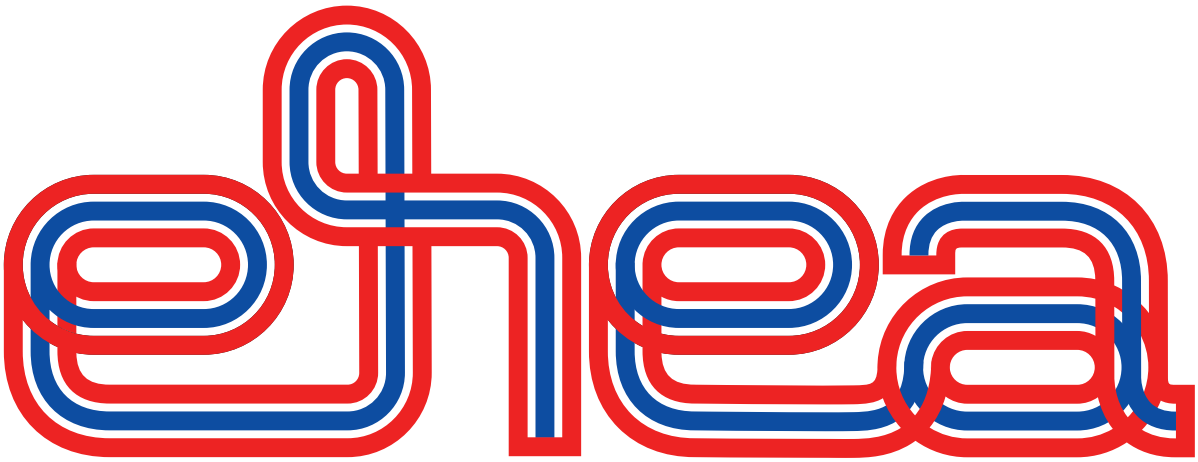
European Commission

The European Higher Education Area in 2024

Bologna Process Implementation Report



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European Education and Culture Executive Agency

Unit A6 – Platforms, Studies and Analysis
Boulevard Simon Bolivar 34 (Unit A6)
B-1049 Brussels

E-mail: eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu

Website: http://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu

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CHAPTER 5:
LEARNING AND TEACHING

The 2020 Rome Communiqué

The 2020 Rome Communiqué, adopted by ministers of higher education of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the Rome Ministerial Conference in November 2020 ([1]), puts emphasis on innovative learning and teaching practices. In this communiqué, ministers committed to support higher education institutions in further implementing student-centred learning and teaching by adopting the Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA ([2]) prepared by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Advisory Group on Learning and Teaching.

The recommendations build on the 2018 Paris Communiqué, in which ministers announced that the time has come 'to add cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of the EHEA' ([3]). In this context, they committed to 'developing new and inclusive approaches for continuous enhancement of learning and teaching across the EHEA' […] 'in full respect of academic freedom and institutional autonomy' ([4]).

The recommendations adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué promote increased support for all learners, and for teaching and non-teaching higher education staff. They are structured around three interconnected themes, namely 1) the need for student-centred learning, 2) the fostering of continuous enhancement of teaching, and 3) the strengthening of higher education institutions' and systems' capacity to enhance learning and teaching. The recommendations also underline the crucial importance of reinforcing the Bologna tools and the other Bologna key commitments.

The BFUG has been asked to support the implementation of the recommendations and to report on the results in the framework of this report.

Chapter outline

This chapter follows closely the content and organisation of the BFUG questionnaire, which was developed in collaboration with the BFUG Advisory Group on Learning and Teaching. The questionnaire considered both the recommendations adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué and the type of information accessible to national higher education administrations.

The chapter starts by exploring system-level strategies and other policy measures to support learning and teaching in higher education. In its initial sections, the chapter also examines the extent to which policy developments in this area are subject to dialogue with different stakeholders, and the role of quality assurance agencies in relation to learning and teaching in higher education.

The chapter then moves to student-centred learning. In this context, it investigates how top-level (national) steering documents address and understand this concept, to what extent learning outcomes are used in higher education, and whether there are any legal requirements or restrictions potentially limiting the implementation of flexible student-centred learning.

([1]) Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([2]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([3]) Paris Communiqué, 25 May 2018, p. 3.
([4]) Ibid.

The final part investigates policy measures to enhance high-quality teaching, by exploring training requirements and opportunities for higher education teachers, students' views on their teachers, as well as the role of teaching in the recruitment and promotion of academics.

The chapter is mainly based on data collected within the BFUG data collection. This main data source has been complemented by two additional sources, namely the Trends 2024 survey of the European University Association (EUA) and the Eurostudent 8 survey ([5]).

Information presented in this chapter complements and develops data provided in some other chapters, in particular Chapters 2 and 4. Therefore, when relevant, the chapter guides the reader to data in other parts of this report.

5.1. Top-level strategies and other policy measures

The recommendations adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué call for 'including the enhancement of learning and teaching in national higher education strategies and approaches' ([6]). Considering this objective, this section starts by mapping top-level (national) strategies that include major references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. The section than explores policy levers other than top-level strategies that follow the same objective.

5.1.1. Top-level strategies promoting learning and teaching in higher education

Figure 5.1 shows that in slightly more than half of the higher education systems surveyed (27 out of 47 for which data are available) there is an ongoing top-level strategy that includes major references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. The figure and the related table ([7]) also demonstrate that the reported strategies differ in terms of their thematic focus and coverage. Three types of strategies can be distinguished in this regard.

First, there are **strategies that focus on higher education** (Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, France, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malta ([8]), Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Türkiye and Ukraine). For example, following its higher education strategy, Bulgaria aims to update existing and create new higher education curricula, to introduce flexible forms and methods of learning and teaching, and to improve, more generally, the organisation and effectiveness of higher education studies. In Czechia, the higher education strategy promotes inclusive and interactive teaching at universities with a focus on competence building. In Hungary, the focus is on the implementation of learning outcomes, flexible programmes, and practice-oriented learning and teaching. The higher education strategy in Ukraine, in turn, refers to the enhancement of the student-centred learning, especially by promoting learning technologies and different modes of programme delivery.

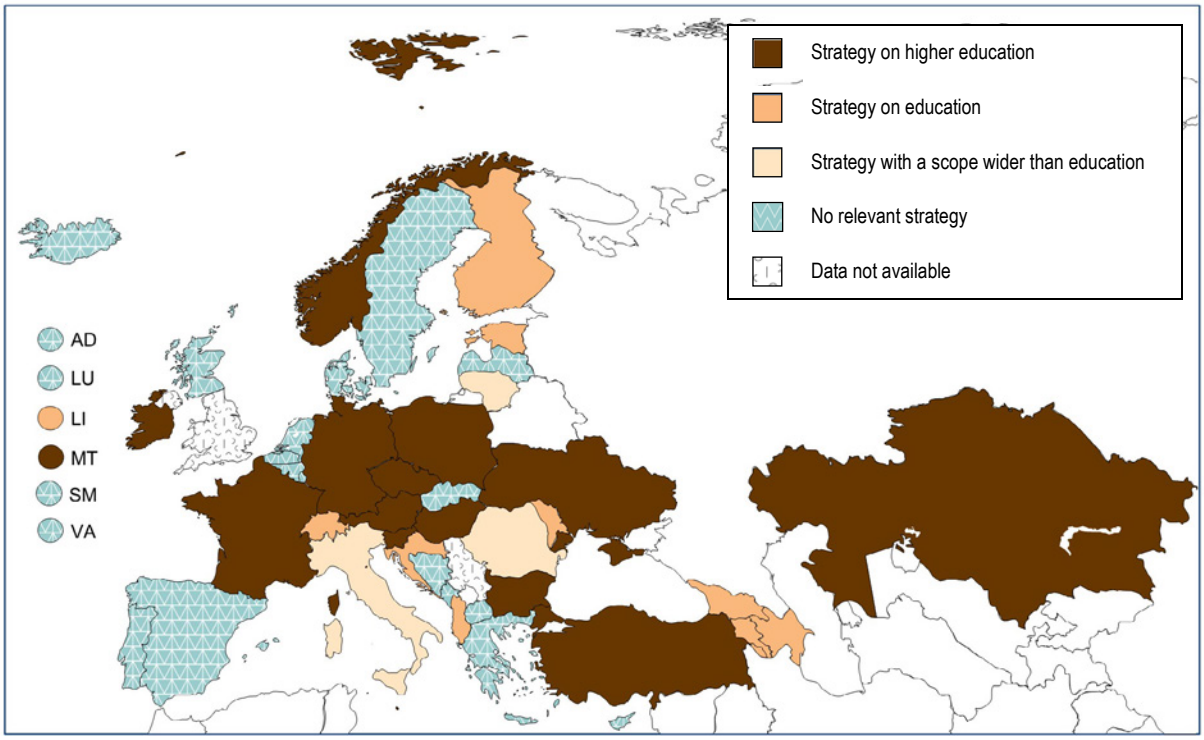
Second, there are **strategies covering all sectors of education, including higher education** (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Moldova and Switzerland). Although higher education is only one area treated in these strategies, there are explicit references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in this sector. For example, the education strategy reported by Albania includes, among its different objectives, an objective to improve teaching and research competences of academic staff by creating centres at universities for training in teaching and research. The education strategy in Croatia promotes the improvement of digital maturity of higher education institutions, including the provision of hybrid and online teaching and learning.

Third, there are **strategies that extend beyond education** but still include explicit references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education (Italy, Lithuania and Romania). More

([5]) For details regarding different data sources, see the Glossary and methodological notes section.
([6]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020, p. 4.
([7]) Table 5.1 in Annex lists all the reported strategies.
([8]) The strategy reported by Malta covers two education sectors: further and higher education (see Table 5.1 in Annex).

specifically, Lithuania formulates in its National Progress Plan an objective to renew and financially support the implementation of guidelines to improve competences of academics, in particular their foreign language skills and digital competences. In Italy, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan calls for the innovation in the higher education sector and, in this context, it refers to broadening of scientific, technological and linguistic skills of higher education students and teachers. The same plan in Romania promotes the digitalization of higher education, including the development of digital competences of both students and teachers.

Figure 5.1: Top-level strategies with major references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education (by the type of strategy), 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

Notes:

Respondents from the systems with several relevant strategies were asked to report the most important (ongoing) strategy in relation to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education.

Table 5.1 in Annex lists the reported strategies.

Regardless of the type of strategy, most countries with a relevant ongoing strategy reported that the strategy includes an implementation plan as well as measurable targets. Moreover, the implementation of most strategies has been supported by dedicated funding, which commonly combines national and international resources, such as European Union funding.

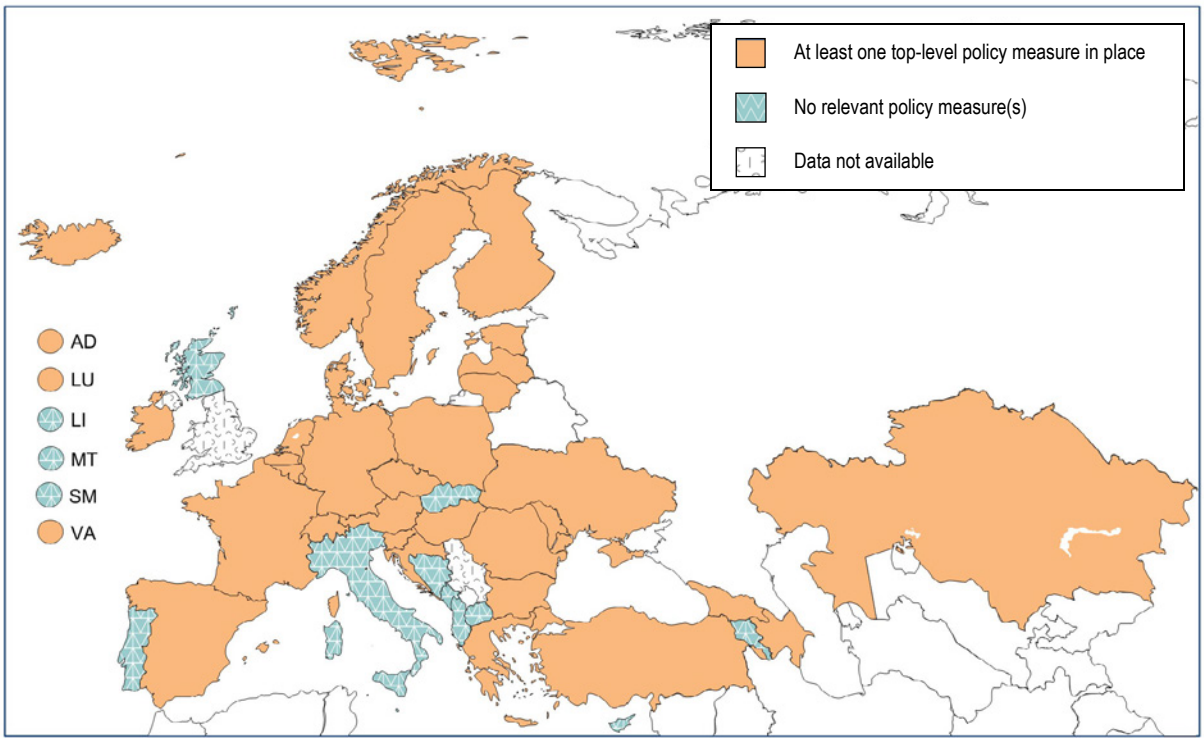
A rather striking feature of Figure 5.1. is a relatively high number of countries with no ongoing strategy including major references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. However, this finding would benefit from further research, in particular research looking at how national data providers understand and interpret their existing top-level strategies in relation to the concept of enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. Indeed, a wider or narrower understanding and interpretation of this concept could lead to cross-country differences in data provided and could (at least partly) explain the lack of relevant strategies ([9]). Moreover, some strategies could have been under preparation during the academic year 2022/2023, which is not captured by data displayed in Figure 5.1.

([9]) In this context, it is noteworthy to mention findings of the Trends 2018 survey (Gaebel et al., 2018). Within this survey, 31% of responding higher education institutions indicated a dedicated national strategy for higher education learning and teaching and further 47% reported a national higher education strategy that includes learning and teaching among other matters (ibid., p. 23). However, responses from different higher education institutions within the same country often did not converge, which suggests that this question may be subject to different interpretations.

5.1.2. Policy levers other than strategies

Top-level strategies are not the only policy approach to manage and shape learning and teaching in higher education. Indeed, as displayed in Figure 5.2, in most higher education systems investigated (34 out of 47 for which data are available), national authorities promote the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education through other measures.

Figure 5.2: Top-level policy measures (other than top-level strategies) to support learning and teaching in higher education, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

The most widespread measure (other than top-level strategies) consists of **system-level (national) projects** to enhance learning and teaching in higher education.

Although the system-level (national) projects differ in terms of their scope, thematic focus and size, one recurring area on which they concentrate is the digitalization and digital transformation in higher education. For example, national authorities in France launched, in 2021, a call for expressions of interest 'Digital Demonstrators in Higher Education' (*Démonstrateurs numériques dans l'enseignement supérieur*) ([10]), which supported 17 institutional projects experimenting different dimensions of the digital transformation in higher education (total budget of EUR 100 million). These projects should now inspire further initiatives, with a view to generalise the digital transformation in higher education on a national scale. Finland, in turn, has been conducting the national programme 'Digivisio 2030' ([11]), which involves all Finnish higher education institutions and aims at building flexible and easily accessible learning opportunities, particularly by using digital facilities. In Switzerland, one national project ([12]) aims to strengthen digital skills in higher education teaching, by subsidising measures focusing on both students and teachers, and, more generally, on higher education institutions (CHF 30 million for the period 2019-2024). Lithuania has been conducting the project 'EdTech' ([13]), which aims at changes in the education

([10]) https://www.gouvernement.fr/enseignement-et-numerique
([11]) https://digivisio2030.fi/en/frontpage/
([12]) https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/themen/digitalisierung/digital-skills
([13]) https://www.edtechlithuania.com/

system (at all levels) through education technologies. In the field of higher education, the project aims to provide academics with knowledge and skills related to digital learning and teaching innovations.

The system-level (national) projects cover also other areas than digital transformation. For example, in Sweden, during 2021-2023, national authorities launched two initiatives (calls for expressions of interest): one aiming to boost higher education pedagogy (SEK 5 million in 2022; at least SEK 15 million in 2023) and one concentrating on quality of distance education ([14]). These initiatives allow higher education institutions to apply for funding to develop related projects. The Netherlands has been running the eight-year national programme 'Npuls' (2022-2030) ([15]), which covers different types of institutions (all vocational education and training institutions, research universities, and universities of applied sciences) and includes several objectives, among which are technological improvements (ICT infrastructure) and the creation of a centre for learning and teaching in every institution.

It is noteworthy that the system-level (national) projects often use international support, especially international financial assistance. For example, Moldova has conducted the World Bank Project 'Moldova Higher Education Project' ([16]) that enables national authorities to finance various initiatives enhancing teaching and learning practices in higher education. In Ukraine, national authorities, in cooperation with the British Council and other organisations, have been implementing the 'Ukraine Higher Education Teaching Excellence Programme' ([17]), which aims to foster teaching and learning excellence in the sector. In Latvia, academic staff development and training activities are addressed under the EU structural funds programme 'Growth and employment', the sub-programme 'Strengthening academic staff of higher education institutions in areas of strategic specialisation' ([18]).

Less common compared to system-level (national) projects are **recent regulatory changes** aiming to enhance learning and teaching in higher education. Greece, for instance, adopted in 2022 a legal framework ([19]) stipulating that every Greek higher education institution should establish a learning and teaching support centre. Ireland adopted in 2022 a new higher education act ([20]) reforming the higher education sector and impacting the governance as well as learning and teaching (see also Section 5.1.3). A slightly longer time ago, in 2018, France adopted a legal framework ([21]) reinforcing learning support for undergraduate students through various means (new curricula, modularisation, personalised support for each student, etc.), with the aim to increase study completion rates.

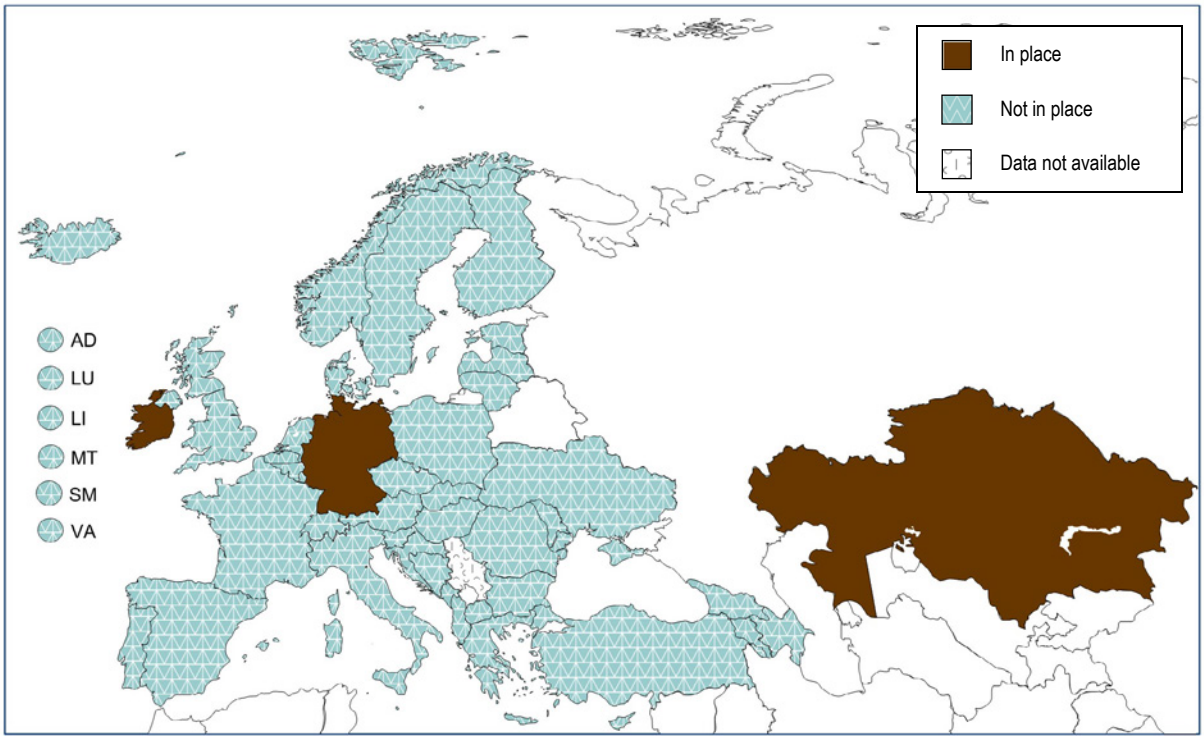
Outside the main types of measures identified above, there are **other policy measures** across the EHEA that may positively impact learning and teaching in higher education. The most noteworthy is the establishment of top-level (national) bodies – in Germany, Ireland and Kazakhstan – that focus on the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education (see Section 5.1.3). Further examples of measures include national teaching awards (Austria and Denmark), a dedicated national fund to increase the collaboration between higher education institutions, with a focus on enhancing the quality of education and research (Iceland), and changes in national quality assurance frameworks aiming to improve the evaluation of learning and teaching in higher education (Georgia).

([14]) https://hpu.uhr.se/utvecklingsprojekt/
([15]) https://npuls.nl/en/
([16]) https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/loans-credits/2020/03/05/moldova-higher-education-project
([17]) https://www.britishcouncil.org.ua/en/programmes/education/teaching-excellence-programme
([18]) Implementing regulations of 9 January 2018 for the first, second and third project applications selection round of specific objective 8.2.2 'To strengthen academic staff of higher education institutions in the areas of strategic specialisation' of the Operational Programme 'Growth and employment'.
([19]) Law 4957/2022, Article 129.
([20]) Higher Education Authority Act 2022.
([21]) Law n° 2018-166 of 8 March 2018 relating to the orientation and success of students.

5.1.3. Top-level bodies supporting learning and teaching in higher education

Building on the analysis presented in the previous section, Figure 5.3 emphasises one specific policy measure: the presence of top-level (national) bodies dedicated to supporting learning and teaching in higher education institutions. Currently, such dedicated bodies exist only in 3 higher education system (out of 48 for which data are available): Germany, Ireland and Kazakhstan.

Figure 5.3: Top-level bodies dedicated to supporting learning and teaching in higher education institutions, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

More specifically, in Germany, the federal government and the states (Länder) established, in 2020, the Foundation for Innovation in Higher Education (*Stiftung Innovation in der Hochschullehre*) ([22]), which started operating in 2021 under the auspices of a non-profit organisation. The objective of the foundation is to promote innovation in academic study and teaching, provide stakeholders with networking opportunities, and support the transfer of knowledge. Based on this objective, the foundation provides funding for projects conducted in higher education institutions. All funding (EUR 150 million per year) is provided by the federal and state governments.

Ireland re-established, in 2022, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (National Forum) ([23]). This body now operates under the auspices of the Higher Education Authority, which is a statutory body that leads strategic developments in the Irish higher education system. The National Forum is responsible for advising on the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education, and it provides and administers funding for projects in this area. One example is the project (funding allocation) 'Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education' ([24]) with financing initiatives focusing on education for sustainable development, digital transformation and academic integrity (EUR 6.4 million during 2022-2023).

([22]) https://stiftung-hochschullehre.de/
([23]) https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/; the re-establishment of this body follows the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 that is referred to in Section 5.1.2.
([24]) https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/funding/#!/Funding-Calls

Kazakhstan established, in 2018, a national council dedicated to learning and teaching in higher education: the Republican Education and Methodology Council for Higher and Postgraduate Education ([25]). This body cooperates with consultative and advisory units (so called 'academic methodological associations') established in higher education institutions ([26]).

Even if top-level (national) bodies dedicated to supporting learning and teaching in higher education institutions are scarce, other types of bodies exist across Europe that contribute to this cause. These can be clustered into several categories.

First, the highest decision-making body responsible for higher education, which is generally the ministry of education, may be directly involved in activities that support innovative practices in higher education learning and teaching (e.g. through the coordination of top-level strategies or other policy measures). Moreover, national quality assurance agencies can also intervene in this area since their activities aim at guaranteeing that some minimum requirements of quality in learning and teaching are met, and that the quality of learning and teaching is continuously improved.

Second, some countries have in place national bodies – other than ministries of education and/or quality assurance agencies – with a range of roles, including roles relating to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. For example, in Sweden, the Swedish Council for Higher Education ([27]) conducts several activities, among which is the coordination of two recent national initiatives that aimed at boosting higher education pedagogy and distance education (see Section 5.1.2 for details). In other words, while the Swedish Council for Higher Education is not specifically and explicitly dedicated to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education, it manages projects comparable to those that are managed by the dedicated agencies operating in Germany and Ireland. Similar bodies with a wider role exist in several other EHEA countries.

Third, there are bodies that do not benefit from direct national subsidies, but still conduct activities supporting innovations in learning and teaching in the higher education sector. One key example is the organisation Advance HE ([28]), which is a member-led British charity (membership organisation) that was created in 2018 by merging some previously existing organisations. Advance HE covers various areas related to higher education, including teaching and learning, governance, leadership development and equality, diversity and inclusion. The organisation uses different channels to deliver its support, including professional development programmes, events, fellowships, awards and consultancy services.

In addition to the above-mentioned bodies, higher education institutions themselves may provide relevant services through dedicated learning and teaching centres ([29]). As shown is Section 5.1.2, these centres are sometimes established within national policy projects or measures. For example, one objective of the ongoing national project 'Npuls' in the Netherlands is to create a centre for teaching and learning in every institution (see Section 5.1.2 for details).

Overall, the BFUG data collection points to a scarcity of publicly funded bodies specifically dedicated to supporting learning and teaching in higher education institutions. At the same time, the data collection shows that other types of bodies and policy approaches can be used to enhance learning and teaching innovations in the higher education sector.

([25]) Based on the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 12 October 2018 no. 562.
([26]) See, for example: https://www.kaznu.kz/en/25736/page/
([27]) https://www.uhr.se/en/start/
([28]) https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/
([29]) The report presenting findings of the EUA Trends 2018 survey (Gaebel et al., 2018, p. 18) indicates that 65% of higher education institutions have a dedicated learning and teaching centre or unit for the entire institution.

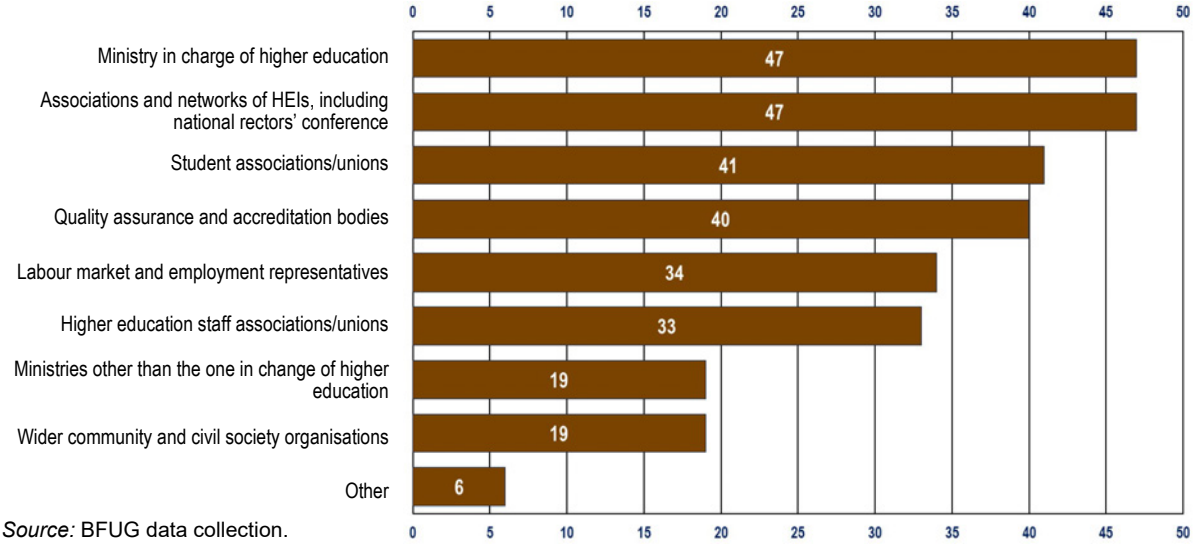
5.2. Stakeholders' involvement

The recommendations on learning and teaching adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué not only call for the inclusion of the enhancement of learning and teaching in national higher education strategies and approaches but also specify that '[t]he design and implementation of such strategies and approaches should serve as a basis for a structured and continuous dialogue with higher education institutions and other stakeholders in the learning and teaching community' ([30]). Building on this objective, this section starts by exploring the involvement of different stakeholders in policymaking related to learning and teaching in higher education. The section then looks at the role of quality assurance agencies in this area.

5.2.1. Stakeholders involved in policy developments

The development of national higher education learning and teaching policies may involve a range of stakeholders. Figure 5.4 displays some key stakeholders that may have an interest in influencing learning and teaching in the higher education sector. The figure indicates the number of higher education systems (out of 48 higher education systems for which data are available) that reported a common involvement of a specific stakeholder in the development of national higher education learning and teaching policy.

Figure 5.4: Stakeholders commonly involved in the development of national higher education learning and teaching policy (number of systems reporting different stakeholders), 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

Note:

The figure is based on data supplied by 48 higher education systems.

As the figure shows, the development of national learning and teaching policies most commonly involves the national ministry responsible for higher education (47 systems), and associations and networks of higher education institutions (47 systems). Indeed, these stakeholders have been reported by virtually all the higher education systems investigated.

Alongside the above stakeholders, student associations and unions are also commonly involved in the development of national learning and teaching policies (41 systems), as well as national quality assurance and accreditation bodies (40 systems). Further quite frequently represented parties are labour market and employment organisations (34 systems) and higher education staff associations and unions (33 systems). All these stakeholders have been reported by more than half of the higher education systems investigated.

([30]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020, p. 4.

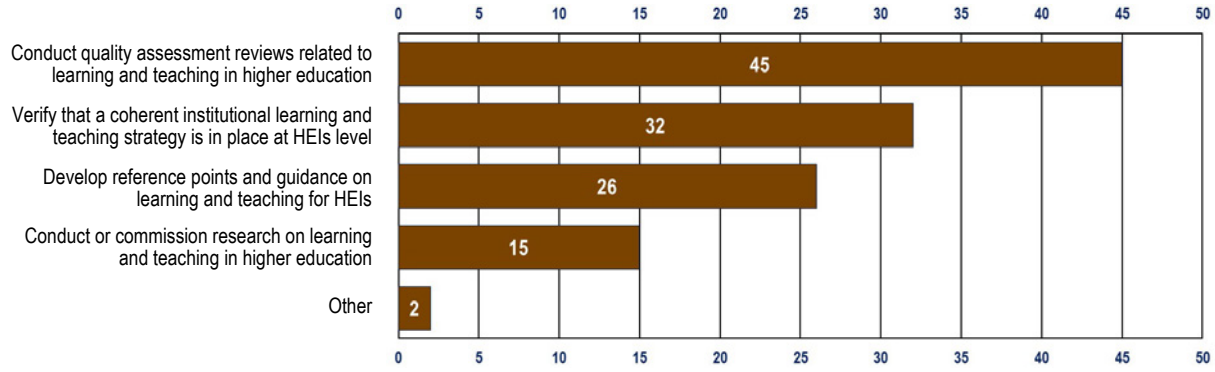
Less commonly involved stakeholders include ministries responsible for areas other than higher education (19 systems), and the wider community and civil society organisations (19 systems).

In a limited number of higher education systems (6 systems), additional stakeholders come into play. For example, in Spain, alongside all the stakeholders listed in Figure 5.4, regional authorities are commonly involved in the development of national higher education learning and teaching policy. In Germany and Switzerland, which are both federal systems, other stakeholders include national coordinating bodies, namely the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Germany) and the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (Switzerland). The Flemish Community of Belgium involves in the development of higher education learning and teaching policy the Flemish Education Council (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*), which is a strategic advisory council on education and training that includes representatives from the entire educational landscape. Slovenia, in turn, involves the National Academy of Science and Art (*Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti*).

5.2.2. Role of quality assurance agencies

National quality assurance agencies play a crucial role in ensuring the quality, credibility, and continuous improvement of higher education within a country. Figure 5.4 has shown that they are commonly involved – as one of the stakeholders – in the development of higher education learning and teaching policies. Figure 5.5 provides further information on their role in relation to learning and teaching in higher education.

Figure 5.5: Role of quality assurance agencies in relation to learning and teaching in higher education (number of systems reporting different roles), 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

Note:

The figure is based on data supplied by 47 higher education systems.

As the figure demonstrates, the most common role of quality assurance agencies in relation to learning and teaching in higher education is to conduct quality assessment reviews (45 higher education systems out of 47 with data). These may involve various approaches, including site visits, data analysis and stakeholder feedback. In around two thirds of the systems surveyed (32 systems), quality assurance agencies verify, within their reviews, that higher education institutions have in place a coherent institutional learning and teaching strategy. In around half of the systems (26 systems), quality assurance agencies develop reference points and guidance on learning and teaching for higher education institutions. A slightly less common role for quality assurance agencies is to conduct or commission research on learning and teaching in higher education (15 systems).

In supporting the quality enhancement of learning and teaching, quality assurance agencies may also conduct other activities. For example, in Armenia, they commonly organise workshops for higher education institutions to exchange on practices related to learning and teaching.

5.3. Student-centred learning

Student-centred learning has been part of the Bologna Process for more than a decade. Already in 2009, ministers responsible for higher education incorporated this concept in their communiqué, highlighting that '[s]tudent-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles' ([31]). In this context, the ministers put forward 'the necessity for ongoing curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes' ([32]). The shift towards learning outcomes was specified as a means to achieve 'high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths' ([33]).

The ministers reiterated the topic of student-centred learning in their subsequent communiqués. Most recently, student-centred learning was put forward in the 2020 Rome Communiqué, in which the ministers highlighted that '[f]lexible and open learning paths, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of student-centred learning and are in increasing demand in our societies' ([34]). Moreover, the ministers have committed to support higher education institutions in further implementing student-centred learning and teaching by adopting the Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA ([35]).

This section examines student-centred learning in three parts. First, it investigates whether and how top-level (national) steering documents related to higher education define this concept and which elements are put forward in the national definitions. Second, the section examines the implementation of learning outcomes, by investigating the extent to which they are required to be used in higher education. The final part looks at the existence of regulatory barriers that may limit the provision of flexible and individualised studies. This part can be complemented by the analysis provided in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, which covers flexibility in higher education.

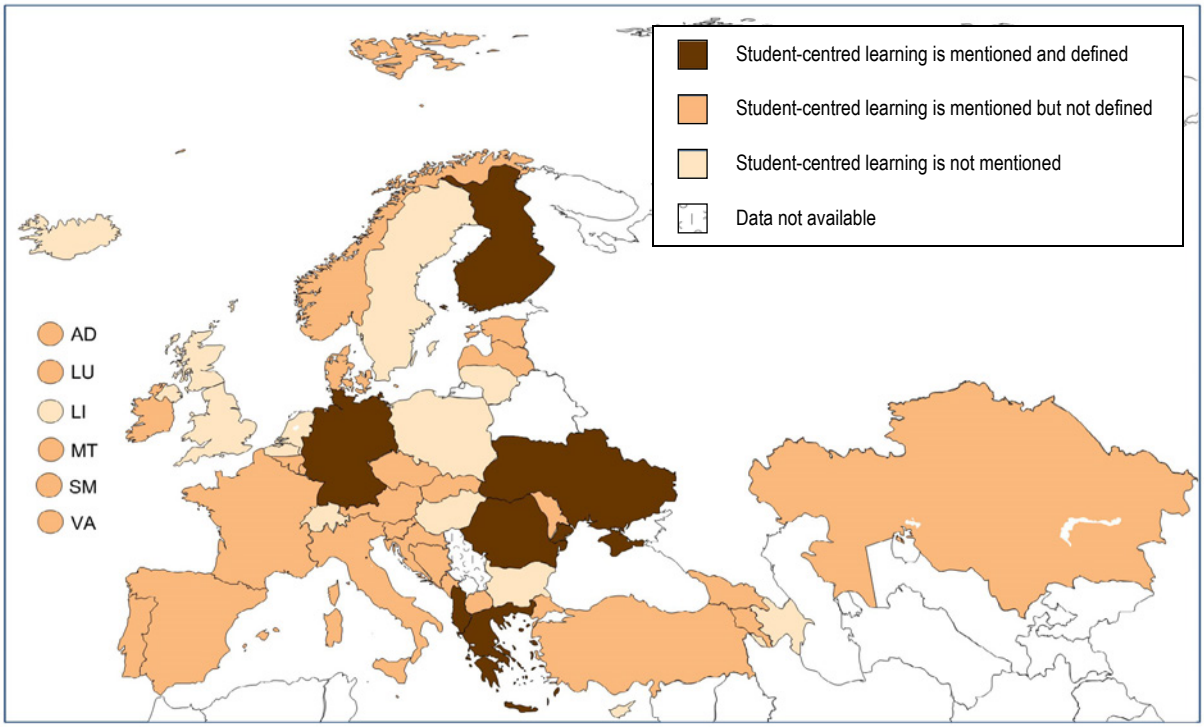
5.3.1. Student-centred learning in top-level steering documents

Policy documents related to the Bologna Process understand student-centred learning as a multidimensional theme. They associate it with a range of closely related topics, such as learning outcomes, individually tailored and flexible learning paths, active involvement and participation of students in the learning process, high-quality and innovative teaching as well as appropriate assessment methods. Considering these different aspects, the BFUG data collection examined whether top-level (national) steering documents define the concept of student-centred learning and, if they do, what elements are incorporated in the national definitions.

Figure 5.6 shows that in around one third of European higher education systems (14 out of 48 for which data are available), national steering documents related to higher education do not mention the term 'student-centred learning' (or an equivalent expression in the state language). In more than half of the systems (28 out of 48 with data), the term is mentioned, but it is not defined. It follows that in only a few higher education systems (6 out of 48 with data), student-centred learning is both mentioned and defined in national steering documents.

([31]) Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009, p. 3.
([32]) Ibid.
([33]) Ibid.
([34]) Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020, p. 6.
([35]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.

Figure 5.6: References to student-centred learning in top-level steering documents, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

An example of national definition of student-centred learning has been provided by Ukraine, which refers to student-centred learning in its national law on higher education ([36]) and defines the concept as follows:

> Student-centred learning is an approach to organising the educational process that involves:
>
> - encouraging students to take on the role of autonomous and responsible agents in the educational process;
> - creating an educational environment that is focused on meeting the needs and interests of students, including providing opportunities for individual learning trajectories;
> - building the educational process on principles of mutual respect and partnership among participants in the educational process.

In Finland, a definition was provided from an external quality assurance manual ([37]) stating that

> [i]n the student-centred approach, students are encouraged to take an active role in the learning process. This can be done, for example, by supporting students' motivation, self-assessment abilities and well-being, as well as enabling flexible study paths.

Romania dedicates one chapter of its national education law ([38]) to 'promoting student-centred university' and, within this chapter, specifies that 'students are considered partners of higher education institutions and equal members of the academic community'. A more detailed definition of student-centred learning is provided in an external quality assurance manual ([39]).

The above examples suggest a general alignment of national interpretations of student-centred learning with the Bologna Process conceptualisation. Still, the main outcome of the investigation is that national steering documents rarely define student-centred learning and, quite commonly, they do not even mention it. At the same time, country replies show that even when the term 'student-centred learning' is not explicitly used, national steering documents commonly refer to different aspects associated with

([36]) Law of Ukraine on higher education, non-official translation from Ukrainian.
([37]) Audit manual for higher education institutions, p. 6.
([38]) Law No. 1/2011 of 5 January 2011 - National Education Law, Chapter X, Article 199.
([39]) Due to its length, the definition in question cannot be presented in this chapter, but can be consulted in the Methodology of external evaluation and of the list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Section 4.IP.B2.1.4 on student-centred learning.

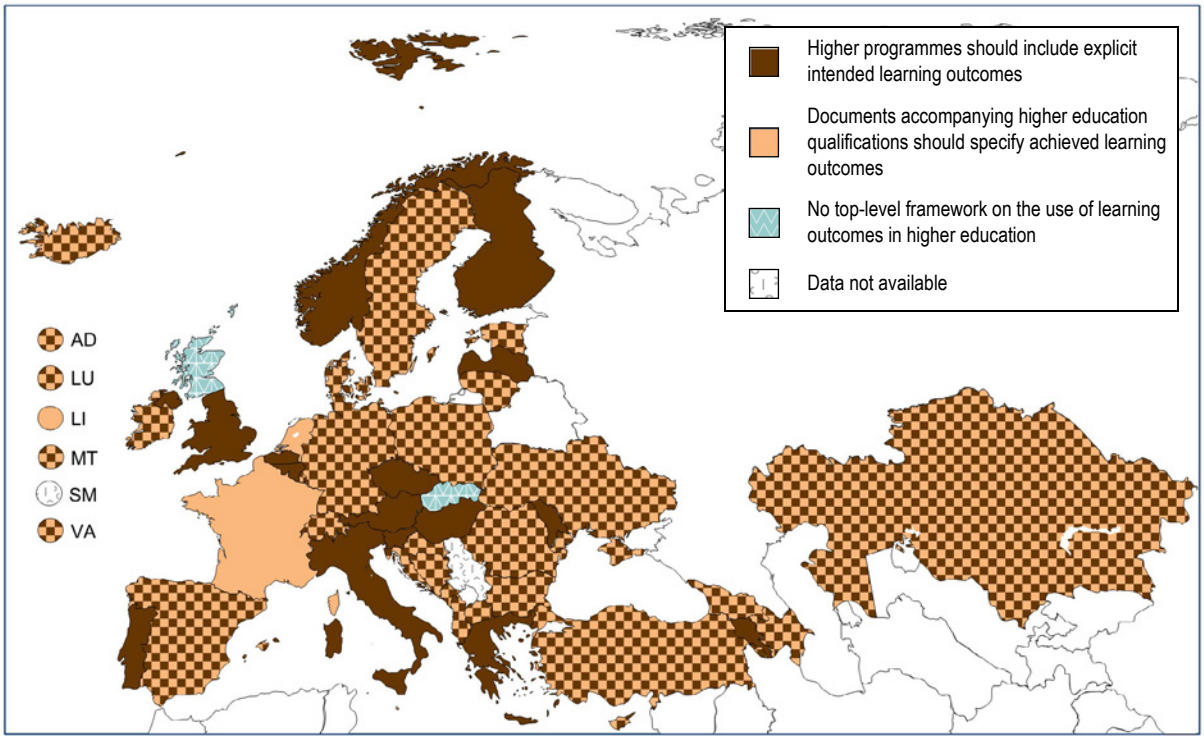
student-centred learning. Moreover, what may count more than the presence of a definition is the existence of actual measures aligned with the idea of student-centred learning. One of these measures – the implementation of learning outcomes – is discussed in the next section.

5.3.2. Use of learning outcomes

Learning outcomes, which refer to statements describing what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a particular course, module, or programme ([40]), have been widely referred to in the Bologna Process ministerial communiqués. They have been closely associated not only with the concept of student-centred learning, but also with the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area ([41]). When it comes to student-centred learning, learning outcomes are expected to support flexible and individually tailored learning paths. This relates to the idea that clearly defined learning outcomes may facilitate the recognition of various forms of learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Figure 5.7 looks at the presence of top-level (national) requirements or recommendations on the use of learning outcomes in higher education and specifies areas covered by these requirements or recommendations.

Figure 5.7: Use of learning outcomes as required or recommended in top-level steering documents, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

As the figure shows, top-level requirements or recommendations on the use of learning outcomes exist virtually everywhere in Europe, namely in 45 higher education systems out of 47 with data (Slovakia and the United Kingdom – Scotland are the only systems reporting no relevant requirements or recommendations). In almost all the systems with top-level requirements or recommendations (42 out of 45), steering documents indicate that all higher education programmes should include explicit intended learning outcomes. In around two thirds of the systems (30 out of 45), there are requirements

([40]) For the full definition of 'Learning outcomes', see the Glossary and methodological notes.
([41]) For the definition of 'European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System' and 'Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area', see the Glossary and methodological notes, and for the related analysis, see Chapter 2.

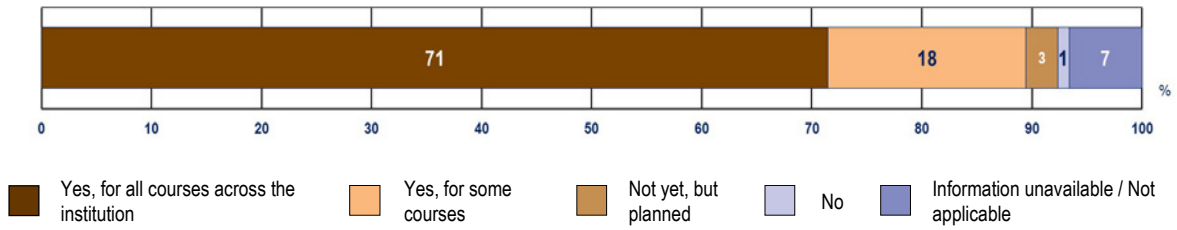
or recommendations stipulating that documents accompanying higher education qualifications should specify achieved learning outcomes. France, Liechtenstein and the Netherlands are the only systems with requirements or recommendations covering only the second aspect, but not the first one.

Although Figure 5.7 does not make a distinction between 'requirements' and 'recommendations', country data suggest that learning outcomes are most often covered by (at least some) top-level requirements. Indeed, learning outcomes are commonly referred to in steering documents that have a binding character, including the main higher education legislation (the higher education act or similar), legal frameworks related to the implementation of national qualifications frameworks and/or documents stipulating quality assurance procedures. In addition to the above, learning outcomes may also be referred to in various guiding documents having a non-binding character (type 'recommendation'). Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) are the only systems, among those with the relevant steering documents, addressing learning outcomes only in top-level recommendations and not in binding top-level steering documents.

Overall, Figure 5.7 and the related analysis suggest that, from a policy perspective, learning outcomes have become an integral part of the design and implementation of higher education programmes throughout the EHEA.

A similar finding is provided by the EUA Trends 2024 survey within which higher education institutions across European countries were asked to report on the implementation of learning outcomes (Figure 5.8). Out of 484 institutions, 71% reported that learning outcomes have been implemented in all courses ([42]) and further 18% indicated the implementation in some courses (a total of 89% when considering the implementation in both all and some courses).

Figure 5.8: Implementation of learning outcomes in higher education institutions (% of institutions), 2023



Source: EUA.

Notes:

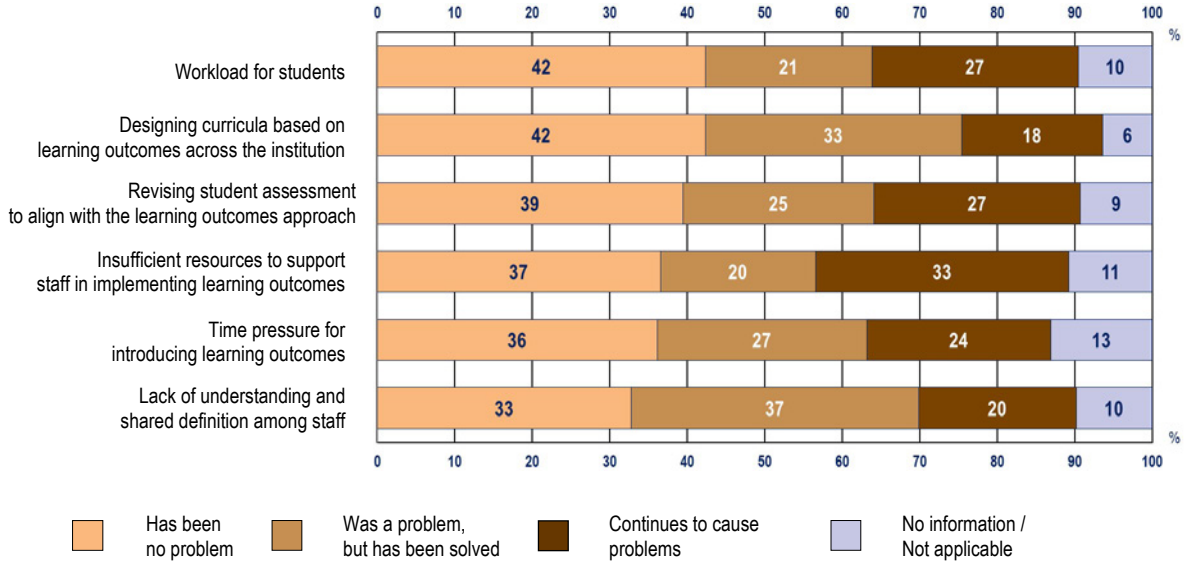
Data refer to Question 30 in the EUA Trends 2024 survey: 'Have learning outcomes been implemented? Please select one option'. The figure displays the options that were proposed.

The figure is based on data supplied by 484 higher education institutions.

The EUA Trends 2024 survey also shows (Figure 5.9) that higher education institutions often do not face problems with specific aspects of the implementation of learning outcomes (33% to 42% of the institutions reported no problems regarding the aspects surveyed) or are able to overcome initial difficulties (20% to 37% of the institutions). However, the implementation of learning outcomes remains a challenge for many institutions. For example, one third of higher education institutions (33%) that have been using learning outcomes struggle with insufficient resources to support staff in implementing this approach. Other common ongoing issues include the impact on the workload of students (27% of institutions using learning outcomes face this issue), the necessity to revise assessment methods (27%), time pressure for introducing learning outcomes (24%), the lack of understanding among staff regarding learning outcomes (20%) and, finally, the challenge to design curricula based on learning outcomes across the institution (18%).

([42]) When it comes to the implementation of learning outcomes in all courses, data from previous editions on the Trends survey point to a steady increase between 2010 and 2018, namely 53% in 2010, 64% in 2015 and 76% in 2018 (Gaebel et al., 2018, p. 35). In this context, the most recent data displayed in Figure 5.8 suggest some stagnation in this field.

Figure 5.9: Problems encountered by higher education institutions when implementing learning outcomes (% of institutions), 2023



Source: EUA.

Notes:

Data refer to Question 30.1 in the EUA Trends 2024 survey: 'How would you describe issues encountered when implementing learning outcomes?'. The figure displays the options that were proposed.

The figure is based on data supplied by 433 higher education institutions, namely those where learning outcomes have been implemented in all or some courses (see Figure 5.8).

5.3.3. Regulations potentially limiting flexibility and individualisation of studies

The previous section concentrated on learning outcomes, which, when appropriately implemented, are expected to facilitate flexible and individually tailored learning paths. Several additional approaches can be used to create flexible learning environments. Many of these approaches have already been outlined in Chapter 4, in Section 4.2. This section complements the previously presented data by focusing on legal requirements and restrictions potentially limiting flexible and individualised higher education studies.

Figure 5.10 indicates some specific requirements and restrictions that may limit flexibility and individualisation in higher education, and it displays the number of higher education systems in which these requirements or restrictions exist.

As the figure shows, there are commonly regulatory restrictions regarding the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning (RPL), i.e. learning taking place outside formal higher education programmes. These restrictions have been identified in 31 higher education systems out of 48 for which data are available. Two main categories of higher education systems can be distinguished regarding the RPL restrictions.

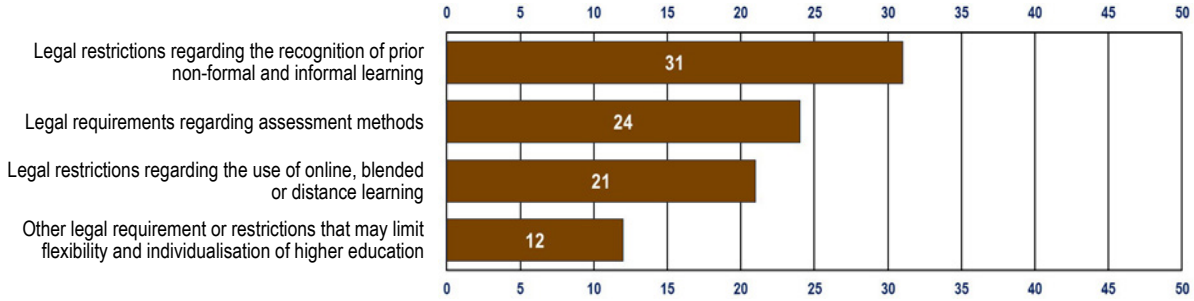
First, there are higher education systems without possibilities for RPL. This means that all learning that can be recognised and counted towards a higher education qualification must take place within formal higher education programmes. These countries, which are included in the numbers displayed in Figure 5.10, are specified in Chapter 4, Figure 4.3 (category 'No RPL' ([43])).

Second, there are countries with possibilities for RPL, but which have restrictions regarding the extent to which non-formal and informal learning can be recognised and counted towards a higher education

([43]) In addition to the category 'No RPL', Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4 demonstrates that in several countries RPL can contribute to the fulfilment of study programmes but cannot be used for accessing studies. This limitation (when not accompanied by other RPL limitations) is not considered in this section as the present discussion focuses on flexibility and individualisation during higher education studies.

qualification. These restrictions are expressed in various ways. Often, they refer to the maximum number or proportion of ECTS credits that can be validated through RPL. For example, in Italy, the recognition is limited to 12 ECTS credits in each programme; in Spain to 15% of ECTS credits; in Austria to 60 ECTS credits; and in the French Community of Belgium, in the higher education sector dedicated to mature students, to 120 ECTS credits in the first cycle and 60 ECTS credits in the second cycle. When referring to ECTS credits, some countries do not specify the maximum extent of RPL, but rather indicate the minimum number of credits that must be achieved in formal higher education programmes. This is the case in Luxembourg and Norway, where at least 60 ECTS credits must be obtained through courses in the higher education institution awarding the degree. Beyond references to ECTS credits, there are other closely related ways of expressing RPL restrictions, including the proportion of programme workload that can (or cannot) be recognised. For example, in Andorra, RPL cannot exceed 20% of the programme workload; in Ukraine, the maximum, which depends on the programme, is situated between 25% and 50% of the workload; and in Hungary, at least one third of the programme must be completed in the degree-awarding institution. Latvia, in turn, specifies that RPL cannot replace the final examination and/or the thesis.

Figure 5.10: Legal requirements or restrictions that may limit flexibility and individualisation in higher education (number of systems reporting different requirements or restrictions), 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

Note:

The figure is based on data supplied by 48 higher education systems.

Another aspect that may limit flexibility and individualisation in higher education is the existence of legal requirements covering assessment methods. These have been identified in half of the higher education systems investigated (24 out of 48 with data). Commonly, the requirements in question specify some compulsory type of assessment that all students (or all students in specific programmes) must undertake. They often cover the final stage of degree studies and include elements such as the final degree examination and/or the thesis. For example, in Czechia, legislation stipulates that each degree programme is completed with the final state examination, and, in addition, there is the thesis deference, which is voluntary in the first cycle and compulsory in the second and the third cycle. A comparable framework is in place in Estonia, where all first- and second-cycle programmes end with the thesis or the final examination, and the third-cycle programmes with the thesis. In the Holy See, regulations require a comprehensive examination or equivalent test at the end of the first and the second cycle. In addition to these examples, there are restrictions related to assessment methods and RPL, namely those that exclude the final examination and/or the thesis from the scope of RPL (see the above example of Latvia).

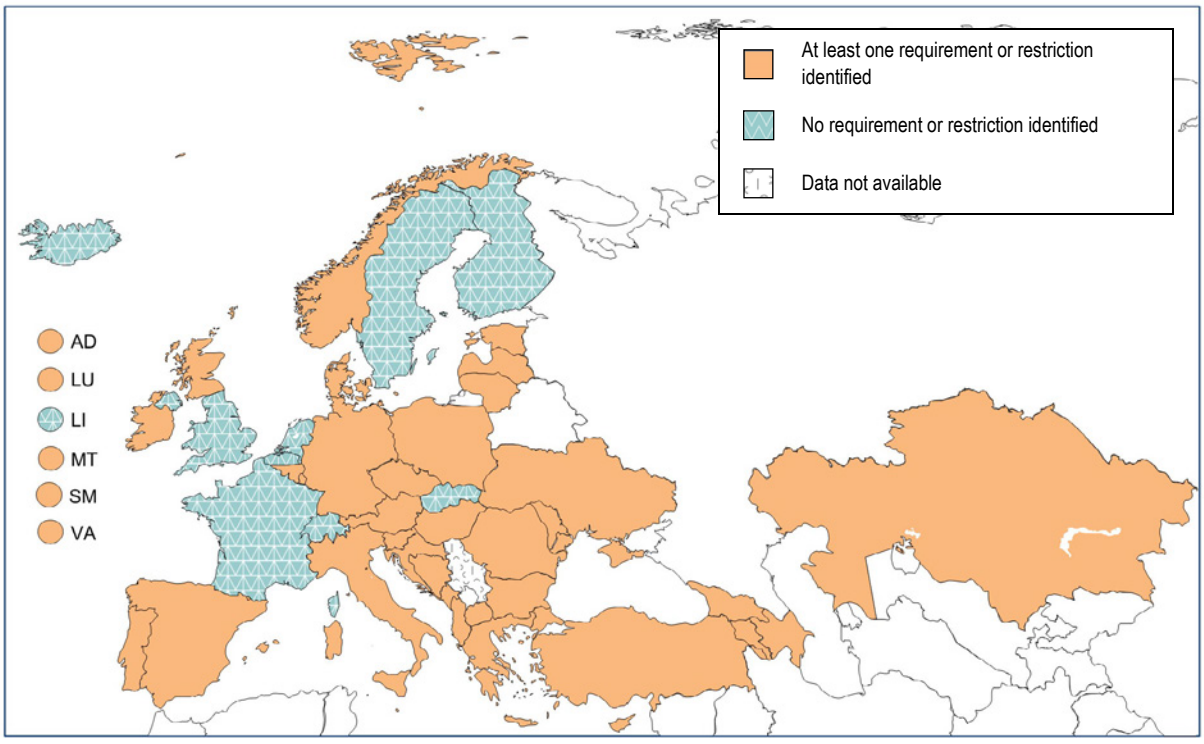
In a considerable number of EHEA systems (21 out of 48 with data), there are regulatory restrictions related to online, blended or distance learning. The related restrictions sometimes specify the amount of learning that can (or cannot) take place through these modes of study. For example, in Lithuania, at least 10% of full-time and 5% of part-time studies should take place face-to-face; in Luxembourg, at least 50% of ECTS credits in first- and second-cycle programmes must be achieved through in person classes; in Latvia, the remote study can comprise up to 50% of the total number of contact hours related

to each programme; and in Türkiye, 30% of ECTS credits, at most, can be delivered through distance education. In Romania, study programmes cannot be delivered entirely online, meaning that the blended learning format must be used. Montenegro, in turn, has in place regulations specifying that examinations must take place in the premises of higher education institutions, while the teaching process may be organised online. In addition to these examples, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, countries' legal frameworks sometimes regulate the extent to which different types of higher education institutions can (or cannot) provide blended and/or distance learning. These restrictions, which have been incorporated in Figure 5.10, are mapped in Table 4.3 in Annex.

There are also other legal requirements that may potentially limit the implementation of flexible and individualised learning pathways in higher education (identified in 12 higher education systems out of 48 with data). For example, as outlined in Chapter 4 and shown in Table 4.3 in Annex, some countries have in place legal restrictions related to the provision of part-time studies, meaning that part-time studies are either legally possible only in some higher education institutions or not possible at all. Examples of additional restrictions include limited or no possibilities for students to extend their studies while benefiting from public funding (e.g. Ukraine), the obligation to organise programmes leading to regulated professions only as full-time studies (e.g. Albania), the necessity for higher education institutions to deliver programmes in full alignment with the conditions under which they were accredited, which implies, for instance, that distance learning is only possible if a degree programme has been accredited as a distance learning programme (e.g. Czechia and Portugal).

Figure 5.11 looks at all the discussed requirements and restrictions from a country perspective, distinguishing between higher education systems where at least one requirement or restriction – among those displayed in Figure 5.10 – has been identified and the systems with no requirement(s) or restriction(s) identified. The figure clearly shows that virtually everywhere in Europe, there are some regulations potentially limiting flexibility and individualisation of higher education programmes.

Figure 5.11: Presence of legal requirements or restrictions that may limit flexibility and individualisation in higher education, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

These findings raise the question of whether EHEA systems are sufficiently responding to the claimed Bologna Process objective to provide flexible and individualised learning pathways and, more generally, student-centred learning. Indeed, data in Figures 5.10 and 5.11 demonstrate that students may be facing regulatory barriers when seeking to achieve a higher education qualification in a flexible and/or non-traditional way. At the same time, contextual information reported by countries suggests that legal requirements potentially impacting flexibility of higher education programmes often aim to guarantee that all students meet the necessary standards of their higher education degree or qualification. Therefore, there seems to be a challenging balancing exercise for policymakers who need to find the right equilibrium between regulatory standards and requirements, on the one hand, and flexible and individualised study opportunities, on the other hand.

5.4. Enhancing the quality of teaching

One key objective of the Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA ([44]) adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué ([45]) is to foster continuous enhancement of higher education teaching. Different means and approaches are specified in this context, including the necessity to foster new and innovative teaching methods in higher education and to support higher education institutions in enhancing the continuous professional development of their teaching staff.

Considering the objective to enhance higher education teaching, this section starts by investigating whether top-level policy frameworks specify the necessity for higher education teaching staff to follow a training in teaching. The section that looks at top-level measures other than compulsory training, which may encourage academics with a teaching role to take part in teacher training. The section is complemented by data from the EUA Trends 2024 survey capturing teaching support measures available in higher education institutions, and Eurostudent data looking at the degree of students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

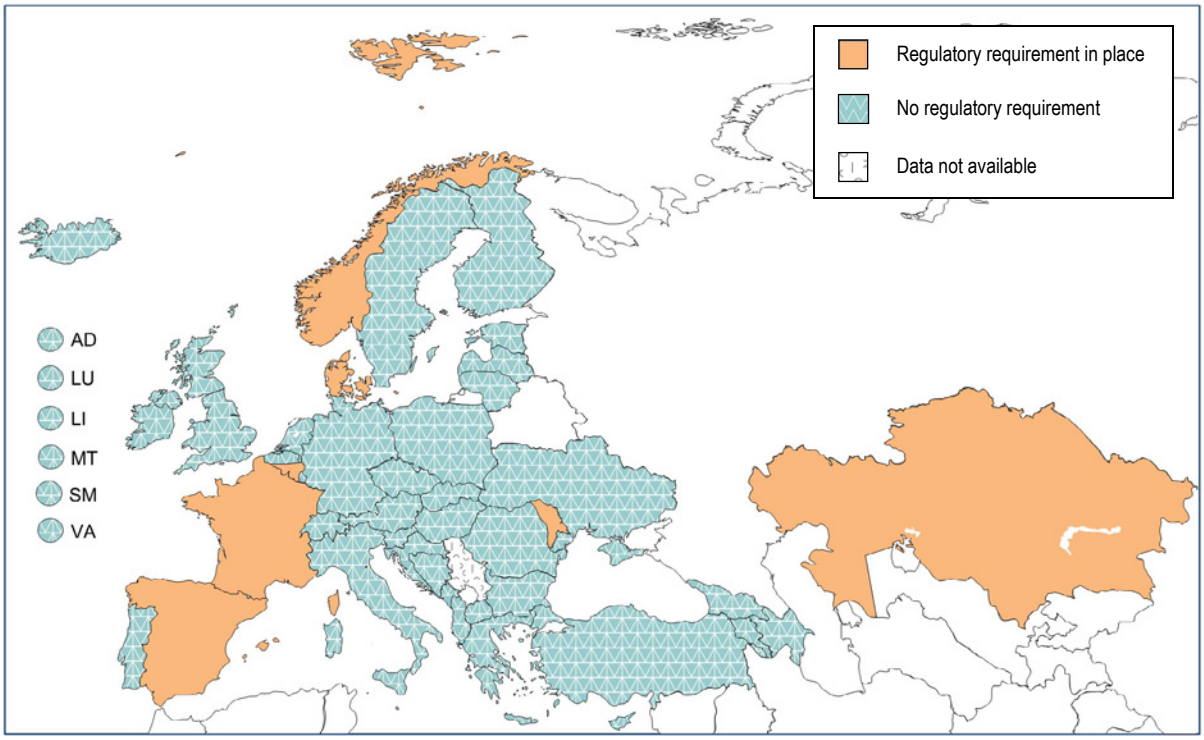
5.4.1. Requirements for academics with a teaching role to receive training in teaching

Prospective teachers at levels below higher education commonly follow programmes combining subject knowledge, pedagogical theory and classroom practice (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2021). When it comes to higher education, the situation is more complex and varied. Within doctoral studies, which commonly precede academic careers, teaching is most often not specified as a standard element to be included in all programmes (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2017). Moreover, beyond doctoral studies, other pathways may lead to teaching in academia. This raises the question of whether academics with a teaching role receive, systematically, training in teaching.

Figure 5.12 explores the above question by looking at the presence of top-level regulations requiring academic staff with a teaching role to receive training in teaching. The figure shows that only a few EHEA systems (7 out of 48 with data) have in place top-level regulations specifying such a requirement.

([44]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([45]) Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.

Figure 5.12: Top-level regulations requiring academic staff with a teaching role to receive training in teaching, 2022/2023



Source: BFUG data collection.

Note:

Table 5.2 in Annex provides details on the regulatory requirements displayed in the figure.

In two higher education systems – the French Community of Belgium and Kazakhstan – the requirement in question covers only some higher education institutions or programmes. More specifically, in the French Community of Belgium, the requirement concerns only higher education institutions other than universities, namely *Hautes Écoles* and higher education establishments for social advancement (*établissements d'enseignement supérieur de promotion sociale*), and it specifies that those teaching in these institutions have to obtain, within six years, a teaching aptitude certificate (*Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique Approprié à l'Enseignement Supérieur*). In Kazakhstan, the requirement concerns only academics involved in the delivery of online higher education programmes. They are requested to complete a training related to this study modality lasting at least 72 hours.

Sometimes, the training requirement is a pre-requisite for teaching in academia. This is the case in Moldova, where anyone teaching in higher education should complete a teacher training module, which can be either followed during studies or taken additionally as a microcredential prior to being engaged in the teaching process.

In some other cases, the requirement covers mainly the early contract stage and/or early stage of teaching in academia. This is the case in France, where lecturers are initially appointed as trainees for a period of one year and, during this period, they are requested to follow training aimed at deepening their pedagogical skills ([46]). In Spain, professors and assistant professors must undertake, in the first year of the contract, an initial teacher training course defined by universities' units responsible for training and innovation.

([46]) In addition to this requirement, regulations in France also provide some specifications regarding doctoral studies, stating that training in pedagogy is provided within doctoral studies when it contributes to the doctoral student's professional activity or project. This is not considered in Figure 5.12.

Regulations may also emphasise training in teaching in relation to higher academic ranks. For example, in Denmark, lecturers must complete professional postgraduate teacher training (*universitetspædagogikum*) and this training is a prerequisite for higher academic positions, including a professorship. In Norway, there is a regulatory expectation for academic staff with a teaching role to follow a 200-hour teacher training course, but professors need to document further qualifications than the minimum.

Although Figure 5.12 indicates that there are only a few EHEA systems requiring academics with a teaching role to follow training in teaching, some further aspects and measures need to be considered. First, many EHEA countries have in place regulatory frameworks which specify, in a general way, that academics should (continuously) improve their teaching skills (or skills in general) and/or that higher education institutions should provide continuing learning opportunities for their staff. These regulations are not considered in Figure 5.12 since they are not enough explicit and prescriptive regarding the participation in and/or completion of teacher training. Second, when there is no system-level requirement for academics to follow training in teaching, higher education institutions may still have in place a systematic provision of such training and may even make it obligatory, through their internal regulations. The institutional practice is outside the scope of Figure 5.12 but is discussed at the end of Section 5.4.2 and in Section 5.4.3.

5.4.2. Other systems-level measures promoting teacher training for academic staff

Apart from regulations requiring academics to follow training in teaching, other system-level measures are in place across the EHEA to stimulate the provision of teacher training for academic staff and the participation in it. These measures fall under various categories and are comparable only to a limited degree. For this reason, they are not displayed in a dedicated figure. Nevertheless, some key clusters of measures are outlined below.

To start with, there are top-level measures aiming to systematise the provision of teacher training for academic staff across the higher education sector. For example, in Austria, public universities conclude performance agreements with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research every three years ([47]) and, within these agreements, they commit to provide pedagogical training to their teaching staff. In Spain, according to legislation adopted in 2023 ([48]), universities should develop initial and continuous teacher training, provide tools and resources necessary to achieve quality teaching, and continuously evaluate teaching (including through student surveys). In Norway, all universities and colleges must offer skills development in university and college pedagogy, either at their own institution or in collaboration with other institutions. Slovenia attempts to systematise the provision of teacher training for academic staff with support from the European Social Fund. More specifically, between 2018 and 2022, the country conducted the public tender 'Innovative and flexible forms of teaching and learning', which concentrated on training for academic staff related to new teaching methods and innovative work with students.

When it comes to the actual development of teacher training, one important operational aspect is the definition of skills and competence to be achieved. It follows that the development of competence frameworks for academic positions can contribute to the development of relevant training provision. Activities in this area are taking place in several EHEA systems. For example, France adopted, in 2019, the competence benchmarks for academic positions (*Repères pour l'exercice du métier d'enseignant-chercheur*) ([49]), which aim to guide the development of initial and continuing training for academic staff, including the compulsory pedagogical training for newly appointed lecturers (see the previous section). In Ireland, already in 2016, the National Forum (see Section 5.1.3) published the National Professional

([47]) https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulgovernance/Steuerungsinstrumente/Leistungsvereinbarungen.html
([48]) Organic Law 2/2023 of 22 March on the University System, Articles 6.4 and 6.5.
([49]) Benchmarks for the exercise of the profession of teacher-researcher.

Development Framework for all Staff who Teach in Higher Education ([50]). The same body coordinates the Open Courses for Professional Development ([51]), which are aligned with the above framework and target all those who teach in higher education. In Ukraine, policy documents adopted in 2020 and 2021 ([52]) define professional competences for higher education teachers, including teaching competences. It is explicitly recommended that higher education teachers follow training leading to the expected competences. Lithuania adopted, in 2020, the guidelines for the development of competences of higher education teachers ([53]) that refer to three types of competences: teaching and learning, research, and general competences. The aim of the guidelines is to encourage higher education institutions to develop an effective training system for their staff.

Networking activities represent yet another way to stimulate the provision of higher education teacher training and the participation in it. For example, in Germany, there are several university networks on academic teaching in the individual Länder. One example is the Network for Higher Education Teaching in North Rhine-Westphalia ([54]), which promotes academic teaching at universities in this state. The network runs the programme Professional Teaching Competence for Higher Education leading to a teaching qualification. Another example is the Higher Education Network 'Digitalization of Teaching' in Baden-Württemberg ([55]) that focuses on the development of digital teaching and learning.

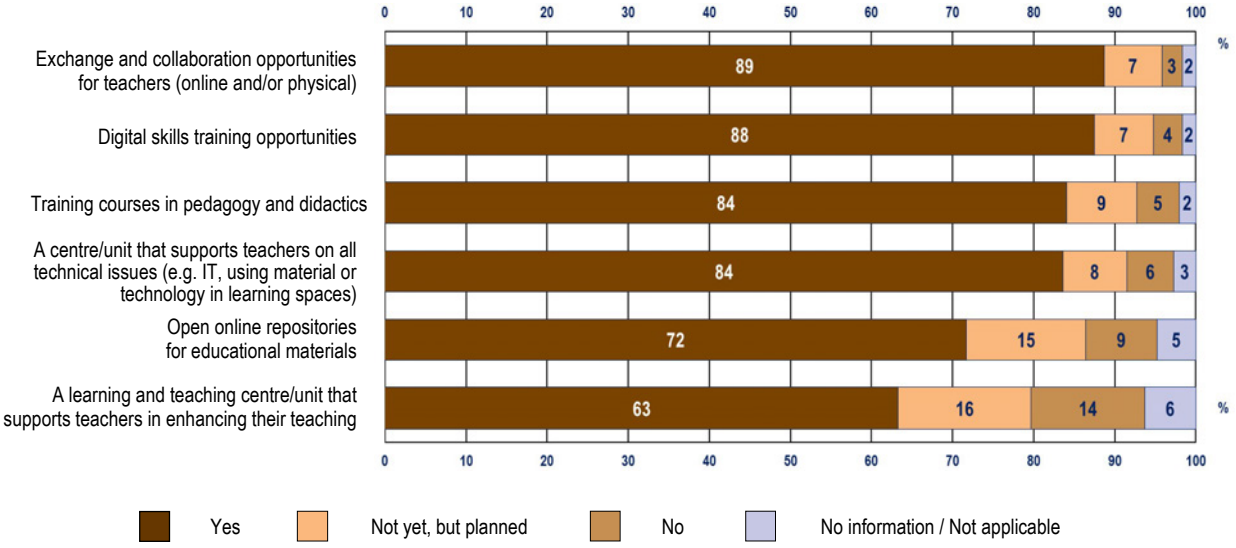
Beyond system-level measures, the information reported by several countries suggests that higher education institutions themselves are often active both in providing teacher training and in encouraging academics to take part in it ([56]). For example, in Finland, many higher education institutions developed pedagogical guidelines and strategies, and some make teacher training even mandatory for academic involved in teaching. In Sweden, higher education institutions commonly offer training courses in higher education teaching (usually around 10 weeks) to both newly hired and more senior employees. A rather extensive training provision for academic staff has also been reported by Switzerland, where continuing education courses covering teaching competences can built up to a certificate of advanced studies (one example is the certificate offered by the University of Zurich ([57])). These examples suggest that it is useful to complement data on national support measures related to higher education teacher training by data on institutional activities in the same area. This is the focus of the next section.

5.4.3. Support provided by higher education institutions to their teaching staff

The EUA Trends 2024 survey shows that higher education institutions commonly have in place measures to support their teaching staff (Figure 5.13). They frequently provide exchange and collaboration opportunities for teachers, digital skills training opportunities, training in pedagogy and didactics, and support related to technical issues (80% to 90% of the institutions surveyed). Slightly less common, but still widespread, are open online repositories for educational materials (72%) and learning and teaching units supporting teachers in enhancing their teaching (63%).

([50]) National Professional Development Framework for all Staff who Teach in Higher Education.
([51]) https://opencourses.ie/
([52]) Order of Ministry of Education of Ukraine of 4 December 2020 n°1504 regarding professional development of academic staff, and Order of Ministry of Economics of Ukraine of 3 March 2021 n°610 on approval of professional standard on professions group 'Higher education teachers'.
([53]) Ministerial order approving guidelines for the development of competences of higher education teachers.
([54]) https://hd-nrw.de/
([55]) https://www.hnd-bw.de/
([56]) This can partly be explained by the content of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) which specify, in Section 1.5, that higher education institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers and should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.
([57]) https://www.weiterbildung.uzh.ch/en/hochschuldidaktik/ls/cas.html

Figure 5.13: Support provided by higher education institutions to teaching staff (% of institutions), 2023



Source: EUA.

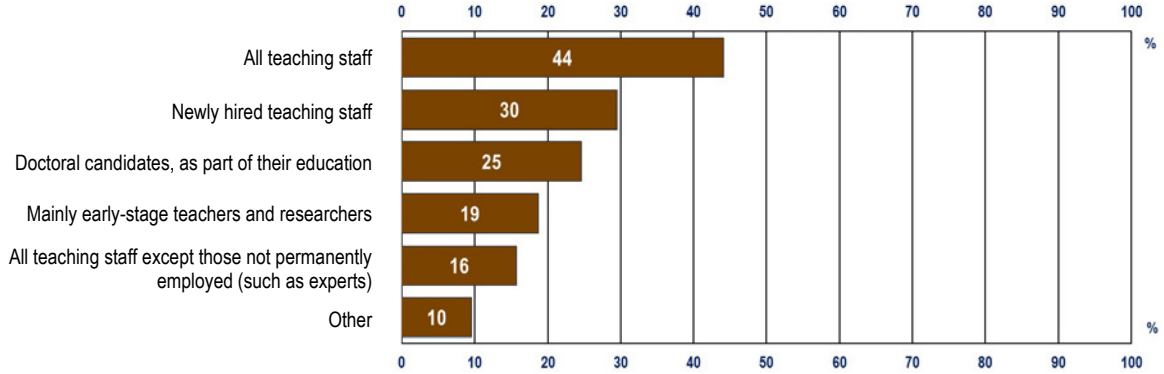
Notes:

Data refer to Question 33 in the EUA Trends 2024 survey: 'Does your institution support teaching staff with […]'. The figure displays the options that were proposed.

The figure is based on data supplied by 483 higher education institutions.

The EUA Trends 2024 survey also allows to evaluate the extent to which training courses for higher education teachers, when provided by higher education institutions, are compulsory (Figure 5.14). Data reveal that almost half of all institutions providing training courses for teachers [in pedagogy and didactics] (44%) make them compulsory for all teaching staff. This shows that while top-level (national) regulations rarely impose teacher training on higher education teachers (see Figure 5.12 and the related analysis), higher education institutions commonly do so. The compulsory training [in pedagogy and didactics] may also focus on specific categories of academic staff, including newly hired teachers or early-stage teachers, and/or doctoral candidates.

Figure 5.14: Categories of academic staff for which training courses for teachers are compulsory (% of institutions reporting different categories), 2023



Source: EUA.

Notes:

Data refer to Question 33.3 in the EUA Trends 2024 survey: 'If your institution offers training courses for teachers, for which categories of staff are the enhancement courses compulsory? Please select all applicable options.' The options that were proposed within the survey are displayed in the figure. The question concerned only those institutions that indicated, under Question 33 (see the previous figure), that they provide training courses in pedagogy and didactics.

Data cover 406 institutions, namely those institutions (out of 438) that reported the provision of training for teacher [in pedagogy and didactics].

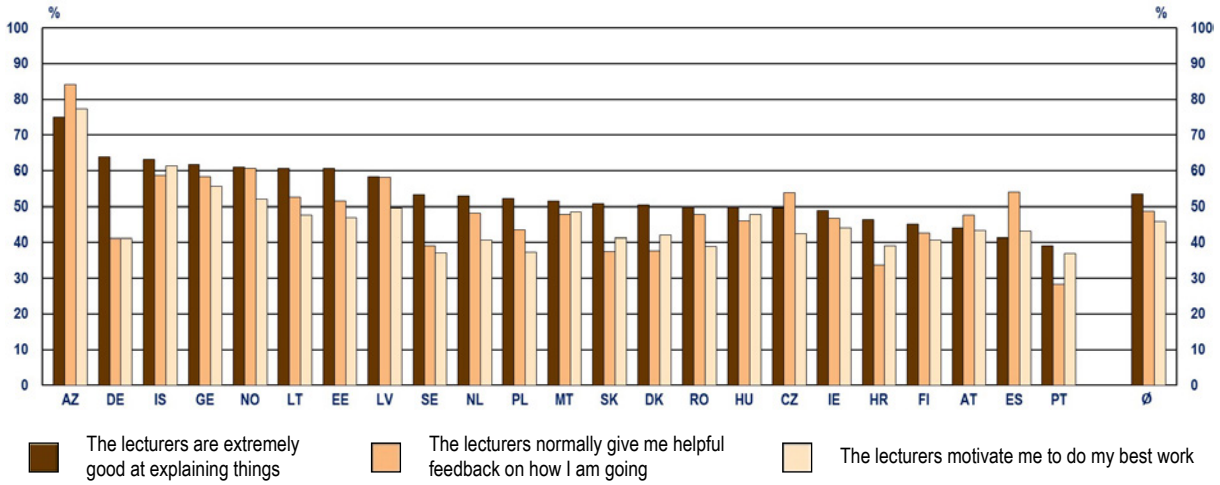
5.4.4. Students' perspective

After having discussed different approaches to enhancing the quality of teaching, the question of how higher education students perceive their teachers (lecturers) can be raised. The Eurostudent survey addresses this question by surveying students' views on different aspects of teaching, namely the quality of explanations, the provision of feedback and teachers' contribution to students' motivation.

Figure 5.15 covers 23 countries for which Eurostudent data on the above aspects are available. The figure shows that, among the three aspects surveyed, students in almost all the countries are the most positive about the quality of explanations. On average, across the 23 countries, 53% of students agree or strongly agree that their lecturers are extremely good at explaining things. This aspect is followed by the provision of helpful feedback, with 49% of students across the countries agreeing or strongly agreeing that their lecturers normally give them helpful feedback on how they are doing. 46% of students, on average, agree or strongly agree that the lecturers motivate them to do their best work.

There are substantial variations in the assessment of the three aspects across countries. Students in Azerbaijan show the highest degree of satisfaction with their lecturers in relation to all the aspects: 84% rate (very) positively the feedback they receive, 77% the contribution of the lecturers to their motivation and 75% the quality of explanations. Students in Georgia, Iceland, Latvia and Norway are also relatively positive regarding all the aspects surveyed since 50% or more agree or strongly agree with all the statements regarding their lecturers displayed in the figure. In contrast, in Portugal, only 28% of students evaluate (very) positively the provision of helpful feedback by their lecturers, 37% the contribution of the lecturers to their motivation and 39% the quality of explanations. Germany shows a pattern characterised by substantial differences between how students evaluate different teaching aspects: 64% of the students are (very) satisfied with explanations provided, but only 41% indicate a (high degree of) satisfaction with the feedback received and with how lecturers motivate them to do their best work.

Figure 5.15: Percentage of students (strongly) agreeing with different statements related to their lecturers, 2022



%	AZ	DE	IS	GE	NO	LT	EE	LV	SE	NL	PL	MT	SK	DK	RO	HU	CZ	IE	HR	FI	AT	ES	PT	Ø
The lecturers are extremely good at explaining things	75	64	63	62	61	61	61	59	53	53	52	52	51	50	50	50	50	49	46	45	44	41	39	53
The lecturers normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going	84	41	59	58	61	53	52	58	39	48	43	48	38	38	48	46	54	47	34	43	48	54	28	49
The lecturers motivate me to do my best work	77	41	61	56	52	48	47	50	37	41	37	49	41	42	39	48	42	44	39	41	43	43	37	46

Ø = refers to the average across the 23 countries with data

Source: Eurostudent.

Notes:

The figure refers to the following question in the Eurostudent 8 survey questionnaire: '3.1. Generally, to what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your studies? The #lecturers normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going; The #lecturers motivate me to do my best work; The #lecturers are extremely good at explaining things.' Items in this question were adapted from the Course Experience Questionnaire 2017 in the Student Experience Survey (Australia).

The Eurostudent survey used a five-level scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'do not agree at all'. The indicator displays the percentage of students who indicated either the most positive rating or the rating just below. It follows that the indicator covers students who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with different statements.

Data are sorted by the percentage of students who (strongly) agree that their lecturers are extremely good at explaining things.

The reference year indicated in the figure (2022) is the reference year of data for most countries. Data for some countries have different reference years. For details, see the description of the Eurostudent survey in the Glossary and methodological notes section.

Apart from the 23 countries displayed in the figure, the Eurostudent 8 survey also covers France and Switzerland (25 countries in total), which however do not provide data for this indicator.

5.5. Recognition of teaching in the recruitment and promotion of academic staff

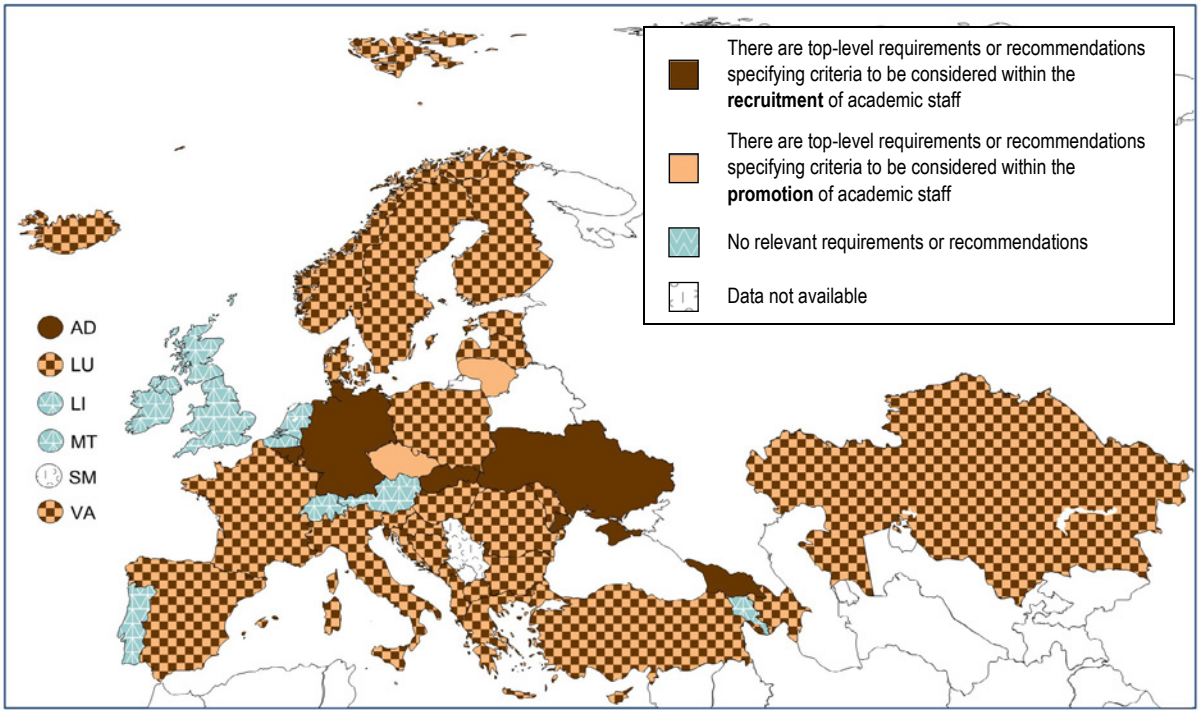
The Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA ([58]) adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué ([59]) invite policymakers in charge of higher education to foster continuous enhancement of teaching, by 'structural measures to assure the parity of esteem for teaching and research' ([60]). In this context, the recommendations specify that, '[i]f needed, academic career schemes should be revised to ensure a better recognition for teaching in academic careers' ([61]). Considering the above objective, this section investigates criteria (to be) considered in the recruitment and promotion of academic staff as specified in top-level policy documents (regulations or recommendations).

Figure 5.16 shows that in most higher education systems participating in the Bologna Process (36 systems out of 47 for which data are available), top-level policy documents specify at least some criteria to be considered within the recruitment and/or promotion of academic staff. The figure also displays that in most higher education systems, top-level policy documents refer to the criteria related to both the recruitment and the promotion. In a limited number of the systems, top-level policy documents cover only one of these two areas.

Although the figure does not make a distinction between requirements (which refer to rules that must be followed) and recommendations (which refer to suggestions or proposals), most higher education systems have in place at least some top-level requirements covering the recruitment and/or promotion of academic staff. Indeed, this area is often covered by higher education legislation, which generally sets a broad framework for the recruitment and/or promotion processes. In addition to the requirements, there may be different recommendations. In a few higher education systems, there are no relevant requirements, but recommendations covering these areas are in place. This is the case in Finland and Iceland (recruitment and promotion), and Lithuania (promotion).

([58]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([59]) Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([60]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020, p. 4.
([61]) Ibid.

Figure 5.16: Existence of top-level requirements or recommendations specifying criteria that should be considered within the recruitment and promotion of academic staff, 2022/2023



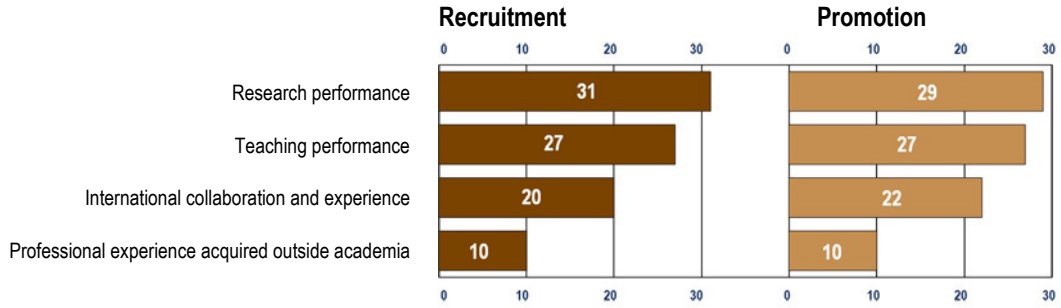
Source: BFUG data collection.

Requirements or recommendations referring to the recruitment and promotion of academic staff may include different specifications. For example, they may specify criteria to be considered in the evaluation process such as research outputs, teaching performance, leadership roles, etc. They may also comprise specifications related to the composition of recruitment or promotion committees, the documentation required, the evaluation and decision-making processes, and the appeal procedures. Moreover, they may explicitly prohibit discrimination based on factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or age.

Figure 5.17 considers those higher education systems that have in place top-level requirements or recommendations specifying (at least) some criteria to be considered within the recruitment and promotion of academic staff (see Figure 5.16). The figure depicts four criteria that may potentially be referred to in regulations or recommendations covering the recruitment and promotion of academic staff, namely research performance, teaching performance, international collaboration and experience, and professional experience acquired outside academia.

The figure shows that among the four criteria listed, research performance is the most frequently specified. This means that top-level policy documents commonly include some indications regarding the necessity for those who want to pursue academic careers to demonstrate their research capabilities, for example, by displaying the quantity, quality, and impact of their research. Teaching performance, while slightly less prominent than research performance, is also commonly referred to in top-level policy documents. In this context, regulations may, for instance, specify the necessity to present proofs of pedagogical experience when applying for different positions. Compared to the research and teaching performance, international collaboration and experience is less commonly specified in top-level policy documents. Even less common are explicit references to professional experience acquired outside academia.

Figure 5.17: Criteria that should be considered within the recruitment and promotion of academic staff as specified in top-level requirements or recommendations (number of higher education systems), 2022/2023



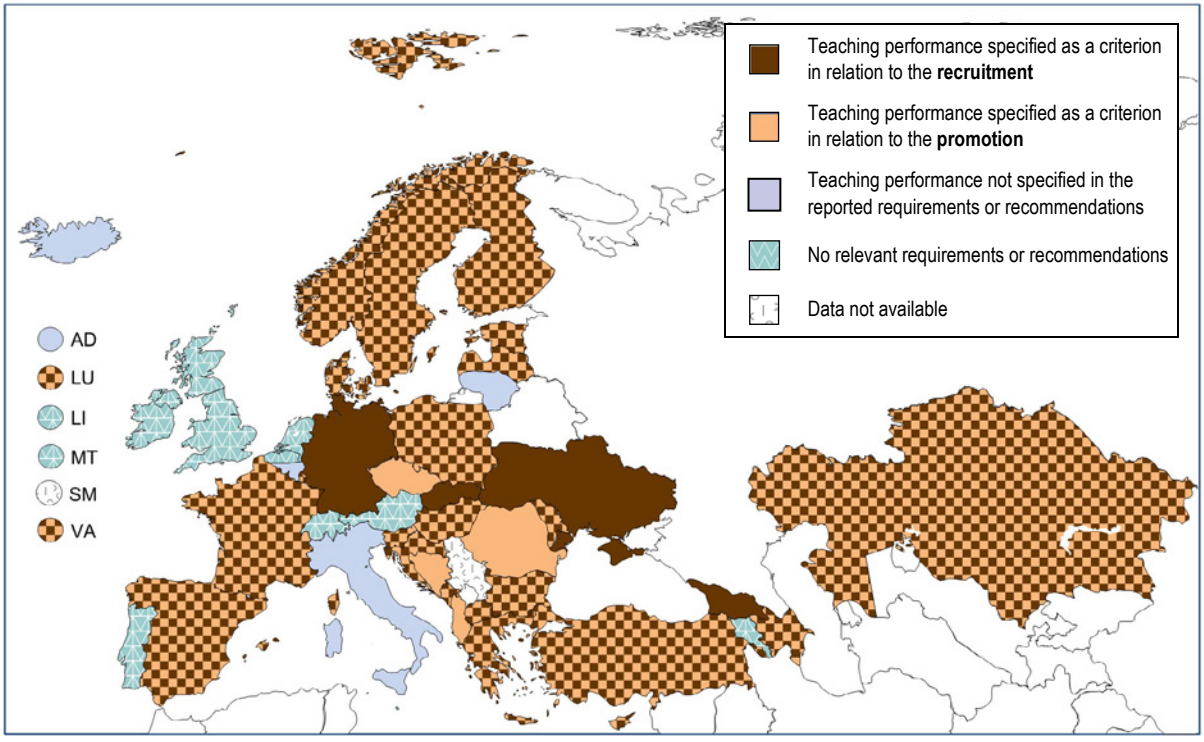
Source: BFUG data collection.

Note:

The figure is based on data supplied by those higher education systems that have in place top-level requirements or recommendations specifying (at least) some criteria to be considered within the recruitment and promotion of academic staff. These higher education systems can be identified in Figure 5.16.

Figure 5.18 looks at the above data from a country perspective and focuses on the criterion 'teaching performance'. It demonstrates that in almost all higher education systems with top-level policy documents covering the recruitment and/or promotion of academic staff, teaching performance is referred to among the criteria (to be) considered. Only five higher education systems with relevant policy documents do not specify teaching performance among various criteria included (Andorra, the French Community of Belgium, Iceland, Italy and Lithuania). Moreover, as discussed previously (see Figure 5.16 and the related analysis), 11 higher education systems do not have in place top-level policy documents specifying criteria that should be considered within the recruitment and promotion of academic staff.

Figure 5.18: Teaching performance as a criterion specified in top-level requirements or recommendations related to the recruitment and promotion of academic staff, 2022/2023

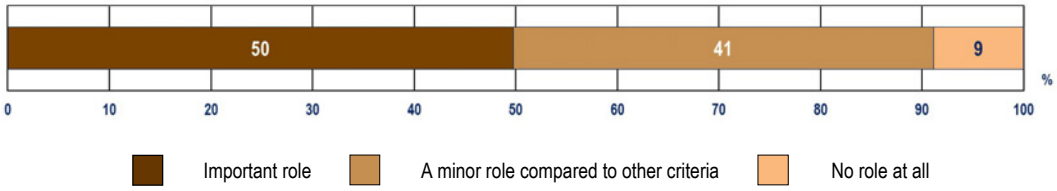


Source: BFUG data collection.

Overall, the analysis of top-level frameworks suggests that while research performance remains the main criterion valued in academic careers, teaching performance – alongside research – plays a role, albeit a lesser one, in the recruitment and promotion of higher education staff. However, it must be noted that top-level regulations or recommendations often provide only a broad framework regarding the recruitment and promotion of academic staff. This means that higher education institutions can commonly complement national rules and guidelines by their own policies and, potentially, prioritise (or not) certain criteria within their recruitment and promotion processes. In other words, this area cannot be fully comprehended through the analysis of top-level policy documents and the analysis needs to be complemented by the exploration of institutional practices.

The EUA Trends 2024 survey provides some insight into institutional practices by surveying directly higher education institutions across Europe. Within the survey, the institutions were asked to specify the role of teaching performance evaluations in the promotion and career progression of teaching staff (Figure 5.19). Half of the institutions surveyed (50%) indicated that these evaluations play an important role and, in contrast, only 9% reported no role. The remaining institutions (41%) recognised that teaching performance evaluations play some role in the promotion and career progression of teaching staff; however, a minor role compared to other criteria.

Figure 5.19: Role of teaching performance evaluations in the promotion and career progression of teaching staff (% of institutions reporting different roles), 2023



Source: EUA.

Notes:

Data refer to Question 34 in the EUA Trends 2024 survey: 'Do teaching performance evaluations play an important role in the promotion and career progression of teaching staff?'. The survey proposed the following answers: 'Yes', 'A minor role compared to other criteria' and 'No role at all'. The figure displays the answer 'Yes' under the category 'Important role'.

The figure is based on data supplied by 484 higher education institutions.

The comparison of the above data with the previous edition of the Trends survey suggests that teaching performance evaluations play a more important role nowadays than some years ago. More specifically, within the previous survey round, only 39% of participating institutions indicated that teaching performance evaluations play an important role in the promotion and career development of teaching staff, 48% indicated some role and 12% no role (Gaebel et al., 2018, p. 69).

5.6. Conclusions

Building on the Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA ([62]) adopted within the 2020 Rome Communiqué ([63]), this chapter examined whether and how higher education systems across the EHEA support quality and innovation in higher education learning and teaching. Following the content of the recommendations, the chapter investigated three interconnected thematic areas: system-level policies and measures, student-centred learning and initiatives fostering continuous enhancement of teaching.

Starting with system-level policies and measures, the BFUG data collection shows that slightly more than half the EHEA systems have in place an ongoing system-level strategy with major references to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. Alongside the strategies, there are other system-level policy measures promoting learning and teaching in higher education. For example, several countries have been conducting national projects concentrating on areas such as digitalization of higher education and/or higher education pedagogy. There have also been regulatory changes in some EHEA countries that intend to boost learning and teaching innovations, and three countries (Germany, Ireland and Kazakhstan) have recently established national bodies to support learning and teaching in higher education institutions.

The development of national policies and measures related to learning and teaching in higher education most commonly involves the national ministry responsible for higher education and higher education institutions (through their associations and networks). Alongside these most frequently cited stakeholders, other commonly involved parties are student associations and unions, quality assurance agencies, labour market and employment organisations, and higher education staff associations and unions. Although they may be strongly affected by the outcomes of policies and measures, it is less common for ministries responsible for matters other than higher education and for the wider community and civil society organisations to be involved in policy development consultations related to higher education learning and teaching.

Looking more precisely at quality assurance agencies, data show that their most common role regarding learning and teaching in higher education is to conduct quality assessment reviews. Within this central role, in around two thirds of the EHEA systems, quality assurance agencies verify that higher education institutions have a coherent institutional learning and teaching strategy in place. In around half of the EHEA systems, quality assurance agencies develop reference points and guidance on learning and teaching for higher education institutions. A slightly less common role for quality assurance agencies is to conduct or commission research on learning and teaching in higher education.

Moving to the concept of student-centred learning, the analysis has shown that this term is not always specified in national policy documents and, even when specified, it is rarely defined at national level. Nevertheless, the few national definitions captured within the BFUG data collection suggest a general alignment of national interpretations of student-centred learning with the Bologna Process conceptualisation.

The BFUG data also demonstrate that learning outcomes, which are acknowledged to support student-centred learning, have become a common feature of higher education programmes across the EHEA. Indeed, in almost all EHEA systems, top-level policy documents specify that higher education programmes should include explicit intended learning outcomes, and in around two thirds of the systems, documents accompanying higher education qualifications must specify achieved learning

([62]) Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA, Annex III of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.
([63]) Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 19 November 2020.

outcomes. The EUA Trends survey, which surveys higher education institutions directly, confirms a high degree of implementation of learning outcomes.

Alongside learning outcomes, student-centred learning has been closely associated with flexible learning. Building on the analysis provided in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2), this chapter looked at regulatory requirements and restrictions that may limit flexible study arrangements in higher education. Such requirements and restrictions have been identified in most EHEA systems. Commonly, higher education systems have in place restrictions related to the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning, requirements regarding obligatory assessment methods and/or limitations concerning online, blended and distance learning, or part-time studies. These restrictions are often motivated by quality assurance concerns. However, policy makers need to find the right balance between these concerns and the provision of adequate learning opportunities for all learners, including non-traditional and self-directed learners.

In its final sections, the chapter concentrated on policy measures to foster high-quality teaching. It has shown that, contrary to teachers at lower education levels, higher education teachers are rarely systematically required to follow training in teaching. Indeed, the BFUG data collection has identified only a few systems with top-level regulations imposing training in teaching to (at least some categories of) higher education staff. However, data provided directly by higher education institutions within the EUA Trends survey suggest that higher education institutions often make training in pedagogy and didactics compulsory for their teaching staff. In other words, requirements set at institutional level regarding training in teaching for academics commonly go beyond those specified at national level.

Apart from compulsory courses, other measures are in place across the EHEA to stimulate the provision of teacher training for academic staff and their participation in it. For example, some countries have been using national resources to systematise the provision of relevant training across the higher education sector and some other countries have invested in the development of competence frameworks for academic positions, which can in turn support the development of adequate training provision.

Closely related to the provision of teacher training for academic staff is the question of how satisfied students are with the quality of their teachers (lecturers). The Eurostudent survey shows that, on average, around half of the students in the countries surveyed agree or strongly agree that their lecturers are extremely good at explaining things, providing feedback or motivating them. This can be seen as a relatively satisfactory result. However, in every country surveyed, there is some room for improvement.

Finally, regulatory information provided within the BFUG data collection suggests that while research performance remains the main criterion valued in academic careers, teaching performance – alongside research – also plays a role, albeit a lesser one, in the recruitment and promotion of higher education staff. The EUA Trends survey complements the regulatory analysis by showing that higher education institutions commonly see teaching evaluations as an important element influencing careers of higher education teaching staff. Moreover, the comparison between different EUA Trends survey rounds suggests that teaching performance evaluations play a more important role nowadays than some years ago.

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