Review of the ECTS Users' Guide

25 June 2025

Technical introduction

Support Service Team

# In the Microsoft Teams Menu bar
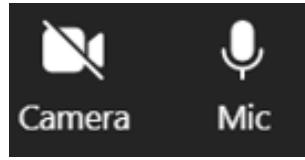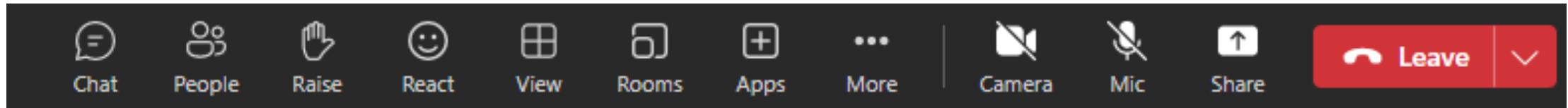
- To show/hide your webcam and to mute/unmute your microphone (Please note all participants will be muted during the event).
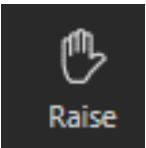
- Raise your hand if you have a question/want to contribute
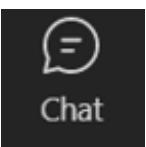
- To open the chat box and post a written message
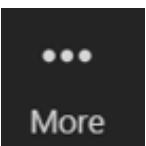
- More actions e.g. device settings

Recording

This meeting will be recorded (for internal purposes only)

You will be prompted once the recording starts:

- In the chat box

- At the top of the Teams window

Recording: Meeting
Recording has started

Recording has started. By joining the meeting, you have given consent for it to be recorded. Privacy Policy

Technical problems?
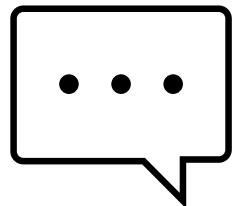
Post a message
in the **chat box**
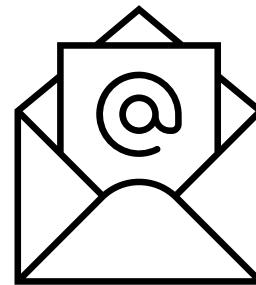
Email for further support
ECTSUsersGuidereview@icf.com

Welcome remarks

Susanne Conze, European Commission, DG EAC B.1 - Higher education

Agenda

11.00-11.15	**Welcome and update/feedback from EQF advisory group**
11.15-11.45	**Research findings**
11.45-12.15	**Student perspectives on ECTS implementation**
12.15-12.45	**Use of ECTS in vocational education and training**
12.45-13.30	**Lunchbreak**
13.30-14.15	**Introduction to Draft 0**
14.15-15.15	**Discussion of Draft 0 – general and accumulation**
15.15-15.30	**Coffee**
15.30-16.45	**Discussion of Draft 0 – transfer and recognition**
16.45-17.00	**Close: summary, overview of next meetings and any other business**

Feedback from EQF advisory group

Kinga Szuly & Colin Tück

Research findings

Colin Tück and Ilona Murphy

Introduction

- **Overview of research activities (completed and planned)**

- **New research findings in relation to:**

    - Micro-credentials, Blended Intensive Programmes

    - Learning agreements and Transcript of records

- **Targeted findings in relation to:**

    - Grade conversion

    - Digital tools

    - Quality assurance

    - Recognition of prior learning

Overview of research activities

- Desk research

- Survey

- Focus groups

Research activity	Type	Number/Status
Desk research	Institutions	80
	Programmes	240
	Courses	133
	Micro-credentials / short-term learning opportunities	139
	Blended Intensive Programmes	22
	Learning Agreements (ongoing)	61
	Transcripts of Records (ongoing)	45
Survey	Responses submitted	2,503
	Status	open until September 2025
Focus Groups	Staff focus groups completed	13
	Student focus groups completed	10
	Total completed	23 out of 32
	Total remaining	9 (3 staff, 6 student)

Remaining focus groups: **Bulgaria** (1 staff, 1 student), **France** (2 staff, 2 student - 1 FG in progress), **Netherlands** (1 student)

Due to initial 'no show': **Ireland** (1 student), **Netherlands** (1 student) both lined up for September

Survey completion rates

Surveys: submitted vs. opened (n=2981)
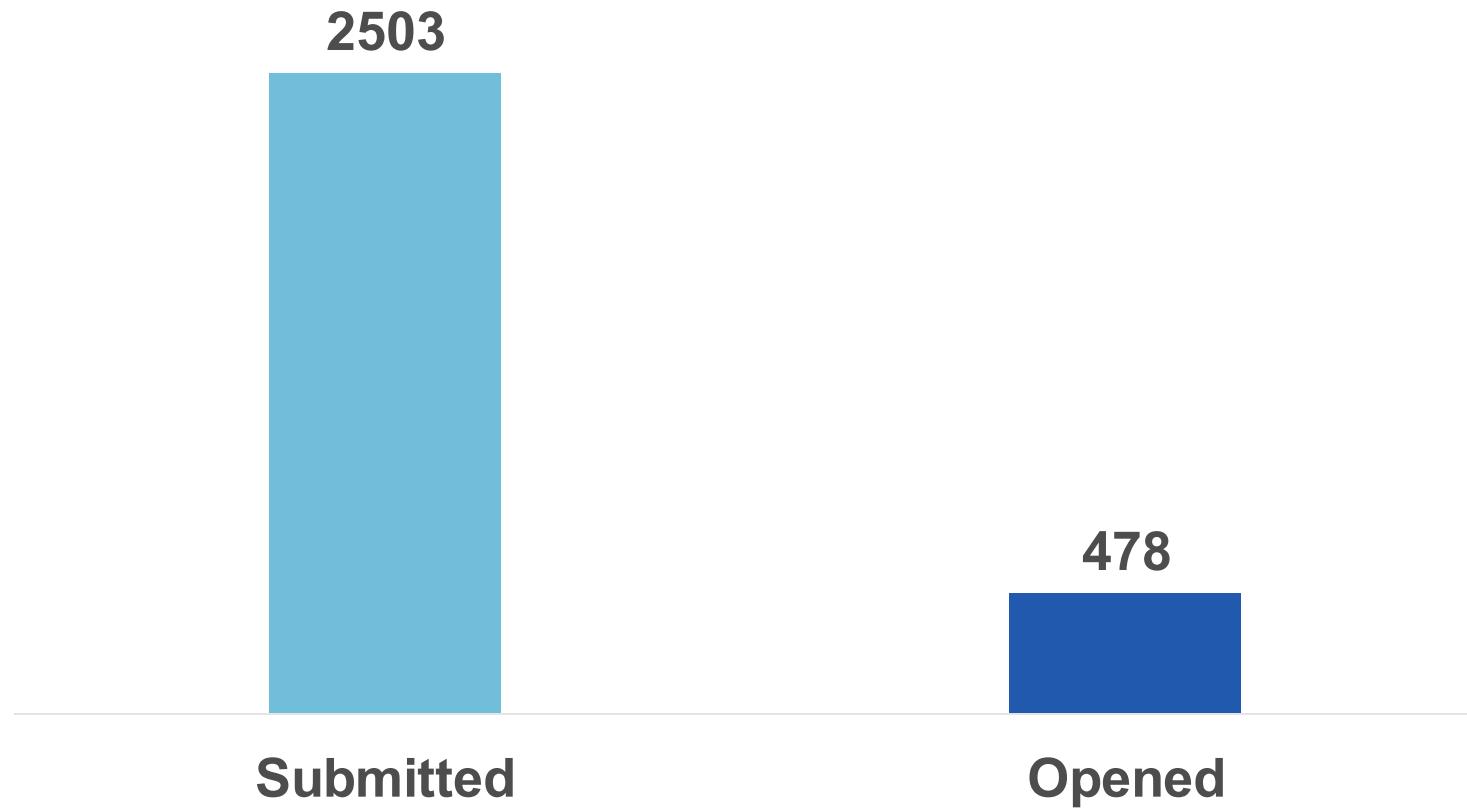
Survey responses by category

**Total responses by target group
(total n=2503)**
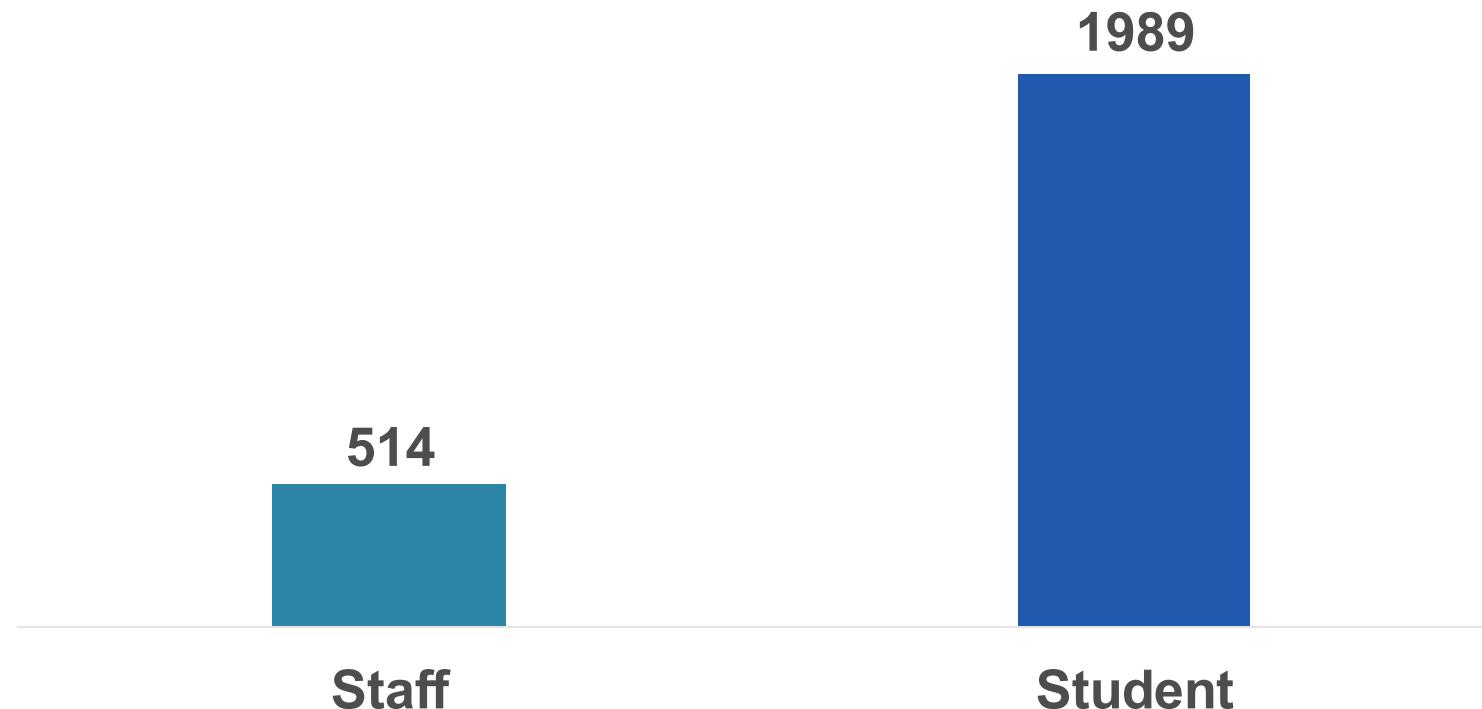
Survey responses by country

Number of responses per country and category (n=2503)

Country	Staff	Student
Austria	96	512
Bulgaria	4	28
France	9	547
Ireland	91	502
Netherlands	43	61
North Macedonia	169	184
Spain	73	66
Sweden	27	33
Other	2	56
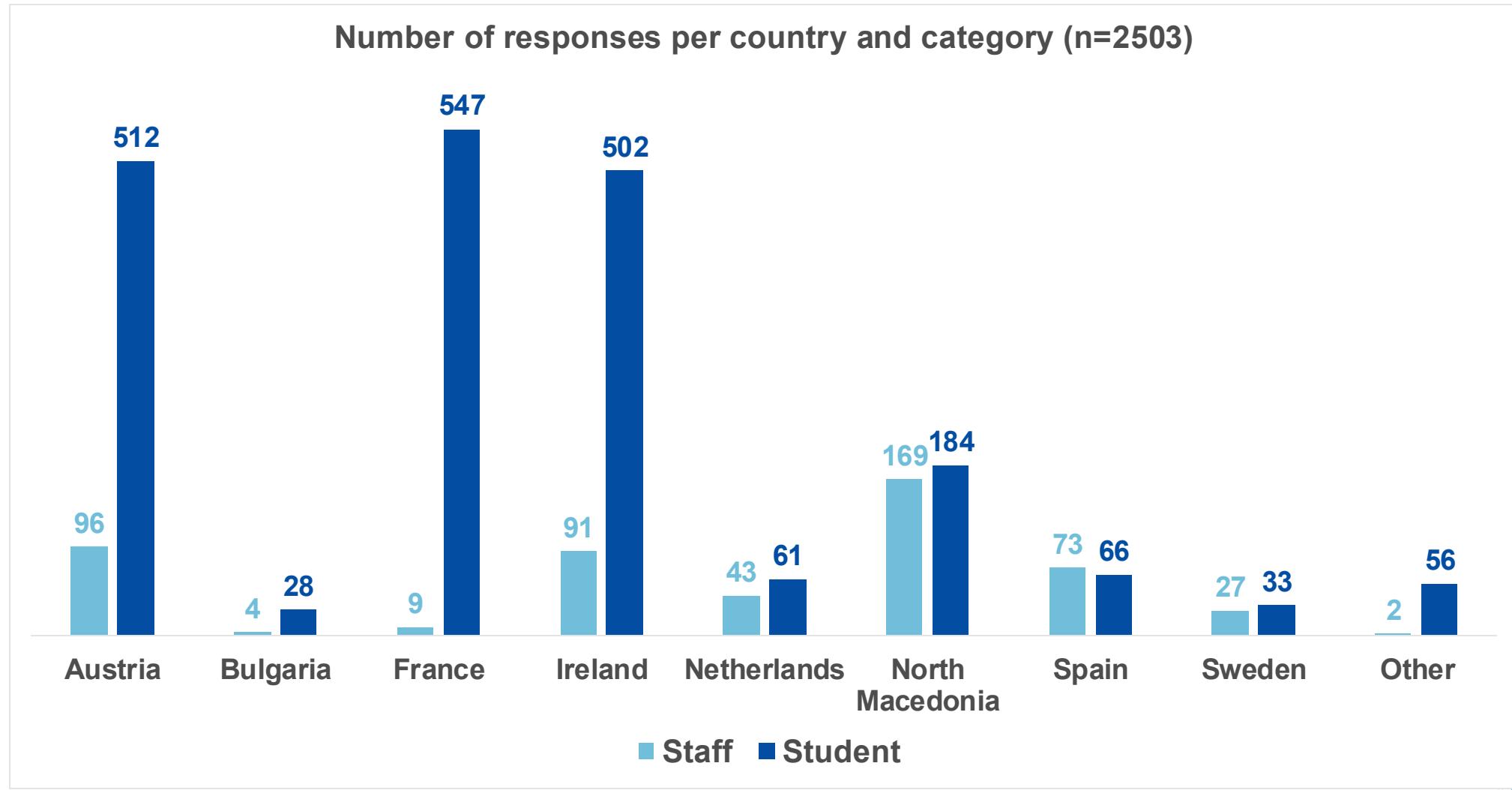
Main findings – Micro-credentials

- Micro-credential by delivery mode

n/a, 18, 13%

online, 43, 31%

in-person, 37, 27%

blended, 41, 29%
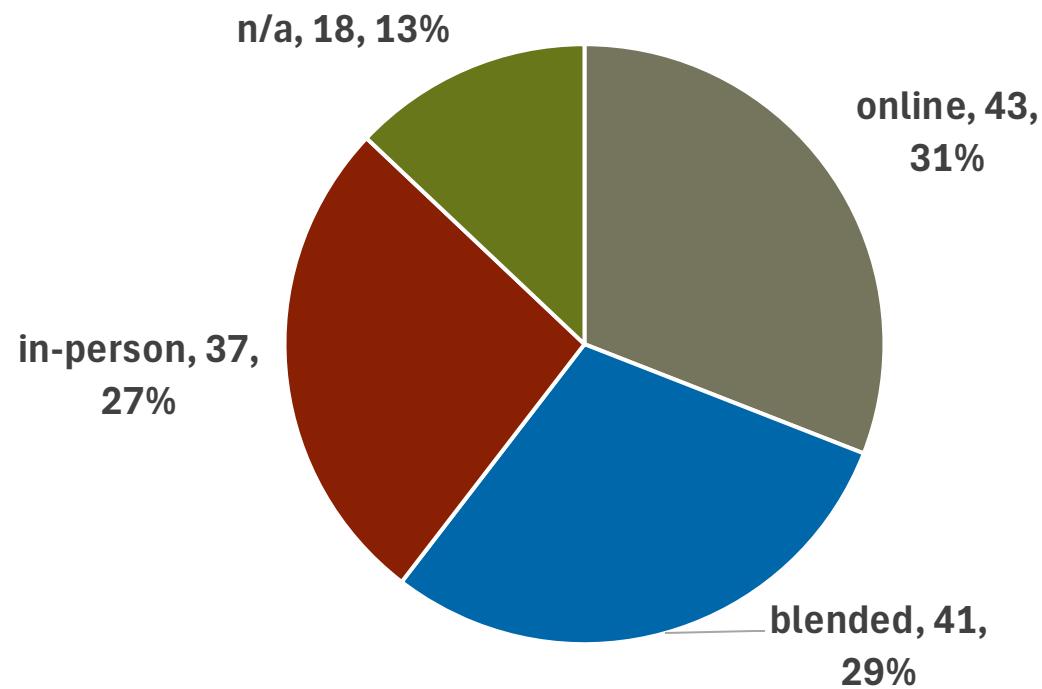
Review of 139 MCs

- Business (59)
- Engineering (46)
- History (6)
- Other (28)

Mode of delivery

- Overall higher % offered online (31%), followed closely by blended (29%) and in-person (27%)
- **By discipline,** slightly tendency toward blended mode of delivery for **Engineering** otherwise a mix and balance across all disciples by delivery mode

- N/A details of delivery mode not listed

Main findings – Micro-credentials

- Information contained in course catalogue

|		
Title		99%
Mode of delivery		86%
Prerequisites		79%
Academic term		78%
Details on course content		77%
Learning outcomes		70%
Name of lecturers		68%
Number of ECTS		60%
Language of instruction		60%
Assessment method and…		56%
Code		32%
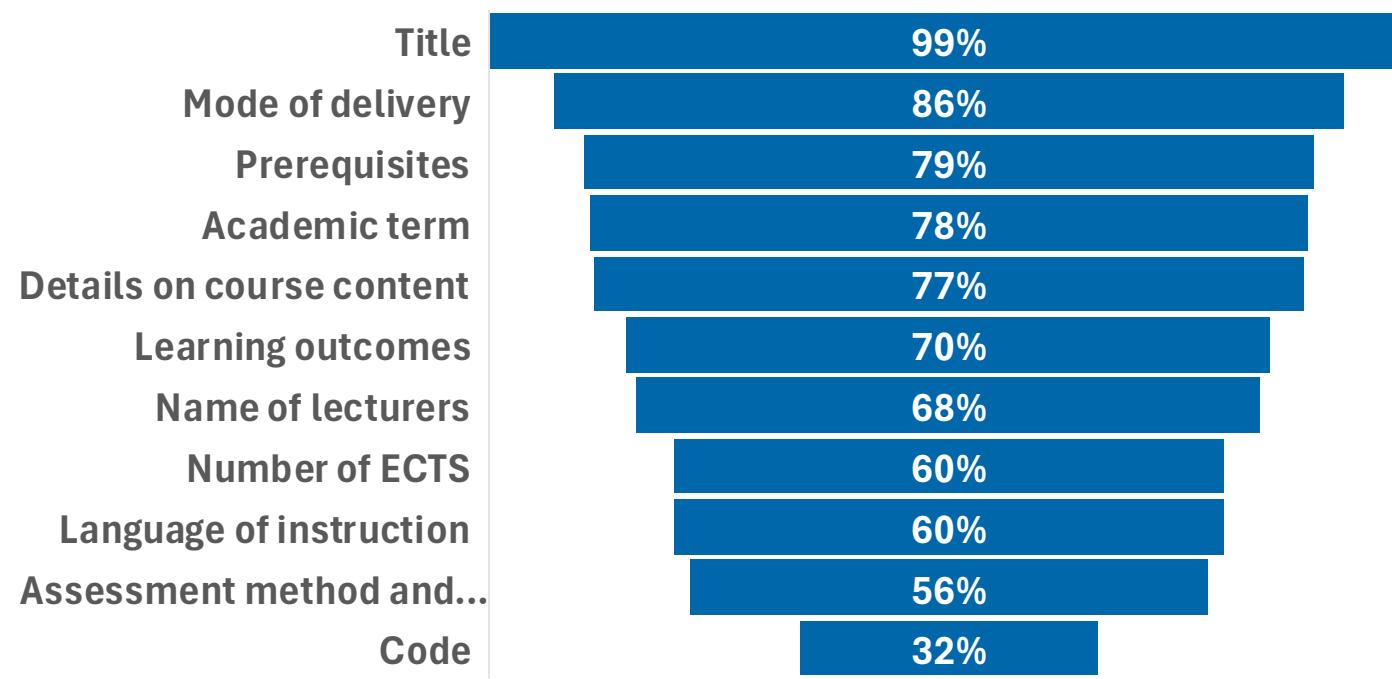
Descriptions contain good coverage of basic information

60% provide details of the number of ECTS credits allocation

Of these 95% of ECTS credits are fixed; 2% variable' 3% (N/A) details are not listed

Main findings – Micro-credentials

- **Insights from staff focus groups**

- HEIs / countries are at different stages in their use / development of MSc and supporting frameworks (status of MCs in regulator/legislative context not clear (reported by 2 countries)

- Employability focus: Emphasis on enhancing graduate employment prospects, working professionals (4 FG)

- Quick turnaround for industry needs – noting same rigorous QA standards apply as for regular modules (1 FG)

- Size range: Influence by national frameworks (examples range 3-15 ECTS, but some 1 ECTS exceptions, micro-degree of 15-40 ECTS) (3 FG)

- Allocation of ECTS relatively straight forward for HEIs provided regulations / procedures are clear (3 FGs)

Main findings – Micro-credentials

- **Insights from staff focus groups**

- QF levels: Assigning a level to a micro-credential is not straight-forward - the same MC might be suitable for a level 6 programme in one discipline but a level 7 programme in another (1 FG)

- Terminology: Different terminology is used. In one HEI the term 'micro-credential' is not mandatory, some established formats with other names are maintained (1 FG)

- **Challenges** (mainly expressed by HEIs with limited experience of MCs):

  - Confusion about the definition of MCs and application across Europe (2 FGs)

  - Described as "like a Tetris puzzle" - difficult credit allocation process

  - Uncertainty about how micro-credential credits integrate with degree programmes

Main findings – Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

- Distribution of responses by target group: % out of the number of BIP courses
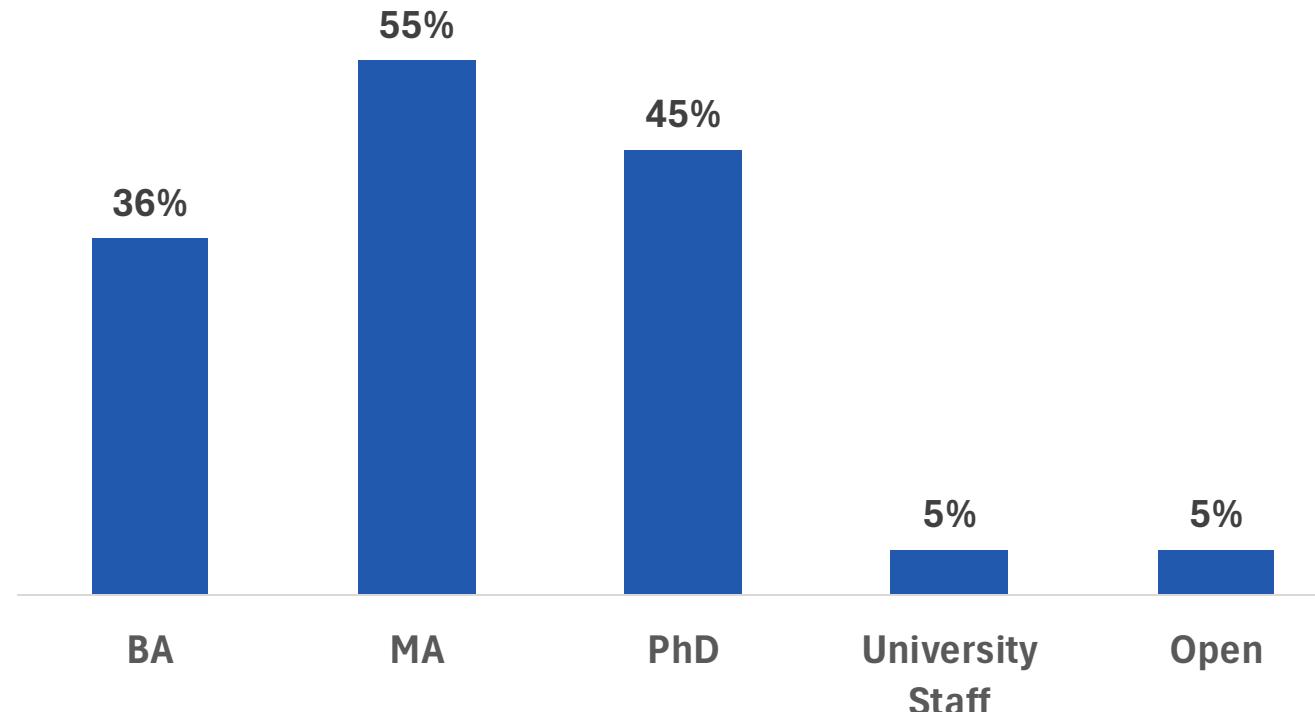
Review of 22 BIPs

BIPs are open to students at different educational levels – only 1 of those reviewed open exclusively to PhD students; 2 exclusive to MA students.

5% of those reviewed an offer to University Staff

Main findings – BIPs

- BIPs in the context of European University Alliances
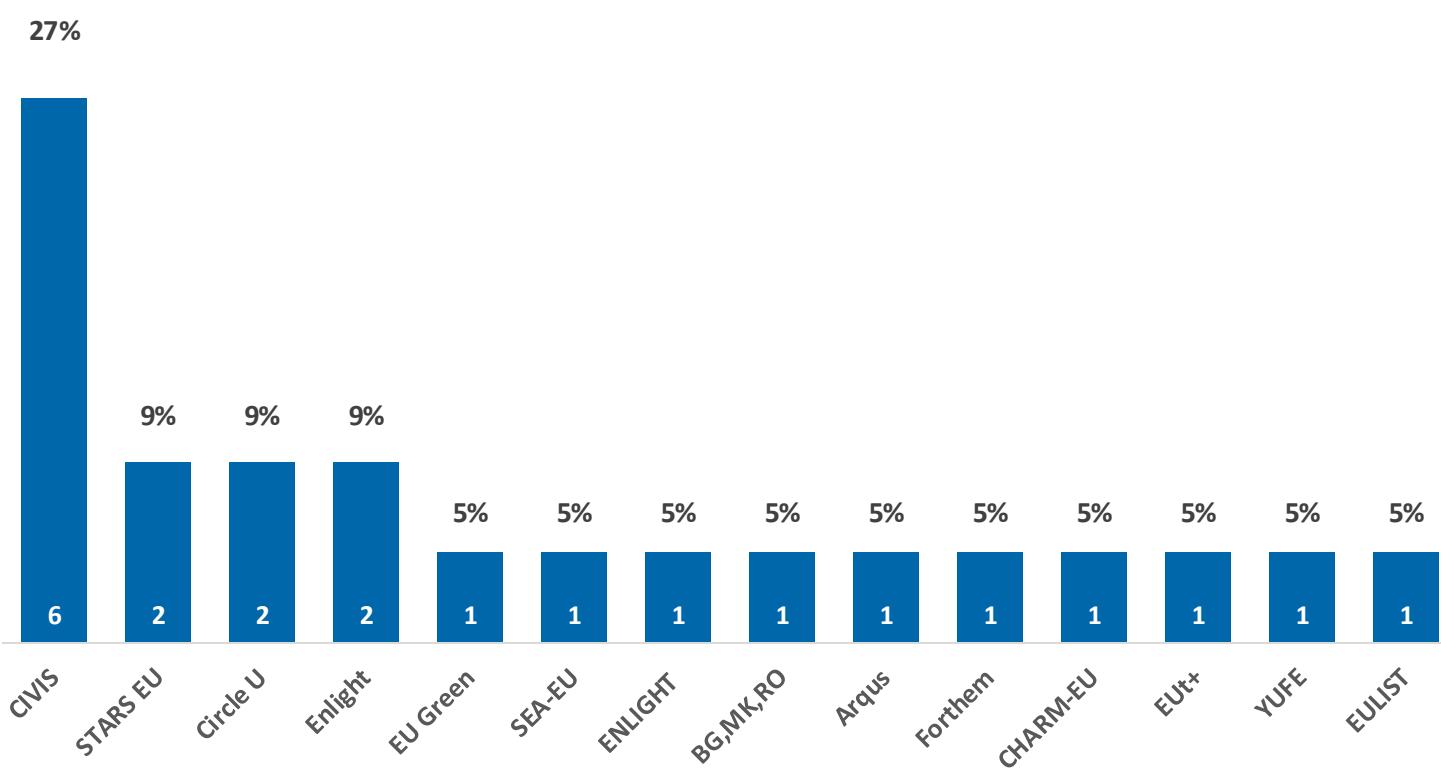
BIPs offered by a range of EUAs

Example: CIVIS (AT, ES, FR) BIPs across different areas of study, levels of education (BA, MA, PhD)

Main findings – BIPs

- Elements included in BIP description

Most BIP descriptions include basic details.

Less / low coverage on pedagogical aspects (assessment, LO, course content and delivery)

Element	Percentage
Title	95%
Mode of delivery	91%
Academic term	91%
Number of ECTS credits	86%
Prerequisites and co-requisites	64%
Assessment methods	55%
LO	55%
Name of lecturer(s)	50%
Language of instruction	50%
Course code	14%
Details on course content and delivery	9%
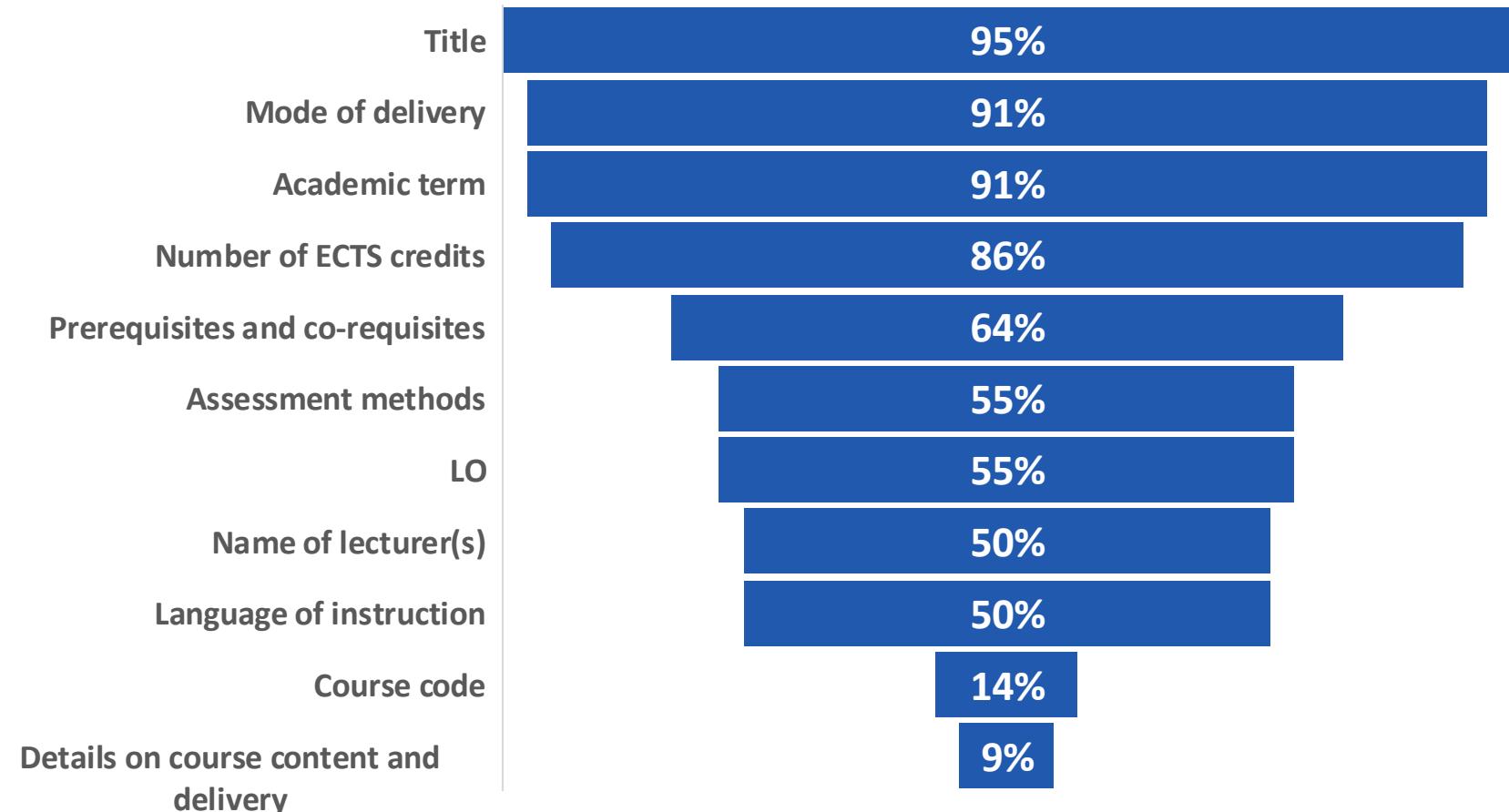
Main findings – BIPs

- Allocation of ECTS: Fixed / Variable

Fixed — 77%

Not specified — 18%

Variable — 5%

Majority of ECTS credit points in BIPs are fixed (77%)

No apparent trend for non-specified / variable ECTS
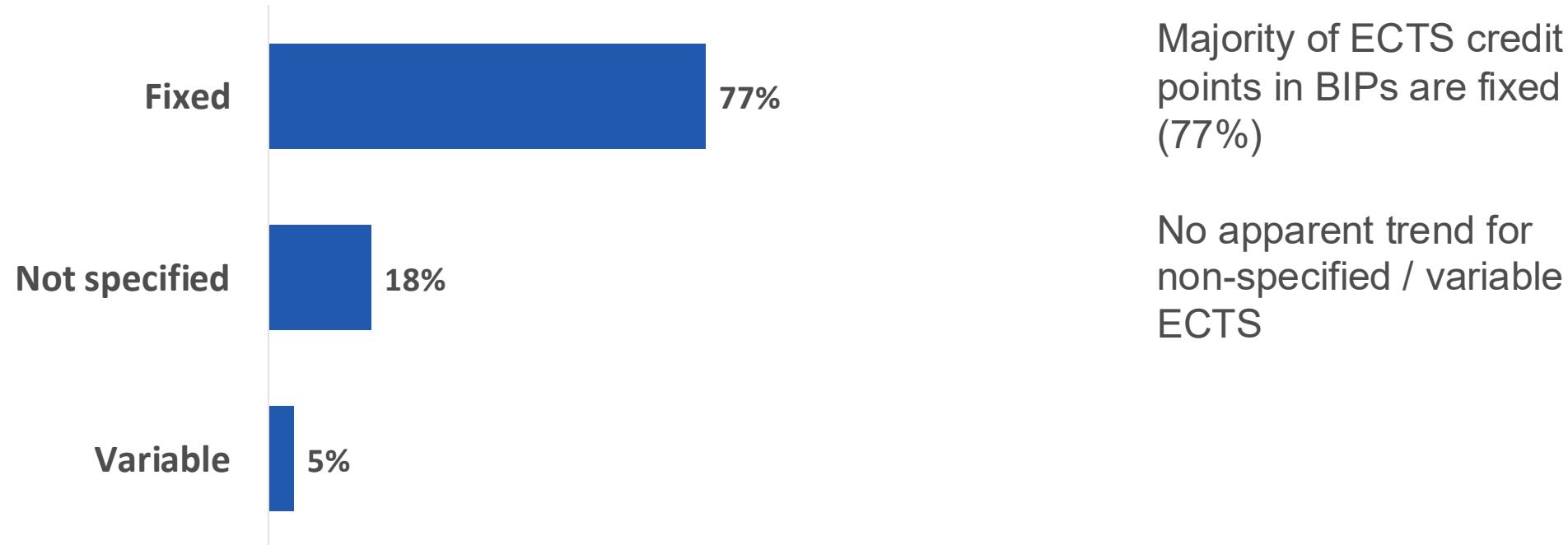
Main findings – BIPs

- **Insights from staff focus groups**

- Evidence of BIPs amounting to a minimum of 3 credits for one-week programmes in some HEIs (several FGs)

- Some BIPs are integrated as part of existing 5 ECTS modules

- Credits are awarded as additional/extra credits, not counted toward the degree requirements (1 FG)

- Ongoing discussion about whether to include BIPs on official transcripts / diploma supplements

- Administratively challenging – coordination across institutions, BIPs not fitting existing credit transfer system/ procedures / mobility windows

- Difficulty recognizing BIP credits, especially for Doctoral students (1 FG)

- Pressure to use allocated BIP funding or return to EC (1 FG)

Main findings – BIPs

- **Insights from student focus group**

- Enriching experience

- Strong enthusiasm for additional mobility opportunities

- Unclear purpose and benefit of additional credits 'surplus credits'

- Perception that long-term mobility credits are incorporated into degree; but short-term mobility credits are additional – why?

- Need for clearer understanding of cumulative benefits

- Students expressed limited engagement with short learning opportunities despite institutional availability

Main findings – Learning Agreements (LA)

- 61 Learning Agreements (LAs) reviewed

- 51% of LAs were incomplete (31 out of 61 LAs reviewed):

  - Missing link to the course catalogue is a standalone issue in 25 cases (81%)

  - 'Credits to be taken and to be recognized do not align'

  - 'Missing name of programme'

  - Does not fulfil the formal requirements for a LA due to being part of a Blended Intensive Programme (BIP)

  - Study cycle missing

Main findings – Transcript of Records (ToR)

- 45 Transcripts of Records (ToRs) reviewed

- Is the Transcript of Records template aligned with the 2015 Version of the Guide?

| Category	Percentage
Names and contacts of the institution	96%
Educational components taken at the institution (with codes, credits and local grades)	89%
Description of the institutional	62%
Field of study of the student	56%
Grade distribution information	33%
Current year of study	7%

Main findings – LAs and ToRs

- Further insights from desk research
  - **Grade distribution scales missing in ToR in 67** % of cases.
  - Description of the grading system missing in ToR in 38 % of cases.
  - Field of study or name of study programme missing in ToR in 36 % of cases.
  - Some universities provide information about their statistical grade distribution in their Transcripts of Records, but they do not use them themselves for grade conversion.
  - Some universities provided two Transcripts of Records for one student – one issued by the receiving institution, and one by the home institution. Most institutions only provided ToR issued by the receiving institution.
  - Ratios of credits planned to be taken by student abroad vs. recognized by home institution difficult to calculate due to missing information (LAs and ToRs provided to us not serving as proof of recognition in majority of cases due to ToRs coming from receiving institutions).

Main findings – Grade Conversion

Country	Total n
AT	96
BG	4
FR	9
IE	91
NL	43
MK	131
ES	72
SE	24
Other	2

- Are ECTS **grade distribution tables (GDT) maintained?** (staff survey) % of responders
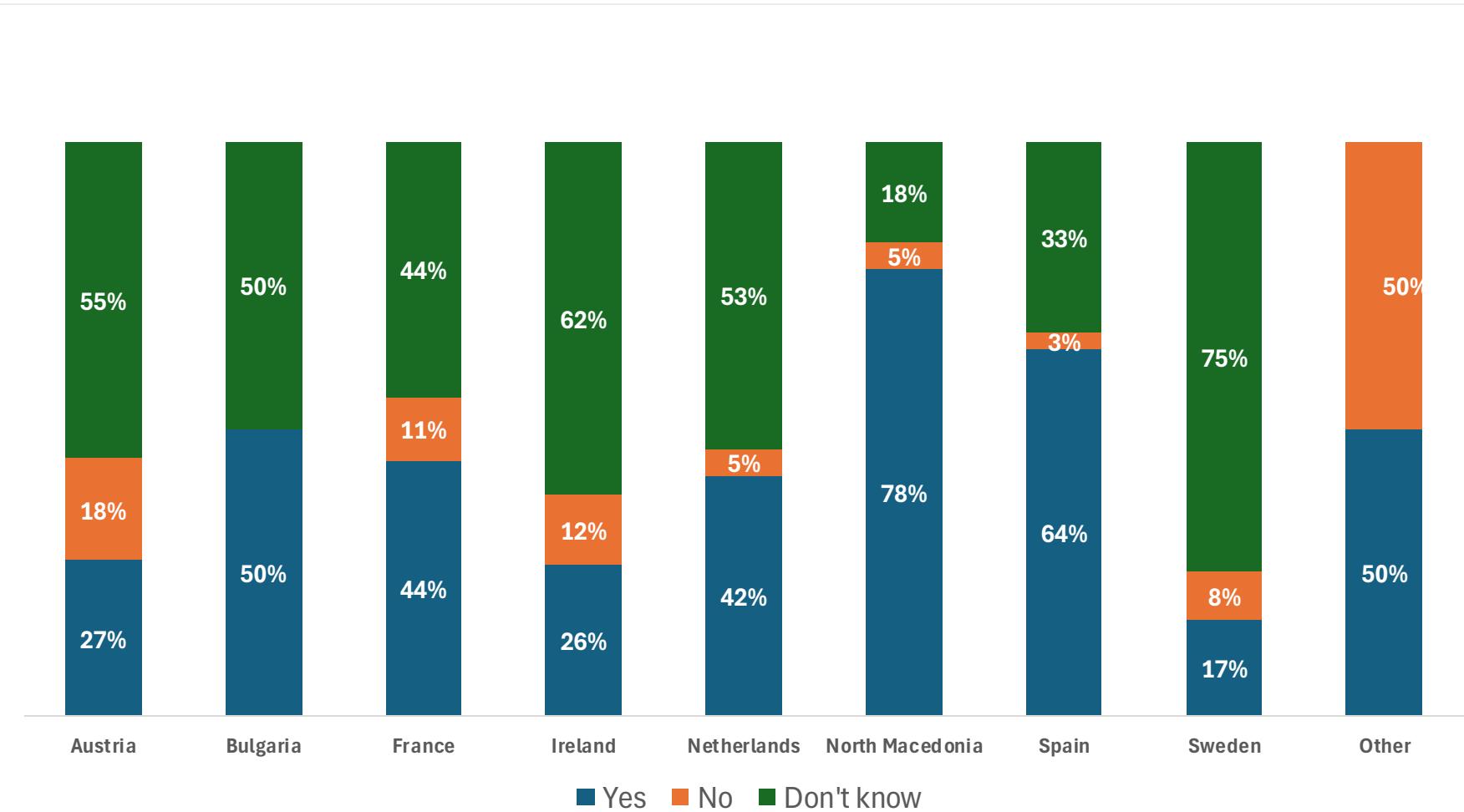
**Overall, 48% respondents reported GDT are maintained**

MK and ES highest proportion of 'yes'

AT, IE, NL, SE majority of respondents indicate 'Don't know' - can be due to institutional / systemic practices / processes

Chart data:

Country	Yes	No	Don't know
Austria	27%	18%	55%
Bulgaria	50%		50%
France	44%	11%	44%
Ireland	26%	12%	62%
Netherlands	42%	5%	53%
North Macedonia	78%	5%	18%
Spain	64%	3%	33%
Sweden	17%	8%	75%
Other	50%	50%	

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Main findings – Grade Conversion

Country	Total n
AT	96
BG	4
FR	9
IE	91
NL	43
MK	131
ES	72
SE	24
Other	2

- Is the **grade conversion methodology** used for mobile students public and in line with the ECTS Users' Guide guidance? (staff survey) % of respondents
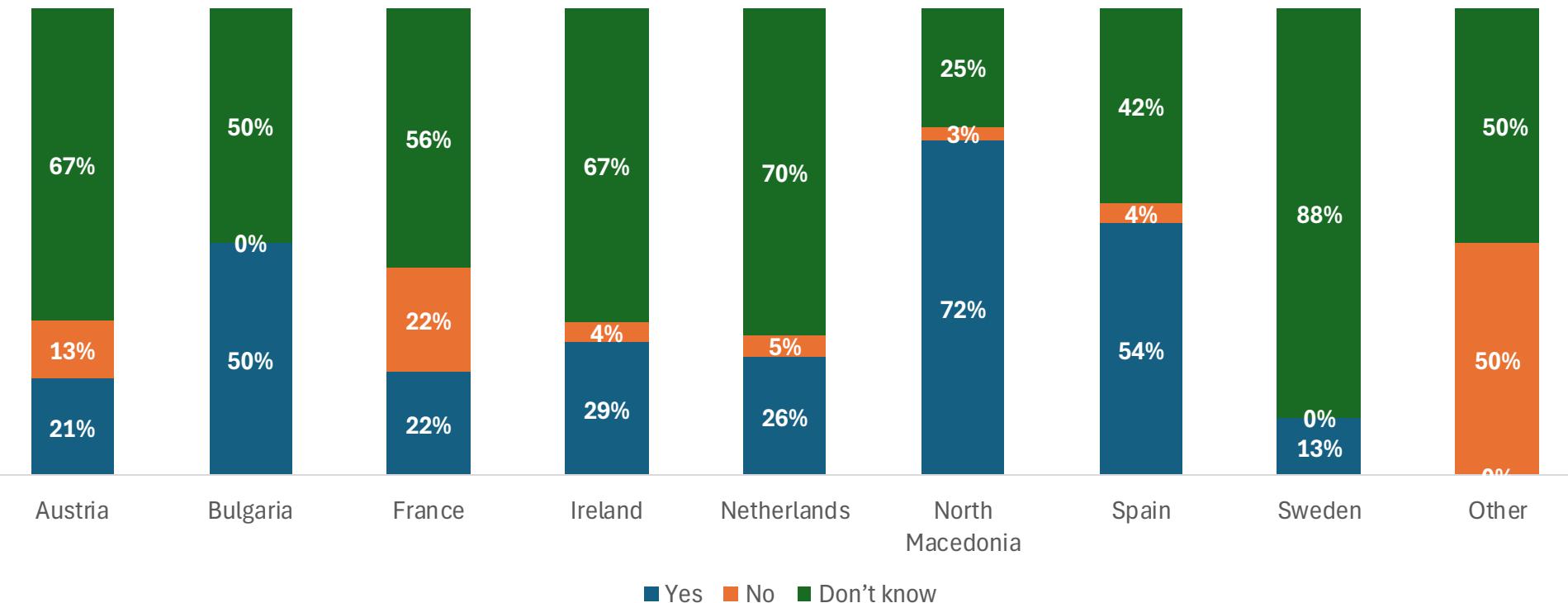
Overall, 42% staff respondents grade conversation methodology in line with ECTS users guide

MK and ES highest proportion of yes

AT, IE, NL, SE majority of respondents indicate 'Don't know'

	Austria	Bulgaria	France	Ireland	Netherlands	North Macedonia	Spain	Sweden	Other
Don't know	67%	50%	56%	67%	70%	25%	42%	88%	50%
No	13%	0%	22%	4%	5%	3%	4%	0%	50%
Yes	21%	50%	22%	29%	26%	72%	54%	13%	0%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know

Main findings – Grade Conversion

- Do you think the conversion of the grades you have received abroad by your home/sending institutions was fair? (**student survey**) % of respondents

- **Overall, 48% had a positive grade conversion experience**
- **12% reported 'no, the conversion was not fair'**

I was deducted about 10% off of my final grades, despite taking classes in my second language. This would be fine, except other students in my university got to take these classes in their native language and had the same deduction.

Pass rate at home considered a fail in mobility country. This should be taken into account during conversion.

The credit system in my country is completely different from the system in the country where I received skills training.

Grades not converted: *Pass/fail, grade not recognised, only credit received*

Main findings – Grade Conversion

Countries with larger response rate (IE: 136), FR: (112) perceptions are divided

ES (33%): grades earned abroad were 'downgraded' when back in their home institutions

- Do you think the conversion of the grades you have received abroad by your home/sending institutions was fair? (**student survey)** % of respondents

	Austria	Bulgaria	France	Ireland	Netherlands	North Macedonia	Spain	Sweden	Other
Don't know	17%	14%	35%	26%	8%	9%	33%	14%	21%
My grades were not converted at all	27%		13%	20%	11%	9%		29%	9%
No, the conversion was not fair	7%		14%	18%	5%	4%	33%		6%
Yes, conversion was fair	49%	86%	38%	36%	76%	78%	33%	57%	65%

■ Yes, conversion was fair   ■ No, the conversion was not fair   ■ My grades were not converted at all   ■ Don't know
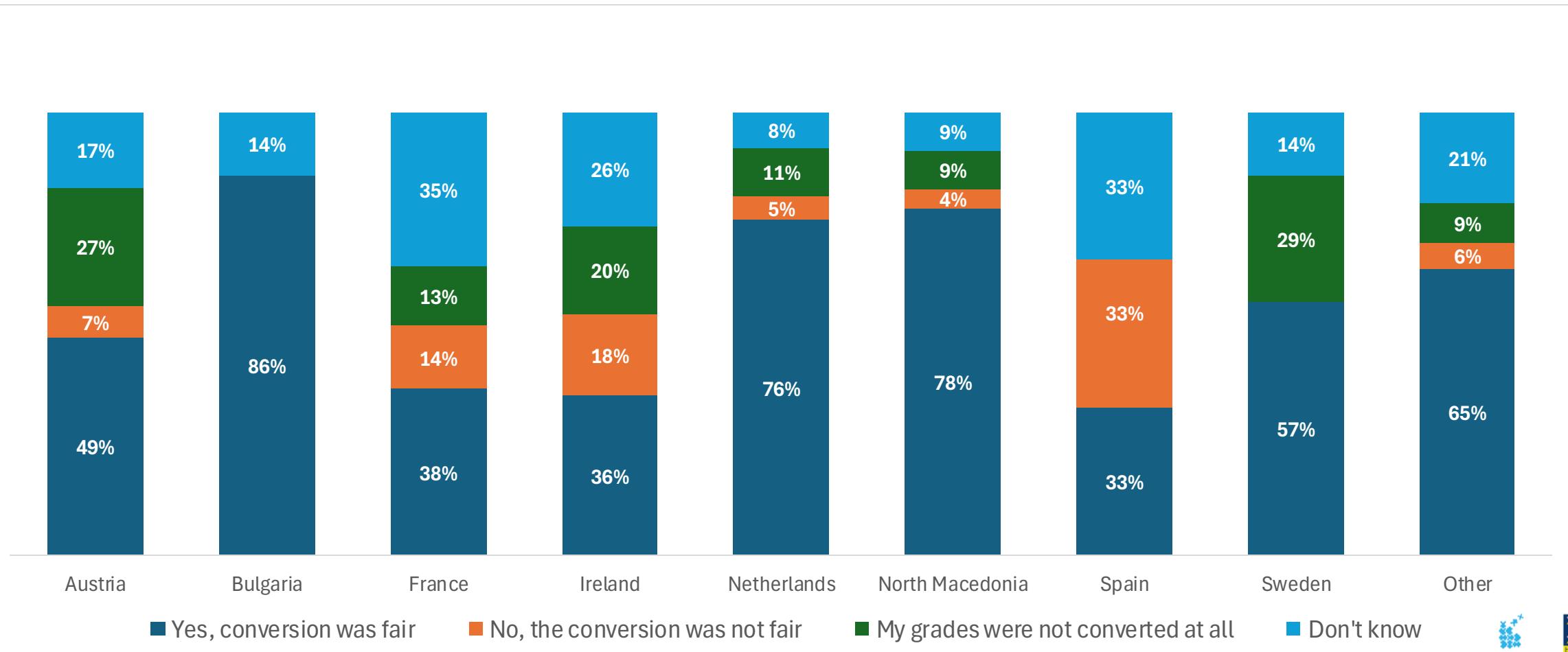
Main findings – Grade Conversion

- **Insights from staff focus groups:**

  - **Institutional approaches vary significantly**, ranging from faculty-specific to university-wide policies.

  - **Majority of institutions avoid grade conversion**, prioritizing credit transfer over grade translation (mentioned in 8 out of 13 focus groups).

  - Other ECTS grading tools receive limited practical application in conversion processes. Multiple universities **found it difficult to convert grades due to differences in grading systems, while simultaneously not utilising grade conversion tables**.

  - **Pass/fail systems predominate** as pragmatic solution to conversion complexity challenges.

Main findings – Grade Conversion

- **Insights from staff focus groups:**

  - Multiple universities mentioned that **tools such as EGRACONS are not used by all partner universities**, which makes a consistent approach to grade conversion difficult.

  - **Resource constraints and administrative burden influence conversion policy decisions**. One university did not convert grades because the administrative burden to do so manually would be too high. Another university had dedicated staff to convert grades.

Main findings – Grade Conversion

- **Insights from student focus group:**

- Experience of **varying conversion methodologies** from simple calculations to automated tables.
- Widespread experience of **institutions not using grade conversion** in European mobility programmes.
- Students from multiple universities reported pass/fail system is used as an alternative approach in specific academic contexts.
- **Varied satisfaction with grade conversion practices, depending on the perceived fairness** of the conversion results.
  - For example, students from a university in Bulgaria mentioned their Portuguese grades were translated to lower Bulgarian equivalents despite higher performance abroad.
  - At one university in Spain, students mentioned that automatic conversion systems typically result in slightly lower grades at home.
  - At another university in Spain, students reported that conversion errors required manual intervention and student awareness.

Main findings – Grade Conversion

- **Insights from student focus group – continued:**

- Overall **need for clarity and transparency** in how grades are interpreted and converted.

  - Students at a university in Sweden, when presented with the option, **wanted access to statistical grade distributions** to contextualise their results.

  - Students at a university in Ireland appreciated **simple, understandable conversion methods** (e.g., percentage-based).

  - Students at a university in Spain and Sweden reported that **lack of cumulative GPA or non-numerical systems can be problematic**, especially when applying for jobs or further studies.

  - Students at two universities in Spain and North Macedonia pointed out that inconsistent application of conversion rules and lack of coordination between institutions created **confusion and inequity**.

Main findings – Digital tools

- Does the institution support digital learning agreements via Erasmus Without Paper?
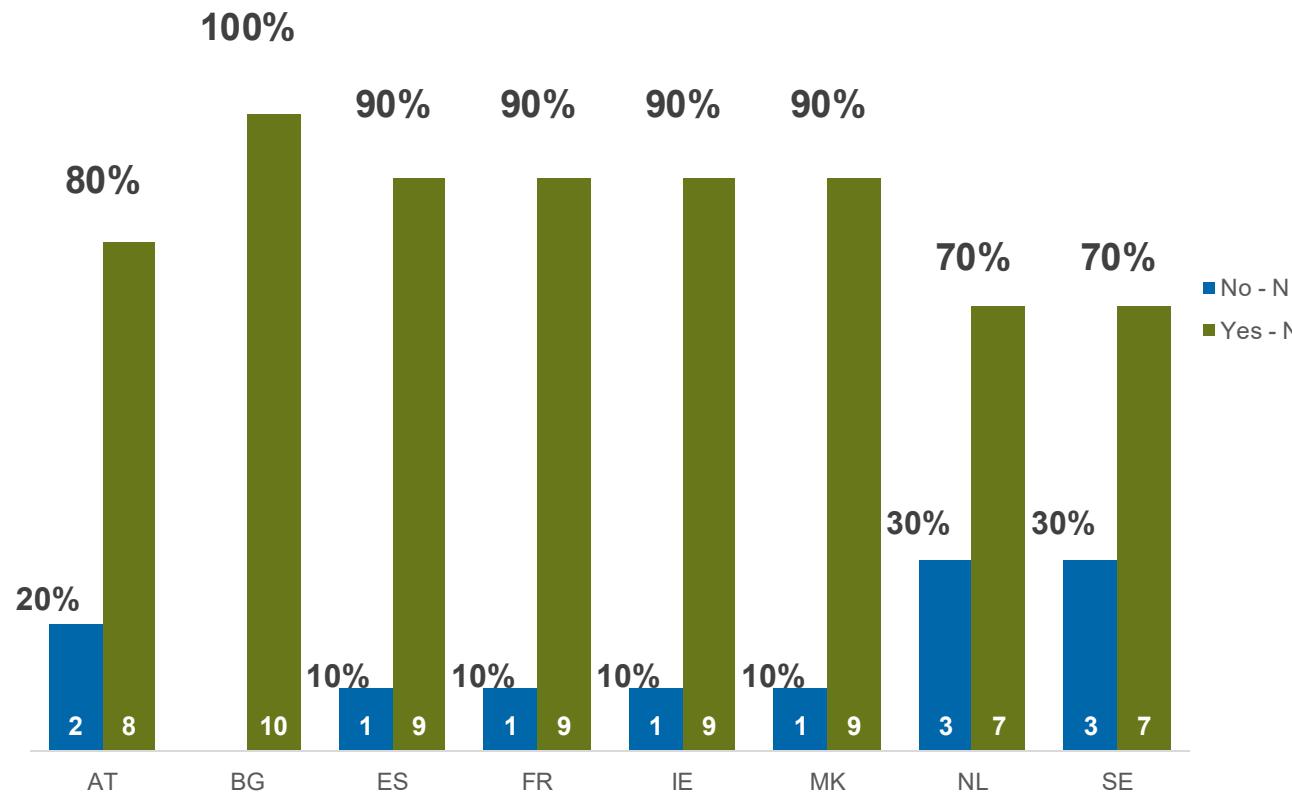

The majority of sampled institutions (85%) support the use of digital learning agreements via EWP.

Main findings – Digital tools

- **Insights into staff focus groups**

- EWP highly welcomed: Significantly reduces administrative burden; Paper version of LA considered more complicated than online version

- Challenges: Access limitations: Only one person has access to the online LA, system does not allow to create users with different rights and responsibilities. Not all partners use digital systems (1 FG reported up to 50%). Difficult to amend the LA online. Some technical challenges reported 'system bugs'.

- Some institutions have developed their own supplementary tools – for example 'equivalence tables' to compare sending/receiving institution courses – used with frequent partners (3 FG)

Main findings – Quality assurance

- What mechanisms are used for monitoring the allocation of ECTS?

Mechanism	Percentage
Monitoring of results/grades	54%
Student questionnaires	30%
My office does not deal with this	27%
Data on completion times (LMS)	25%
Data management system	24%
Interviews	6%
Focus groups	6%
Other	5%

- Most common methods for monitoring allocation of ECTS is monitoring of results/grades (across all countries), student questionnaires

- More qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups are used less frequently (6% respectively)

- Other: Evaluation of study programmes, part of curricula design, Committee Review, an online application for students (voluntary basis)

Main findings – Quality assurance

- How often is the allocation of ECTS credits across modules and courses monitored in your institution? (staff survey)

Overall almost 30% of respondents reported monitoring is conducted at least once every 2 years

16% report either ad-hoc monitoring or none at all
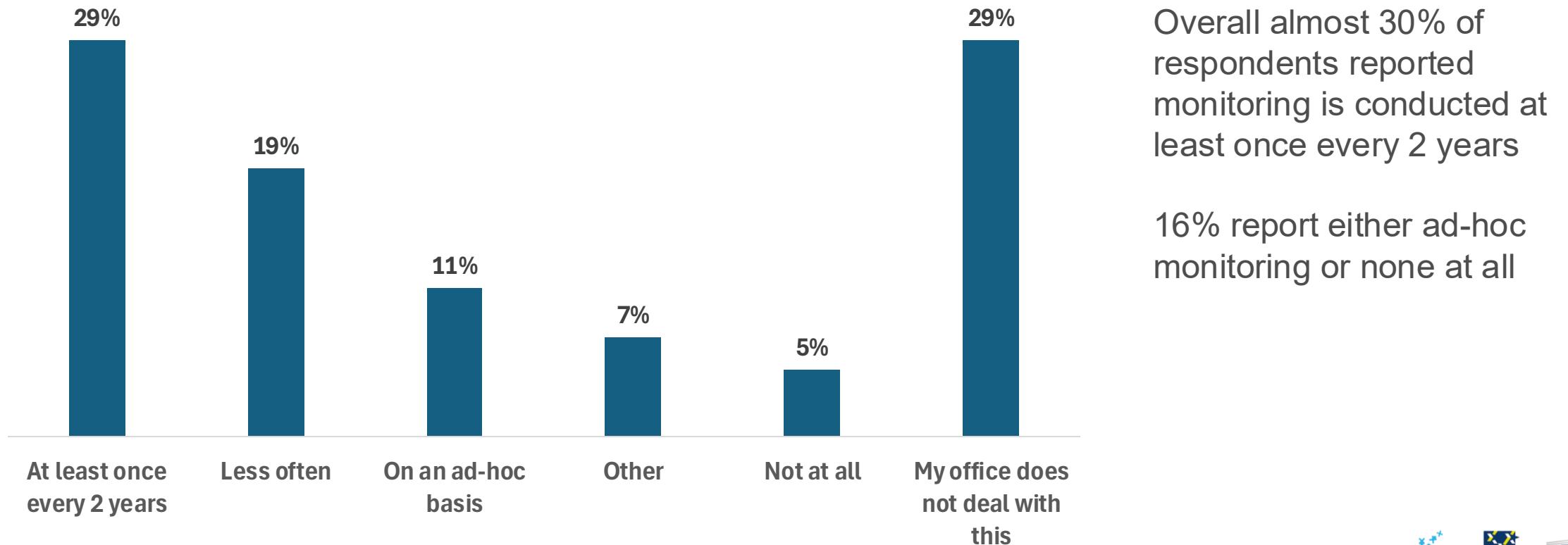
Main findings – Quality assurance

- Is the workload/time you spend on each module/course unit in your studies monitored by your institution? (student survey) % of respondents

Overall, 18% of students reported their institution monitored their workload

*Surveys – tracking time/workload, attendance, class observation*

NL has highest proportion of 'Yes' responses

Countries with larger response rate FR: (538) IE (469) majority answered no

	AUSTRIA	BULGARIA	FRANCE	IRELAND	NETHERLANDS	NORTH MACEDONIA	SPAIN	SWEDEN	OTHER
Don't Know	31%	46%	26%	29%	35%	44%	25%	30%	24%
No	47%	21%	63%	59%	30%	21%	60%	55%	52%
Yes	22%	32%	12%	12%	35%	35%	15%	15%	24%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't Know

Main findings – Quality assurance

- As a student, do you have opportunities to contribute to internal or external quality monitoring in relation to the use of the ECTS system at your institution in any of the following ways? (student survey) by % of respondents
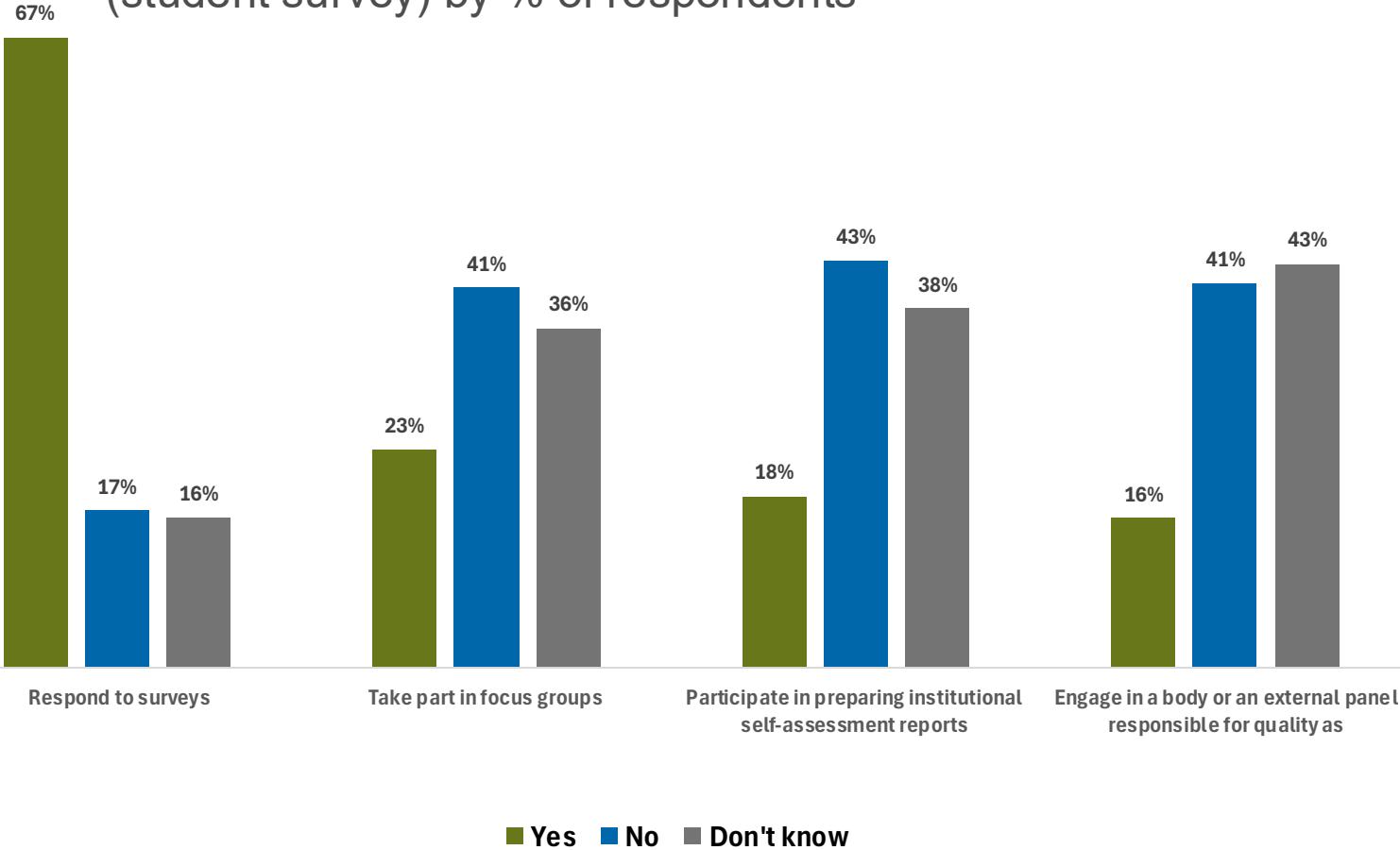
Overall 31% of students reported they had an opportunity to contribute

Surveys are the main tools to engage students in quality monitoring (67% respondents)

Lower engagement in focus groups, participating in preparation of self-assessment reports and as part of an external body / panel

67% 17% 16%
23% 41% 36%
18% 43% 38%
16% 41% 43%

Respond to surveys
Take part in focus groups
Participate in preparing institutional self-assessment reports
Engage in a body or an external panel responsible for quality as

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Main findings – Quality assurance

- Insights from staff focus groups - workload

- Regular summative evaluations / informal consultations in addition to end of year evaluations reported to be used in most HEIs. Specific examples:

  - Online evaluation at end of each module includes workload assessment questions (1 FG)

  - Graduate workshops: Year-end workshops with completing cohorts to review entire programme workload and structure (1 FG)

  - First cohort workshops: New pilot for new programmes to assess curriculum effectiveness after first/second semester (1 FG)

- Low student response rates identified as challenge for meaningful feedback

- Adjustment: Results can lead to workload redistribution or structural changes of the curriculum

Main findings – Quality assurance

- Insights from staff focus groups - workload

- In one FG, concerns raised about the limited systematic assessment of actual vs. planned student workload

- Suggestion for detailed workload descriptions in course catalogues, assessment component explanations (2 FG)

- Insights from student focus group - workload

- Overall, mixed views on how learners experience workload

- Students welcome greater involvement in QA processes

Main findings – Recognition of Prior Learning

- Are you responsible for the recognition of competences achieved outside of formal education? (staff survey) % of respondents
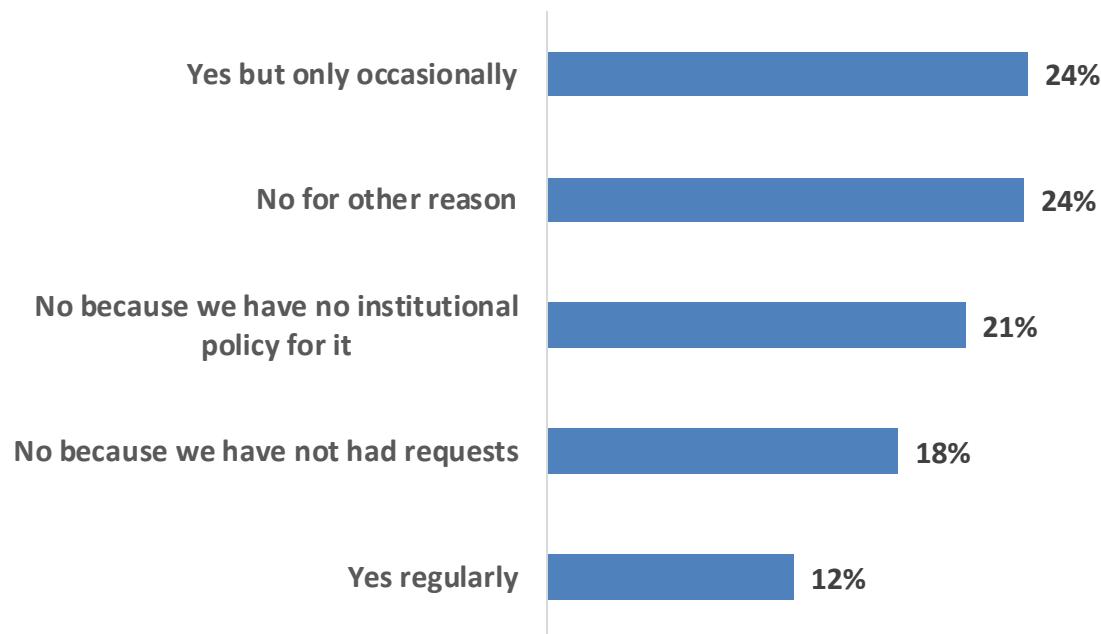
12% report they regularly recognise competences outside of formal learning

Close to two-thirds of respondents reported 'no' – reasons due to absence of institutional policy (21%), no requests (18%) or other reasons (24%)

Other reasons: Responsibility of a dedicated unit / committee / other office

Category	%
Yes but only occasionally	24%
No for other reason	24%
No because we have no institutional policy for it	21%
No because we have not had requests	18%
Yes regularly	12%

Main findings – Recognition of Prior Learning

- Have you had any competences achieved outside of formal education recognised for credit? (student survey) % of respondents

Response	%
No I did not know this would be an option	47%
No because it was not applicable	26%
Yes up to 5 ECTS	12%
Yes more than 5 ECTS	8%
No because my HEI did not offer the opportunity	7%
I sought recognition but my request was not approved	2%

20% of student reported receiving credit (12% up to 5 ECTS, 8% more than 5 ECTS)

47% reported they were unaware recognition of learning outside of formal education was an option - general lack of awareness about RPL opportunities

7% indicated their institution did not offer such opportunities

Main findings – Recognition of Prior Learning

- Insights from staff focus groups

- National legal frameworks related to NQFs influence institutional practices related to RPL: Possibility for RPL does not exist in HE but in VET

- Where possibilities exist, evidence of institutions following 4 stages of validation recommended by 2012 CR on validation

- AT, IE active promotion of RPL - formal, non-formal and informal learning

- IE robust double-dipping rules against using the same experience for multiple recognition purposes

- Credit limits applied in certain HEIs/countries – some HEIs do not allocate credit for NFIL

- Issue of where learning acquired by means of NFIL is documented and how

- Challenge: Value of the learning outcomes acquired by means of NFIL

Main findings – Recognition of Prior Learning

- Insights from student focus groups

  - Mixed experiences – some positive experiences – evidence of learners receiving exemptions, some receiving credits for extra-curricular activities (2 FGs)

  - Barriers identified: Complex documentation requirements, lack of awareness, unclear deadlines and process, administrative burden and financial constraints deterring students, lack of systematic approaches to assessing non-formal learning, institutional activities favored over general volunteer work

Conclusion

- BiPs and MCs in development.

- BiPs - issues highlighted in terms of integration in existing modules, remaining outside formal programmes

- Grade conversion – institutional variation, many not using grade conversion tables

- Digital tools – Support for EWP, suggestions for integration of existing tools / templates

- Quality assurance – mechanisms in place to monitor workload, students welcome more engagement

- RPL – practices vary across countries / institutions – overall need for greater awareness raising

Next and final steps

- Remaining focus groups: **Bulgaria** (1 staff, 1 student), **Ireland** (1 student), **France** (2 staff, 2 student), **The Netherlands** (2 student)

- Survey end: September 2025

- Technical Report: September 2025

- Remaining research activities to feed Technical Report once completed

Student perspective on ECTS implementation

- **Introduction of ESU statement – Lana Par**

- **Key messages from ESN – Rita Dias**

- **Reflections, questions and answers**

ESU
EUROPEAN STUDENTS UNION

FIGHTING FOR STUDENT'S RIGHTS SINCE 1982

Student perspective on ECTS implementation

Lana Par
Vice-president of ESU
lana.par@esu-online.org

ESU
EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

9.8. Allocation of ECTS on the basis of the total student workload for achieving learning outcomes

ETCS is not implemented in our country 2,9%

I don't know 5,7%

Rarely 5,7%

Always 42,9%

Sometimes 14,3%

Often 28,6%
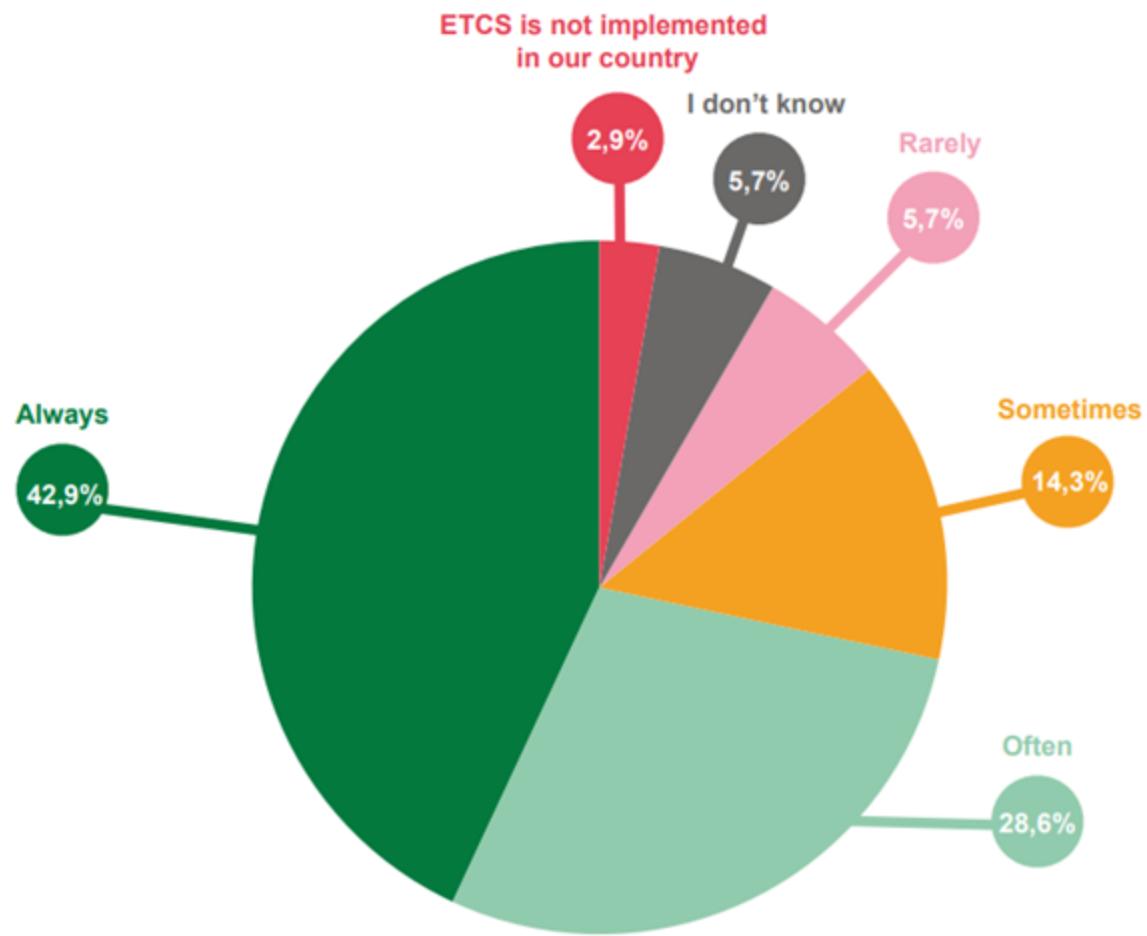
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- N/A

Challenges in the Implementation of ECTS

ESU — EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION
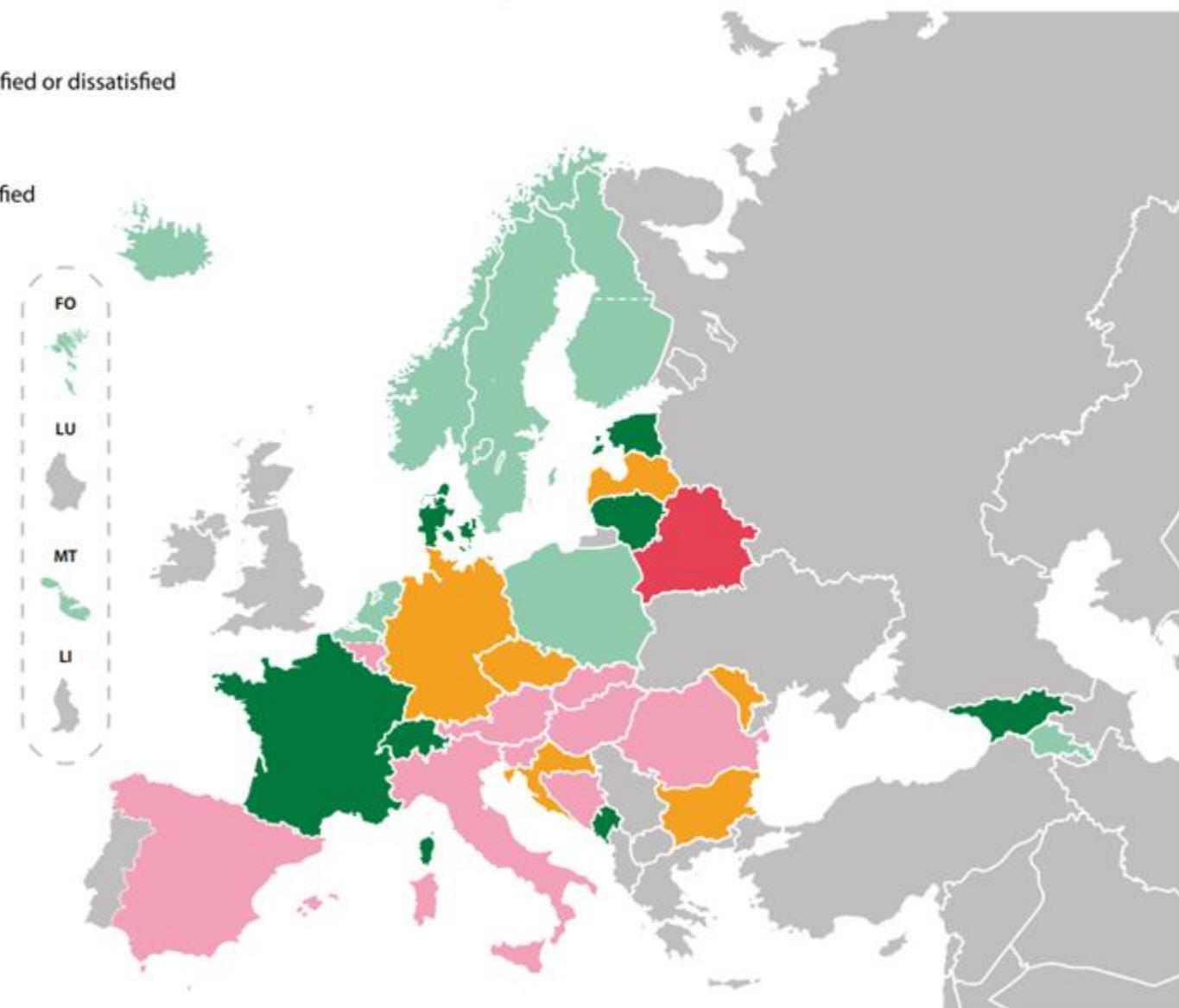
1. Inconsistent Credit Allocation

Credits for similar courses often differ across institutions, undermining comparability and disrupting student mobility. This inconsistency leads to unfair recognition of academic work and limits seamless transitions between universities.

2. Diverse Grading Systems

Without a unified European grading scale, students face difficulties in transferring their grades. The absence of clear conversion systems can negatively affect students' academic progress and equity in evaluation

3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Informal and non-formal learning, such as work experience or internships, are rarely recognized for credit. This discourages lifelong learning and makes it difficult for students from non-traditional backgrounds to gain recognition.

Challenges in the Implementation of ECTS

EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

ESU

4 — Workload Discrepancies

ECTS credits are meant to reflect total student workload, including self-study and assessments. However, many institutions base credits only on contact hours, which leads to inconsistent expectations and unfair workloads.

5 — Transparency and Awareness

Students and staff frequently lack understanding of how ECTS works. Poor communication and insufficient guidance lead to confusion over credit allocation, transfer processes, and institutional policies.

3 — Barriers to Mobility

ECTS was designed to facilitate mobility, but bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistent credit recognition policies discourage participation in exchange programs and international learning opportunities.

Enhancing the Overall System for Credit Accumulation and Transfer

Stronger Institutional Commitment

Institutions must align their credit policies with Bologna principles. Clear internal quality assurance mechanisms are essential to monitor and ensure consistency in credit allocation and application.
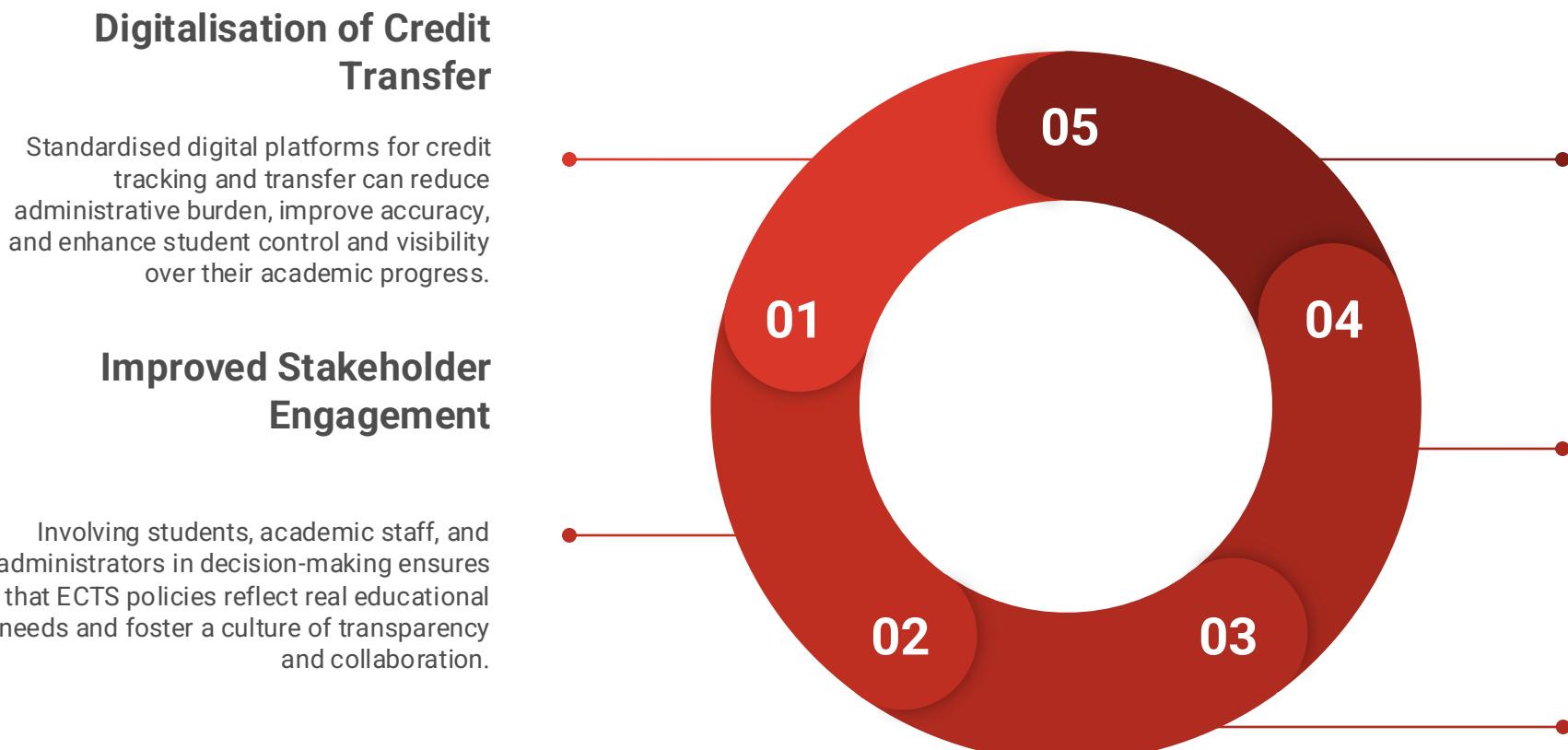
Digitalisation of Credit Transfer

Standardised digital platforms for credit tracking and transfer can reduce administrative burden, improve accuracy, and enhance student control and visibility over their academic progress.

Continuous Training for Academic Staff

Ongoing training for academic and administrative staff helps ensure consistent and correct application of ECTS principles. Professional development should be regular, comprehensive, and mandatory.

Improved Stakeholder Engagement

Involving students, academic staff, and administrators in decision-making ensures that ECTS policies reflect real educational needs and foster a culture of transparency and collaboration.

ECTS in Vocational Education and Training (VET)

To ensure flexible learning paths, ECTS should be better aligned with vocational systems like ECVET. This would allow learners to transition between academic and vocational education more easily.

05

01

04

02

03

Standardise Credit Allocation	Harmonised Grading Scales	Clearer Guidelines on RPL
Define clear and consistent rules for assigning credits based on student workload and learning outcomes.	Adopt a common grading system or clear conversion tool across Europe to ensure fair and consistent grade recognition for mobile students.	Strengthen and clarify policies for recognizing non-formal and informal learning. Institutions should publish transparent RPL procedures

Recommendations for Improving the ECTS Users' Guide

Improved Monitoring of ECTS Determination	Enhanced Transparency and Student Involvement	Quality Assurance in ECTS Application
Use external quality assurance and ECHE monitoring to ensure accurate and fair credit allocation. Institutional practices should be	Involve students and student representatives in shaping ECTS policies and improve communication about credit	Establish robust quality controls to ensure ECTS is applied consistently across institutions and countries, reducing disparities and improving trust

ESU
EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

Follow us !

f @Europeanstudents

Instagram @esu.online

X @ESUtwt

in @EuropeanStudentsUnion

Globe www.esu-online.org

Academic recognition

Insights from the ESN survey, Rita Dias

Who are we?

Rita Dias
President of ESN

Simone Lepore
President-Elect of ESN

Our network in numbers

15,000+ volunteers

1000+ HEIs

46 countries

350,000+ students

Enrichment of society through international students

XV ESNsurvey Final Report was just launched!

Methodology:

- ~23,000 of answers;
- Survey conducted in 2023;
- Target audiences: international students who participated in Erasmus+ or any other type of exchange since August 2021 (17,855), non-mobile students (1,856) and full-degree students (3,064).

Recognition of credits earned abroad

Before Mobility

Before Mobility: Support by the Sending Institution

- Participants were asked to **rate services offered by the sending Institutions** on a Likert scale (N= 14,491) :
  - Information and support on grade transfer, ECTS, and study recognition (M = 3.74, SD = 1.16)
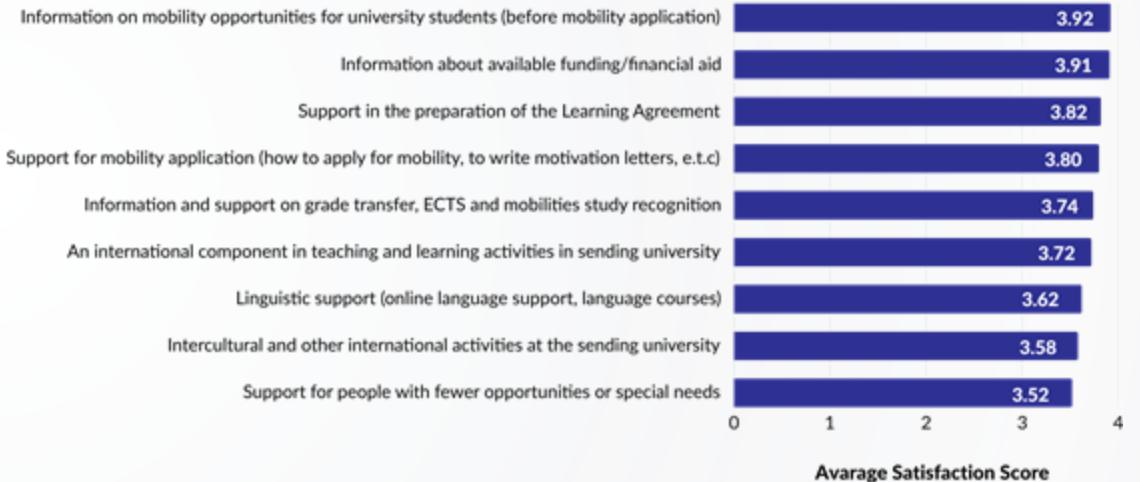
Figure 36: Average satisfaction with the support provided by Sending Institutions before arrival (N= 14,491).

Recommendation

Students should be given comprehensive information about the accessibility of courses and the ECTS system. Erasmus+ coordinators should play a key role in guiding students to select a host institution that aligns with their expectations and in assisting with the preparation of their learning agreement, with a focus on prioritising learning outcomes and ensuring an impactful academic experience (XIV ESNsurvey, 2022).

During Mobility

During Mobility: Main issues faced by students

Main issues faced by exchange students:

- **35.63%** - Insufficient money to cover my cost of living;

- **35.5%** - Problems finding affordable accommodation;

- **33.97%** - Problems related to the courses I was taking.

This issues can lead to the increase of **feelings of anxiety and stress** - 42.3%

Insufficient money to cover my cost of living — 35.63%
Problems finding affordable accommodation — 35.5%
Problems related to the courses I was taking (enrolment, schedule, exams) — 33.97%
Problems connecting to locals — 28.95%
Absence of family and friends — 23.1%
Late payment of my grant/scholarship — 20.11%
None of the above — 15.98%
Problems with my administration (residence permit/visa/registration) — 10.98%
Loss of income/loss of student job while abroad — 10.45%
Problems adapting to life in the hosting city — 9.15%
Discrimination based on my personal background — 4.3%
Other (Please Specify) — 2.34%

Figure 46: Issues encountered during the stay abroad by exchange students (general sample, N = 14,568)

After Mobility

After Mobility: Digital tools used as part of the Erasmus+ journey
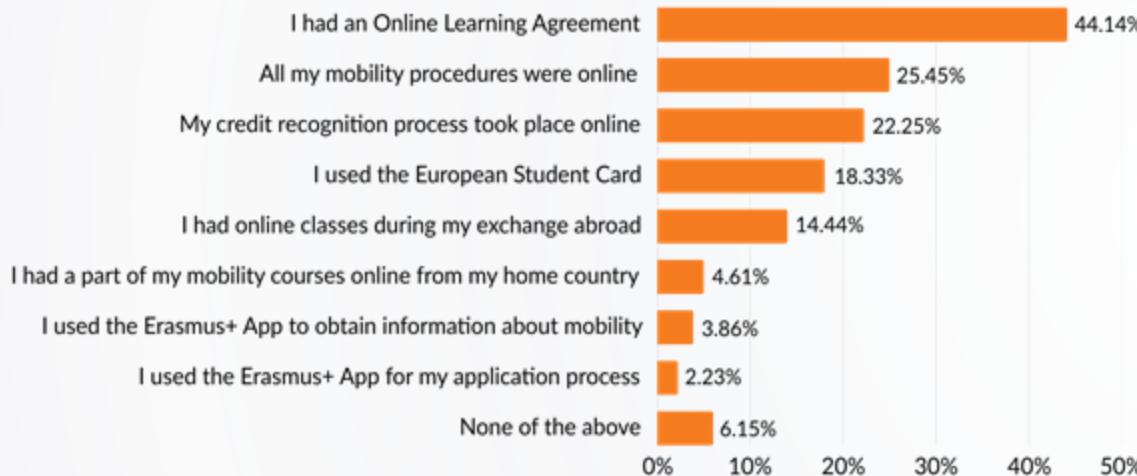
Figure 53: Digital tools used as part of the Erasmus+ journey, percentage (N= 14,743).

- The most widely used tool was the Online Learning Agreement, with **44.14%**

- These results highlight **significant room for improvement** in the adoption of digital tools

After Mobility: Automatic Recognition of Learnings Aboard
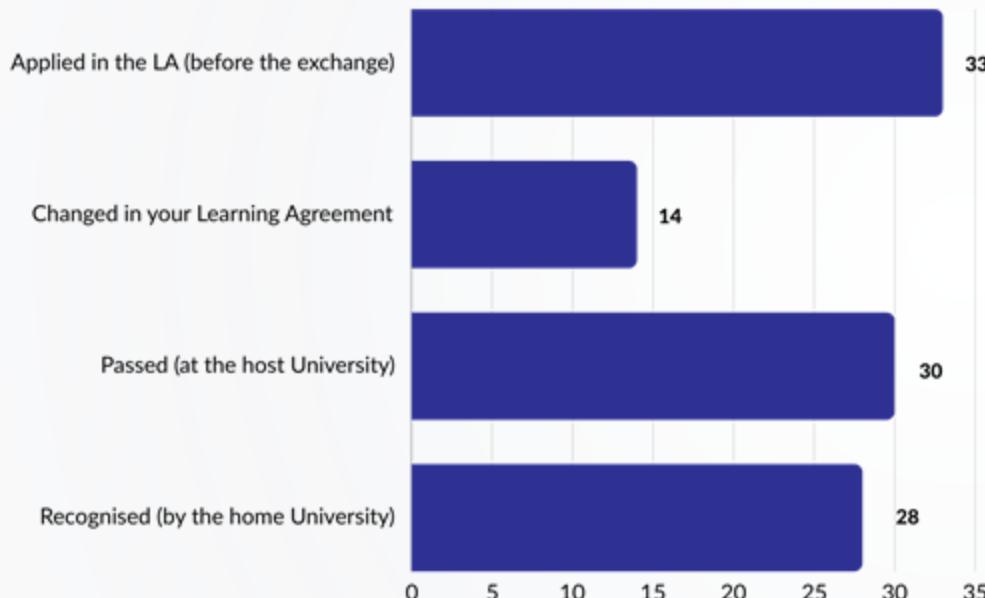
Figure 70: Recognition of learnings aboard, the credits taken compared with the credits recognised (N = 6,620)

While the average recognition rate is 28 ECTS, **2.6%** of survey respondents did not have any of their credits recognised upon their return to their home university.

After Mobility: Students perspectives on the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
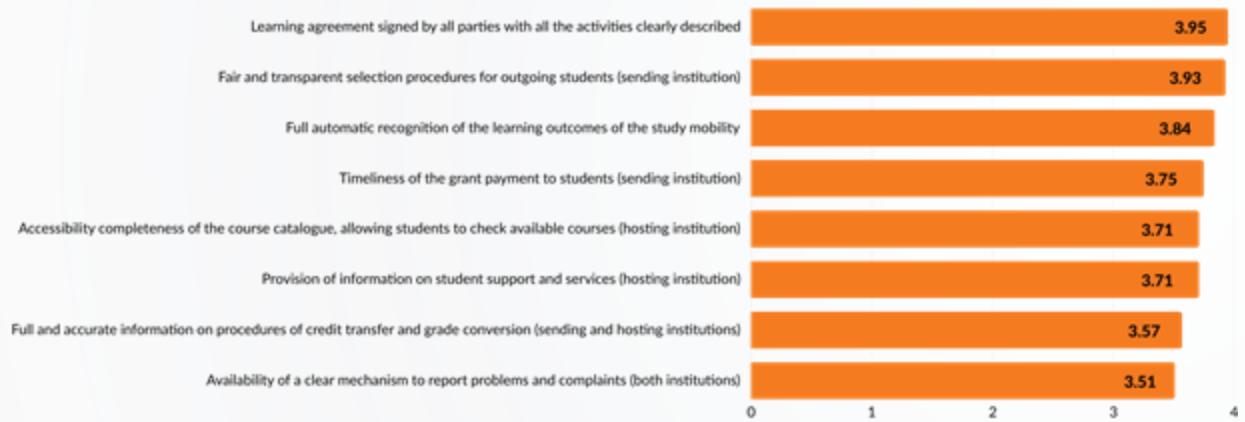
Figure 59: Average Agreement Score with Statements Reflecting Responsibilities of Higher Education Institutions towards Exchange Students (N = 12,824)

What students agree to be the biggest priorities of HEis?

- Full and accurate information on **credit transfer and grade conversion procedures** (M = 3.95, SD = 1.02)
- **Timeliness of grant payments** to students (M = 3.93, SD = 0.99
- Accessibility and completeness of the **course catalogue** (M = 3.84, SD = 1.08)

Recommendations

1. National Governments and Higher Education Institutions **must intensify their efforts to ensure the automatic recognition of learning outcomes** from Erasmus+ mobility.

2. The European Commission, National Agencies and Higher Education Institutions should fully explore the potential of Erasmus+ participation by not only gathering personal stories but **also systematically analysing the impact of mobility through a data-driven approach.**

3. National Agencies should implement **stricter monitoring of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)** to ensure that course catalogue information is provided well in advance and that recognition procedures are applied in full compliance with the charter commitments.

Inflexible programme structures

Inflexible programme structures

- Qualitative data from the XV ESNsurvey structural issues contributing to this problem namely **inflexibility in degree programs**.

"In one case, the teachers considered that the classes

I took during my mobility set me behind my classmates

and in the other case, they considered the course was

irrelevant to my studies."

Recommendations

- The ECTS Users' Guide should incentivise institutions to **embed mobility windows**, within every degree programme.

- National and European quality assurance authorities should support **curriculum reform through institutional planning**, incentives, and best practices.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

- ESN Section questionnaire:
  - **Internal survey** with insights, experiences of **495 ESN local organisation in 45 countries**
  - Conducted in August 2024
- Volunteers of **62 % of the Sections** do not get any form of recognition from their HEI.
- Just 11.1% have an academic recognition like ECTS .

Recommendations

Higher Education Institutions should formally recognise students' volunteer work and participation in civic engagement activities within the local community. This can be achieved through existing tools such as ECTS recognition and the diploma supplement.

The untapped potential of the European University Alliances and the European Degree

How to motivate student engagement?

Representation	Capacity Building	Recognition
-Highly evolved students in the decision making process, also with voting power; -Elected student representatives, according to the Bologna principles.	-With the view to have the most knowledgeable student representatives it's necessary to capacity them with key knowledge; -This a timely process and sometimes not successful;	-To finalise and to ensure that the students continue to be part of the alliances as student representatives we must recognise their work (ECTS, more flexibility...)

president@esn.org

President | ESN International

www.esn.org

Use of ECTS in vocational education and training

- **Presentation of the Cedefop study on the transparency and transferability of learning – Zelda Azzara, Expert on qualifications and credentials, Cedefop**

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

Insights on credits developments

WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

- Decentralised EU agency (based in Greece).

- We support the promotion, development and implementation of the EU policy in the field of **VET** as well as **skills** and **qualifications**.

- Provide research–based conclusions, evidence and services for policy making and disseminate and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Shaping VET and qualifications

Cedefop

- actively supports the development and use of **European tools and principles for transparency**

- monitors VET policy developments across the EU

- Looks into the future of VET

97

Research project on transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

(2022-2025)

Overall aim

Explore, over a 20-year time period, European and national efforts to increase the flexibility of learning systems to enable individuals to access and combine learning as needed, with a view to informing future policy discussions

Learning takes place throughout life and different contexts

Education and training systems do not always recognise past learning

Increasing diversity and complexity of education and training systems

Rigid, 'siloed' education systems – limited tailoring and flexibility

Limited trust in learning taking place outside formal systems

Methodology

| Work assignment 1 European level 2022-2023	Work assignment 2 National level 2022-2023	Work assignment 3 Individual level 2023-2024	Work assignment 4 Future scenarios 2024-2025
• Literature review • 20 interviews with policy experts • Online expert workshops	• Literature review • Case studies (8) with desk research and interviews (55) • Online survey (98 respondents)	• Literature review • Country cases with stakeholder and learner interviews (70, focus groups (54 stakeholders), case histories (20) • Statistical comparative analysis	• Literature review • 2 expert workshops

Synergies with other European policy initiatives

Policy areas / Policy initiatives	Quality assurance	Credit transfer and accumulation	Comparability of skills and qualifications (*)	Validation of non-formal and informal learning	Recognition of qualifications
ECTS	High with ESG	Limited with ECVET	High overall	Moderate overall	High overall
ECVET	Limited with EQAVET	Limited with ECTS	Limited overall	Limited overall	Limited overall

Source: Cedefop (2004), Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5609

Stakeholders' perceptions of the interplay between national initiatives on credit systems and other policy areas

Quality assurance: not at all 0.0% / 15.5%, small links 37.1%, moderate links 26.8%, high links 20.6%

Comparability of skills and qualifications: not answered 1.0%, not at all 13.4%, small links 26.8%, moderate links 38.1%, high links 20.6%

Validation of non-formal and informal learning: not answered 2.1%, not at all 18.6%, small links 33.0%, moderate links 28.9%, high links 17.5%

Recognition of skills and qualifications: not answered 4.1%, not at all 14.4%, small links 29.9%, moderate links 29.9%, high links 21.6%

Legend:
- not answered
- not at all
- small links
- moderate links
- high links

Original question:
In your opinion, in your country to what extent are the national initiatives in the considered policy areas interlinked and mutually reinforcing each other?

Period: from December 2022 to January 2023

N: 98 from 28 countries

Insights from ECTS and ECVET analysis

Examples of national developments

- Credit system in VET not present in all countries

- In some countries there are different credit systems deepening on the *type* of qualification (3 credit systems in HR and SE)

  → Is accumulation and transfer of credits possible? Does it support mobility?

- Malta uses ECTS for all qualifications and other countries are exploring its use for qualification other than HE (e.g. IE and NO)

[Council recommendation](#) on vocational education and training sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020)

"For vocational qualifications at post-secondary and tertiary level, the ECTS already in use may be applied".

Implementation at national level: Make best use of the European transparency tools (including ECTS)

[Council recommendation](#) on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2017)

Principles for credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Main findings from the project

➢ Increased focus on **learning outcomes -** unifying element promoting coherence

➢ **Moderate synergies** across transparency initiatives.

➢ Stronger synergies **exist within sub-systems** (e.g. higher education or VET) than across policy themes ➔ Increasingly coherent policy framework, but **not fully integrated system**

➢ Increased **converges** and **commitment** to transparent, comparable and recognised qualifications as well as **more flexible learning pathways**

➢ Growing focus on **learning outside formal settings**, supporting lifelong learning ➔ but non-formal and informal learning remains under-integrated
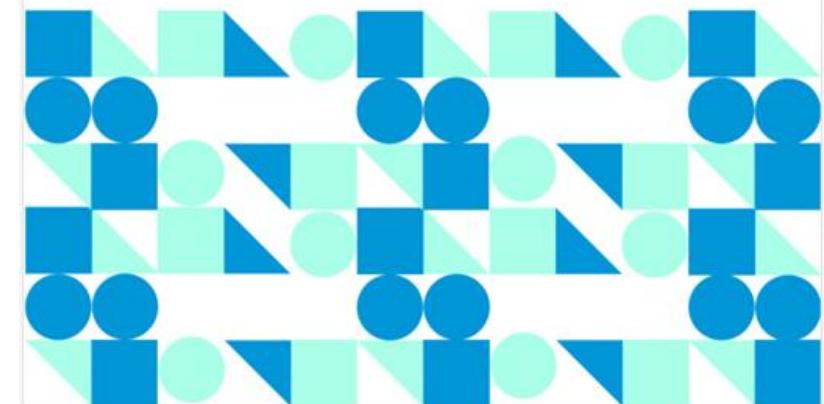
Concluding considerations

- Persistent **barriers** to portability of learning across countries, sectors, and institutions

- Room for greater **synergy** between credit initiatives and other efforts

- Credit systems mainly **advanced in higher education**

- Use of credits in **VET** is more **limited**

- **Weak coordination** across subsystems hampers permeability

- **Cross-border portability prioritised** over cross-sector portability

Questions for discussion

➢ What **arrangements** are in place in your country regarding credit systems? Is **alignment/compatibility** between different credit systems promoted, and if so, how?

➢ What **risks** and **benefits** do you see in promoting the use of ECTS in VET?

➢ How could **closer cooperation** between HE and VET in credit system design support lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning

Thank you

www.cedefop.europa.eu

Follow us on social media

Contact details:
Zelda AZZARA
Zelda.Azzara@cedefop.europa.eu

Project pages:

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes:
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/transparency-and-transferability-learning-outcomes

National qualifications frameworks
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool

CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Introduction to draft 0

- **Overview by Colin Tück**

Changes to the structure/outline

- Turn EHEA chapter into "principles and objectives"

- Shorten glossary and link to text

- Status/nature of the document?

Have in mind:

- More "modern" format of publication eventually

Micro-credentials

- Fully integrate short learning opportunities/programmes (chapter on programme design)

- Explain linking of MC to QF level

ECTS for Lifelong Learning (LLL)

- Mainstream LLL into other chapters

  - Integral part instead of "add on"

  - Keep previous LLL chapter with focus on RPL

- Use "learner" instead of "student" throughout

- Remove/change any text applicable exclusively to HE

  - Education institution instead of HEI

  - Do not refer to three cycles without other QF level

Mobility and recognition

- Notion of automatic transfer of any credits

- Cover different mobility scenarios

    o Free mover mobility

    o Individual Learning Agreement (current focus)

    o Standard pathways with automatic recognition

- Grade conversion

    o Simplified grade distribution info (in ToR)

    o Alternative: definition-based grading scale (A-E + F)

Digital infrastructures

- Course catalogue

  o Reflect different nature than monolithic PDF file

  o Emphasise importance of open data

  o Link course catalogue with ELM

- Mobility and recognition

  o Establish requirements for digital transcripts of records

Discussion of Draft 0 – general credit and accumulation

Coffee break

Discussion of Draft 0 – transfer and recognition

Close and summary

Summary and close, overview of next meetings and any other business

By Colin Tueck, Lead expert and Kinga Szuly, EC

Thank you!