TPG C on QA
01 June 2023

Presenters
Magalie Soenen (EQAR)
Anna Gover (ENQA)

QA·FIT

Quality Assurance Fit for the Future

About QA FIT

Partners

- ENQA–European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Belgium
- ESU–European Students' Union, Belgium
- EUA–European University Association, Belgium
- EURASHE–European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, Belgium
- EQAR–European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, Belgium
- ANOSR–National Alliance of Student Organisations in Romania, Romania
- FINEEC–Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, Finland
- IUA–Irish Universities Association, Ireland
- MOESGE (associate partner) –Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Georgia

Aim

- **Gather comprehensive evidence and reflect if and how the current EHEA framework of the ESG is implemented and needs to adapt**

  - conduct a comprehensive mapping exercise of the state of play of internal and external quality assurance in the EHEA;
  - take a critical look at the ESG and see how they have been adapted to different contexts;
  - explore how quality assurance activities are addressing recent and emerging developments in higher education including activities that go beyond the focus of the ESG and that use innovative approaches, and
  - gather perspectives on the future of quality assurance in the EHEA.

About QA-FIT

Main activities

◣ Surveys to
  ◣ Quality assurance agencies
  ◣ Ministries
  ◣ Higher education institutions
  ◣ National student unions &
  ◣ Student QA Pool members

➡ will feed in a series of **6 papers and webinars**

◣ **Five focus groups** to discuss in detail some of the matters arising from the surveys

◣ A **final publication** and **policy recommendations**

◣ A **final conference** organised in Brussels

◣ At EHEA level, the project findings will feed directly into the discussions leading up to the next Bologna Process Ministerial Conference in 2024 and, if appropriate, into the drafting of the 2024 Tirana Communiqué.

https://www.enqa.eu/projects/quality-assurance-fit-for-the-future-qa-fit/

Accountability vs Enhancement (1)

HE, QA agencies and students' view on the purpose of external QA:

External quality assurance's main purpose is accountability

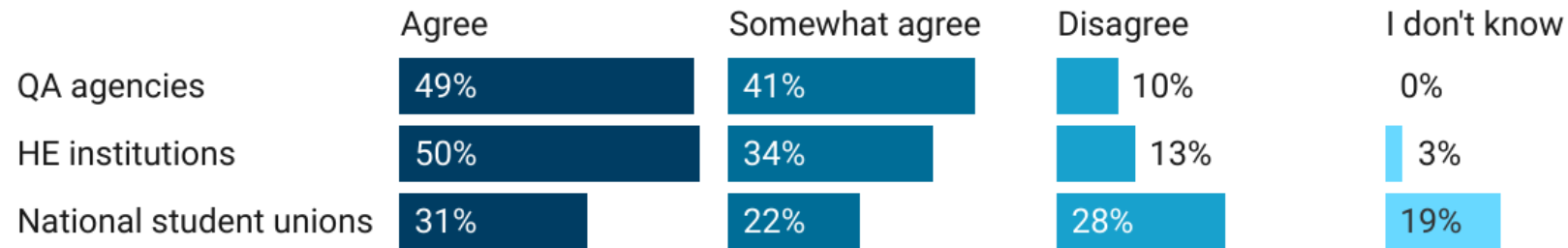|	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	I don't know
QA agencies	49%	41%	10%	0%
HE institutions	50%	34%	13%	3%
National student unions	31%	22%	28%	19%

Chart: 15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements • Created with Datawrapper

External quality assurance's main purpose is enhancement

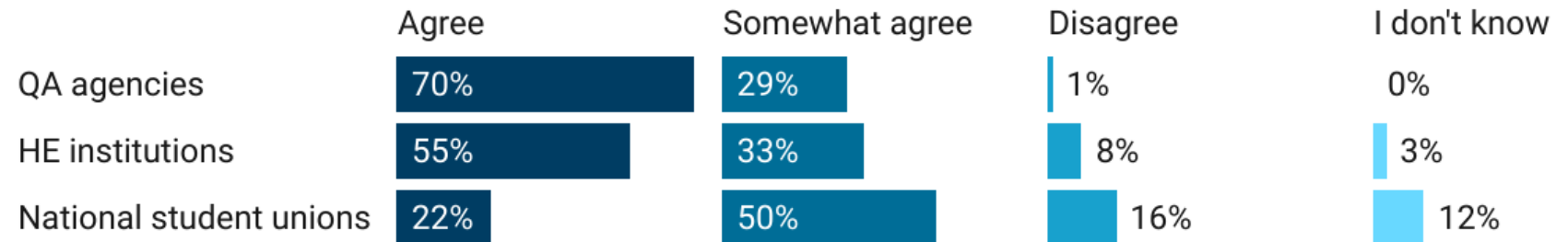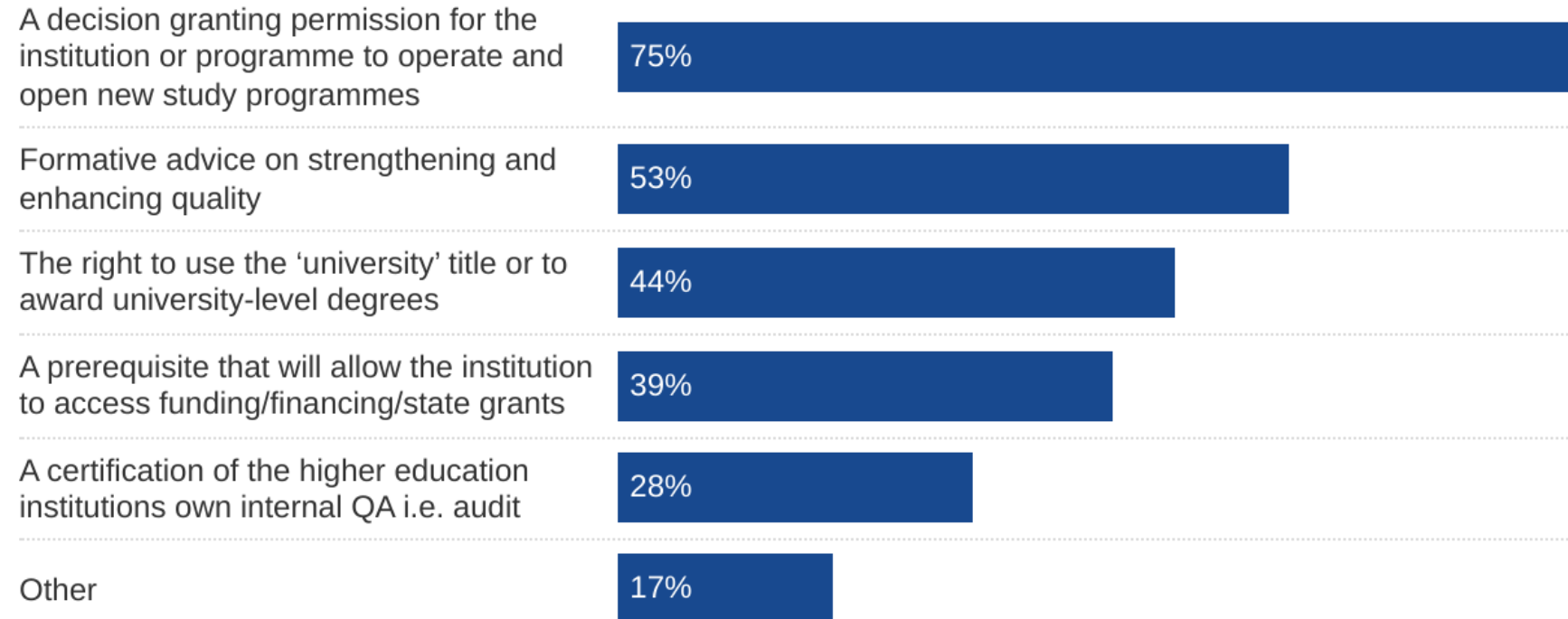|	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	I don't know
QA agencies	70%	29%	1%	0%
HE institutions	55%	33%	8%	3%
National student unions	22%	50%	16%	12%

Chart: 15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements • Created with Datawrapper

Accountability vs Enhancement (2)

Ministry's response (n. 36) on the purpose of external QA in their HE system:

Q13. Outcome(s) of an external QA activity in the HE system

A decision granting permission for the institution or programme to operate and open new study programmes	75%
Formative advice on strengthening and enhancing quality	53%
The right to use the 'university' title or to award university-level degrees	44%
A prerequisite that will allow the institution to access funding/financing/state grants	39%
A certification of the higher education institutions own internal QA i.e. audit	28%
Other	17%

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Initiating and designing external QA

Ministry survey responses on who is responsible for initiating and designing EQA

Initiating and designing external QA policies and processes
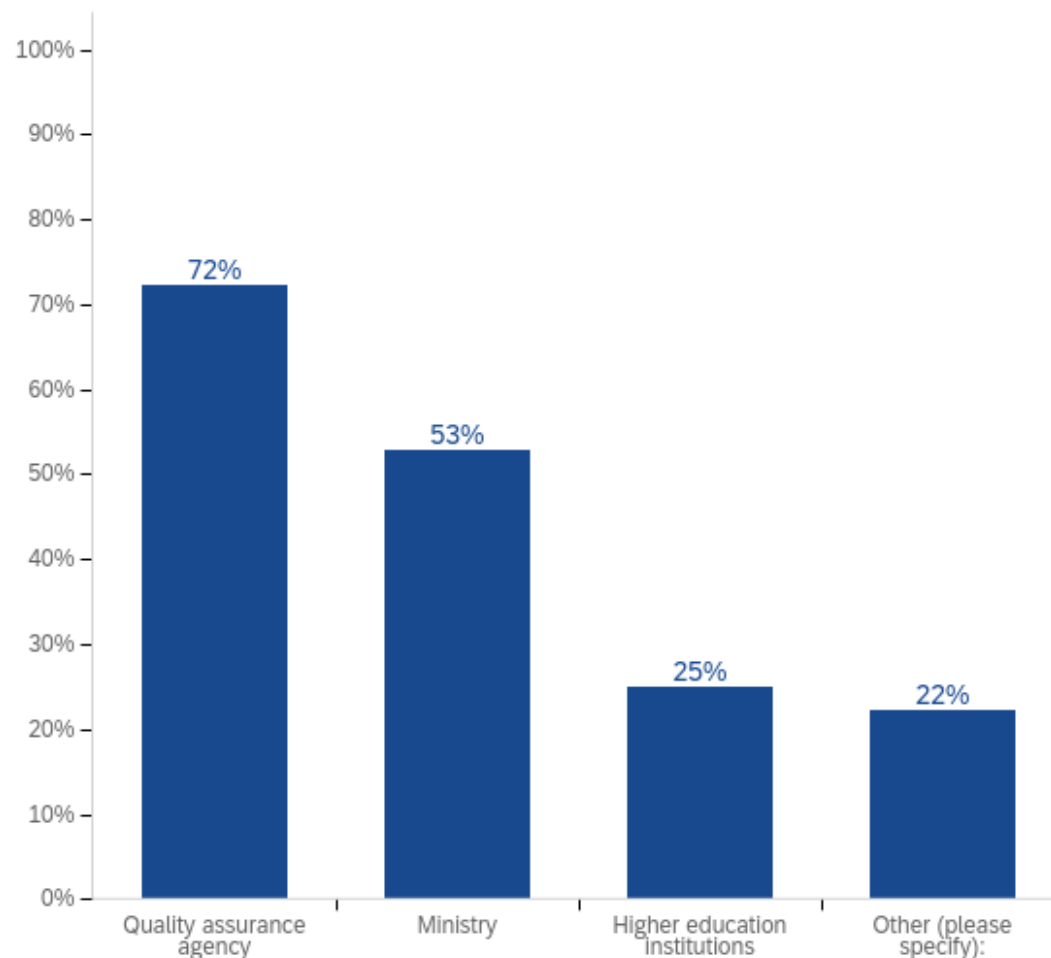
QA regulation	Laws	Ministerial orders / secondary national regulation(s)	QA agency's own methodology or regulation	HEIs internal policies	Other
Regulation for QA review processes (self-assessment, external assessment, site visit, reporting, etc.)	86%	56%	83%	n/a	11%
Standards for internal QA	58%	42%	64%	72%	6%
Criteria for decision-making (benchmarks, including weighing of standards)	44%	44%	72%	n/a	11%
The establishment of QA agency(-ies)	89%	28%	8%	n/a	6%
The governance structure of quality assurance agency(-ies)	78%	39%	44%	n/a	14%
External QA appeals processes	61%	22%	64%	n/a	8%
Student involvement in external QA	64%	42%	69%	n/a	6%

Agreement between stakeholders

- Stakeholders agree on the **importance of a European QA framework** especially to promote common minimum standards in HE, stimulate enhancement, and facilitate degree recognition

- Stakeholders strongly agree that the **ESG are still needed**

- Stakeholders agree that the **ESG support development of L&T, trust in qualifications, student mobility, quality culture**

- Stakeholders would like the **ESG to provide more guidance**

Differences between stakeholders (1)

- Most students believe that the main purpose of HE is to support students' personal development, while for Ministry, QA agencies and HEIs it is "preparing students for their future careers"

- A larger share of students compared to QA agencies and HEIs think that scope of the ESG is too limited (see chart)

The scope of the ESG is too limited

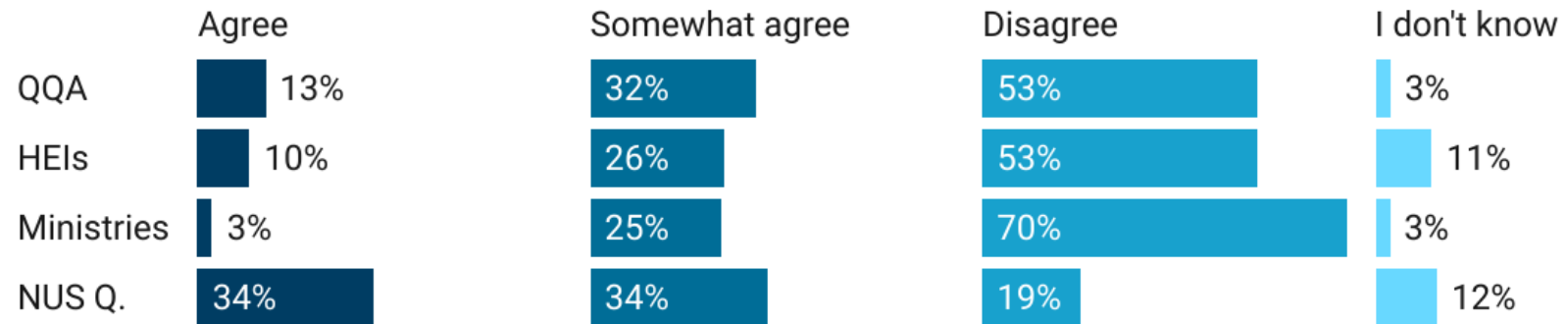|	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	I don't know
QQA	13%	32%	53%	3%
HEIs	10%	26%	53%	11%
Ministries	3%	25%	70%	3%
NUS Q.	34%	34%	19%	12%

Chart: Q6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements • Created with Datawrapper

Differences between stakeholders (2)

- Most stakeholders agree that fundamental values should be evaluated through QA, but students are very keen (85%) while QA agencies (63%), ministry (61%) and HEIs (55%) are more cautious

- Reducing ESG to fewer core standards: ministry and students largely disagree with this idea, while HEIs and QAAs disagree to a lesser extent (see chart)

The ESG should be reduced to a few core standards

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	I don't know
QQA	18%	32%	43%	7%
HEIs	12%	26%	45%	17%
Ministries	6%	3%	67%	25%
NUS Q.	6%	18%	76%	0%

Chart: Q8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements • Created with Datawrapper
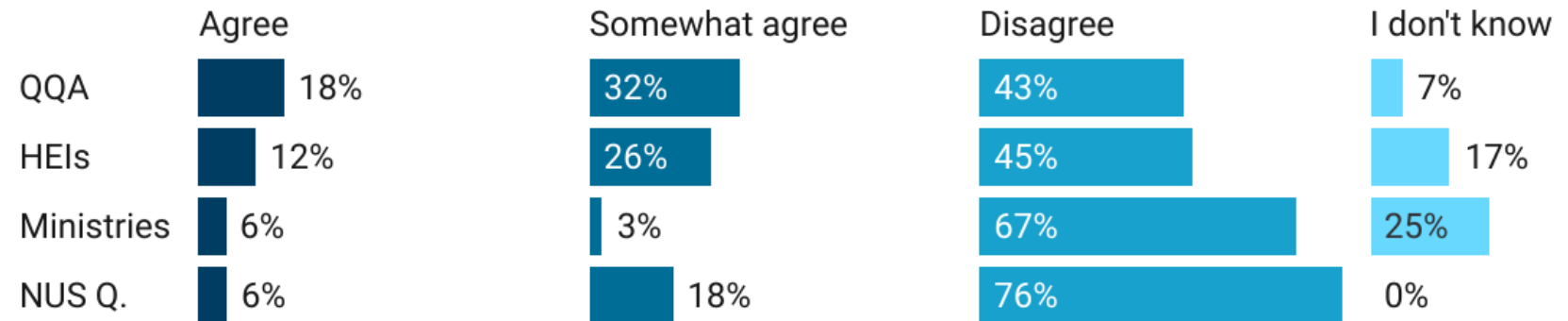
Revision of the ESG (1)

- General agreement among all stakeholders that **"purpose and principles" of the ESG need minor or no revision at all**

- Majority of stakeholders think that **current focus of ESG (L&T) needs minor revisions**
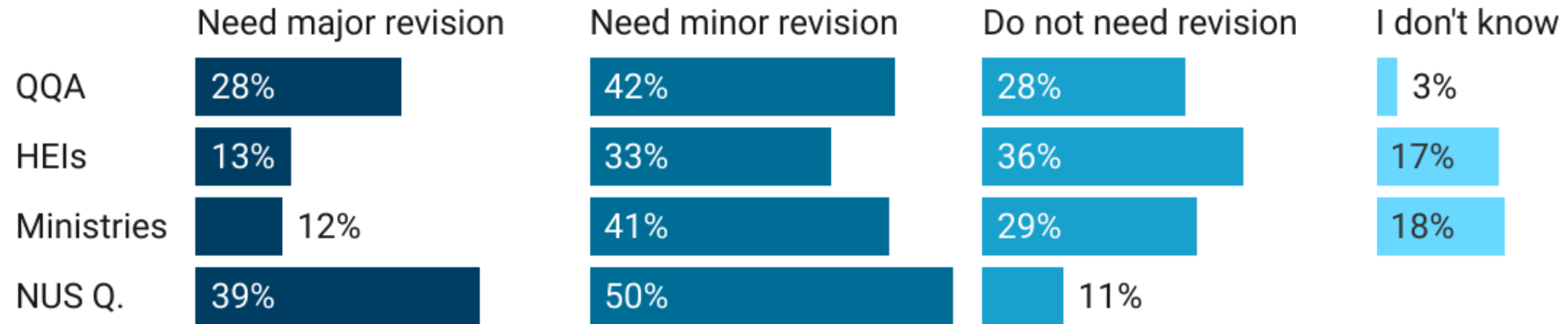
The focus of the ESG (currently on learning and teaching)

	Need major revision	Need minor revision	Do not need revision	I don't know
QQA	28%	42%	28%	3%
HEIs	13%	33%	36%	17%
Ministries	12%	41%	29%	18%
NUS Q.	39%	50%	11%	

Chart: Q9. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements • Created with Datawrapper

Revision of the ESG (2)

- When asked about the **revision of the different Parts of the ESG**:

  - **HEIs are always the least** keen on revision (between 20-35% not in favour)

  - **QA agencies and ministries are generally in favour of revision** (between 14-32% not in favour

  - **Students are always those most keen** on revision (around 90% in favour)

- Considerable portion of **HEIs, Ministry and students** responded **"I don't know"** (20% to 30%) when asked about the revision of the different Parts of the ESG, against only 5% or less of QA agencies

Expanding the scope of the ESG (1)

When asked what they would want to be covered in more detail by the ESG:

- QA agencies, ministries and students are more keen than HEIs to have the ESG expanded to cover **new activities and aspects of higher education**

- Majority of QA agencies and students want "**institutional management" and "institutional autonomy" to be covered, while HEIs are less keen**

- Students are not keen on "Cooperation with labour market and its relevance for higher education" to be included in ESG but keen on **social dimension**

- Apart from earlier mentioned aspects, all other aspects proposed in the survey (incl. **digitalisation, research, third mission, academic freedom**, etc.) the majority of stakeholders wanting their inclusion in the ESG (more than 50% in favour for all stakeholders), but there are also significant portions of each stakeholder group (between 35% and 15%) that disagree

Expanding the scope of the ESG (2)
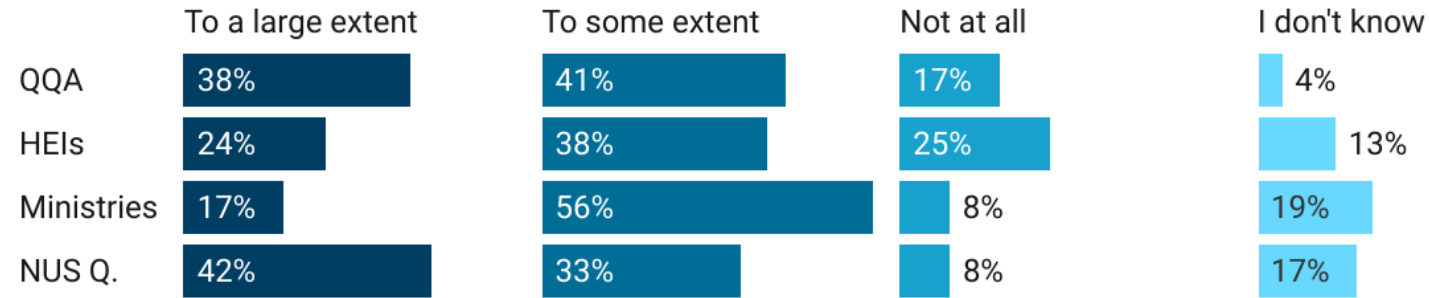
Academic freedom and integrity

	To a large extent	To some extent	Not at all	I don't know
QQA	38%	41%	17%	4%
HEIs	24%	38%	25%	13%
Ministries	17%	56%	8%	19%
NUS Q.	42%	33%	8%	17%

Chart: Q10. If the scope of the ESG Part 1 were to be expanded what should it cover in more detail? • Created with Datawrapper

Research

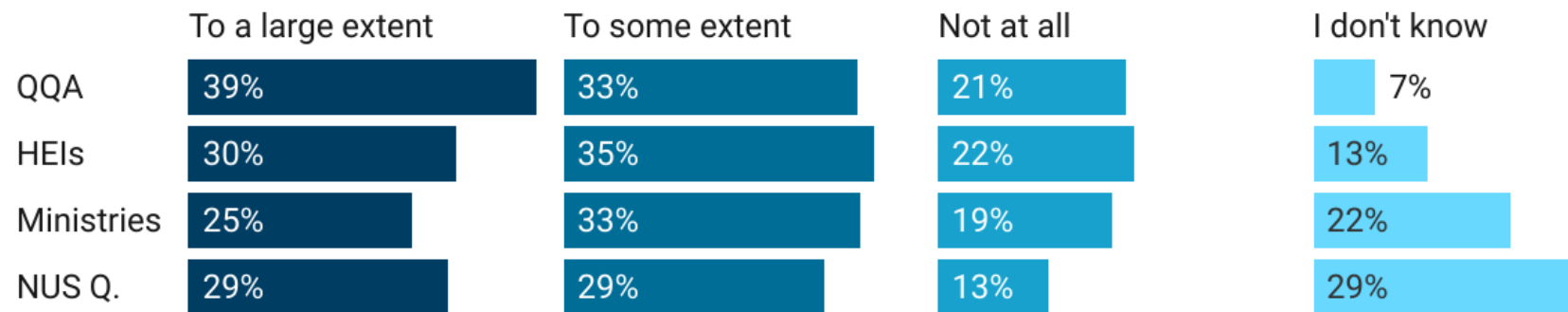|	To a large extent	To some extent	Not at all	I don't know
QQA	39%	33%	21%	7%
HEIs	30%	35%	22%	13%
Ministries	25%	33%	19%	22%
NUS Q.	29%	29%	13%	29%

Chart: Q10. If the scope of the ESG Part 1 were to be expanded what should it cover in more detail? • Created with Datawrapper

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Spotlight on service to society

Do stakeholders want to see it included in the ESG?

Services to society/Third mission

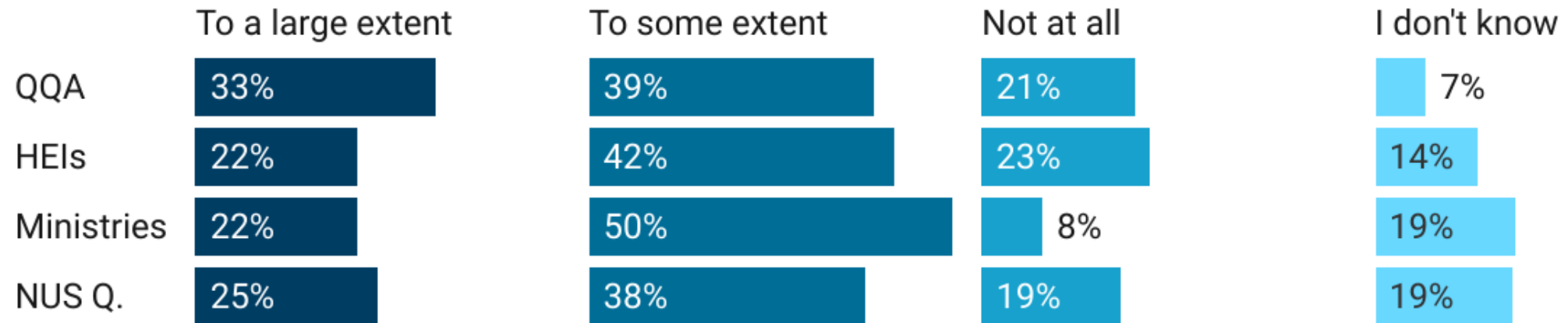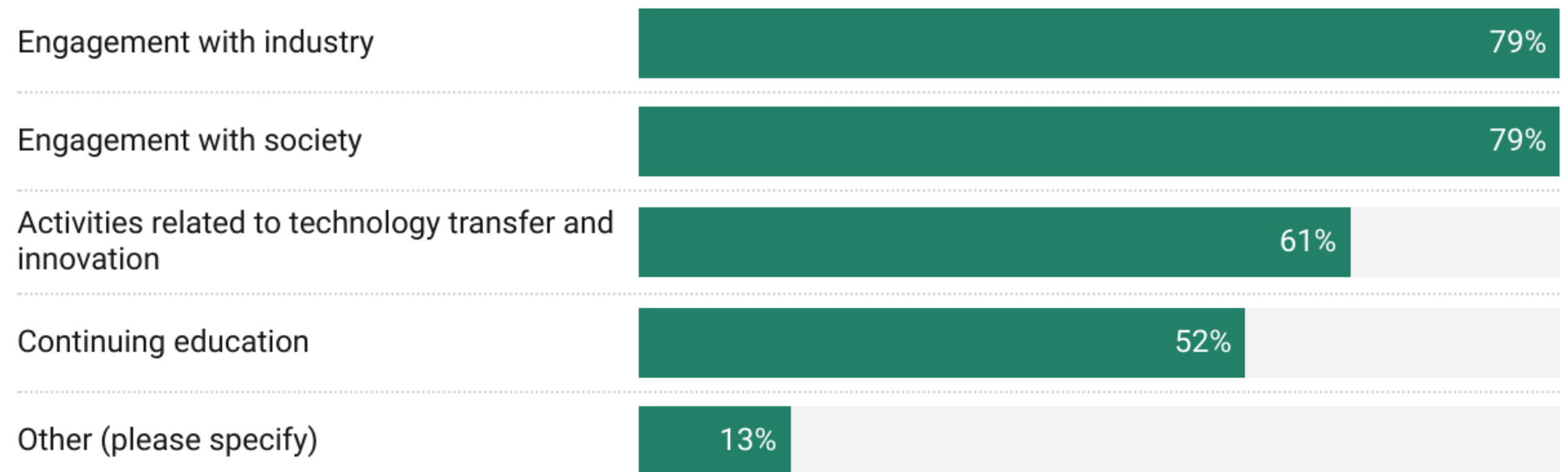|	To a large extent	To some extent	Not at all	I don't know
QQA	33%	39%	21%	7%
HEIs	22%	42%	23%	14%
Ministries	22%	50%	8%	19%
NUS Q.	25%	38%	19%	19%

Chart: Q10. If the scope of the ESG Part 1 were to be expanded what should it cover in more detail? • Created with Datawrapper

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Spotlight on service to society

82% of agencies report that they already evaluate if and how internal QA addresses service to society, covering a range of aspects:

Aspect	Percentage
Engagement with industry	79%
Engagement with society	79%
Activities related to technology transfer and innovation	61%
Continuing education	52%
Other (please specify)	13%

Which of the following aspects related to Service to society/Third mission does your agency evaluate?

Chart: ENQA • Source: QA-FIT • Created with Datawrapper

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Spotlight on social dimension

Do stakeholders want to see it included in the ESG?

Social dimension of higher education

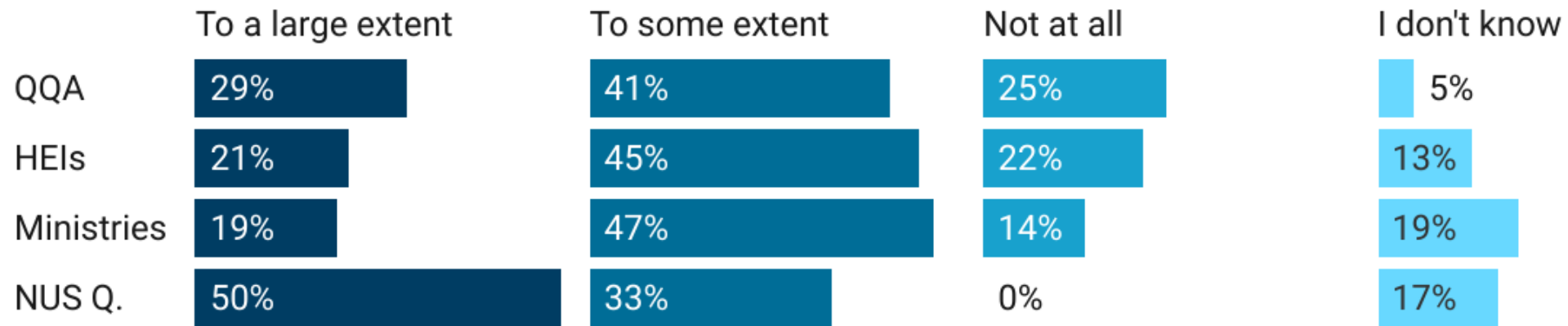|	To a large extent	To some extent	Not at all	I don't know
QQA	29%	41%	25%	5%
HEIs	21%	45%	22%	13%
Ministries	19%	47%	14%	19%
NUS Q.	50%	33%	0%	17%

Chart: Q10. If the scope of the ESG Part 1 were to be expanded what should it cover in more detail? • Created with Datawrapper

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Spotlight on social dimension

- Social dimension is covered by 85% of agencies to a large or some extent when evaluating the internal quality assurance system

- 15% of agencies do not cover this area

Most covered aspects:

- Adapted policies to support access for students with disabilities

- Psychological services and student wellbeing

- Policies on increasing student completion rates

Least covered aspects:

- Training on inclusion and equity for students and staff

- Monitoring concrete targets on social dimension

- Involvement of disadvantaged groups in the elaboration and monitoring of SD policies

- Data collection on social dimension indicators

Final reflections

European QA is based on fitness-for-purpose… what is the purpose of the ESG?
- Framework for guidance?
- Criteria for compliance?
- Both?

QA is much more than the ESG… what needs to be regulated and at what level?
- Institutional level?
- National/system level?
- European level?

QA still serves the purpose of accountability
- To support trust between HE systems and recognition
- The principle outcome at system level is a decision about permission for an HEI or programme to operate
- How to find the balance between a strong accountability framework and flexibility for different approaches to enhancement?

Thank you!

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