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QUALITY ASSURANCE OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

TPG-B meeting

June 2026, Sèvre (France)

Sophie Guillet, TPG C co-chair (France)

Head of cooperation and development – Hcéres

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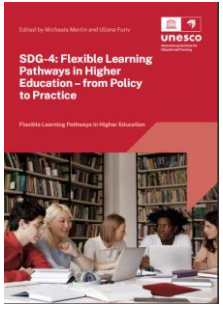
REMINDER – WHY QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS?

As mentioned in the key commitments reaffirmed by the Tirana Communiqué (2024, p.8):

"We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, which need to be flexible, properly delivered, **quality assured**, and recognised, in all higher education programmes. This also includes the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials. We need to ensure student-centred learning is a reality for all students"



Flexible learning pathways can be defined as (IIEP-UNESCO, p.46) :

« entry points and re-entry points at all ages and all educational levels, strengthened links between formal and non-formal structures, and recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education »

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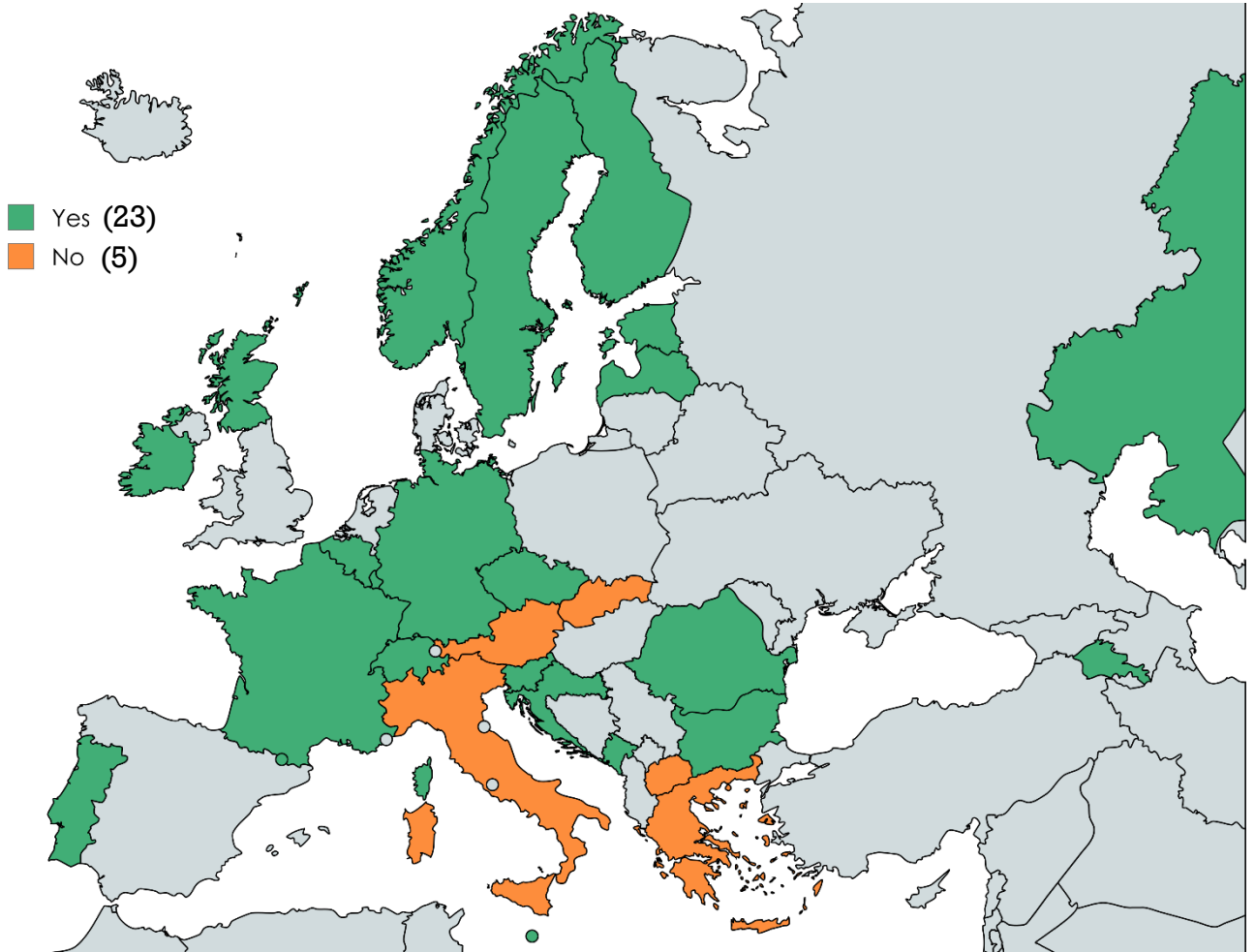
QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

SURVEY RESULTS RESPONDENTS' NATIONAL REULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Does your country currently have national regulations or guidelines for flexible learning pathways? (e.g. a law or act, or national framework)

28 respondents



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QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

UNDERLYING CONCEPTS FOR QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATWHAYS

Regulatory and policy frameworks

Pathways for getting into higher education	Pathways for getting through higher education	Pathways for getting out of higher education and transition with the labour market
e.g. quality assurance of recognition of prior learning, quality assurance for pathways between tertiary education sub-sectors…	e.g. quality assurance supporting data collection on student success through flexible delivery modes and time and pace of study	e.g. quality assurance processes including consultation with the labour market and fostering work-based learning

bologna process
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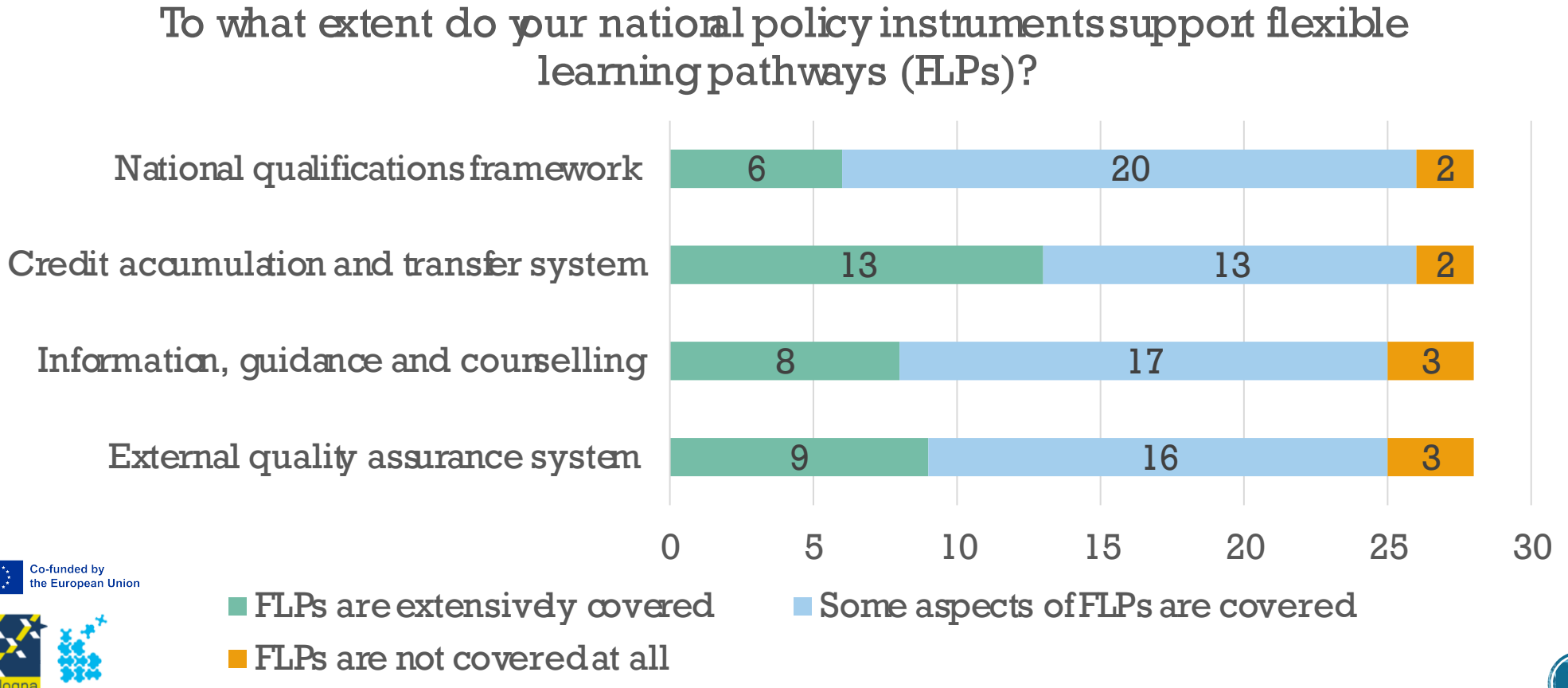
QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

SURVEY RESULTS – GENERAL QUESTIONS



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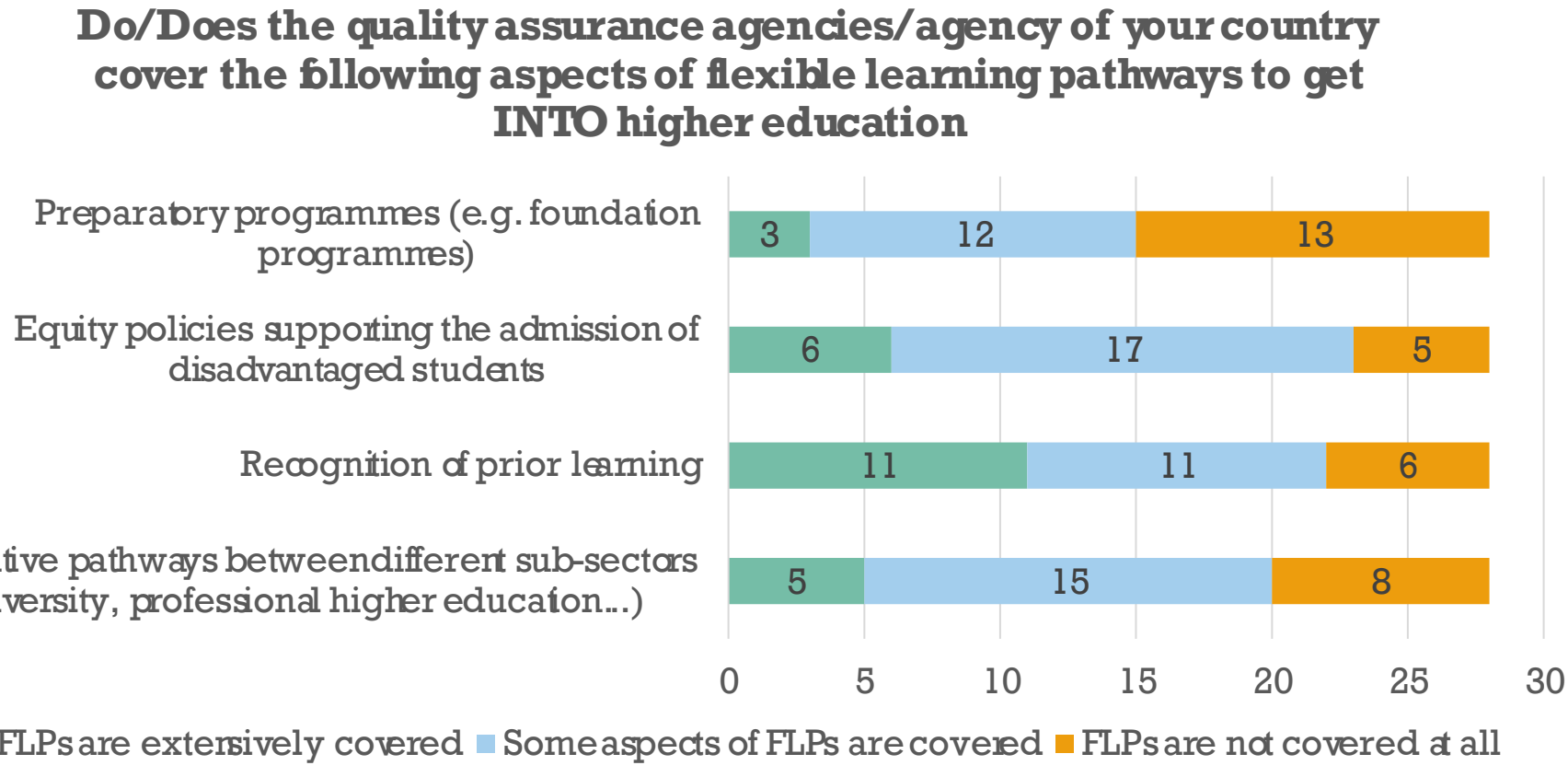
QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

SURVEY RESULTS – QA QUESTIONS



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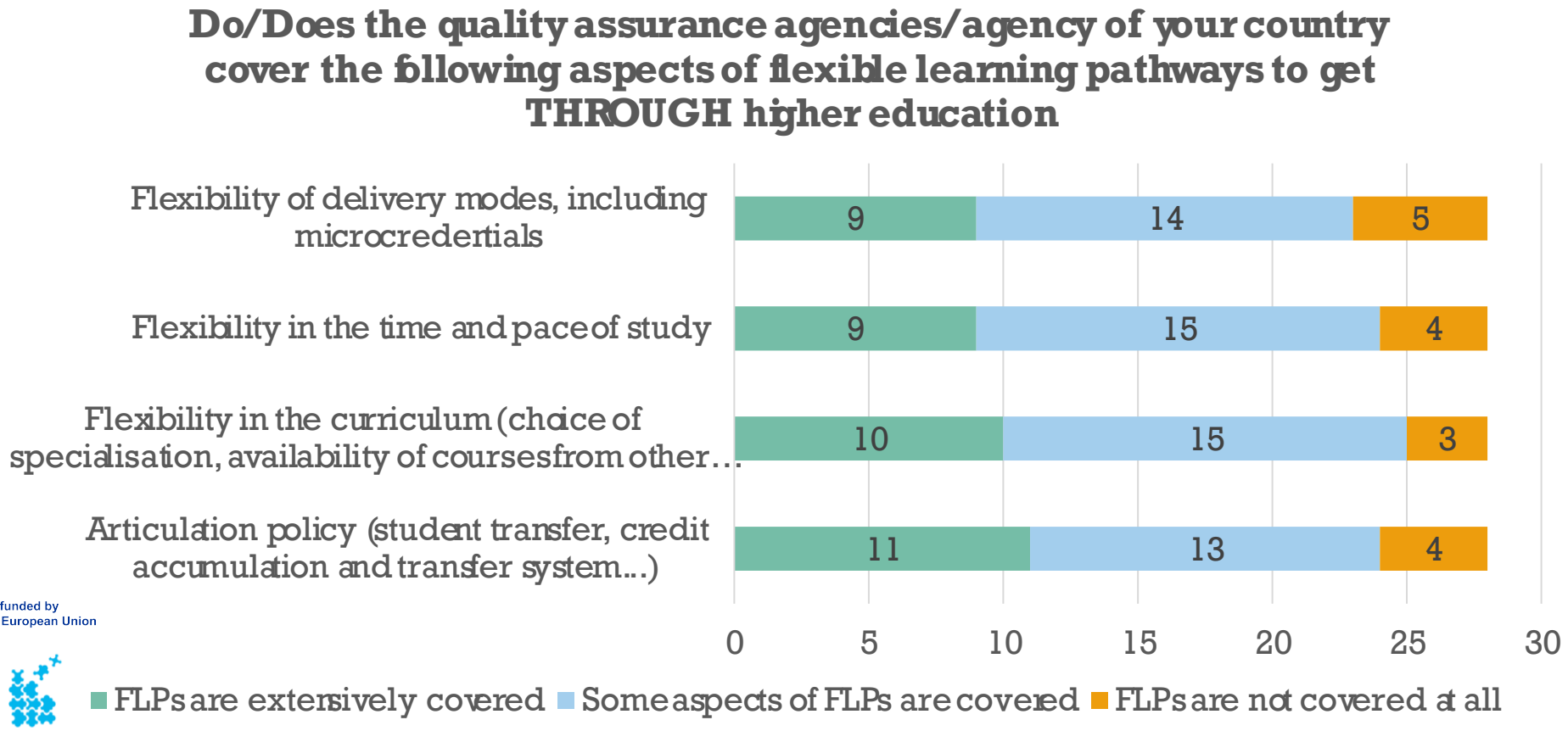
SURVEY RESULTS – QA QUESTIONS



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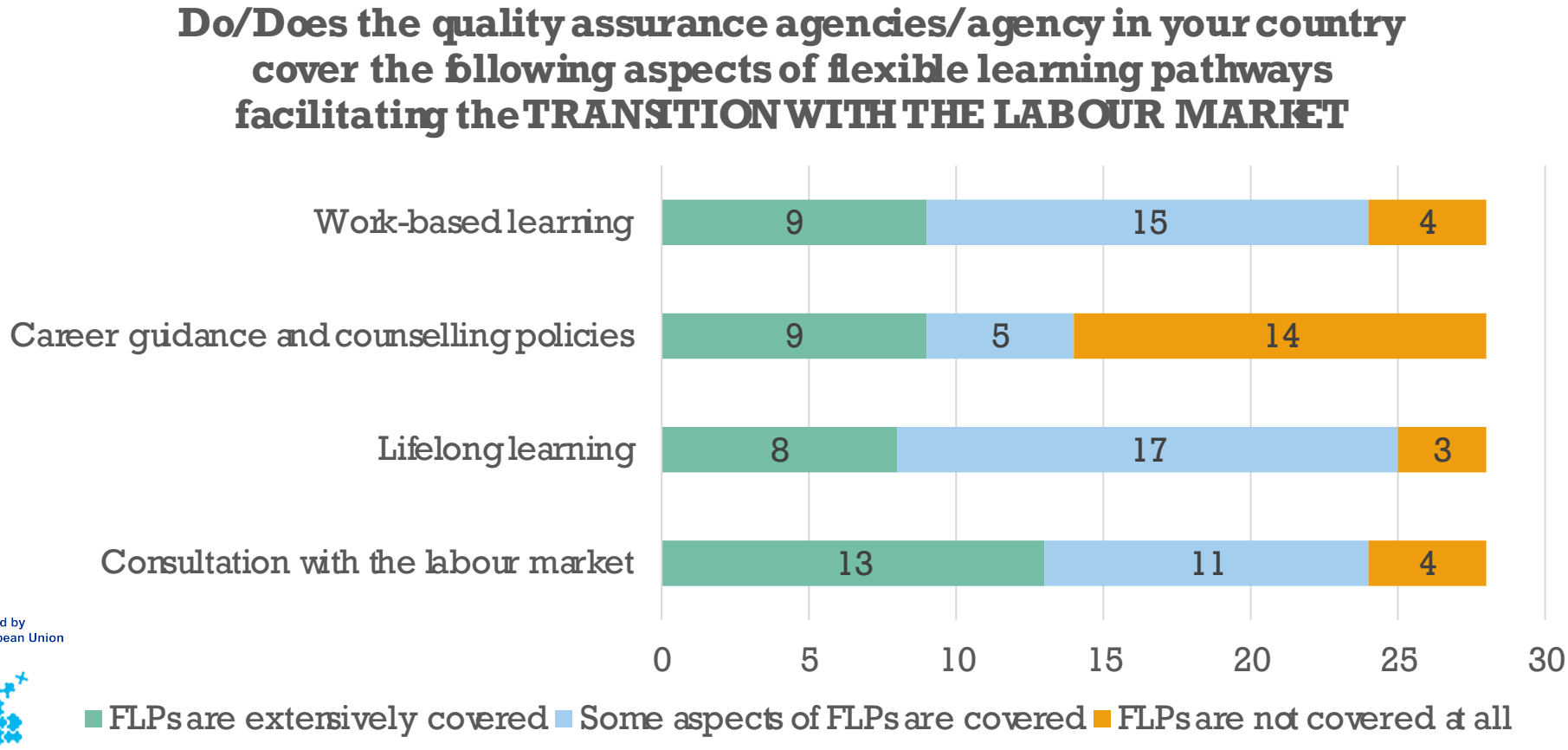
SURVEY RESULTS – QA QUESTIONS



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QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

Ministries	In national regulations, **define FLPs in a broad sense to safeguard the au**tonomy of higher education institutions in implementing them.
	Include FLPs in the national qualifications framework and foster FLPs across different tertiary education sub-sectors
Agencies	**Place a stronger emphasis on FLPs in institutional-level reviews**, treating them as a core institutional policy rather than quality-assuring all aspects of FLPs at programme level.
	Contribute to knowledge-sharing on good practices related to the quality assurance of FLPs (e.g. thematic analysis based on external reports; thematic evaluations on specific aspects of FLPs…)
Higher education institutions	**Include flexible learning pathways in the institutional strategy**, supporting their implementation with targeted policies disseminated both at institutional and programme level.
	Work with all stakeholders to define clear indicators with which to monitor and continuously support the development of FLPs, ensuring they are fit for purpose.

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QA OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

SIQA

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Policy brief External quality assurance of flexible learning pathways in the European Higher Education Area (November 2025)

This policy brief is one of the deliverables of the SIQA project (Support for the enhancement-oriented implementation of the quality assurance key commitments), supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, and part of the action plan of the Bologna Follow-Up Group's Thematic Peer Group on Quality Assurance (TPG-C).[1]

Executive summary

Building on the commitment to have quality assured flexible learning pathways (FLPs), which was reaffirmed by the ministers of the European Higher Education Area in 2024, this policy brief maps country practices and suggests actions for implementation. Of the 28 countries surveyed, 23 have national regulations or guidelines for FLPs. Regarding quality assurance, most countries (25 out of 28) cover aspects of FLPs in their external quality assurance standards. In particular, FLPs to navigate through higher education (articulation policy, flexibility in the delivery mode, in the time and pace of study as well as in the curriculum) are the most widely covered aspects. FLPs for entry into higher education, including equity policy and recognition of prior learning are relatively well covered by countries while preparatory programmes and alternative pathways between different tertiary education sub-sectors are not covered by 13 and 8 out of the 28 countries respectively. Finally, as regards the quality assurance of FLPs to transition with the labour market, work-based learning, lifelong learning and labour market consultation are reviewed by at least 24 countries while 13 countries do not consider career guidance and counselling at all. Overall, it seems that the Tirana ministerial commitment on quality-assured FLPs appears to be rather well advanced, as most of the countries surveyed already include FLPs in their quality assurance systems. However, not all aspects are covered evenly. To better support policy implementation, this policy brief therefore invites:

- Ministries to define FLPs in a broad sense in national regulations to safeguard the autonomy of higher education institutions in implementing them.
- Agencies to put stronger emphasis on FLPs in institutional-level reviews as a core institutional policy rather than quality assuring all aspects of FLPs at programme level.
- Higher education institutions to include FLPs in their institutional strategy and support their implementation with targeted policies and monitoring indicators in a fit-for-purpose manner.

[1] Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority (EACEA) can be held responsible for them.

https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/downloads/bologna-processus-policy-brief.pdf

bologna process

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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SIQA PROJECT
Support for the enhancement-oriented implementation of the quality assurance key commitment

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