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ED-AFFICHE

European Degree Label

Consolidated report on
outcomes of European Degree
criteria mapping exercise



EU CONEXUS
European University for Smart
Urban Coastal Sustainability



Document Information

Title	Consolidated report on outcomes of European Degree criteria mapping exercise
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Distribution	Public
Document No	WP2-D2.2



Consolidated Report on Outcomes of European Degree Criteria Mapping Exercise

Table of Contents

Consolidated Report on Outcomes of European Degree Criteria Mapping Exercise	3
Introduction to ED-AFFICHE Report on Outcomes of European Degree Criteria Mapping Exercise	4
About ED-AFFICHE	4
About the Analysis.....	5
Methodology.....	5
1. Characterization of Respondents	6
1.1 General Analysis	7
1.2 Mobility Schemes	13
Bachelor.....	13
Master	14
PhD	15
1.3 The Curriculum and Certification	15
1.4 Enrolled Students	19
1.5 Language	20
1.6 Quality Assurance.....	21
Conclusions.....	22
2. The Joint European Degree Label Criteria	23
2.1 Mandatory criteria	23
Mandatory criteria applicability	24
Mandatory criteria feasibility due to legal/regulatory barriers	38
Mandatory criteria relevance.....	49
2.2 Optional criteria applicability and relevance	51
2.3 From Focus group on Optional and Mandatory Criteria Testing	54
Development of Measurement Scale:.....	54
Evaluation of Criteria:.....	55
Accreditation Process:.....	55
Importance of Consortium Agreement:.....	55
Applicability of Criteria:.....	55
Testing Phase:.....	55





European Level Implementation:.....	55
Obtaining the Label:	55
Attractiveness for International Students:.....	55
Conclusion	56
3. Barriers and Bottlenecks	57
3.1 Legal/Regulatory Barriers.....	57
3.2 Organizational Barriers.....	68
3.4 Funding Sources	76
3.5 Academic Barriers.....	78
3.6 Summary of the Desired Policy Changes (open field)	81
Belgium.....	81
Czech Republic.....	82
Finland	82
France	83
Germany.....	83
Italy.....	84
Poland.....	84
Portugal	85
Romania.....	85
Spain	85
Sweden	86
Conclusions	86
General Conclusions and Recommendations.....	88
Annexes	90

Introduction to ED-AFFICHE Report on Outcomes of European Degree Criteria Mapping Exercise

About ED-AFFICHE

In 2022, the European Commission launched a call for European University Alliances to examine and facilitate the delivery of a joint European degree label. The ED-AFFICHE Project consortium, composed of six university alliances (**Una Europa, 4EU+, CHARM-EU, EC2U, EU-CONEXUS, and Unite!**) and 51 higher education institutions from 22 different countries, have secured European support.



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In consultations with experts, the ED-AFFICHE consortium will propose possible improvements to the criteria associated with the European degree label and co-develop recommendations on the possible assessment procedure, as well as the design and delivery of a future European Degree label.

Together, the consortium has been successful in securing the **support of 19 national and regional ministries in charge of higher education as well as 15 national accreditation and quality assurance agencies**. It is the exchange of best practices between those actors and the open dialogue with their universities that carries the real potential to move forward the European Higher Education Area.

About the Analysis

The document succinctly presents findings from the ED-AFFICHE questionnaire, gathering **insights from joint programme directors and coordinators**. It captures their perspectives on the European degree label, associated criteria, and their views on possible barriers to joint degrees within their respective countries. Complementing questionnaire responses, interviews were conducted through focus groups organized by Country.

Organized into **three main sections**, the document includes a summary profiling the respondents, a comprehensive mapping of the applicability of the proposed criteria for the joint European Degree label, and an analysis of perceived barriers. This analysis is viewed **through the lens of academic directors, coordinators of joint programmes, and involved administrative staff** with potential contrasts explored in comparison to legal experts' perspectives and ED-AFFICHE's analysis of obstacles to transnational collaboration.

The primary goal of this document is to offer a **comprehensive overview of the application of proposed criteria associated with the European Degree label in existing joint programmes**. It sheds light on **perceived obstacles** hindering increased collaboration among universities. Furthermore, it provides **recommendations to incentivize programme directors and coordinators** to pursue the European Degree label or find motivation in it to forge new collaborations.

Methodology

In response to the European Degree label's call to map potential joint programmes for label application, the ED-AFFICHE team devised a **questionnaire on the state of art of Joint European Degree Label**. This was distributed to joint programme coordinators, academics engaged in such





programmes, administrators overseeing development/management/implementation, and vice-rectors for education and internationalization. In a total of 193 responses received (134 from academic staff and 59 from administrative staff), the predominant respondent group comprised academics (151), followed by administrative staff (59),

The questionnaire, disseminated in June and July 2023, reached the target audience through each alliance within the consortium. Alliances utilized their mailing lists of **joint programme directors and coordinators**, as provided by member universities. The intended respondents were coordinators involved in **various forms of university collaboration**, spanning dual degrees to joint degrees. This approach aimed to comprehend their perspectives, definitions, and assess whether these collaborations align with the European Degree label criteria.

The structure of the document mirrors the questionnaire, encompassing a **general analysis of respondents, their experiences, opinions on mandatory and optional European degree label criteria, and a broader perception of barriers hindering joint degree delivery**. To enhance questionnaire responses, interviews were conducted via **focus groups** divided by country. Between September and October 2023, interviews were carried out in 10 countries, selected based on their representation in the questionnaire responses. The script utilized for these interviews is annexed to this document for reference.

The document adopts two distinct approaches: one that offers a broader overview of joint programme **collaborations across Europe** and another that delves into the **specific national contexts**.

This study draws extensively from other ED-AFFICHE deliverables, particularly [D3.1 – the ED-AFFICHE Analysis of the Obstacles for Transnational Collaboration in Higher Education](#). The primary aim is to illuminate any **disparities between the perspectives of the target group outlined in this study and the actual legal frameworks in the analysed countries**.

Most **pertinent graphics** derived from the questionnaire are integrated into the main body of the text, providing a comprehensive visual representation.

1. Characterization of Respondents

The first section of the report intends to characterize the profile of the respondents and outline the features of the analyzed Joint Programmes (JPs) and in particular, **geographical distribution, level of education, size of the JPs, academic fields, modes of accreditation, certification awarded, and**



curriculum development. Whenever generalizations did not provide any insightful information, the analysis is also presented per country.

1.1 General Analysis

The **selection of countries** available for respondents to choose from was derived from the EEA/member states. Page | 7

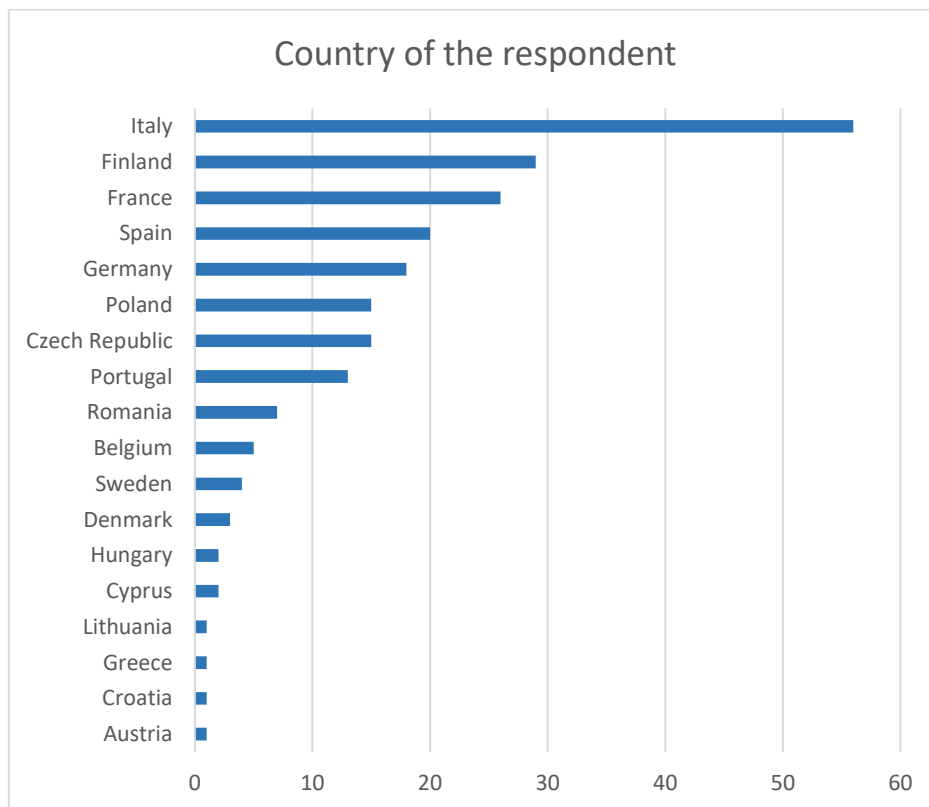


Fig. 1.1

As evident from the graphic, there is a notable **disparity in the representation of countries**, and the 4 countries with the most responses (Italy, Finland, France, and Spain) account for 60% of the total responses. This discrepancy arises from the **decentralized dissemination of the questionnaire**, managed independently by each university member within the consortium alliances, and needs to be taken into consideration when reading the graphics representing the entire pool of responses.

This report will only analyze separately countries with at least four responses. However, responses from all other countries have still been considered in the ongoing dialogue with national stakeholders, complemented by the [outcomes from the survey conducted among legal experts](#).

For ease of analysis, respondents were requested to choose **their field of study domain** from a list aligned with the [ISCED fields](#).

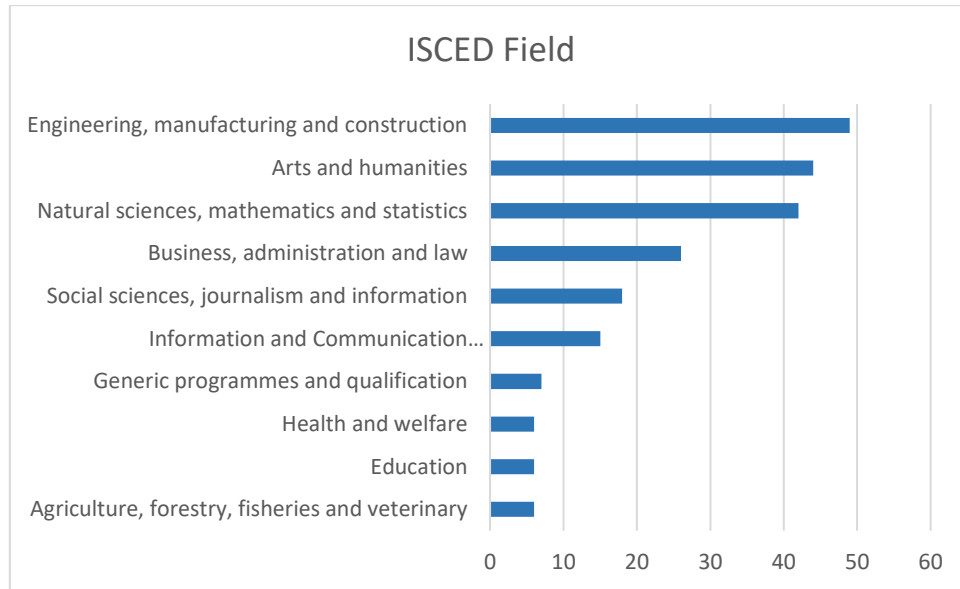


Fig 1.2

The **overrepresentation of the Engineering** field can be attributed to a dual factor: firstly, joint programs are more prevalent in this field compared to others (engineering and business are also typically the most mobile professions), and secondly, the higher percentage of joint programs affiliated with Unite! (an alliance in the field of science and technology) compared to those linked to more comprehensive alliances.

For the analysis, it was pertinent to inquire about the **educational level of the joint programme**, as illustrated in figure 1.3.

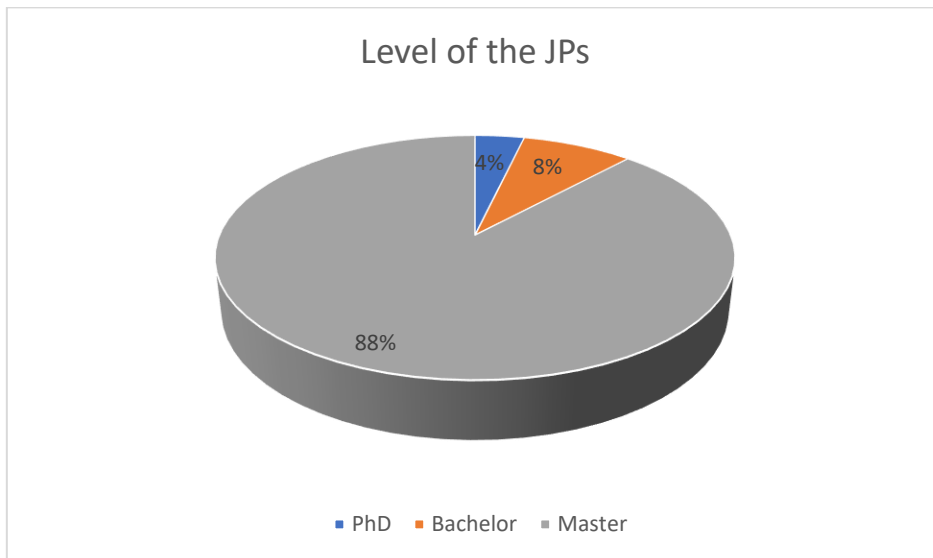


Fig. 1.3

As well known, the vast majority of the currently existing international joint programmes are at **Master level** (88% in the case of the analyzed sample). The number of responses received for the Bachelor and PhD level are not sufficient to perform a meaningful quantitative analysis of the results. The responses provided have nevertheless been used during the focus groups sessions and during the dialogue with the legal experts and national authorities and stakeholders (WP 3).

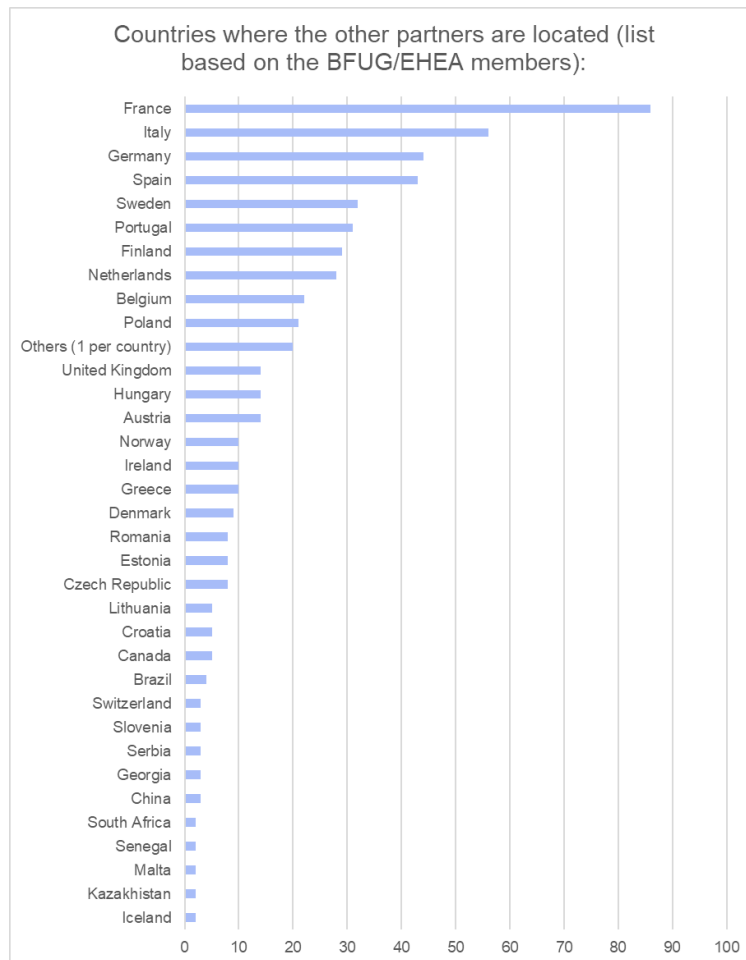


Fig. 1.4

As it can be observed in fig. 1.4, France is confirmed as the prime partner for international JPs, followed by Germany, Italy, and Spain which is understandable given the size of the countries and number of universities. Sweden, Portugal, and Finland follow this first block of countries despite their much smaller size and number of universities. The table reveals that **international joint programmes are still an exception in the academic offering of universities located in Eastern Europe, in the Balkans, and in the Baltics.**

We also surveyed respondents about the **number of universities within the consortium**, aiming to obtain insights into the prevalent types of collaborations within the target group (fig. 1.5).

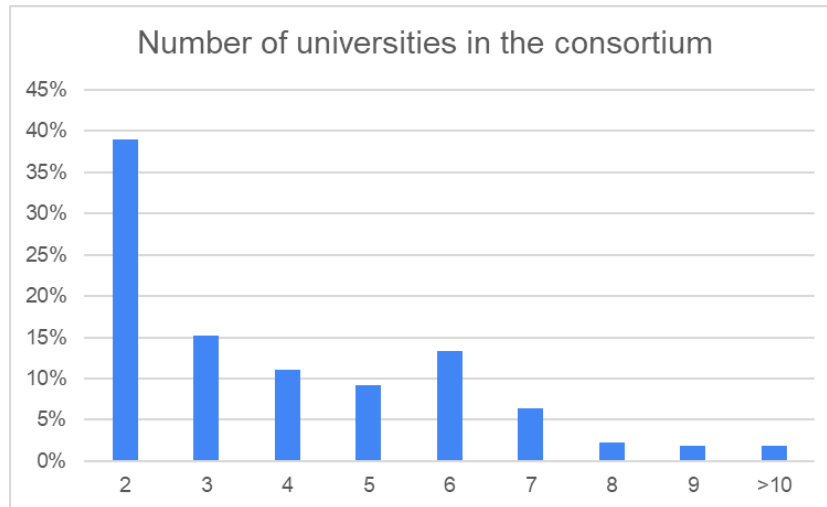


Fig. 1.5

39% of the joint programmes covered by the study are **of bilateral nature** and many of them have the characteristics of the traditional double/dual degrees, and would probably not satisfy most of the suggested criteria for the Joint European Degree Label. Among these bilateral ventures are also included all the joint doctoral programmes. This speaks in favor of **keeping criterion number 1 unchanged (at least two HEIs from two different countries)**, although most of these programmes would have to take substantial action in order to satisfy all the suggested criteria. Most of the JPs involving from 3 to 6 partners are typically Erasmus Mundus programmes.

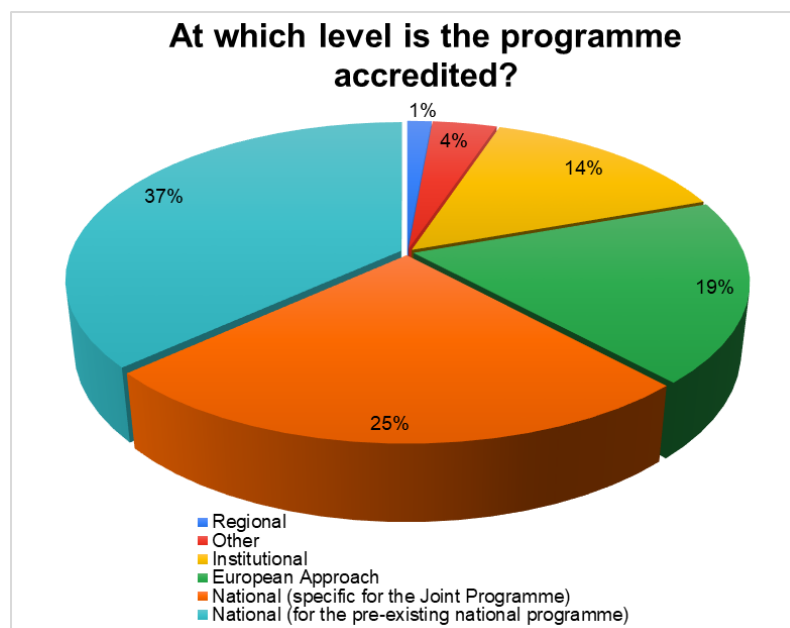


Fig. 1.6

Fig. 1.6 shows how the accreditation procedures are very fragmented since they are linked to very diverse national requirements. A solid 62% of the analyzed JPs are nevertheless accredited nationally, either as pre-existing programmes or specifically as joint programmes under the new configuration. On a positive side, 18% of the joint programmes covered by the study completed the accreditation process through the European approach. A more detailed picture on the accreditation frameworks, requirements, and level in each country are provided by the contributions of the legal experts and national authorities under WP3. Please note that individual degrees and degree programmes are not accredited in Finland and it is therefore listed under "institutional". The entry "other" includes a mix of the listed options. A picture of the different accreditation modes for the different academic levels is detailed here below. In any case, the national level of accreditation is predominant for all levels.

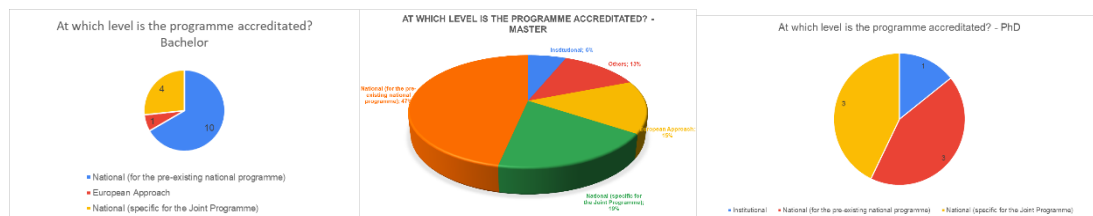


Fig. 1.7

When asking the target group about the form in which the programme is accredited (fig. 1.8), the vast majority of the surveyed JPs (82%) are accredited either as international double degree programmes, or as standard domestic programmes and in only 3% of the cases JPs don't need any form of accreditation.

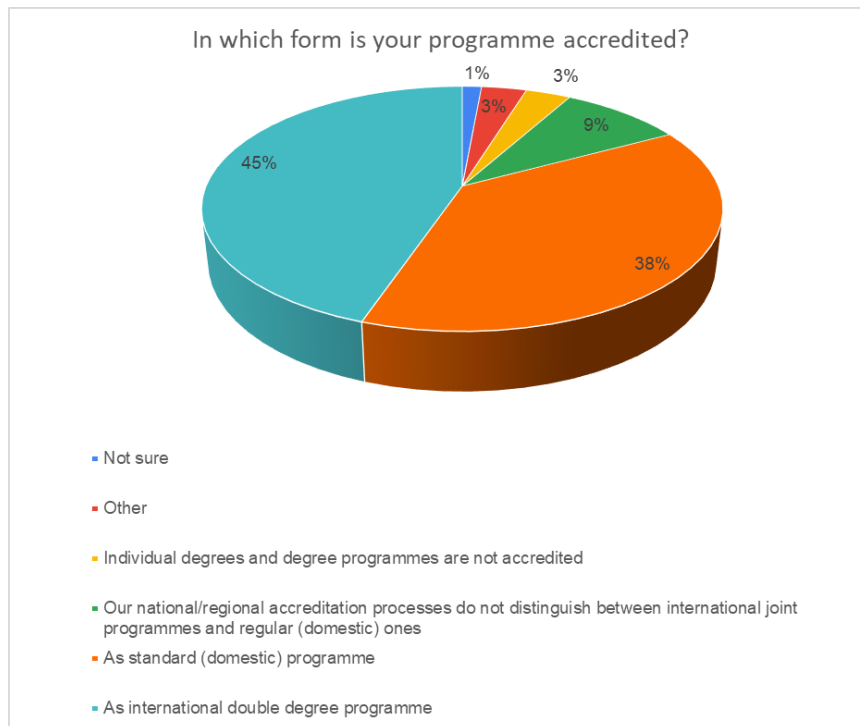


Fig. 1.8

This picture is also confirmed when looking at the accreditation forms for each academic level (see graphs below).

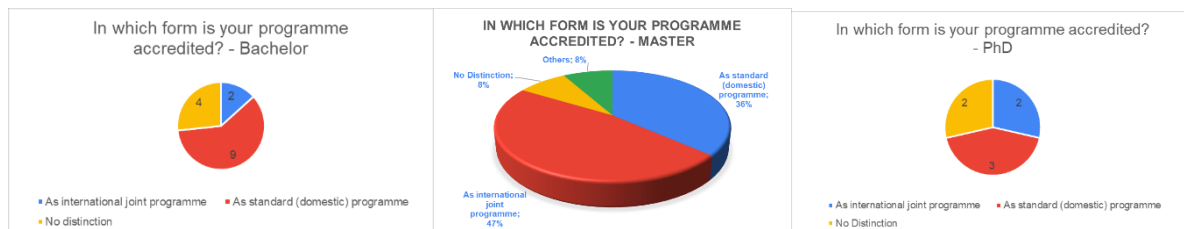


Fig 1.9

1.2 Mobility Schemes

Survey participants were requested to furnish additional details pertaining to the structure and characteristics of the physical mobility scheme embedded within their joint programmes. Responses differ between bachelor, master and PhD levels.

Bachelor

A number of mobility schemes at Bachelor level have been reported, but the most common one by far consists of the first **two years at the home university (or university A) and the last year at the host university (or university B)**. The second most popular scheme consists of one academic year at three different universities.

Master

Below the choices given to the participants in the programme to describe their mobility schemes.

1. 1 year univ. A + 1 year univ. B
2. 1 semester univ. A + 1 semester univ. B + 1 semester univ. C + 1 semester master thesis at any of them
3. 1 semester univ. A + 1 semester univ. B + 1 year univ. C
4. 1 year univ. A + 1 semester univ B
5. 1 year univ. A + 1.5 years univ. B
6. 1 semester univ. A + 3 semesters univ. B
7. 1 year univ. A + 1 semester univ. B + 1 semester univ. C
8. 1 semester univ. A + 1 semester univ. B + 1 semester at univ. A, B, C, or D + 1 semester at univ. A, B, C, or D
9. Other (none of the suggested options)

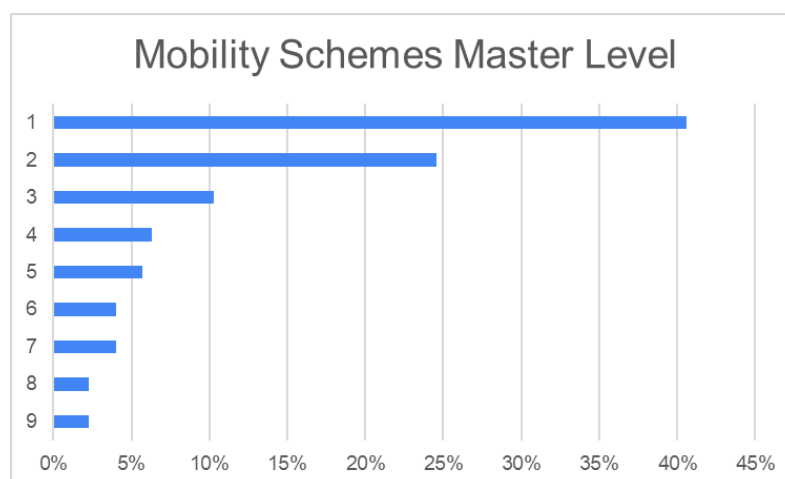


Fig. 1.10

The mobility schemes at Master level are very diverse but with a **clear preference (41%) for the most common Erasmus Mundus scheme** i.e. 1 year at university A + 1 year at university B. It's interesting that, despite the fact that 8 alternative schemes were offered, 25% of the respondents selected the "other" option, which suggests that the number of alternative existing mobility schemes is very vast. The second most popular model among the offered ones consists in one semester at each of three different universities and a final semester at any of them for the Master thesis. Option 5 is the most popular among Spanish universities due to the duration of their Master programmes (3 semesters).

PhD

Mobility schemes at PhD level are even more diverse, with basically **each respondent reporting a different model due to the different legal and institutional requirements**. Here below is the list of the possible alternative schemes:

1. 1.5 years univ A + 1.5 years univ B (2 records)
2. 2 years univ A + 1 year univ B
3. At least semesters in each of the two (possibly three) mobility universities
4. 2.5 years univ A + 0.5 year univ B (2 records)
5. 21 months at recruiting institution + 9 months host institution + 3 months at associated partners
6. 1 year at a partner University only in case of cotutelle; 1 year mobility abroad is also requested to PhD students not interested in cotutelle, but the choice of the destination is free. In both cases the evaluation carried out jointly every year by all partner Universities

1.3 The Curriculum and Certification

In the upcoming section, we will focus on the characteristics and elements of the curricula and kind of certifications awarded of joint programmes examined through the questionnaire.

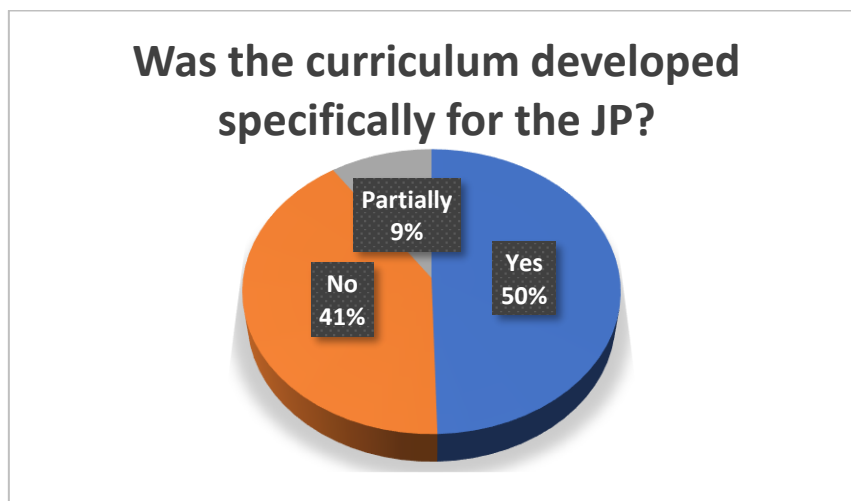


Fig. 1.11

Half of the surveyed JPs developed a specific curriculum for the joint venture, while 41% of them made use of existing curricula. It is nevertheless unclear how “developing a specific curriculum” is understood by the respondents, since this percentage seems to be rather high compared to the reality.

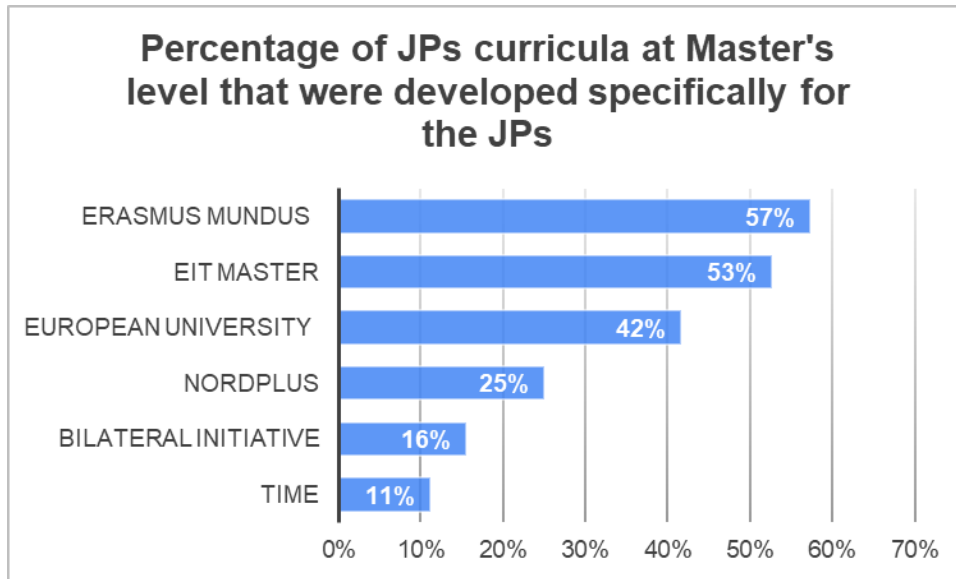


Fig. 1.12

As expected, the JPs based on specifically developed curricula are those that rely on external funding. Bilateral initiatives are usually double/dual degree programmes relying on pre-existing national Master programmes and involve a limited number of students per year, which wouldn't justify further efforts in developing specific new curricula.

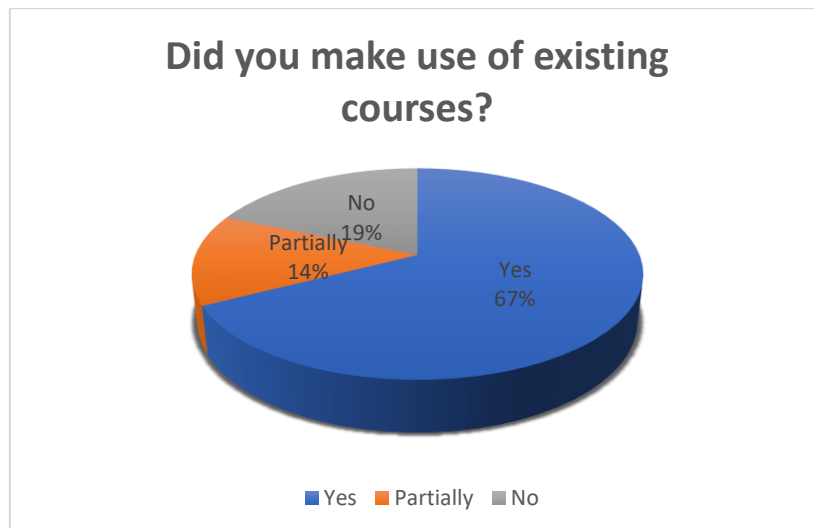


Fig. 1.13

Only 19% of the JPs developed new courses while the rule (67%) is still that existing courses only are used to feed the joint programmes. This is even more true for the JPs at Master level (74%) according to the graph below (fig. 1.14).

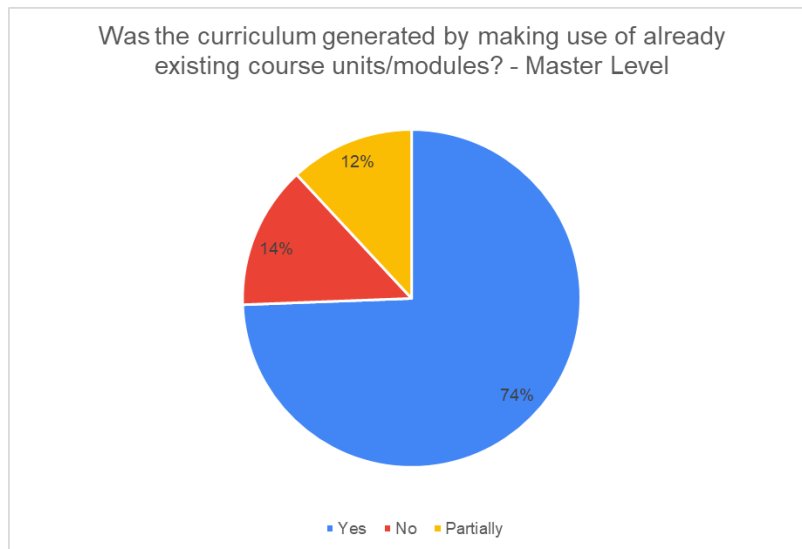


Fig. 1.14

Respondents to the questionnaire were invited to share insights on the certification students receive, selecting from the options provided below:

1. Each involved university issues a separate diploma (double/multiple degree)
2. Each involved university issues a separate diploma (double/multiple degree) with the addition of a joint certificate/diploma supplement
3. Only one joint diploma is issued to the students on behalf of both/all involved universities that have awarded a degree to the student
4. Other
5. A joint diploma is awarded by three out of four universities, a national diploma is awarded by the University of Bologna (all the responses collected for this model came from the same university).

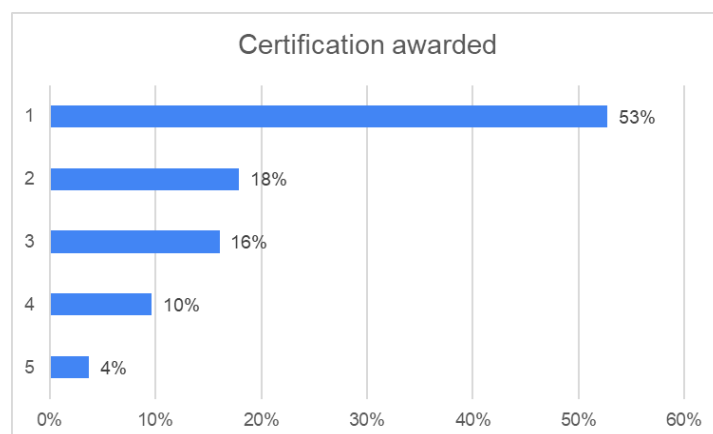
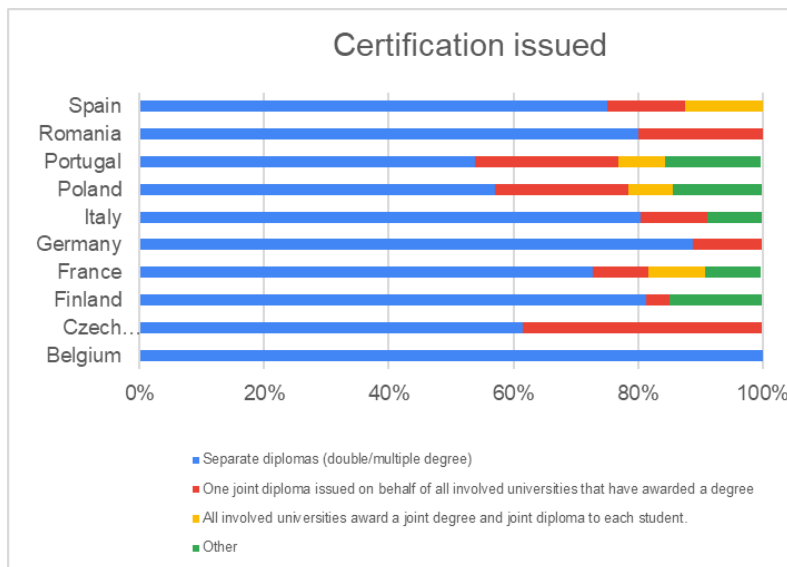


Fig. 1.15

As it can be observed in fig. 1.15, the rule is still that **each university involved in the student mobility issues a separate diploma with or without a joint certificate (71%)**. Only 16,5% of the analyzed JPs issue one single diploma signed by the partners concerned in the student mobility, and only 3,6% of the JPs issue one single diploma on behalf of all the partners of the consortium, regardless of the mobility track for each student.

Fig. 1.16

Nevertheless, observed in fig. 1.16, the picture varies the different depending on legislation in with joint



as it can be observed in fig. 1.16, the picture varies substantially in the different countries depending on the national legislation in this matter, diplomas being

more common in the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland, and Portugal. The practice of awarding separate diplomas seems to be particularly widespread in Belgium and Germany.

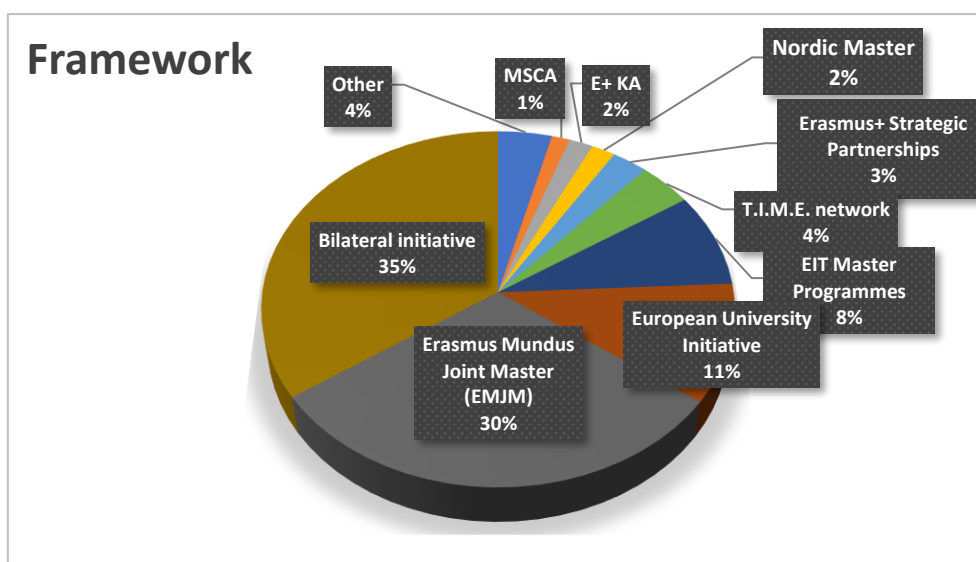


Fig. 1.17

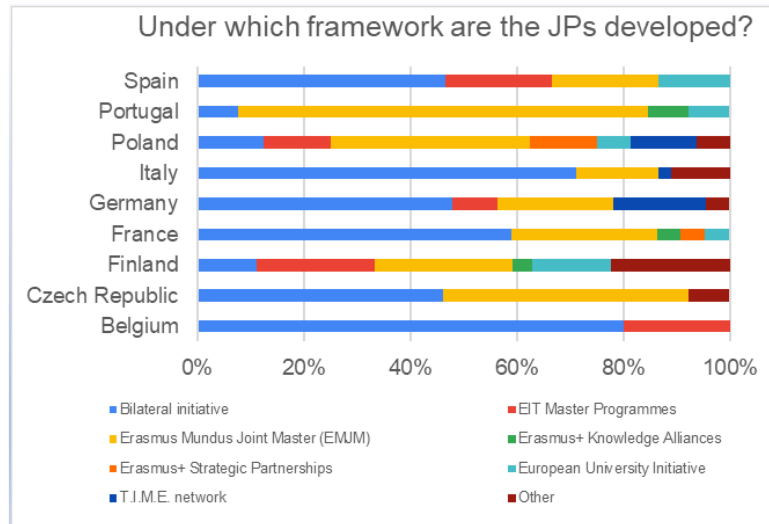
As it can be observed in fig. 1.17, the majority (76%) of the surveyed JPs were developed bilaterally, under the Erasmus Mundus action, or within the European University Initiative. The other actions of

the Erasmus+ programme seem to be still underused for this purpose. The distribution is extremely diverse at national level with Erasmus Mundus over-represented in Portugal and the Czech Republic and the bilateral initiatives being predominant in Belgium and Italy.

Fig. 1.18

In fig. 1.18, each country report.

1.4 Enrolled



specificities in analysed in the

Students

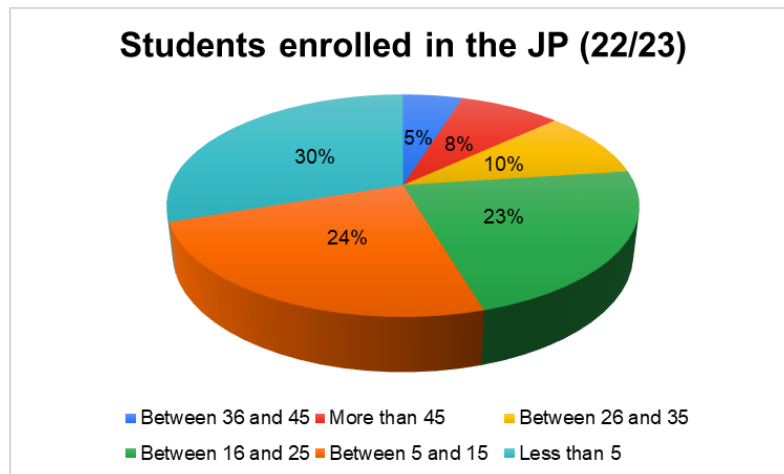


Fig. 1.19

The fact that the relative majority of the surveyed JPs (30%) enrolls less than 5 students raises questions on their level of integration, sustainability, and impact. On the other hand, through a deeper analysis, it emerges that these JPs are actually bilateral dual/double degrees with little or no ambition of true jointness. Also the number of JPs with fewer than 15 students is rather high (24%). This phenomenon is even more noticeable at the Bachelor level.

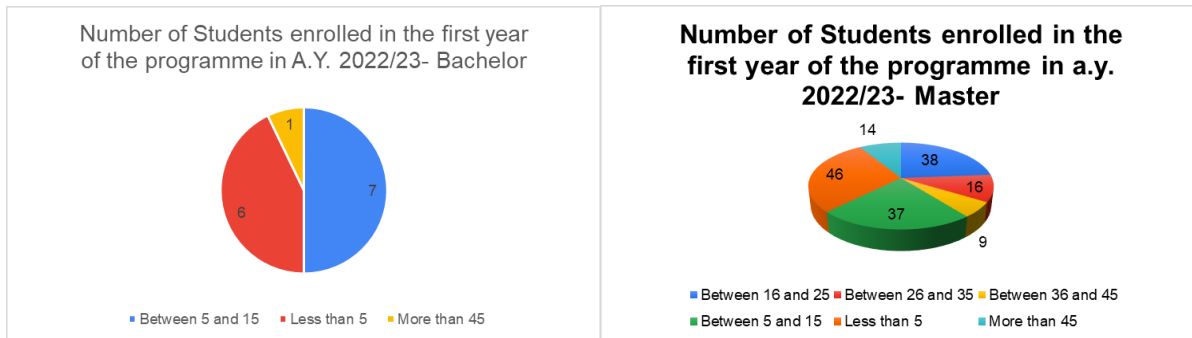


Fig. 1.20

1.5 Language

Participants were asked to share insights regarding the language used in the joint programmes for which they are responsible.

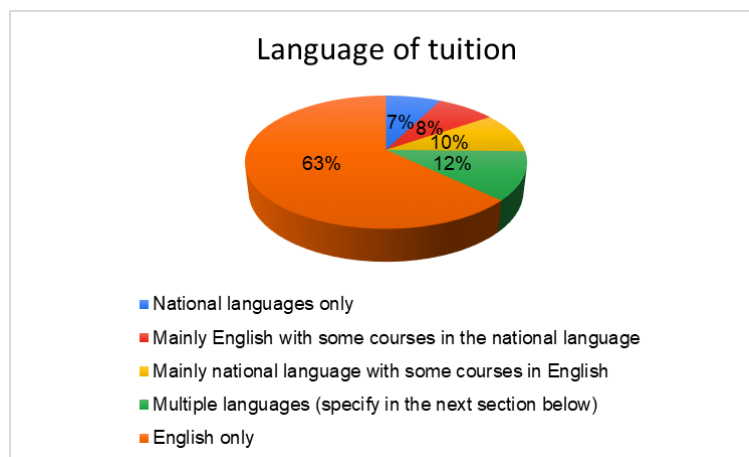


Fig. 1.21

The number of programmes using English only as tuition language (63%) are constantly growing compared to previous studies (in particular REDEEM2 which showed that the percentage in 2020 was approximately 50%).

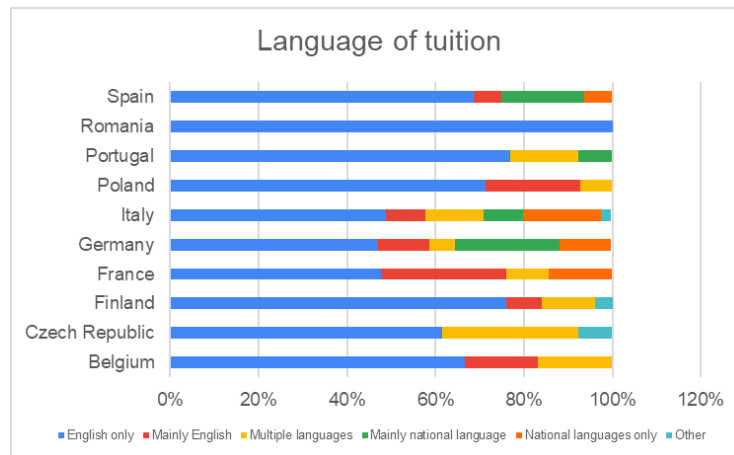


Fig. 1.22

On the other hand, the percentage of JPs taught entirely in national languages is constantly shrinking and concern mainly French, Italian, and German universities. Moreover, most JPs taught mainly in national language with some courses in English reported that the number of courses offered in English is constantly growing. All the Romanian respondents stated that the tuition is carried out in English only, and high percentages in this sense were also recorded in Portugal, Finland, and Poland.

1.6 Quality Assurance

95% of JPs are **regulated by a specific consortium agreement** and the few ones that don't are traditional bilateral programmes with few students concerned. It is nevertheless surprising the high percentage of JPs that do not have a specific QA process in place (32%). This is the case particularly for JPs that involve Italian, German, and French HEIs. The 69 programmes without any form of QA would in principle be excluded from the Joint European Degree Label. **The criterion should nevertheless be kept as mandatory**, since developing specific QA provisions that meet the requirements of all involved countries/HEIs has proven to be a necessary element for the sustainability of the JP.

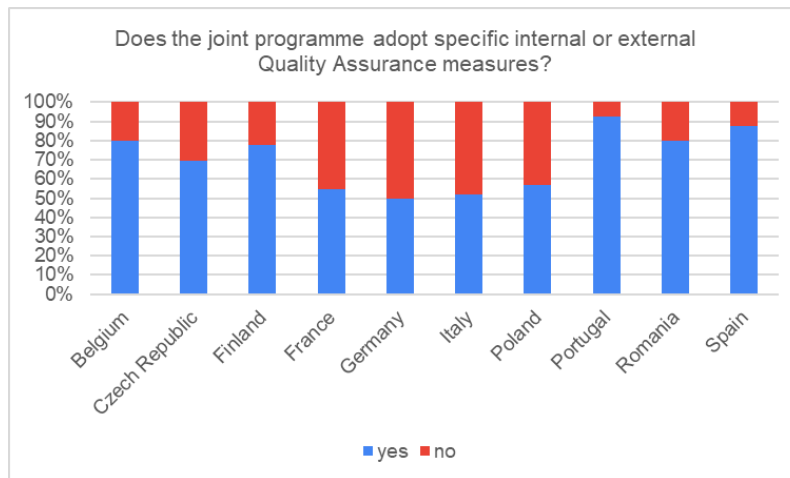


Fig. 1.23

Conclusions

In general, it is confirmed that the vast majority of JPs is **still developed at Master level** and that a big share of these programmes are developed on a bilateral basis. A large number of these programmes are still developed as traditional dual/double degree programmes with a very low (if any) level of jointness in the development and management phases. **Also the size (in terms of student enrolled in each cohort) of a large number of the surveyed JPs is rather small**, which poses questions on their actual jointness and sustainability. The **accreditation** of the JPs occurs still in the majority of cases at national level (either as national programmes or as international programmes) with only a minority of them making use of the European Approach to Quality Assurance for JPs. More than two thirds of the JPs issue separate national degrees to the graduates, and only a minority of them issue a joint Diploma Supplement describing the joint elements of the programme.

2. The Joint European Degree Label Criteria

The second section of this report aims to provide a Country-based mapping of the applicability of the mandatory and optional criteria proposed by the European Commission for the release of a European Degree Label and a ranking of their perceived relevance.

The need to add more or remove mandatory criteria has also been surveyed. The analysis explores the perspectives and experiences of academics expressed through responses to the mentioned survey and discussions arose from focus groups, underling the need for **tailored approaches and clarity in the definitions of criteria**. The number of programmes entirely taught in English are progressively growing in order to increase their attractiveness. **Most of the surveyed JPs rely mainly on EU funded programmes to ensure appropriate funding.**

2.1 Mandatory criteria

List of Mandatory Criteria provided by the European Commission in the [Call of Proposal “ERASMUS-EDU-2022-POL-EXP”](#).

1	Higher education institutions involved	The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered by at least 2 higher education institutions (HEIs) from at least 2 different EU Member States.
2	Transnational joint degree delivery	The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree.
		Dissertations are co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries.
3	Transparency of the learning outcomes	The joint programme is described in ECTS.
		A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to the student at the end of the joint study programme.
4	Quality assurance arrangements	Internal and external QA is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The programme, the study field or the institutions are accredited/evaluated by an EQAR-registered agency. If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved, the transnational programme should be accredited/evaluated preferably using the European Approach for Quality Assurance (QA) of Joint Programmes (EA).
5	Joint policies for the joint programme	The HEIs involved have joint policies for admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures for the joint study programme.

6	Transnational campus – access to services	The joint programme provides enrolled students, regardless of their location, with seamless and free access to the participating HEI’s services such as e.g. IT services, shared infrastructure and facilities, (online) library services, faculty development and support, academic guidance and psychological counselling, career advice/mentoring, alumni systems.
7	Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements	<p>The joint programme includes at least 1 period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS.</p> <p>The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (including secondment).</p> <p>In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes opportunities for doctoral candidates to participate in one or more of these activities at another partner institution: teaching activities, international events, international conferences, joint research scientific projects between partner institutions, joint research publications with researchers from partner institutions.</p>
8	Multilingualism	During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages, language classes excluded. Exposure to EU official languages can take place in active and/or passive use of language(s), at any level in teaching and/or learning activities, examinations, research activities, professional or civic engagement activities and during mobility periods, including by going on mobility to a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life.
9	Innovative learning approaches	The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components using student-centred and/or challenged-based approaches.
10	Graduate outcomes	The joint programme has a system to monitor graduate outcomes. This system can be at the level of the programme or institutional level(s). If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of EUROGRADUATE.
11	Inclusiveness and sustainability	<p>The joint programme commits to wide participation through socially and geographically inclusive admission through tailored measures for all categories of disadvantaged students.</p> <p>The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter.</p>

Mandatory criteria applicability

Survey recipients were queried about the **applicability of mandatory criteria** suggested by the European Commission to their programmes. The analysis focused on the 11 countries that provided ≥4 responses to the survey. However, a notable **bias in the national distribution** of responses was

observed, with 24% from Italy, 14% from Finland, and 11% from France, potentially compromising the overall analysis.

Remarkably, all the criteria demonstrated **applicability to over 50% of existing programmes**, indicating their effectiveness in defining Joint Programmes. Specifically, two criteria, namely Criterion #1 - Higher education institutions involved and Criterion #7 - Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements, surpassed an applicability rate of 75% across existing programmes (see Figure 2.1).

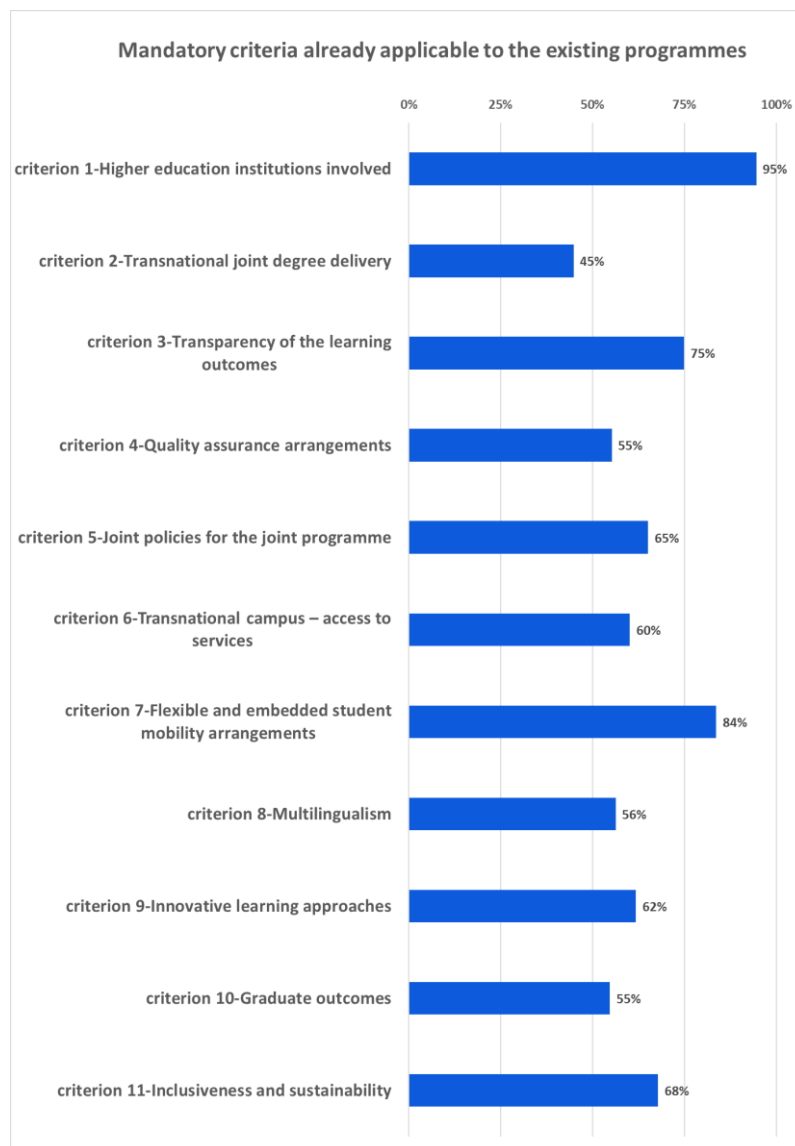


Fig. 2.1. Overall applicability of the proposed EU criteria for transnational programmes

Merely 17 out of 183 joint programmes (**9%**) assert fulfillment of all mandatory criteria. The majority of joint programmes, in most countries, involve at least two higher education institutions from at least



two different European Member States, aligning with criterion #1 (Higher education institutions involved). Notably, Belgium stands as an exception, where all proposed criteria, including criterion #1, apply to fewer than 25% of existing programs (as observed in Figure 2.2), a situation mirrored in Poland.

Page | 26

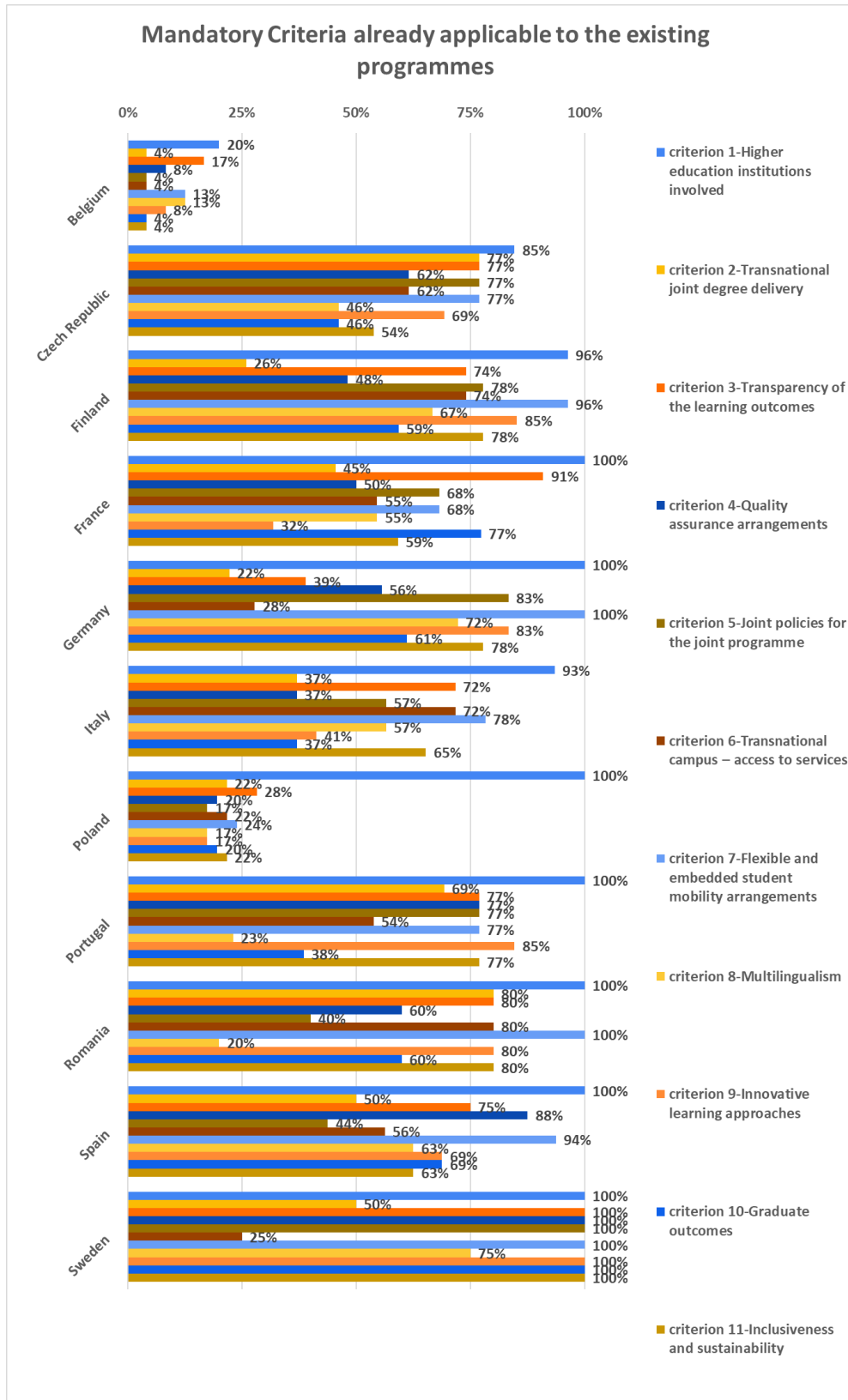
Transnational degree delivery (criterion #2), multilingualism (criterion #8), and graduate outcomes (criterion #10) emerge as the most challenging criteria. In Belgium, Poland, and Portugal, these criteria are applicable in less than 50% of existing programmes.



Fig 2.2

Focus

group

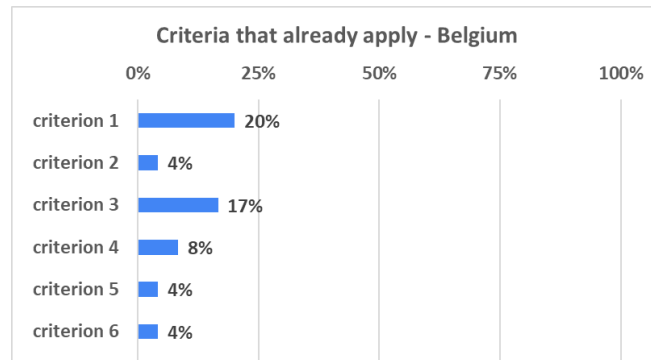


interviews performed on a national base approach highlighted a few relevant comments on the **clarity**

and **relevance** of the mandatory criteria that showed the necessity to carefully take into consideration country differences in the choice of the final criteria.

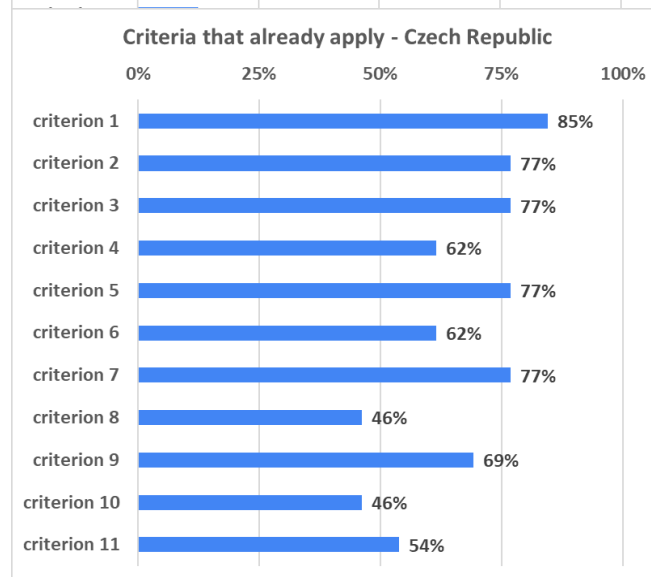
The analysis on the mandatory criteria applicability to already existing programmes are presented below for each country and, when available, the focus group main outputs are reported below each graph.

Fig. 2.3
In Belgium, all the 11 applicable to less than programmes, reminded that only 5 survey were focus group was



proposed criteria are 25% of the existing although it should be responses to the provided and no possible.

Fig. 2.4
In Czech Republic all exception of **#8- (46%)** and **#10- (46%)** can be applied the existing The Focus Group representatives of revealed that most exception of the **education institution**



the criteria, with the **Multilingualism Graduate outcomes** for more than 50% of programmes. with the the Czech Republic the criteria, with the **critterion #1- Higher involved and #8-**

Multilingualism, are comprehensible. The panel underlined that the **Criterion #1 Higher education institutions involved** lacks clarity regarding whether these institutions should be public, private, or if it is irrelevant. The challenge for **critterion #8 Multilingualism** was also reported to have some vagueness in its formulation. The term "exposed" is particularly unclear. Clarification is needed to understand the expectations and standards associated with this criterion.

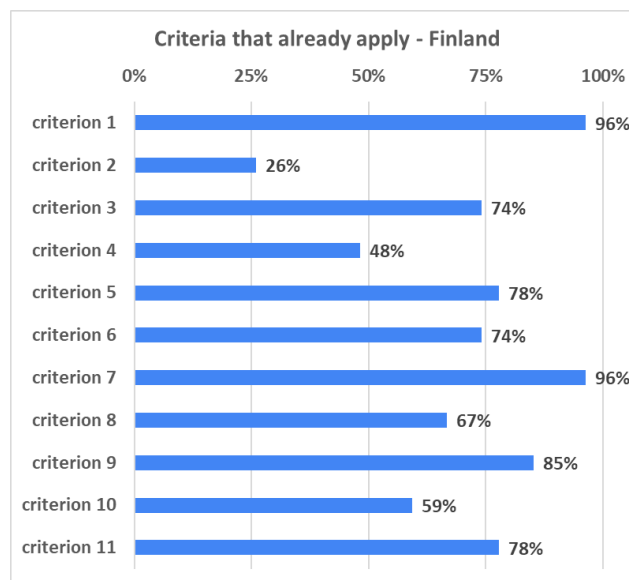
Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria, several comments were expressed on Criteria #3, #6, #7 and #8. In details: regarding **#3 Transparency of the learning outcomes: diploma supplement**, while the current approach involves supplementing the diploma, the preference is for a true joint diploma which represents a significant added value; regarding **#6, Transnational campus – access to**

services, the concept of a transnational campus is very relevant, especially for the well-being of international students. While support is provided, adapting to a foreign degree system can be unfamiliar and presents health and well-being challenges; regarding **#7 Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements**, a duration of 6 months is deemed insufficient, considering the added value of a joint programme. It's worth considering whether this duration is sufficient, given that there is already the opportunity for Erasmus mobility. Based on the experience, it might be more beneficial for double degree students to spend at least 2 semesters at partner institutions. It is challenging for students to switch every 6 months and this rotation proves difficult for both the students' adjustment and the assessment of the criterion. Regarding **#8 Multilingualism**, for some is considered relevant and aligns with the core values of the joint programme, nevertheless, someone suggests that this should not be a mandatory criterion.

An interesting comment/concern from the panel was that the recognition of joint diplomas is a concern, as many institutions and the job market may not be accustomed to them. Some students may prefer or request a diploma from a single country, such as a Czech diploma, as the recognition of joint diplomas abroad remains uncertain. Some countries insist to have a national diploma, but solutions can be always found in the consortium (e.g. France). He supports the idea of joint diploma which can be achieved in Czech Republic.

Fig. 2.5

In Finland the most applicable only in 26% programmes is **#2-degree delivery**. The below 50% is **#4-arrangements (48%)**. The Focus Group with Finland revealed that **Transnational joint**



critic criteria, of the existing **Transnational joint** only other one just **Quality assurance**

Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements, #8-Multilingualism, #9 Innovative learning approaches and #11 Inclusiveness and sustainability need better definition.

For **critterion #2-Transnational joint degree delivery** there is a need for clarification regarding the terminology "awarding the degree." Is it referring to a full degree or a certificate? Defining these terms

is essential as well as a clear definition between diploma and degree. HEIs award degrees for which they or the consortia issue diplomas/degree certificates. This point probably refers to diploma/degree certificate. At its simplest, a joint diploma/degree certificate should include the following basic information:

- (Name of holder) has successfully completed the Joint European Degree Programme (name of programme) for which s/he has been awarded the following degrees from the institutions delivering the programme (list of degrees and the HEIs awarding them);
- The names and logos of institutions (and the EUI consortium, if valid);
- Diploma Supplement to provide detailed information on the programme completed.

Someone believes that awarding two degrees at the home institution is a favorable solution.

Regarding **criterion #5-Joint policies for the joint programme**, while joint policies are generally appreciated, the Panel recommended providing a more detailed list of expected actions. Legal disparities between countries must also be considered. The following issues have emerged:

- **Different academic calendars** – Collaboration is indeed a challenging endeavor, encompassing decisions such as application periods. It's important to clarify what is meant by "academic calendars".
- **Admission process** – There are notable variations in the admission processes for students among different countries. It's crucial to recognize that flexibility in this area might contravene legal regulations. Therefore, it's imperative to establish specific and well-defined criteria.
- **Curriculum Renewal Schedules** – Universities operate on varying timelines for curriculum renewal. When the leading university decides to modify a program, it has the potential to create challenges for other institutions due to these differing schedules.
- **Thesis** - There exists a diversity of perspectives among universities concerning the ideal format for theses.
- **Tuition fees** – Emphasis on the necessity of addressing the topic of tuition fees, as this is a complex issue that requires explicit consideration in the discussion.

For **#7 Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements** the Panel suggested that it would be good to have flexibility in the minimum requirement, e.g., if a student could have several shorter stays in one country or in more than one country. In Finland, students complete 30 credits, they rarely spend a full six months in other countries; they typically stay for a single term. Mandating a full six-month stay can disrupt students' schedules. Also, online learning v. physical mobility need a better

clarification. How mobility is defined, and whether online learning can be considered a form of mobility has to be addressed.

For **#8-Multilingualism** the panel underlined that the concept of multilingualism requires further elucidation. It is crucial to consider the situation of uncommon languages, as mandating study in such languages may discourage some students. Additionally, the meaning of being "exposed" to these languages should be explicitly defined. For example, in Finland, opportunities to study in Finnish exist, but it's not obligatory. The requirement should focus on removing language barriers by allowing courses to be offered in either English or the local language.

The criterion should only state that teaching/courses in the languages of the participating institutions must be offered to students and that students should have the opportunity to take courses in the local languages if they have the required proficiency level in the language/s.

Regarding **#9 Innovative learning approaches**: the integration of innovative learning approaches is commendable, but there is a need for clear definitions and assessment criteria to ensure their effective implementation.

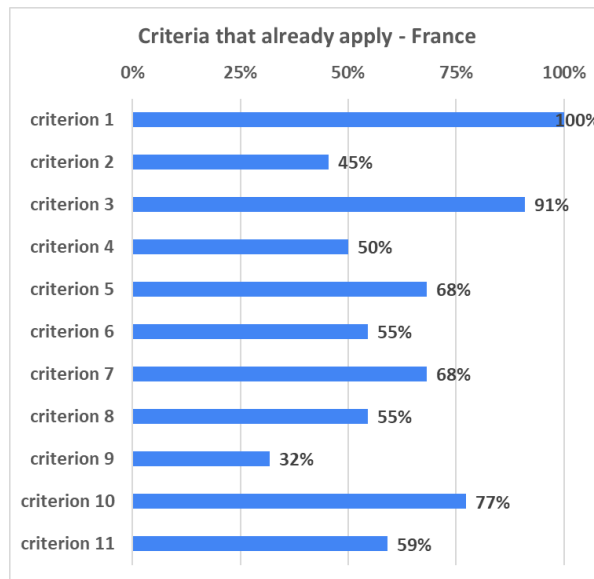
For **#11-Inclusiveness and sustainability** the panel noticed that currently, the focus is predominantly on geographical and social inclusiveness, which inadvertently excludes other groups. While the idea is commendable, it's imperative to rephrase it in a manner that ensures a broader and more comprehensive approach. Additionally, it's crucial to devise a method for measuring this criterion.

Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria, a comment was expressed on criteria **#6-Transnational campus - access to services**. In Finland, there's a fee associated with accessing health services. Addressing this criterion requires finding a workable solution for external students throughout the entire programme duration. The overall aim of this criterion should be carefully considered.

The focus group participants also suggested that unclear and hard-to-describe and validate criteria should be left out, e.g., **#9-Innovative learning approaches** and **#11-Inclusiveness and sustainability**. The panel commented also on Doctoral studies. Some of the criteria mention them, but they should be mentioned in all the criteria.

Fig. 2.6

In France over 50% of programmes can mandatory criteria , criteria #2- degree delivery (45%) learning approaches The Focus Group with France revealed that criteria are relevant and the feeling varies



the existing already apply all the with the exception of Transnational joint and #9-Innovative (32%). the representatives of almost all mandatory understandable, even if depending on the

individuals, with professors and academics with no experience in joint degrees unable to understand them. Someone believes that criterion #3-Transparency of the learning outcomes is not very clear and should be better defined.

The panel expressed concerns on adding more criteria, as an excess of optional criteria could become burdensome.

Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria comments were expressed on criteria #2 Transnational joint degree delivery and #3 Transparency of the learning outcomes .

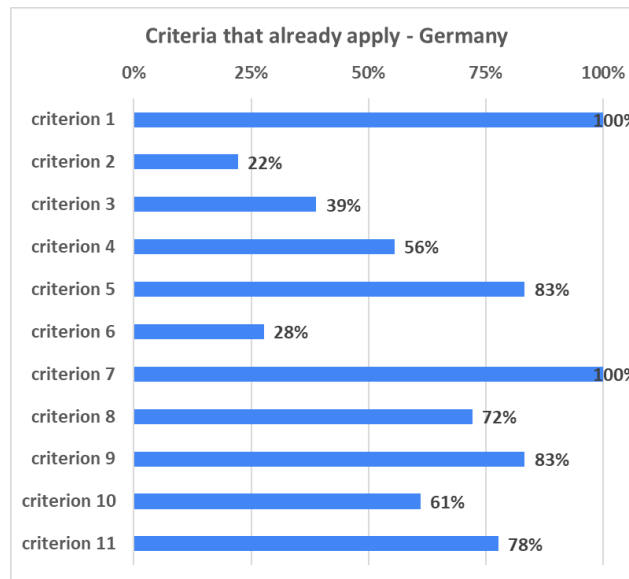
Regarding #2 Transnational joint degree delivery the panel perceived it as fundamental but challenging to execute; a common feeling was the difficulty in implementing and delivering joint degrees.

For #3-Transparency of the learning outcomes it was recognized that it emphasizes the significance of transparent learning outcomes, especially in recognizing ECTS, internships, and ensuring quality assurance.

Regarding #4 Quality assurance arrangement, #6 Transnational campus – access to services and # 8 multilingualism they were evaluated as contingent on the assurance of flexibility.

Fig. 2.7

In Germany, 3 criteria than 50% of the criteria **#2-degree delivery** (39%) and **#6-campus – access to** The Focus Group with Germany revealed proposed mandatory more specifically detailed.



are applicable to less existing programmes: **Transnational joint learning outcomes** (22%), **#3-Transnational services** (28%). the representatives of that some of the criteria should be

Criterion #5 Joint policies for the joint programme and **#6 Transnational campus – access to services** should be more specific, for example with “yes and no” questions.

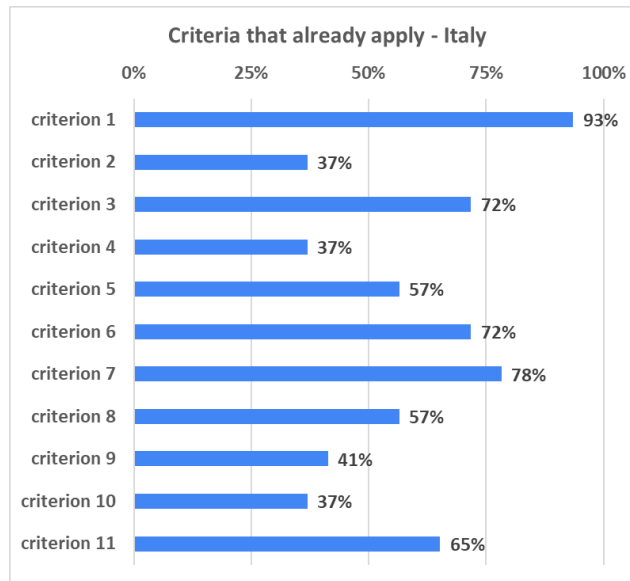
Criterion #7-Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements should be more specific on what is intended with flexibility and what it is not. There is the wish to be more flexible on the 30 ECTS because sometimes students would go abroad only for one exam then come back; maybe with the 30 credits to be spread during the program not in one semester only.

For **#10 Graduate outcomes** is unclear until what extent? According to the panel the institutions can ask the alumni what happens after graduation but more than this it is difficult to fulfil.

Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria, comments were expressed on criteria **#1-Higher education institutions involved** and **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery**. In details, **#1 Higher education institutions involved** was clear and it was agreeable that it is mandatory, for **#2 Transnational joint degree delivery**, doubts had been expressed on its relevance. Someone believes that joint degrees are not very relevant for the students who enroll to a specific University to obtain a degree from that well-known University. Joint degrees may be of interest for a limited time frame, but what about in the future is unpredictable. Furthermore, it is additional work for the University to set up a joint degree, therefore it is seen as not worth it. Reputation of the program already in place rather than new joint programs seems the better way to follow. It was also underlined the poor knowledge in the job market regarding what joint degrees are is a problem.

Fig. 2.8

In Italy, 4 of the existing criteria are poorly applicable (to less than 50% of programmes): **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery assurance** (41%) and **#10-Graduate outcomes** (37%).



mandatory criteria (to less than 50% of programmes): **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery assurance** (37%), **#4-Quality assurance arrangements** (37%), **#9-Innovative learning approaches** (41%) and **#10-Graduate outcomes** (37%).

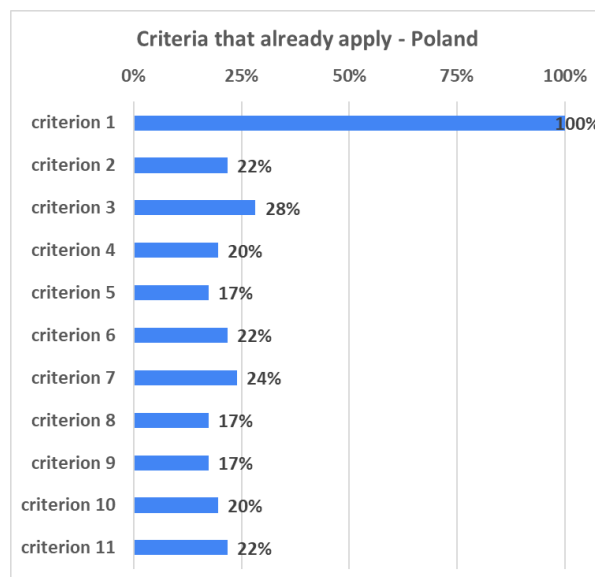
Considering the high number of responders from this Country, this information should be carefully taken into consideration especially in trying to understand the legal barrier.

The Focus Group with the representatives of Italy revealed that some of the proposed mandatory criteria should be moved to the optional list, namely **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery**, **#4-Quality assurance arrangements**, **#6-Transnational campus** that if made mandatory, could be a barrier and **#8-Multilingualism**.

During the discussion, it was suggested adding a new criterion to assess how well the criteria are aligned with developing sector qualification frameworks.

Fig. 2.9

In Poland, with the exception of criterion **#1-Higher education institutions involved**, all the others can be applied only to below 30% of the existing programmes. The Focus Group with the representatives of Poland revealed that the criteria are both clear and pertinent. However, it's worth noting that the criteria for double degrees may differ,



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the representatives of the criteria are both clear and pertinent. However, it's worth noting that the criteria for double degrees may differ,

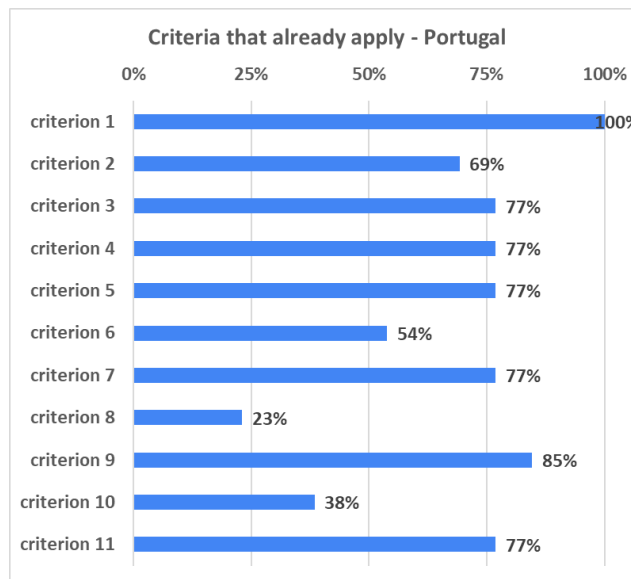
therefore, a clear definition of what we consider to be joint programmes should be provided.

Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria comments were expressed on several criteria: for **#8-Multilingualism** it was pointed as relevant but complex to quantify or measure and for **#5-Joint policies for the joint programme** it was commented that is quite challenging for some aspects like supervision and assessment due to the differing regulations held by each partner institution.

Fig. 2.10

The two critical programmes are **#8-#10-Graduate** to 23% and 38% of the respectively.

The Focus Group with Portugal revealed all the criteria are was concerned about **Transnational services** and **#8-Multilingualism**, for the latter a need for a further clarification of the criterion was expressed.



criteria for **Portugal Multilingualism** and **outcomes**, applicable existing programmes,

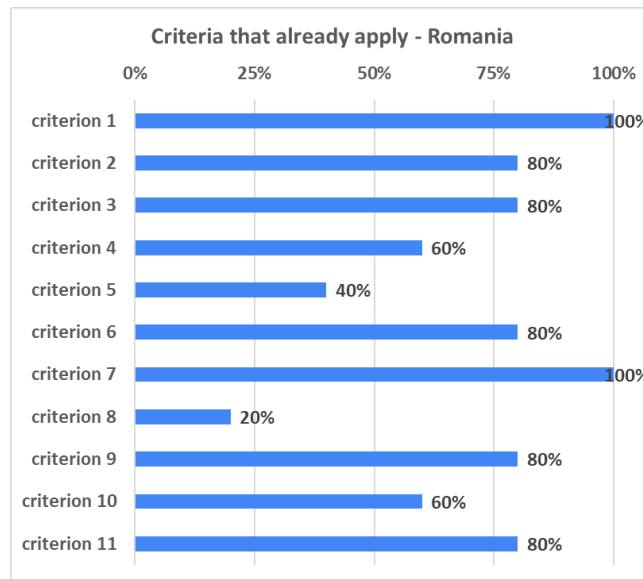
the representatives of that for the Country pertinent. The panel the clarity of **#6-campus – access to**

In general it was underlined that because of the initial complexity in the establishing of a joint degree due to different accreditation processes, double degrees with universities involved in their joint programme have been established. Subsequently, this solution was proposed to Erasmus Mundus and proved successful.

Regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria a comment was expressed on criteria **#7Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements**, the panel underlined that while mobility is beneficial, it is not advisable to exert excessive pressure on students by requiring them to move every six months.

Fig. 2.11

A serious limit in represented by **Multilingualism**, of the existing only other criterion 50% of the existing **Joint policies for the** Regarding the of the criteria the



Romania is criterion **#8-** applicable only in 20% programmes. The applicable to less than programmes is **#5-** **joint programme.** perceived relevance Focus Group

commented that criterion **#2-Transnational Joint Degree Delivery** is relevant but not feasible in Romania. This comment is in contrast with the survey result, pointed out the limit of the report when few responses are available (for Romania only 5). The panel also highlighted that criterion **#3-Transparency of learning outcomes** should be at the core of joint degree program assessment and that **#8-Multilingualism** is of great importance in today's higher education landscape. Not all joint degree programmes offer instruction in multiple languages, but students are invariably exposed to diverse linguistic environments, contributing to their overall linguistic competency, The panel also highlighted that **#9 Innovative learning approaches** is fundamental to enriching the learning experience.

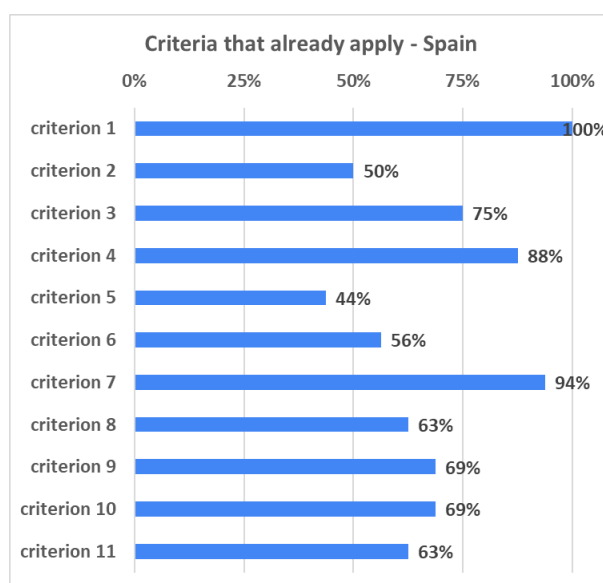


Fig. 2.12

In Spain, all the criteria seemed to be easily applicable to over 50% of the existing programmes, with the exception of **#5-Joint policies for the joint programme (44%)**.

From the Focus Group discussion it emerged that almost all the criteria are comprehensible with the exception of criteria: **#10 Graduate outcomes**, this is the less understandable because it seems to ask for employability, thus it needs a better definition; **#11 Inclusiveness and sustainability** for which the reference to Marie Curie's programmes is not clear, an explanation of it would be appreciated, especially if it is related to bachelor's or master's degrees.

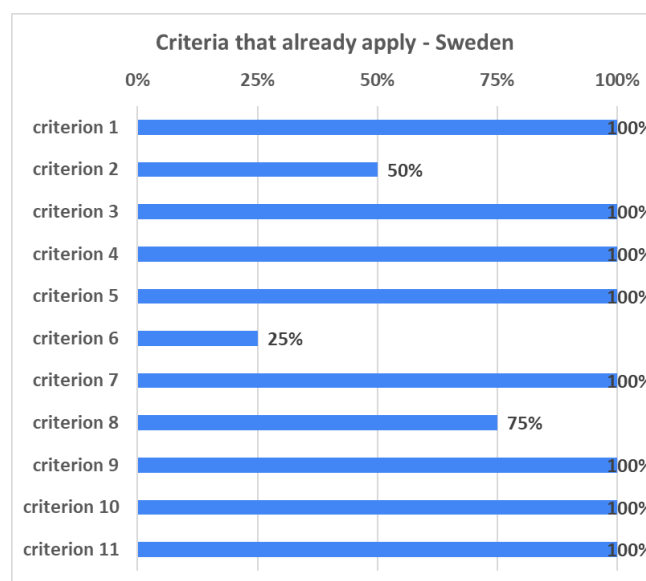
From Focus Group regarding the perceived relevance of the criteria a comment was provided for criterion **#5-Joint policies for the joint programme** that was indicated as feasible, but in reality, very difficult to accomplish in the alliance. It is difficult to harmonize the procedures among the Universities, avoiding competition. The panel suggestion was to move it from the mandatory to the optional criteria. Someone else counters that in their institution it had been done (common policy on admissions, registration, academic policies, quality assurance), not easy but feasible. Same policies are needed when there is real joint degree in place, not otherwise (e.g. double degree).

Regarding criterion **#8-Multilingualism** and exposition to languages it was commented that it is not easy to be proved formally (i.e. registration to actives, issuing certificates, etc). To what extent do institutions must control its implementation?

Finally, regarding criterion **#4-Quality assurance arrangements** it was underlined that it is not going to be easy but feasible, especially if Institutions agree on issuing a joint degree.

Fig. 2.13

The only criterion the existing Sweden is **#6-campus – access to** be taken into account to the survey were From Focus Group it criterion **(#6-campus – access to** is uncertain what is



applicable to 25% of programmes in **Transnational services**, but it should that only 4 responses collected. emerged that this **Transnational services**) is unclear; it its added value.

Someone believes that this criterion should not be mandatory. According to Swedish legislation, joint

programmes do not require a joint degree; if the programme is collaboratively created, it need not be encapsulated in a single document. Someone else recognizes that implementing such a mandate could lead to complications, encompassing signatures, logos, and other administrative intricacies that would need to be managed. Such a requirement would object the goals of the European Commission, undermining the intended productivity of their initiatives. For regulated disciplines it should be further developed – maybe it should differ by disciplines.

Also criterion **#4-Quality Assurance arrangements** raised concerns. **The panel** suggested to avoid unnecessary duplications, particularly if this is intended to be a bottom-up approach where universities already have their own criteria.

Regarding criterion **#6-Transnational Campuses – access to services**, the panel emphasized the importance of considering different access options for domestic students and mobility students; this might require legal adjustments.

Mandatory criteria feasibility due to legal/regulatory barriers

The recipients of the survey were then questioned on which of the mandatory criteria suggested by the European Commission (listed below) were not applicable to their programmes due to legal and/or regulatory barriers.

All the criteria were listed from some programmes in some Country as unapplicable, but none of the them rich 50% of unapplicability. The only criterion not applicable to more than 25% of the existing programmes was **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery (Figure 2.3)**. Interestingly for about 50% of the programmes none of the criteria represent a serious barrier.

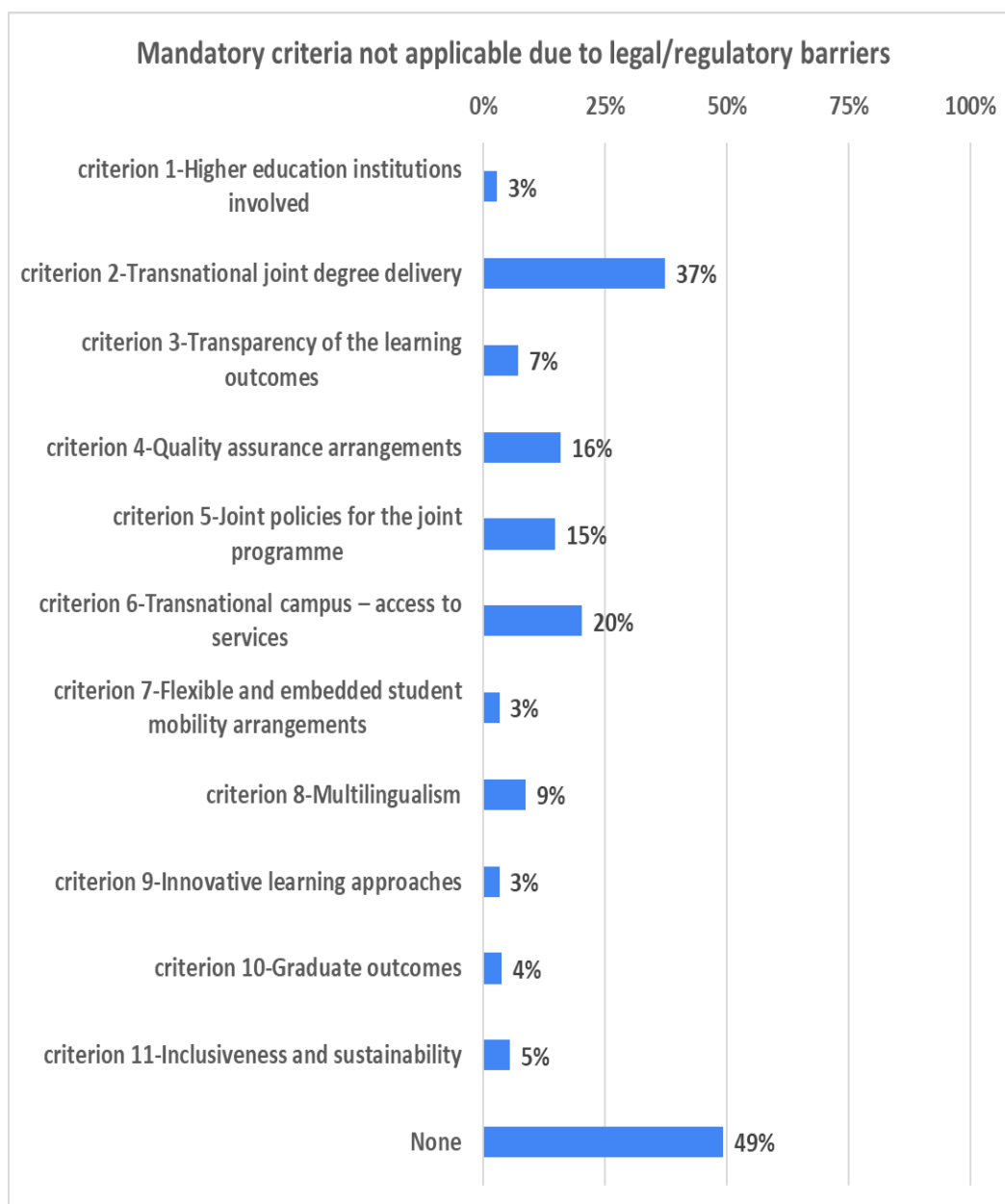


Fig. 2.14. Overall international analysis of the mandatory criteria not applicable due to legal/regulatory barriers.

A national analysis of the unapplicability of criterion **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery** revealed that it represent a major barrier for Italy and Finland in which $\geq 50\%$ of the programmes cannot apply it. Considering the relevant number of responders from these Countries it seems recommendable removing this criterion from the mandatory list not to exclude these programme from the JEDL (Figure 2.4).

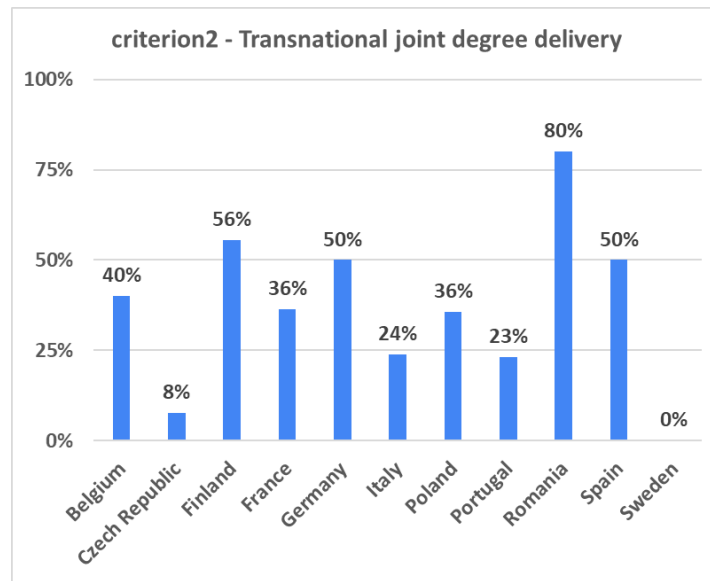


Fig. 2.15

A closer look of the Countries for which none of the criteria represent a barriers showed that for 6 of them, nameley Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Spain and Sweeden over 50% of the responders did not identified specific issues in criteria applicability (Figure 2.5).

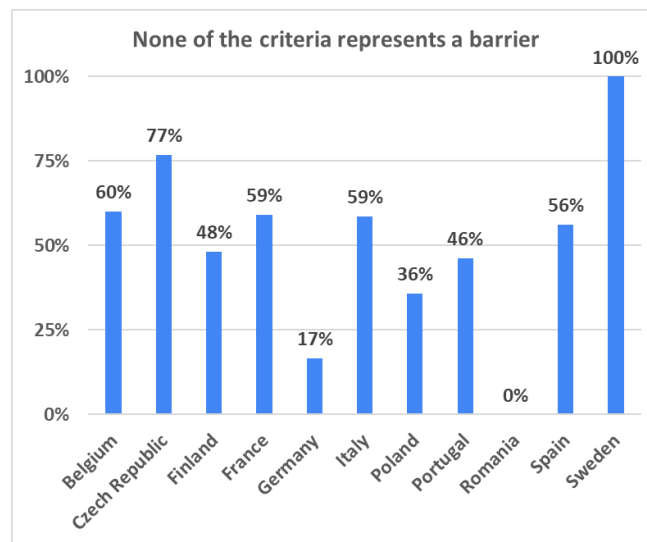


Fig. 2.16

Focus group interviews performed on a national base approach highlighted a few relevant comments on the legal/regulatory barriers to the mandatory criteria that showed the necessity to carefully take into consideration Country differences in the choice of the final criteria.

The analysis on the mandatory criteria inapplicability to already existing programmes is presented below for each Country and, when available, the focus group main outputs are reported below each graph.

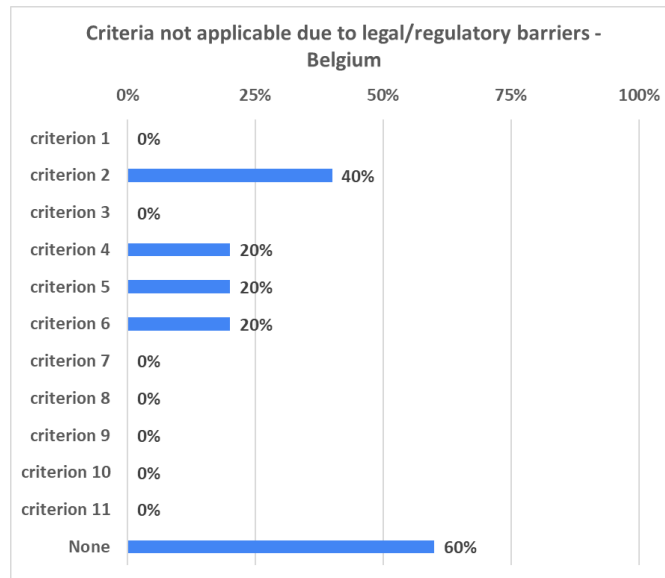
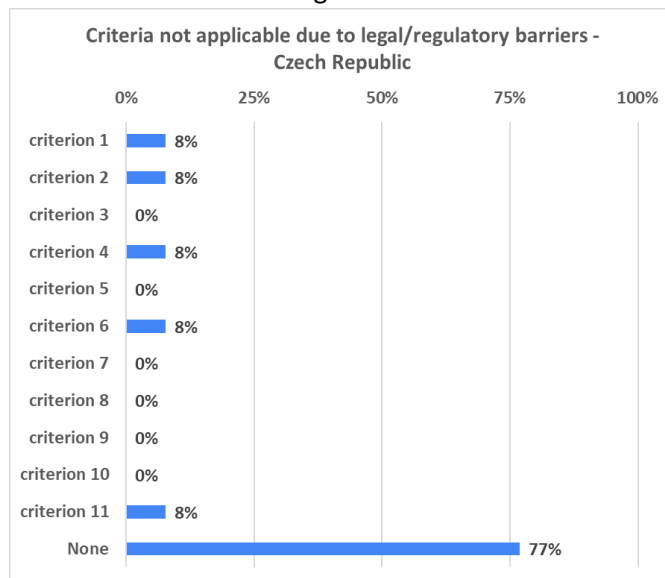


Fig. 2.17

No focus group was possible with Belgium representatives.

Fig. 2.18



Over 75% of the highlighted no respondents regarding the specific concern the applicability of the proposed criteria.

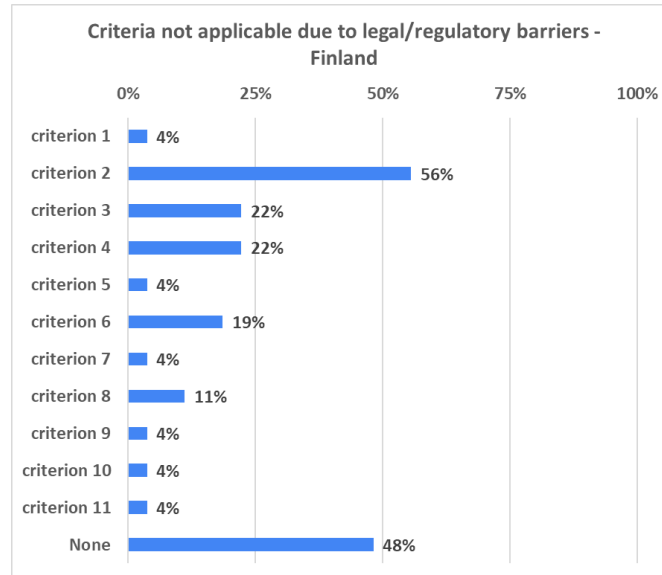
The Focus Group underlined the need for accreditation. The accreditation process currently involves national accreditation in each

responders specific concern applicability of the

discussion to ameliorate the European approach The accreditation involves national country, which often

requires numerous adaptations. The goal is to simplify this process without compromising on maintaining high standards of excellence. A potential solution under consideration is to establish a single European accreditation system that would apply uniformly to all participating institutions, streamlining the accreditation process while upholding excellence standards across borders.

Fig. 2.19



In Finland the only significant barriers Transnational joint The focus group highlighted that the not inherently are generally follow. However, it's recognize that in legal constraints that aspects. Therefore,

criterion with was #2- degree delivery . discussion criteria in the list are problematic, as they straightforward to important to Finland, there are may restrict certain the essential first

step is to delineate what is the difference between a European degree and joint degree, especially in consideration of these legal constraints.

Diploma issues can be a challenging. Presently, if an English-language diploma is issued for a Finnish degree, a translation into one of the two official languages – Finnish or Swedish – must be produced. Are there any exceptions possible? Or is a translation of the jointly issued diploma possible?

Admission regulations should also be carefully considered since all Finnish HEIs will have to pursue the principle of numerus clausus (restricted entry), and it is not clear how can this practice be followed when there are institutions with more automatic or free entry to Bachelor programmes.

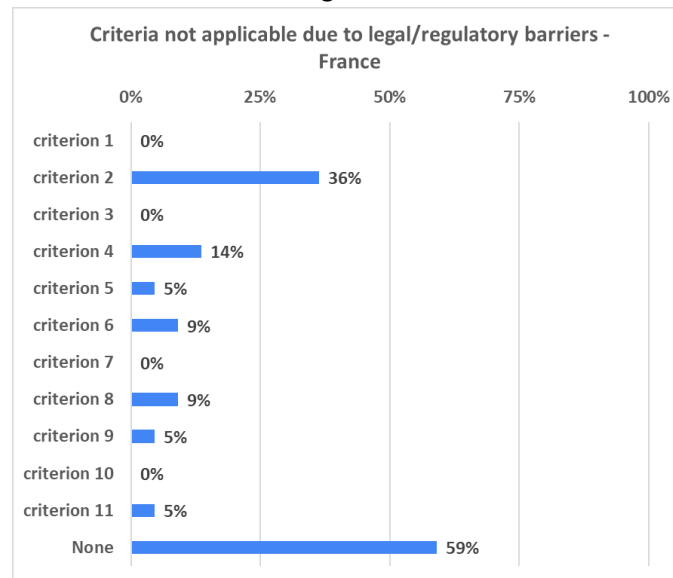
Finland does not typically employ programme-level accreditation. Nevertheless, if the European Commission can devise a means to offer accreditation for these programmes, it's a concept worth considering. The absence of programme-level accreditation might also present challenges, potentially necessitating accreditation from another institution in the programme.

The panel underlined that regarding the Accreditation for joint programmes it will be desirable to have it done at the European level and not by single institutions.

Another relevant point was regarding the **limitation at the bachelor level. Indeed,** there are substantial disparities in how joint programs operate at the bachelor and master levels. At the bachelor level, Finland, for instance, imposes more restrictions compared to the master's level.

A major concern was raised on tuition fees, the national regulations should accommodate the different realities in other countries, possibly allowing for exceptions when Finnish HEIs engage in Joint European Programs.

Fig. 2.20



The Focus group French highlighted few on the barriers to the that showed some Countries in the criteria.

The panel discussed more **Flexibility** for

interview with representatives relevant comments legal/regulatory mandatory criteria constrains for the application of the

on the need for the accreditation of

joint programmes to overcome timing and bureaucratic challenges. The **accreditation period** in France is 5 year and for joint programmes should be faster.

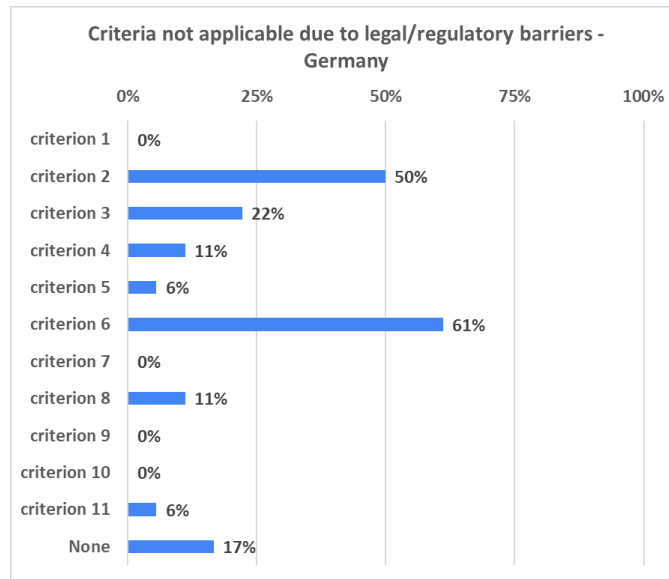
The **Compliance with prescribed tuition fees is also a** real barrier for French programmes since it is mandatory to respect the amount of money students are supposed to pay for a certain programme.

Another recommendation from the panel was the necessity to **harmonize duration and/or ECTS for joint programmes** in Europe and the willingness to explore the possibility of establishing coherent duration and credit standards for joint programmes.

As it is now in order to deliver a diploma, the French university part of a joint programme should be the leading university.

Fig. 2.21

The Focus group German highlighted some **#9 Innovative approaches** that did not emerge from the survey. The panel order to access the students must have requirements in degree.

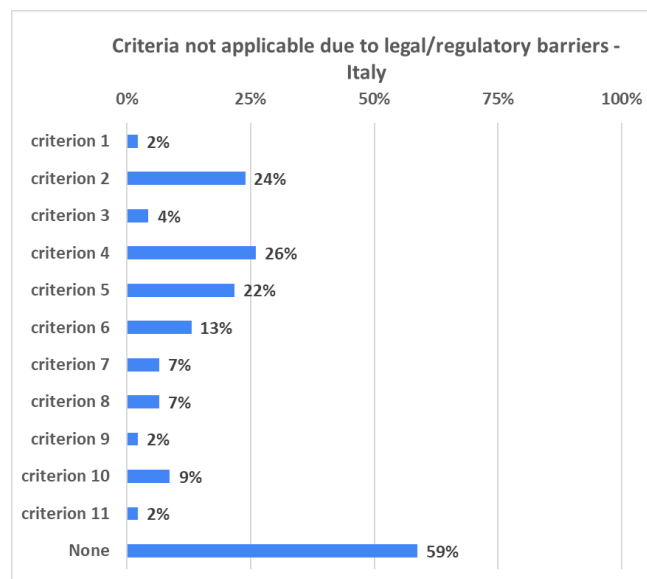


interview with representatives barriers regarding **learning** not emerge from the underlined that in master's degree minimum entry their bachelor's

Accreditation was also indicated as very challenging, since settling a new joint degree in Germany requires at least 2 years of work.

Fig. 2.22

The Focus group representatives difficulties in degree due to regulations. E.g. accepts students in programs without earned the final master's degree.



interview with Italian highlighted the awarding a joint differences in some institution double degree them having yet degree for access to a

The panel commented also on **Administrative constraints** associated for students, for example to obtain an account.

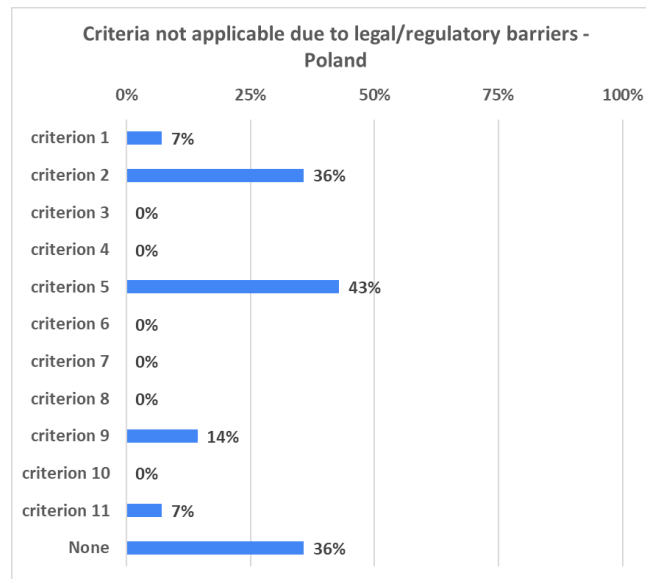


Fig. 2.23

The Focus group interview with Polish representatives highlighted several barriers for JPs in Poland. In Poland the legal framework mentions joint programs, making their existence clear. However, universities lack a well-defined procedure for their implementation.

In accordance with Polish statutory law, the issuance of a joint degree by Polish universities requires students to be enrolled in Polish university for at least one semester. This requirement becomes particularly challenging when the university is not the coordinating institution for a joint programme. Amending this legislation can be a time-consuming process.

Stringent regulations and careful considerations govern the issuance of diplomas. For instance, it is mandatory for the title of a bachelor's degree to be in the Polish language, posing a significant challenge. Another issue arises when joint diplomas are issued as a single document for multiple universities e.g. determining the applicable regulations.

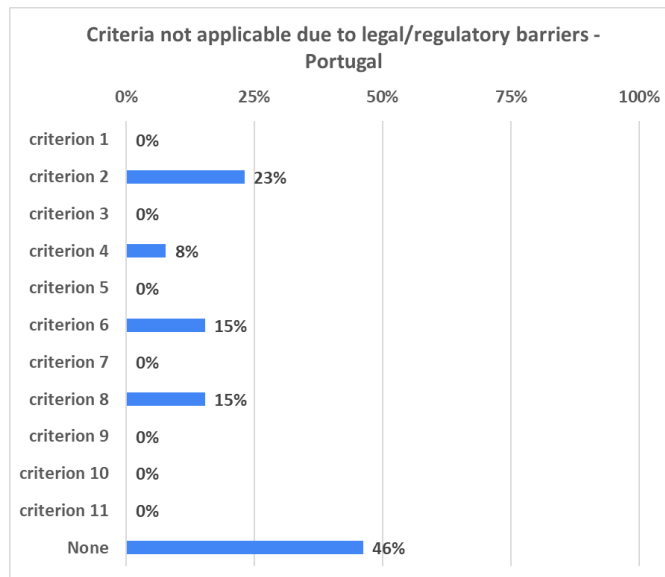
The recognition of academic disciplines can vary between countries, resulting in discrepancies. In Poland, statutory law imposes strict rules concerning academic disciplines, which can sometimes hinder interdisciplinary collaboration.

Regarding **PhD**, Polish law does not recognize a joint PhD degree in full.

Fig. 2.24

The Focus group Portuguese highlighted several JPs in Portugal that consideration when criteria for them.

In Portugal **degree** is contingent of academic



interview with representatives

legal constrains for should be taken into formulating specific

achieving a joint on the commitment leadership. Given

that difficulties change periodically, it's essential to maintain flexibility in addressing bureaucratic issues

Regarding **Accreditation** it is difficult to align the Portuguese accreditation process and the application of the programme to the European Commission. Timelines are different and conditions to apply are too strict and demanding.

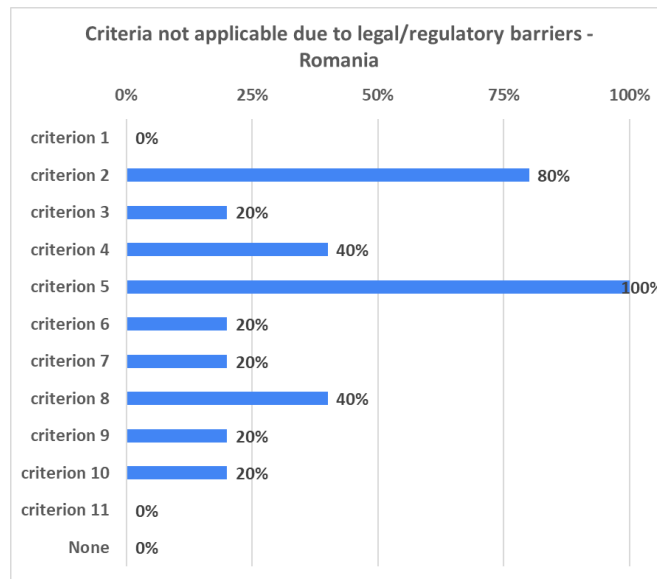
Another barrier refers to **internship**, some countries mandate internships as part of the bachelor programme, creating challenges in accommodating these varying requirements.

Also the synchronization of academic calendars is crucial for smooth programme operation.

The panel discussed on the need for more flexibility within joint programmes. Establishing specific legislation for joint programmes would facilitate their activation and accreditation. While a European approach is preferable, the associated procedures should not become burdensome, and they should be cost-effective.

Fig. 2.25

The Focus group Romanian highlighted several JPs in particular accreditation and In Romania the body degree is the University; there are and little freedom.



interview with representatives legal constrains for regarding student admission. who awards the Ministry, not the standards to respect Thus, a dedicated

legislation to support joint degrees in Romania **is a need.**

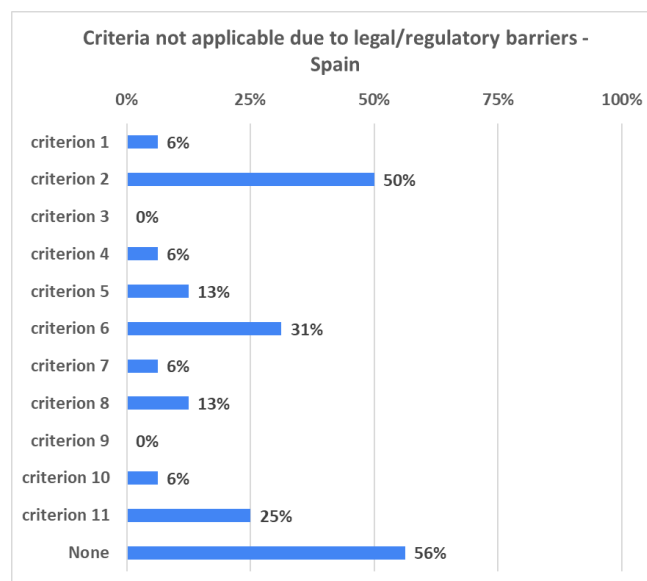
To issue a degree, a student must be admitted in Romania, then enrolled into the system. The wish is to change the legislation so that the students that have already been admitted by another partner University do not need to be admitted again by Romanian institutions.

The panel underlined the need to establish a European Union benchmark to facilitate comparisons of learning outcomes in joint programmes, emphasizing the importance of standardization at the EU level.

For Romanian partners **Flexibility** in defining learning outcomes is necessary.

Fig. 2.26

The Focus group representatives of made evident some particular regarding The panel barriers regarding criterion #5 **Joint programme.** example the issue of for Spain, where even



interview with Spanish Universities barriers for JPs in fees and languages. commented on the applicability of **policies for the joint** Considering for fees, it is not feasible within the same

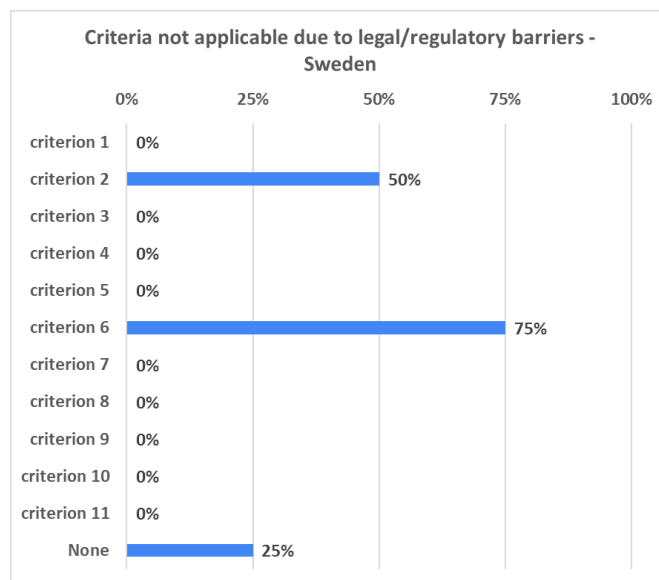
country there are differences between regions in tuition fees. Issue to be raised with the Spanish national legislator or the EU. Someone suggested that a solution could be that all the joint programs should have the same fees. Some else suggests that the EU can give grants to joint master's degrees as for Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters.

The language was underlined also as a problem, in Spain not everything is in English, webpages are not translated

The panel also discussed the complexity for students to move during the semesters, for example in terms of paperwork.

It was also raised to the point that implementing the criteria is challenging and a lot of work is necessary, therefore someone suggests that there should be recognition, incentives for the work done.

Fig. 2.27



The Focus group representatives of highlighted several activation. In commented that is recognize that varies significantly another, so any such initiatives

interview with Swedish Universities barriers for JPs particular the panel essential to education legislation from one country to discussions about should be preceded

by necessary legal changes.

The extended duration required for accreditation can be a considerable burden for certain countries, potentially obstructing the establishment of joint programmes.

Diverse Academic Calendar - In certain countries, the timing for master thesis presentations is restricted to specific periods of the year.

Compulsory Courses - There are variations in mandatory courses between countries, exemplified by the case of KTH, where certain courses, such as research methodology, already have predetermined credit requirements.

Intellectual Property (IP): Some industries may demand non-disclosure agreements from academic supervisors, which could pose challenges for non-local businesses or enterprises.

It was discussed that the participation in a joint degree programme tends to make curricula inflexible, rendering flexibility nearly impossible.

The issue of tuition fees was evidently a significant concern. A European degree may lead to substantial financial burdens and negotiation among Universities on which one will receive the payment and how the fees will be distributed. The concern that this might resemble the Erasmus Mundus model, where students are required to pay additional fees to partake in the programme. Furthermore, unevenly high tuition fees in some countries can create disparities among universities.

Mandatory criteria relevance

The responders were also questioned about the relevance of the mandatory criteria using a ranking from from 1 (least relevant) to 4 (most relevant).

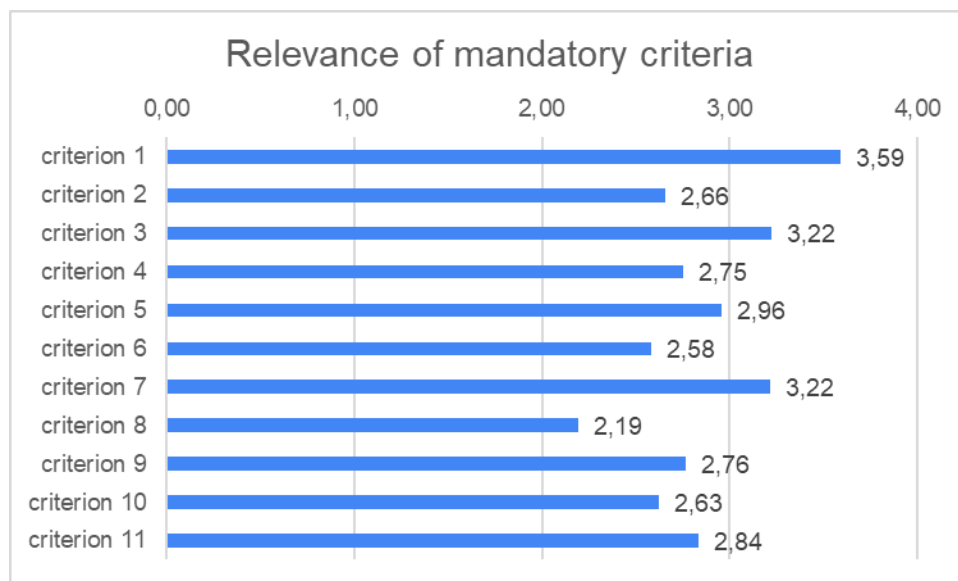


Fig. 2.28

On a scale from 1 (least relevant) to 4 (most relevant), all the criteria were ranked rather high with an average of 2.85. The criterion #8-Multilingualism was indicated as the least important (2.19), whereas criteria #1-Higher education institutions involved, #3-Transparency of the learning outcomes and #7-Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements indicated as the most important.

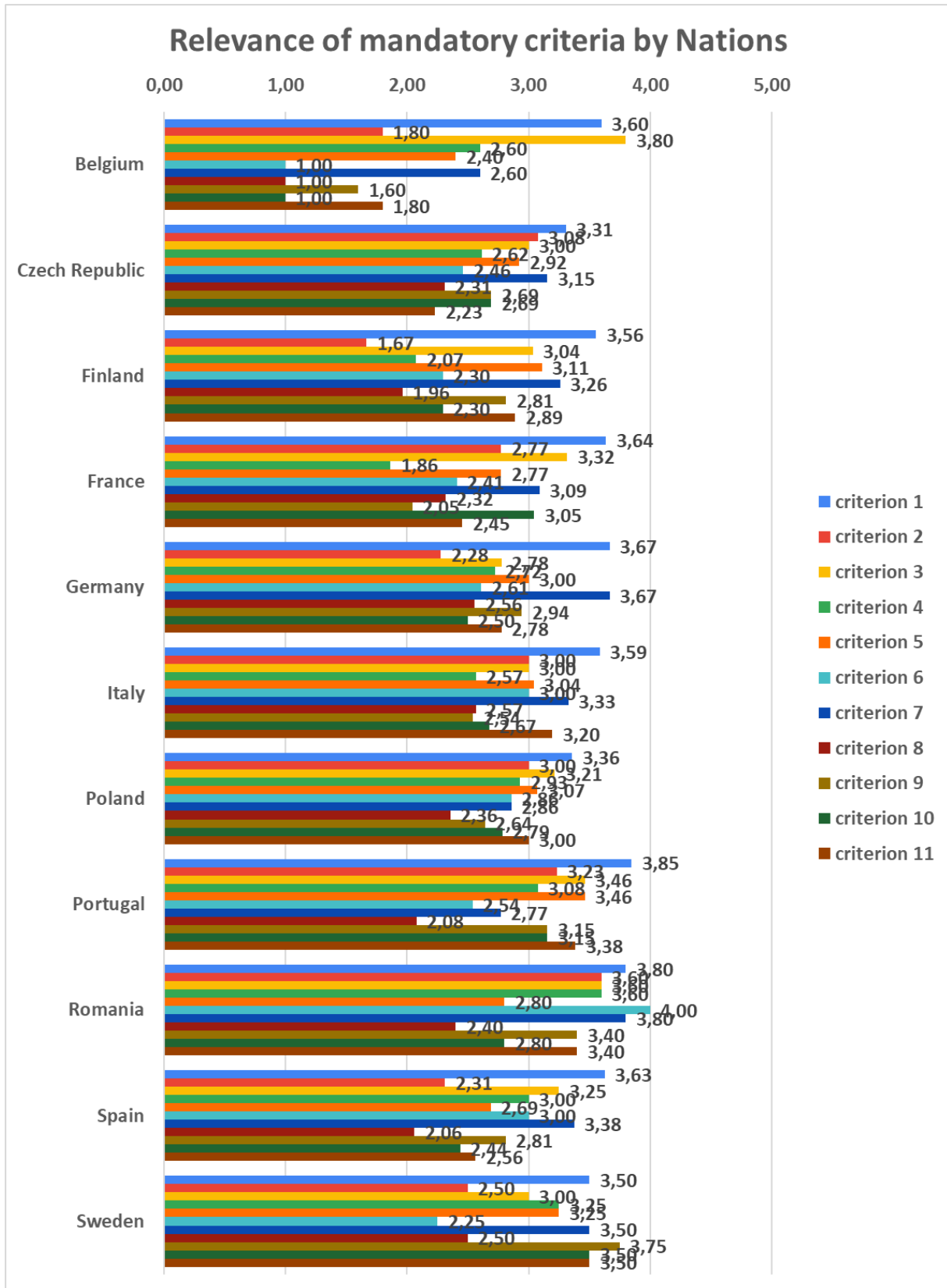


Fig. 2.29

2.2 Optional criteria applicability and relevance

A question was also made on the optional criteria (listed below), specifically which of them were already applicable to the existing programmes.

1	In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes additional formats of transnational learning activities with partner higher education institutions (e.g. online or blended, in the format of regular or intensive courses, summer/winter schools).
2	The joint programme offers the possibility to take language classes so as to enhance the command of multiple European languages.
3	The joint programme supports future labour market needs and/or includes cooperation with businesses and sectors in its curriculum.
4	The joint programme provides opportunities for international professional internships/work-based learning recognised through the award of ECTS.
5	The joint programme includes a career development plan devised with the candidate and/or exposure to the non-academic sector (such as internships, seminars, networking).
6	The joint programme includes components and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities.
7	The joint programme includes components and actions related to the development of high level digital skills of students, it offers high quality digital education content, as well as assessment of student skills.
8	The joint programme offers the possibility for students to participate in activities promoting democratic values and addressing societal needs of the local community(ies), including volunteering, and to receive ECTS for it.
9	The higher education institutions offering the joint study programme conducts joint promotion and awareness-raising activities to ensure visibility of the joint programme and provide the necessary information about it for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers.

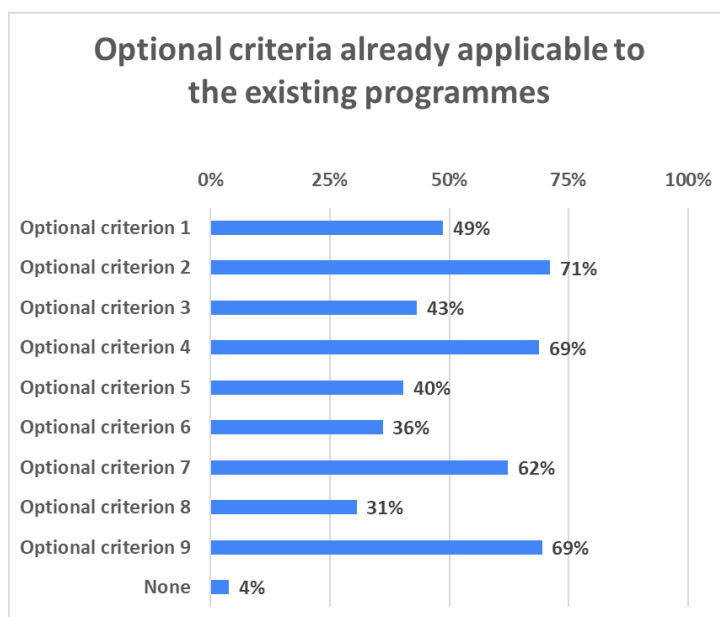


Fig. 2.30

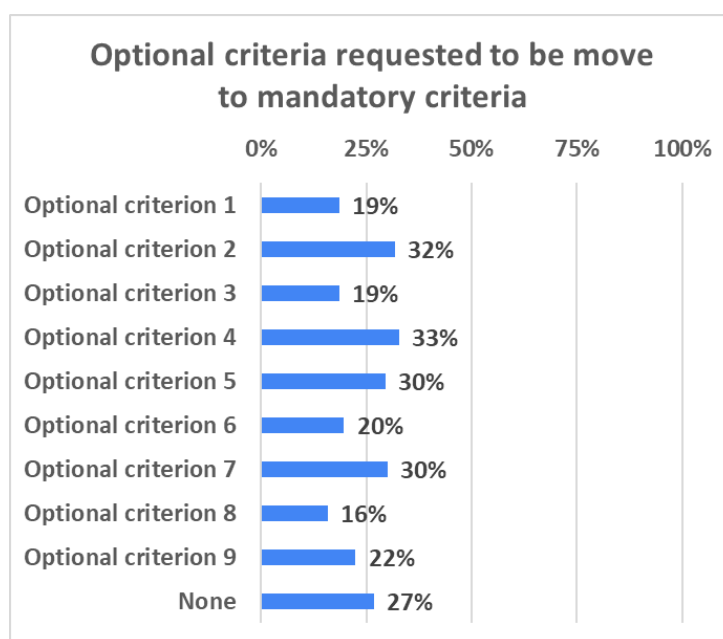


Fig. 2.31

None of the Optional criteria overcomes the 75% of applicability to the existing programmes (Figure Z), and all of them are recommended to be moved to mandatory for less than 30% (Figure ZZ) of the responders, suggesting avoiding to add more criteria with respect the mandatory ones.

From the Focus group discussion, it was pointed out by French representative that the **Optional criteria: #8 should** be considered to be included among the mandatory criteria since it offers the

possibility for students to participate in activities promoting democratic values and addressing societal needs of the local community(ies), including volunteering. To receive ECTS for it, "education to European citizenship," is a valuable addition for the label that only Europe can provide.

The Focus group with Spanish representatives highlighted the wish to include among the mandatory criteria the optional criteria #1 and #5. The panel pointed out that Optional criterion #1 helps the students feel in an international environment. The panel suggested for the Optional criterion #5 either to be transferred to mandatory criteria or maybe integrated with mandatory criterion #9 Innovative learning approaches.

Regarding the question on what of the mandatory criteria should be moved to optional, none reach 25% of the responders, the highest one being criterion #2- Transnational joint degree delivery.

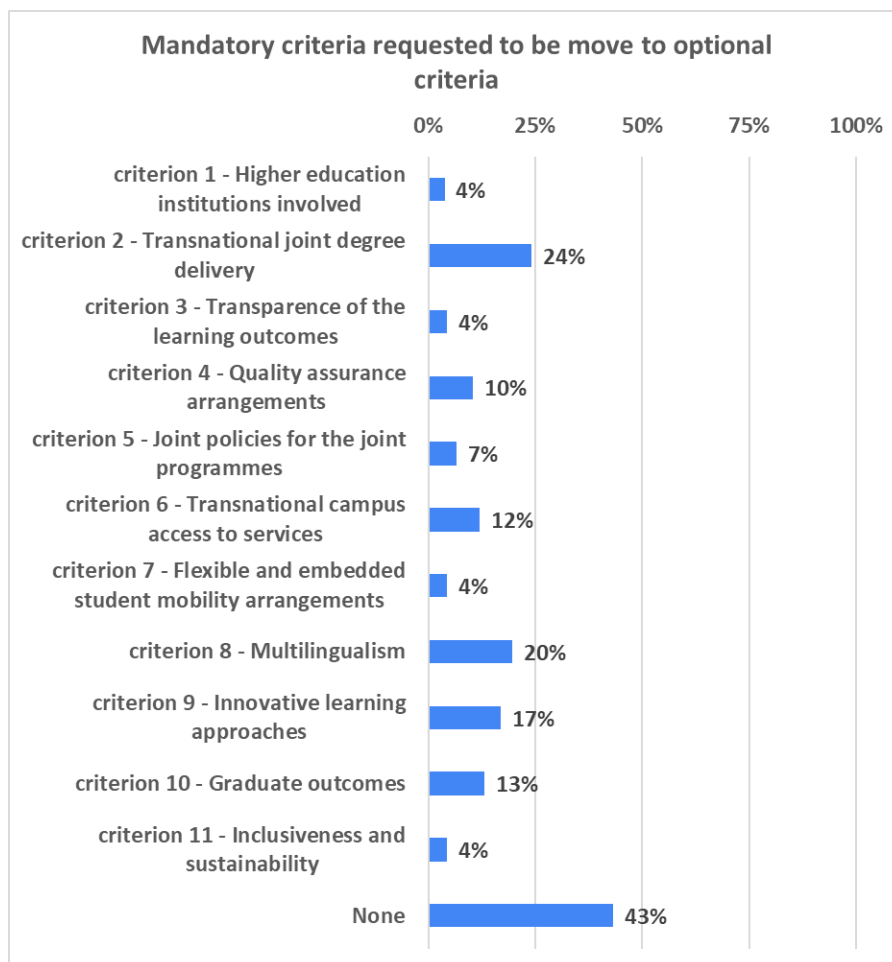
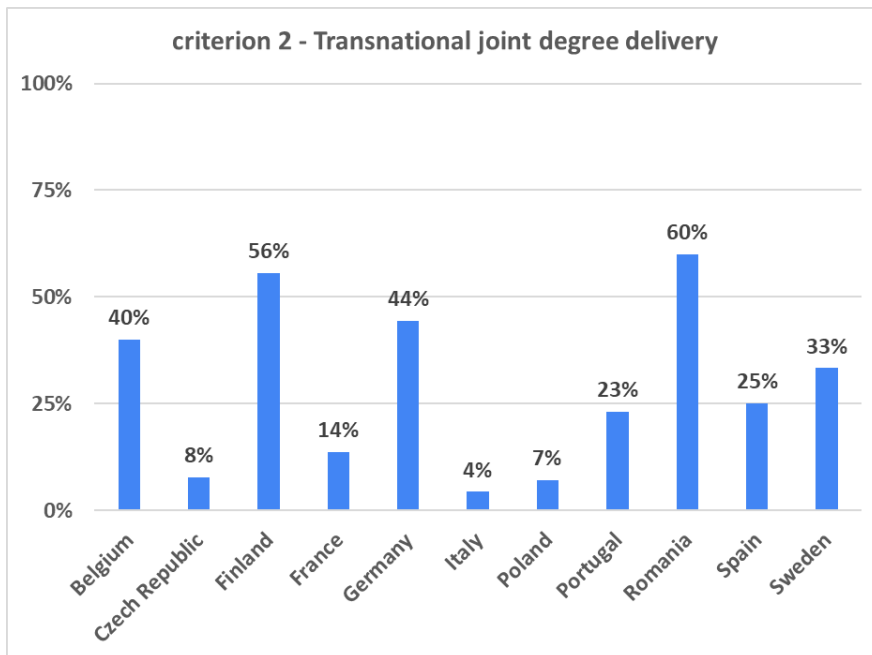


Fig. 2.32

Fig. 2.33
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Countries,
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respondents from Belgium, Finland, Germany, and Romania.

From the focus groups, German participants suggested to move to optional criterion **#5 Joint policies for the joint programme**, since it is difficult to achieve.

The Focus group panel of Italian responders recommended to move to optional the criteria **#2 Transnational joint degree delivery**, since it is not relevant whether the degree is single or joint, but that it is the educational pathway that is important, **#4 Quality assurance arrangements**, **#6 Transnational campus** since if made mandatory, it could be a barrier and **#9 Innovative learning approaches**.

The criterion **#6-Transnational campus** was also suggested to be moved by Spanish responders during the focus group.

Both German and Italian Focus group participants suggested to move criterion **#8-Multilingualism** to the optional group.

2.3 From Focus group on Optional and Mandatory Criteria Testing

Development of Measurement Scale:

- Czech Republic emphasizes the need for a comprehensive scale for consistency in assessment and evaluation of the criteria.

Evaluation of Criteria:

- Czech Republic suggests a "yes or no" approach followed by secondary scaling, favoring simplicity.
- Finland stresses the need for clear and explicit criteria.

Accreditation Process:

- Czech Republic recommends involving an external perspective for objectivity and credibility.
- Finland desires European-level accreditation for joint programs.

Importance of Consortium Agreement:

- Czech Republic emphasizes adherence to the consortium agreement for quality assurance.
- Italy and Portugal discuss monitoring implementation and quality assurance processes.

Applicability of Criteria:

- Czech Republic acknowledges that most criteria are applicable, with specific challenges in quantifying multilingualism.

Testing Phase:

- Poland suggests a testing phase, with a preference for the national approach due to practical challenges.
- Romania also proposes testing criteria in already existing programs.

European Level Implementation:

- Sweden recognizes the potential added value of European-level implementation but expresses concerns about practical details.

Obtaining the Label:

- Further comments highlight the need for clarification on the timeline and application process for obtaining the label.

Attractiveness for International Students:

- Further comments mention the potential attractiveness of the label for non-European students who would know for sure certain criteria are included in the programme.



Conclusion

Over 50% of the existing programmes comply with the proposed mandatory criteria, indicating their effectiveness in defining Joint Programmes. The only criterion not applicable to more than 25% of the existing programmes was **#2-Transnational joint degree delivery** which it is recommended to be moved from the list.

Page | 56

During focus groups' discussions the criterion **#8 – Multilingualism** seemed to be the one considered the most challenging in its formal implementation, such as registration for activities or issuing certificates. Some respondents further questioned to what extent institutions must control the implementation of multilingualism. Therefore, it has been suggested to move criterion #8 from the mandatory list of criteria to the optional one.

Regarding relevance the criterion **#8-Multilingualism** was indicated as the least important, whereas criteria **#1-Higher education institutions involved**, **#3-Transparency of the learning outcomes** and **#7-Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements** were listed as the most important.

None of the optional criteria were considered so indispensable to be moved to the mandatory list and the recommendation is in general to avoid adding more criteria to the listed ones.



3. Barriers and Bottlenecks

3.1 Legal/Regulatory Barriers

This section delves into the analysis of the perspectives held by joint programme directors and coordinators concerning legal barriers associated with joint programmes within their respective countries. The report examines potential discrepancies between these perceptions and the actual legislative landscape as outlined in [ED-AFFICHE D3.1, titled "Obstacles for Transnational Collaboration in Higher Education"](#). This document compiles insights into legislative obstacles gathered from legal experts, consultations with ministries, and the analysis of new legislation relevant to joint programmes.

Within the questionnaire, joint programme directors and coordinators were tasked with ranking each barrier outlined by the European Commission for the development of joint programmes¹. Their assessments, framed within the context of their institutions and countries, were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 signifies minimal problematic impact and 7 denotes a highly problematic scenario.

Full description of the barriers in the graphics:

- Rigid curricula with little room for changes in the allocation of credits
- Accreditation or re-accreditation of the programmes
- Minimum requirements in terms of credits (minimum number of credits to be completed at the home university)
- Minimum requirements in terms of duration (minimum number of semesters to be spent at the home university)
- Mandatory extension of the legal duration of the studies for the awarding of the national degree"
- Heavy accreditation/re-accreditation procedures
- Time required for accreditation/re-accreditation
- High accreditation costs
- High differences in the tuition fee levels at the different partners
- Different Intellectual Property Rights legislation
- Other (please specify below)

¹CONSULTATION MEETING WITH AD HOC EXPERT GROUP (30 APRIL 2021), Background note: Challenges to unlocking the full potential of European Universities.

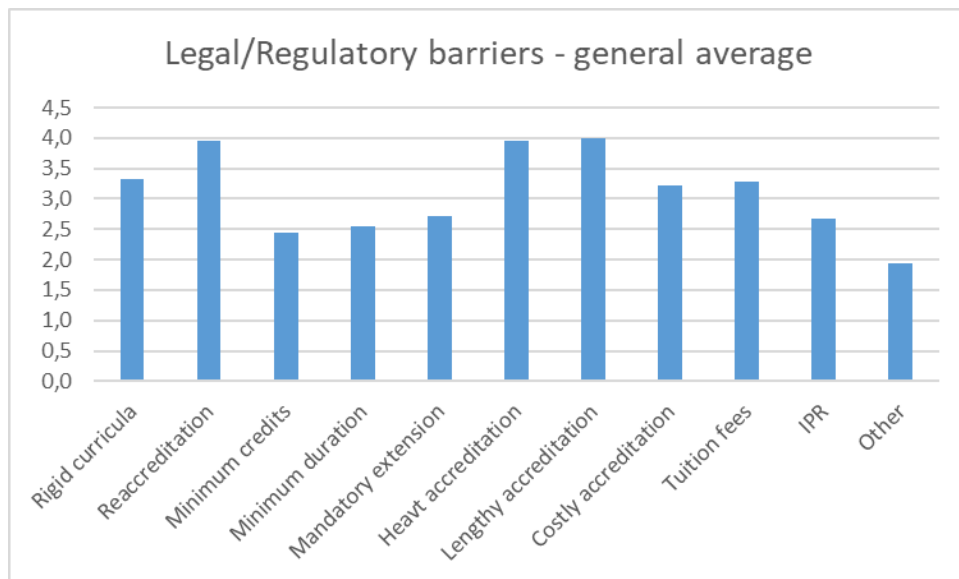


Fig. 3.1,

As it can be observed in the general average of the responses received, “**accreditation**” seems to be the most problematic factor when developing a joint programme. This is also confirmed by legal experts. Of all items on the obstacle list that was presented to the legal experts in fact, this was the one for which the **largest number of countries reported that the obstacle exists**.

However, the way this obstacle is perceived differs significantly from country to country. This may be related to the possibility or not to apply the European Approach, even if also those countries which can apply the approach report some issues regarding the cost, timing and other.

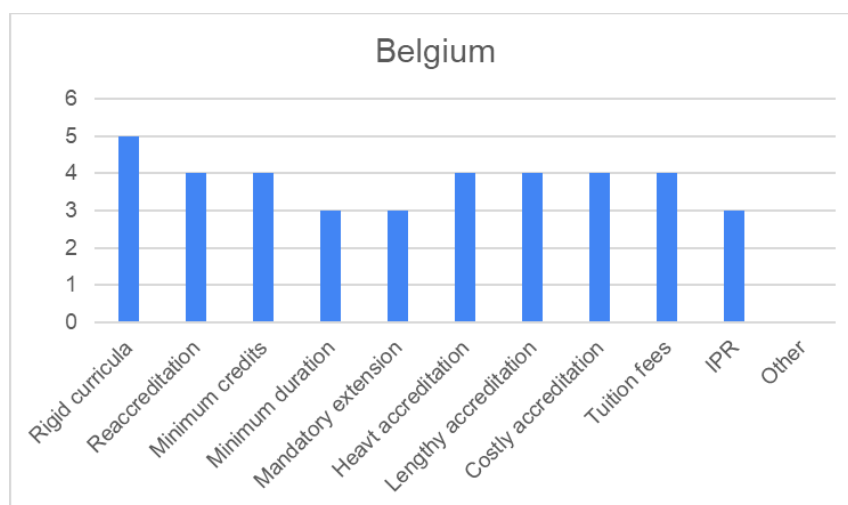


Fig. 3.2

In **Belgium**, joint programme directors and coordinators who participated in the study identify "Rigid curricula with limited flexibility in credit allocation" as the primary challenge when implementing a joint programme. However, when consulting legal experts, they do not see this as an obstacle in general, but only for some specific degree programmes (regulated professions in medicine, teacher training programmes that must have 30 ECTS of internship/practices) and some specific issues (such as the necessity of having a programme in Dutch with similar content for bachelor and master level).

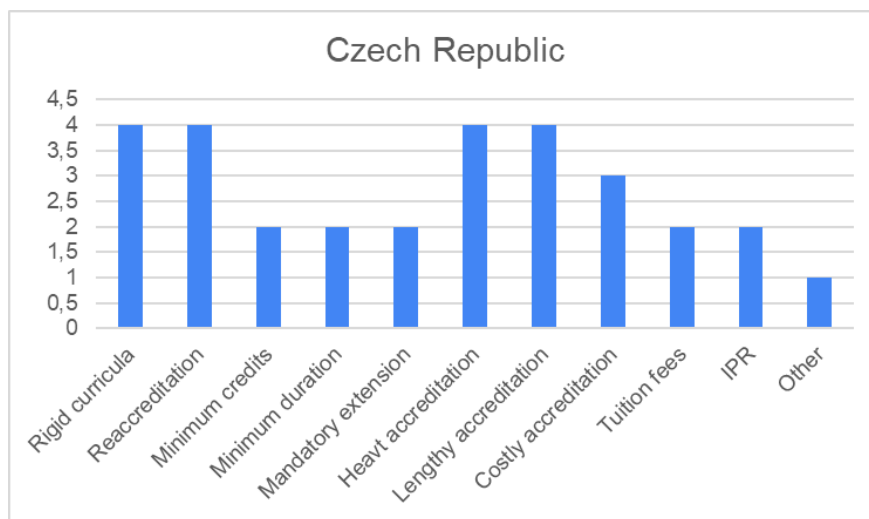


Fig. 3.3

In **Czech Republic**, joint programme directors/coordinators do not perceive any stronger legal barrier scoring higher than 4 out of 7. In Czech Republic, universities have the possibility to opt for the "**institutional accreditation**", meaning that the university as a whole receives an accreditation for specific fields of study. In this case, an Internal Evaluation Board is established to grant the accreditation to specific study programmes. This procedure takes a while but is still shorter than the accreditation through National Accreditation Bureau. Nowadays all bigger Czech universities have institutional accreditation so only smaller universities have to go through the National Accreditation Bureau. In both cases there are no deadlines for setting up the new accreditation, which is very flexible. The concern expressed by the programme coordinators in this sense doesn't seem therefore to be entirely justified. The only other barrier of concern scored 4/7 is the one related to **the rigidity of the curricula**. This is due to the fact that by law in each degree one field of study has to be dominant (i.e. represent more than 50% of the curriculum). The dominant field of study determines the code of the programme, but sometimes it can be difficult to explain to academics from partner universities why one field of study has to be dominant.

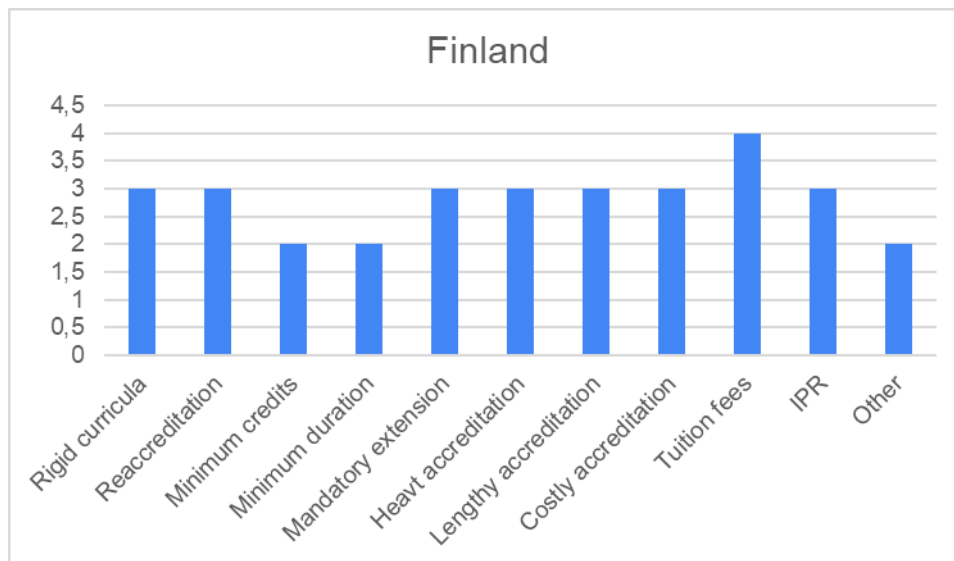


Fig. 3.4

In Finland, joint programme directors/coordinators do not perceive any stronger legal barrier, scoring them maximum 4 out of 7. The only barrier which scored 4/7 is “**High differences in the tuition fee levels at the different partners**”. This perception can be explained by the fact that in Finland students do not pay any tuition fee. From consultation with legal experts in the country, we understand that the issue of the **special situation of joint programmes is being tackled at the moment**, as many Finnish institutions are currently part of a European University alliance and therefore involving in joint programmes. Although programmes are accredited institutionally in Finland, the average value for the accreditation related barriers are relatively high but they refer either to the European Approach to Quality Assurance, or to the accreditation process at the other universities in the consortium. Under the option “other” it was mentioned “National legislation on annual enrolment (including mandatory student union and healthcare fees) and on tuition fees and how these are interconnected”.

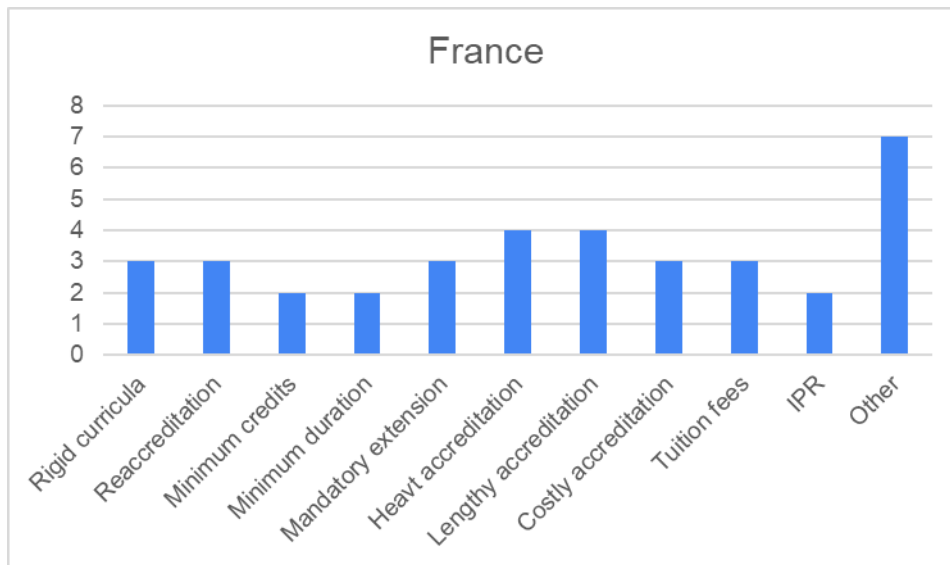


Fig. 3.5

In France, joint programme directors/coordinators do not perceive any stronger legal barrier, scoring them maximum 4 out of 7. The only two barriers which scored 4/7 were referred to haevy and lengthy accreditation. During the focus group the requirement for increase flexibility during the accreditation was underlined as a need to address timing and bureaucratic challenges. The Tuition Fee obtained overall a score of 3/7, nevertheless during the focus group it emerged as a critical barrier since **compliance with prescribed tuition national fees is an obligation for French institutions**. Interestingly, it was also reported as obstacle the lack of harmonization of the uration and/or ECTS for joint programmes in Europe. In the category “other” it was reported the lack of dedicated administrative pesonel to support the Joint Programmes.

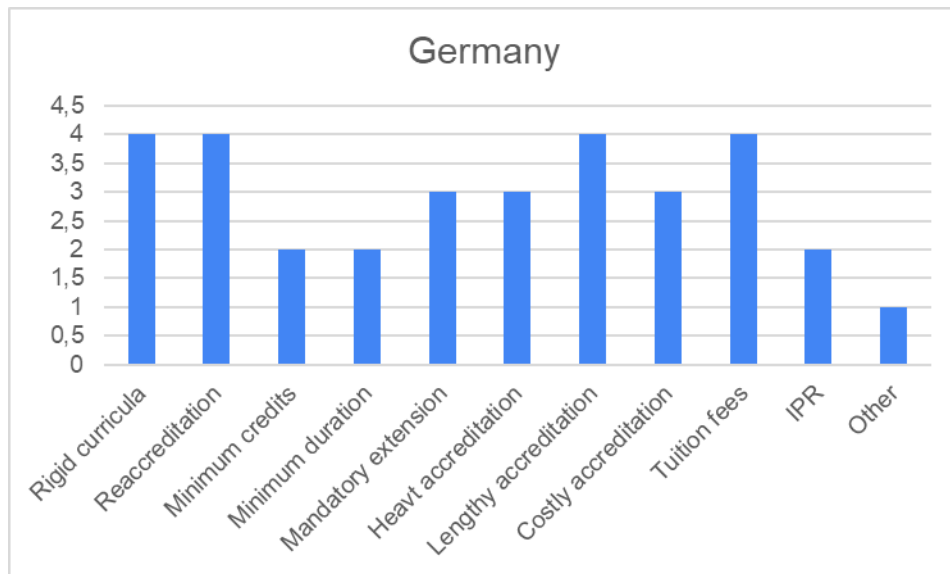


Fig. 3.6

In Germany, no specific strong legal barriers were identified, still joint programme directors/ coordinators gave a score 4/7 to the rigid curricula, the reaccreditation, the accreditation time and the tuition fees.

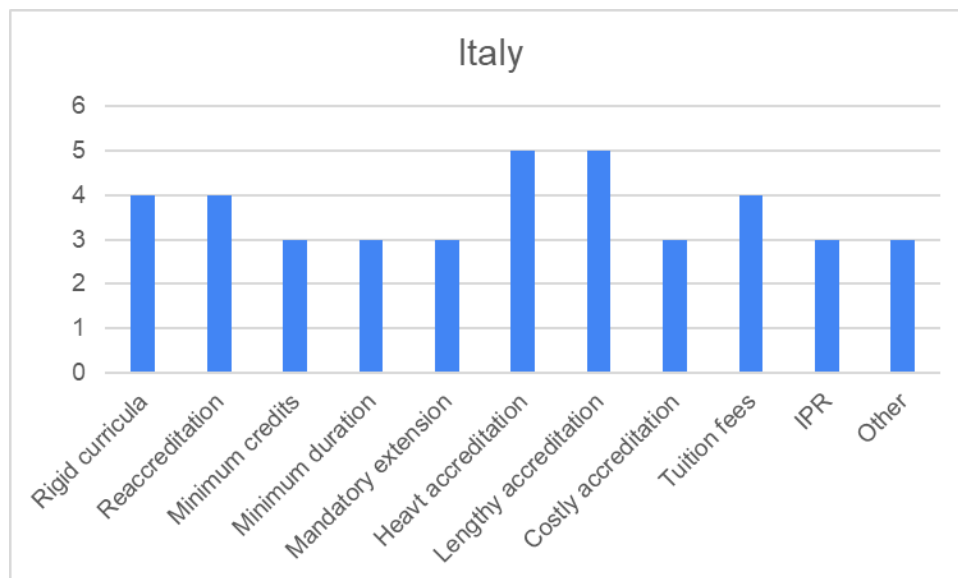


Fig. 3.7

The **heavy and lengthy accreditation** were ranked 5/7 among the legal barriers by the **Italian** directors/coordinators of joint programmes. Rigid curricula, reaccreditation and tuition fees followed with a rank of 4/7. During the focus group it also emerged as relevant barrier the difference in academic calendars (for example graduation sessions) and different internal and national rules at the partner institutions, as well as different admission requirements.

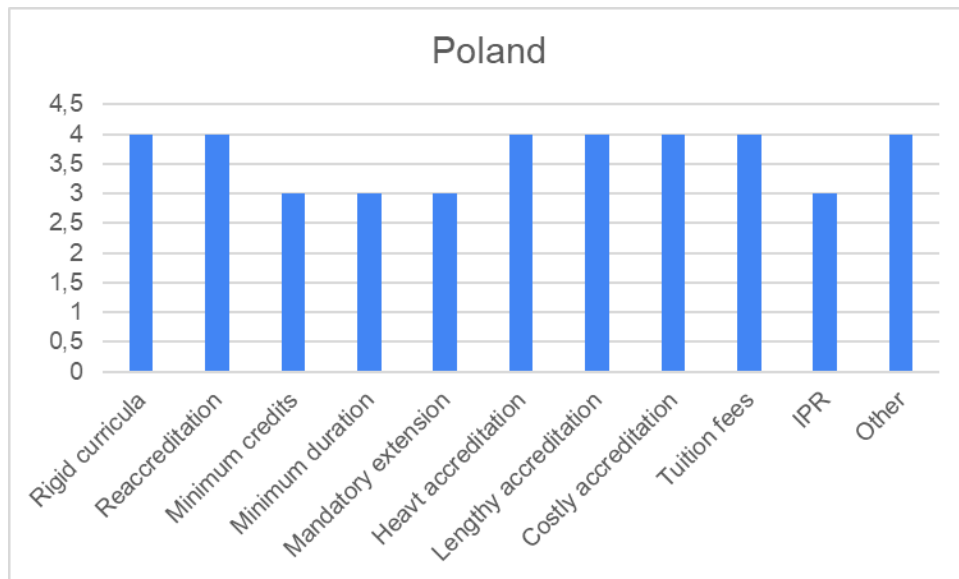


Fig. 3.8

Heavy accreditation, lengthy accreditation, costly accreditation, reaccreditation, rigid curricula, and tuition fees all received the highest rank of 4/7 by Polish academic coordinators.

Further insights focus on legal constraints and changes within the academic system: Regarding PhD degrees, Polish law does not fully recognize joint PhD degrees. Statutory law stipulates that for Polish universities to issue joint degrees, students must undergo enrollment in a Polish university for at least one semester. This requirement proves challenging, particularly when the coordinating institution for a joint program is not the university itself. The process of amending this legislation is acknowledged as time-consuming.

The process of diploma issuance in Poland is governed by stringent regulations and careful considerations. Challenges include the obligatory use of the Polish language for the title of a bachelor's degree. Issuing joint diplomas as a single document for multiple universities raises concerns about determining applicable regulations.

Recognition of academic disciplines can vary between countries, leading to potential discrepancies. In Poland, statutory law imposes strict rules on academic disciplines, which may pose challenges to interdisciplinary collaboration. Additional comments underscore that while the legal framework in Poland acknowledges joint programmes, a well-defined procedure for their implementation is lacking.

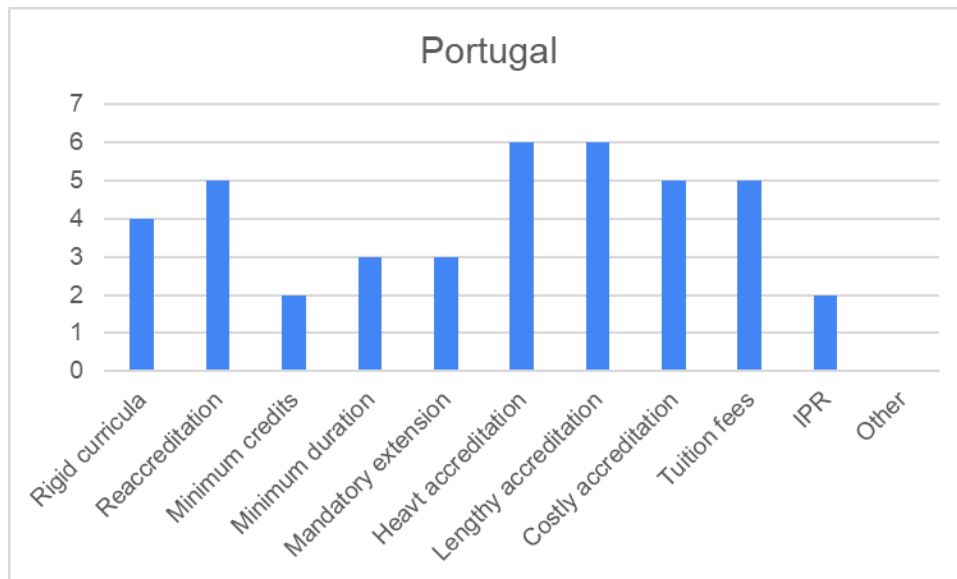


Fig. 3.9

In Portugal, the need for accreditation or re/accreditation of national programmes when offered jointly was ranked very high as a barrier (5/7), but the national legal experts didn't mention any difficulty in this sense. Also accreditation costs are scored very high, but according to the legal experts this amounts to 4.500€, which is relatively low if compared to other countries. Other accreditation related barriers are also scored rather high, but this is referred to the **European Approach** and not to the national process for accreditation. The relatively high ranking of restrictive curricula as a barrier doesn't seem to be justified from the perspective of the legal experts. In the case of tuition fees, sometimes there are some difficulties in articulating the specificities of each country, especially in those cases in which it is not expected or possible to charge tuition fees at all. So this barrier is more referred to specific countries and not to the situation in Portugal.

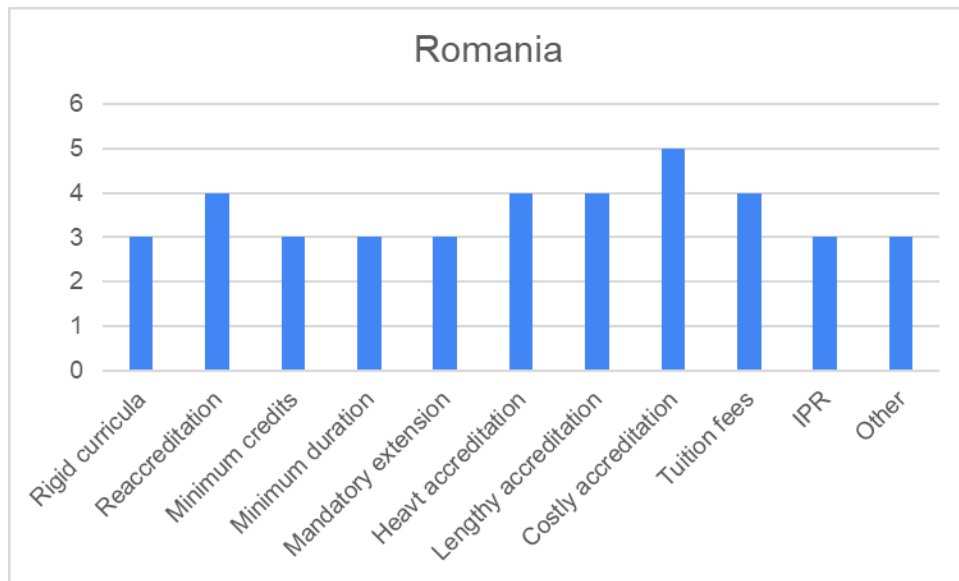


Fig. 3.10

In **Romania**, the **accreditation process is perceived as costly** and was ranked as a barrier (5/7), while heavy accreditation, lengthy accreditation, and reaccreditation, as well as tuition fees, all receive a rank of 4/7. The commentary highlights various challenges in the accreditation system. Legal constraints at the national level pose difficulties related to accredited and joint degrees, making the overall process complex.

Notably, in Romania, the authority responsible for awarding degrees is the Ministry, not the University, and strict standards must be followed with limited flexibility. The comments during the focus groups emphasizes the need for dedicated legislation to support joint degrees in Romania.

During focus groups emerged the issue of limited numbers of non-EU students and the existence of different national accounting rules for fees.

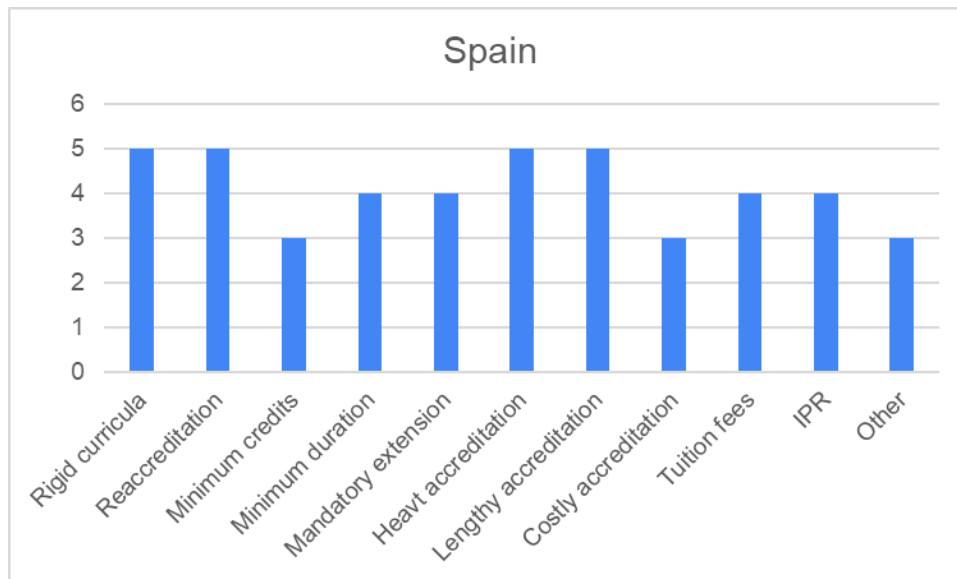


Fig. 3.11

In Spain, heavy accreditation, lengthy accreditation, reaccreditation, and rigid curricula are rated the highest at 5/7, representing significant barriers.

Minimum duration, mandatory extension, IPR and Tuition fees ranked 4/7. However, it is noteworthy that numerous comments were made specifically regarding the tuition fees aspect. Notable differences in academic rules and regulations are highlighted, along with variations in how tuition fees are charged to students – whether for the entire program, academic year, or by specific program – and the rules for refunds in case of withdrawals. There are also disparities in additional tuition fees. Spain believes that a joint policy for joint fees is not feasible because even within the same country, differences in tuition fees exist between regions. An already mentioned solution is to address this matter with the Spanish national legislator or the EU, suggesting standardizing fees for all joint programs or asking the EU to provide grants for joint master’s degrees as has been done with Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters.

A further comment has been made when addressing international programs: request for support to guide students through legal visa procedures; Many students may face uncertainties when moving between countries or need to extend their stay to complete their studies.

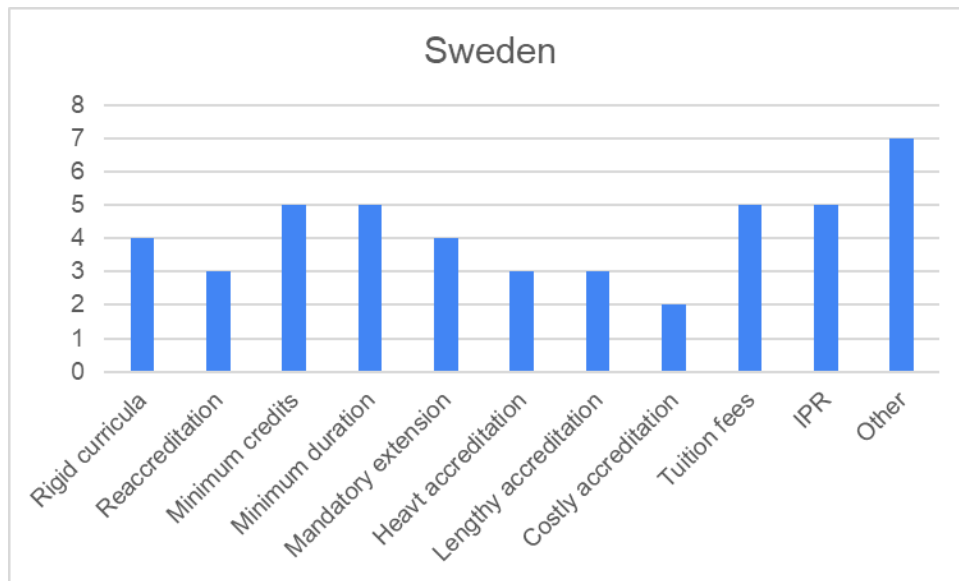


Fig. 3.12

The **Swedish system** does not involve accreditation of education programmes at tertiary level. Rather, the universities are awarded the right to issue degrees on certain levels and certain academic areas if they fulfil specific criteria. The respondent assigned a value between 2 and 3 to the accreditation criteria by referring to the European Approach to Quality Assurance in joint programmes or to the accreditation process in the partners countries. In Sweden, The Swedish higher education agency (UKA) is sole body for safeguarding and control of QA of HEI in Sweden (no other organizations, consultancy firms or such are approved by the Swedish government). UKA stipulates certain standards of and models for QA within Swedish HEI that we must adhere to. These standards are in line with the ESG, but HEI must take part in UKA’s audits.

The most problematic barriers according to the average scores were not among the suggested ones. Under the “other” option the following elements were highlighted: “Different vacation time for teachers to join/organize the summer events/schools” and “Variations among the EU member states in terms of what is expected/mandatory to be included in a certain degree and the different grading scales”.

Swedish universities are required to charge a tuition fee for non-European students on bachelor and master level (that is students outside of EU, EEA and Switzerland and without residence permit in Sweden). The fee should cover the full cost for providing the education. On the other hand, Swedish universities must not charge any fee for students from an EU/EEA country. On PhD-level no tuition fee should be charged. Joint programmes often have costs, and these are difficult for us to charge for. Joint

programmes often have extra costs compared to regular programmes and these costs are difficult for Swedish universities to charge for, which explains the high value attached to this criterion.

Intellectual property rights are problematic in the sense that In Sweden the student/researchers are in control of the research findings (including Master thesis) and this is guaranteed in the ordinance for higher education. The Swedish university has no stake in this. We need to preserve this freedom for the individual researcher/doctoral student in our international programmes, which sometimes collide with the IPR in the partner universities.

3.2 Organizational Barriers

This section delves into the analysis of the perspectives held by joint programme directors and coordinators concerning organizational barriers associated with joint programmes within their respective countries.

Respondents were asked to rank each of the following identified barriers for the development of joint programmes for a scale from 1 to 7 (1 not problematic at all – 7 extremely problematic):

- Tuition language requirements
- Lack of administrative support
- Lack of institutional support
- Lack of scholarships to attract a sufficient number of students
- Lack of funding for the development of the programmes

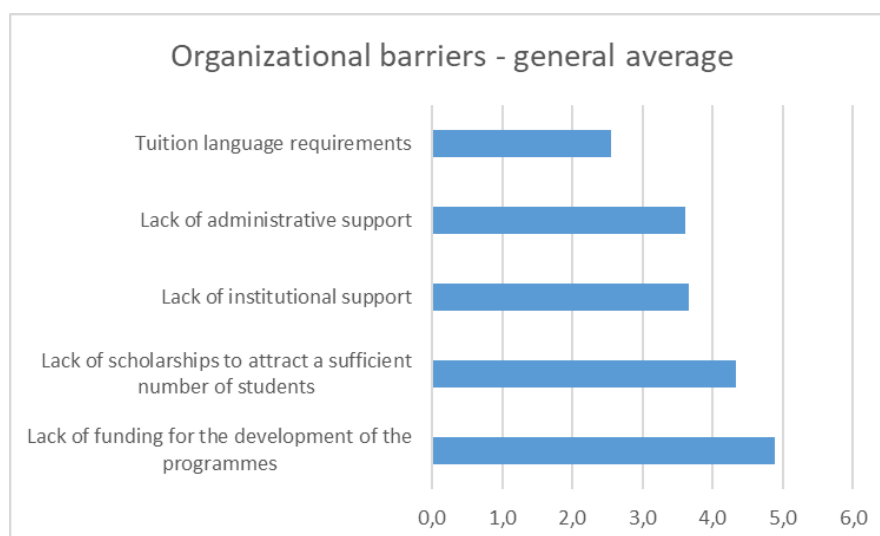


Fig. 3.13

It is clear from the responses received that in general the main organizational barriers are related to the funding issue. This is true for both the development phase and for the implementation (scholarships to support the student and staff mobility). This factor speaks in favour of the provision of some financial incentive for the adaptation of existing JPs to the JEDL criteria, and even more for the JPs that will be created ex-novo. Lack of administrative and institutional support scored also quite high, although the relevance of these barriers varies widely among countries as highlighted by the following graphs.

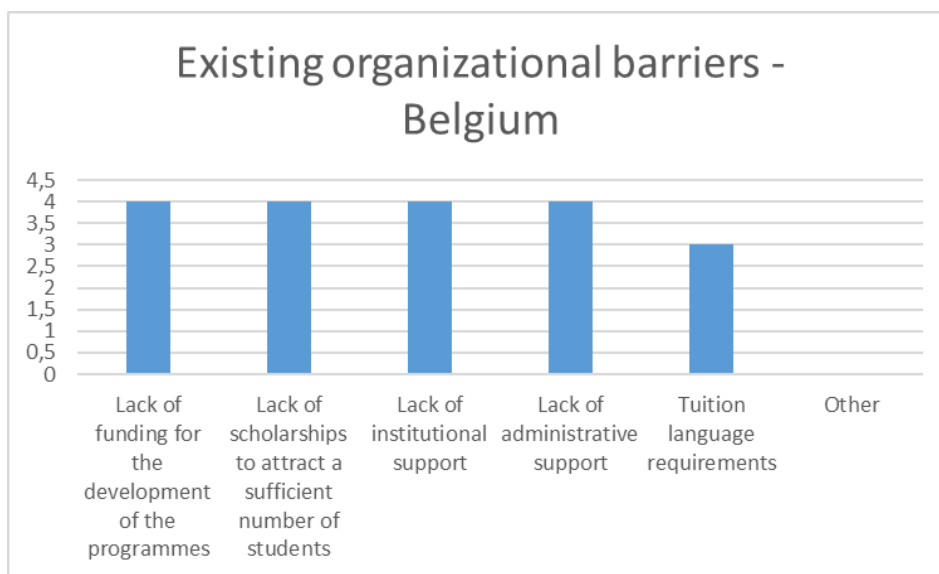
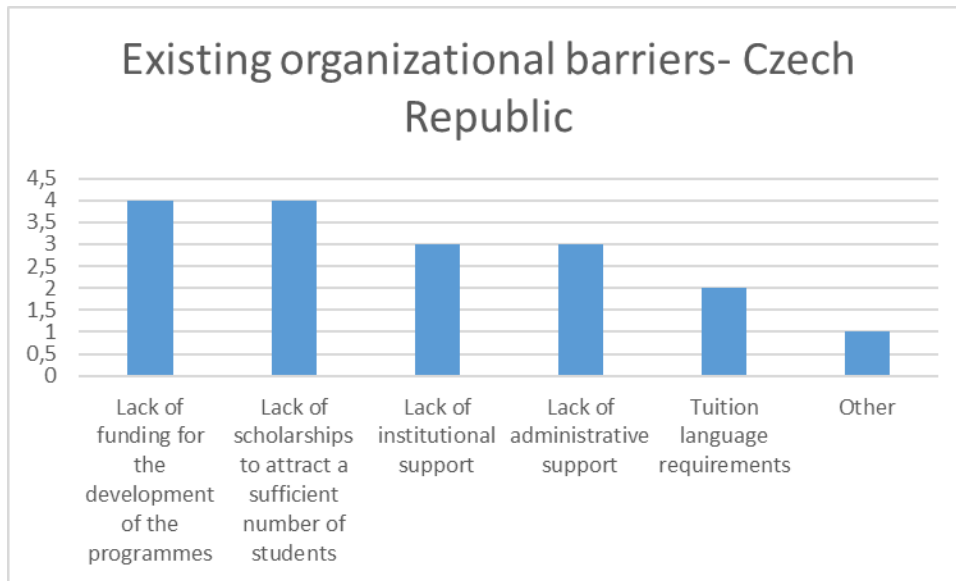


Fig. 3.14

LAURA WRITES THAT!!

Fig. 3.15
The
of



Ministry

Education only provides finances for students studying programmes taught in Czech language. Study programmes in foreign languages foresee tuition fees. Most mobility is funded through Erasmus+ only.

Fig. 3.16
The



university regulations don't allow transfer of credits for Master's thesis but instead this has to be independently supervised and evaluated by each local professor (confusion for students, more work for administration, more work for professors). English-taught programmes are allowed, provided that Finnish language programme(s) are offered within the same discipline. Moreover, no direct restrictions on the percentage of foreign teachers, but according to the Universities Act (section 11) the language of instruction at Finnish universities is either Finnish or Swedish. Further, the Government Decree on Universities (770/2009) 1 § states that a person working with tuition at a university must have a good

knowledge of the teaching language (either Finnish or Swedish). Exceptions to the language proficiency requirements can be made in internal rules of procedure of the universities.

The

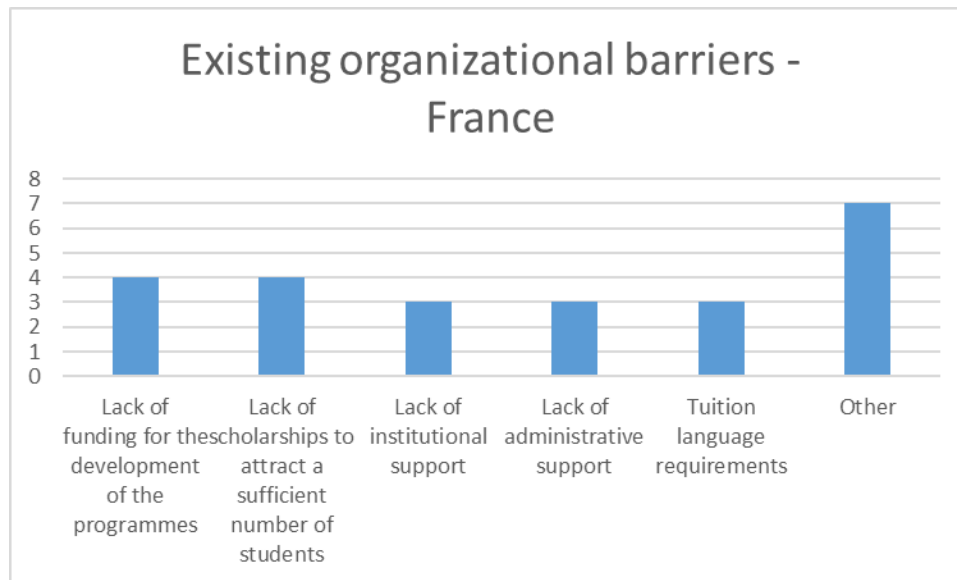


Fig. 3.17

organizational barrier for French universities is not among the suggested options and it's due to the fact that professors are overloaded with teaching (800 hours/year of education) and research with complex administrative processes. Without extra time allocated and recognized, it is very demanding to get into the complexity of preparing international JPs. This aspect might be considered as part of the lack of institutional support.

No restrictions in the use of foreign languages was identified by the legal experts, but this barrier was rated rather high by the programme directors. In reality, in order to enhance the attractiveness and international recognition of diplomas, certain courses may be taught in a foreign language or organized in cooperation with foreign higher education establishments, in accordance with the provisions of articles L. 121-3 and D. 613-17 et seq. of the French Education Code. According to bill 121-3, the language of instruction, examinations and competitive examinations, as well as theses and dissertations in public and private educational establishments is in French. Exceptions may be justified:^{3°} By pedagogical requirements, when teaching is provided within the framework of an agreement with a foreign or international institution as provided for in article L. 123-7 or within the framework of a European programme;...".

Fig. 3.18

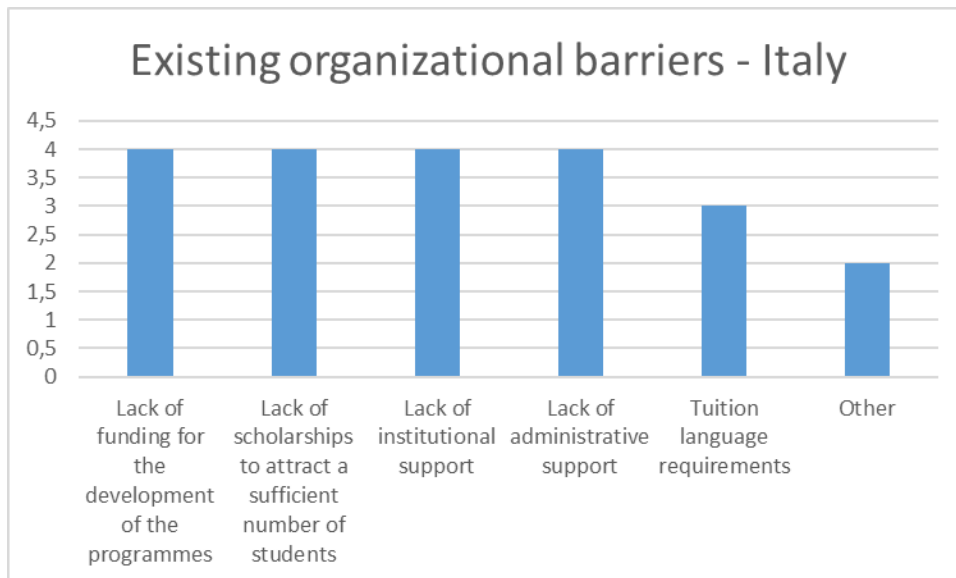


Lack of specific funding for the creation and

implementation of the programmes as well as for attracting and supporting the enrolled students are among the main barriers in Germany, together with the tuition languages requirement. A rank of 3 anyway was also indicated for limited support both at institutional as well as administrative level.

Fig. 3.19

Italian



universities require language certifications as minimal entry requirement for to applying to a programme. If the degree programme is not taught in Italian, it is necessary for the student to provide a B2 language proficiency certificate as an entry requirement.

Under “other”, one university mentioned problems in the organisation of the timetable due to the scarcity of teaching rooms, which can have an impact also for joint programmes.



Fig. 3.20

There are no requirements in the national legislation besides the language proficiency of at least B2 to have licencjat (EQF 6) and B2+ to have magister (EQF 7) qualifications. Under the “other” option two elements were highlighted:

- Lack of understanding of the meaning of institutional support needed for the development and management of JPs with the generation of unnecessary institutional difficulties
- Legalisation of stay: too many problems related to the mobility when students apply for residence permit (decision time far too long)

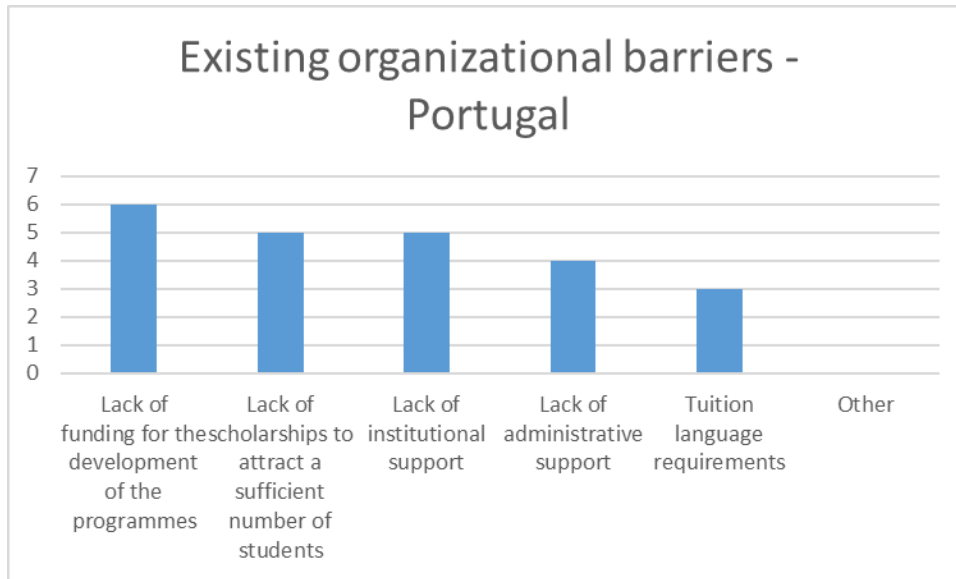


Fig. 3.21

The main organization constrains in Portugal limiting the Join Programme activation and ranking above 4 are the lack of economical as well as administrative and institutional support. Nevertheless, language requirements can represent also an obstacles.

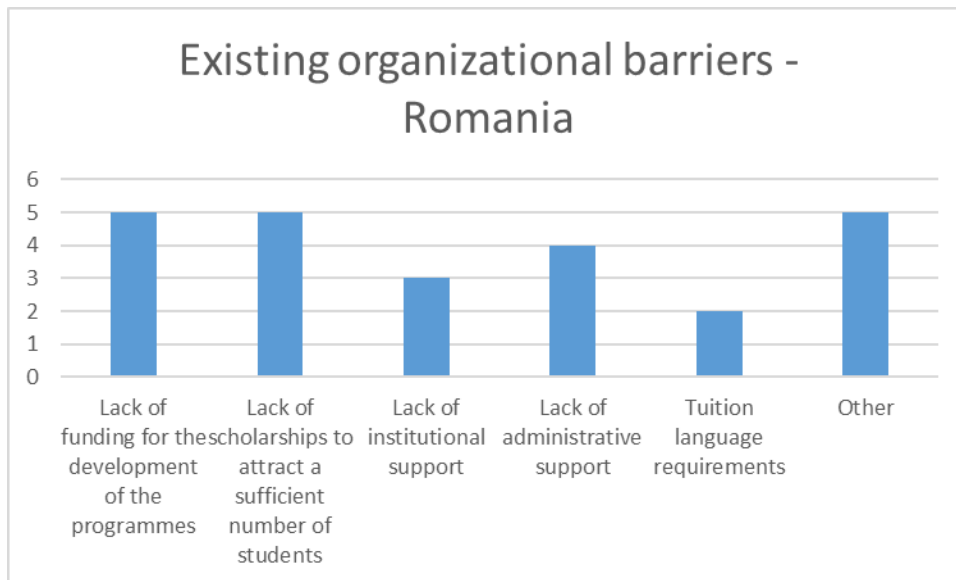


Fig. 3.22

According to the legislation for the approval of the Methodology-framework for the organization of integrated study programs, offered by two or more universities, leading to the obtaining of joint diplomas, the program is conducted in the language for which the accreditation of the master's degree

program was obtained. English as a foreign language of tuition represents nevertheless a problem for some universities.

The

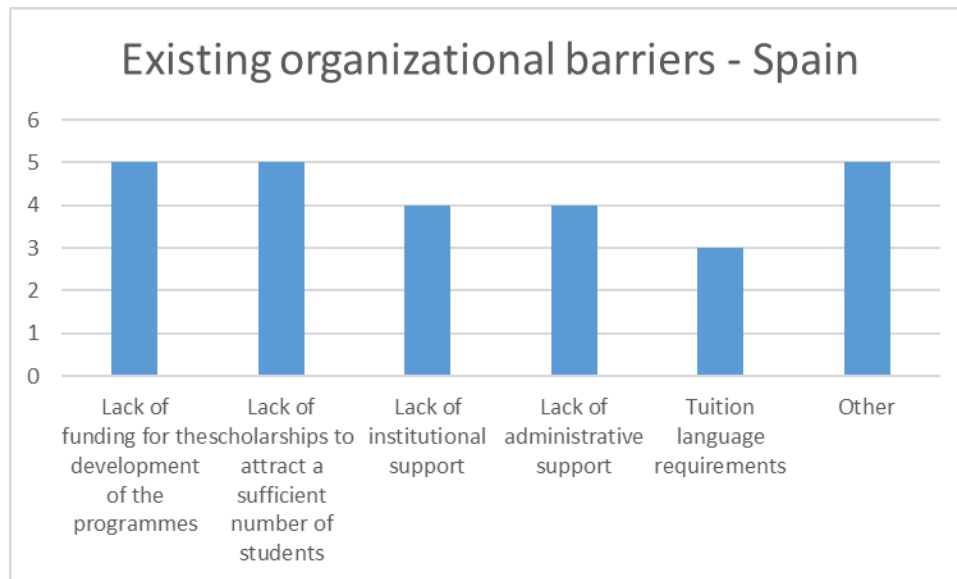
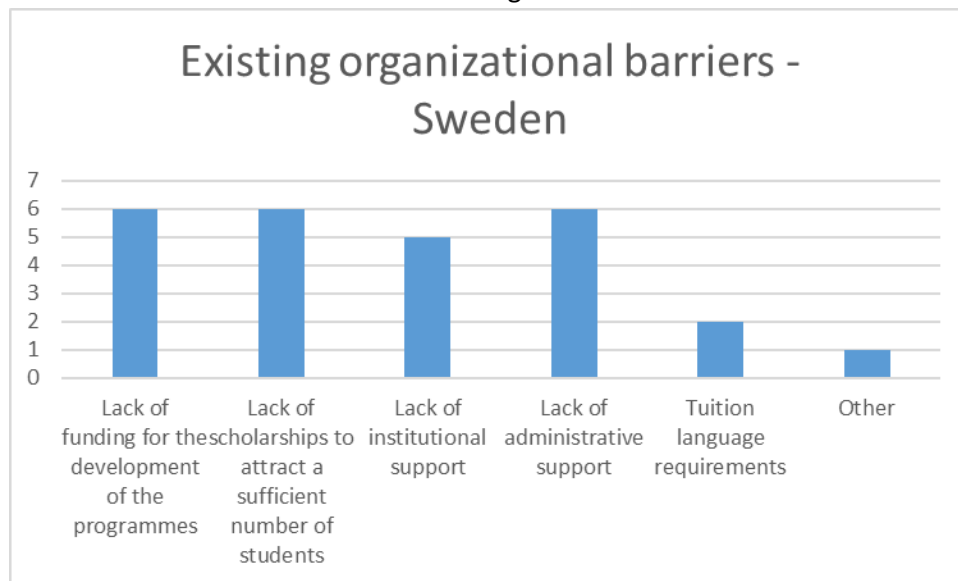


Fig. 3.23 Page | 75 Spanish

National Legislation, in the case of joint study programs, does not impose any language requirements to their curriculum. It is necessary, though, to use one of the official European languages. Under the “other” option, the following elements were highlighted:

- Differences in the Erasmus+ grants procedures (quantities received in advance, requirements, etc.). On the other hand, Erasmus+ grants work based on host-home university scheme that does not apply to joint programmes, and following this rule (being “home” the starting University) generates ineligibility of some students and internal inequalities.
- Difficulties in the registration of the professors from the other universities of the consortium in the programme management software.
- Compatibility of the timing of teaching activities (i.e., start and end of semesters, etc.).

Fig. 3.24



Language related restrictions are not specified more than that the university is responsible for judging if students have sufficient language skill to be able to complete a program language-wise.

3.4 Funding Sources

What are the main sources of funding for your joint programme in terms of development, implementation, and/or provision of scholarships (pick the top three)?

206 responses

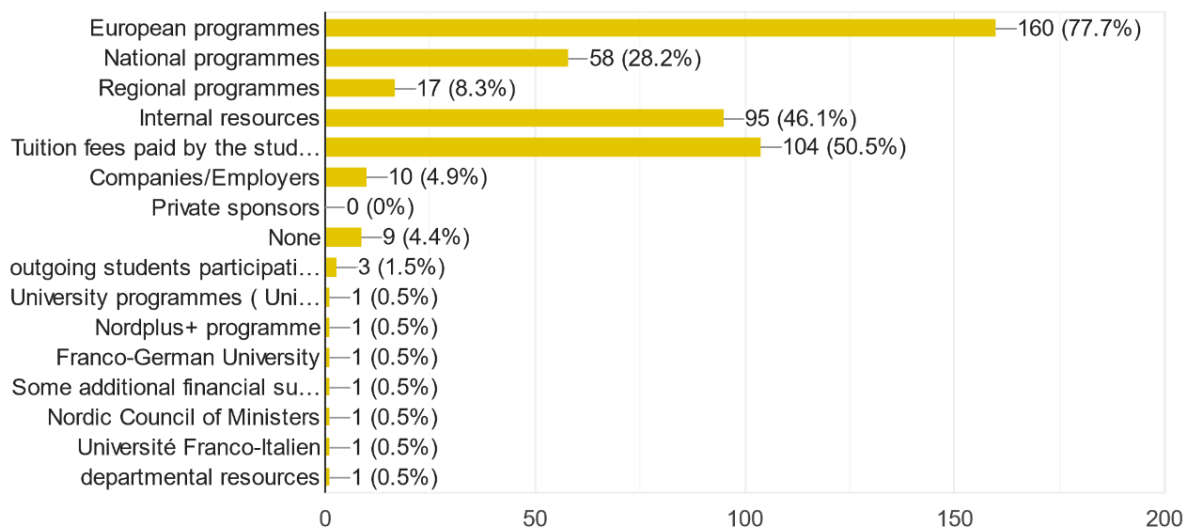


Fig. 3.28

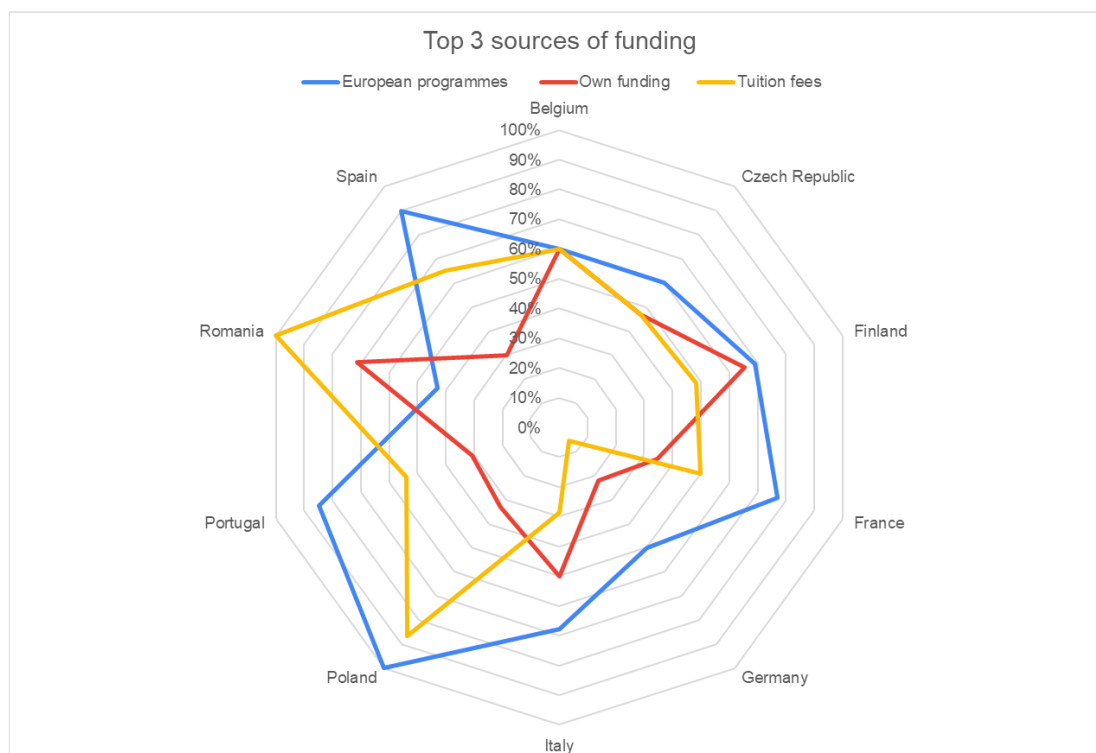


Fig. 3.29

Concerning the funding sources used to develop and implement joint programmes, it is clear that the European Programmes are still predominant (77,7% of the JPs rely on this source, and mainly on the E+ KA1 mobility of individuals and E+ KA2 EMJM). Tuition fees are mentioned by 50% of the respondents, but half of the JPs are also sustained by internal resources as one of the top three sources of funding. Companies and private sponsors are unfortunately still negligible sources of funding, probably due to their infrequent involvement in the development and implementation phases. Nevertheless, the situation varies substantially in the different countries with European Programmes representing the main source of funding in Poland, Spain, and Portugal, while tuition fees are the main source of funding in Romania and a source of low relevance in France, Germany, and Finland. Own resources are relatively high in Romania, Finland, Italy and Belgium and much lower in Germany and Spain. The relevance of European Funding calls for a harmonization of the requirements for the upcoming Joint European Degree and the ones attached to EU programmes, in particular the EMJM action. If this will not be the case, JP directors will be in the position of having to chose one or the other, and their preference will most likely go to the funded programme.

3.5 Academic Barriers

The survey responders were questioned on six identified Academic barriers for the development of JPs, namely: lack of recognition of teaching activities performed abroad, the difficulties in involving/recruiting the required teaching staff, the teaching staff qualification, the language proficiency of teaching staff, the differences between academic calendars and the difficulties in achieving a full recognition of credits. The responders had also the opportunities to add other barriers identified by themselves based on their experience.

It was asked to rank the barriers from their point of view (and referred to their institution/country) on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 not problematic at all – 7 extremely problematic).

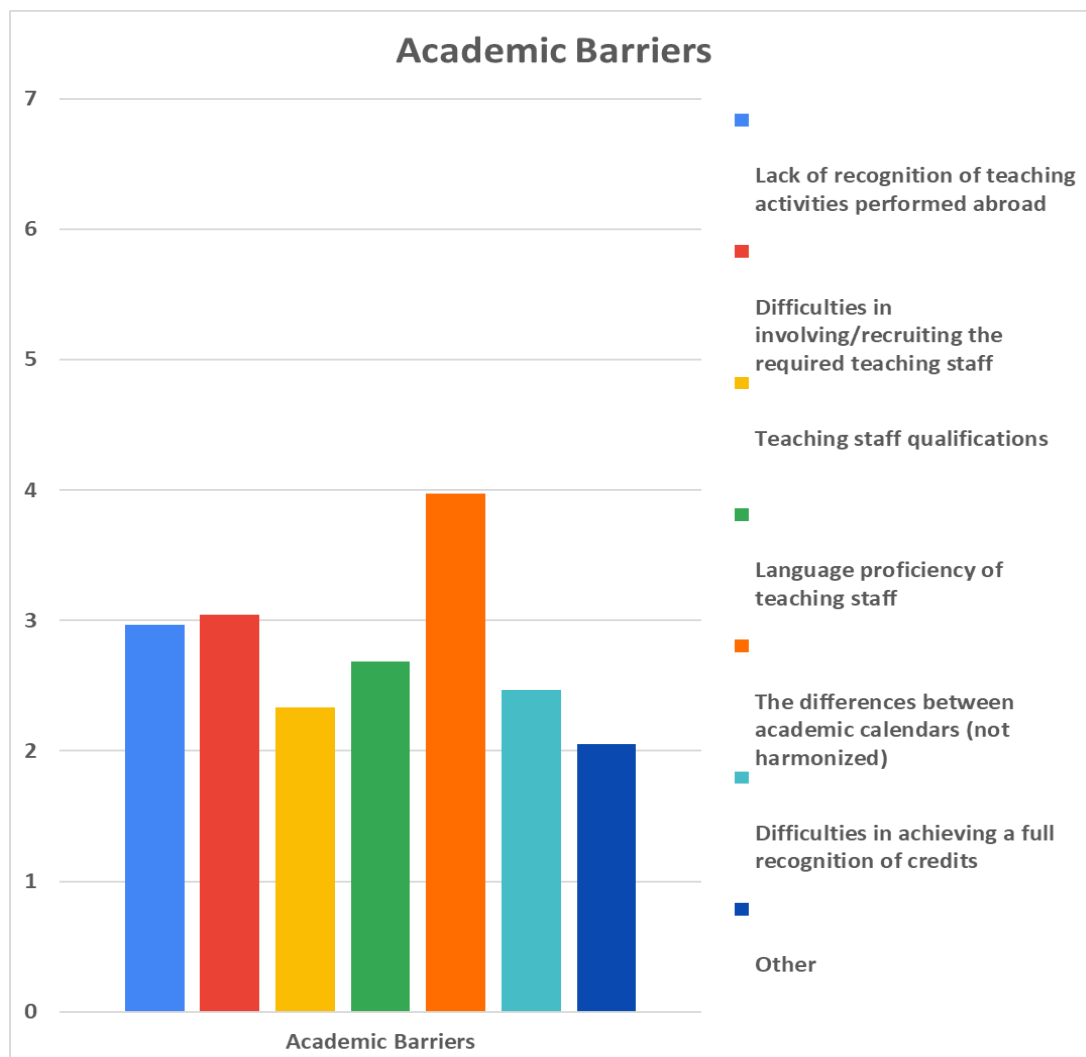


Fig. 3.25

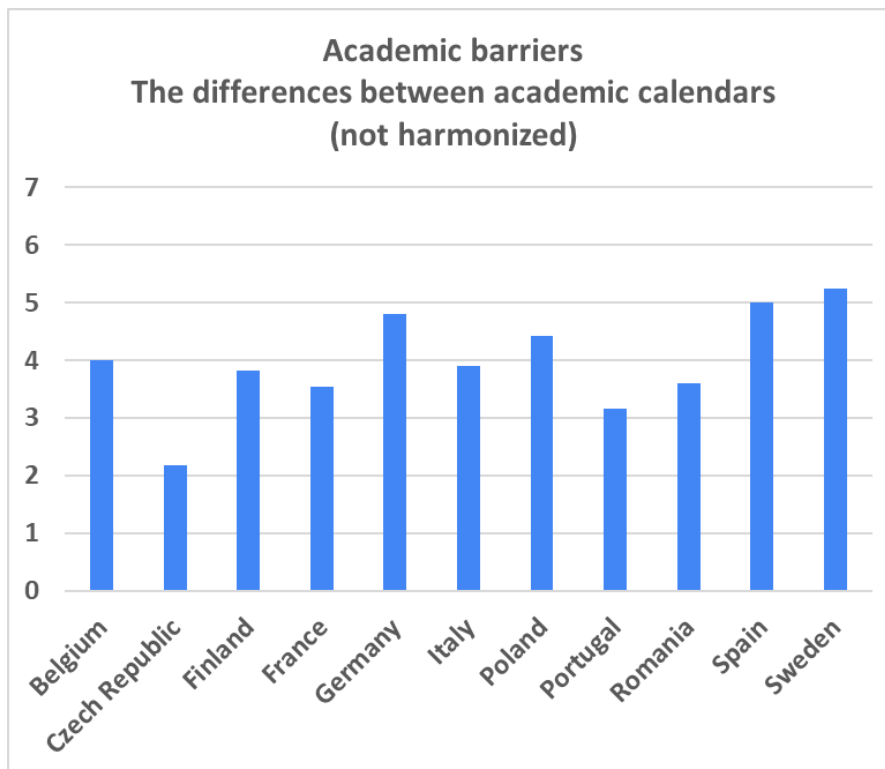


Fig. 3. 26

The differences between academic calendars ranked the highest, it ranked ≥ 3 in Belgium, Germany, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The difficulties in involving/recruiting the required teaching staff ranked ≥ 3 in 7 of the 11 Countries: France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden. This results goes together with the ranking value for the lack of recognition of teaching activities performed abroad, that was >3 in Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

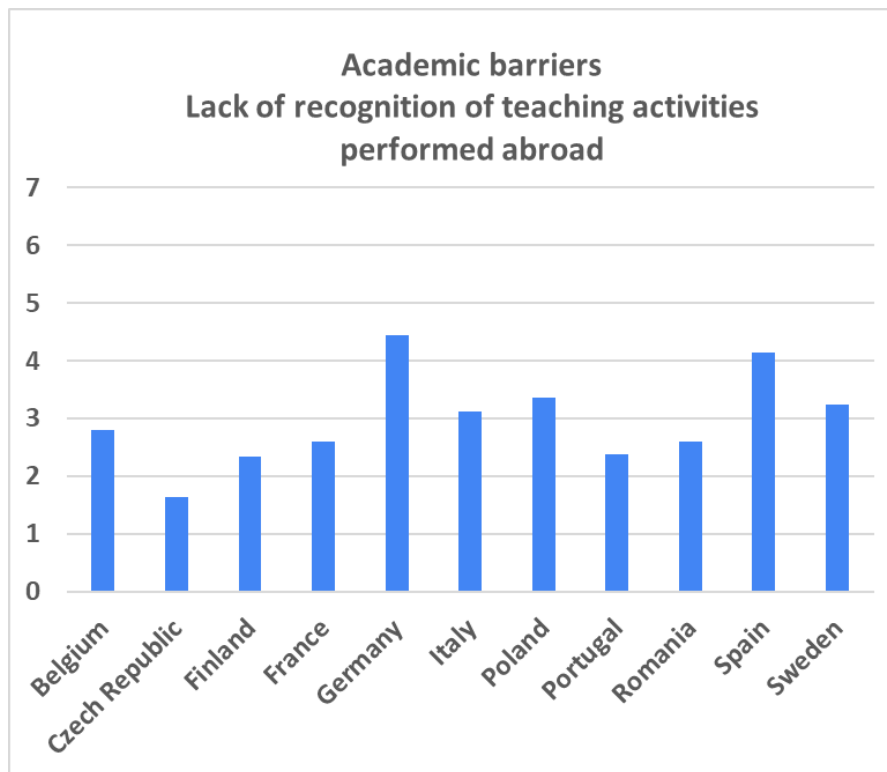


Fig. 3.27

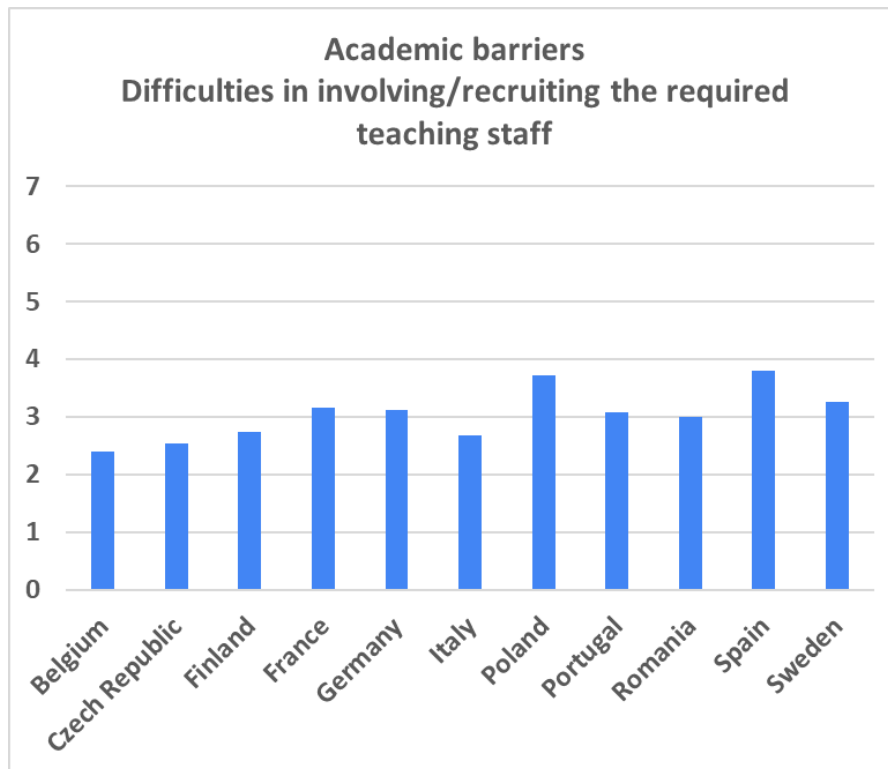


Fig. 3.28

Among the other barriers identified French and Italian, responders indicated the following:

In France, it is noticeable a difficulty to obtain support from the University to make more flexible the rigid rules regulating French professors, who develop these international masters on a volunteer basis. The university do provide administrative staff but do not allocate enough professor time. Universities support more research proposal because they have potentially a higher income.

In Italy, we can observe lack of institutional recognition. Professors involen in the internationalisation are not recognized at all. Lack of "level of internationalisation criteria" for career development.

3.6 Summary of the Desired Policy Changes (open field)

Belgium

- **Flexibility in Exam and Education Regulations:**

Belgian academic representatives highlight the importance of flexibility in exam and education regulations, especially for double degree programs. This indicates a desire for more adaptability in academic structures to accommodate the diverse requirements of joint programs.

- **Need for Administrative Support:**

Advocacy for more support from administrative members and experienced colleagues reveals a recognition of the challenges in developing joint programs. This support is seen as crucial for navigating the complexities involved in establishing and maintaining European Joint Degrees.

- **Simplification of Accreditation Procedures:**

The commentary on accreditation and reaccreditation procedures underscores a desire for their simplification. This suggests that streamlining these processes is crucial for making the establishment and continuation of joint programs more efficient.

Czech Republic

- **Financial Support in the Preparatory Stage:**

Emphasizing the need for sufficient financial support in the preparatory stage reflects the importance of a strong foundation for the success of joint programs.

- **Accreditation Procedure Concerns:**

The academic expresses frustration with the bureaucratic nature of accreditation procedures, particularly the extensive paperwork. There is a call for less bureaucracy and more user-friendly processes, highlighting the need for a streamlined accreditation system.

- **Electronic Signature for Joint Diplomas:**

Advocacy for the possibility of an electronic signature for joint diplomas signals a desire for modernization in administrative practices.

- **Flexibility and Openness in Joint Degrees:**

The call for less rigidity, openness to changes, and coordination of visa procedures at the EU level reflects a broader desire for flexibility and adaptability in the development and management of joint programs.

Finland

- **Optional Student Union Membership Fee:**

Advocacy for making the student union membership fee optional, decoupled from university enrollment, suggests a desire for flexibility in student financial obligations.



- **Industry Involvement in Funding:**

The call for increased involvement of companies/employers in funding international programs indicates a recognition of the importance of industry support for joint degrees.

- **Flexibility in Program Development:**

The emphasis on flexibility in program development, administrative resources, and interdisciplinary skills aligns with the need for adaptability in the creation and execution of joint programs.

- **Improved Government Funding:**

Advocacy for improved government funding to universities, especially in countries without tuition fees for EU citizens, highlights the importance of financial support from national authorities.

France

- **Political Support and Scholarships:**

The mention of political support and the need for scholarships indicates the importance of governmental backing and financial aid for students pursuing joint degrees.

- **Common Visa Procedure:**

The desire for a common visa procedure across EU member states reflects a need for standardized processes to facilitate international mobility.

- **Flexibility in Joint Degree Signing:**

The call for flexibility in allowing institutions to sign joint degrees, even if not the coordinator, emphasizes the need for autonomy in program development.

- **Financial Management and Administrative Support:**

Concerns about financial management of tuition fees and the need for administrative support highlight the practical challenges in running joint programs.

Germany

- **Credit for Teaching and Research Abroad:**

Advocacy for crediting teaching and research abroad indicates a desire to recognize and incentivize international academic experiences.



- **Simplified Degree Recognition:**

The call for standards in degree recognition reflects a need for clear and consistent policies in acknowledging joint degrees.

- **Flexibility in Joint Program Variants:**

The desire for joint programs to be variants of existing programs without the need for separate setups underscores the importance of streamlining administrative processes.

- **Permanent Pool of Scholarships:**

Advocacy for a permanent pool of scholarships highlights the need for sustained financial support for students pursuing joint degrees.

Italy

- **Investment in Human Resources:**

The call for investment in human resources, including dedicated administrative staff and training, underscores the importance of skilled personnel for successful joint programs.

- **Balanced Credit Correspondence:**

The desire for a better balance of credits between universities emphasizes the need for fair and standardized credit allocation in joint programs.

- **Flexibility in Accreditation Rules:**

Advocacy for flexibility in accreditation rules and simplified procedures reflects the need for adaptability in the regulatory framework.

- **Harmonization at the European Level:**

The calls for harmonizing academic calendars, procedures, and developing a European accreditation system highlight the importance of standardization across borders.

Poland

- **Improved Communication Among Accrediting Agencies:**

The call for better communication among accrediting agencies and ministries suggests a need for coordination at the national level.

- **Challenges at Various Levels:**

The recognition of challenges at the legislative, organizational, staff, financial, and accreditation levels indicates a holistic approach to addressing barriers in joint program development.

Portugal

- **Joint Accreditation and Increased Funding:**

The emphasis on joint accreditation and the call for increased funding sources point to the need for both streamlined processes and financial support.

- **Common European Framework:**

The suggestion of a common European education and legal framework indicates a desire for standardized guidelines to facilitate joint program development.

- **MSc Grants for Student Attraction:**

The proposal for MSc grants reflects an awareness of the need to attract students to joint programs through financial incentives.

Romania

- **National Methodology for Accreditation:**

The call for a national methodology for accreditation indicates a need for standardized processes at the national level.

- **Separate Funding for Administrative Resources:**

Advocacy for separate funding, especially for administrative resources, underscores the practical challenges faced during joint program implementation.

Spain

- **Dedicated Personnel for International Programs:**

The call for a specific person dedicated to international double degrees and joint degrees indicates a need for focused support in managing these programs.

- **Flexibility in Accreditation and Consortium Agreement:**

The desire for more flexibility in accreditation, consideration of the consortium agreement as the main legal framework, and simplification of pre-accreditation processes reflect a need for streamlined administrative procedures.

- **Recognition of Credits from Partner Universities:**

Page | 86

The call for straightforward recognition of credits obtained at partner universities highlights the importance of consistent academic policies.

Sweden

- **Increased Flat Fee and Flexibility in Examination Scheduling:**

The request for a higher flat fee and flexibility in scheduling examination activities between partner universities shows a need for increased financial support and adaptability in academic structures.

- **National Co-funding and Resources:**

The call for national co-funding and resources for program development emphasizes the importance of sustained financial support for the continuous evolution of education.

In summary, these comments collectively highlight the different challenges and aspirations within the European academic landscape regarding Joint master's degrees. The common themes include the need for financial support, streamlined administrative processes, flexibility in program development, recognition of international experiences, and increased involvement from industry and governmental bodies. Addressing these concerns would contribute to the successful establishment and ongoing success of European Joint master's degrees.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the development of joint programmes in Europe encounters various challenges. Below is a summary of the key obstacles identified in the report:

Legal Barriers: Accreditation stands out as a significant obstacle across countries, with concerns ranging from cost to compliance with regulations. However, the specific challenges vary, including rigid curricula in Belgium and Portugal, and accreditation time in Germany and Romania.

Organizational Barriers: Financial constraints, such as funding for scholarships, are major hurdles faced by joint programmes. Language restrictions, administrative support issues, and challenges in coordinating teaching activities further complicate the process.



Academic Barriers: Differences in academic calendars and difficulty in recruiting teaching staff are significant challenges. Moreover, recognition of teaching activities abroad is lacking in several countries, hindering international collaboration efforts.

For example, French universities struggle to provide support for professors engaged in international masters, leading to administrative burdens. In Italy, there's insufficient institutional recognition for professors involved in internationalization efforts, impacting career development opportunities.



General Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis covered ten European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Finland, France, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain), revealing that most joint programmes are bilateral partnerships at the master's level, primarily under the Erasmus Mundus Master programme.

Page | 88

While accreditation predominantly occurs at the national level, **only a minority utilizes the European Approach to Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes.**

Over 50% of existing programmes align with proposed mandatory criteria. However, criterion #2 - Transnational joint degree delivery - lacks applicability for more than 25% of programmes and is suggested for removal by joint programme directors/coordinators. Discussions in focus groups emphasized the need for **clarity regarding degree expectations.**

Based on the findings outlined in the document, the development of joint programmes in Europe presents **several challenges across legal, organizational, and academic domains.** These challenges include accreditation procedures, financial constraints, language restrictions, and coordinating teaching activities. While specific barriers vary by country, overarching themes such as rigid curricula, accreditation time, and recognition of teaching activities abroad are prevalent. On the other hand, based on the findings from focus group interviews conducted at the national level, it is important to **consider country-specific differences in determining the final criteria selection carefully.**

To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of joint programme development, several **recommendations can be made for the development of the European degree label:**

- Encourage the use of the **European Approach to Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes** and provide incentives for its adoption to streamline accreditation processes across Europe. Many institutions opt out of utilizing the European Approach due to financial constraints or administrative complexities. Efforts should be made to streamline the process and enhance its accessibility.
- While physical mobility is often favored over other forms of mobility, it may inadvertently exclude disadvantaged students and less privileged universities. **Allocate sufficient funding attached to the European Degree Label initiative** to support student and staff mobility, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder programme development.
- Multilingualism contributes to a rich multicultural experience. However, the criterion lacks clarity on how this aspect should be enhanced. There are diverging ideas on how languages should be

incorporated into studies. Some countries ensure studying the language is compulsory during studies for international students, while other countries, such as Finland with a smaller linguistic international reach, provide the opportunity for students to the language but it is not obligatory. Provide **clarity on language requirements** and facilitate multilingualism in joint programmes, particularly in formal implementation processes such as registration and certificate issuance.

- **Foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders**, including universities, policymakers, and accreditation bodies, to address the diverse needs and challenges of joint programme development.
- Ensure **adequate recognition for teaching activities performed abroad**, enabling professors to engage in internationalization efforts without facing institutional barriers.



Annexes

[Annex 5 – ED-AFFICHE script with questions for focus groups composed by joint programme directors/coordinators from the same country](#)

