

« Credit systems » and « Learning outcomes » in Europe

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Presentation overview

- I. Introduction to EUA
- II. The European higher education landscape in 2010
- III. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- IV. Learning outcomes
- V. Conclusion

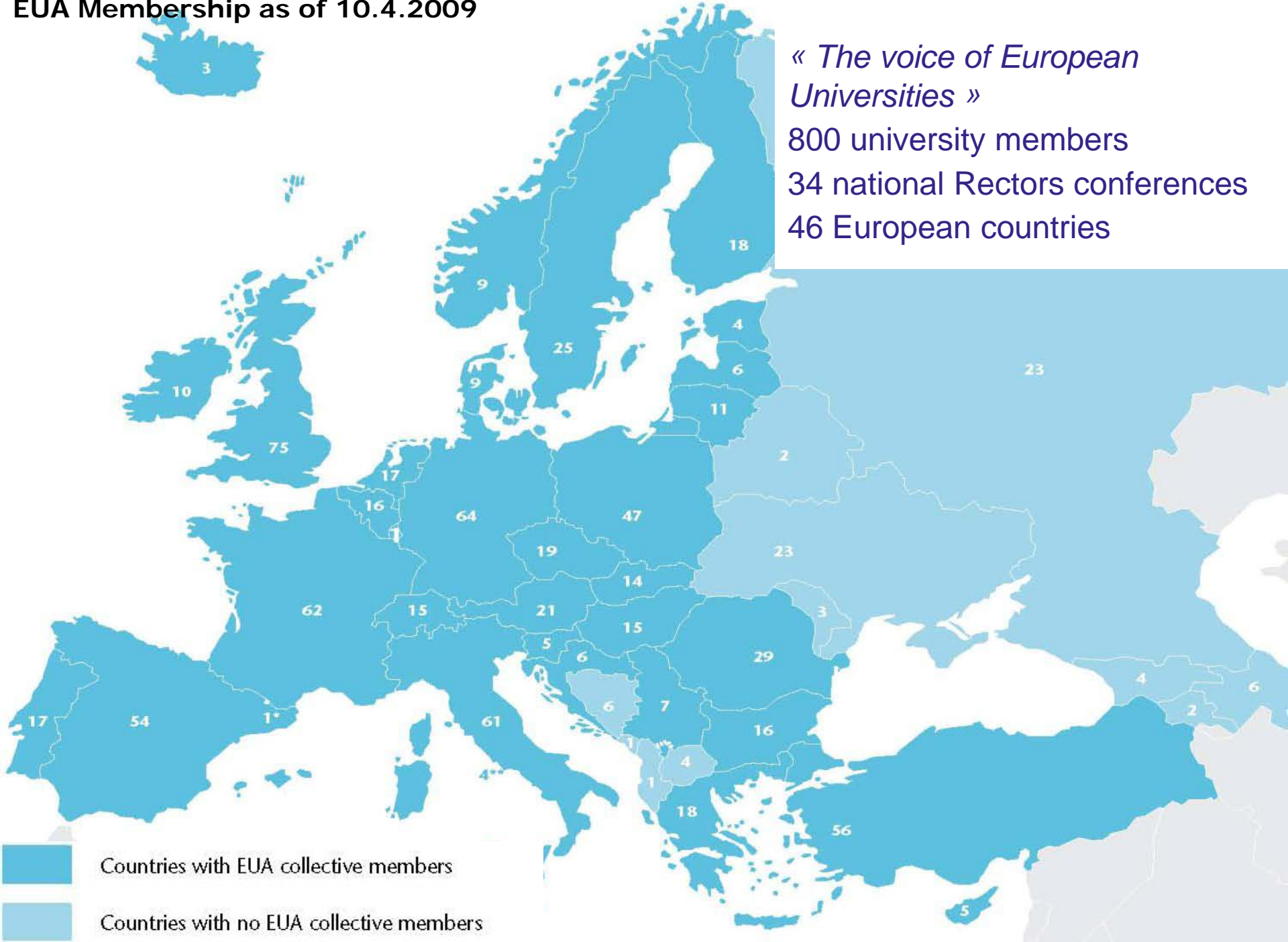
I. Introduction to EUA



- Membership organisation of nearly 800 members: universities and national rector conferences in 46 countries
- Mission: To ensure that universities have the means to fulfill their three-fold public mission (research, teaching and service to society)
- Activities: Policy development, projects, research and publication
- Active in EU and in a wider Europe: Unique overview of different processes that take place at different levels

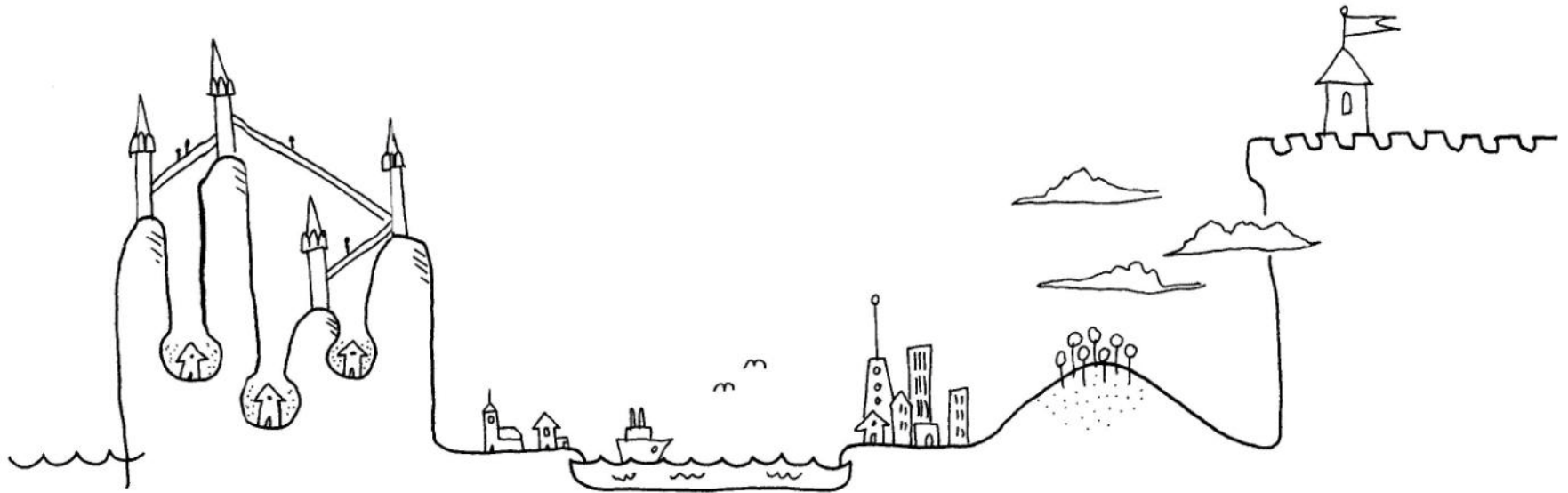
EUA Membership as of 10.4.2009

« *The voice of European Universities* »

800 university members
34 national Rectors conferences
46 European countries



 Countries with EUA collective members
 Countries with no EUA collective members



THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF EUROPE:
DIVERSITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN COUNTRIES

Patrick Sanders 2008

II. The European Higher Education landscape in 2010

- Establishment of European Higher Education Area consisting of 47 European countries
- Much has been achieved – but need for consolidation and communication of reforms
- European Research Area to be linked to EHEA
- Higher Education remains mainly a national responsibility
- Growing EU competence in research
- Rapidly developing internationalisation at all levels as a response to globalisation
- **Growing importance of the universities**

III. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

- ECTS – For the purpose of credit transfer
- ECTS – For the purpose of credit accumulation
- Principles of ECTS
- Use of ECTS
- Tools for ECTS
- ECTS implementation

III.1 ECTS - for the purpose of credit transfer

- ECTS developed under the SOCRATES ERASMUS Programme by the European Commission in **1989**
- **Why?** Student mobility needs academic recognition of periods of study abroad
- **How?** Introducing common tools that facilitate recognition (e.g. learning agreement, transcript of records, course catalogue)
- **Objectives:**
 - ✓ Facilitate student mobility
 - ✓ Enable transfer of credit between higher education institutions in different countries
 - ✓ Promote the European dimension in higher education

III.2 ECTS - For the purpose of credit accumulation

- **Bologna process:** student-centred learning, transparency of qualifications in Europe, flexible learning paths
- **Why?** Need for a credit accumulation system
- **How?** Together with other Bologna tools, ECTS enhances the transparency of European systems and thus promotes the attractiveness of European higher education
- **Objectives:**
 - ✓ Support curricular reform and student mobility within and between institutions, national systems and internationally

III.3 Principles of ECTS

- A learner-centred system based on:
 - ✓ Learning outcomes
 - ✓ Notional student workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes
- For credit accumulation and transfer
- Based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes.
- It aims to support institutions in
 - ✓ planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning
 - ✓ student mobility

III.3 ECTS principles: Notional student workload

- Time an average student at a given level needs to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, exams, self study, etc.) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.
- Notional student workload \neq contact hours or courses

III.3 Importance of notional student workload

- Support tool for curriculum planning
- Provides value to the currency – mean to quantify learning outcomes
- Acts as a guarantee that the curriculum is not overloaded or not demanding enough
- Focus on students' time investment, rather than teachers' time investment
- Should be evaluated regularly

III.4 Use of ECTS

- 60 ECTS credits are attached to the learning outcomes and the associated notional student workload of a full time year of formal learning (academic year)
- The average workload in Europe is somewhere around 1500 hours
 - ✓ 38 weeks, 40h/week of studying
 - ✓ 1 ECTS = 25 hours (e.g. Austria, Italy, Malta)
- Up to national regulation to set amount hours/credit
 - ✓ Finland: 1600 hours => 1 ECTS = 27 Hours
 - ✓ Belgium (FI), Germany, Greece, Poland => 1500-1800 hours = 1 ECTS = 25-30 Hours

III.4 Use of ECTS

- Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placements, laboratory work, etc.).
- The number of credits ascribed to each component is a reflection of the approximate quantity of work each component requires in relation to the completion of a full academic year of study in the programme

III.4 Use of ECTS

- Credits are awarded to individual learners (full time or part time) after completion of the learning activities required by a formal programme of study or by a single unit and the successful assessment of the expected learning outcomes.
- Credits may be accumulated in view of obtaining qualifications as decided by the degree awarding institution.
- Detailed arrangements for credit accumulation, including the use of notional workload, are determined at national and institutional level, within the parameters of ECTS.

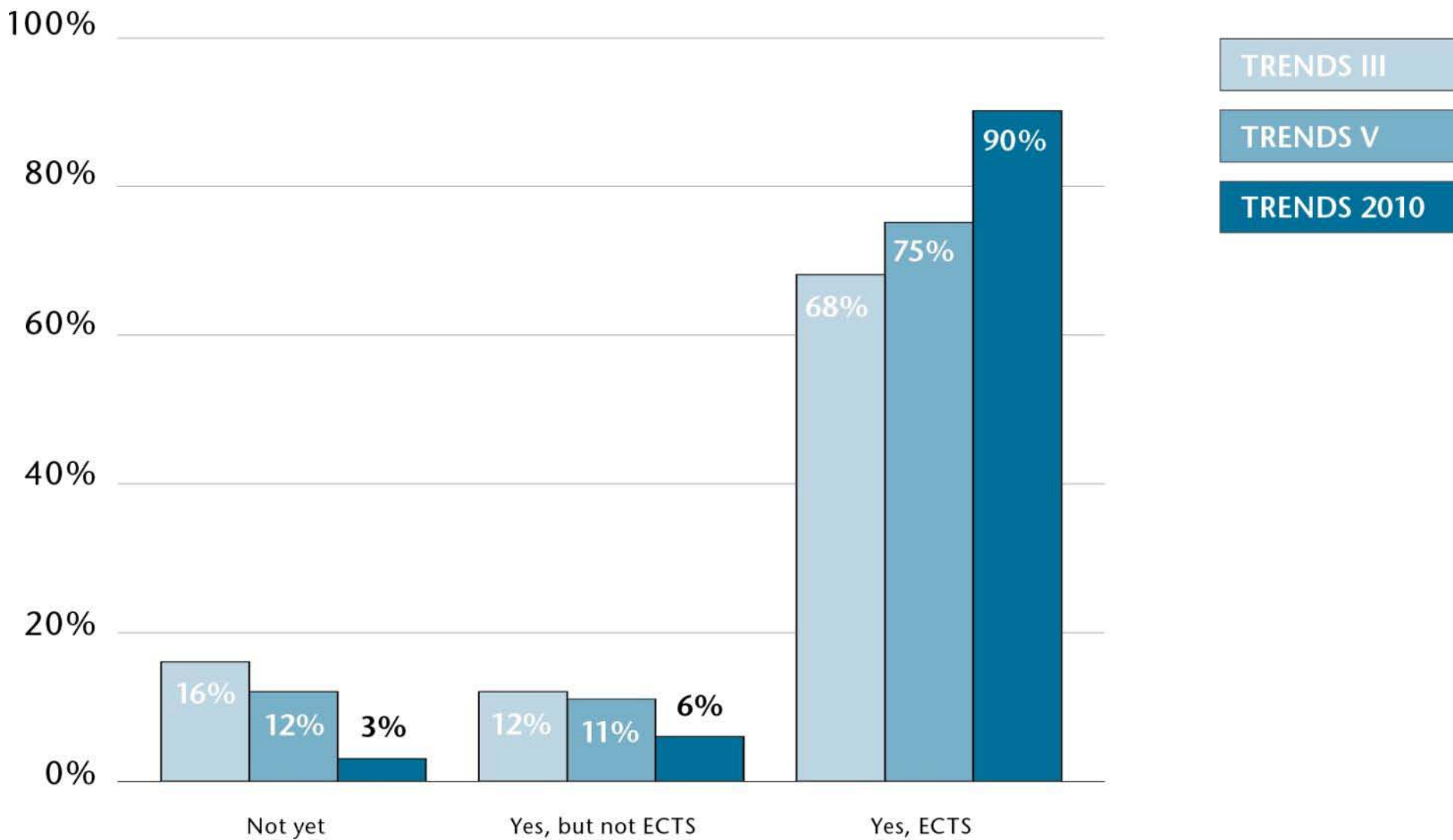
III.5 Tools for ECTS

- Course catalogue (information on the institution and its study programmes)
- Learning agreement (list of courses to be taken and agreed upon between the student and the institutions concerned) => Ensure recognition
- Transcript of records (documents the performance of the student with list of courses, credits gained, local and ECTS grades)

III.6 ECTS implementation

- Data from Trends 2010:
 - ✓ The 6th report on the state of “Bologna” implementation in universities, reflecting a decade of change in European higher education
 - ✓ Based on:
 - HEI questionnaire (N=831)
 - 28 Institutional site visits in 16 countries (incl. Russia)
 - 2 Focus group interviews
 - Previous studies on Diversity, autonomy and the implementation of master degrees in Europe

Table 15. Q21. Does your institution have a credit transfer system for all Bachelor's and Master's programmes?



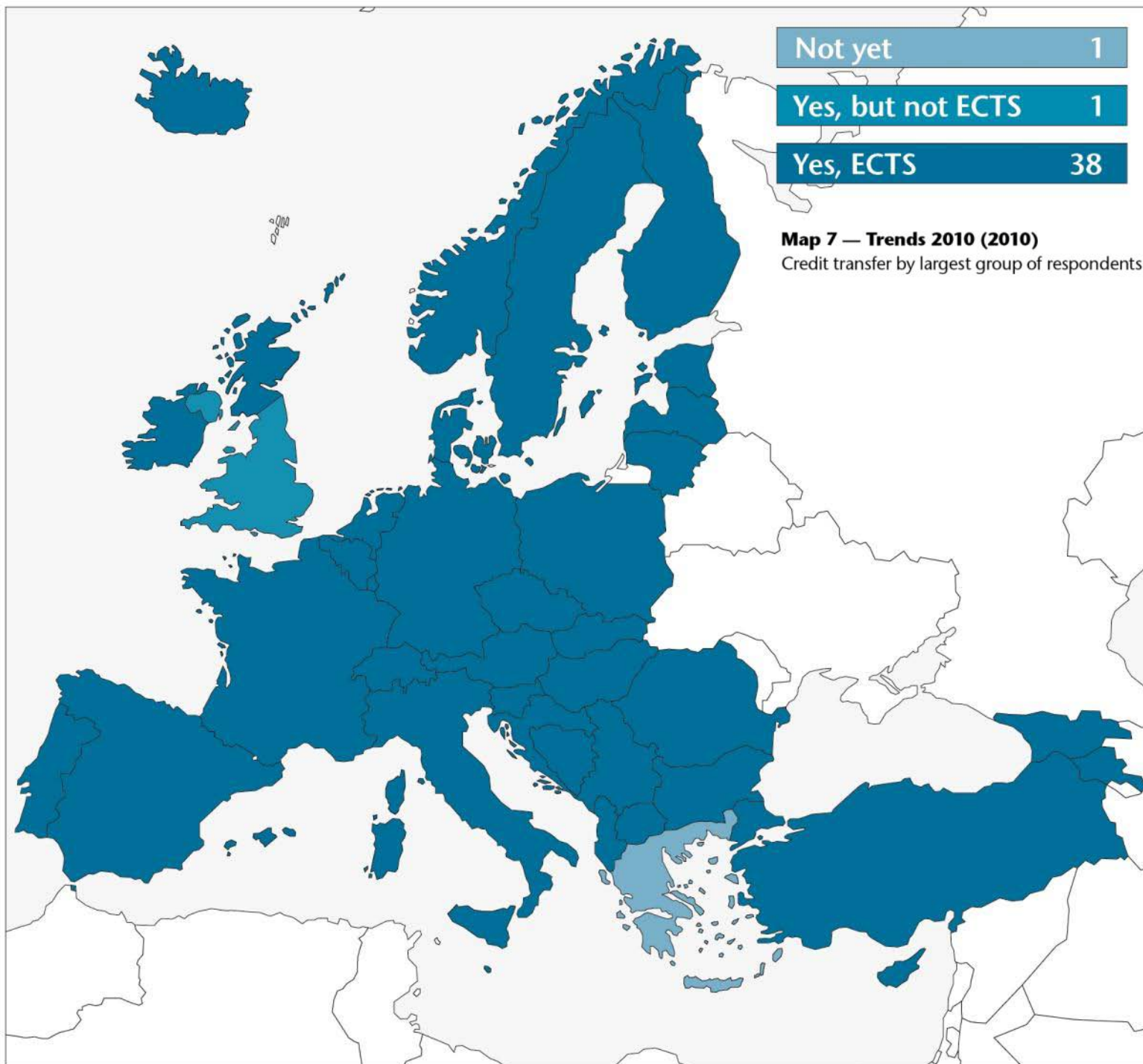
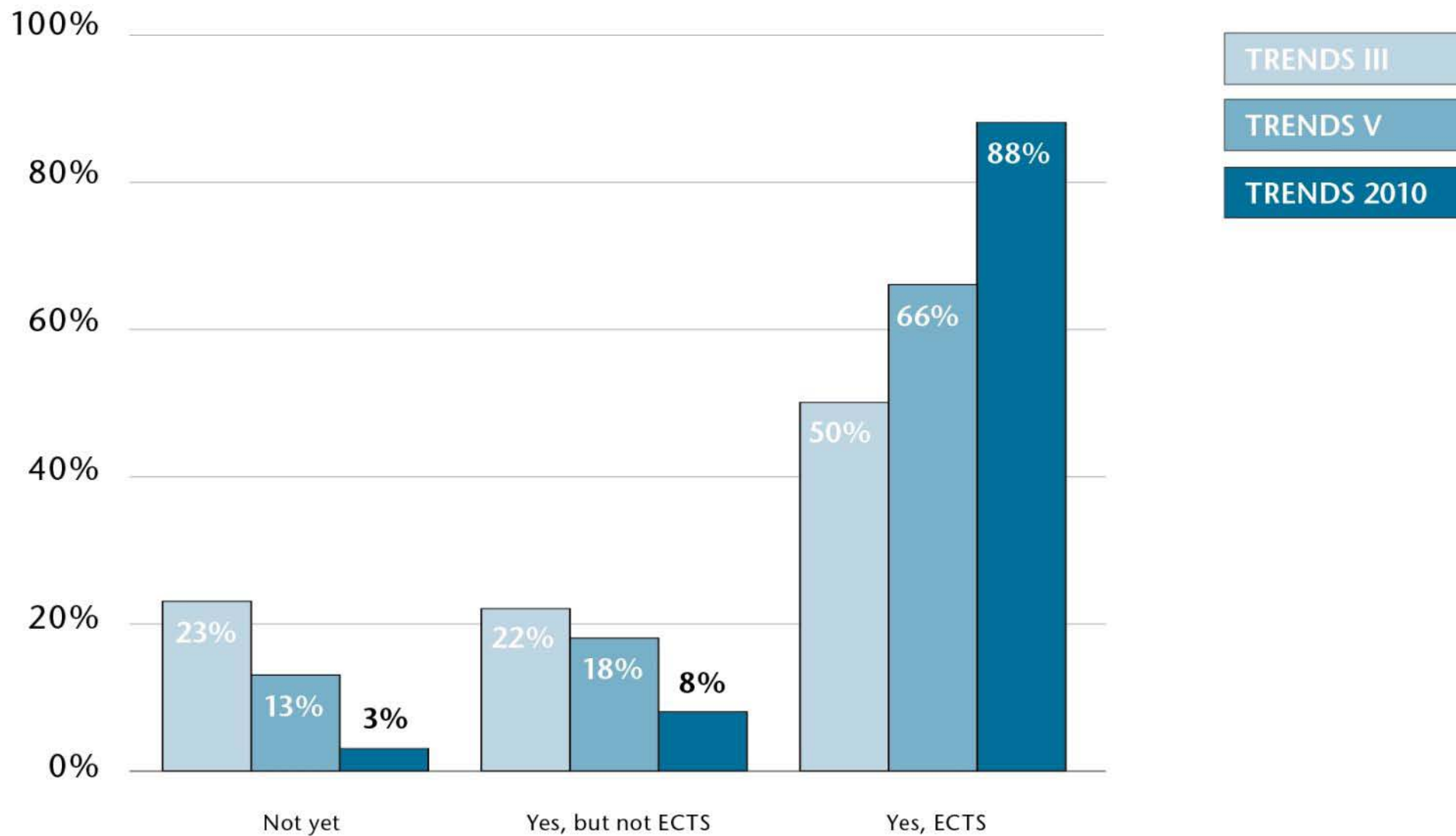


Table 16. Q20. Does your institution use a credit accumulation system for all Bachelor's and Master's programmes?



III.6 ECTS implementation

- Applied differently across Europe
- In some cases implemented superficially and inconsistently within and between HEIs
- Notional student workload still considered as contact hours (7 countries)
- + not properly or consistently estimated
- Still problems with recognition of mobility periods (only 44% claim that there are no problems)
- Little evidence of link between ECTS and learning outcomes at course/module level

IV. Learning outcomes

- Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning
- Defined as a mixture of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and understanding
- Specific methodological approach for the expression and development of the curriculum
- Potential bridge between higher education and other educational sectors

IV. Importance of learning outcomes

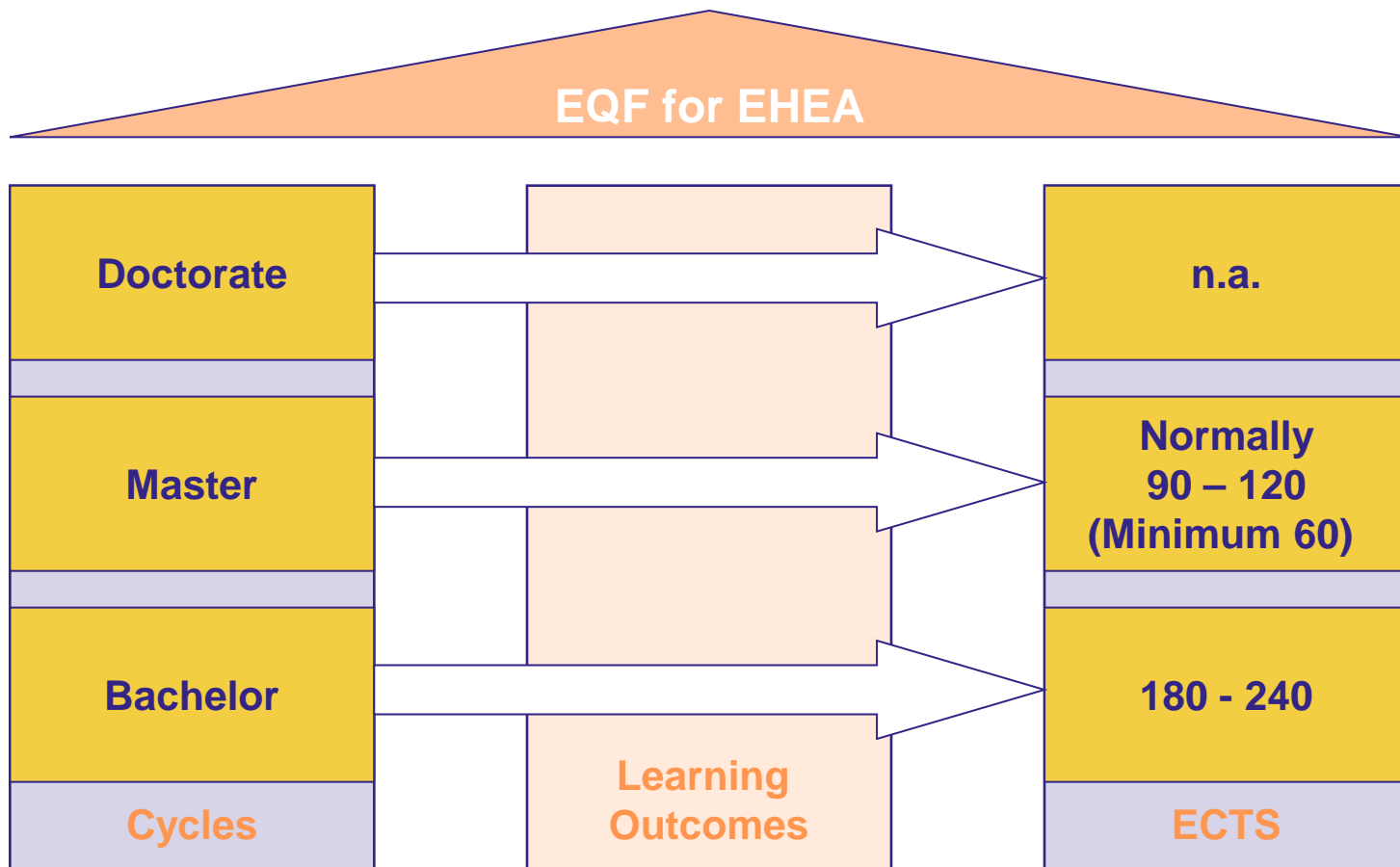
- Focus on the learner, not the teacher
- Positive impact on teaching-learning-assessment relationship
- Aid for quality assurance (external reference points)
- Provides information to the learner on expectations
- Ensures transparency to the outside world
- Helps international progression, transparency and recognition

IV. Qualifications Frameworks

- To accommodate the:
 - ✓ Three-cycle degree structure
 - ✓ A diversity of national approaches
 - ✓ Need for international transparency
 - ✓ Increased mobility
 - ✓ Trust and Quality
 - ✓ Focus on student centred learning

- A European Qualifications Framework for higher education, based on learning outcomes was conceived.

IV. Credit Ranges per Cycle



IV. Dublin descriptors

- Generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications at the end of a cycle
- Look at knowledge and understanding, its application, making judgments, communication, learning skills
- Should be read in relation to each other (B – M – D)
- Are the top of the iceberg

IV. Different levels for learning outcomes

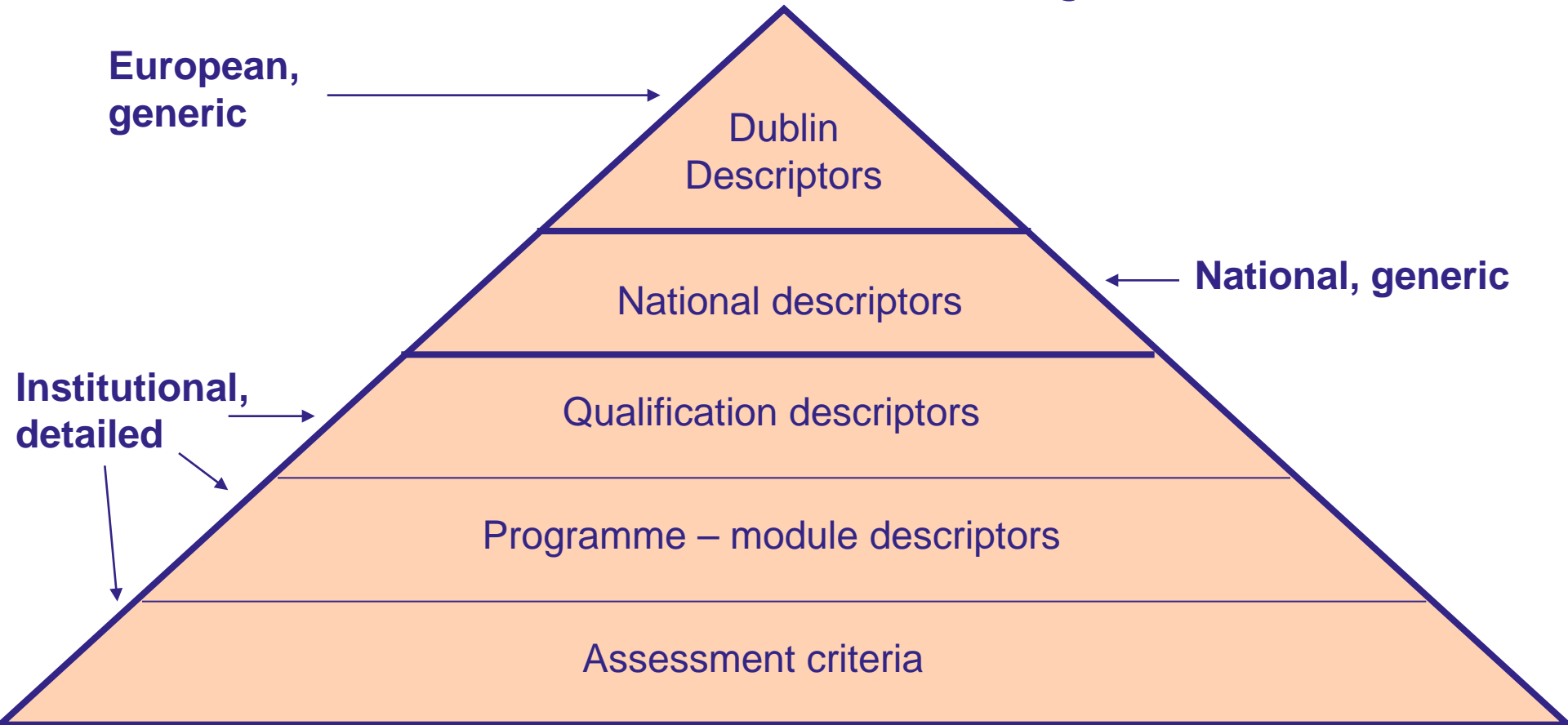
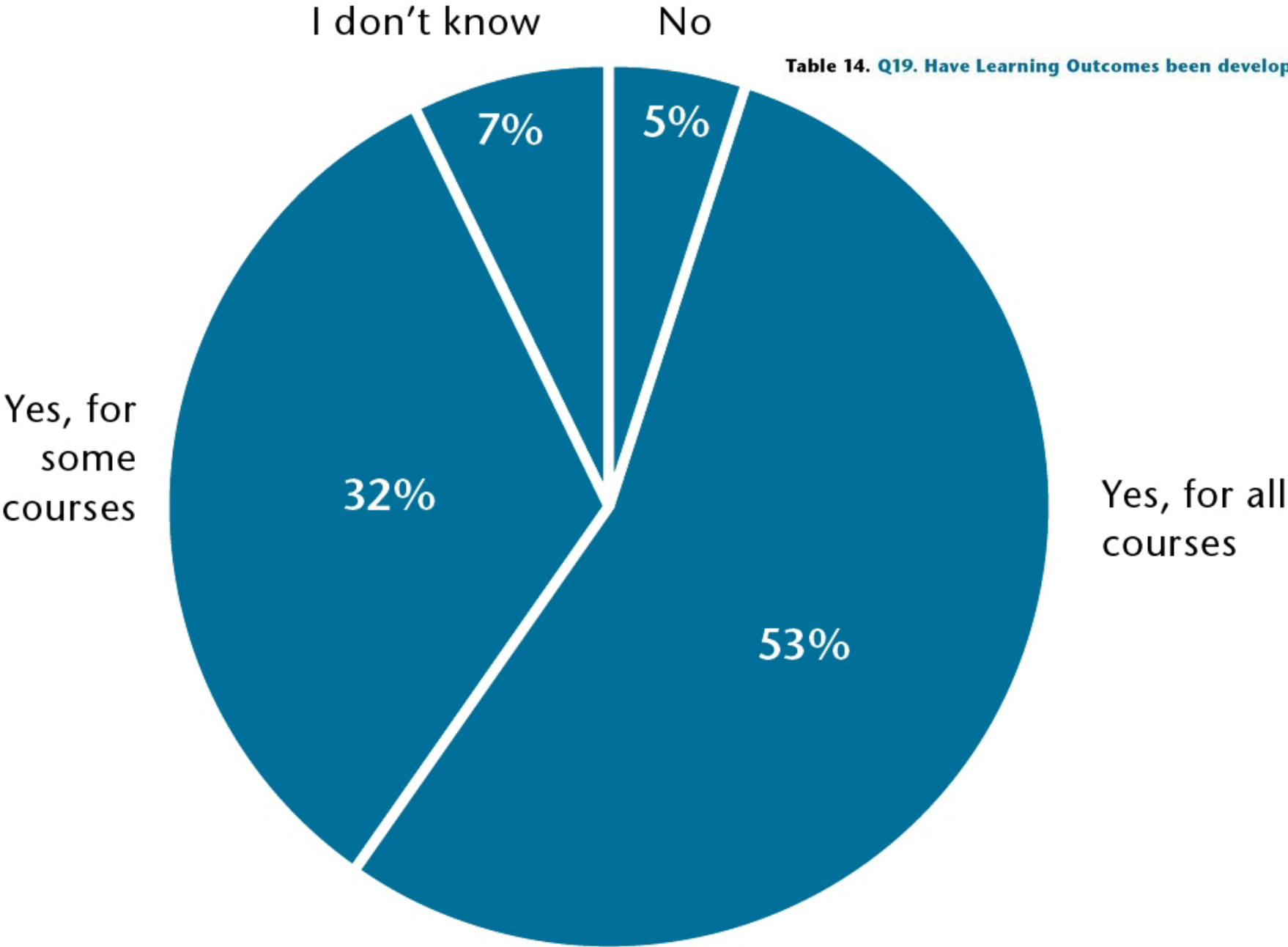


Table 14. Q19. Have Learning Outcomes been developed?

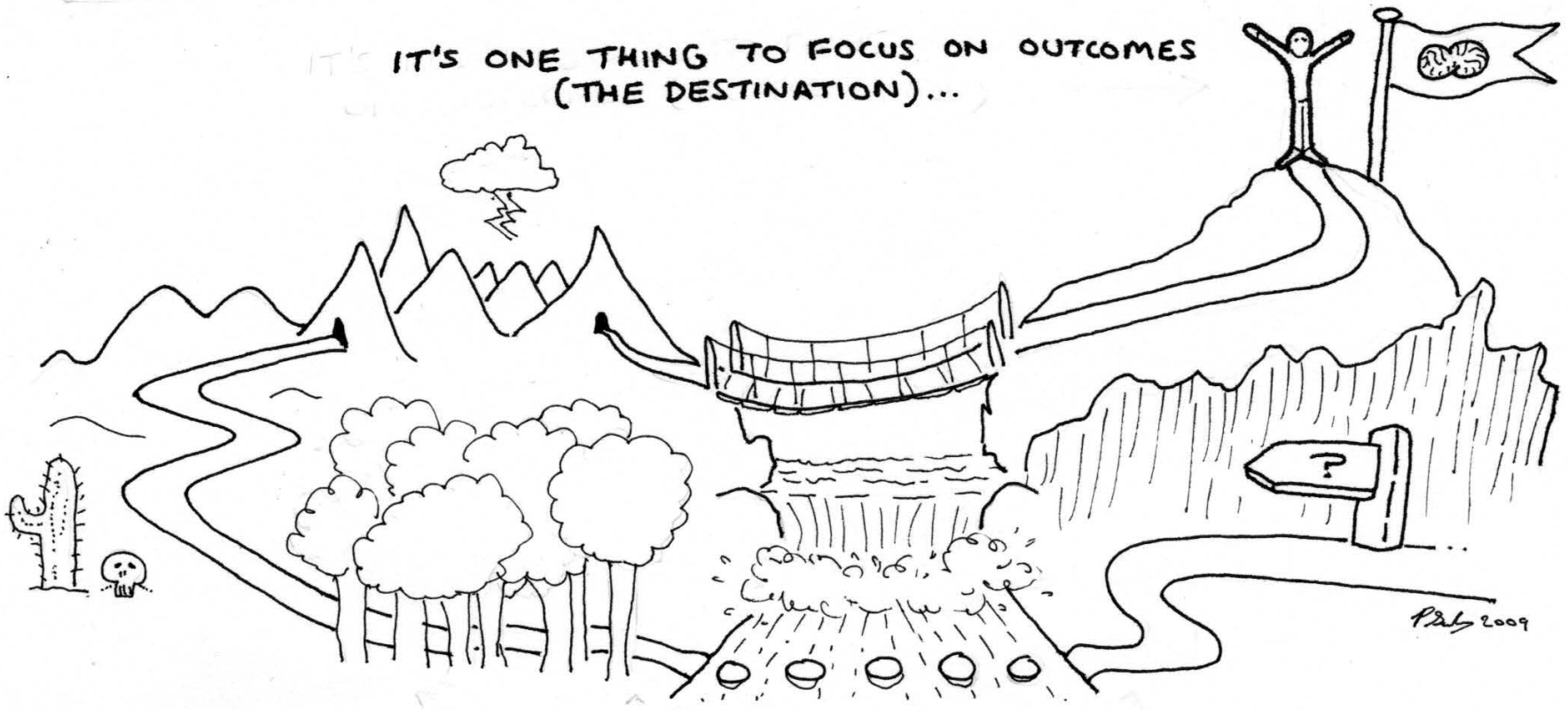


V. Challenges for the future

- Learning outcomes and credits are TOOLS not AIMS
- Increased focus on student-centred learning require new teaching methods, BUT:
 - ✓ Legal and regulatory constraints:
 - Teaching workloads
 - Staff promotion mechanisms
 - Types of examinations permitted
 - Method of ECTS calculation
 - ✓ Need for Cultural change:
 - Students and teachers need to become more engaged
 - New teaching methods transform the nature of students' work
 - Academic staff needs to work as a team
 - Age structure of academic staff
 - ✓ Financial resources

PROCESS VS. OUTCOME

IT'S ONE THING TO FOCUS ON OUTCOMES
(THE DESTINATION)...



... BUT EVEN THEN, YOU STILL HAVE TO FOCUS ON THE PROCESS
(THE JOURNEY) — OTHERWISE YOU WILL JUST KEEP GETTING LOST...



Background material

- 2009 ECTS Users' Guide
 - ✓ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf
- Seminars in the framework of the Bologna process work programme
 - ✓ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/calendar/>
- Implementation of ECTS in Europe
 - ✓ 2009 Stocktaking report
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/Stocktaking_report_2009_FINAL.pdf
 - ✓ Focus on higher education in Europe 2010 (Eurydice report)
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122_EN.pdf
 - ✓ EUA Trends 2010
http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/Trends_2010.pdf
 - ✓ Bologna at the finish line 2010 (student perspective)
http://www.esib.org/documents/publications/ESU_BAFL_publication.pdf

Thank you!

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