



## **Speaking notes for the Budapest and Vienna Ministerial conference, 11-12th of March 2010**

### **1. Degree and curriculum reform and Cooperation in QA**

[CS] = change slide

The European Students' Union is the representative voice of European students since 1982. We have been an active partner in the build-up of the process ever since 2001, while criticizing Bologna implementation on the ground. The 4 editions of the Bologna with Student Eyes surveys, with Bologna at the Finish Line as an analytical overview brought the real effects felt by students to the attention of education ministers in every ministerial conference since 2003. All the maps and graphs in my presentations are a result of the input given by our members and represent what we see as the mirror of Bologna implementation and its relevance in the eyes of the ones being able to sense both its failures and success.

[CS] The degree reform under the Bologna Process has been declared as a success by the independent assessment. However we have to ask ourselves if formal implementation and rigid compliance with what was understood as a must (3-4 years for the first cycle, 1.5-2 years for the second cycle and 3 years for the third cycle) are the right proxies for measuring the effectiveness of the action line implementation.

[CS] When we look at the feedback from our members, their impression in almost half of the cases is that the degree reform is very much work in progress and recent student protests across Europe were looking exactly at bad effects of too rigid degree reform: inflexibility of the curricula, less employability, barriers for mobility and more difficult progression between cycles.

[CS] The curriculum reform came about with the European Credit Transfer system. Implementation of ECTS is viewed as a solved issue by many of the 46 Bologna states. But as the independent assessment points out, only 12 national systems use both student workload and learning outcomes as the basis for the allocation of credits. The ECTS accumulation and transfer function is not fully used. This leads to the effects you can see in the picture: increased student workload in many more cases than an initially expected decrease. This is translated into lack of mobility and a lack of time for personal development and in-depth critical thinking.

[CS] Quality assurance is one of the building blocks of the EHEA. It is also our priority in the context of the ESU high quality higher education for all goal. But in order for the definition of quality to be meaningful and for quality processes to be fit for purpose, European ministers agreed that student participation in QA is essential. Our 2009 BWSE survey showed that there is still one third of HEIs that do not involve students in QA and the full commitment to include students in external QA and agency governance is significantly under 40% of the cases surveyed. This is to say that the real mentality change did not take place and that quality is still seen in a bubble with little connection to the benefits higher education should bring to students. The fact that few quality processes look at student support services, mobility strategies and student centered learning instruments is a clear sign that quality needs to mean more if our systems are to reach their intended goals.

[CS]Perhaps one of the most prominent Bologna achievements was the set up of the European Quality Assurance Register, with students as equal partners in its founding. It was very interesting to see the student's expectations with regard to the EQAR missions. It seems that the most relevant missions that EQAR should have in the future, in the students' eyes is bringing more transparency of HE quality for students and enforcing the European Standards and Guidelines for QA. This brings a very interesting insight into what the development directions should be from a student point of view.

[CS]Thank you!

## **2. Recognition and mobility**

Recognition is a measure of trust and paves the way for realizing mobility, as the hallmark of the EHEA. In order to reach the 20% mobile graduates in the EHEA by 2020 benchmark, we need to address the two main causes for students not being mobile: recognition and funding. Recognition has many tools that should make it a reality: qualifications frameworks, ECTS, Diploma supplement and the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

[CS] When it comes to qualifications' frameworks it has been said that it will make it easier for students to enter and exit educational pathways, which will make systems transparent and higher education access and completion rates higher. But they have proved to be largely unknown and unused by students, HEIs and employers alike. One cause for that is the closed doors design process. The map of student involvement in national qualifications frameworks design shows a gloomy picture of student involvement in the NQF design process, which surely had an impact on the awareness, dissemination and usage of NQFs.

[CS]The same lack of awareness is to be seen in the case of the Diploma Supplement. Our members warn that the employers and the general public are largely unaware of the Diploma Supplement and its benefits, which makes it a missed opportunity. The effort for promoting this tools would be highly awarded by the large scale acknowledgement of its benefits by not just HE experts and institutional leaders, but also by the societal actors with which graduates have to interact.

[CS] When we mentioned financing as one mobility obstacle, we have to remember that the one concrete ministerial commitment in this regard was to make grants and loans portable. The map before you shows how far we are from that goal. But is this just an unintended delay or is there a fear of brain drain underpinning the reluctance to make national grants and loans portable? There is no mobility without support and we argue that the well known benefits of mobility and of the "open border" policy should bring much more benefits to individual countries than the illusion that they will be able to keep students locked inside national borders through red tape and limiting support mechanisms. Due focus on the negative effects of brain drain should be paid though. A special attention should be given to systems that do not have a classical grant and loan system in place, which makes the ministerial commitment for their portability a strange statement for the ears of the students that feel disadvantaged in comparison to their European colleagues.

[CS] Credit recognition for mobility periods abroad seems to be a very far reality for students. The incomplete implementation of the ECTS system and the subjectivity of recognition procedures at the institutional level make the lack of credit recognition one of the most feared effects of credit mobility. If we aim at academically meaningful mobility periods abroad to be taken up by more students, the threat to fall academically behind your non-mobile colleagues should be erased from students' minds. And we can do that through transparent and fair credit recognition procedures that respect the institutional learning agreements.

[CS] Finally, we feel that it is safe to say that we have a clear discrimination situation when it comes to the treatment of non-EU/ EEA mobile students, which leads to unbalanced mobility flows. The rush to collect increasing financial advantages from mobile students as an additional income stream and their unequal status as a non-EU citizen

*The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 37 countries and through these members represent over 11 million students. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.  
ESU was formerly known as ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe.*

sometimes makes non-EU students second-class citizens in the countries they aim at studying in. Mobility will not fully contribute to the build-up of the EHEA until its academic, cultural and societal value is fully treasured and not just its commercial advantage.

[CS] Thank you!

### **3. Social dimension**

The Bologna Process aimed at the creation of a European Higher Education Area. But why we want to have a common space? Is not so that the full potential of our future citizens benefits from the European diversity and cultural heritage? Is not so that more European citizens are able to succeed in their personal and professional lives? We would argue that the social mobility function of higher education has as a tool national social dimension strategies that will make the diversity of our populations reflected in the national student bodies.

[CS] But let's see how important the social dimension really is... In our members' view it is a crucial priority for the students. But this is not the case for all governments and higher education institutions that seem to largely not prioritise this Bologna action line as students do. And it is quite obvious when we look at the lack of comprehensiveness of the national action plans for social dimension that should have been submitted by last year for the Leuven/ Louvain la Neuve ministerial conferences. There were even answers saying that some countries do not have underrepresented groups, which is sociologically very unlikely. Now, a new commitment was made in 2009: that all 46 Bologna countries would define their underrepresented groups and set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. ESU feels that if this is not a reality by 2020, the process will lose its relevance and real potential for societal transformation.

[CS] The picture of expenditure in HE institutions per full time equivalent student is worrying. We talked a lot about unlocking Europe's potential. The young generation will bear the burden of the economical and social recovery after the economic and values crisis. Are we making sure that we are investing enough in properly aiding that every student is able to reach its full potential? We would say that the upcoming demographic challenges put the pressure on the new active population that needs to not be afraid of choosing some educational paths because of their costs.

Student protests across Europe are pointing the finger at Bologna for the worsening of their study and living conditions. And we believe that in order for ESU to keep saying that Bologna does not come about with a catastrophic effect over their study opportunity and quality, we need to ascertain that promises in the field of social dimension are kept. And on this, you can be sure all eyes are on you, distinguished ministers. ☺

[CS] Thank you!

### **4. Essence and impact**

Student representatives from across Europe were meeting this week in Vienna to discuss the impact of the Bologna Process on higher education in Europe. On March 9, they adopted a declaration to the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference in Budapest /Vienna.

It is with great honour that I bring forward the 4 main messages that European students wanted the European ministers to hear. They asked all 47 countries governments to commit to:

1. Supporting the aims of the Bologna Process, whilst not allowing for further confusion regarding the main goals and tools of the process. This is especially important when looking at the parallel agendas being launched at the same time as the EHEA, such as the EU2020.

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2. Holistic, In-depth and financially supported continued implementation of all Bologna action lines, with a special focus on the social dimension, mobility and student-centred learning.
3. Inter-governmental solidarity, to overcome the ill-effects of the 'two-speed' Bologna implementation, rather than an excessive focus on the individual promotion of national higher education systems.
4. Full student participation in all decision-making structures at national, regional and institutional levels.

Bologna is at its first finish line. We will now have a European Higher Education Area that needs to be functional. And we commit to be an active partner in this endeavor. We are celebrating here the 9 years of student participation in the Bologna Process and its impact, from the focus on social dimension to the mobility benchmark and from the promotion of student centered learning to making student participation a Bologna unique characteristic. Students were protesting these days because Bologna, as they perceive it, has brought more sorrow than a welcome change. In order for the Bologna Process to be perceived as a process for students – a students' process if you like, we need your help. On behalf of all ESU members, I thank you for all your efforts so far and congratulations for a part of a dream come true. Now, let's make sure it does not transform into a nightmare, but that someone could wake up to see the dream has come true.

Thank you all!

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# Degree and curriculum reform Cooperation in QA

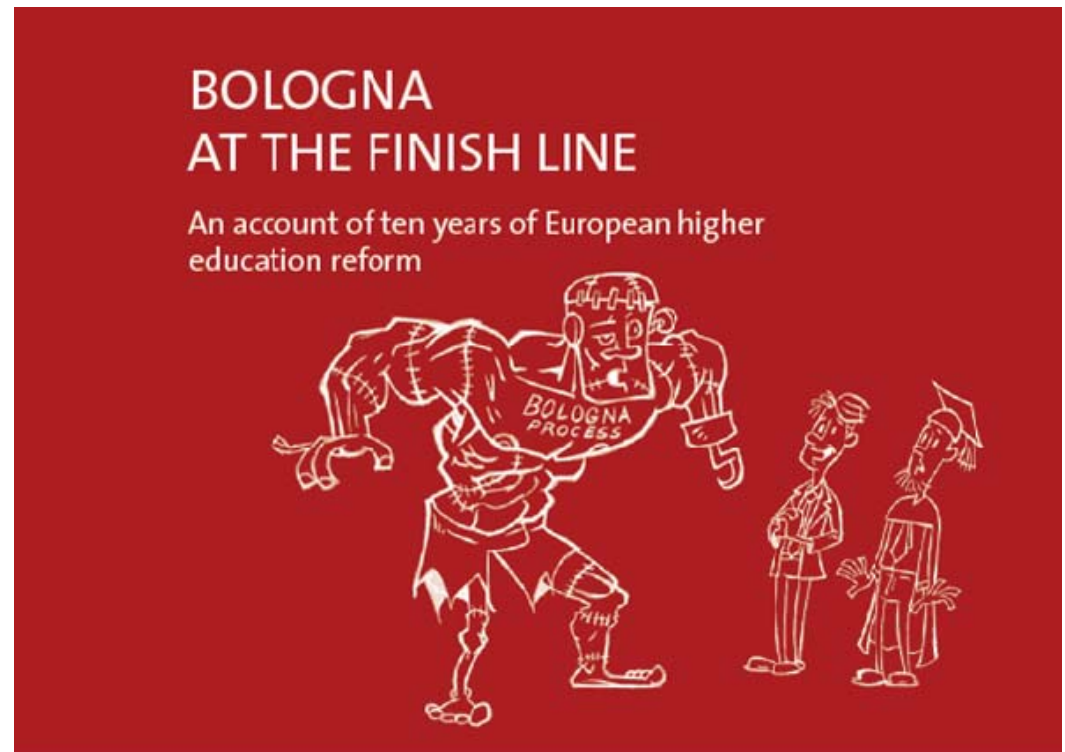


Ligia Deca, ESU Chairperson

Budapest and Vienna Ministerial conference, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2010



# BWSE 09



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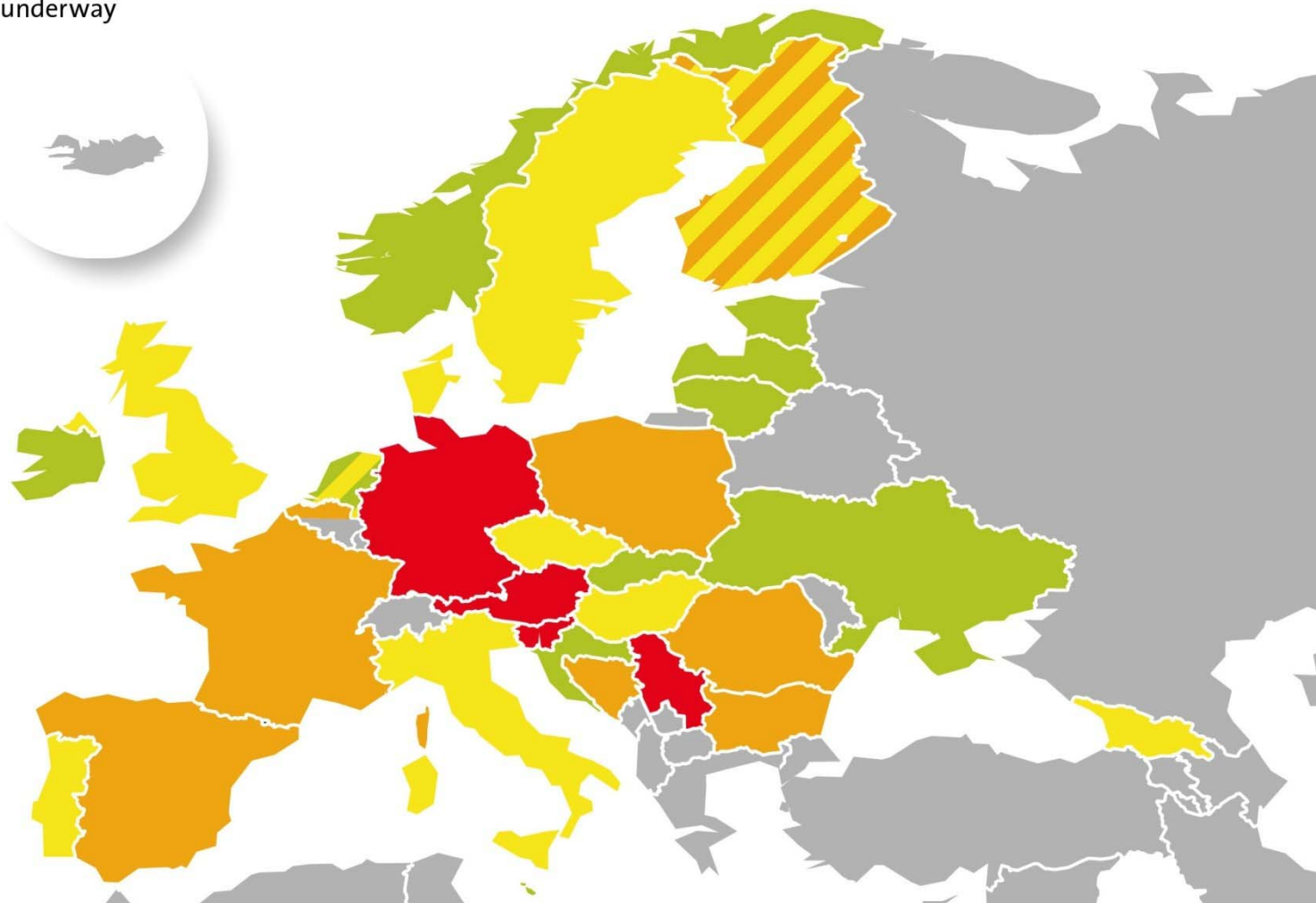


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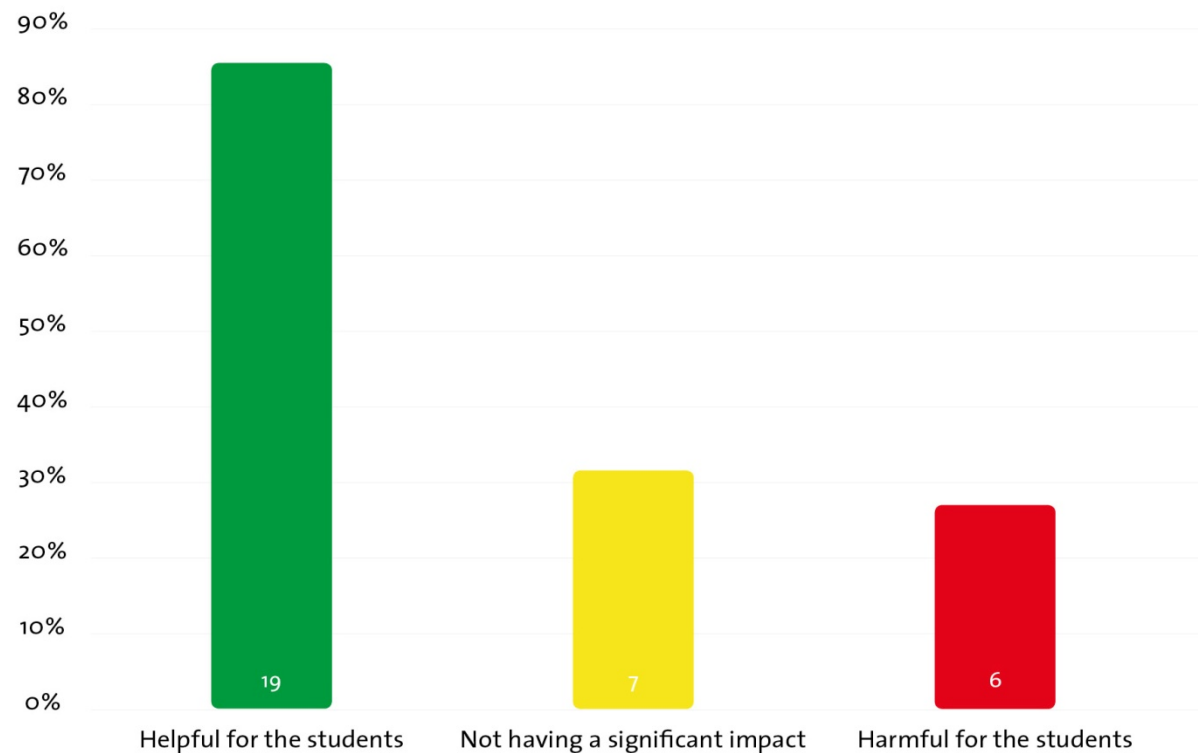
*fig. 25—Reform of degree structures in Europe*

- 3 cycles in place and fully operational
- 3 cycles in place with outstanding issues
- 1st and 2nd cycles in place and 3rd cycle yet to be reformed
- 1st and 2nd cycle reform still underway



# Perception of student unions on degree reform

fig. 26—Perception of the national unions about the degree structures reform



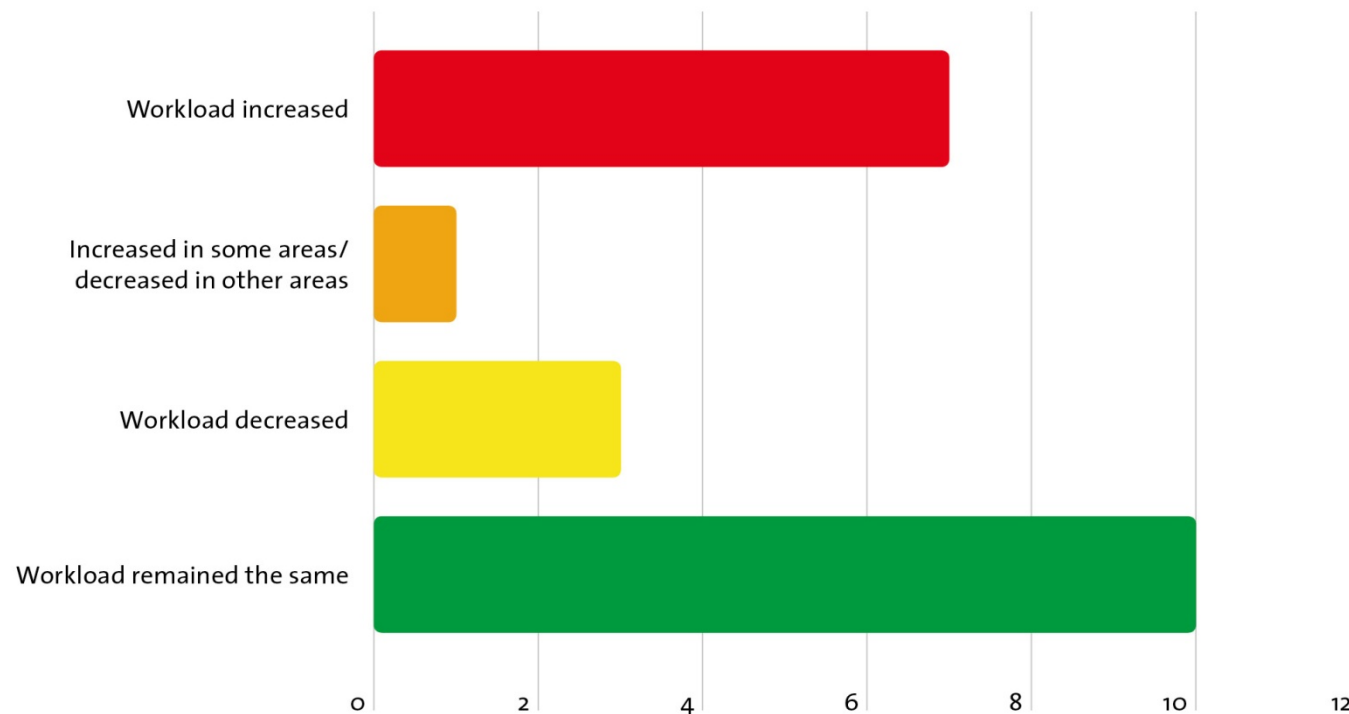
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# Changes of student workload after ECTS implementation

*fig. 28—Changes to student workload after the implementation of ECTS*



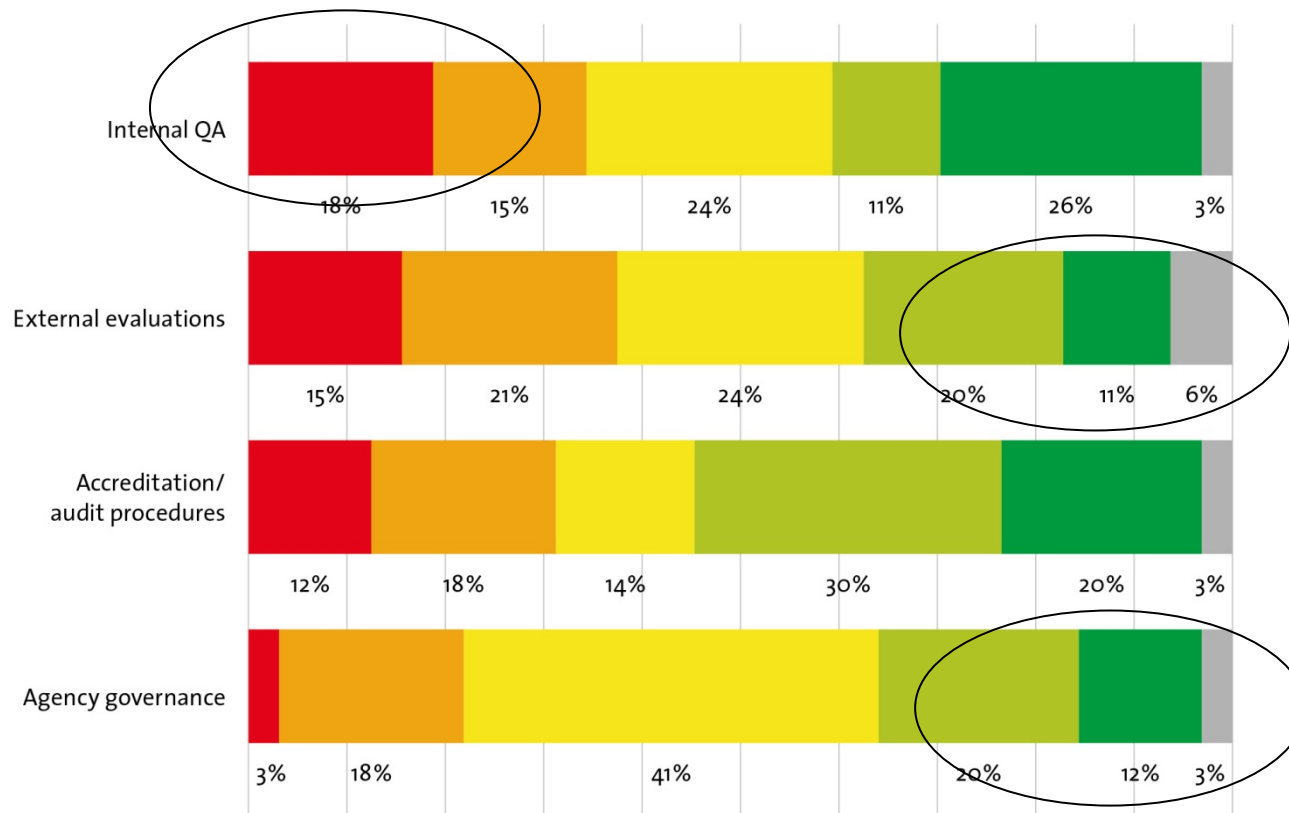
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# Student participation in QA processes

fig. 12—Student participation in quality assurance processes

- no participation
- very little participation
- some participation, but far from being enough
- participation high, but still lacking in some places
- equal partners
- No answers

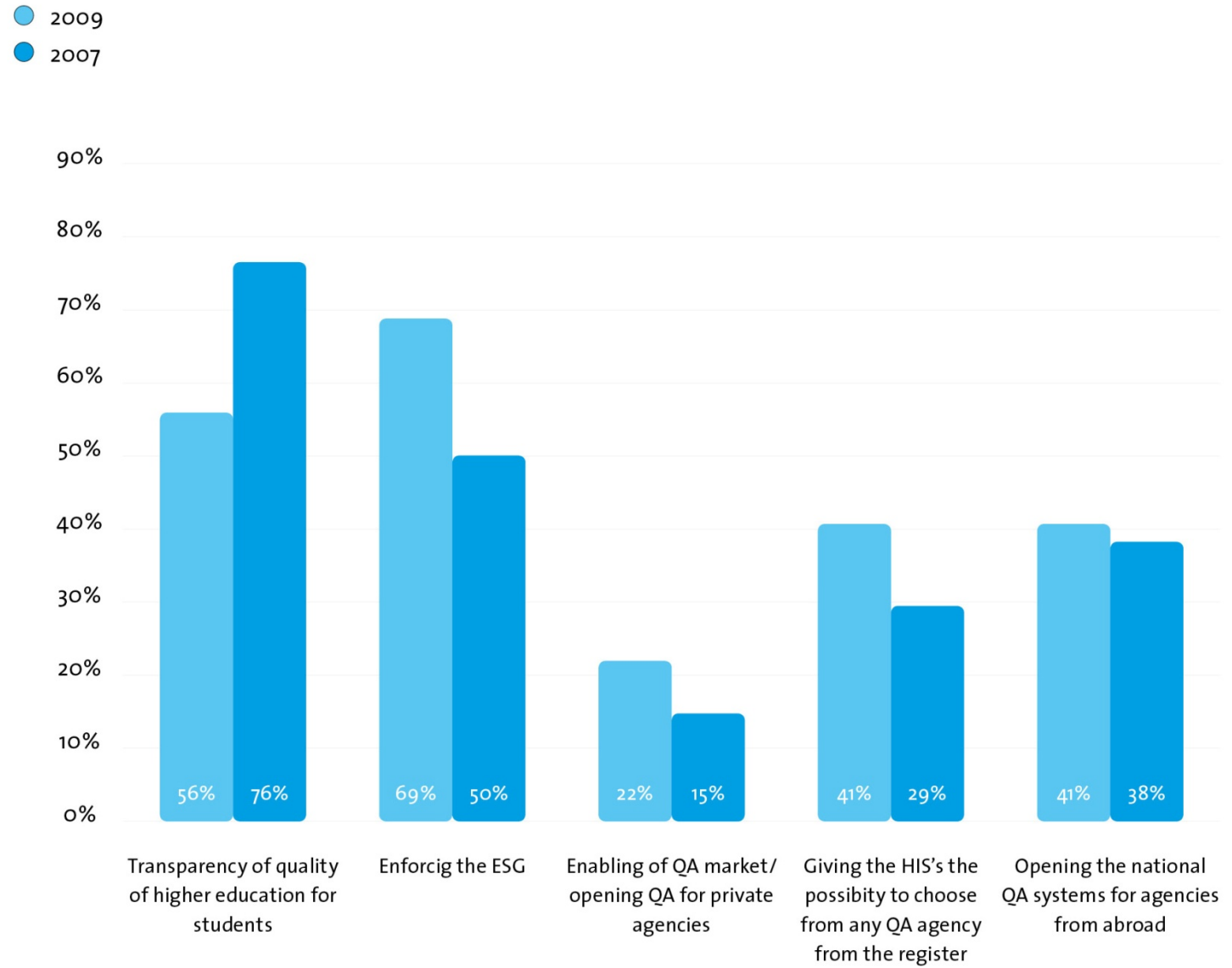


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# EQAR expected impact

fig. 16—Expected impact of the register



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# Thank you!

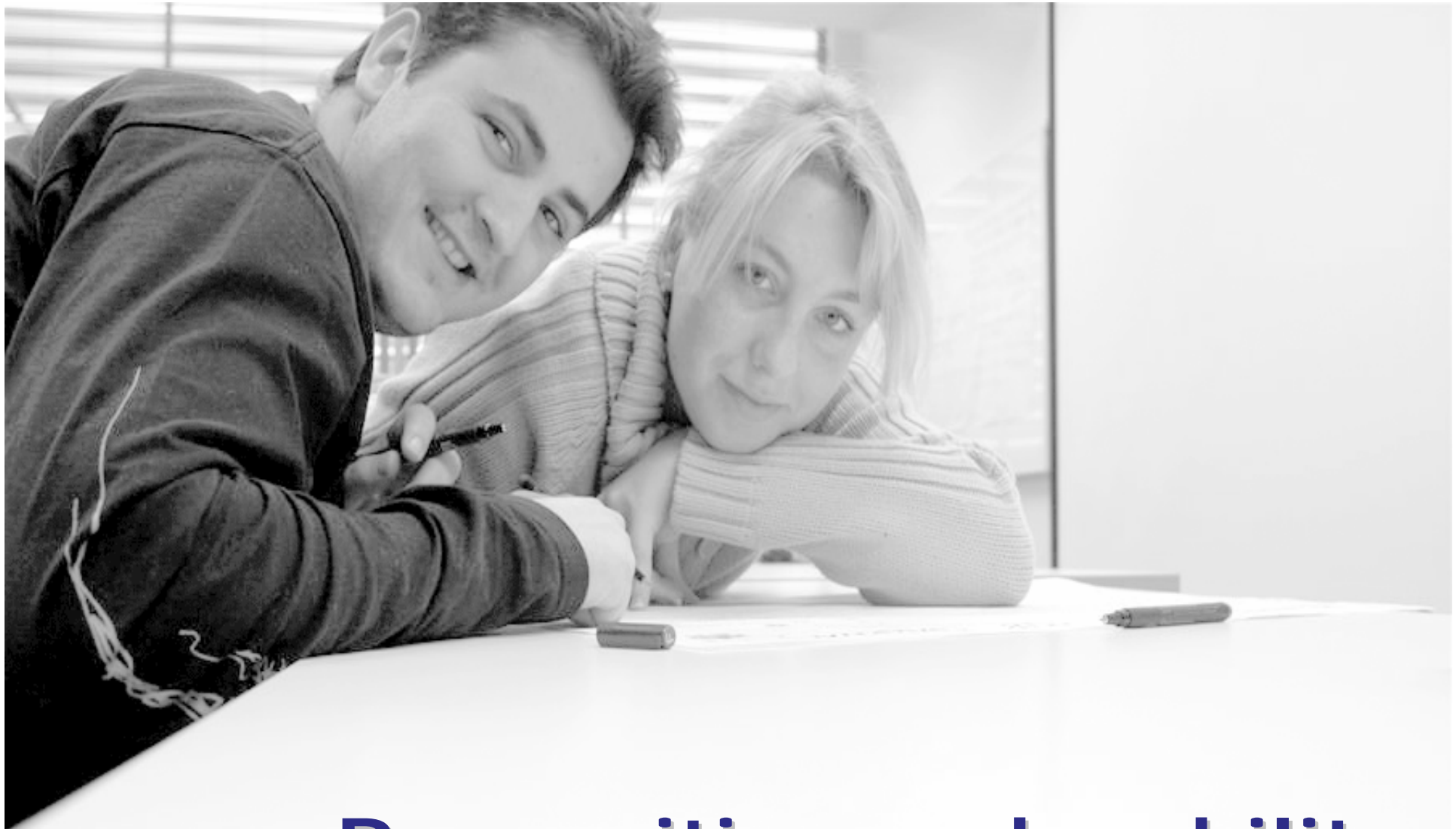


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# Recognition and mobility



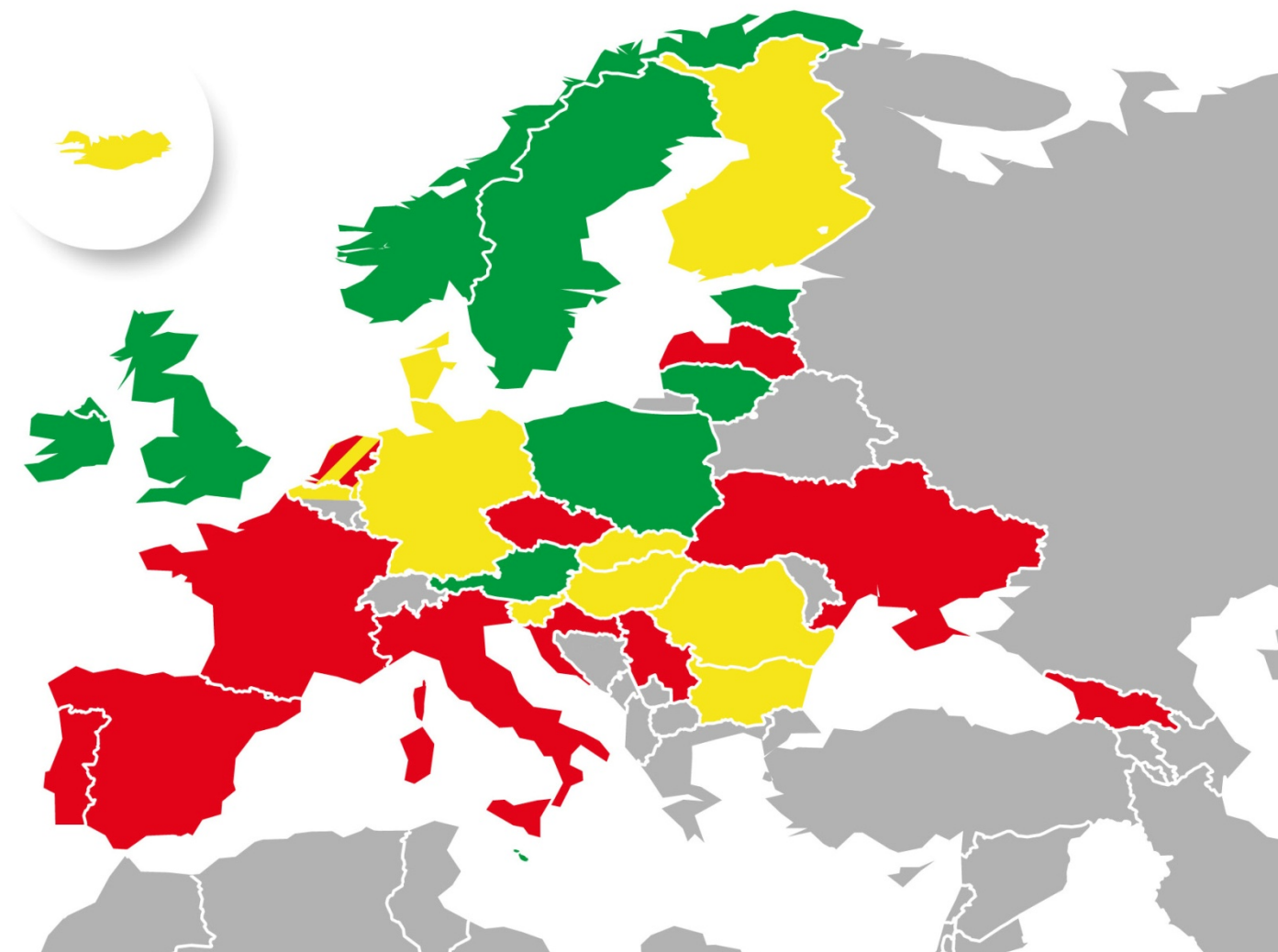
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# Student involvement in the NQF design

fig. 31—Involvement of student unions in the work with a national QF for HE

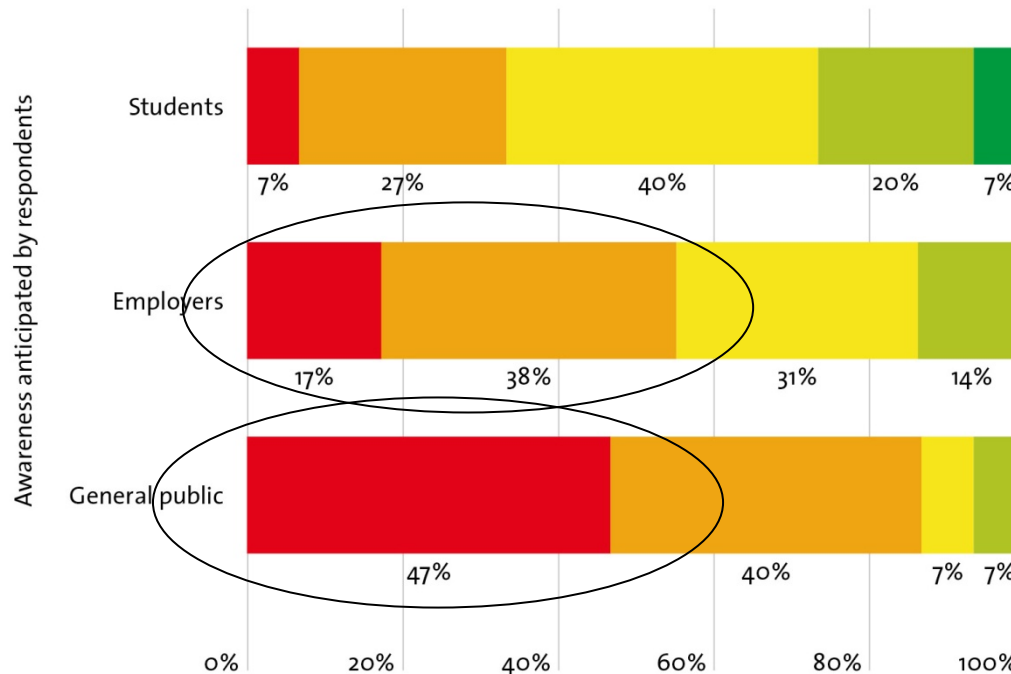
- Students fully consulted
- Only some consultation of students
- Students not consulted at all/not applicable



# Awareness regarding Diploma Supplement

fig. 34—Awareness about the Diploma Supplement as anticipated by NUSes

- No awareness
- Little awareness
- Some awareness
- Some awareness and increasing
- Fully aware



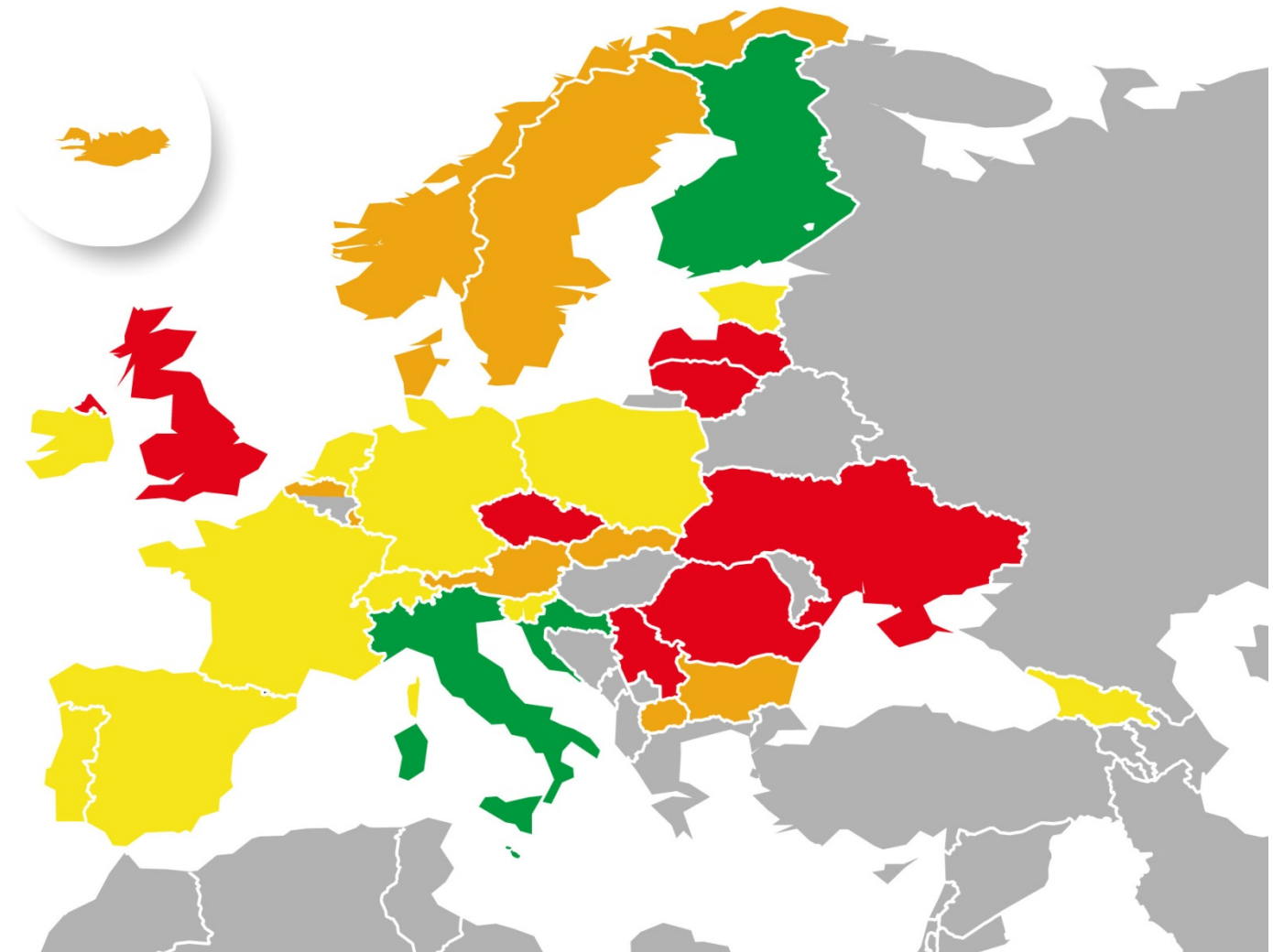
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# Portability of grants and loans overview

*fig. 17—Portability of grants and loans*

- grants and loans are fully portable
- portability of grants and loans is possible with minor obstacles
- portability of grants and loans is possible with major obstacles
- portability of grants and loans is not possible



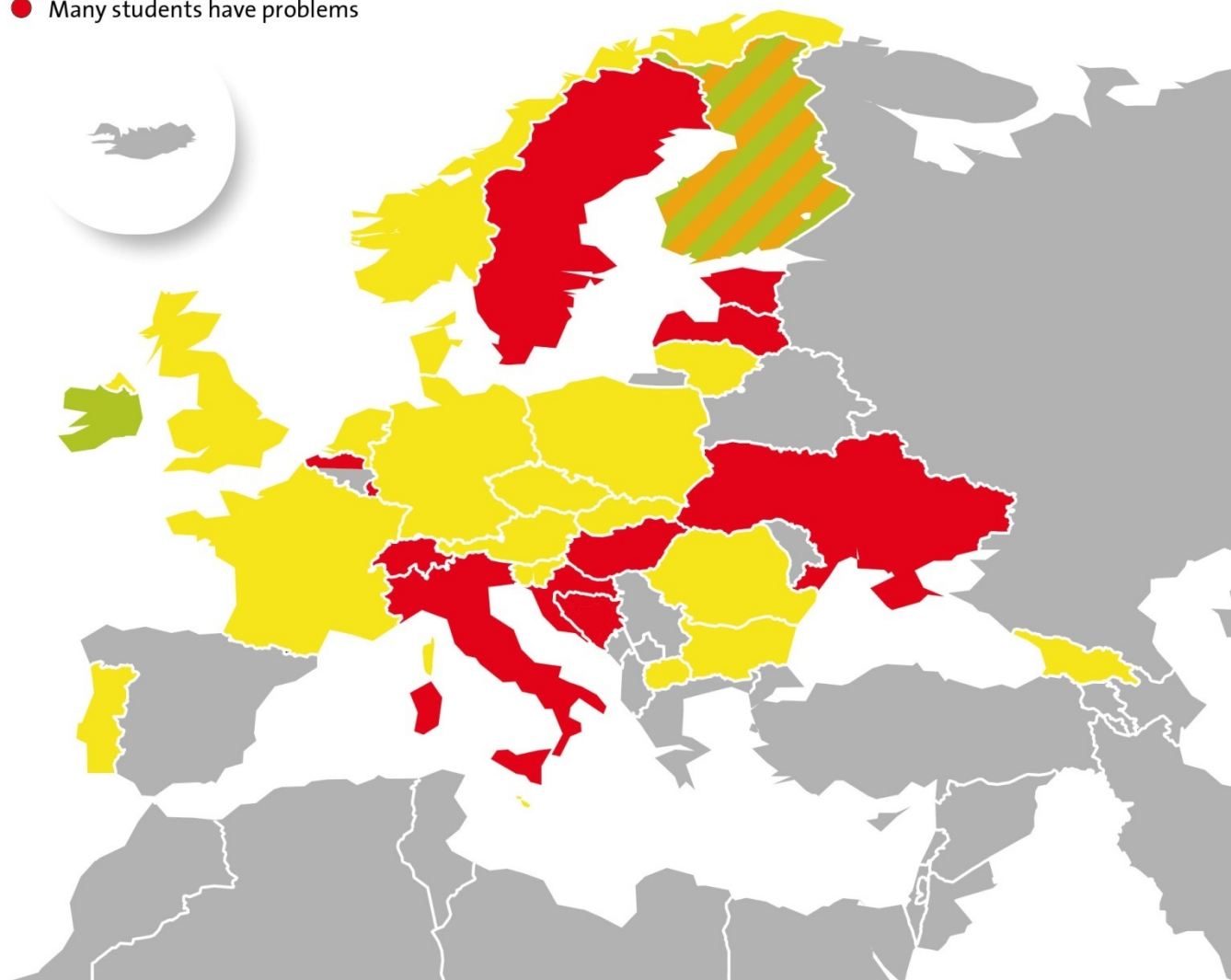


# Credit recognition overview

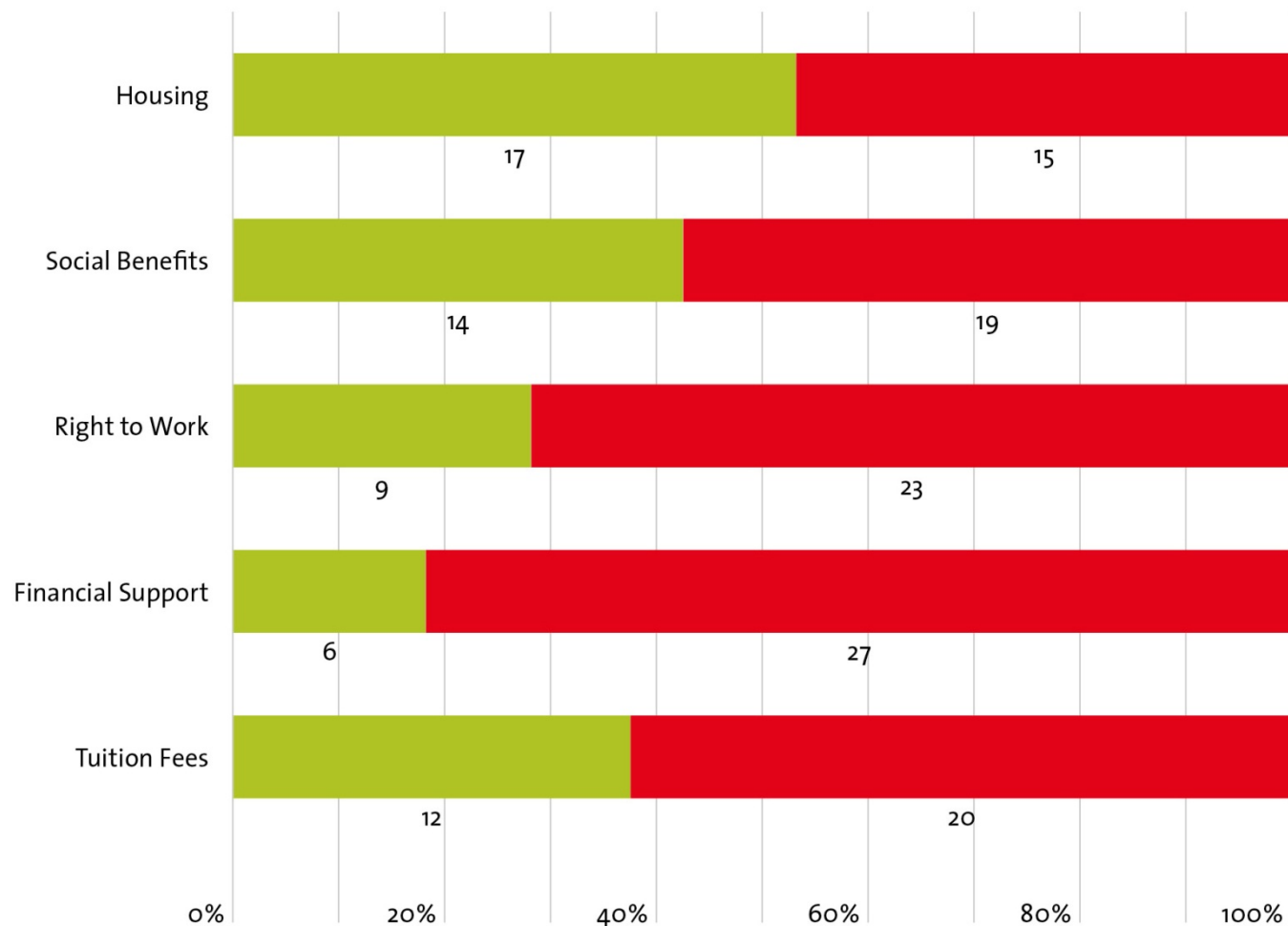


*fig. 21—Situation of national students returning from a period of study abroad encountering problems with the recognition of their credits*

- None or almost none have problems
- Some students have problems
- Depends on where they were studying
- Many students have problems



# EU/ non-EU mobile student treatment



*fig. 58—Treatment of non-European/  
non-EU students in home higher  
education institutions*

- same
- different



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# Thank you!

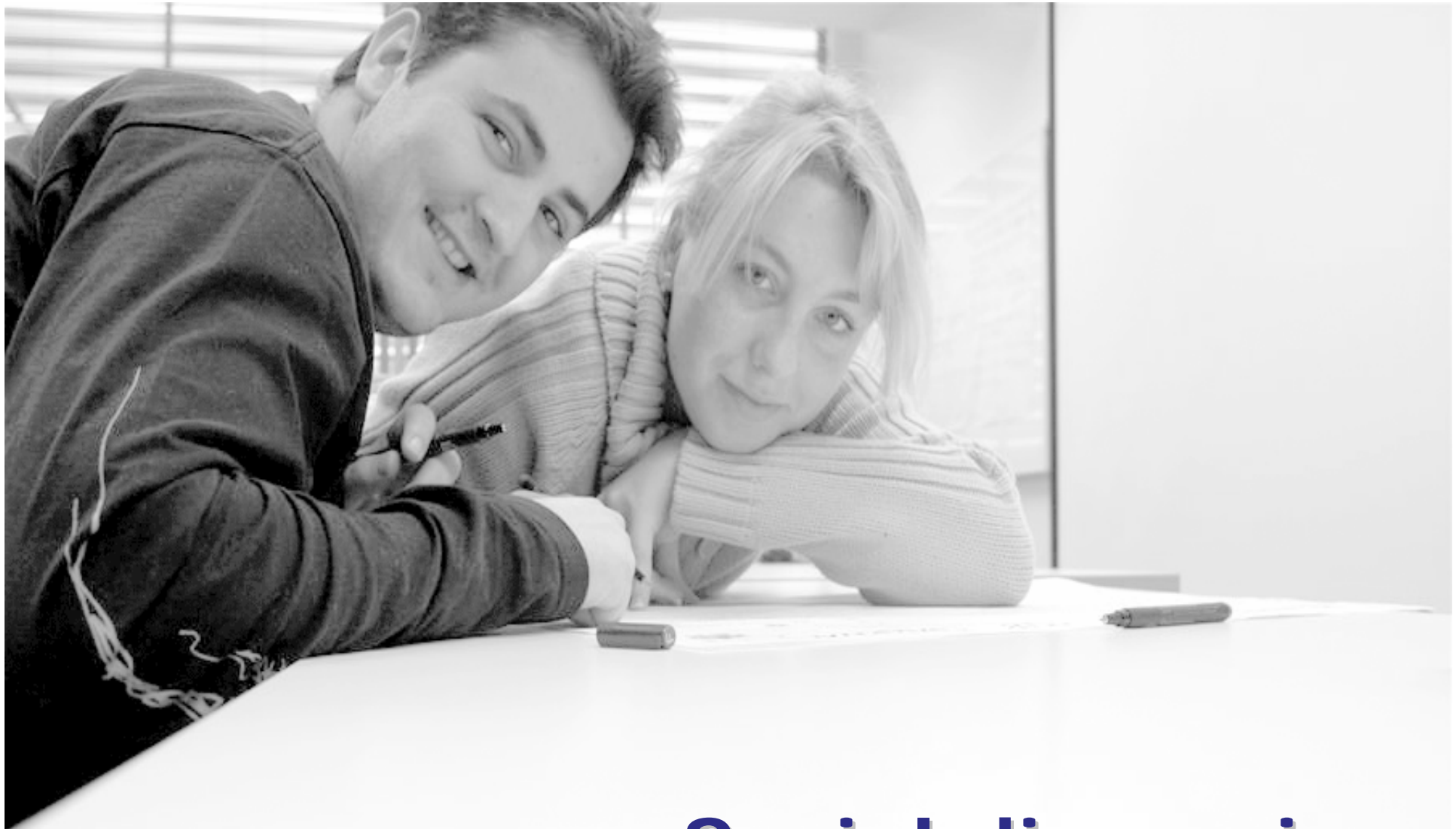


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# Social dimension



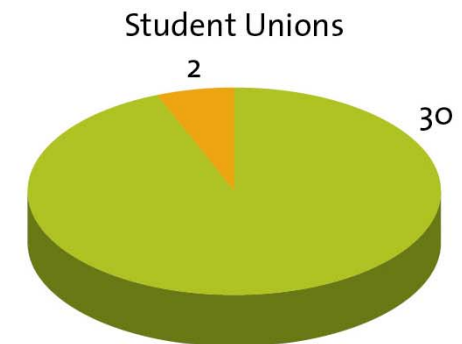
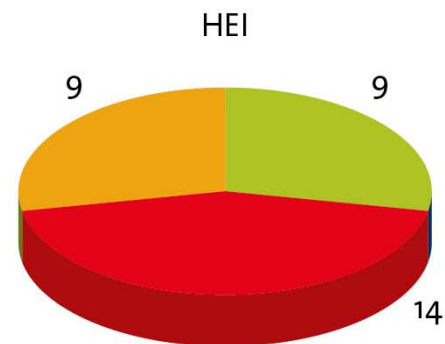
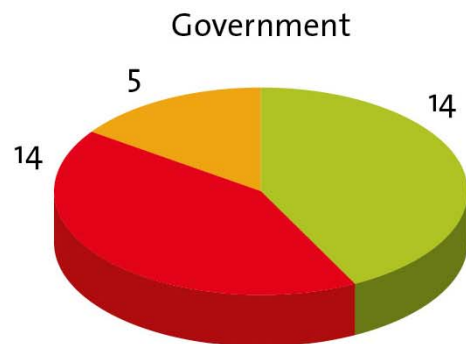
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# Social dimension – a Bologna priority?

*fig. 1—Is the social dimension a priority, according to the student unions, for the government, the higher education institutions and the student union?*

- Yes
- No
- Some degree



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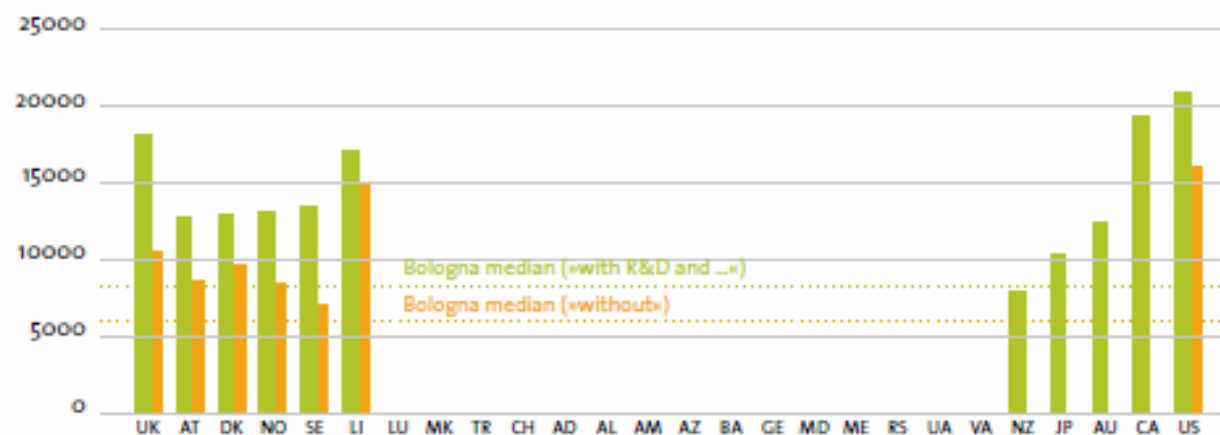
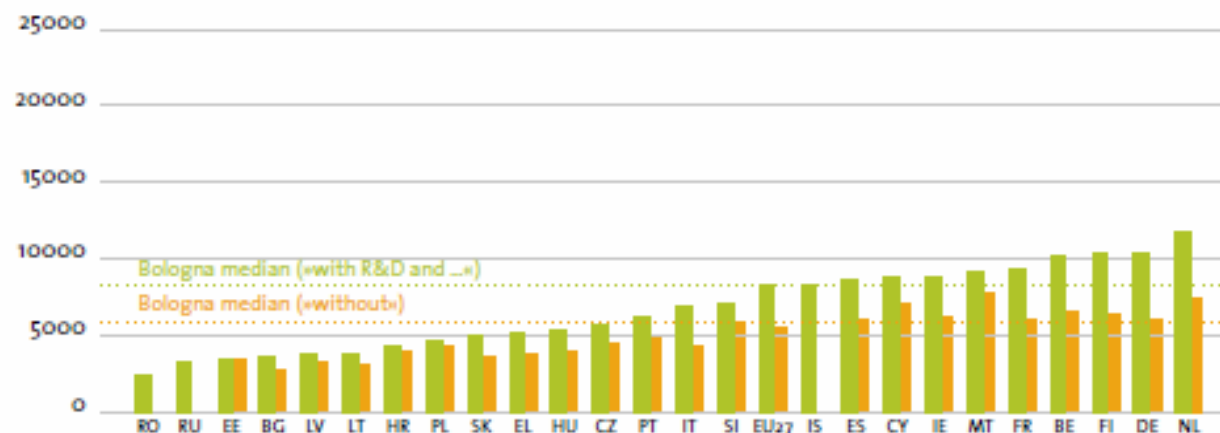
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# The reality check...

fig. 16—Annual total expenditure on tertiary education institutions per full-time equivalent student (in EUR PPS) including and excluding expenditure on research and ancillary services

EUROSTAT 2009:79, Acknowledgement to Eurostat and eurostudento, for granting permission to use its graphs on this chapter.

- without (core expenditure)
- with R&D and ancillary services



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# Thank you!



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