TEACHING, RESEARCH AND BEYOND

General trends and country specific challenges

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General trends

- University systems have become larger and more expensive

- The population of students have become more heterogeneous, with different needs and abilities, asking for a more diversified tertiary education supply

- The involvement of universities in social and economic activities has become more intense

- Globalization has spurred international competition for resources, students, relevance, prestige
General trends and changes in the governance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

• **Request for more accountability**: Governments and the tax payer need to be informed on the use of resources and on the quality of teaching and research

• **Self-evaluation and external evaluation** have increased their relevance in the government of institutions, fostering accountability and efforts to improve the performance of HEIs

• **Strategic planning, strengthening of internal governance and acceptance of external judgement** are relatively new features of management of **HEIs** (possible conflicts with the traditional academic culture).
Specific challenges for the Italian system due to the historical legacy

- **Very homogeneous university system** (only ISCED 5A, ISCED 6 programmes offered). Common culture, difficulties in developing institutional differentiation through strategic planning and in offering technical and practical programmes.

- Huge **gap in tertiary education attainment** with respect to other industrialized countries and EU2020 objectives, partially due to the **absence of tertiary vocational programmes** focused on practical, technical and occupational skills.

- **Delay in the adoption of quality assurance mechanisms and external evaluation**
Specific challenges linked to the current situation

• Economic and fiscal crisis determined a **severe cut in public funding** (-20% in real terms between 2009 and 2013). **Risk of divergence between northern and southern European countries.**

• **Trust in the university system has been undermined** by a general crisis of the trust in the élites of the country and by the weakness of accountability mechanisms

• General **rules on resource management have been stiffened** by the central government as a means to reduce universities expenditures

• In recent years, however, **research quality assessment and quality assurance have been introduced in the system together with a change in the governance of institutions**
In this context the Italian system needs to:

- **Reinforce the centrality of students** in the design and management of tertiary education programmes and **narrow the gap in tertiary education attainment**. This last objective requires:
  - *reduction of drop-outs*,
  - *reduction of the time needed for completion*,
  - *increase of the enrolment rate*, also developing programmes focused on practical, technical and occupational skills (not necessarily supplied by universities)
- **Strengthen strategic planning capacity of HEIs for developing specific goals**
- **Strengthen the international presence of Italian HEIs**. The Italian system can rely on a good average research quality and productivity
...these priorities would require:

- Reinforcement of accountability mechanisms and evaluation, also as a means to increase the trust in the system
- More resources (tertiary education is clearly underfinanced)
- More flexible rules for the government of HEIs institutions

- More resources and more flexibility can be more easily obtained if trust is re-established through more accountability.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION