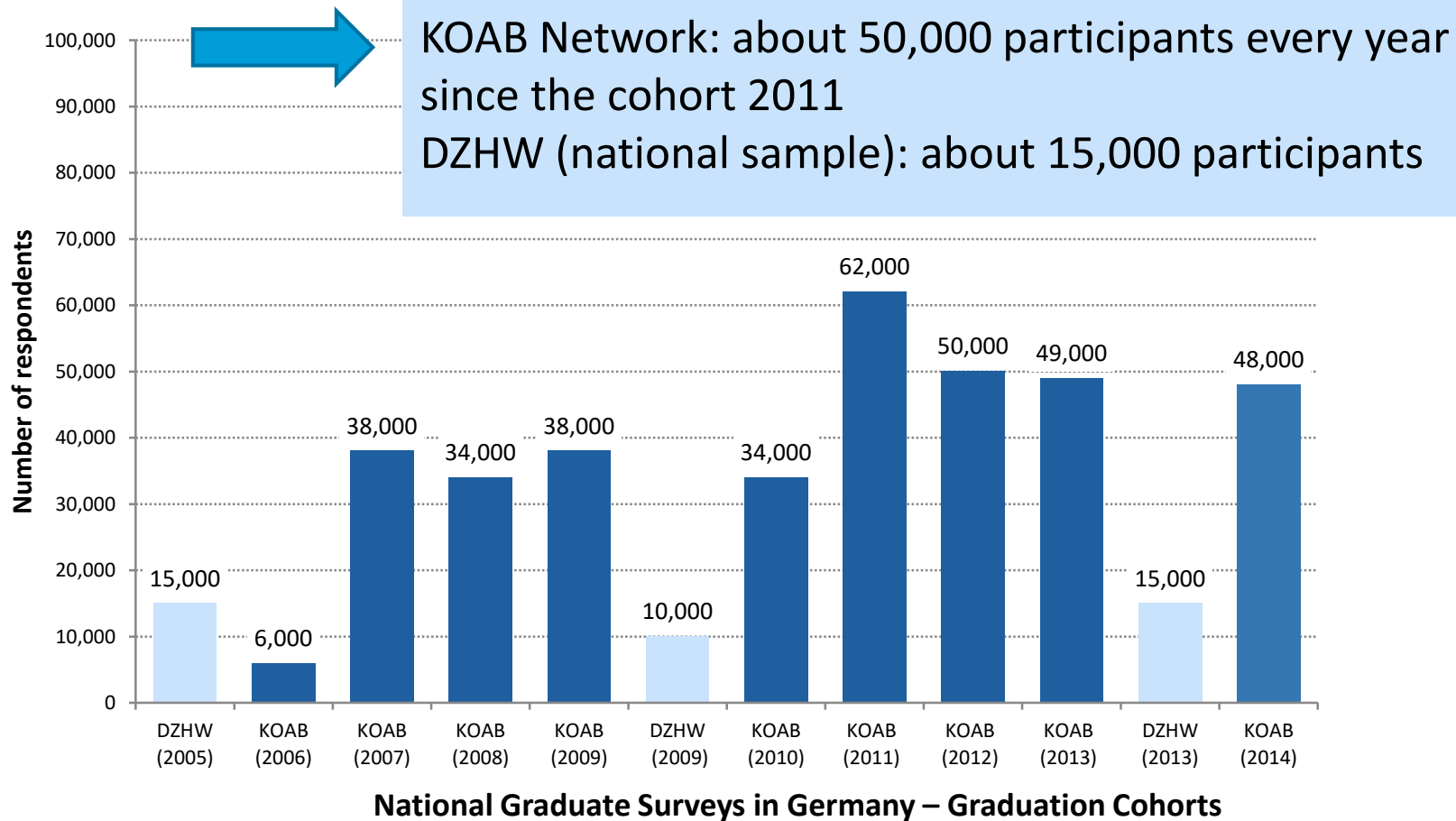
The New Tracer Study Network Approach: Capacity Building for a Learning Organisation



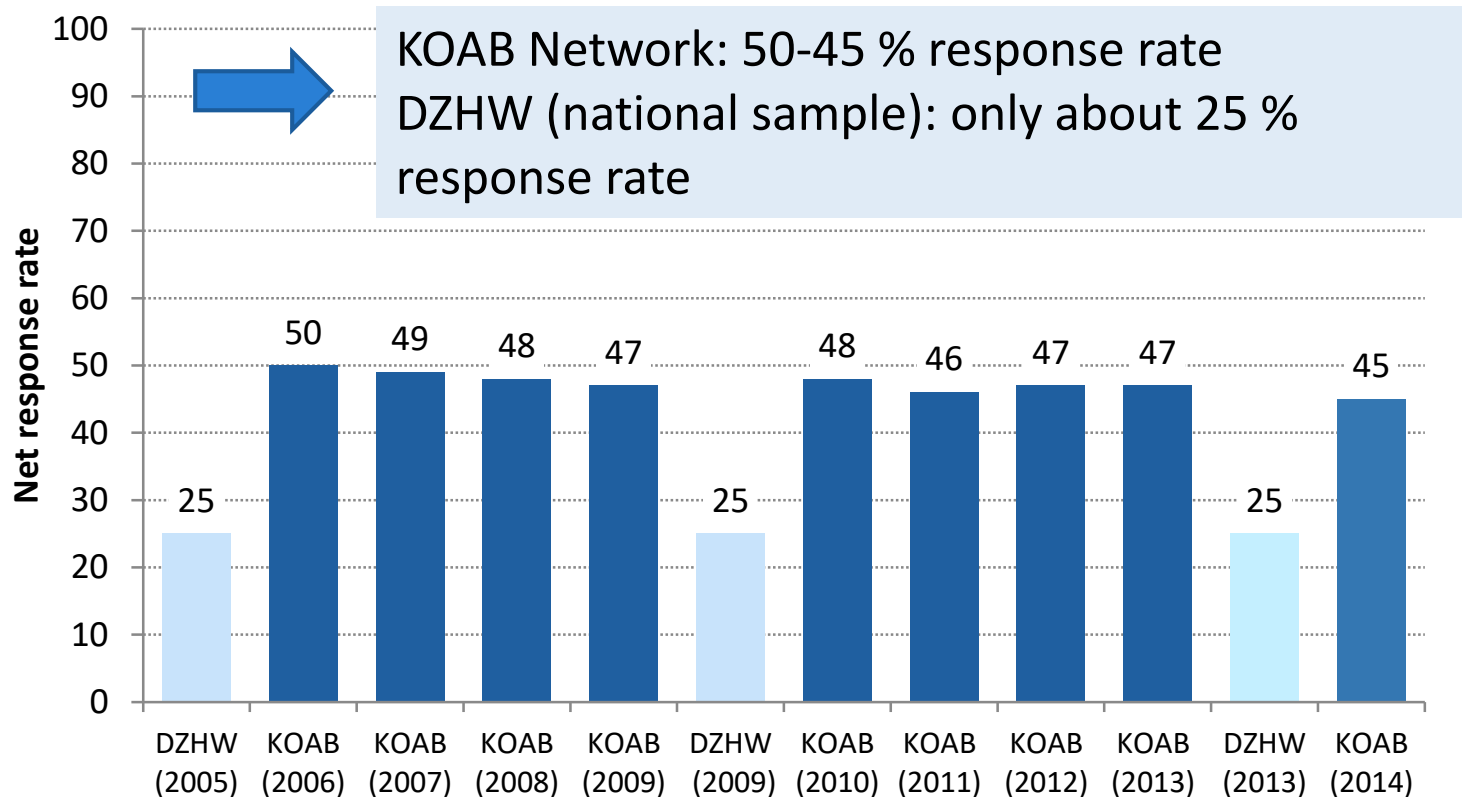
Examples of Tracer Studies With a New Approach

- Regular tracer studies in Oman
- Sustainable tracer studies in the TEVET sector
 - Kyrgyzstan
- Sustainable tracer studies in the TEVET and HE sector
 - Malawi
 - Namibia
 - Macedonia
- Consolidation of the network approach
 - Indonesia (INDOTRACE)
 - Germany (KOAB)

High Participation of Graduates in the Institutional Graduate Surveys in Germany



High Response Rates in Institutional Graduate Surveys in Germany



National Graduate Surveys in Germany – Graduation Cohorts

Key Issues of the KOAB Tracer Studies

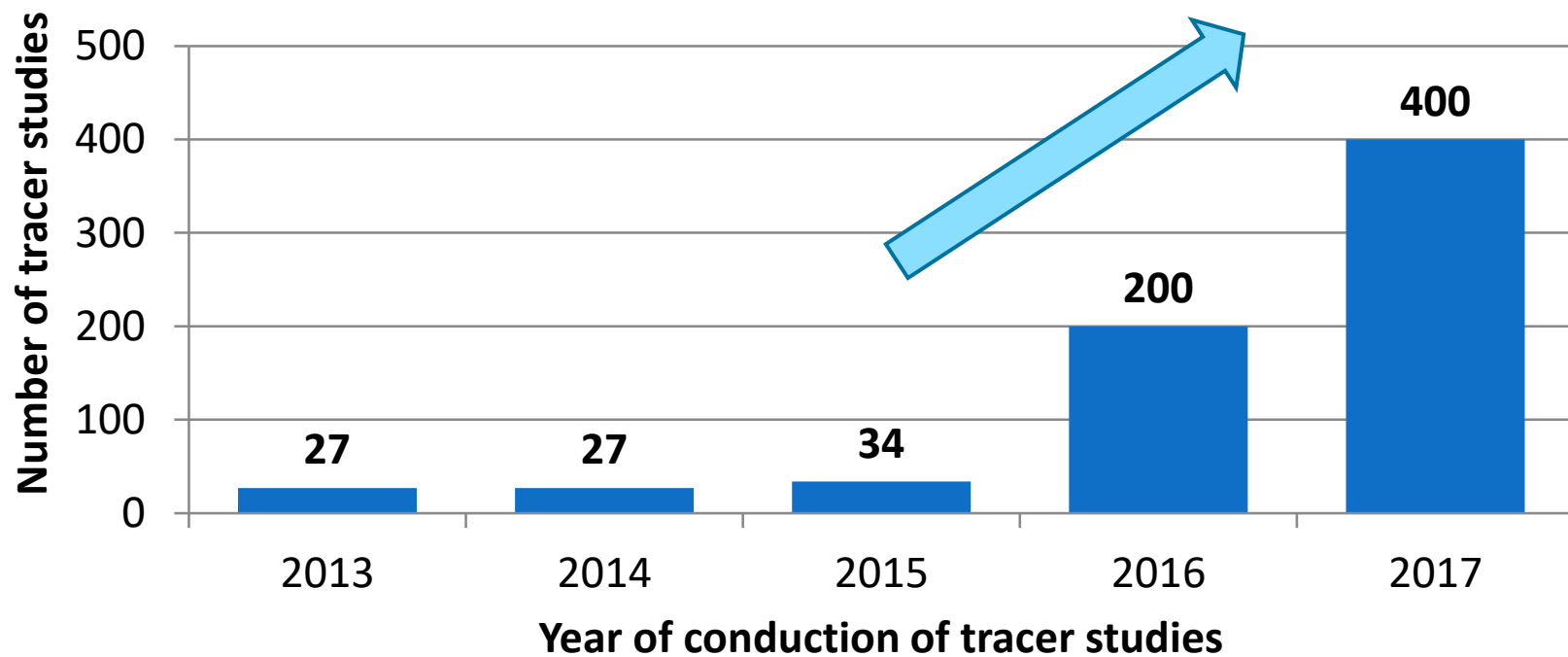
- Every university has an individual questionnaire (2009: 160 surveys were administrated at the same time by INCHER-Kassel)
- Every university has a project coordinator (= researcher)
- At least 6 training workshops per survey + national and international conferences
- Response rate: 50 %

INDONESIA – Development of a Monitoring System

- INDOTRACE – a network of tracer studies since 2010
- Units conducting the tracer studies: Career Service Centers
- Since 2012 small grants of the Ministry of Education for universities to conduct tracer studies
- 2012-2015 only about 30 grants
- 2016 big shift: now 200 grants will be available
- 2017 Plan: 400 Institutions of Higher Education should do a Tracer Study
- Central data base in the Ministry
- Technical support / training for the universities provided by Indonesian tracer study experts

Tracer Studies of Institutions of Higher Education in Indonesia 2013-2016 (grants)

Number of tracer studies at institutions of higher education



ITB Bandung – Indonesia: Regular and Fast Publication of Results

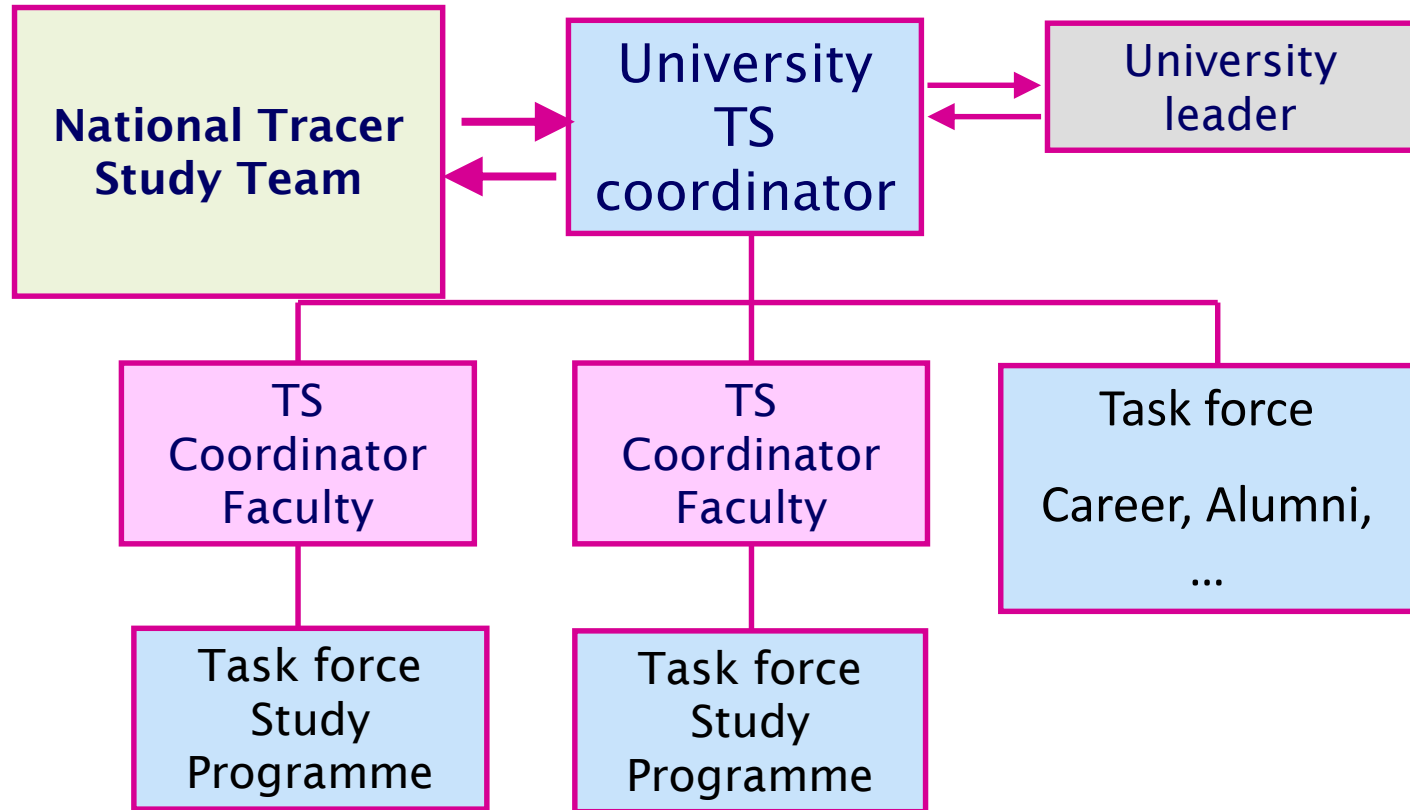
**Very high response rate:
2014: More than 90 %;
only online questionnaire**

The screenshot displays the ITB Career Center website, specifically the 'Tracer Study' section. The header includes the ITB Career Center logo and navigation links: Kuesioner, Kontak, Laporan, Seminar, and Tentang. The 'Report' section is highlighted, showing two entries:

- 2014 Tracer Study ITB 2014**: A summary report for the 2014 study, which was a research on the 2007 alumni. It mentions a response rate of 80.2% (2268 out of 2828) and provides a link to download the report (pdf).
- 2013 Tracer Study ITB 2013**: A summary report for the 2013 study, which was a research on the 2006 alumni. It mentions a response rate of 72% (1902 out of 2648) and provides a link to download the report (pdf).

Source: <https://karir.itb.ac.id/tracerstudy/report>

Aspects of the Organisation



TS = Tracer Study

Local Tracer Study Team (TST)

- Tracer Study coordinator (contact person);
- Required functions/competencies of the team members
 - Project management,
 - Educational expertise,
 - Experience with conduction of surveys and mass data handling
 - IT support,
 - Report writing,
 - Statistical analysis (SPSS syntax),
 - Very good MS Word competencies (text formatting)
 - External partners.

Address Database

The database should contain all information needed

- to *contact* the graduates (like names and addresses);
- to document *how and when* the graduates were contacted (like method of contact and dates);
- to allow to analyse *who* was contacted (like study programme, gender, degree, date of graduation).

Methods to Collect Addresses

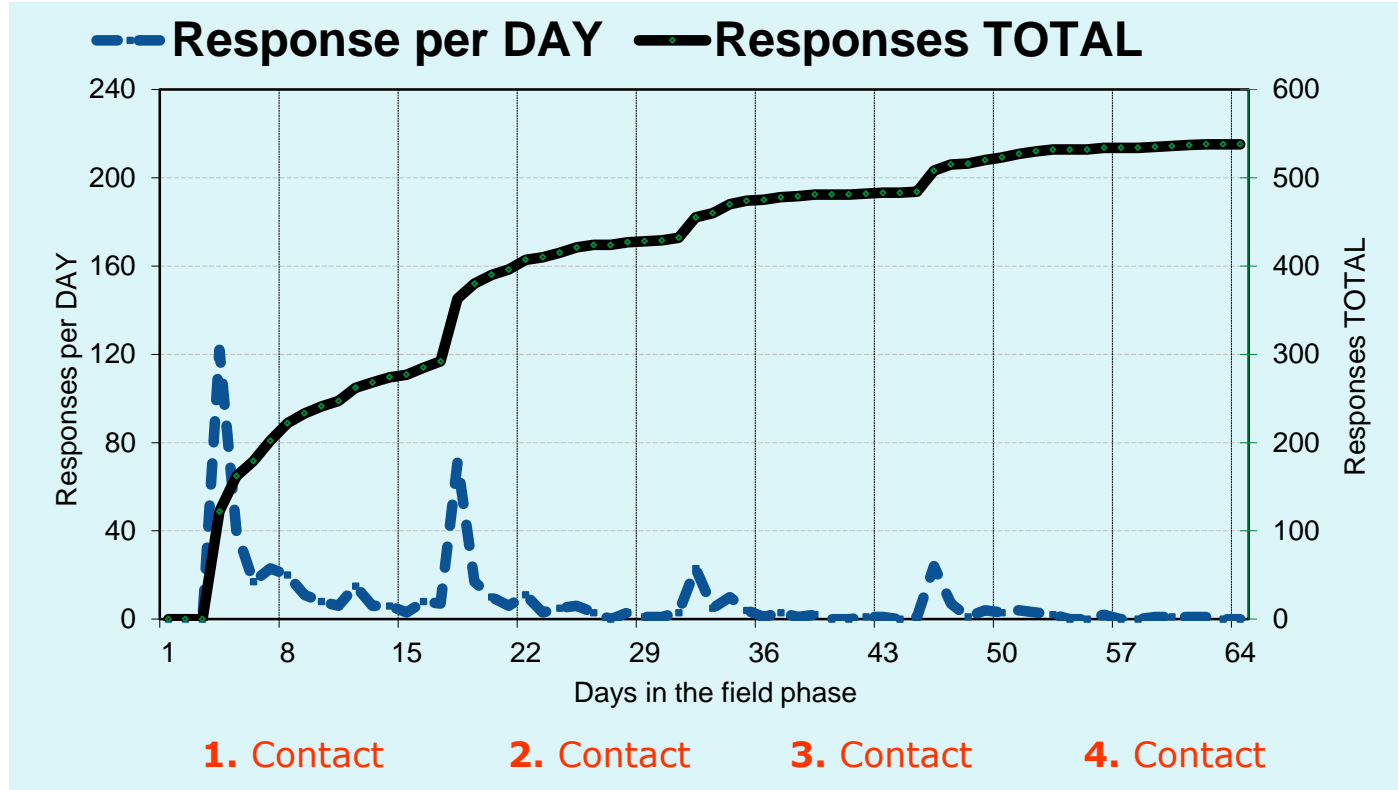
- sometimes it is necessary to collect the address information from sub units within an education institution (faculties or departments);
- if addresses are not stored electronically they must be entered manually;
- use of addresses of the parents of the graduates (registration records);
- use the media: announce the survey in the internet, newspaper, radio or TV and ask the graduates to contact you;
- use Alumni associations, if available;
- contact graduates via employers (like schools and universities and other known employers of graduates);
- use the snowball technique: ask graduates for addresses of other graduates.

Snowball technique can be used, if no address is available

- Every graduate should provide addresses of three others
- The new addresses are used to update the address database
- → Long duration of field phase

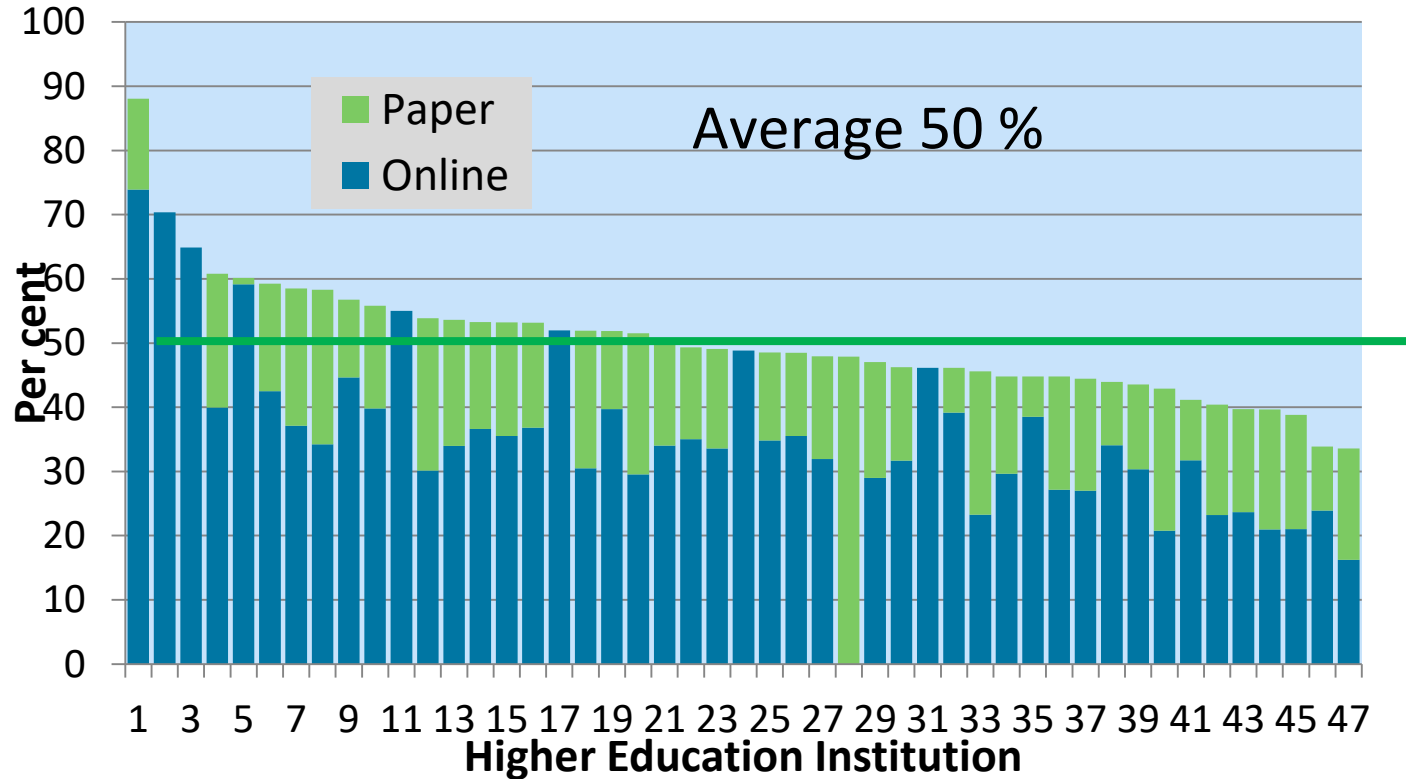
The Effects of Reminders

Response Statistics of a German University (KOAB network)



Example of a Mixed Mode Survey

Response Rate of the KOAB (German Network) Survey 2009,
by Higher Education Institution (%)



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Lessons Learned from Tracer Studies in Different Countries

- High *response rates* are possible to achieve in almost all countries
- Availability and *quality of addresses* (methods used to update addresses) seems not to be a real problem
- High *quality of the data* is a pre-requisite of the relevance of the findings for research and institutional development
- *Documentation* of survey procedures and data editing is necessary – culture of critique

Open Questions

- Can Institutional Tracer Studies deliver relevant data to substitute a separate National Tracer Study?
- How to ensure comparability of Institutional Tracer Studies?
- Who collects the data and is responsible for data quality?
- How to build a system of Tracer Studies which is flexible and relevant for the institutions and for researchers (and the Ministry of Education) at the same time?
- How to exchange systematically the experiences to improve the future Tracer Studies (building a learning culture)?

Perspectives of a Good Tracer Studies

- The implementation of Institutional Tracer Studies is a long term perspective (5 to 10 years)
- Network approach of institutions (cooperation) helps
- A central (national) support unit is needed
- Handbooks/Guides are available

International exchange and cooperation: INGRADNET



Tracer Study Researchers from Africa, America, Asia and Europe during the International Conference „Experiences with Link and Match in Higher Education: Results of Tracer Studies Worldwide“ EXLIMA (Bali, 2012)

Indonesian Tracer Study Network: INDOTRACE



The 2nd International Conference
"Experiences with Link and Match in Higher and Vocational Education. Results of Tracer Studies Worldwide" (EXLIMA)
&
Workshop and Training on
"Indonesia National Tracer Study Network" (INDOTRACE)
SANUR PARADISE PLAZA HOTEL 24 - 28 NOVEMBER 2015, BALI, INDONESIA

Bali, Indonesia 2015

Next International Tracer Study Conference: Bali/Indonesia 2018

Thank you very much for your attention

Further information and tools: Web site
<http://ingradnet.org>

Tracer study handbook:

Harald Schomburg (2016): Carrying out tracer studies. In: ETF/CEDEFOP/ILO (eds.): Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs. Volume 6. Torino: ETF

Download:

http://ingradnet.org/images/schomburg_2016_carrying_out_tracer_studies.pdf