

Reflections on how to deal with rankings and on their impact

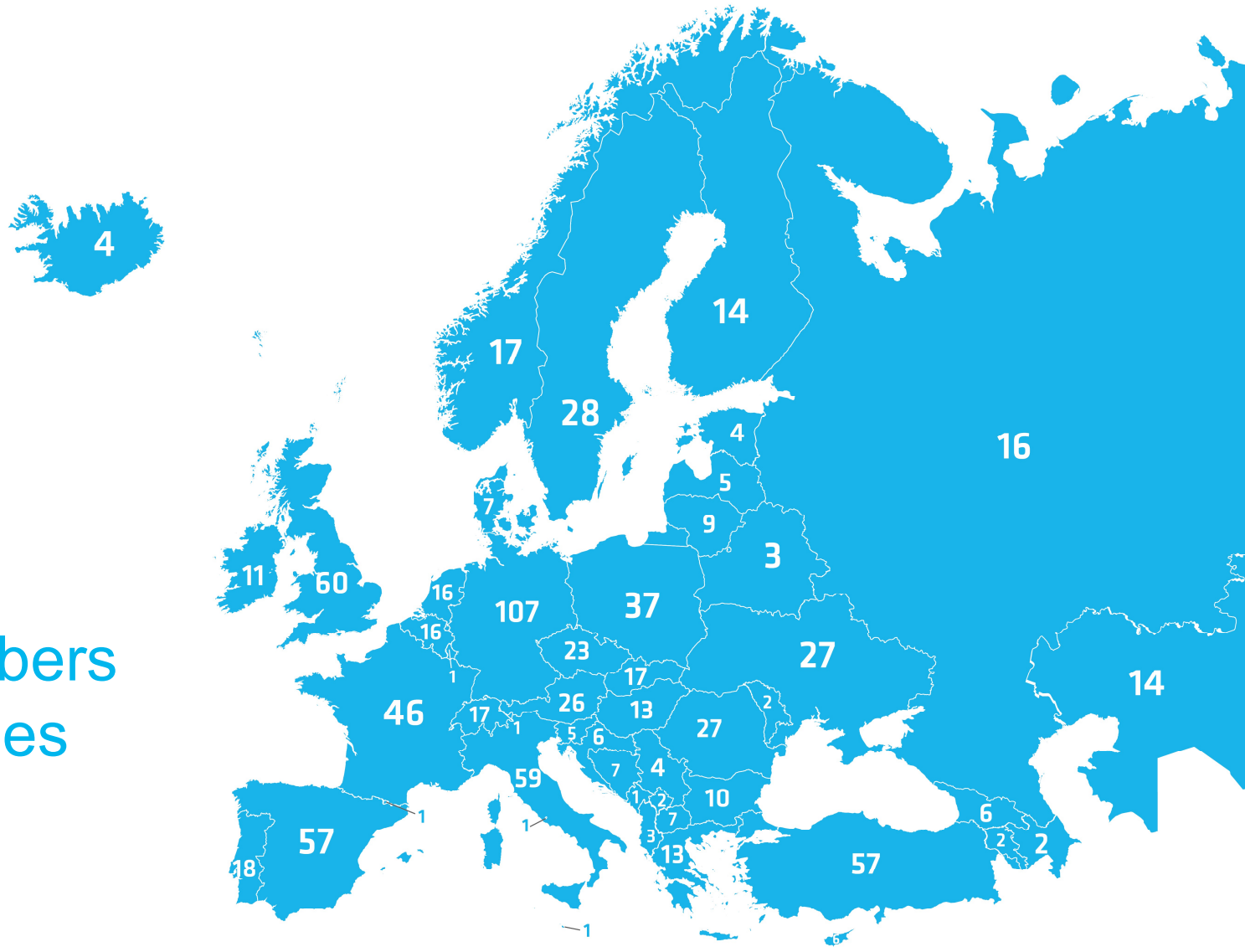
@TiaLoukkola

Tia Loukkola
25 November 2019

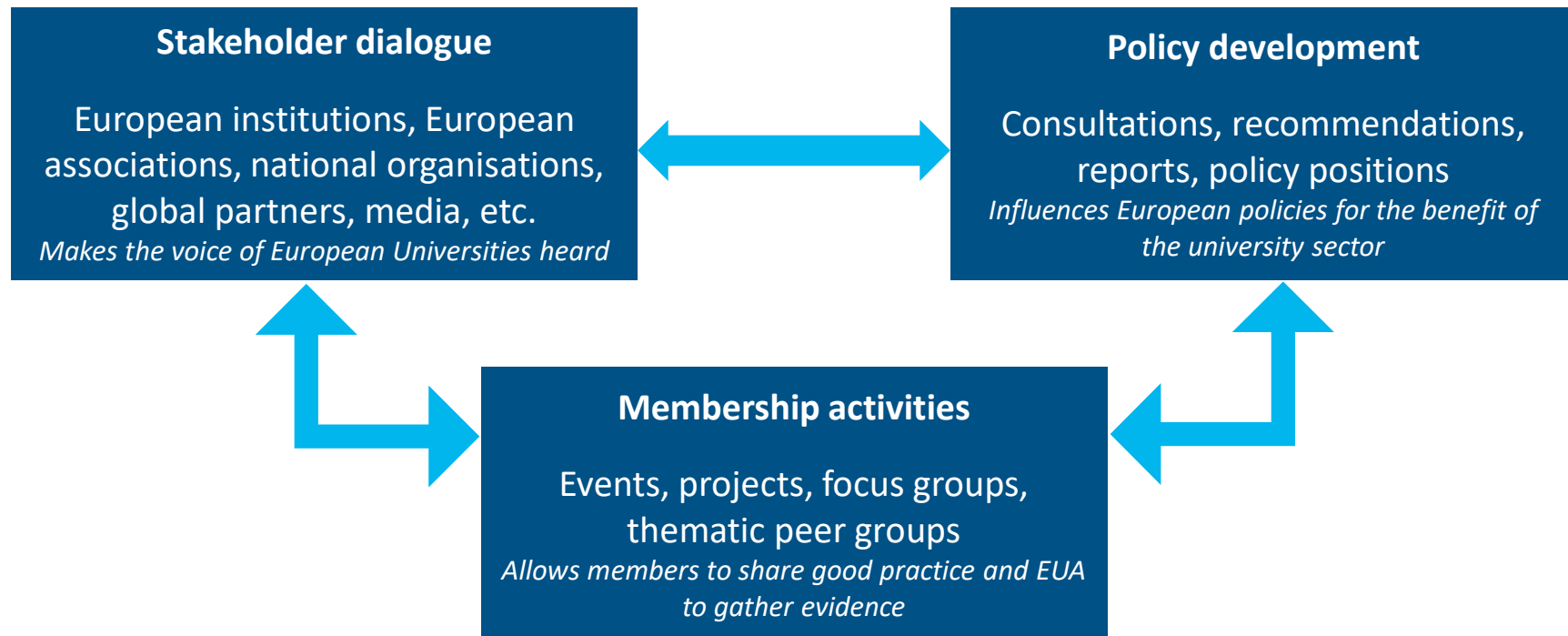
This presentation

- Where I come from
- We should not overestimate the role of rankings...
- ...but they do some have some use

**EUA has 840 members
based in 48 countries**
(as of 1 Jan 2020)



Main activities



What we can agree upon

- Ranking methodologies have flaws
- Rankings don't tell the whole story
- Increased attention in public discourse paid to universities is positive

Drivers or opportunists?

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-impact-rankings-2019-results-announced>

THE University Impact Rankings 2019: results announced

University of Auckland tops first global ranking to measure institutions' social and economic impact

April 3, 2019

By [Ellie Bothwell](#)

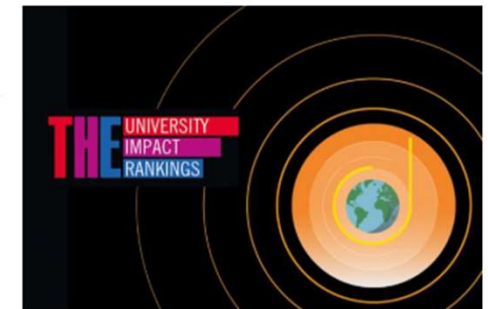
Twitter: [@elliebothwell](#)

[View the full results of the overall University Impact Rankings 2019](#)

The [University of Auckland](#) has topped a pioneering new ranking that assesses the social and economic impact of universities based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The *Times Higher Education University*

[Impact Rankings](#) is the world's first global attempt to document evidence of universities' impact on society, rather than just research and teaching performance. Metrics include universities' policies on academic freedom, their use of secure employment contracts and their share of senior female academic staff and are based on 11 of the 17 UN SDGs.



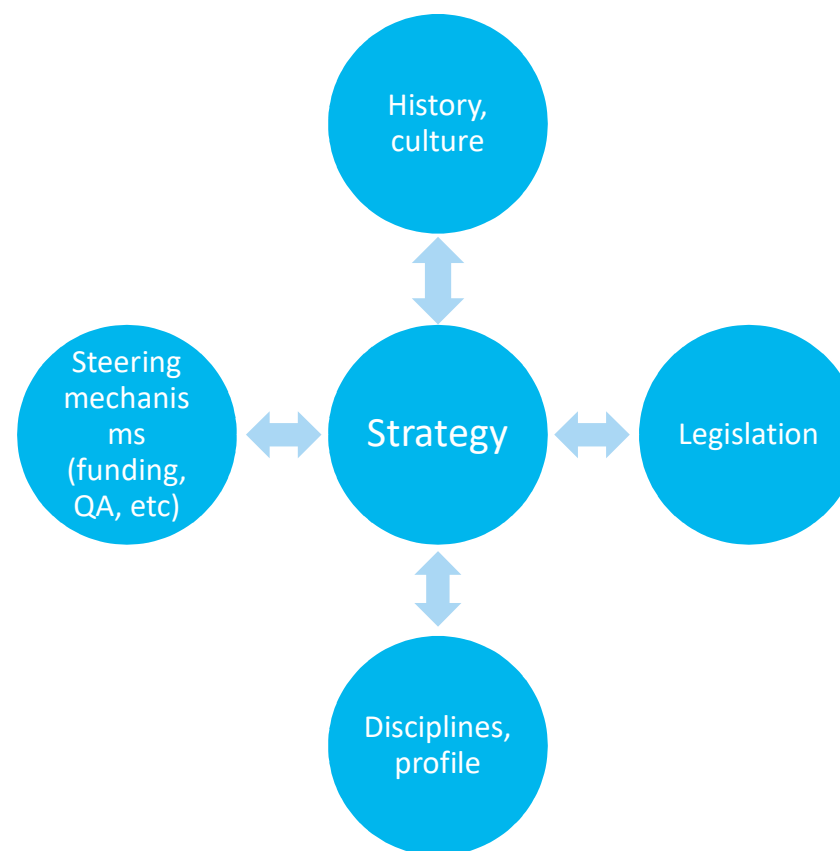
READ MORE

[THE University Impact Rankings 2019: Canada leads the way](#)

The impact of rankings?

- Overreactions in early stages, sobering since
- Focus on challenges in
 - Public information provision
 - Institutional data management
- Diminishing impact of one or another ranking
 - Choose the one that fits your needs?
- Actual impact difficult to discern

Putting rankings in a context



What can they
be used for?

- Inform decision-making
- Fill information gap
- Benchmarking
- Marketing purposes

<https://www.eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?id=415>

Ten principles for the responsible use of university rankings

by Ludo Waltman, Paul Wouters, Nees
Jan van Eck

<https://www.cwts.nl/blog?article=n-r2q274>

Interpretation of university rankings

5. Comparisons between universities should be made keeping in mind the differences between universities
6. Uncertainty in university rankings should be acknowledged
7. An exclusive focus on the ranks of universities in a university ranking should be avoided; the values of the underlying indicators should be taken into account

Use of university rankings

8. Dimensions of university performance not covered by university rankings should not be overlooked
9. Performance criteria relevant at the university level should not automatically be assumed to have the same relevance at the department of research group level
10. University rankings should be handled cautiously, but they should not be dismissed as being completely useless

To conclude

- International dataset for higher education and research still not any closer
- Importance of understanding the limitations of rankings and the logic and underpinning valued and drivers behind them

It is vital that each university has a coherent mission and strategic plan, and stays true to that mission.

Thank you for your attention

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