

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AND THEIR IMPACT SUMMARY

Andrejs Rauhvargers



Copyright © by the European University Association 2011

All rights reserved. This information may be freely used and copied for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (© European University Association).

Copies of the full report “Global University Rankings and their impact” are available for 10 Euro per copy.

For ordering information, please contact publications@eua.be or write to:

European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24
1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32-2 230 55 44
Fax: +32-2 230 57 51

A free electronic version of this report is available at www.eua.be.

“Six Blind Men and an Elephant” image

Copyright © 2011 Berteig Consulting Inc. Used with permission.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AND THEIR IMPACT

Andrejs Rauhvargers



The Blind Men and the Elephant

by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, -"Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he,
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!



MORAL.

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
*And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years university rankings have become increasingly important worldwide; the number of global rankings has grown during the period of this review and it is predicted that it will keep growing¹. Rankings went global in 2003 when Shanghai Jiao Tong University published the results of the first global university ranking. The importance of rankings seems to have grown exponentially.

Rankings have always been controversial. Society may like to have a league table that allows one to see who is the 'best in the world' (and who is not). Politicians like to be presented with information in a business-like manner – and rankings do just that. In times of significant financial constraints, policy makers in different countries are increasingly interested in comparisons of the performance of various higher education institutions (HEIs) according to objective indicators. However, the results of any ranking, but especially global league tables, depend strongly on the choice of indicators and weights assigned to them. In addition, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure and quantify quality itself, and therefore rankings use various proxies – some of which are rather distant from the actual quality of teaching or research.

Purpose and principles of this review

The purpose of this European University Association (EUA) review is to inform universities about the methodologies behind the most popular global rankings, and about their potential impact.

The EUA review of global university rankings has been produced following some agreed principles:

- It addresses the most popular global university rankings as well as some other attempts to measure performance (rankings, ratings, classifications) that are relevant for European universities. However, the review does not cover national rankings.
- The review is not aimed at ranking the rankings themselves, but at providing universities with an analysis of the methodologies behind the global rankings.

¹ S. Marginson, interview in *The Australian*, 12 January 2011.

- Only publicly available and freely accessible information on each ranking, rather than surveys or interviews with the ranking providers, was used in the survey. Such an approach was used in an attempt to demonstrate how transparent each ranking is from a user's perspective.
- Efforts were made to discover what is said to be measured, what is actually measured, how the scores for individual indicators and, where appropriate, the final scores are calculated, and what the results actually mean.

We believe that this ranking methodology analysis will provide useful information to the universities in times when rankings increasingly influence higher education policies and public opinion about them.

Selection of rankings covered in the review

According to the above principles, the following international university rankings were selected for the EUA review:

- Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) – Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, China
- Times Higher Education World University Ranking, Times Higher Education:
 - in cooperation with Quacquarelli Symonds until 2009
 - in cooperation with Thomson Reuters as of 2010
- World's Best Universities Ranking – US News & World Report in cooperation with Quacquarelli Symonds, US
- Global Universities Ranking – Reitor (Рейтор), Russia
- EU University-Based Research Assessment – AUBR Working Group, European Commission
- Leiden Ranking – Leiden University, The Netherlands
- Performance Rankings of Scientific Papers for World Universities – Higher Education Accreditation and Evaluation Council, Taiwan

- CHE University Ranking – Centre for Higher Education Development/*die Zeit*, Germany
- CHE Excellence Ranking – Centre for Higher Education Development/*die Zeit*, Germany
- U-Map classification – CHEPS
- U-Multirank ranking – EU funded project
- Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- Webometrics Ranking of World Universities – Cybermetrics lab, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Spain.

Summary of observations and findings

General findings

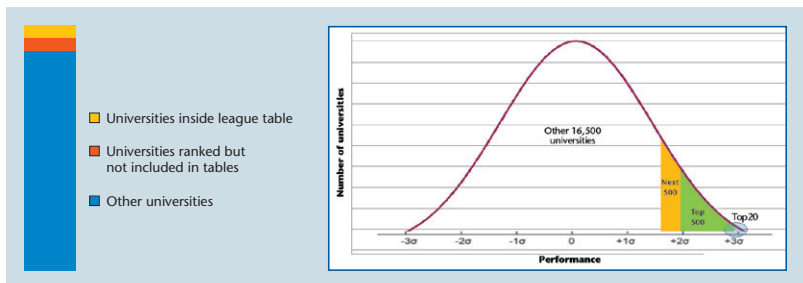
1. Trends in recent years demonstrate that the **number of global university rankings is likely to keep growing**, although they will become more specialised.
2. Policy makers and society at large often see global university rankings as tools for university “transparency”, although it might be difficult to argue the reverse – i.e. that, were there no rankings, universities would be “non-transparent”.
3. The landscape of existing global university rankings is diverse covering:
 - University rankings whose main purpose is to produce league tables of top universities only – the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) ranking, mainly based on research indicators; the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking initially in cooperation with Quacquarelli Symonds (THE-QS), since 2010 THE in cooperation with Thomson Reuters (THE-TR); and using a different set of indicators; the Russian Reitor ranking, and others.
 - University rankings concerning research performance only – with or without league tables – the Leiden Ranking with no composite score, the Taiwan Higher Education Accreditation Evaluation Council university ranking (HEEACT) with a league table based on a composite score, and the EU Assessment of University-Based Research (AUBR) which is a research assessment methodology targeted at transparency for various purposes, rather than a ranking.

- University rankings and classifications using a number of indicators with no intention of producing composite scores or league tables – the original German Centre of Higher Education Development (CHE) university ranking was designed to help potential students choose a university according to their requirements, the EU U-Map classification to allow them to find and compare universities with similar profiles, and the EU U-Multirank ranking to compare the performance of universities in various aspects of their activities.
 - OECD is in the initial phases of its Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO), which is intended to benchmark universities according to the actual learning outcomes demonstrated by students.
 - Rankings of universities only according to their visibility on the web – Webometrics.
4. Despite their many shortcomings, biases and flaws ‘rankings enjoy a high level of acceptance among stakeholders and the wider public because of their simplicity and consumer-type information’ (AUBR Expert Group 2009). Thus, university rankings are not going to disappear; indeed, the number of rankings is expected to increase although they will become more specialised (Marginson, 2011).

Ranking elite universities, shaking all

5. The most popular global league tables (ARWU, THE-QS and THE-Thomson Reuters, US News and World Report Ranking (USNWR), HEEACT, Reitor and others) concern the world’s top universities only. First of all, the league tables include roughly 1% to 3% of universities (200-500 universities) out of approximately 17,000 universities in the world. Secondly, it is important to note that the rankings producing global league tables use methodologies that simply **cannot produce stable results for more than 700-1200 universities** in global league tables and just around 300 universities in subject area rankings).

Proportion of universities considered by existing global rankings vs. the total number of universities in the world



6. Due to the elitist approach applied in the methodologies of the global league tables, more than **16,000 of the world's universities will never obtain any rank** in those rankings. Jamil Salmi's (2010) rhetorical question "How many universities can be among the top 500?" and his answer "five hundred" is unequivocal.
7. One problem or 'unwanted consequence', as rankers sometimes call the negative impacts of rankings, is that both society and policy makers are tempted to judge all higher education in the world by the standards that rankings use to detect the top *research* universities, rather than applying one of the core principles of quality assurance – the 'fitness for purpose' principle. In other words, not only research universities deserve consideration, but also universities that are regionally important or those targeted at widening access to higher education with a view to involving a wider cohort of young people. Thus, one 'unwanted consequence' of global league tables is that **HEIs with other missions than that of being top research universities may have to re-justify their profile** at a time when mission differentiation is at the top of higher education agendas across Europe.
8. Descriptions of the methodologies of most global league tables are simplified and rarely allow a reader to follow the actual calculation of the scores of individual indicators and the composite final score. In order to be able to follow the calculations requires accessing more specialised sources, where the information is more sophisticated and would be of little help to an interested curious user who simply wants to understand where the numbers come from.

Combining indicators into final score – simply a calculation?

9. It should be noted that various indicators have different dimensions and denominators e.g. publication count, staff numbers, citations per academic etc. Before combining the scores of all individual indicators into an overall composite score, indicator scores are therefore treated mathematically in order to make them dimensionless. This means that **the published indicator scores are usually not the indicator values themselves but something else**, in most cases the proportion between the indicator value of the university in question and the university that has the greatest indicator value². The league tables usually do not indicate in the column headings that the number provided is not the indicator value itself but rather a result of further mathematical operations. As a result, the scores in the league tables can lead to misunderstandings.

²For instance, if the indicator 'publications per academic' for university X has a value 57, it does not mean that each academic of university X publishes 57 publications per year. Instead, it means that the publication productivity of university X is 57% of the university which has the greatest productivity.

10. Composite scores always contain subjective elements. In all cases where a composite score is calculated, ranking providers assign weights to each indicator in the overall score. This means that the **ranking provider's subjective judgement determines which indicators are more important**. In other words, the composite score reflects the ranking provider's concept of quality. The above considerations demonstrate why rankings producing league tables cannot, in principle, be 'objective'.
11. Indicators used by rankings may use absolute values (count of publications, citations, students, staff members, etc.) or relative values (publications per staff member, citations per publication, funding per student, etc.). This simple aspect should be taken into account when analysing ranking results. If a ranking predominantly uses absolute values, its scores are size-dependent, i.e. the ranking favours large universities. If relative values prevail, universities which are more efficient and not necessarily large, will score more highly. Examples of rankings predominantly using absolute numbers are, for instance, ARWU and Reitor. HEEACT predominantly and THE-QS and THE-TR mainly use relative values (except for reputation surveys). The Leiden Ranking, which does not combine indicator scores, offers both size-dependent and size-independent indicators.
12. Current high positions of the top universities cannot be taken for granted. On the contrary, highly ranked universities have to make great additional efforts in order to maintain their current high positions, because their rivals evolve as well (CHERPA, 2010).

How far can we trust the indicators?

13. Overall, global university **rankings reflect university research performance far more accurately than teaching**. The bibliometric indicators, which are used for measuring research performance in most rankings, also have their biases and flaws, but they still are direct measurements.
14. Existing **indicators on teaching are all proxies** and their link to the quality of teaching is indirect at best. One extreme is measuring the quality of education by the number of Nobel Prize winners among the university's graduates (ARWU) – this indicator can be considered as being linked to the quality of education, but in a very special and rather indirect way. Judging teaching quality using staff/student ratios alone without examining teaching/learning itself (THE-QS) is another extreme. Moreover, it has been proven that staff/student ratios can be easily manipulated. Indicators such as teachers' salaries or time to degree do not actually measure quality. The time-to-degree indicator addresses an important issue in some countries, but is hardly seen as a valid indicator in others. It is not clear whether a much shorter time to degree or high graduation rates are signs of high quality or rather of low requirements. Those indicators may also open the door to manipulation.

15. In the CHE University Ranking, the indicators on teaching are selected with a view to helping potential students choose appropriate HEIs. The information used is largely taken from student satisfaction surveys – which work well for the purpose, especially as the CHE ranking does not produce league tables.
16. As regards bibliometric indicators used for measuring research performance, the natural sciences and medicine bias has been apparent since the first ARWU ranking was published in 2003. Natural sciences and medicine are favoured by all rankings based on bibliometric indicators – the ISI 21 ‘broad subject areas’ are mainly sub-areas of natural sciences and medicine, while social sciences are underrepresented and humanities are simply ignored. At the same time, various areas have different publication and citation cultures. There are more publications and more citations per publication in natural sciences and especially in medicine, in particular because the main citations databases – WoS and Scopus – have little coverage of books.

Attempts have been made to compensate for the field bias. Field normalisation is carried out through dividing the number of citations of an article by the expected average number of citations in the same field and year.

Two citation impact indicators have been developed: the field normalised citation number (CPP/FCSm), the “crown indicator” of the Leiden Ranking and, more recently, the mean normalised citation number (MNCS). The calculation of those two indicators from citation data is described in detail in the main text of the survey. From a calculation point of view, the main difference lies in the sequence of mathematical operations. The CPP/FCSm indicator is calculated by first summing up values of citation counts per article and, separately, the average number of citations (in the same field in the same year), and then dividing the first sum by the second. The MNCS indicator, however, is calculated in reverse sequence, by dividing the citation number of each article by its particular average citation number, and then summing up all the results.

It can be demonstrated that the CPP/FCSm indicator is naturally biased towards older publications – because older publications have, by definition, accumulated more citations. In addition, summing up citation numbers of articles in all possible fields before division somewhat blurs the outcome. In the case of the MNCS indicator, there is no problem with the older publications and also the meaning of the outcome seems clearer. However, a new problem emerges: the newest publications have accumulated few citations and the world average citation numbers are therefore not reliable, making the result of the indicator unstable. For this reason, a modified MNCS2 indicator was proposed in 2010 which leaves out the most recent publications (of the last year).

Although one issue is thus removed, a new one is created. And, after all, these attempts to improve the methods of calculation in no way tackle the main problem, which is that citations of books or compendia of articles are still not considered.

17. Regarding the journal citation impact factor itself, it is important to note that, especially in social sciences and humanities, expert rankings do not correlate very well with impact factors (AUBR, 2010). In the above fields and in engineering, other sources, such as books and proceedings, are important as well. A warning on this issue can even be found on the Thomson-Reuter's website, which states that 'the impact factor should not be used without careful attention to the many phenomena that influence citation rates'³.
18. **Peer review bias.** The term 'peer review' itself is ambiguous as it is used to denote quite different processes in quality assurance (QA) and rankings. In QA of both research and teaching, the term 'peer review' is used for assessment by (usually visiting) peers, which involves rigorous procedures. By contrast, in rankings, 'peer review' exercises are usually no more than reputation surveys. In the THE-QS ranking, even if a large number of academics have been approached, only some 5% actually answered. Secondly, at least in the case of the THE-QS-based ranking, the 'peers' are not in fact nominating the universities *they* consider excellent – they are restricted to pre-prepared lists, from which many universities and even whole countries have been omitted. Thirdly, there is evidence that the opinion of 'peers' can be influenced by the reputation that an institution has already built up (AUBR, 2010).
19. **Language bias and regional bias.** It has been noted since the publication of the first world rankings that global rankings favour universities from English-language nations because non-English language work is both published and cited less. A recent study by the Leiden Ranking team has shown that the citation impact of publications of French and German universities in French or German, respectively, was smaller than the citation impact of publications of the same universities published in English (van Raan et al., 2010).

³ http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science/free/essays/impact_factor/

Improving quality or improving ranking positions?

20. In an attempt to improve their positions in the rankings, universities are strongly **tempted to improve their performance specifically** in those areas which are measured by ranking indicators.
21. There have been cases where, rather than improving performance, data have been manipulated, for instance:
- merging universities just to get onto league tables
 - number of applications to university
 - standardised test scores of applicants
 - number of academic staff
 - student/staff ratio (it has been demonstrated that using different definitions of staff and students, the ratio could be anything between 6:1 to 39:1) (Baty, 2009)
 - faculty salary
 - reputation survey by students (by directly telling students to lie)
 - even bibliometric indicators may be flawed due to the manipulation of data (AUBR 2010: 13).

How can rankings be improved?

22. Ranking providers are trying to **improve the methodology** they use. However, the improvements are often technical rather than conceptual. For instance, it is important to use field normalised data, and, in this sense, the new mean normalised MNCS2 indicator does indeed improve the mathematics compared to the previous 'crown indicator' CPP/FCSm⁴. However, this is of no help to humanities, which remain ignored by nearly all of the bibliometric indicators used in global league tables. Improving the calculation methods is not enough; rankings should make efforts to cover all research areas on an equal basis.

⁴ See description of Leiden Ranking.

23. A number of university rankings claim that they **help students** to make their choices. Rankings do have the potential to help students choose the appropriate university in their home country or abroad. However, few of the existing league tables are currently able to do so. One of the few examples is the CHE Ranking. Generally speaking, to serve potential students, most of the rankings first need to choose appropriate indicators and provide substantially more explanations on what the scores of the indicators actually mean.
24. Now that rankings attract a great deal of attention from the general public, politicians included, there is a **demand for more 'democratic' rankings**. So far, the global league tables indicate a few hundred universities which are the 'best' in the world. In so doing, they have created problems for the thousands of 'normal' universities which simply do their job, such as training specialists for the labour market and conducting fundamental or applied research. The current rankings disease seems to have created a need to be ranked, because 'if you are not in the tables – you don't exist'. It should be possible to change the rankings substantially to allow more HEIs to be 'in'. This is especially important for those institutions that have been created with a special function, for instance to serve the region in which they are located or to provide higher education to adult students or those working alongside their studies. Including more universities could be seen as a way of recognising the important contribution of those well-functioning institutions that suffer from the 'unwanted consequences' of rankings.
25. Nationally, rankings foster the acquisition and publication of **reliable data** on higher education. In an international context, rankings encourage the adoption of agreed definitions for those aspects on which data is collected. The results of global rankings can lead to both national debates and a focused analysis of the crucial factors involved which, in turn, can bring about (hopefully) positive policy adjustment.
26. Most global league tables also publish lists concerning the '**performance**' of **countries**. These comparisons are made by counting each country's universities in the list of top universities, usually assigning a different number of points depending on whether the university appears in the Top 100, Top 100-200 or following top hundreds. The leading countries in the published lists then are the USA, the UK, Germany and France. However, if the published lists are 'normalised' by dividing the number of top universities by the number of inhabitants, new leaders appear, such as Switzerland, Sweden, Finland and Denmark (Salmi, 2010).

Recent developments in international rankings

27. Existing rankings, except possibly multi-indicator rankings, **cannot provide a diagnosis of the whole higher education system**, as they usually concern the top research universities only. Also, current global rankings can provide little useful information on issues such as the quality of teaching and learning, accessibility, regional involvement, involvement in lifelong learning, cost efficiency and others, simply because the indicators used do not cover such issues. The EU University-Based Research Assessments (AUBR), U-Map, U-Multirank and AHELO have been launched as attempts to develop international transparency tools for all HEIs, although they all have their limitations.
28. The AUBR working group carried out an analysis of the strong and weak elements of various research indicators, and their suitability for various assessment purposes, working out a methodology for the **assessment of university-based research**. The conclusions of the AUBR working group on various indicators are useful when analysing the global university rankings.
29. U-Map has been developed to classify all European HEIs **regardless of the institution type, focus etc.** and it reflects the variety of missions and profiles of European higher education institutions, without providing a final score. U-Map uses indicators that characterise the focus and intensity of various aspects of the work of HEIs rather than performance, impact or quality. U-Map indicators cover teaching level and subject focus, student body, research intensity, knowledge exchange, international orientation and regional involvement. U-Map has two visualisation tools: one to find higher education institutions which fit the characteristics set by the user, and one which allows the detailed comparison of up to three selected HEIs.

Lack of internationally comparable data is a challenge to U-Map. Common definitions have yet to be developed to enable comparison of data from different countries. Until comparable data from across the EU has been collected, U-Map will have to rely on national and institutional data, and will therefore be more appropriate for comparing institutions within a country rather than internationally. U-Map is still being tested and data are being pre-filled by HEIs from volunteering countries.

30. U-Multirank is planned as a multidimensional ranking including all aspects of an HEI's work – education, research, knowledge exchange and regional involvement. No final score of a HEI will be calculated, but, until now, it is unclear how third parties will be prevented from turning the ranking results into a league table (Boulton, 2010). U-Multirank will utilise data from Thomson Reuters for its bibliometric indicators. The other indicators will be based on self-reported data by HEIs on students, teachers, and research (except publications/citations). A large variety of data will be taken from student satisfaction surveys.

31. The issues related to internationally incompatible data may concern U-Multirank even more than U-Map. But for U-Multirank, as a ranking, there are further pitfalls. Using self-reported data may be safe in the case of U-Map as a classification tool. In the case of U-Multirank, even though it does not combine indicator scores into a final score, there are risks that self-reported data can be manipulated to score better in particular indicators. Relying on student satisfaction surveys is clearly preferable to drawing on reputation surveys answered by staff (which are not used in U-Multirank). However, the student satisfaction surveys may be less reliable in international comparisons, as the students are grading HEIs numerically, although grading traditions in different countries may differ. U-Multirank is still in its pilot phase, but seems to be moving towards a methodology of ratings rather than rankings. Data collection appears to be one of the most difficult issues.
32. OECD's AHELO project is an attempt to compare HEIs internationally on the basis of actual learning outcomes. Three testing instruments will be developed within AHELO: one for measuring generic skills and two for testing discipline-specific skills, in economics and engineering. In these initial phases of the project, the developers have yet to find answers to a number of questions, including whether it is possible to develop instruments to capture learning outcomes that are perceived as valid in diverse national and institutional contexts.

Is self-regulation sufficient?

33. In autumn 2010, the International Rankings Expert Group (IREG) announced that it would start a rankings audit exercise. The audit will be carried out using 20 criteria based upon the Berlin Principles. Responsibility for the ranking audit lies with the Executive Committee of the IREG Observatory, which will also nominate the members of each audit team. The IREG Executive Committee has a mixed composition of ranking providers and experts who have followed developments in rankings.

The IREG ranking audit procedure is modelled on higher education quality assurance procedures: a self-evaluation report is produced on the audited ranking based on a questionnaire; then the audit team performs an on-site visit; after the visit, the audit team compiles an audit report to be approved by the IREG Observatory Executive Committee. Positively audited rankings will be awarded an "IREG approved" label. IREG is made up of two categories of specialists: those who research rankings but do not produce them, and the ranking providers themselves.

Meeting the requirements of the Berlin Principles is not easy and most, if not all, existing rankings would have to make changes in order to genuinely comply with them. It is of course too early to assess the IREG ranking audit. However, in order to be credible, the envisaged audit exercise would need to include independent, external experts bringing critical voices to the process.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. There is no doubt that the arrival on the scene of global classifications and rankings of universities has galvanised the world of higher education. Since the emergence of global rankings, universities have been unable to avoid national and international comparisons, and this has caused changes in the way universities function.
2. Rankings and particularly the global league tables have adopted methodologies which address the world's top research universities only. *De facto*, the methodologies give stable results for only 700-1000 universities, which is only a small portion of the approximately 17,000 universities in the world. The majority of the world's universities are left out of the equation. While such an approach may well serve the purpose of producing a list of top universities, the problem is that the flurry of activity surrounding these rankings, often initiated by the ranking providers themselves, affects the whole higher education community as it tends to result in all higher education institutions being judged according to criteria that are appropriate for the top research universities only.
3. Rankings so far cover only some university missions. Few rankings address the broad diversity of types and various missions of higher education institutions.
4. Rankings, it is claimed, make universities more 'transparent'. However, the methodologies of the existing rankings, and especially those of the most popular league tables, still lack transparency themselves. It is difficult, if not impossible, to follow the calculations made from raw data to indicator values and, from there, to the overall score, just by using publicly available information.

5. "There is no such thing as an objective indicator" (see AUBR, 2010). The lack of suitable indicators is most apparent when measuring university teaching performance, for which there are no suitable proxies. The situation is better when evaluating research performance. However, even the bibliometric indicators used to measure research performance have their biases and flaws. Ranking providers are making some effort to improve their methodologies, but the improvements usually concern the calculation method, while the real problem is the use of inadequate proxies, or the omission of part of the information due to methodological constraints. Proxies can be improved, but they are still proxies.
6. At present, it would be difficult to argue that the benefits offered by the information that rankings provide, as well as the increased 'transparency,' are greater than the negative effects of the so-called 'unwanted consequences' of rankings.
7. New attempts to develop classifications, rankings and ratings targeting all higher education institutions and their various missions, such as the AUBR EU Assessment of University-Based Research, U-Map, U-Multirank and AHELO, all aim to improve the situation. However, it is too early to tell how these new tools will work; they are still at various stages of development or pilot implementation, and all of them still face difficult issues, particularly problems of data collection and the development of new proxies.
8. Higher education policy decisions should not be based solely on rankings data.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.

