Recognition of prior learning

Students' perspective

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Why does it matter for students?

RPL is a tool for widening access:

- Helps reduce barriers to entering and progressing in higher education.
- Particularly important for: mature learners, lifelong learners, refugees and displaced persons, students with disabilities, learners from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Supports more diverse student populations and non-linear learning pathways.

Higher education should recognise what students know and can do, not only where they learned it.

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Students' position on RPL

ESU calls for:

- Clear and accessible information on criteria, procedures, timelines, and appeals mechanisms.
- Administrative and advisory support throughout the process.
- Recognition processes should be free of charge.
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning, because valuable learning outcomes should be recognised regardless of where they were acquired.
- Recognition of active citizenship and civic engagement.
- Student representatives to participate in monitoring RPL processes.
- Inclusion of RPL in internal and external quality assurance.
- Extra support for refugee students, where focus should be on learning outcomes rather than paperwork alone.

Recognition should not depend on a student's ability to navigate complicated bureaucracy.

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Data from BWSE 2024

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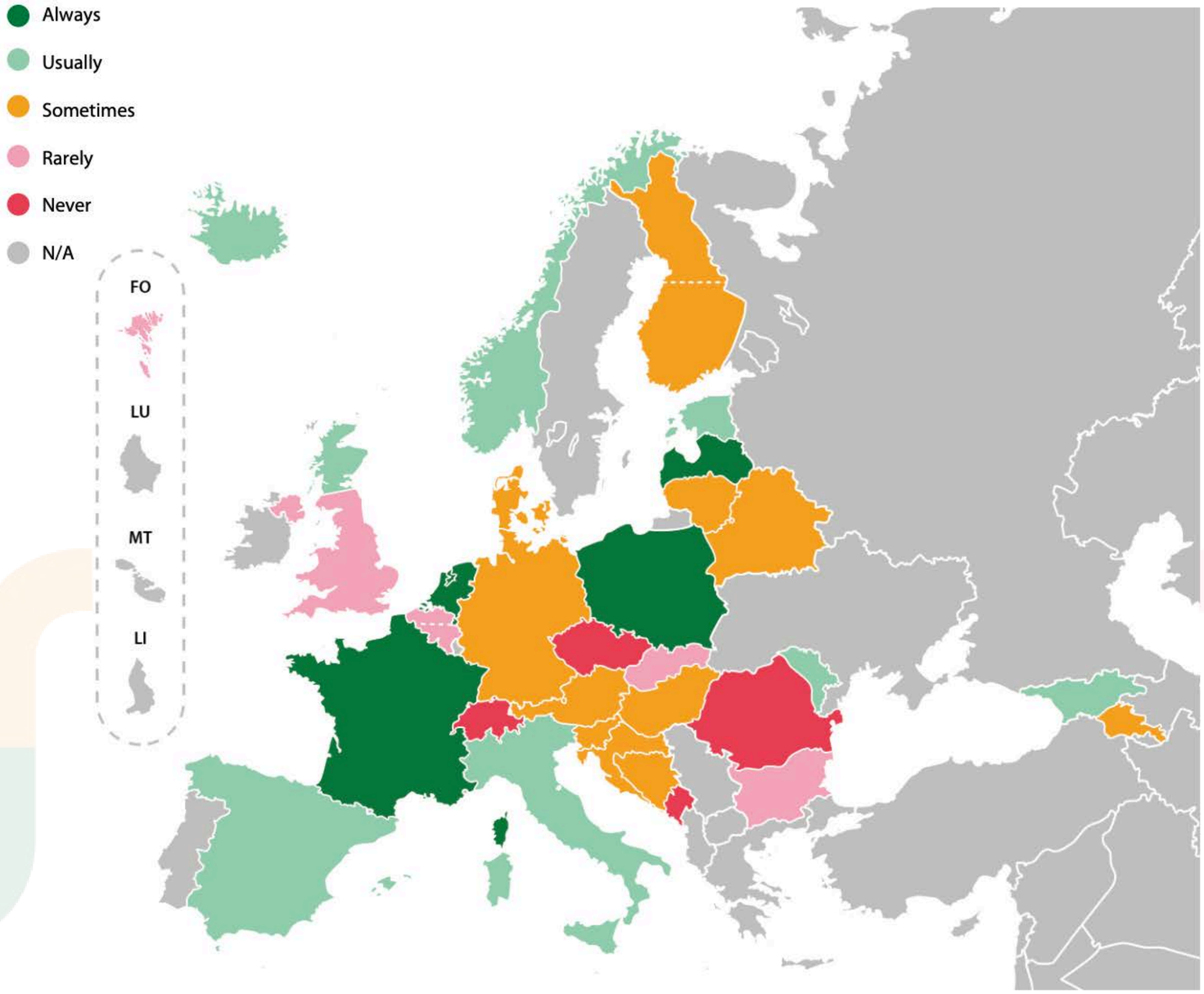
7.6. Availability of recognition of prior learning for students



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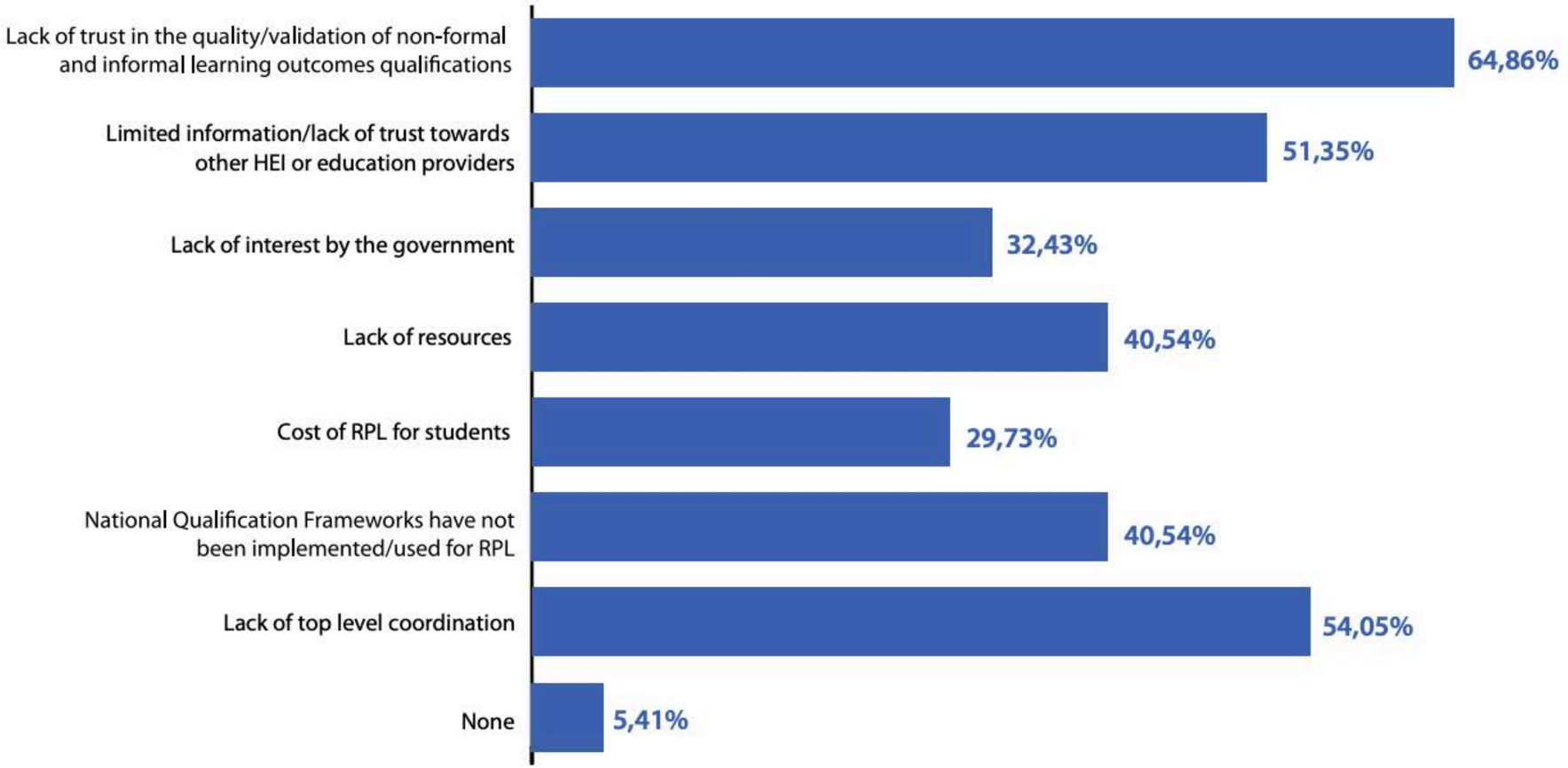
7.7. Perceived main barriers for the implementation of recognition of prior learning



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Examples from student unions

- **Austria (ÖH):** Unclear recognition rules lead HEIs to recognise less learning than students could claim.
- **Germany (fzs):** Limited recognition of non-academic learning; lack of awareness of existing legal frameworks.
- **Finland (SYL):** Good practice is that student representatives can receive academic credits through RPL.
- **France (FAGE):** Student engagement is recognised through RPL and diploma endorsements, but practices vary due to limited national coordination.

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