



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

1. Degree and curriculum reform and Cooperation in QA

[CS] = change slide

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

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

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

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

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

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

[CS]Thank you!

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



Degree and curriculum reform Cooperation in QA

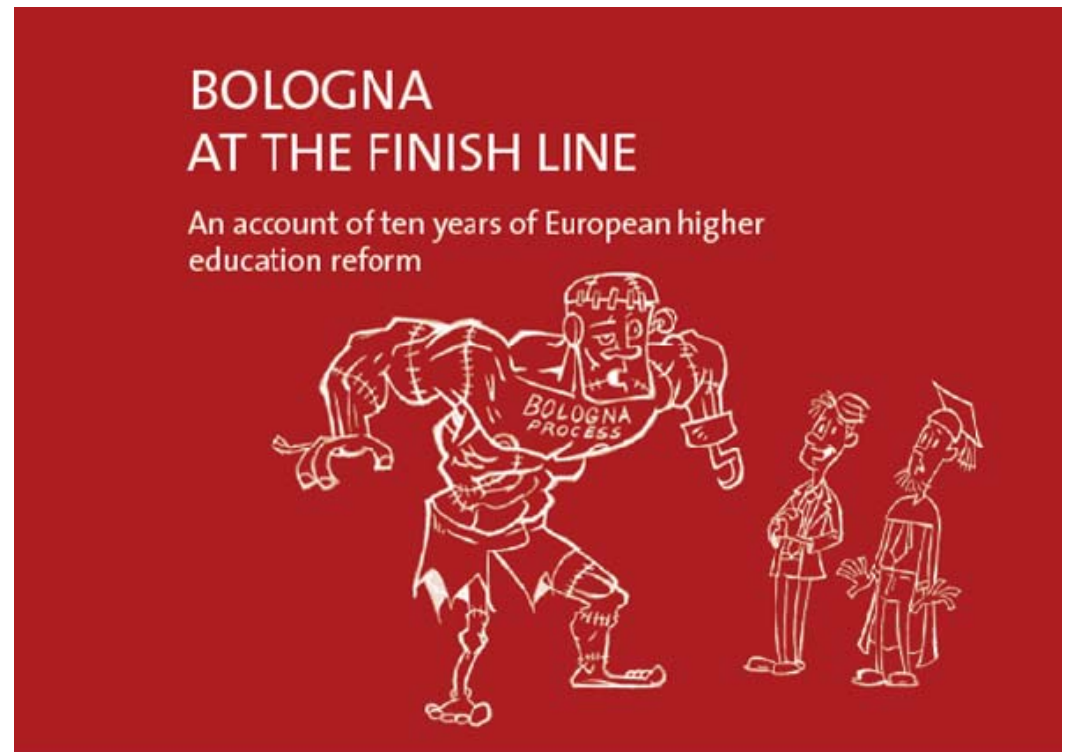


Ligia Deca, ESU Chairperson

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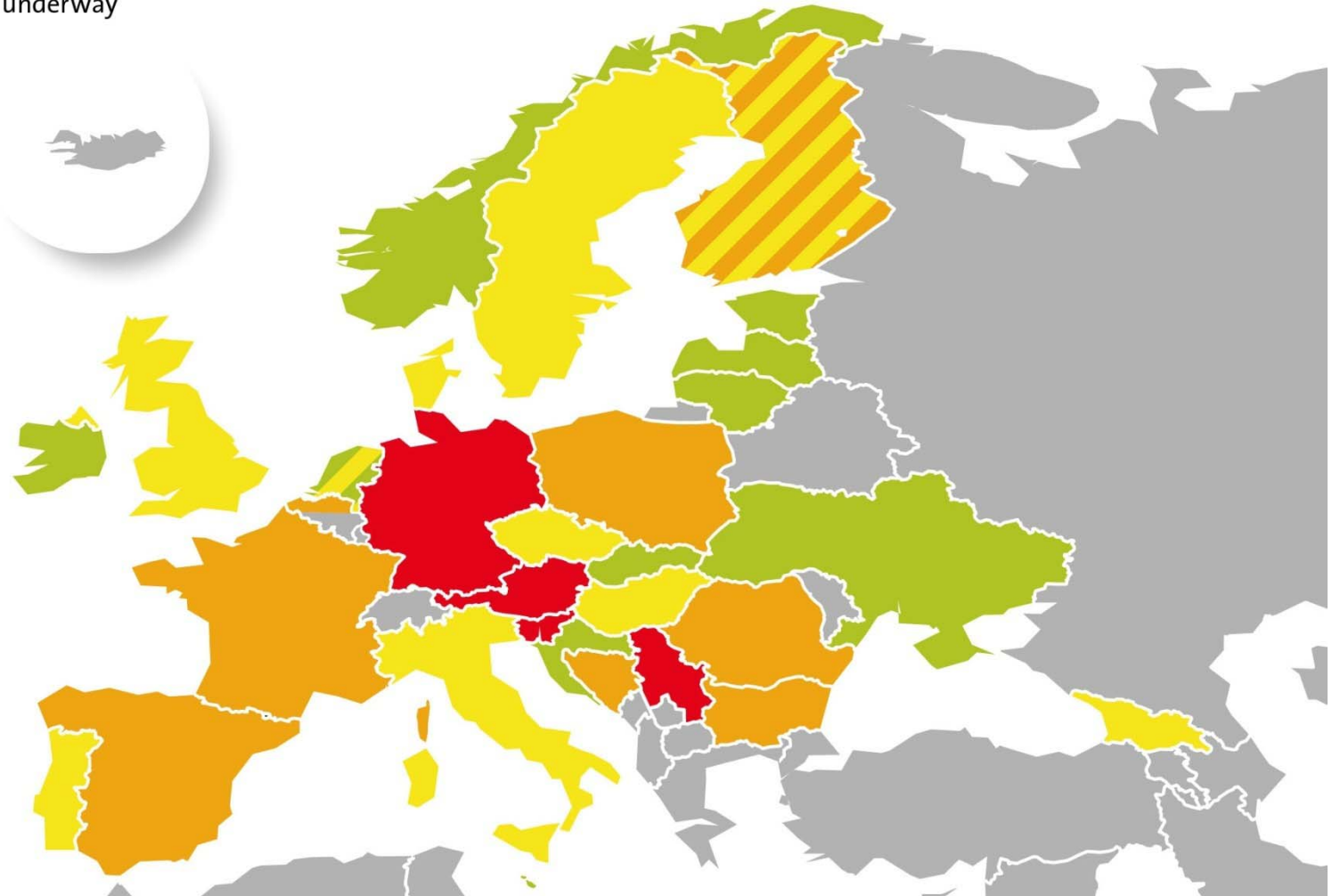


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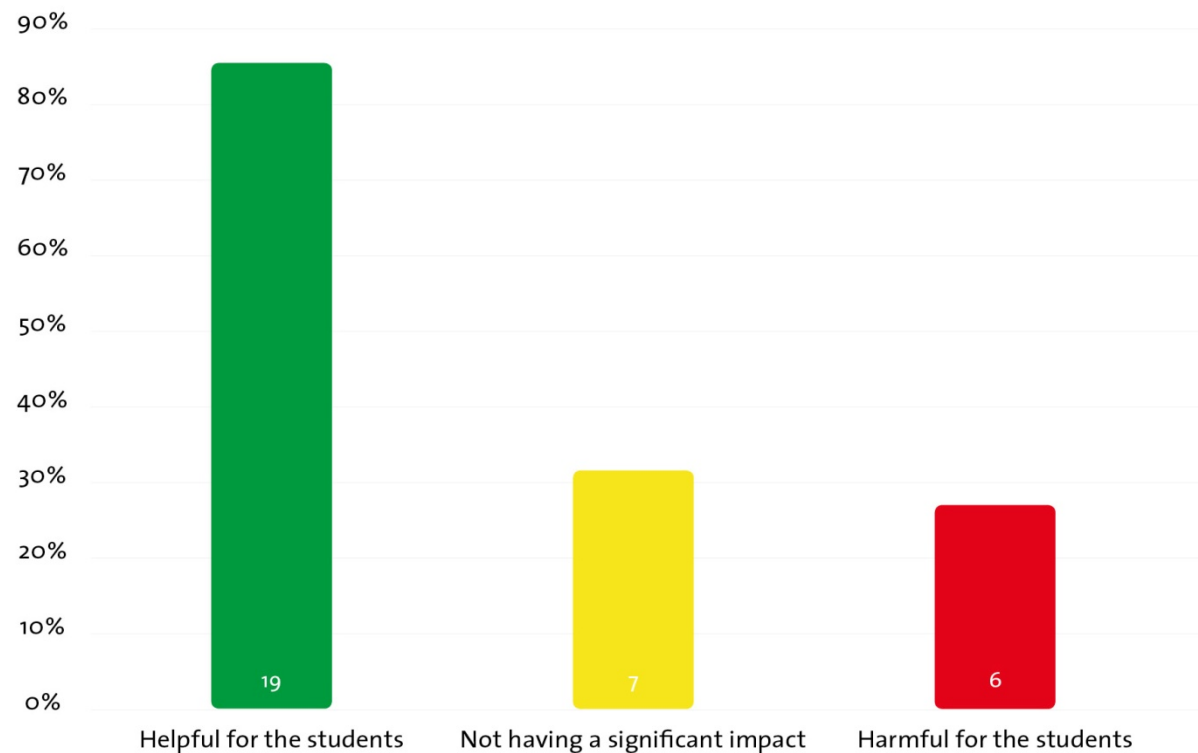
fig. 25—Reform of degree structures in Europe

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



Perception of student unions on degree reform

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

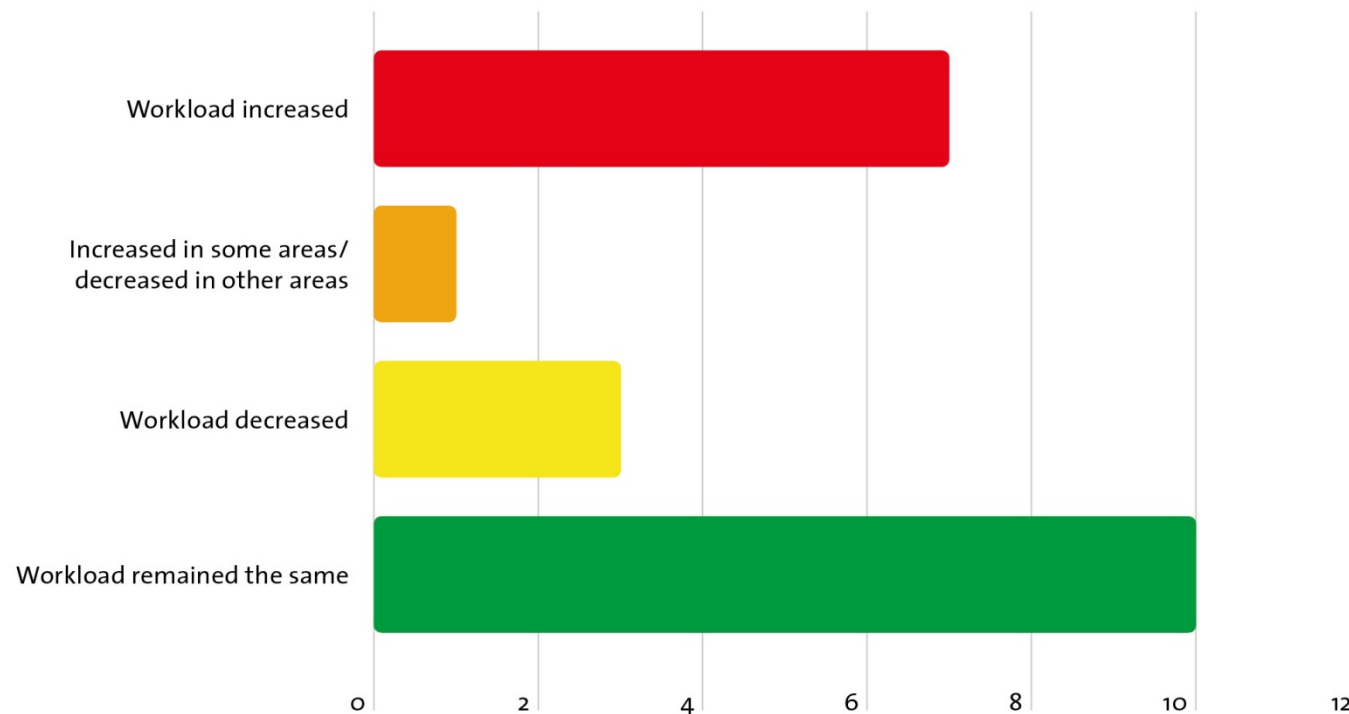


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Changes of student workload after ECTS implementation

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



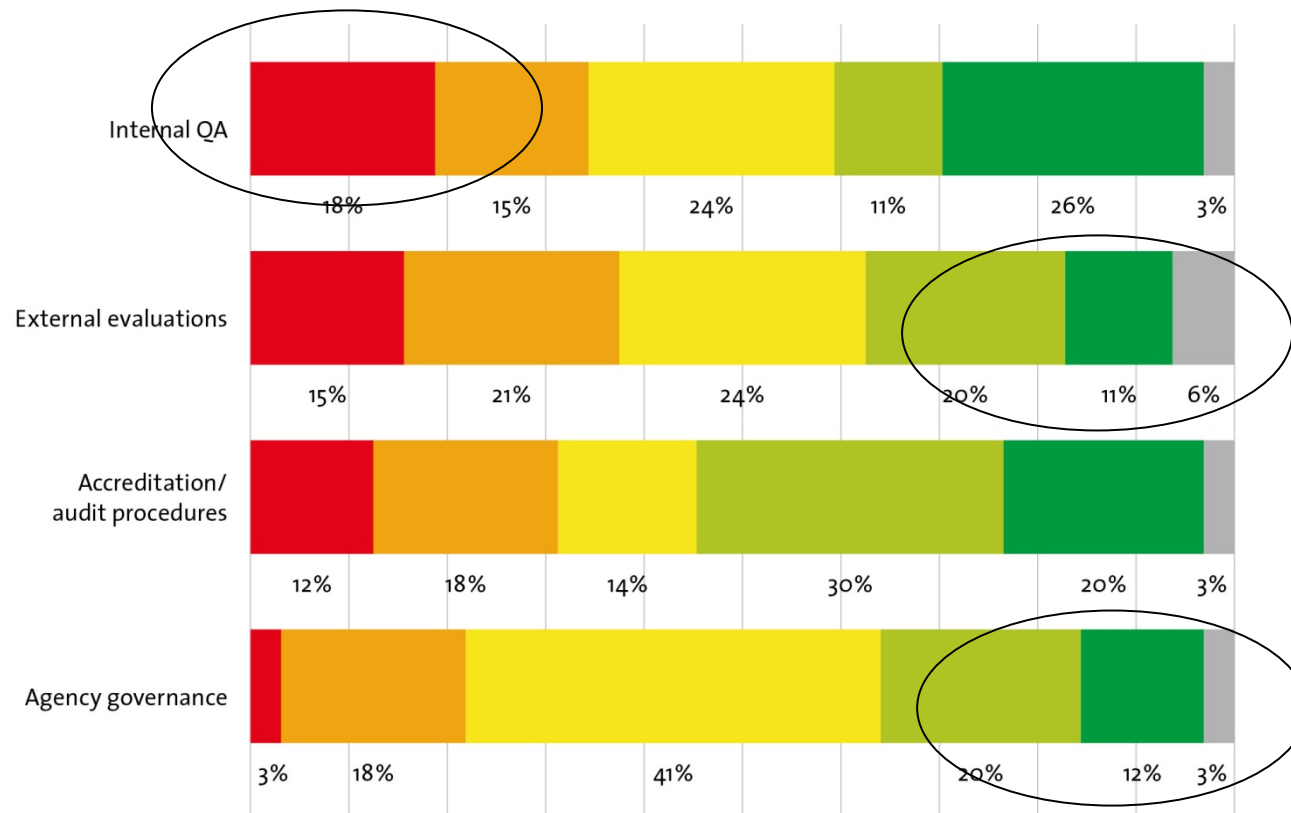
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Student participation in QA processes

fig. 12—Student participation in quality assurance processes

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



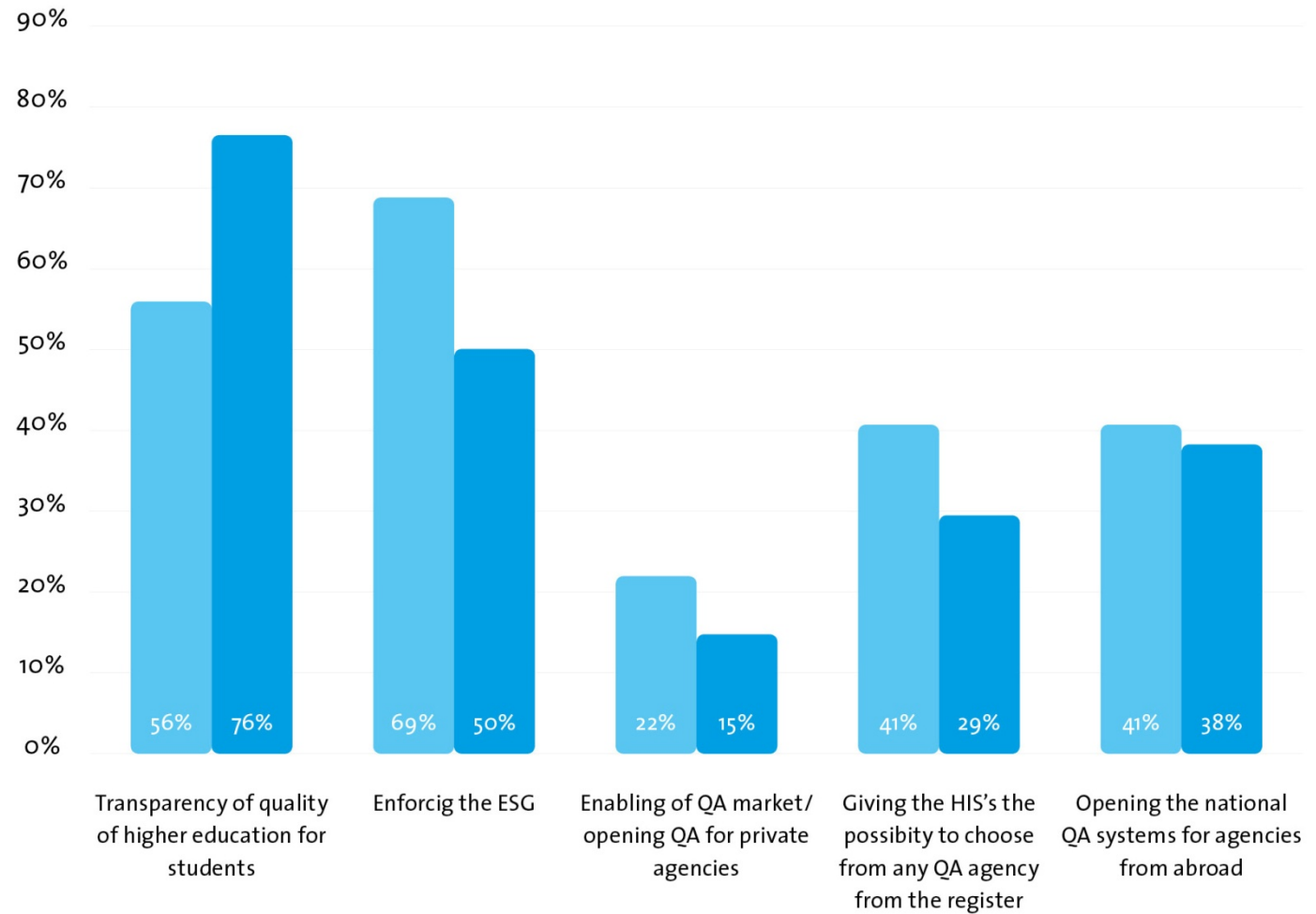
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EQAR expected impact

fig. 16—Expected impact of the register

- 2009
- 2007



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Thank you!



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