Staff development for learning and teaching at European universities

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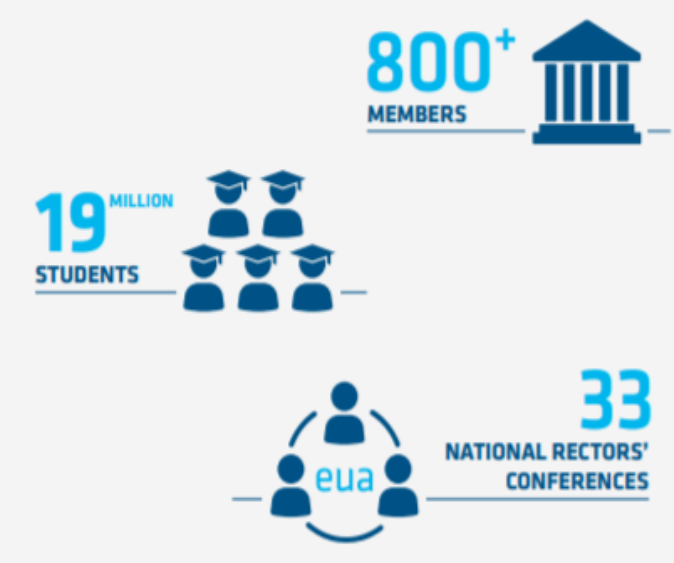
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European University Association (EUA)

800+ MEMBERS

19 MILLION STUDENTS

33 NATIONAL RECTORS' CONFERENCES

eua

- Established in 2001
- Members in the 48 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Non-governmental membership organisation
- Independent voice of universities
- Advocacy for the university sector in European policy-making processes (Bologna Process, EU)
- Forum for exchange, peer learning for members
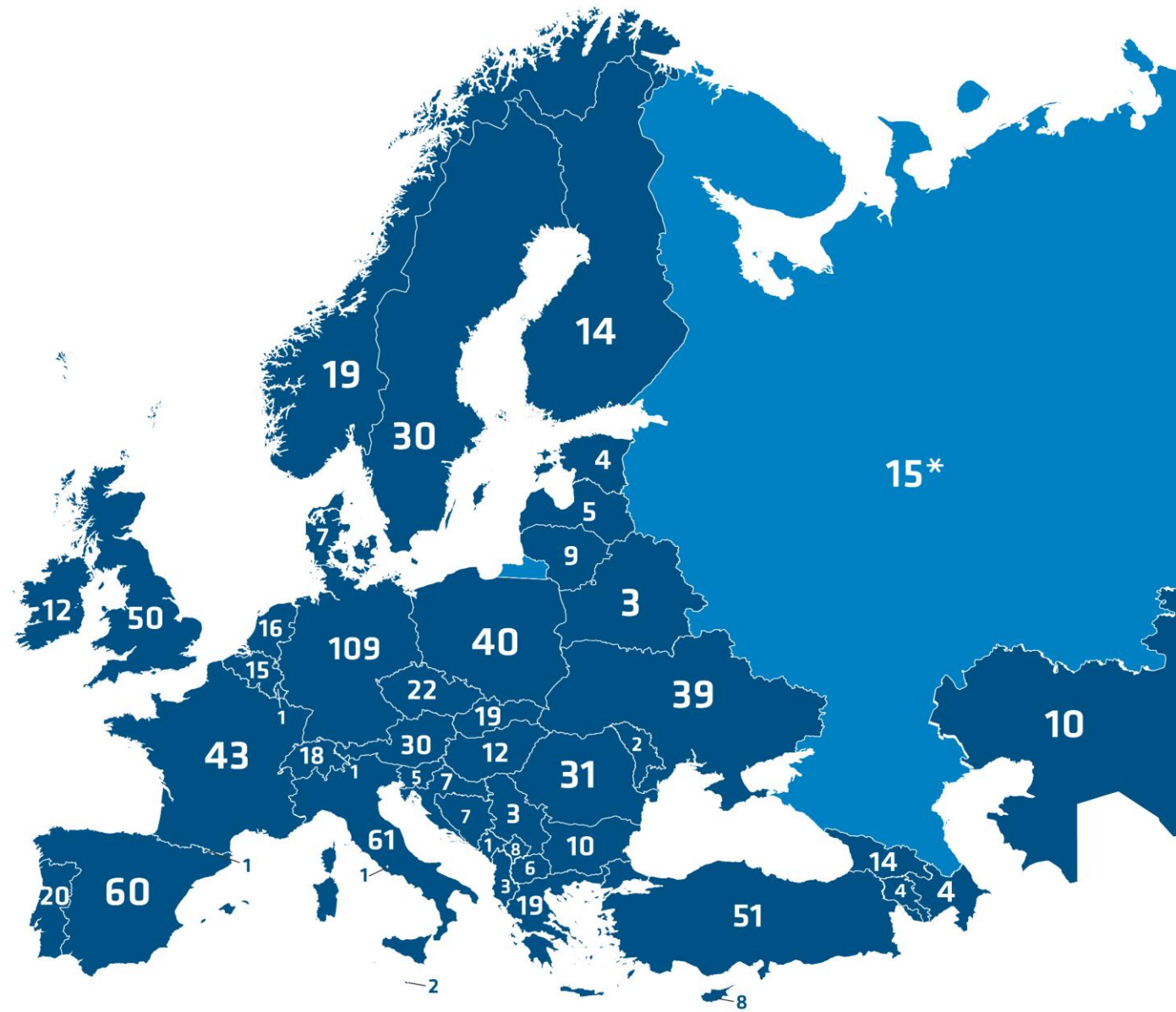
Following a statement by the Russian Union of Rectors (RUR) supporting the invasion of Ukraine, EUA suspended Russian member universities whose leaders signed the statement.

Project

- Co-funded by the Erasmus+
- From January 2024 to December 2026

- To map the situation at European HEIs
- To support HEIs in designing staff development and exchanging on how they do it
- To draw lessons to share with policy makers and the sector

Teaching enhancement in place at European HEIs

Recognition of good teaching

(e.g. awards, career development, incentives)

- **66%** in place
- **13%** planned

Source: Trends 2018

Staff development

- 84% of HEIs across the EHEA offer training in pedagogy and didactics

Source: Trends 2024

Main obstacle to the enhancement of teaching

1. Lack of funding
2. Lack of recognition for teaching in career progression

Source: Trends 2018, Trends 2024

How staff development is conceptualised and organised

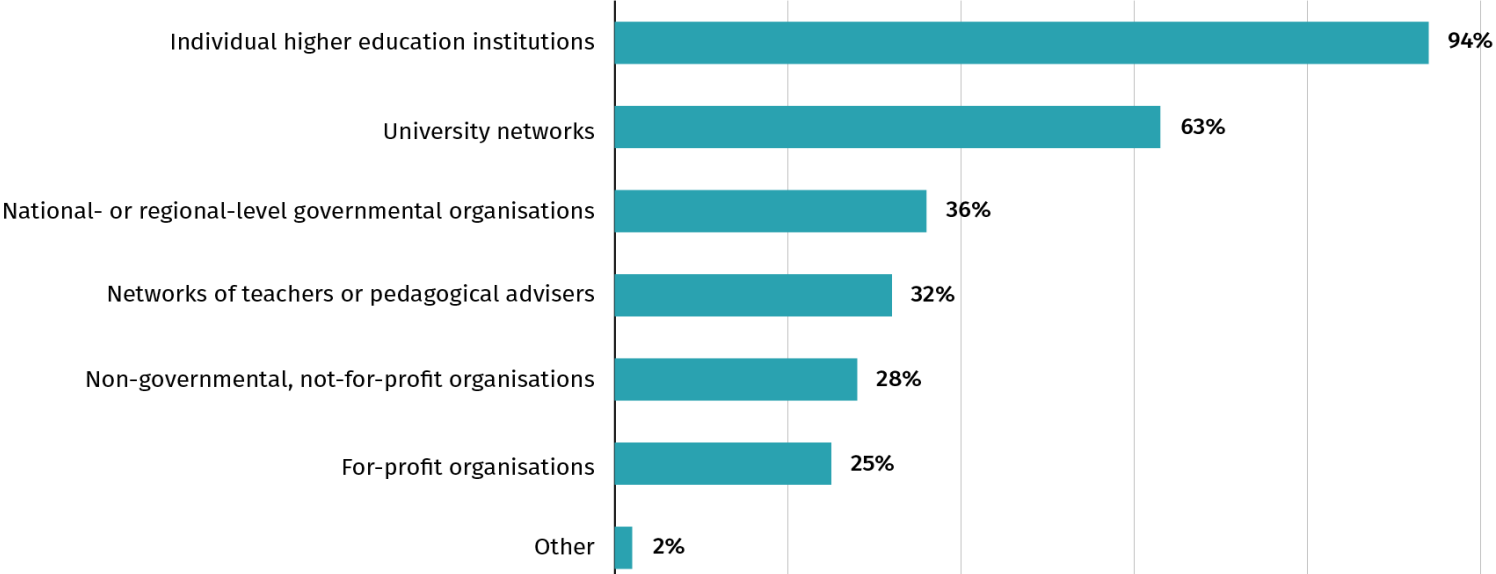**Fig. 4** – In your country, who organises SD in teaching?
N = 163

Category	Percentage
Individual higher education institutions	94%
University networks	63%
National- or regional-level governmental organisations	36%
Networks of teachers or pedagogical advisers	32%
Non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations	28%
For-profit organisations	25%
Other	2%

Fig. 6 – Purpose of offering SD (as described in the L&T strategy)
N = 119

Category	Percentage
To enhance the quality of teaching	89%
As part of the institution's commitment to continuous professional development for its staff	78%
To contribute to career progression of teachers	62%
As part of the institution's commitment to reach better parity of esteem between teaching and research	43%
To fulfil legal requirements	31%
Other	4%

How HEIs see value in staff development

Community building and wellbeing perspective

- Creating and maintaining a sense of community and engagement

- Contributing to teachers' self-confidence and mutual support

- Overcoming frustration over (common) challenges

Institutional perspective

- Creating and maintaining a sense of accountability

- Supporting the institution's pedagogical vision across disciplines and departments, with emphasis on similar values and competences

Individual development perspective

- Supporting the implementation of newly acquired competences into classrooms

- Better informing teachers, broaden their capacity to address transversal aspects

- Improving awareness to engage students through active learning methods

- Helping to tackle new challenges

How staff development is conceptualised and organised

- Intertwined! Not easy to make a clear demarcation line
- Many activities organised by the institution are structured, but do not include any assessment upon completion.

Formal

Organised by the institution
Assigned learning objectives + assessment
More general use

Self-organised

By individuals, groups or the institution
Typically optional
Used for specificities and immediate needs
Role of departments, faculties

96% of STAFF-DEV respondents offer it

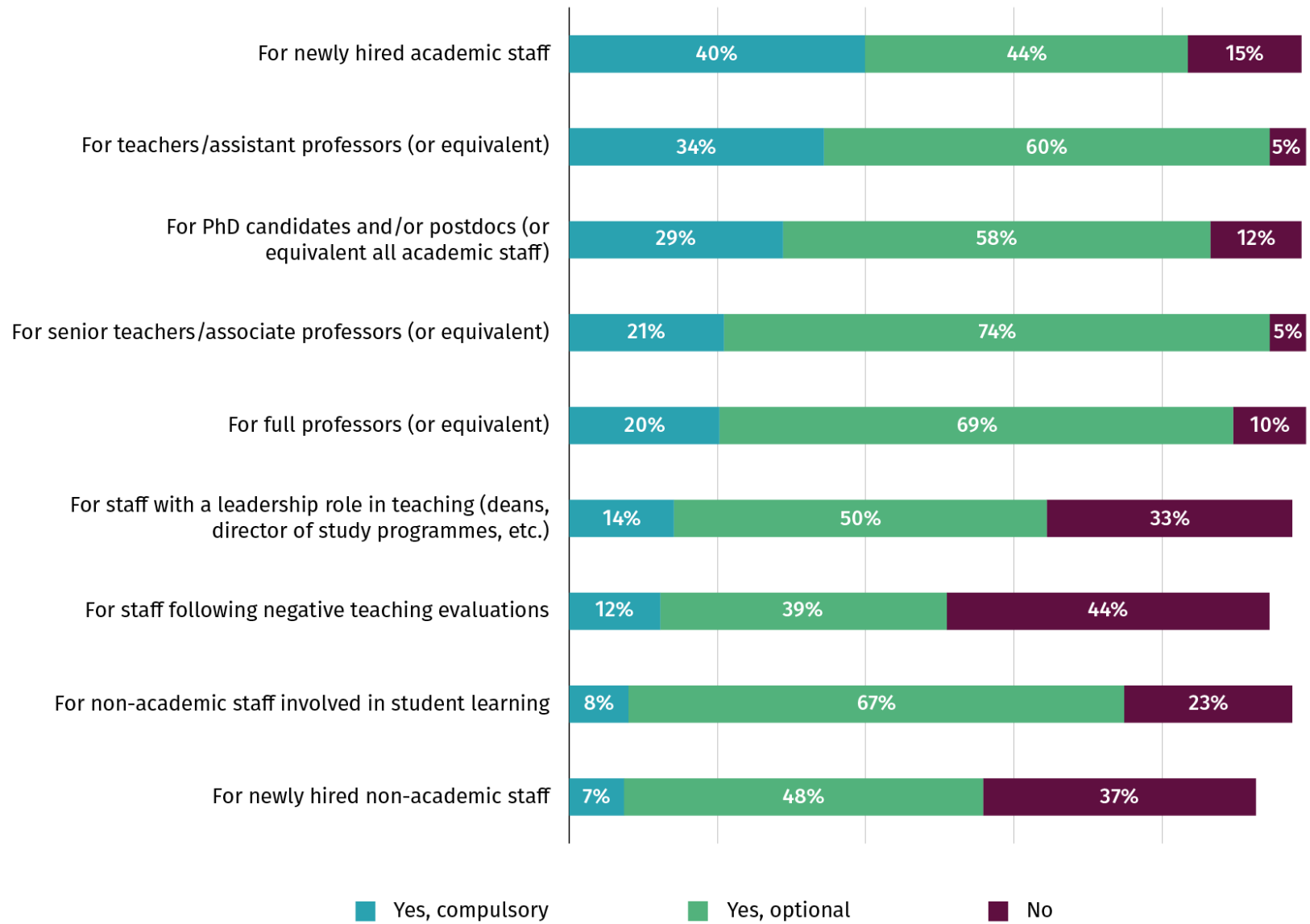71% of STAFF-DEV respondents offer it

How universities support professional development for teachers: relation with recognition and career progression

Some grey zones:

- Courses not mandatory as such, yet required for staff to take them in the course of their career

- Depends more on the status of the person, the state of advancement in career and teaching experience
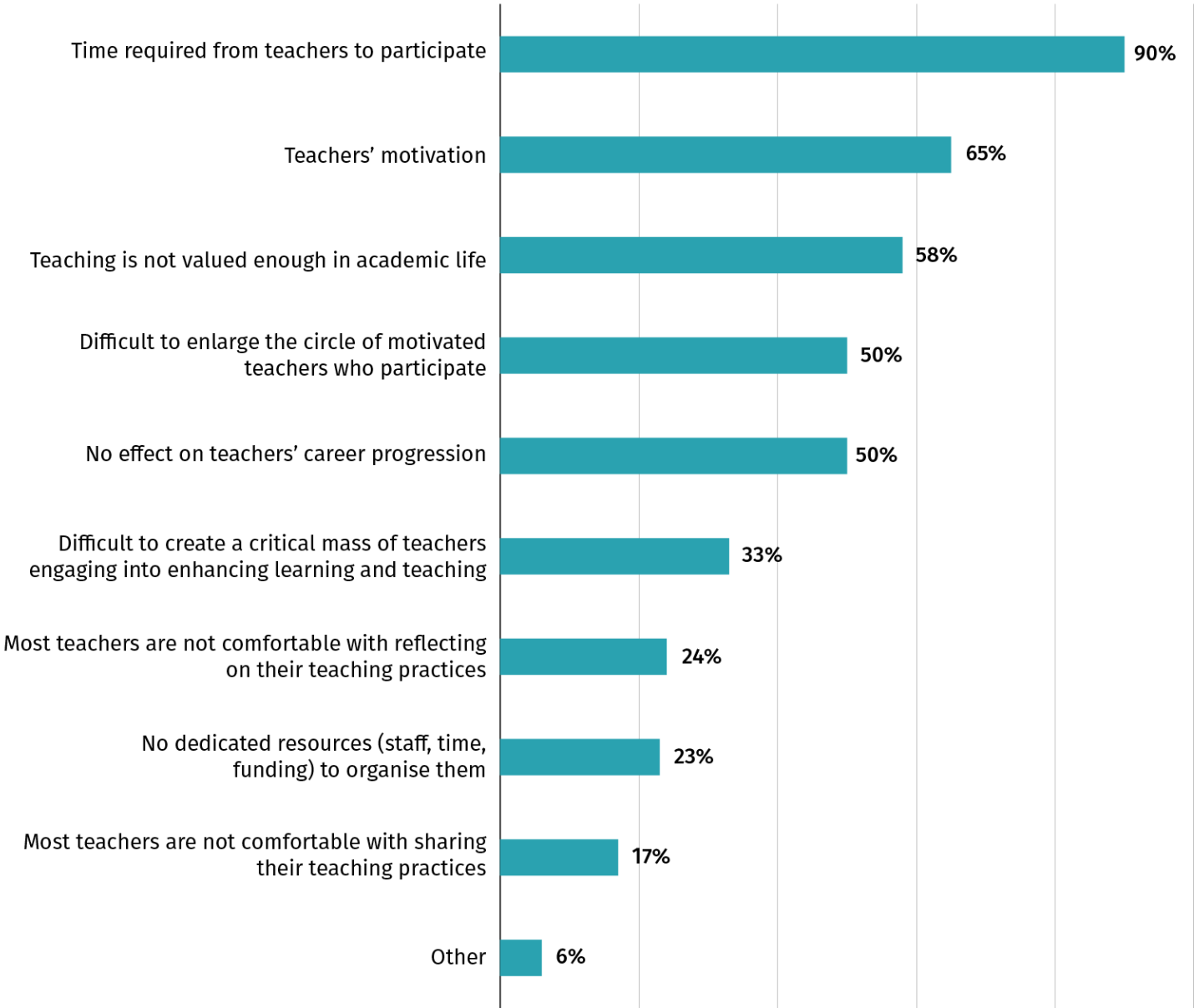
Fig. 9 – Formal SD offered. N = 162

Category	Yes, compulsory	Yes, optional	No
For newly hired academic staff	40%	44%	15%
For teachers/assistant professors (or equivalent)	34%	60%	5%
For PhD candidates and/or postdocs (or equivalent all academic staff)	29%	58%	12%
For senior teachers/associate professors (or equivalent)	21%	74%	5%
For full professors (or equivalent)	20%	69%	10%
For staff with a leadership role in teaching (deans, director of study programmes, etc.)	14%	50%	33%
For staff following negative teaching evaluations	12%	39%	44%
For non-academic staff involved in student learning	8%	67%	23%
For newly hired non-academic staff	7%	48%	37%

■ Yes, compulsory ■ Yes, optional ■ No

How universities support professional development for teachers: relation with recognition and career progression

Fig. 15 – Challenges to proposing and organising SD
N = 163

| Challenge	%
Time required from teachers to participate	90%
Teachers' motivation	65%
Teaching is not valued enough in academic life	58%
Difficult to enlarge the circle of motivated teachers who participate	50%
No effect on teachers' career progression	50%
Difficult to create a critical mass of teachers engaging into enhancing learning and teaching	33%
Most teachers are not comfortable with reflecting on their teaching practices	24%
No dedicated resources (staff, time, funding) to organise them	23%
Most teachers are not comfortable with sharing their teaching practices	17%
Other	6%

BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Time

Institutional and National support

Lack of stability in HEI Leadership
Lack of stability in budget
Lack of stability in government

ENABLERS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Connectivity
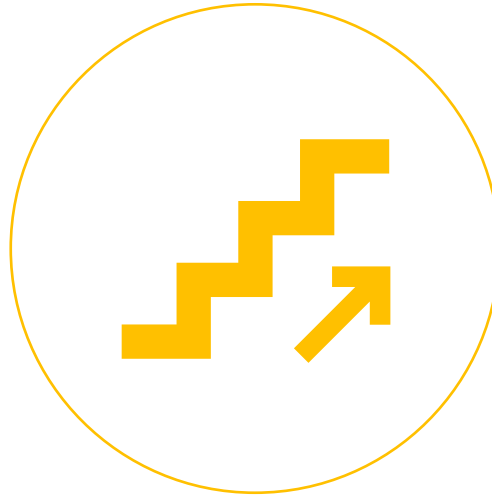
Career Progression

Recognition

How universities support professional development for teachers: relation with recognition and career progression
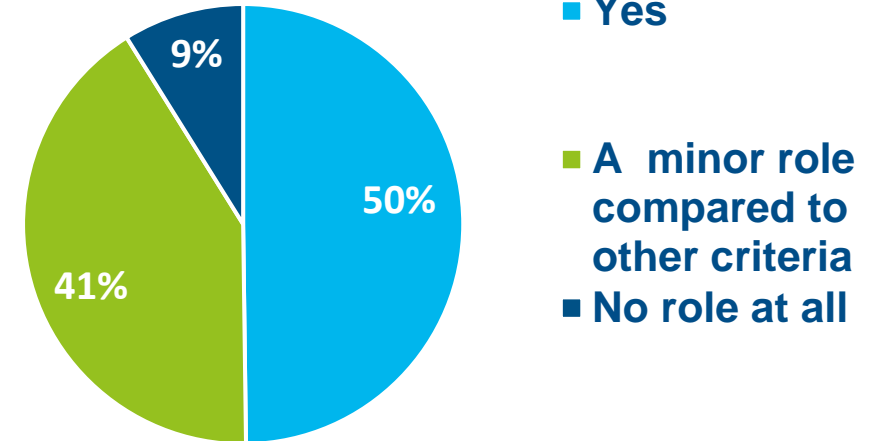
How to assess teaching?

- Student feedback:

The most widespread practice (97% of HEIs)

But HEIs also commented that they need to improve how to approach teaching performance evaluation.

- More appropriate (and complementary) tools?

Role of teaching performance evaluations in career progression

- Yes
- A minor role compared to other criteria
- No role at all

50%
41%
9%

Source: Trends 2024 data N=489	Source: Trends 2018 data N=303
Teaching portfolios 43% use it 10% plan to introduce it	**Peer feedback systems** 34% use it 11% plan to introduce it

How universities support professional development for teachers: relation with recognition and career progression

Processes wherein SD can be taken into account and need to be documented :

1. When academic staff start their position

2. In the context of a periodic evaluation

3. Upon renewal of their contract in the case of temporary staff

4. When moving from a temporary to a permanent status

Fig. 20 – Does formal SD account for career progression?
N = 160

For staff in a permanent position: 57% Yes, 41% No
For staff in a temporary position: 49% Yes, 48% No

Legend: Yes / No
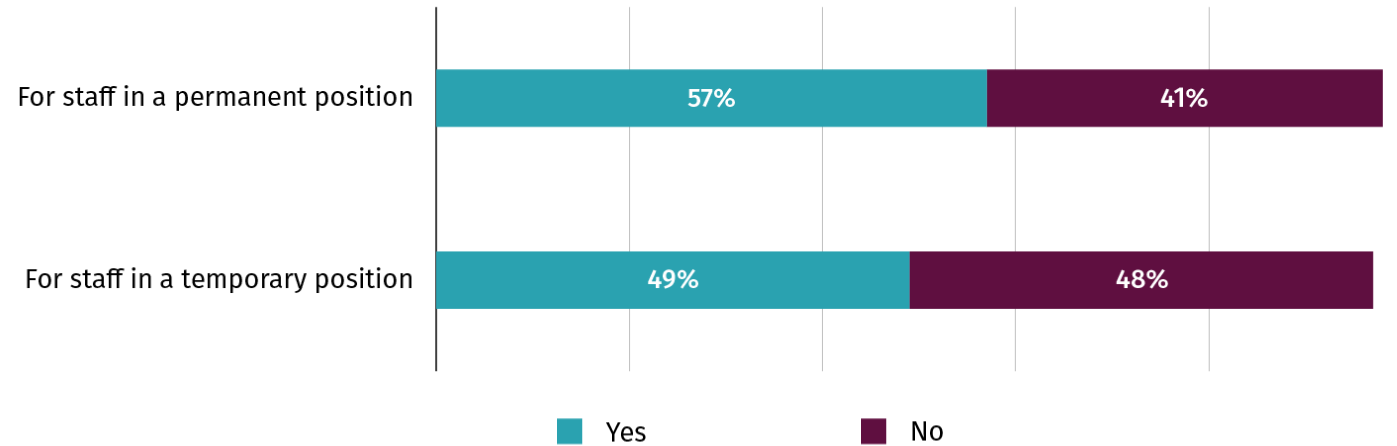
- PCF: Structured by competences, career stages and/or types of teaching activities.
- Significant country differences: 100% in the UK, 90% in SE
- Most HEIs using a PCF have designed their own, or adapted an existing one (UK PSF mostly; other examples in SE and DE; scholarly work)
- Using a PDF may help structure SD offers: HEIs that use it as a reference for SD more likely to have formal activities targeting different stages of a career
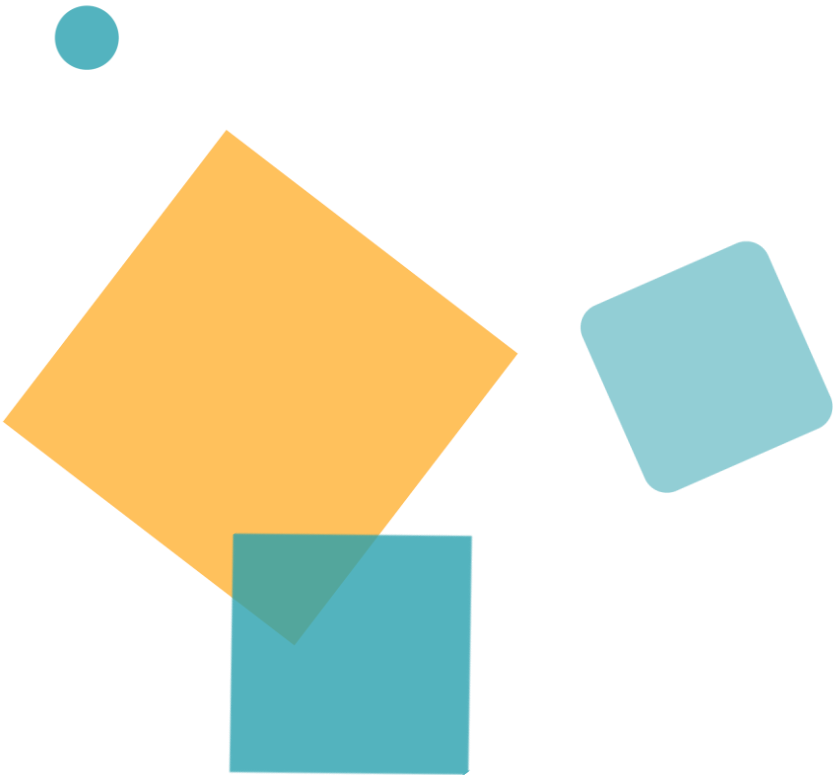
FIGURE 18 Professional development frameworks

12%
31%
57%

Yes
No
I do not know
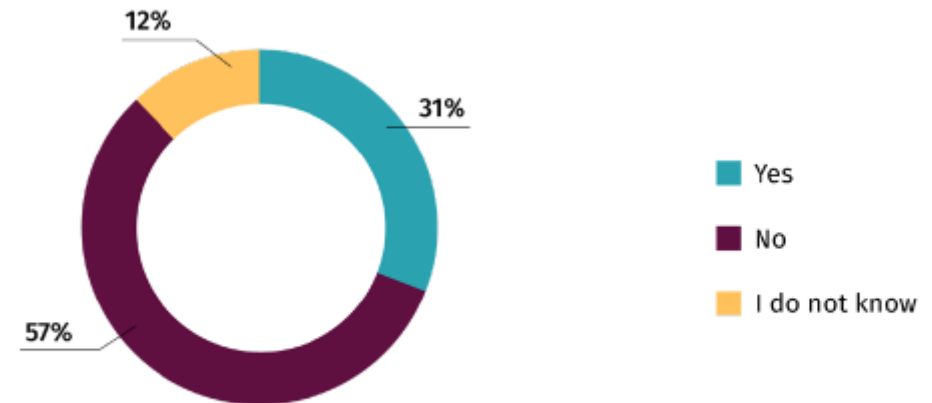
Q20. In your institution, is there a professional development framework used as a reference for staff development in learning and teaching? N=162

To summarise

- SD = part of a teaching ecosystem
  - ✓ Institution's strategy and priorities for L&T
  - ✓ Adequate support structures
  - ✓ Relevant offerings
  - ✓ Complementarity between "formal" and grassroots initiatives
  - ✓ Recognition for time and effort dedicated to improving teaching

- Some loose ends – might impact motivation
  - ✓ Role of teaching in career progression not always clear
  - ✓ Blurry zone between compulsory/incentive/optional yet expected

- The overall value of SD very much depends on the value that institutions grant to the teaching activity as part of the academic profession.

Thank you!