# Ukraine's Higher Education System: Reforms in Progress

Mychailo Wynnyckyj Ph.D.

Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and Lviv Business School
Erasmus+ Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)Team
Adviser to the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine

# Higher Education in Ukraine: Facts and Figures

- Higher Education Institutions – 287
  - Public – 209, Private – 78
  - Number has decreased by 25% since 2014
- Students – 1 370 thousand
- Academic staff – 110 thousand

- National Academy of Sciences
  - 160 research institutes
  - 29 870 staff, incl. 15 530 researchers
  - 260 coop agreements with HEIs

- 5 Specialized Academies of Science
  - Law, Medicine, Agrarian, Education, Art

- Integration of NAS and Sectoral Academies with HEIs is a priority
  - Currently lacks political will

# Key Reforms since 2014:

**New Law on Higher Education:**
- Completion of Bologna
  - 3 cycles – Jnr BA + BA/MA/PhD + DSc
  - ECTS – mobility & joint programs

- University autonomy
  - Academic but not yet financial

- New QA system
  - National Quality Assurance Agency
  - New Standards (420 experts involved)

**Law "On scientific and scientific-technological activities" (2015):**
- National Science Council
- Participation in Horizon 2020

**Law "On Education" (2017):**
- "New Ukrainian School"
- Competence-based programming
- 12 year school trajectory

# Priority reform areas in Higher Education:

- Completion of "works in progress"
  - National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance
  - PhD reform – adoption of a new legal framework for dissertation defenses
  - University Autonomy – passage of legal amendments allowing financial autonomy and improved institutional governance

- New MinEdu initiatives:
  - Reform of educational trajectory and content for "regulated professions"
    - Medical doctors / lawyers / teachers
    - Introduction of "short cycle" BA (2 years) in general subject areas as prerequisite for entry into MA programs in regulated professions
  - Requiring Mathematics for secondary school graduation – 3+1 to enter HEI
  - Introduction of "cooperative" education programs – study + work for credit
    - Particular emphasis on STEM and Computer Science – MA level

# Some comments on the "works in progress"

- National Agency for Quality Assurance
  - Process of member selection re-started – applications accepted 1 Oct. 2018
  - New paradigm of accreditation: from verification to consultancy
    - Expert training / compliance framework development / capacity building in HEIs
  - High risk of renewed bureaucracy if process is unsuccessful

- PhD reform
  - Incomplete: new programming launched in 2016, but no new defense procedures
  - Challenges encountered during reform implementation:
    - Heads of "aspirantura" departments waiting for instructions from MinEdu
    - Entrenched "mentor" relationship/culture of supervisors vis-à-vis PhD students
    - Low trust: academic community recognizes need for change, but rejects all change proposals outright because of suspicion of motives of proposal authors

# The challenge of reform trajectory
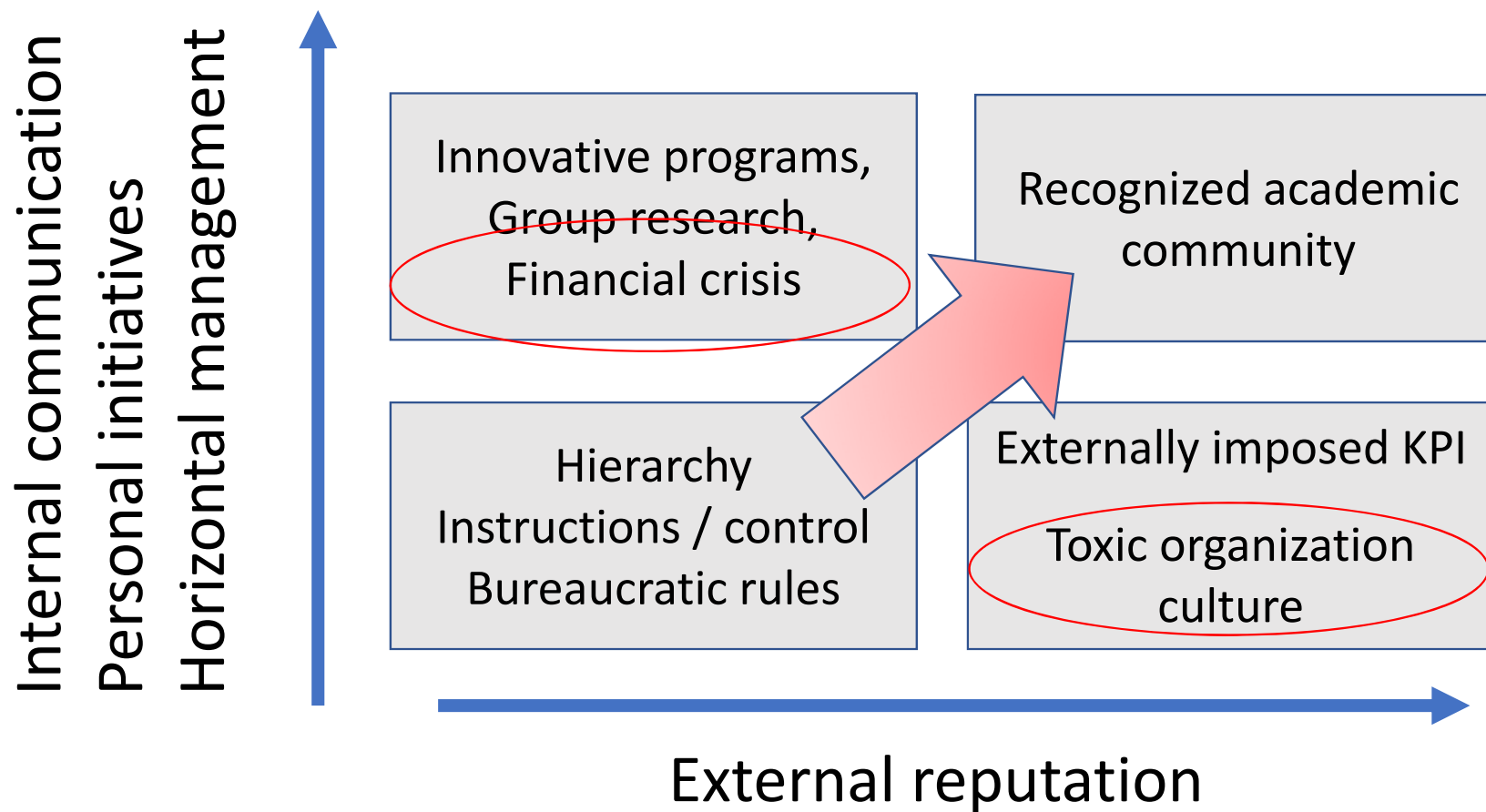
# Risks of university reform

- Institutional priorities (i.e. compliance with externally imposed KPI) can override priority of university as an academic community
  - Competition for funding / rankings leads to toxic environment for staff and students – increased emphasis on research to detriment of teaching/learning

- Balancing teaching and research – risk losing high quality BA
  - EU model of cooperation between research institutes and universities with concentration on MA and PhD requires culture change in Ukraine

- Paradoxically, Ukraine needs increased inter-institutional competition among students and decreased competition between administrators
  - Sports, extracurricular activities, alumni and student pride must improve
  - Competition for gov't funding, rankings, research grants must horizontalize

# Ukrainian Higher Education: Opportunities for Cooperation

Together we are called to build recognized academic communities

What an amazing challenge!

Mychailo Wynnyckyj

mychailo@ukma.edu.ua

# HEI Autonomy and the "reputation" paradigm

- While searching for a "better" (less corrupt, more objective, less bureaucratic, etc.) system, our academic discourse has become toxic
  - Extremely low institutional trust generates skepticism of "non-state" degree granting system: "Bad universities will simply print diplomas!"
- Those few institutions (or experimental units within universities) that have ventured to ignore external KPI's have created wonderfully creative, vibrant communities
  - These communities / programs are generally poor and short-lived due to lack of funding

- Our challenge is to build recognized academic communities
  - For this we need examples / coaching / cooperation / recognition