

# The European Higher Education Area in 2018

*Bologna Process  
Implementation Report*

# CONTENTS

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## CHAPTER 7:

# INTERNATIONALISATION AND MOBILITY

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### The Yerevan Communiqué

The Yerevan Communiqué, adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2015, referred to internationalisation and mobility as powerful means to enhance mutual understanding and to foster the employability of graduates <sup>(117)</sup>. Ministers noted that higher education institutions and academics are becoming increasingly active in an international context and cooperate in joint teaching and research programmes. The Communiqué highlighted key actions that EHEA countries have agreed to pursue to improve mobility opportunities for students with a disadvantaged background, including students and staff from conflict areas, and to promote the mobility of teacher education students <sup>(118)</sup>. Finally, taking into account the guidelines of the Working group on mobility and internationalisation <sup>(119)</sup>, EHEA countries made commitments to promote staff mobility and the portability of grants and loans <sup>(120)</sup>.

### The 2015 Bologna Implementation Report

The 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) emphasised that EHEA countries present very different situations with regard to internationalisation and mobility, especially when looking at mobility flows and the level of engagement in internationalisation activities. Although most national authorities did encourage the internationalisation of higher education through their steering documents, more than half of the countries lacked a national internationalisation strategy and had not adopted quantitative targets for different forms of mobility.

The report noted that although the trend for internationalisation is growing, lack of funding as well as inflexible national legal frameworks may hinder development in some countries. Overall, still only a minority of students benefit from mobility and the participation of under-represented groups needs greater attention. The portability of financial student support is one important measure to address this concern, but only a minority of countries ensure full portability for their students.

Moreover the findings of the report pointed to the fact that it was not yet possible to estimate whether the EHEA collective target of 20 % mobility by 2020 could be reached or not, as comprehensive and harmonised data collection is not yet fully in place. Data limitations pose even more significant challenges in evaluating the situation for staff mobility. There is no agreed operational definition of staff mobility, which would be necessary to be able to set proper quantitative targets and collect data on participation rates.

The 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report concluded that for both student and staff mobility it will be essential to focus not only on numbers, but also on the quality of mobility. This implies investing in information services, monitoring the mobility experience, ensuring that recognition and evaluation processes operate fairly, and improving monitoring of the impact of measures to remove obstacles to mobility and to balance mobility flows.

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<sup>(117)</sup> Yerevan Communiqué, adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015, p. 1-2.

<sup>(118)</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>(119)</sup> Report of the 2012-2015 BFUG Working Group on Mobility and Internationalisation, 2015.

<sup>(120)</sup> Yerevan Communiqué, adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015, p. 4.

## Chapter outline

Section 1 reviews various policies for the internationalisation of higher education at both central and institutional level. It tracks progress in comparison with the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report concerning strategies, budget and incentives for internationalisation, the share of institutions that participate in joint programmes and award joint degrees, as well as legal obstacles for the award of joint degrees. Section 2 focuses on student mobility by bringing together statistical information on mobility flows and information on national policies to support mobility such as target setting for outgoing and incoming mobility and requirements for mobility periods. It also includes the two scorecard indicators on portability of grants and loans and financial mobility support for disadvantaged students. Section 3 is devoted to issues related to staff mobility such as targets for incoming and outgoing staff mobility.

## 7.1. Policies for internationalisation

In recent years a growing number of terms have been used to define the internationalisation of higher education (de Wit, 2011). One distinction that is made is between 'internationalisation at home and abroad', although both aspects are seen as inter-related in various ways. In the first case, the aim is to develop an international awareness through the curriculum at the home institution. In the second case, the focus is on cross-border mobility of people, projects and programmes (Knight, 2008). In this chapter, the term internationalisation is understood to include a number of aspects that are centred around but not limited to international cooperation and mobility (<sup>121</sup>).

Although in many European countries the main responsibility for internationalisation activities lies with the higher education institutions themselves, the framework and strategic direction are often set at central level. Through the 2012 Mobility Strategy, EHEA countries were encouraged to 'develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies' (<sup>122</sup>). In addition, the 2013 'European higher education in the world' communication encouraged EU member states to develop 'comprehensive internationalisation strategies' (European Commission 2013, p. 3) and the 2017 communication 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture' called for further actions to boost mobility and facilitate cross-border cooperation (European Commission 2017b, pp. 4-5).

National strategies for internationalisation can vary greatly across countries. Generally they represent an official policy document that has been developed by the central authorities to achieve the overall goal of supporting internationalisation. Although the level of detail regarding internationalisation policies in such documents can vary greatly, they are expected to identify qualitative and quantitative objectives, describe processes, authorities and people in charge, identify funding sources and make recommendations.

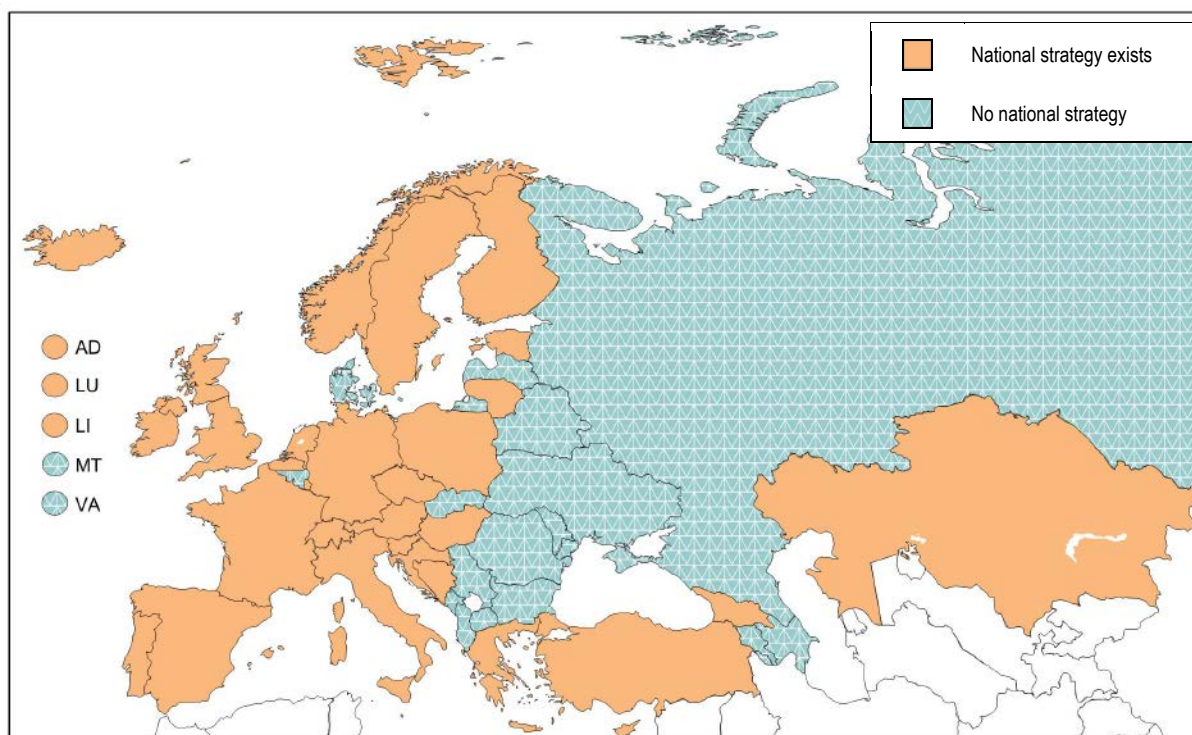
Figure 7.1 provides an overview of the situation regarding the adoption of national strategies for internationalisation across the EHEA. This policy area continues to be very dynamic and has registered a steady progress since the 2015 reporting exercise. Thirty two countries have an active strategy for the internationalisation of higher education. In comparison with the situation that was recorded in 2015 there is a clear increase, with 16 new countries reporting that they have such a strategy in place. In France, for instance, the national STRANES strategy for higher education was adopted in autumn 2015. It involves a clear international dimension setting quantitative benchmarks by 2025 for doubling inbound and outgoing mobility, strongly encouraging Master students to go abroad, broadening international education programmes including the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), improving students' foreign-language skills, and improving the organisation of international cooperation projects.

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<sup>(121)</sup> The European Commission supports tools such as the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER) (<https://www.eter-project.com/>) and U-Multirank (<https://www.umultirank.org>) which provide information on internationalisation and mobility.

<sup>(122)</sup> Mobility for Better Learning: Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), 2012, p. 1.

Figure 7.1: National strategies for internationalisation of higher education, 2016/17



Source: BFUG data collection.

Internationalisation strategies operate in a multiannual timeframe and are being periodically revised and updated. Currently the strategy in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is under preparation, while Moldova plans to develop specific strategic documents with the help of funding from the Erasmus+ Programme.

Internationalisation strategies are usually adopted by the responsible ministry. In the Netherlands, the Minister of Education sends to Parliament a letter on the government's vision on the international dimension of higher education. In some countries, important provisions to facilitate international cooperation and mobility have been included in the laws on higher education. In Iceland, internationalisation has been mainstreamed in the general five year fiscal policy of the government, and is operating under the National Budget Law.

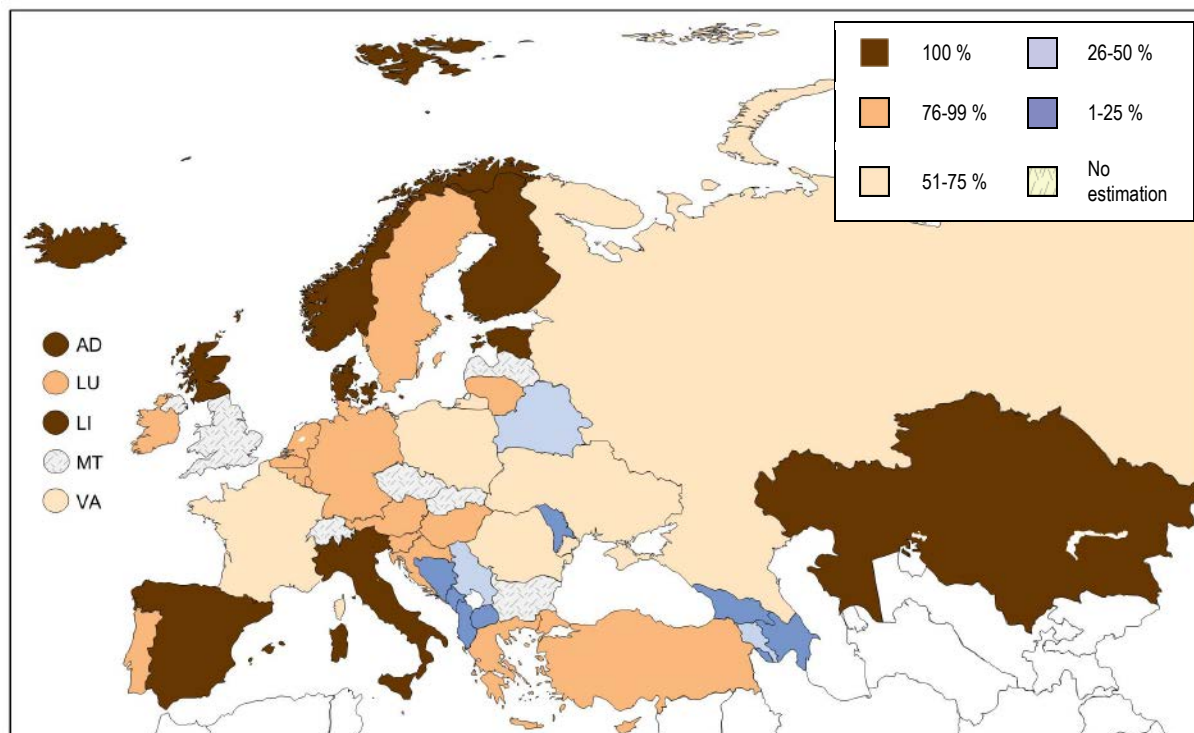
### Engagement at institutional level

Through the 2012 Mobility Strategy, ministers encouraged higher education institutions 'to adopt and implement their own strategy for their internationalisation and for the promotion of mobility in accordance with their respective profile and involving the stakeholders (students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff)' <sup>(123)</sup>. This section therefore focuses on internationalisation at institutional level using data provided through the BFUG questionnaire. Most of the information is based on estimations and perceptions held by national authorities. This is due to the fact that only half of all countries monitor one or more of the three aspects that will be discussed below, i.e. the number of higher education institutions that have adopted an internationalisation strategy, participate in joint programmes and/or award joint degrees. When central level monitoring takes place, it is usually done on an annual basis by the respective Ministry or by the higher education accreditation and evaluation bodies or similar organisations.

<sup>(123)</sup> Mobility for Better Learning: Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), 2012, p. 5.

Countries were asked to estimate the percentage of their higher education institutions that have adopted an internationalisation strategy. As mentioned earlier, the concept of 'internationalisation strategy' is broad and countries may interpret it differently, and Figure 7.2 shows that quite different realities coexist in the EHEA.

**Figure 7.2: Estimated percentage of higher education institutions that have adopted an internationalisation strategy, 2016/17**



Source: BFUG data collection.

Thirty three of the EHEA countries estimate that more than half of their higher education institutions have adopted internationalisation strategies. Among these, 11 countries report that all higher education institutions have an internationalisation strategy. No country estimates that none of their higher education institutions have adopted such a strategy. In comparison with the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report, we observe a considerable increase in the number of countries in the top two categories (76-100 % of institutions): from 13 to 27 countries.

Countries report that data for these estimates include statistics about the proportion of institutions who have the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) (which means that they have formulated Erasmus Policy Statements or a form of internationalisation strategy focusing mainly on the European dimension of their international activity), various national reports and surveys, and in some cases the performance agreements between the government and the higher education institutions.

Ten systems (Andorra, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom – Scotland) report that in addition to the existence of a national strategy for internationalisation (see Figure 7.1), all their higher education institutions have also adopted internationalisation strategies (see Figure 7.2).

Beyond the existence of a strategic document on internationalisation, higher education institutions have an increasing choice of instruments or activities to engage in the internationalisation process (e.g. joint programmes and joint degrees, campuses abroad, massive open online courses (MOOCs)). Nevertheless, the development of these instruments greatly depends on factors such as the available resources at institutional level. In some countries, national legal frameworks as well as institutional regulations can also hinder the development of these internationalisation instruments.

## Budget and incentives for internationalisation

Confirming one of the findings of the 2015 Bologna Implementation Report, most countries report that they have specific budgets for funding internationalisation activities in higher education. For instance in Slovenia, the Action Plan Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian higher education 2016-2018, has set 25 objectives and over 50 concrete measures with a total budget of 57 million euros. These measures range from mobility grants to information campaigns, orientation days, Slovenian language and culture courses and preparation modules for foreign students and higher education teachers.

It appears that central level funding is mostly allocated specifically for mobility. Apart from Erasmus+ and other EU-funded programmes, a number of countries operate national, regional and bilateral programmes for the mobility of students and staff. In particular, well established regional programmes in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Nordic region, as well as national schemes in, for instance, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom continue to play a significant role in supporting mobility.

France and Hungary have provided details of policy actions in this domain. In France, besides Erasmus+ supported grants, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign affairs offers a range of grants for incoming students which in 2016 concerned around 1 000 mobility periods, for a total cost of more than 43 million euros. For outgoing student mobility, the Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation supports EHEA-portable need-based grants for around 700 000 students with a budget envelope of about 2 billion euros. In Hungary, to achieve the student mobility targets the government is financing a *Stipendium Hungaricum* scholarship programme for foreign students with a budget of nearly HUF 7 billion (22 million euros) in 2016, and HUF 14 billion (almost 45 million euros) in 2017. Outward student mobility is supported by the *Campus Mundi* excellence scholarship programme co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Hungarian government with a budget of HUF 9.2 billion (29 million euros) for five years.

Non-financial incentives for internationalisation have been reported by Austria, Estonia, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Russia. Examples of such measures include favourable regulatory frameworks for the accreditation of joint degree programmes, credit transfer and accumulation and the offer of study programmes in English, as well as specialised web-portals, promotion campaigns, support in immigration procedures, welcome services for incoming students. In several countries (Austria, Ireland, Finland, Norway, Poland and Romania) performance indicators on internationalisation activities are used as one of the criteria for the allocation of government funding to higher education institutions.

## Joint programmes and joint degrees

Joint programmes refer to inter-institutional arrangements among two or more higher education institutions that lead ideally to a joint degree (but also currently to double and multiple degrees). Parts of joint programmes undertaken by students at partner institutions are recognised automatically by the other partner institutions. A joint degree is a single document awarded to students who successfully complete a joint programme, and it should be recognised as equivalent to national qualifications by the appropriate (national or, if applicable, regional) authorities of at least the countries participating in the programme.

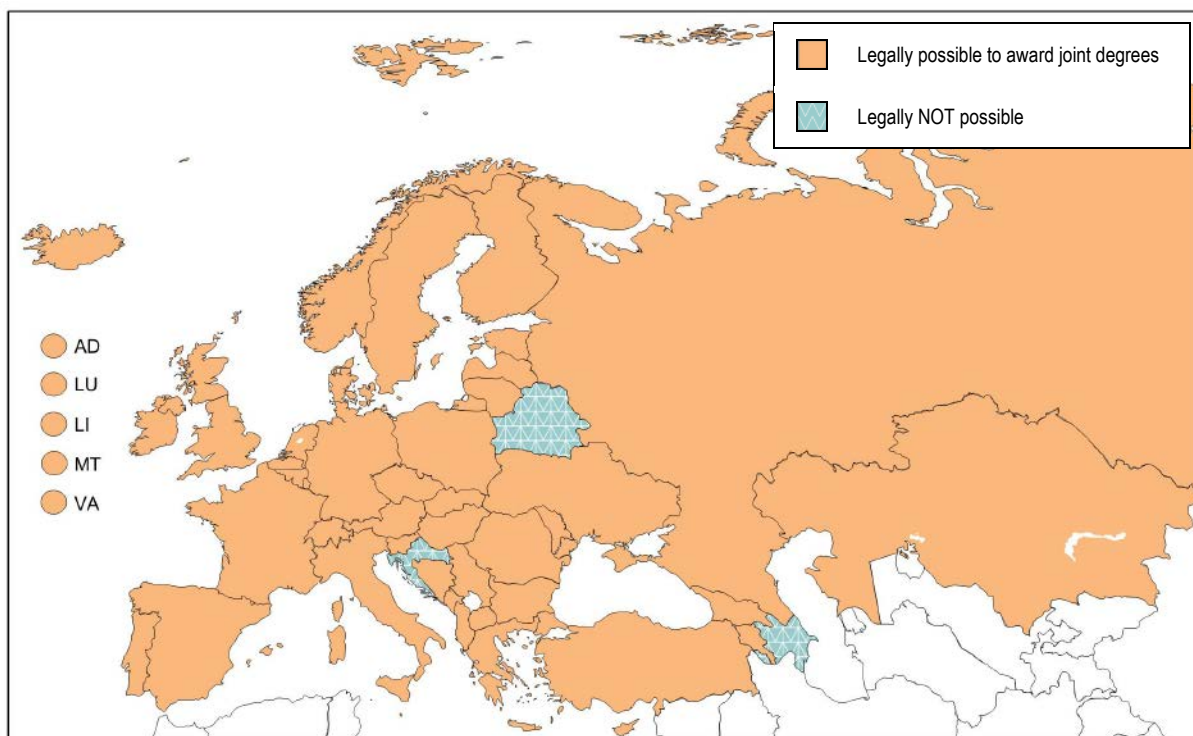
Joint programmes and degrees have long been recognised as a key element in facilitating internationalisation in higher education institutions. Thus from the early Ministerial declarations in the Bologna Process onwards, there have been commitments to develop further these instruments – particularly in light of the launch of the Erasmus Mundus programme in 2004.



While the challenges to higher education institutions in developing cross-border joint programmes have been quite wide-ranging, one of the main issues for governments has been to create a legal environment where joint programmes can be established and recognised without undue problems. Although the vast majority of countries have now amended their legislation to take on board joint programmes and joint degrees, regulatory issues continue to be on the agenda.

Figure 7.3 illustrates the fact that in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Croatia it is not legally possible for higher education institutions to award joint degrees. In Switzerland this possibility is not explicitly stated in the legislation, but Swiss higher education institutions, which enjoy a large autonomy, can award joint degrees. Elsewhere, as for instance in Ireland, Sweden or the United Kingdom (Scotland), the legal framework has been established as early as the 1990s with subsequent updates in the following two decades. More generally, it appears that in a number of countries a lot of ambiguity remains which is due to the lack of a clear legal basis and/or additional regulations to operationalise the concept. For instance, as noted in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.12), twenty two systems report that the European Approach to quality assurance of joint programmes is not permitted by their legislative framework.

**Figure 7.3: Legal possibility for HEIs to award joint degrees, 2016/17**

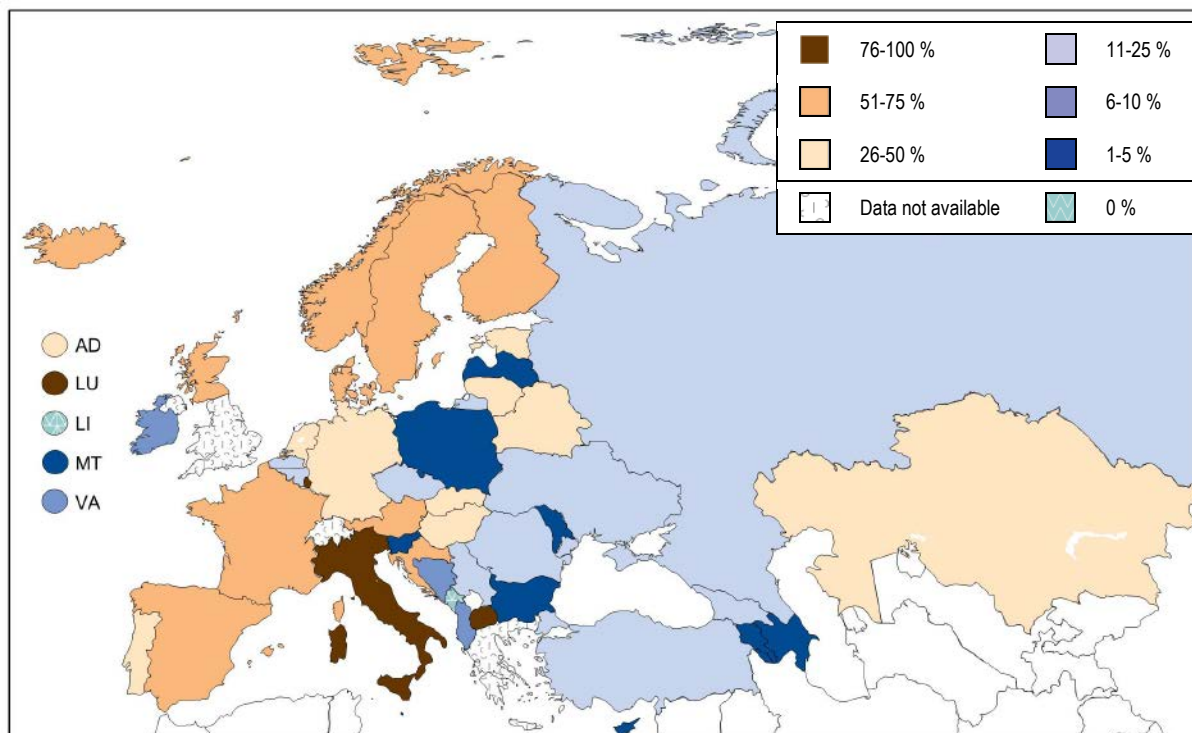


Source: BFUG data collection.

Similarly to the findings from the 2012 and 2015 reporting exercises, countries continue to estimate a higher number of higher education institutions participating in joint programmes than those actually issuing joint degrees (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5).

According to these estimations, in the majority of countries, less than 25 % of higher education institutions participate in joint programmes and less than 5 % award joint degrees with marked differences of the extent to which countries are engaged in these actions. The uncertain legal situation continues to play a role in keeping the take up of joint degrees at a relatively low level.

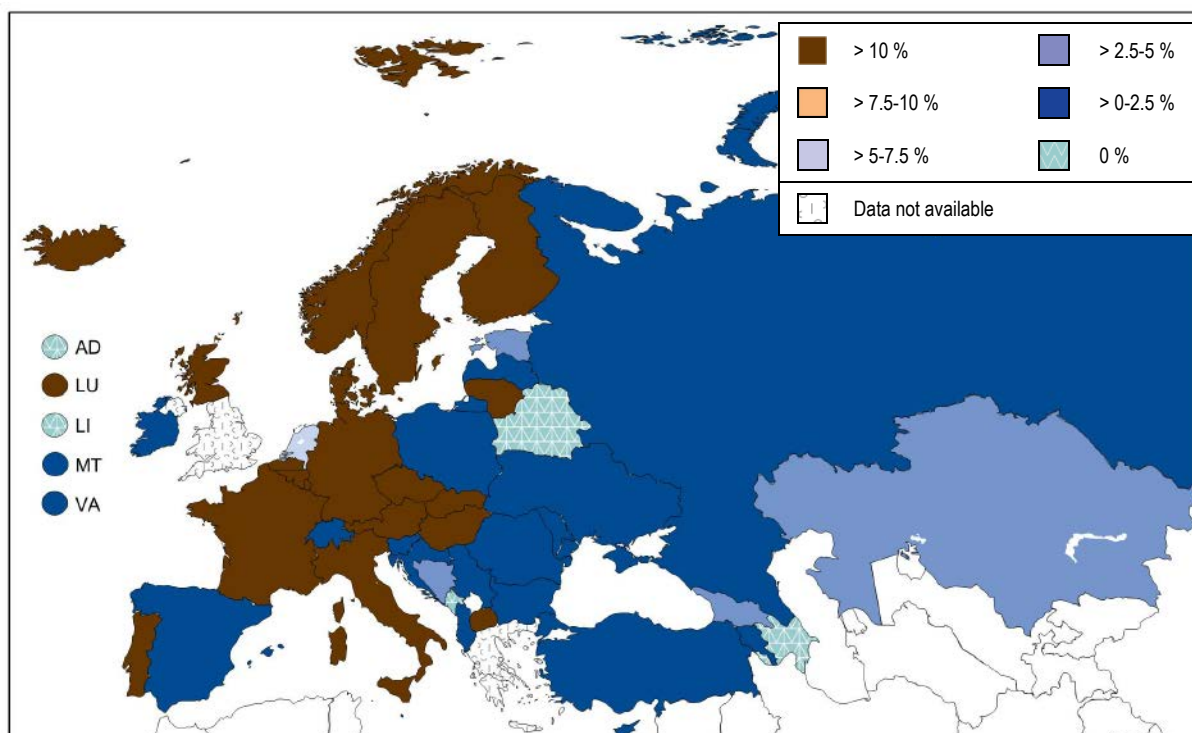
**Figure 7.4: Estimated percentage of institutions that participate in joint programmes, 2016/17**



Source: BFUG data collection.

When comparing with the data in the 2015 Bologna report, we can observe a slight increase in the number of countries that estimate that more than half of their institutions participate in joint programmes, but even so this group (13 countries) continues to be a minority. Among the countries in this group, Italy, Luxembourg and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia estimate that between 76 and 100 percent of their institutions participate in joint programmes. On the other hand, Liechtenstein and Montenegro consider that no institutions are engaged in such activities.

**Figure 7.5: Estimated percentage of institutions that award joint degrees, 2016/17**



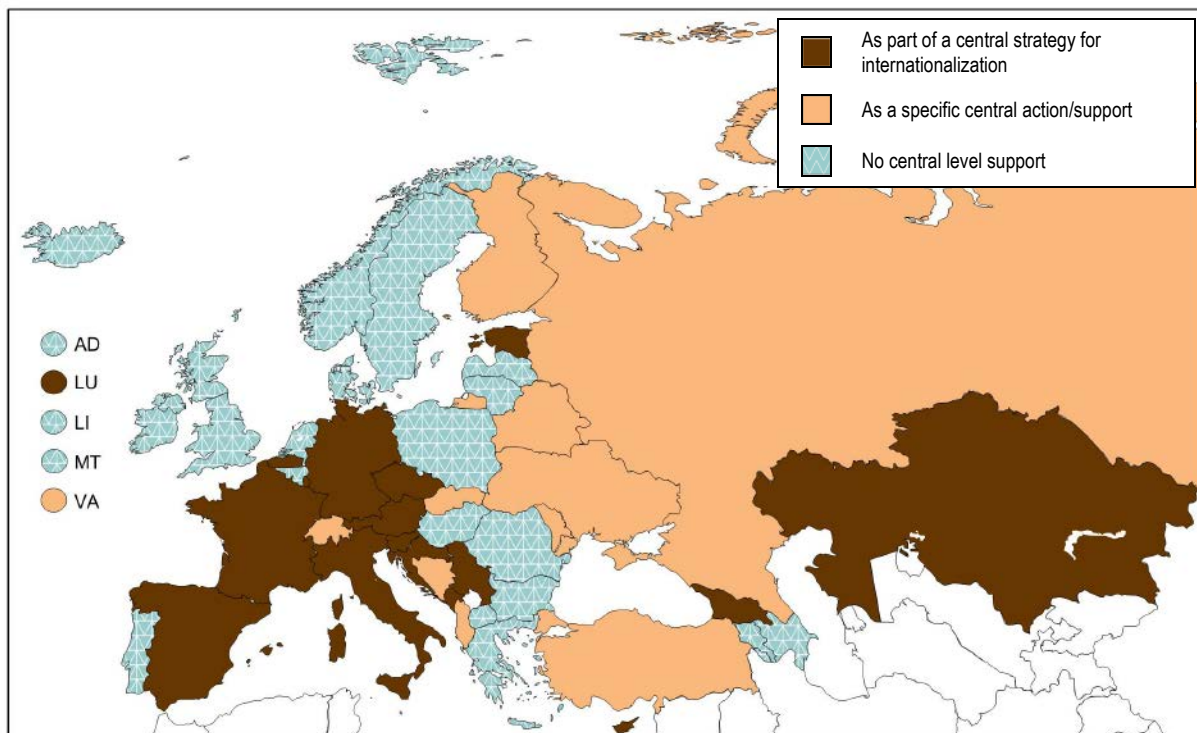
Source: BFUG data collection.

Similarly, there has been an increase in the top two categories (above 7.5 %) of the share of institutions that award joint degrees. Five countries (Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Liechtenstein and Montenegro – as compared to eight countries in the 2015 Bologna report) consider that no institutions award joint degrees, while several others are unable to provide estimates. On the other hand, although in Croatia the award of joint degrees is not regulated by law (see Figure 7.3), a minority of institutions manage to solve the practical problems that arise from the uncertain legal situation and deliver a joint degree.

However, a group of several systems (Austria, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom – Scotland) estimate consistently high shares of institutions that both participate in joint programmes (see Figure 7.4) and award joint degrees (see Figure 7.5). Five of these systems (Finland, Iceland, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom – Scotland) also report that they have a national strategy for internationalisation and estimate that all their higher education institutions have adopted similar documents (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2). In Italy, for instance, the Triannual Strategic Framework for the university system, allocating 50 million euros per year, includes indicators on the progress made by universities in the offer of 'international' degree programmes. These programmes are either taught in English, lead to a joint/double degree, are funded within the Erasmus+ joint master initiative, or at least 20 % of their students experience an outward mobility (at least 12 ECTS). The support of the central authorities includes financial incentives for institutions that increase the offer of international programmes, regulatory measures to facilitate the accreditation of international programmes and promotion of these programmes on the portal that presents all degrees in Italy.

Overall however, when asked whether there are central level actions for the support of the development of joint degree programmes, only half of the countries respond that they provide some support, either as part of a central strategy for internationalisation, or as a specific central action or support (see Figure 7.6).

**Figure 7.6: Central level actions to support the development of joint degree programmes, 2016/17**



Source: BFUG data collection.