DECONSTRUCT

FACTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

D5.1 FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

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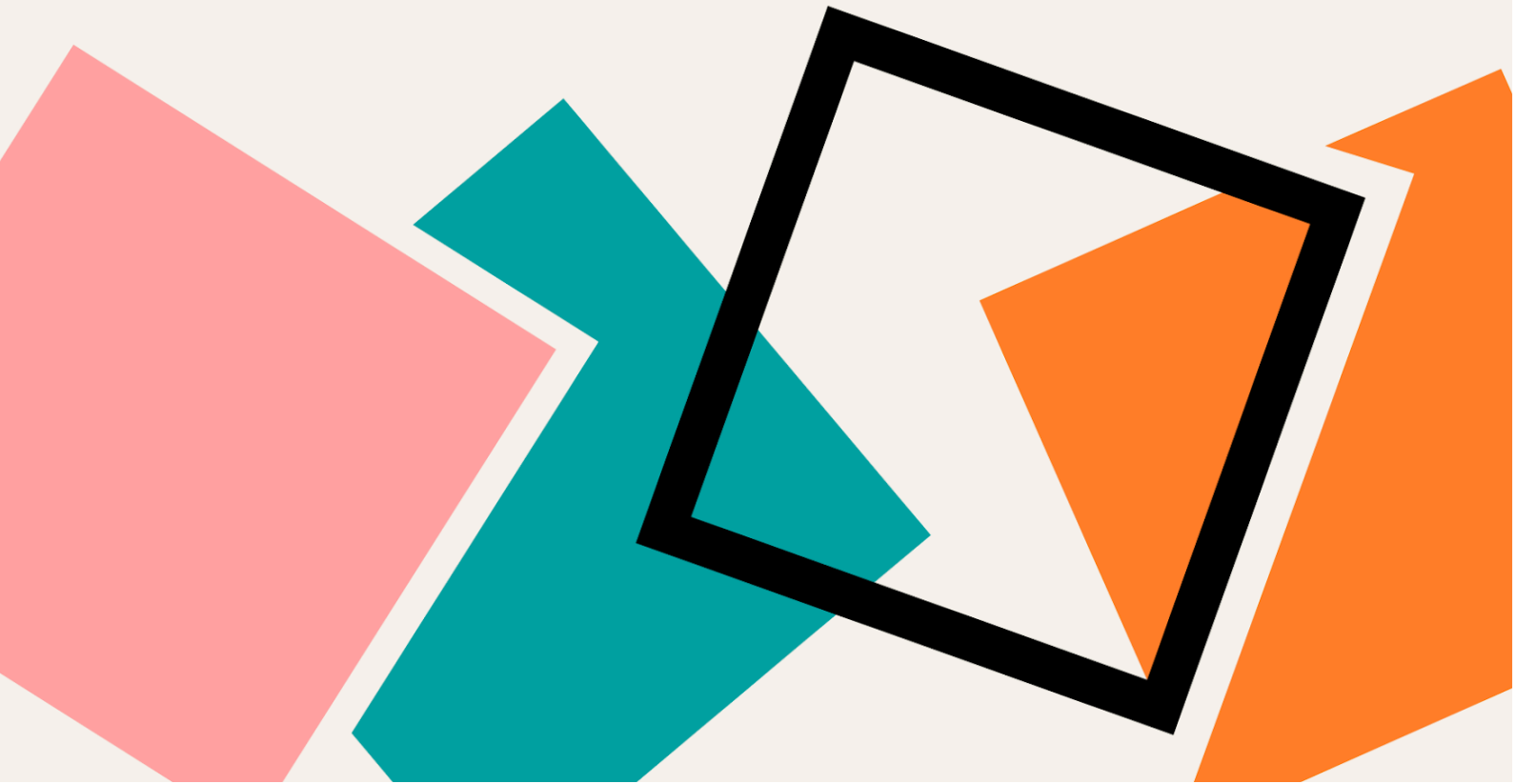

DECONSTRUCT

Deconstructing Distortion and Disinformation via Campaign and Digital Education

Project acronym

DECONSTRUCT

Project Agreement No.

101144756

D5.1 Final Assessment Report

Facts In the Digital Age: Evaluating the Impact on Holocaust Education and Media Literacy

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
CERV-EQUAL	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme – Equality
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IT	Information Technology
Q1	Pre-questionnaire
Q2	Post-questionnaire

DECONSTRUCT

Executive Summary

This report presents the final evaluation of the DECONSTRUCT project – Deconstructing Distortion and Disinformation via Campaign and Digital Education Partnership – funded through the CERV-EQUAL programme and co-funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The project aimed to counter antisemitism, Holocaust distortion, and broader forms of discrimination through research, education, and public engagement, with a particular focus on supporting teachers and students.

An international consortium developed and delivered a series of online educational resources, including learning modules on the IWitness platform, alongside a public awareness campaign called *#ProtectTheFacts*. The project sought to strengthen teachers' professional skills, support effective Holocaust education, and foster critical competencies such as media literacy and critical thinking. In total, 10 teacher trainings were conducted across four countries, reaching 757 participants, and 20 educational modules were developed and localised for national contexts.

Overall, the survey and interview findings show a very positive reception among teachers. Participant teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the training's clarity, structure, and relevance, and the vast majority found it engaging and useful for their professional practice. Nearly all teachers indicated that they would apply the knowledge and tools gained, and 97% would recommend the training to colleagues. Their qualitative feedback highlights that teachers particularly valued practical approaches, the use of video testimonies in IWitness modules, and the focus on critical thinking and media literacy.

At the same time, some challenges emerged. These included the limitations of the training's online format, varying levels of participant engagement, and structural constraints of many teachers, such as limited time and heavy administrative workloads. Technical and logistical barriers – such as classroom equipment and language accessibility – also affected the use of the platform and its modules in some contexts. Teachers emphasised the need for further localisation and adaptation of the modules to different student groups and educational settings.

Survey feedback from participating students in testing the IWitness modules similarly indicates a positive overall impact. A large majority reported that personal stories helped them better understand the consequences of Holocaust distortion, and many described increased awareness and interest in the topic. The materials were particularly effective in strengthening skills such as recognising distortions, fostering empathy, and improving their ability to understand people from different cultural backgrounds.

Importantly, students already demonstrated relatively strong baseline attitudes, including a clear rejection of Holocaust distortion and victim-blaming narratives. These attitudes remained stable or showed modest positive shifts following the intervention. While changes in some areas were limited, this reflects the already high starting point rather than a lack of impact.

Nevertheless, the IWitness platform and its use of survivor testimonies were consistently identified as the most impactful elements of the project by both teachers and students. It is important to

emphasise that, according to the survey data, many of the students who completed the IWitness modules were already aware of the existence, significance, and seriousness of misinformation and fake news. At the same time, it is clear that the modules helped them understand and gain a deeper appreciation of how this affects – or can affect – the historical context, and in turn, how it impacts people's lives. There has also been a clear shift among students: it has become more important to them to learn about the people who lived in the past in the very places where they live now, and to recognise that personal stories are an important part of history.

Teachers similarly highlighted the IWitness platform and modules' personal, relatable, and engaging nature. They confirmed that through the IWitness materials and its methodology, the Holocaust is presented to students not merely as a historical fact, but as a human narrative. This not only helps teachers teach better and more dynamically, but also makes it easier for them to capture and hold students' attention, and to bring historical facts closer to the students. Ultimately, it makes it easier for students to understand the impact that history – and its potential distortion – has on people's lives.

In summary, the project demonstrates clear strengths in students' engagement and attitudinal impact, particularly through its use of personal testimonies and interactive digital tools. At the same time, the findings highlight areas for further development, including deepening conceptual understanding of Holocaust distortion, improving the materials' accessibility, and supporting implementation in various educational contexts.

1. Project Context and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Contemporary Challenges in Holocaust Education and Holocaust Remembrance

Over the past few years, identity-based hatred, discrimination, and intolerance have risen significantly, often leading to violence. These trends transcend borders and are exacerbated by the widespread dissemination of hate through various media channels, both online and in print. Antisemitism, in particular, is rising faster than other forms of hatred. One manifestation of antisemitism is Holocaust distortion. Recent years have seen attempts within international public and political discourse to downplay the impact of the Holocaust and minimise the crimes committed by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Holocaust distortion is not confined to national boundaries, nor is it limited to a single language.

At the start of the DECONSTRUCT project – Deconstructing Distortion and Disinformation via Campaign and Digital Education Partnership – funded through the CERV-EQUAL scheme and co-funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the project partners conducted a baseline study to gather literature and data from the four participating countries – Greece, Hungary, Italy and Portugal – on the history, education and remembrance of the Holocaust. Alongside this thorough desk research, we interviewed teachers and created a questionnaire for students to get an overview of the above-mentioned topics. Not only have numerous studies and data highlighted that Holocaust education and appropriate Holocaust remembrance continue to face challenges today in the partner countries, but the main findings of the teacher interviews and surveys confirmed these trends: antisemitism and Holocaust distortion are often latent but present in our everyday lives. Education, schools, and teachers play a key role in Holocaust education and remain the most important sources of information for students. In addition, it has been shown that the use of digital tools leaves plenty of room for fake news, misinformation and distortions, often leaving students uncertain.

1.2 Project Objectives

The DECONSTRUCT project aimed to counter hate and discrimination and combat racism and intolerance through research, education, and public programming, with a specific focus on antisemitism, Holocaust distortion and Holocaust education. Through this project, an international consortium of organisations – the Greek Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Hungarian Zachor Foundation, the Italian National Research Council of Italy and University of Florence and the Portugal University of Lisbon – delivered online educational resources and an innovative public awareness campaign – called *#ProtectTheFacts* – to engage educators, students, and decision-makers, equipping them with the necessary resources and training to combat antisemitism and Holocaust distortion, while also fostering the development of media literacy skills.

The official objectives included improving teachers' professional skills, educating students effectively, and fostering the development of relevant competencies and attitudes. The learning resources were

developed in English and then localised by the partners for use in different local languages and contexts. The consortium's goal was to create a continuous cycle of education and engagement grounded in research and evaluation, facilitated by the HÉTFA Research Institute's analytical framework.

1.3 Implementation of the Project's Main Activities

The main activities included, among other things, a comprehensive series of training sessions for secondary school teachers across the four partner countries. The respective partners organised these sessions, and, of course, slightly different implementations and approaches were necessary due to differences between countries. As a result, there were overall 10 trainings organised across the four countries with a total of 757 participants. During these trainings, the new IWitness[2] learning modules created for each country as part of the project were presented to the teachers. The total number of developed educational modules is twenty – four in Greek, four in Hungarian, four in Italian, four in Portuguese, and four in English.

The general objective was to produce materials that address some or all of the following topics: Holocaust denial, Holocaust distortion, antisemitism or discrimination, media literacy, misinformation and fake news. As shown below in Table 1, the specific training sessions varied by location and format, but the introduction to the IWitness platform and the presentation and testing of the new teaching modules developed in the project's national languages were also included. Afterwards, teachers were able to try out the IWitness modules with their students. However, because participation in the training was not mandatory, the modules were also distributed to classes whose teachers had not attended the DECONSTRUCT teacher training. It is characteristic of the subject that high school students were the main target group.

Table 1 Implementation of the teacher trainings

Country	Training Type	Training Date(s)	Delivery Format	Number of Participants	
Greece	Webinar (3 hours)	21.10.2025	Online	480 (F: 442, M: 38)	480
Hungary	Webinar series (4 parts)	Part 1 – 21.11.2024,	Online	84 (F: 66, M: 18)	124

[2] IWitness, the international digital educational platform of the USC Shoah Foundation, provides access to over 4.000 full-length video testimonies from survivors and witnesses of genocides. These testimonies form a subset of the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, one of the largest of its kind, with over 60.000 survivor and witness video testimonies, most of which are about the Holocaust. Alongside the full-length testimonies, the IWitness platform hosts multimedia resources and classroom-ready modules. Currently, it offers nearly 600 learning activities free of charge for teachers and students in 22 languages, and the number of educational activities is growing.

		Part 2 – 28.02.2025, Part 3 – 28.03.2025, Part 4 – 27.11.2025.			
	In-person training (6 hours)	11.10.2025	Offline	22 (F: 16, M: 6)	
	Integrated into a larger online course	04.11.2025	Online	18 (F: 13, M: 5)	
Italy	Webinar (3 hours)	16.06.2025	Online	32 (F:22, M:10)	85
	Webinar (3 hours)	21.07.2025	Online	28 (F:25, M:3)	
	Webinar (3 hours)	29.09.2025	Online	25 (F:20, M:5)	
Portugal	Webinar (3 hours)	07.10.2025	Online	21 (F:16, M: 5)	68
	Webinar (3 hours)	14.10.2025	Online	18 (F:15, M: 3)	
	Webinar (3 hours)	21.10.2025	Online	29 (F: 24, M: 5)	

Source: Deconstruct project

2. Evaluation Design and Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Framework and Data Collection Methods

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the technical implementation of the teacher trainings carried out as part of the project, as well as their pedagogical and content quality, and to examine any potential changes in participants' skills and attitudes. Additionally, we sought students' feedback on their experience with the IWitness modules and on the observed learning outcomes and attitude shifts. This evaluation report is based on three main sources of data:

1) Online teacher questionnaires completed after the training sessions,
2) Online student questionnaires completed before and after using the IWitness learning modules, and
3) Semi-structured offline interviews with teachers participating in the training sessions.

2.2 Sample and Participation Overview

Data collection was voluntary and anonymous. The post-training questionnaires were completed by 231 Greek, 44 Hungarian, 42 Italian, and 59 Portuguese teachers, for a total of 376 teachers. Teachers willing to participate in a personal interview could sign up via the post-training questionnaire. For teacher interviews, we conducted six in each partner country, except in Italy, where five interviews were conducted.

For student questionnaires before and after using the IWitness modules, students' responses were paired using an anonymous identifier code. As there were two questionnaires, some students completed only the first or the second, with dropout common for the second. A total of 406 students completed the first questionnaire, and 348 completed the second. Moreover, of these, 95 completed only the first questionnaire, and 37 completed only the second. The number of student questionnaires completed by country was as follows: for the first questionnaire, we received 94 Greek, 137 Hungarian, 61 Italian, and 114 Portuguese responses, while for the second questionnaire, 93 Greek, 104 Hungarian, 59 Italian, and 92 Portuguese responses[3].

3. Impact of the Teacher Training Program

3.1 Characteristics of the Teacher Samples

In each teacher questionnaire, 70% or more of respondents were women, which is not surprising given the official participant numbers, see Table 1 above. In Greece and Italy, the majority – 54% and 55% respectively – indicated that they teach in a country town or a larger city, while the majority of Hungarians (43%) teach in another (smaller) town or city, as do the majority of Portuguese teachers (42%). In terms of the types of schools where most respondents taught, with the exception of Greek respondents, more than 50% in each country taught in other types of secondary schools (e.g., high schools), while for Greeks, this was the least frequently selected category of schools, with 31% teaching in primary schools, 27% in vocational schools, 34% in technical schools, and 15% in other institutions.

Unsurprisingly, teachers of history, social studies, and civics participated in large numbers in all four trainings – 44% in Greece, 64% in Hungary, 45% in Italy, and 63% in Portugal – as did teachers of national language and literature – 55% in Grece, 41% in Hungary, and 43% in Italy – except in Portugal. Interestingly, most Hungarian, Italian, and Portuguese teachers indicated that they teach students in 11-12th grade, whereas the majority of Greek teachers indicated that they teach primary school students, in lower grades than 5th grade. Almost all participants had more than 10 years of professional experience in their field – 74% in Greece, 91% in Hungary, 79% in Italy, and 85% in Portugal.[4]

The interview sample comprised 23 teachers from four countries, with diverse professional backgrounds. In terms of gender, the majority of interviewees were female (13), while 10 were male. Regarding teaching experience, most participants had more than 20 years (14), while 4 had less than 10 years, and 5 had between roughly 10 and 20 years. Regarding the subjects taught, many

[3] The sample is not representative. Numbers vary in some cases because certain questions did not appear to everyone; for example, if a student had not yet studied the Holocaust or did not know what it was, those questions did not appear to them. We analysed the attitude questions that appeared in both the pre- and post-questionnaires among students who completed both questionnaires.

[4] For more information on the teacher participants' demographics, please see Annex: Additional Figures.

interviewees taught humanities-related subjects, particularly history, the language and literature of a certain country, and civic education, although some also taught philosophy, IT, geography, tourism, law, economics, drama, or classical foreign languages.

In terms of school type, the majority worked in public institutions, including public high schools, technical schools, and primary schools, while a smaller number were in private or semi-private schools, universities, or teacher training institutions, and one respondent reported being currently unemployed and only working as an adjunct. Finally, regarding school location, most interviewees work in urban settings (16), with fewer participants teaching in suburban or rural areas (7). Overall, the interview sample comprises experienced educators who primarily work in public education systems and mainly teach humanities-related subjects in urban schools.

3.2 Perceived Relevance and Professional Value of the Training

Regarding the motivation for participating in the training, the teacher interviews revealed that, across the four participating countries, teachers' reasons for joining the project were a shared desire to deepen their understanding of the Holocaust and to improve their professional approach to teaching sensitive historical topics. A common thread was the recognition that Holocaust education is essentially linked to modern challenges like misinformation, making media literacy a priority for educators who wish to help students navigate distorted narratives.

However, specific contexts shaped individual motivations; for example, one Greek educator highlighted the need to address Holocaust denial exacerbated by regional political tensions. In Hungary, teachers' motivation was often tied to addressing domestic discrimination against the Roma minority, with teachers seeking parallels between historical exclusion and current social issues. Italian participants emphasised a deep personal interest with the Holocaust that drove them to understand the mechanisms of hatred, while Portuguese teachers specifically sought to fill a knowledge gap regarding the "subtle" nature of Holocaust distortion as opposed to outright denial.

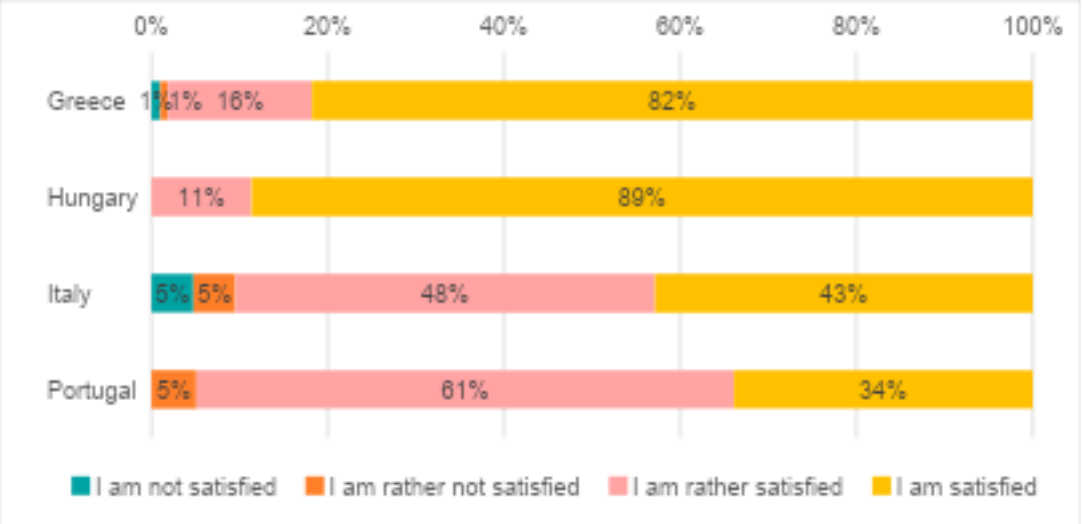
The teacher interviews consistently across all participating countries reveal that the teacher training programmes were evaluated as exceptionally high-quality, modern, and substantial, with the vast majority noting that they provided practical tools immediately applicable to their professional needs. A major consensus among interview participants was that the sessions significantly boosted their self-perceived preparedness and confidence, enabling them to more easily integrate digital platforms, such as the IWitness platform and educational modules, into their curricula.

The training was frequently described as innovative because it bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and experiential learning through multimodal designs and survivor testimonies. While the general feedback was overwhelmingly positive, a shared criticism across different partner countries was the lack of time, with quite a few educators feeling the sessions were too brief to allow for deeper discussion or a full exploration of the complex topics covered.

Overall, based on the questionnaire results, most teachers were either satisfied or rather satisfied with the training, with only a very small number dissatisfied. Notably, in Greece and Hungary, 89%

and 82% respectively were clearly satisfied, whereas in Italy and Portugal, the majority, 48% and 61%, were rather satisfied, see Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1 TEACHERS' OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING, BY COUNTRY

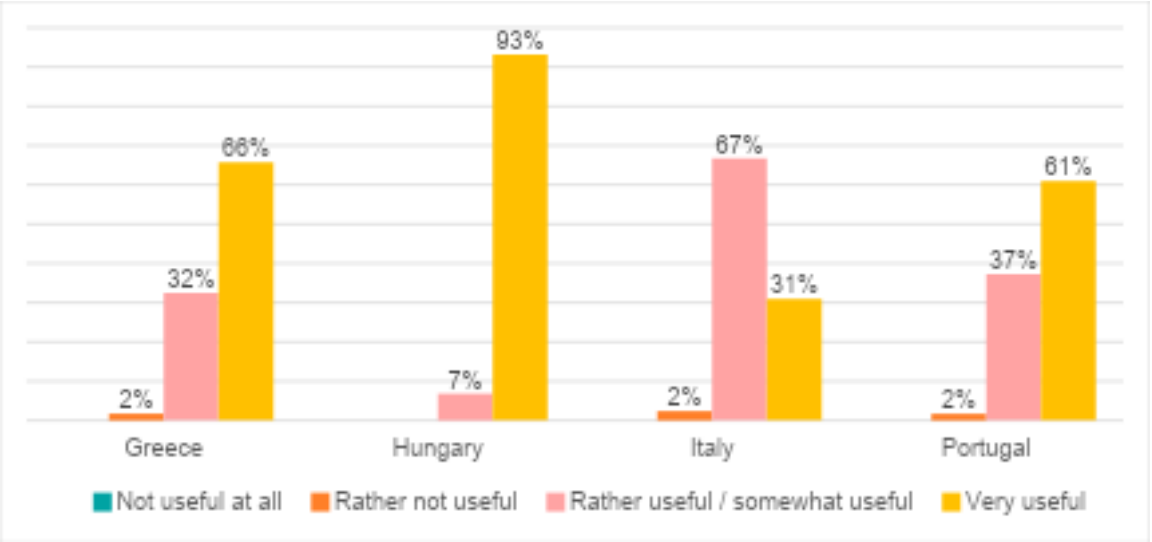


SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

Teacher participants also expressed satisfaction with the clarity of the training, with most finding it clear and understandable – 87% in Greece, 93% in Hungary, 55% in Italy and 49% in Portugal – or rather clear and understandable – 12% in Greece, 7% in Hungary, 38% in Italy and 47% in Portugal. Engagement levels were similarly high, with the vast majority of teachers feeling that the training held their attention at all times or most of the time – 88% in Greece, 100% in Hungary, 60% in Italy, and 83% in Portugal – or to some extent in Greece (12%), Italy (38%), and Portugal (15%).

The responses regarding how useful teachers found the training for their professional lives, as shown in Figure 2 below, were very positive, with many rating it as very useful – 66% in Greece, 93% in Hungary, 31% in Italy, and 61% in Portugal – or rather useful or somewhat useful – 32% in Greece, 7% in Hungary, 67% in Italy, and 37% in Portugal.

FIGURE 2 TRAINING'S PERCEIVED USEFULNESS FOR PROFESSIONAL LIFE OR WORK, BY COUNTRY



SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

Regarding the structure and usability of the training, interview participants further strengthened these results, which generally found the organisation clear and the digital support materials, such as registration guides and educational blogs, very helpful. Portuguese teachers emphasised that the well-balanced proportion of peer interaction and small-group work was one of the most beneficial aspects of the learning experience. As one Portuguese participant put it, she felt she left the session *"richer"* (ipsis verbis), both scientifically and personally.

However, some Hungarian teachers pointed out that, while the content was high-quality, certain university-level sections felt less relevant to the practical needs of high school teachers already dealing with heavy administrative workloads. In Italy, some educators noted that the mandatory registration process could be a barrier to participation and suggested that the platform needs greater visibility through targeted communication.

Other participating teachers also had several opportunities to give written feedback on the training via the questionnaire. This was also true for the question asking them to reflect on their previous expectations of the training and whether these had been met. While the evaluation of the training is inherently subjective, it is valuable to review comments from participants who expressed dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction rooted primarily in the inactivity of other participants and the challenges of the online space:

> *"(I am) rather satisfied, teamwork was not always effective; not everyone was cooperative." – an Italian educator*

> *"I was a little disappointed, the dynamics of the break-up rooms worked, the first time there were five of us, two had their cameras off, they never spoke. Another had her camera on and never spoke." – a Portuguese educator*

Despite a handful of negative comments, the training received a great deal of positive feedback. Based on the responses to the previous question, it includes a few positive comments from training participants. Although not exhaustive, these comments collectively highlight the excellence of the structure, form, and content of the training sessions.

> *"Yes, my expectations from the seminar were fully met. The structure, content, and implementation of the seminar met my needs for substantive training in teaching historical memory using modern, digitally supported methods. Through the presentations and examples of teaching practices, I gained a clearer picture of how testimonies can be creatively integrated into the learning process, offering students a deeper, more experiential framework for understanding the past. Furthermore, the emphasis on critical analysis and the responsible use of digital tools strengthened my confidence as an educator who seeks to cultivate historical empathy and an anti-propaganda attitude in my students. The seminar was therefore truly enlightening and pedagogically empowering." – a Greek educator*

> *"The tasks I was given met my expectations. The unfamiliar teaching materials are characterised by a multi-faceted approach and a critical perspective." – a Hungarian educator*

> *"Yes, my expectations were fully met. I expected rigorous, up-to-date, research-backed training, and the course did indeed provide high-quality content and tools that are immediately applicable in teaching practice. I particularly appreciated the comparative approach between different national contexts, the methodological reflections on the distortion of the Holocaust, and the practical activities related to the use of digital archives and testimonies. The training broadened my understanding of the phenomenon and provided me with new strategies for addressing antisemitism and promoting media literacy among my students." – an Italian educator*

> *"Yes. It was an interesting and enlightening session. The material provided and the way the videos and issues were analysed were educational." – a Portuguese educator*

Last but not least, when asked whether teachers would recommend the training to colleagues or other teachers, an overwhelming 97% of respondents replied positively.

3.3 Knowledge, Skill and Attitude Development

Besides the practical implementation of the training, as demonstrated by written feedback from participating teachers, professional development is also a crucial part of the training sessions. We specifically inquired whether participating teachers would use the knowledge, skills, tools, or training

materials gained during the training in their work. Nearly all respondents, 98%, answered affirmatively.

In their follow-up open responses, the Greek teachers highlighted a wide range of methodological tools, particularly emphasising local history and the IWitness digital platform. Many planned to organise historical walks, for example in Thessaloniki or Chalkida, and to visit Jewish museums. Some teachers aimed to incorporate the topic of Holocaust distortion and antisemitism into lessons in history, literature, religious studies, and foreign languages. Many emphasised commemorative activities specifically linked to International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January, but the most common approach was to integrate survivor testimonies from the IWitness platform across various subjects, often combined with visits to local Jewish heritage sites.

> *"Through the Deconstruct program seminar, I understood how important it is to talk to children from an early age about human rights, diversity, and equality. It gave me ideas and tools to incorporate these values into my daily work and helped me think more critically about my role as an educator." – a Greek educator*

Hungarian teachers also emphasised ethical questions, empathy, and critical media awareness, which is understandable given the focus of Hungarian training courses on media and information. Many teachers intended to use IWitness video interviews or clips to humanise history and improve credibility, especially in ethics and homeroom classes for teachers without a history background, to promote empathy and critical thinking about historical exclusions.

Other Hungarian teachers wanted to focus specifically on source criticism, with analysing the *"duality of opinion and fact"* and teaching students to recognise textbook distortions. In this context, media literacy was also highly cited, with lessons on recognising hate speech, fake news, and disinformation. Moreover, Hungarian language and literature teachers wanted to use Jewish authors' poetry or other literary texts as a basis for discussing Holocaust distortion.

Italian teachers prioritised source-based research, civic responsibility, and the deconstruction of propaganda. They also wanted to utilise digitised diaries, recordings, and videos on IWitness to counter denial and distortion in a primary-source analysis. Some of them highlighted the integration of the topic of the Holocaust into civic education to discuss human rights. They mentioned creative projects in which students create digital memory archives, video essays, or imaginary letters to develop a polyphonic narrative of the past. Fact-checking was also mentioned to teach students to deconstruct false information and stereotypes found in social media and historical press.

Portuguese teachers focused on the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust, specifically fighting against trivialisation and decontextualisation. Using the IWitness platform, IHRA films, and other videos as catalysts for discussion on how society trivialises important historical issues. They also wanted to discuss the limits of humour and the offensive impact of using Holocaust terminology in inappropriate contexts. Someone mentioned organising exhibitions and research projects through school libraries. Here, debates were a characteristic response to address the distortion and trivialisation of the Holocaust in the modern world.

Nevertheless, the IWitness platform, along with its video interviews and materials, clearly emerged as the most valuable and helpful resource. Teachers consistently found learning about and using these to be the most useful part of the teacher trainings. They emphasised the method's unique features and strengths, making the topics more relatable, personal, and accessible. In terms of pedagogical philosophy, a Greek teacher summarised the value of survivor testimonies in his individual interview, stating:

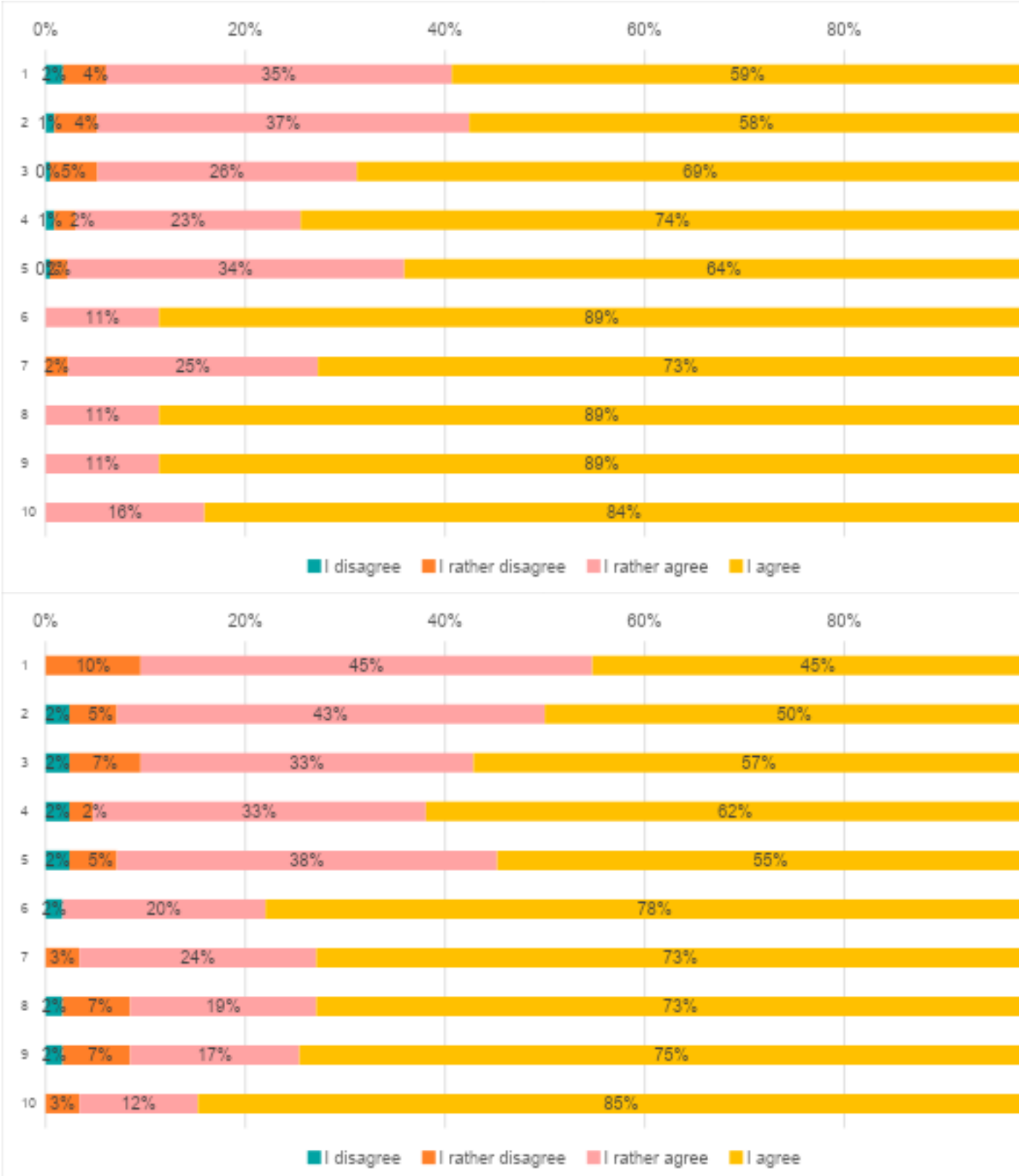
> *"History becomes more understandable to students when it is given a name and a face."*

Overall, the impact of the teacher training sessions was also described as overwhelmingly positive, with interview participants from all countries praising the high quality of the instruction and the practical utility of the tools provided. A major similarity was the significant boost in self-perceived preparedness; many teachers reported feeling far more confident in integrating digital platforms like IWitness into their curriculum.

In Greece and Hungary, this experience was characterised by a sense of joining an educational *"community"*, while in Hungary, the inclusion of international guest lecturers and the DECONSTRUCT project's previous research on student baseline knowledge provided valuable comparative perspectives. One Italian teacher reflected deeply on *"communicative responsibility"*, noting how careless language can inadvertently fuel hatred. As he put it: *"one must learn to use words, [always choosing] the right words and the right tone"*, warning that careless speech can be *"taken by others as a starting point to then increase hatred"*.

Respondents to the training questionnaire were also able to assess more specific statements regarding the training. We can see in Figure 3 that participants generally agreed with all statements about the training's positive impact. Most of them – 97% in Greece, 100% in Hungary, 95% in Italy, and 92% in Portugal – agreed that the training provided practical tools for educational settings, as indicated by the 4th statement in Figure 3 below. However, in Portugal, a greater majority expressed a desire to focus more on countering Holocaust distortion in their work going forward (97%), and that their understanding of Holocaust distortion and its potential impacts has evolved as a result of the training (98%), especially in the 5th and 1st statements of the Portuguese sample. For each statement, the proportion disagreeing is negligible or non-existent, especially among the Hungarian participants.

FIGURE TRAINING'S IMPACT ON TEACHERS, BY DIFFERENT STATEMENTS AND COUNTRY



SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

The teacher interviews further illustrate this, as a main pedagogical impact identified by many of them was a refined understanding of the difference between Holocaust denial and the more subtle and serious phenomenon of Holocaust distortion. Participants noted that the training filled a critical

gap in their knowledge, as one interviewee put it, revealing how *"misinformation often stems from the selective omission of facts rather than just outright lies"*.

> *"Thanks to the course on distortion and denial of the Holocaust, I have acquired important tools for reflecting on the value of historical memory and the danger posed today by forms of antisemitism masked by denial or revisionism. I have understood how essential it is to pass on to younger people an authentic memory, based on reliable sources and direct testimonies, to prevent the Holocaust from being trivialised or exploited." – an Italian educator*

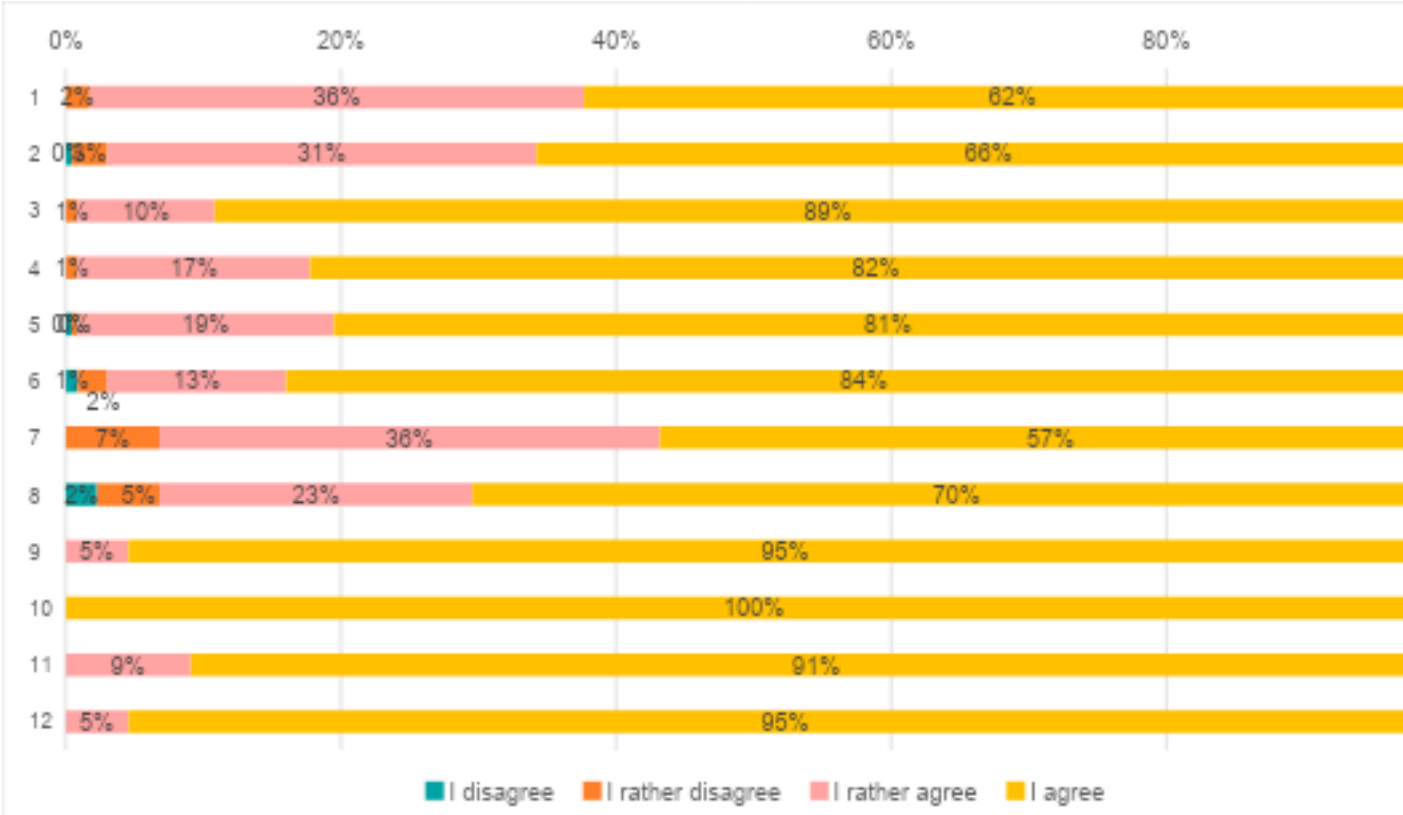
In Portuguese interviews, this realisation was often accompanied by a sense of shock as trainers provided surprising and appalling examples of contemporary distortion, such as commercial products depicting concentration camps. One Portuguese educator noted that distortion is *"much more subtle*" and consequently *"much more difficult to combat, and therefore, much more serious"* than outright denial.

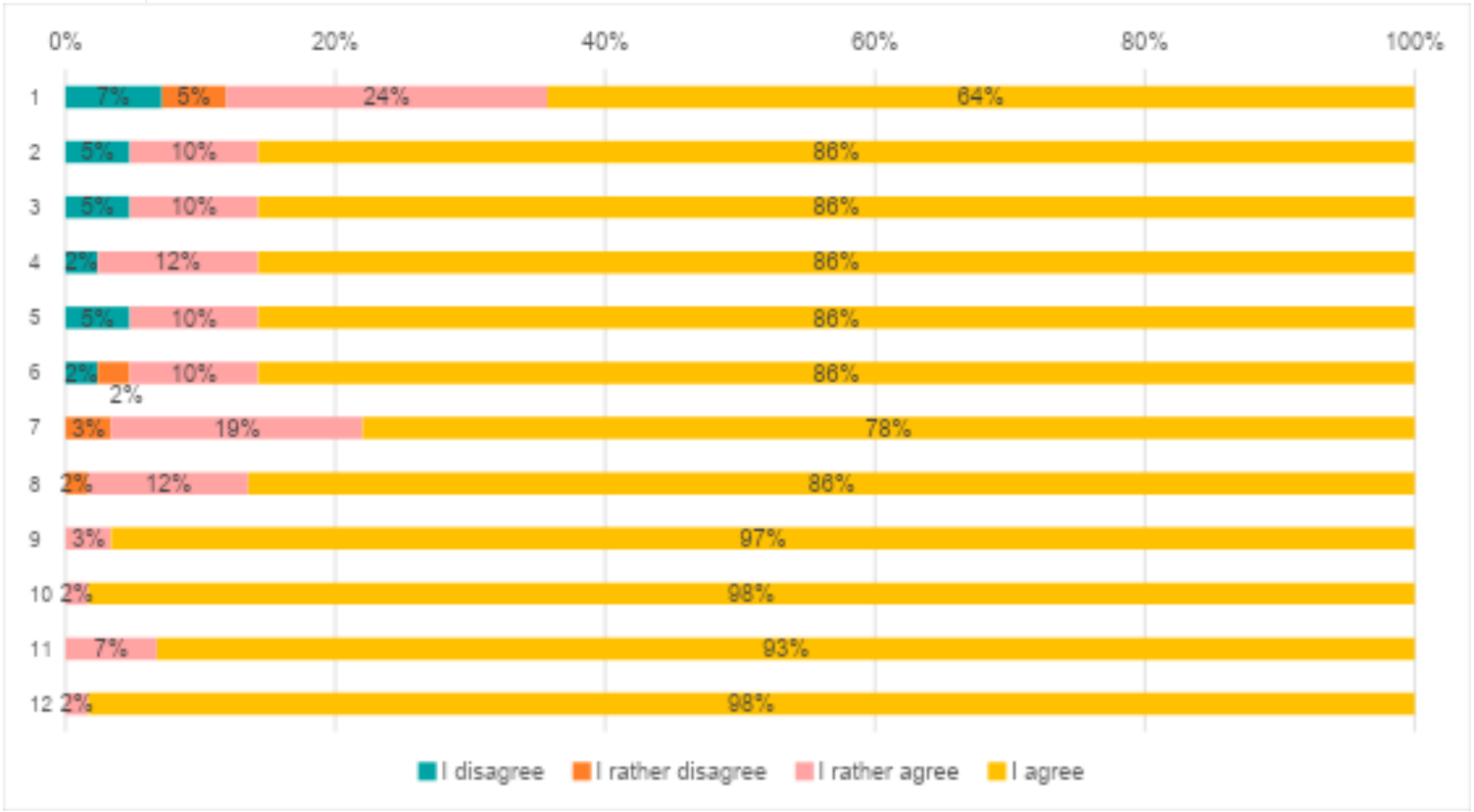
In the survey, teachers also shared their views on Holocaust distortion and denial, and the proportions and trends of these views are similar to those observed earlier regarding the training's impact (see Figure 3 above). Apart from one statement, each statement saw over 93% of respondents in every country agreeing to some level of extent:

- *"The exploitation of the Holocaust for political purposes is a distortion of the Holocaust."*
- *"Holocaust denial is a deep insult to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust."*
- *"Holocaust distortion does not stop at national borders."*
- *"Holocaust distortion damages our diverse and free societies."*
- *"Holocaust distortion is a form of misinformation."*

However, the largest group of participants were Italian teachers, who disagreed with each statement to varying degrees, ranging from 2% to 7%. The highest level of disagreement, or rather disagreement, with 12% of Italian participants, concerned whether Holocaust denial seeks to create a world in which antisemitism is once again acceptable, see the 1st statement in Figure 4 below.

FIGURE ATTITUDE QUESTIONS RELATED TO HOLOCAUST DISTORTION AND DENIAL, BY COUNTRY





SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

3.4 Technical Aspects of the IWitness Materials and Their Impact on Students

Regarding the use of IWitness modules in the classroom, interviewees agreed that the platform is exceptionally intuitive and user-friendly. There was consensus that IWitness and its modules are a very powerful tool, as they can transform abstract historical facts into deeply personal and empathetic experiences through survivor testimonies, which are consistently cited as the most impactful and engaging element.

Across all classrooms, while some students initially displayed indifference or shock when exposed to the materials, this typically evolved into *"growing interest"* and responsibility as they progressed through the activities. Teachers noted that the materials helped students overcome indifference and foster critical thinking about historical truths.

Furthermore, the modules proved essential in fostering media literacy, as students learned to identify historical distortion and unmask the mechanisms of propaganda. Greek students were deeply impacted by firsthand accounts of liberation, while in Italy, the theme of *"artistic resistance"* through music in camps motivated school-wide concerts. Some Hungarian teachers incorporated IWitness modules by drawing parallels to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution against the Soviets or using them in history or literature classes to provide firsthand perspectives. In Portugal, students enjoyed interactive features like digital word games, though some found the repetition of questions in certain modules somewhat monotonous.

According to teacher interviews, in Greece, the impact was especially strong when students could connect the global history of the Holocaust to their local surroundings, recognising streets and landmarks in their own cities within the testimonies, which offered a new perspective on learning. Greek students often linked the platform's historical events to current conflicts in the Middle East, stimulating discussions. In Hungary, students responded well to modules that allowed creative expression and shorter, varied tasks. Italian students engaged with the ethical dilemmas of Jewish resistance and were reportedly *"shocked"* to discover that *"fake news"* and sophisticated propaganda were used by the Nazis to deceive the international community at sites like Terezín. One Italian teacher described a moment of realisation for her students as:

> *"It was a kind of original feeling, which I saw in the kids, a surprise. After all, this existed. This was true, wasn't it?"*

Another Hungarian teacher, in her interview, expressed her views on the significance of critical thinking skills:

> *"I truly and sincerely believe that once a child encounters a task like this and works through the series of questions, they come out of the experience much more self-aware than when they first entered it. So, the questions aren't complicated; they're relatively simplified – they strip things down to the essentials, right? These questions are about what we really need to pay attention to – the relationship between the conscious and*

> *the subconscious – and how, of course, we spend a lot of time learning, only to suddenly, when we have to make a decision, decide based on ingrained patterns. So, these are very important insights, which are also articulated in the assignment, so I'm sure it's very, very important for them to encounter this kind of information and educational material, because in everyday life, at school, you have to be a very conscious teacher to specifically draw attention to this (critical thinking)."*

As another Greek educator summarised in their questionnaire response:

> *"There is a lot of interesting material on the subject – in the IWitness modules – which makes it possible for anyone who wants to help children overcome their stereotypes to engage with it. Given that there are now so many activities at school, there is not enough time for everything. Having such a platform really takes the pressure off us."*

3.5 Challenges of Using the IWitness Materials within the Classroom and Recommendations

Despite the abovementioned classroom successes, a common challenge was that the IWitness modules' activities often required more time than the standard school curriculum allowed, with many teachers noting in their interviews that school hours were insufficient for the level of meaningful work the content inspired.

Greek and Hungarian teachers highlighted other school-specific technical and logistical issues, including poor classroom audio quality and high administrative workloads, which hinder the adoption of new methods, such as using the IWitness platform.

Language also remained a barrier; while many students have some proficiency in English, interviewees across Greece, Italy, and Portugal strongly advocated for more content and IWitness platform features to be fully translated into their national languages to improve accessibility.

Also, while students were highly affected by the emotional weight of the testimonies, one Portuguese interviewee mentioned that some of her younger students struggled with the complex terminology of Holocaust denial and distortion, requiring additional teacher guidance to grasp the nuances between these phenomena. One Italian educator specifically suggested that the materials should be better adapted for diverse student populations, such as those in vocational schools in his environment, who may lack a solid historical foundation.

Finally, Portuguese participants specifically suggested that such training should be officially certified to count toward their professional evaluations, reflecting a desire for formal recognition of the program's scientific and personal value, which could also further motivate participation in future teacher trainings.

4. Students' Experience with the Educational Modules

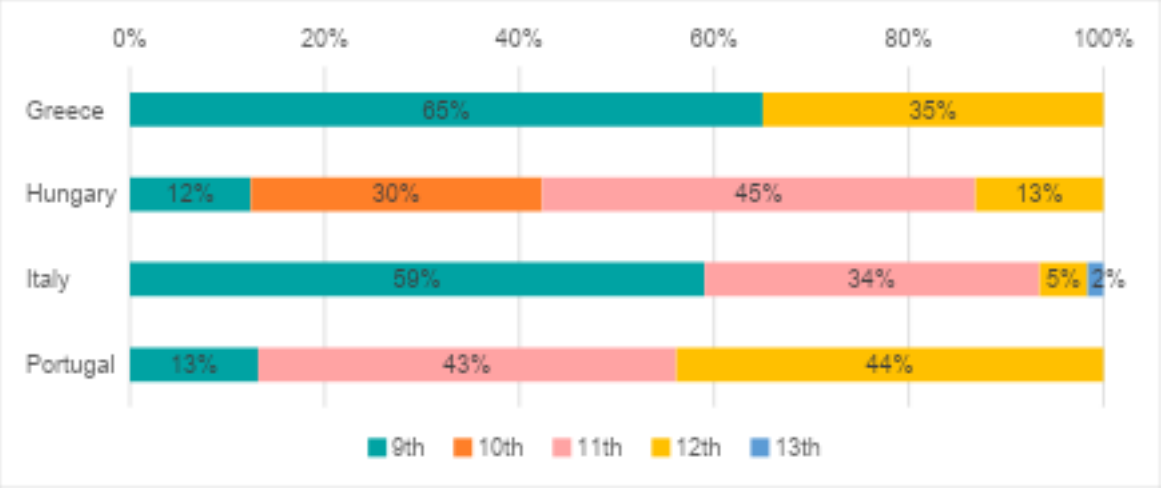
Alongside teacher training, testing the IWitness modules developed during the project among students also played an important role. In addition to considering teachers' opinions, it is essential to understand students' perspectives to improve educational materials.

4.1 Characteristics of the Student Sample

A total of 406 students completed the first questionnaire before using the IWitness modules, whilst 348 completed the second after trying out the modules. Among these students, 95 completed only the first, and 37 only the second. Responses by country were as follows: for the first questionnaire, 94 Greek (23%), 137 Hungarian (34%), 61 Italian (15%), and 114 Portuguese (28%) students responded. For the second, there were 93 Greek (27%), 104 Hungarian (30%), 59 Italian (17%), and 92 Portuguese (26%) responses. Girls were the majority (>50%) in all countries surveyed, with Greek respondents showing the most balanced gender distribution[5].

As shown in Figure 5, the students who completed the questionnaires participated in varying proportions by age and grade across countries. The Greek and Italian students were composed of 9th graders, while the Hungarian sample included a mix of 9th-, 10th-, 11th-, and 12th-graders, and the Portuguese sample consisted of roughly equal proportions of 11th- and 12th-graders.

FIGURE 5 YEAR GROUPS/GRADE LEVELS OF STUDENTS, BY COUNTRY



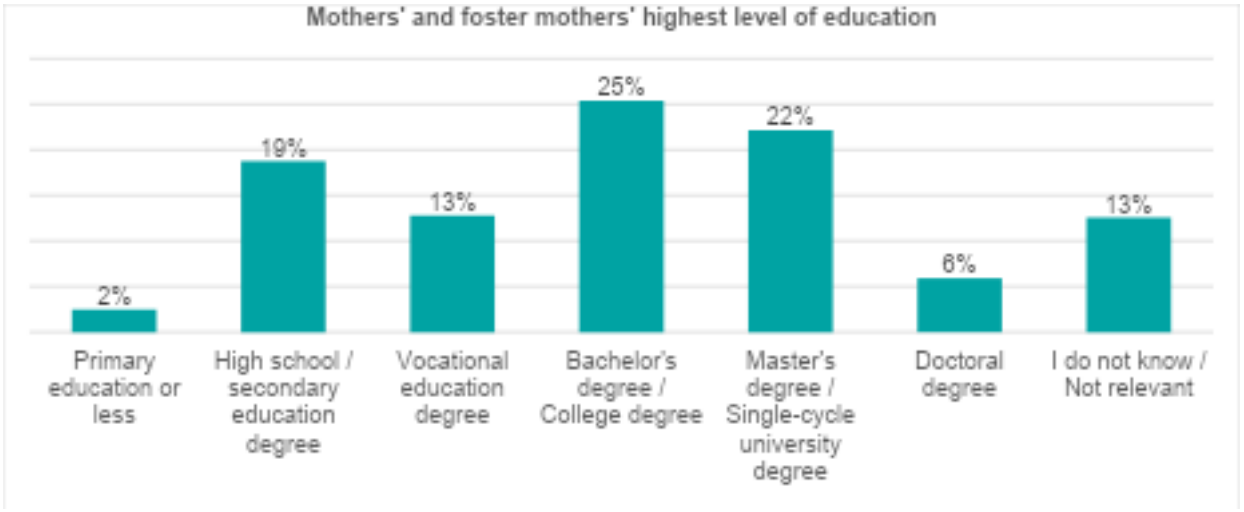
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

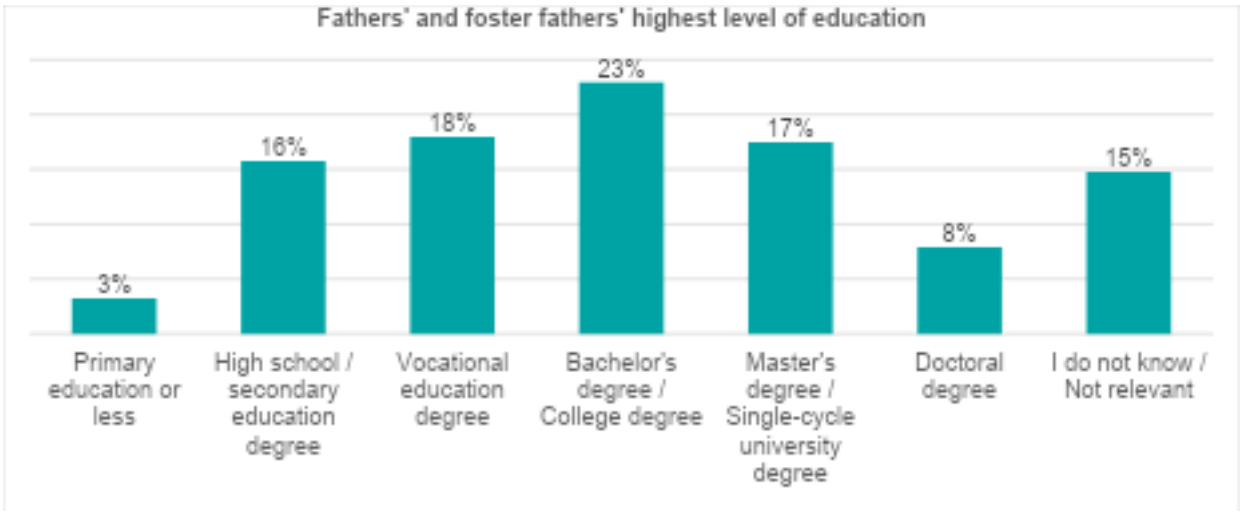
The socioeconomic background of the students participating in the survey should be taken into account when evaluating the results. We can see that, at the highest level of education attained by the parents or guardians of the participants, it is evenly distributed; yet in each country, a very small proportion have the highest level of education of primary education or less, and the greatest

[5] For more information on the student participants' demographics, please see Annex: Additional Figures.

proportion have a bachelor's degree or college degree (see Figure 6 below). Most Greek students' parents or guardians have a BA or MA degree, and the same is true for Portuguese students' caregivers. Among Hungarian students, high school, vocational education, or bachelor's degrees were the most frequently mentioned, whereas among Italian students, master's degrees were also mentioned, especially among Italian mothers. It is also important to note that, with the exception of Hungarian students, in all countries more than 13% of respondents either did not know or considered this question irrelevant.[6]

FIGURE 6 STUDENTS' MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION, OVERALL





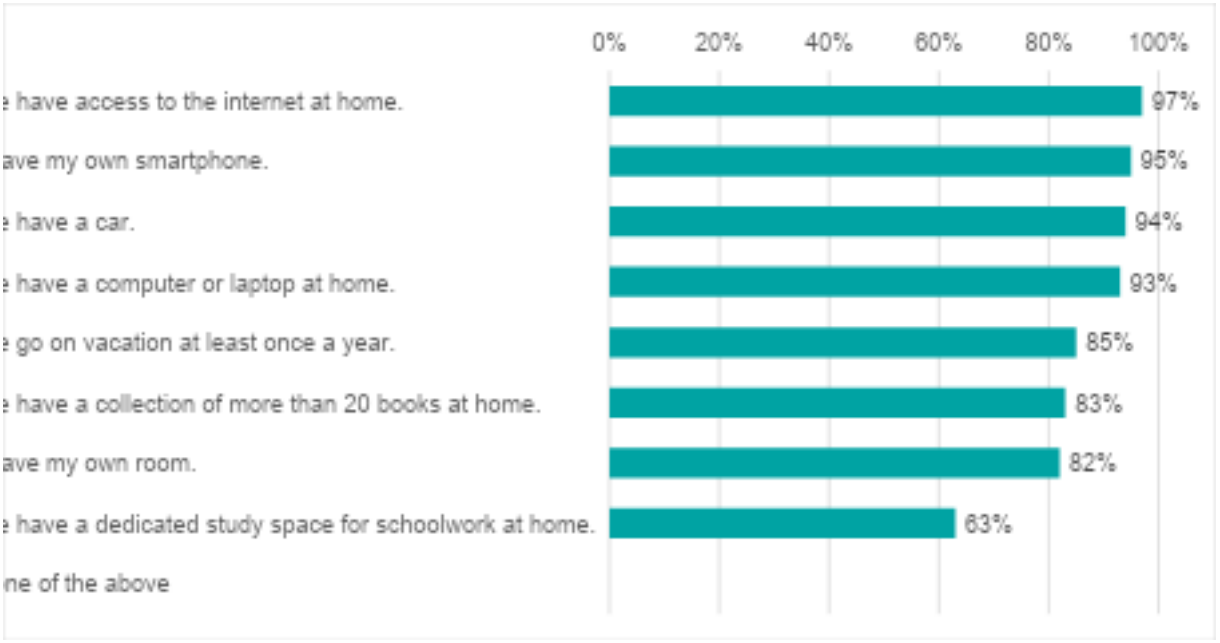
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

The households of students who completed the questionnaire tend to be prosperous – see Figure 7 – as shown by common items such as internet access, owning a smartphone, having a family car,

[6] For more information on the student participants' demographics, please see Annex: Additional Figures.

possessing a computer or laptop, having more than 20 books, taking at least one vacation per year, and having a dedicated study space at home – all of which were indicated by over 58% of respondents in each country and over 63% in overall. The only exception was the dedicated study space, which was selected by just 34% of Greek students. Conversely, 1% of Hungarian and Portuguese students reported household characteristics that did not include any of these items.

FIGURE 7 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS' LIFESTYLES, OVERALL



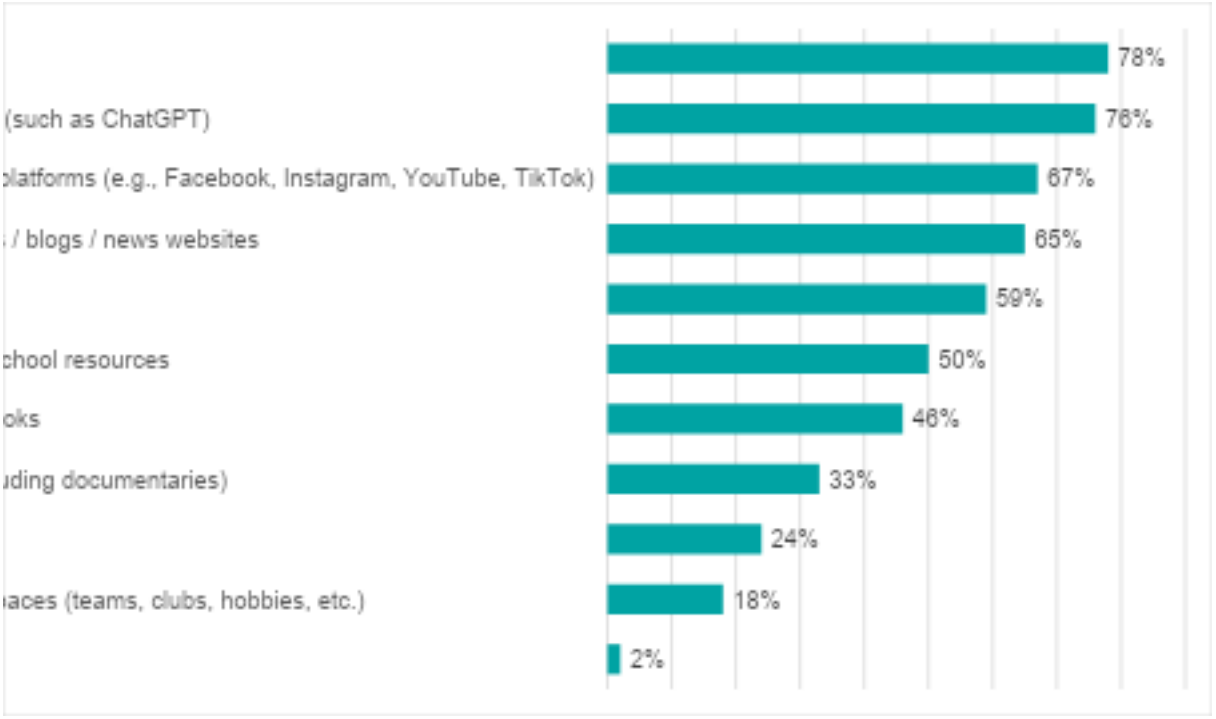
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

4.2 Media Literacy Skills of the Students

A significant part of the pre-survey given to students included questions about their media literacy. As shown in Figure 8, when asked where students seek information when needed, it is clear that they mainly rely on their families (78%). AI platforms are close behind, with 76%, making them the second most popular source, followed by social media platforms (67%). Although Facebook was listed in this category in the survey, teacher interviews showed students no longer use Facebook; instead, they prefer TikTok and Instagram. Digital content – including online articles, blogs, and news websites (65%) – comes in fourth, with friends, teachers, and other traditional sources following.

Breaking down by the four countries reveals some differences in the top sources of information. Greek and Portuguese students primarily turn to family (90% and 84% respectively), with AI platforms often second. Conversely, Hungarian and Italian students prioritise AI platforms first (77% and 69%), followed by family. Overall, the data suggest that students are increasingly relying on AI platforms and close social circles as their main sources of information.

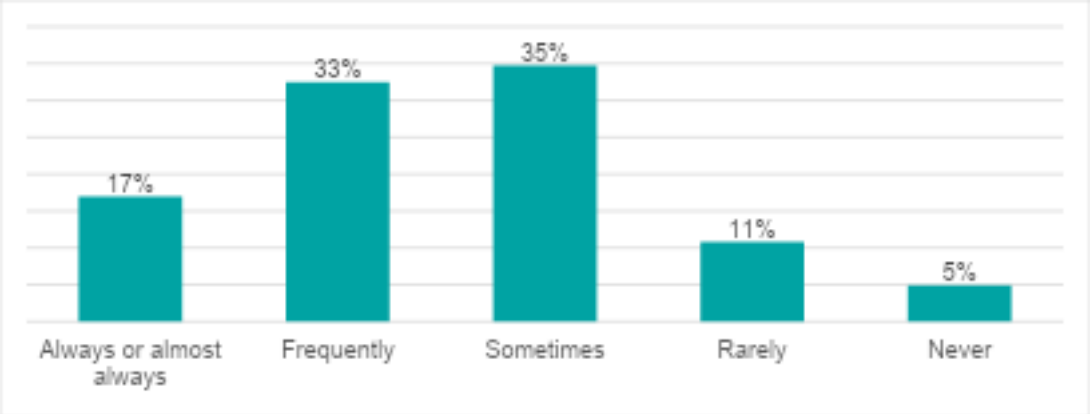
Figure 8 Preferred sources for information gathering, overall



Source: Pre-student survey, N = 406

Regarding the information students collect (see Figure 9 below), about one-third (35%) of students sometimes verify its accuracy, while another one-third (33%) frequently do so. 17% always or almost always verify, whereas the remaining students rarely (11%) or never (5%) fact-check.

Figure 9 Frequency of verifying information accuracy, overall

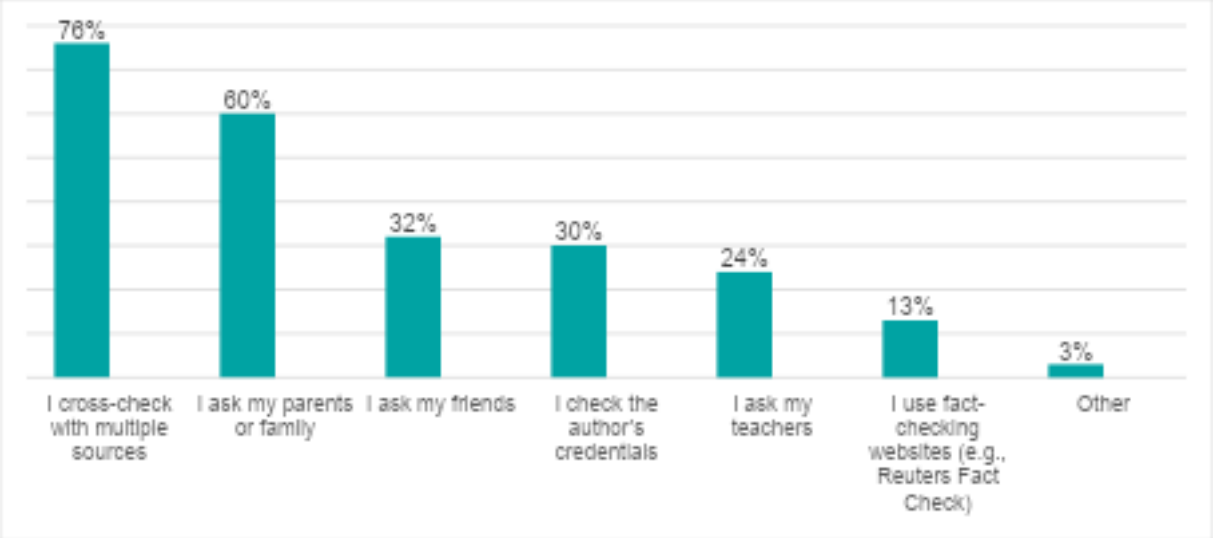


Source: Pre-student survey, N = 406

Furthermore, for respondent students, the most common strategy for verifying information is cross-checking with multiple sources, reported by a majority of respondents (76%). Asking parents or family members is the second most frequent approach (60%), especially among Greek and Portuguese students. Asking friends is less often (32%), while checking the author's credentials is

mentioned by about a third of respondents (30%). A smaller proportion marked asking teachers (24%) or using fact-checking websites (13%). Based on these data, students mainly rely on personal verification through multiple sources and trusted individuals when seeking information.

FIGURE 10 METHODS USED TO VERIFY INFORMATION VALIDITY, OVERALL



SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

As illustrated in Figure 11, the survey data on media literacy statements reveal both similarities and differences in students' perceptions of news credibility. A common challenge across all countries' students is assessing the credibility of online news *("I often find it difficult to determine if the news I read online is true or credible.", "I think that most of the news I see on social media is reliable."* and *"I feel confident in my ability to identify fake news or misinformation."*), with around one-third of respondents expressing uncertainty or an undecided stance (27-31%).

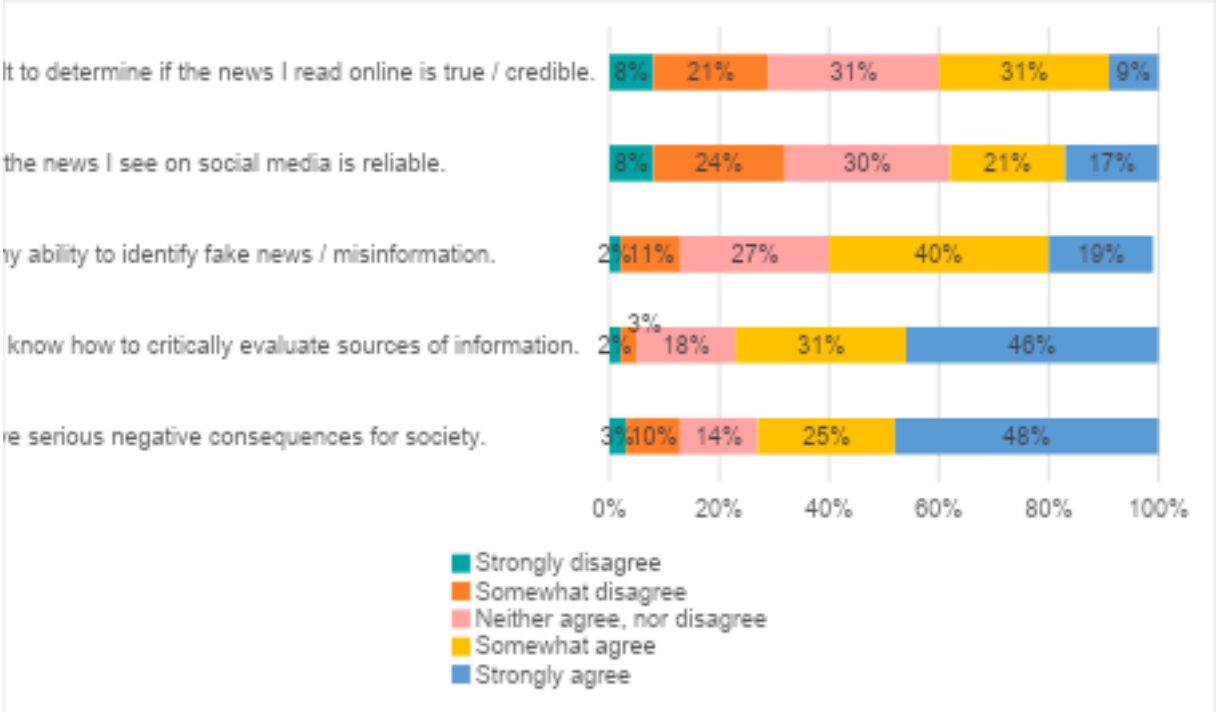
Regarding the first statement, approximately 40% of students agreed to some extent that it is often difficult for them to determine the credibility of online news, while approximately 30% disagreed. A similar pattern was seen, with most of the news they read on social media being considered reliable. One point worth mentioning regarding the national distribution is that Greek students stand out, with 64% believing that most social media news is reliable (*"I think that most of the news I see on social media is reliable."*), in sharp contrast to the scepticism observed among Hungarian, Italian, and Portuguese students, where confidence in the reliability of social media is much lower[7].

Regarding the third statement, approximately 60% of students expressed some degree of confidence in their own ability to identify fake news or misinformation. For the remaining two statements, *"Everyone needs to know how to critically evaluate sources of information,"* and *"Fake news can have serious negative consequences for society,"* there was the highest degree of agreement among students. Ultimately, we can see a shared understanding of the need for media literacy and

[7] For a breakdown by country, see Annex: Additional Figures

the dangers of fake news and misinformation, but levels of trust and confidence in social media vary among students.

FIGURE 11 LEVELS OF AGREEMENT WITH DIFFERENT STATEMENTS CONNECTING TO MEDIA LITERACY, OVERALL

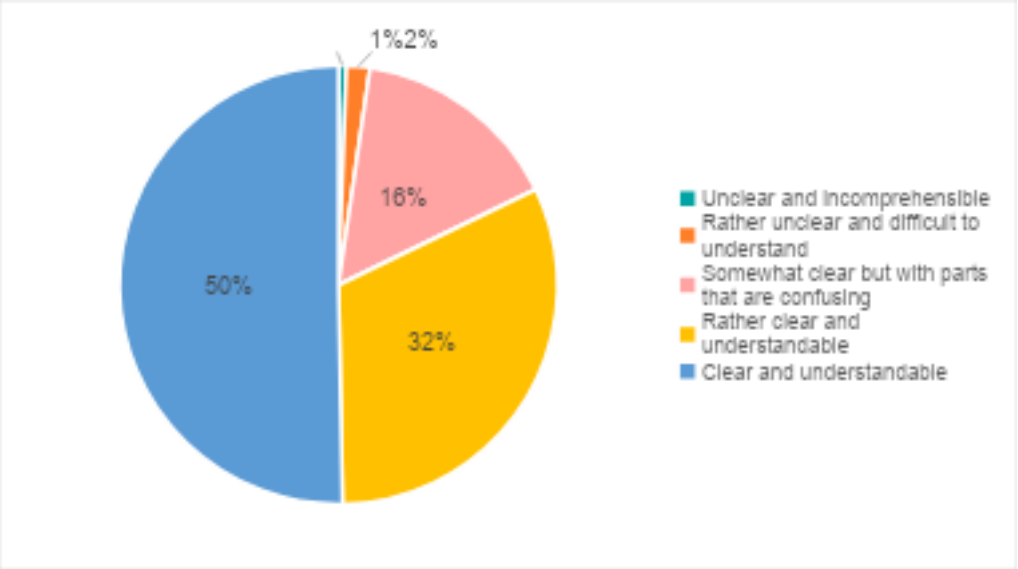


SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

4.3 The IWitness Platform's Learning Environment and Technical Experience

As previously mentioned, students had the opportunity to test the developed IWitness modules in their native language at their schools, and one key aspect of this was assessing general usage. Overall, half of the respondents found the IWitness modules clear and easy to understand, and 32% of students indicated that they were rather clear and comprehensible. 16% noted that the modules were somewhat clear but contained confusing parts. Only 3% stated that the modules were rather unclear or unclear and difficult to understand (see Figure 12).

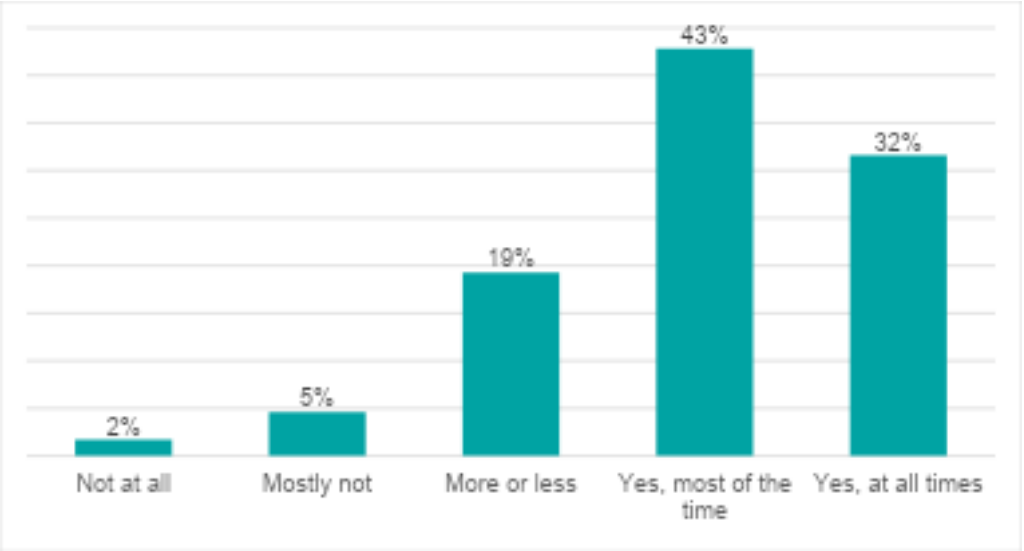
Figure 12 Comprehensibility of the completed educational materials, overall



Source: Post-student survey, n = 348

However, when asked how much attention they paid to a given module (Figure 13), the vast majority of students felt that they paid attention most of the time (45%), at all times (32%), or more or less (19%). The Greek and Italian modules received the most positive evaluations, while the Portuguese and Hungarian modules were somewhat less engaging compared to the others.

Figure 13 Level of engagement with educational materials, overall



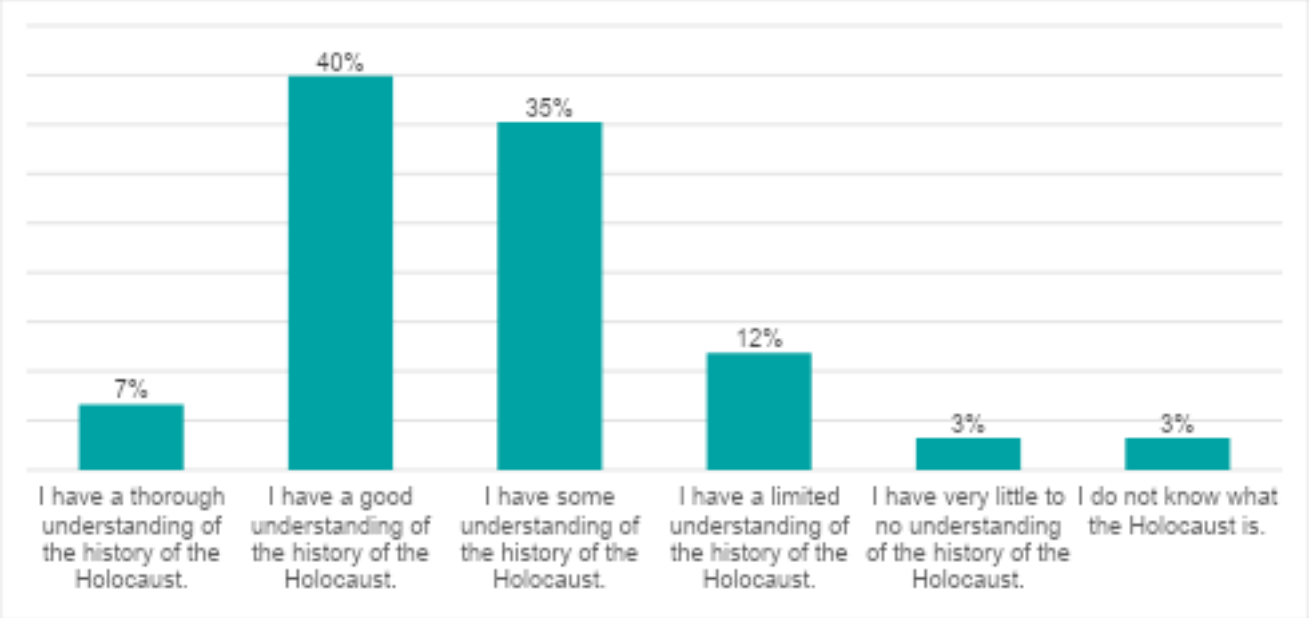
Source: Post-student survey, n = 348

4.4 Students' Knowledge and Skills Development

Another aspect of evaluating educational materials is the actual increase in knowledge and changes in attitude. Before testing the IWitness modules, we were interested in how students perceived their existing knowledge of Holocaust history. As shown in Figure 14, responses were nearly evenly split

between those who believed they had a good understanding (40%) and those who considered their knowledge to be at some level (35%). Additionally, 12% described their understanding as limited, 7% as thorough, and 3% each reported having little or no knowledge of the Holocaust.

FIGURE 14 LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLOCAUST, OVERALL

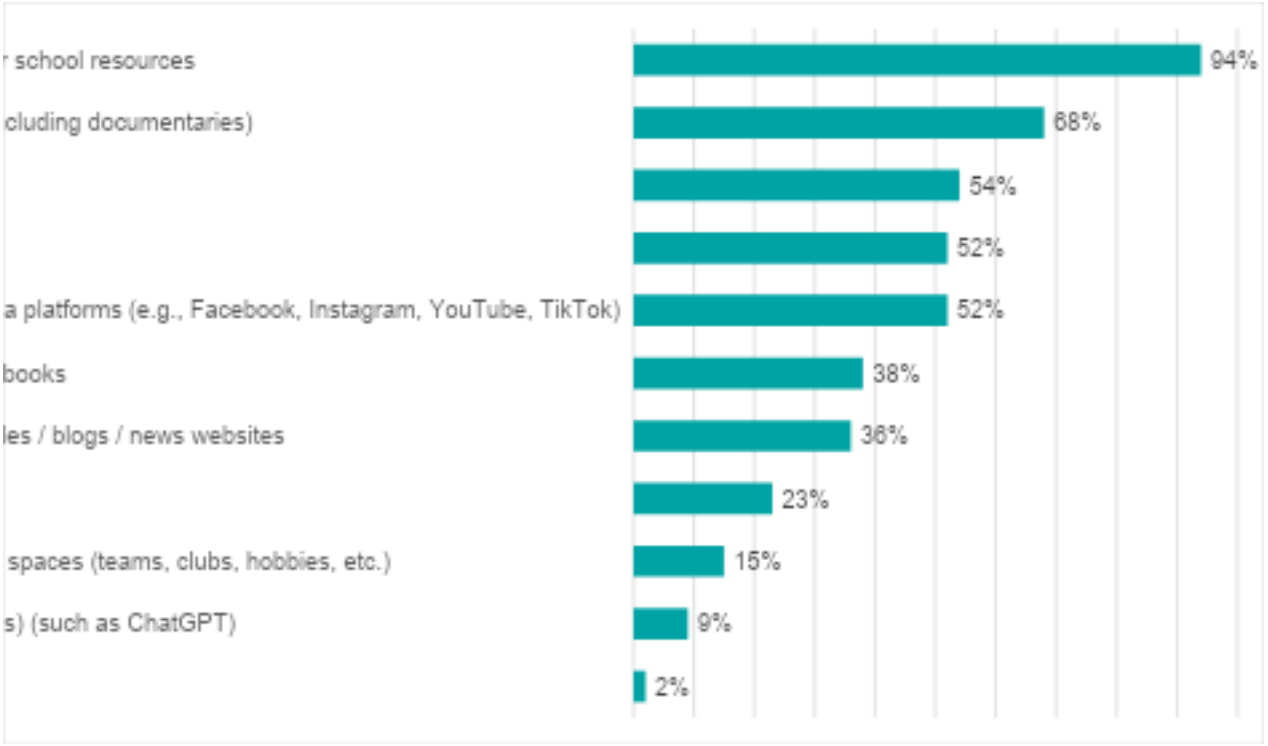


SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

When asked where most students had heard or learned about the Holocaust, see Figure 15, more than 90% of students in each country, and 94% overall, cited teachers and school resources. Additionally, movies, including documentaries (68%), television programs (54%), and family discussions (52%), also ranked highly in the overall results.

However, there are differences in the order of importance among students from different countries. What stands out initially is that Hungarian students mentioned family as a source less frequently than their peers. Similarly, Italian students showed a higher reliance on social media platforms and online articles, as they hear much more about the Holocaust on these platforms compared to respondents from other countries. It is also noteworthy that Portuguese students cited books and e-books, as well as friends, significantly more often than their peers in other countries.

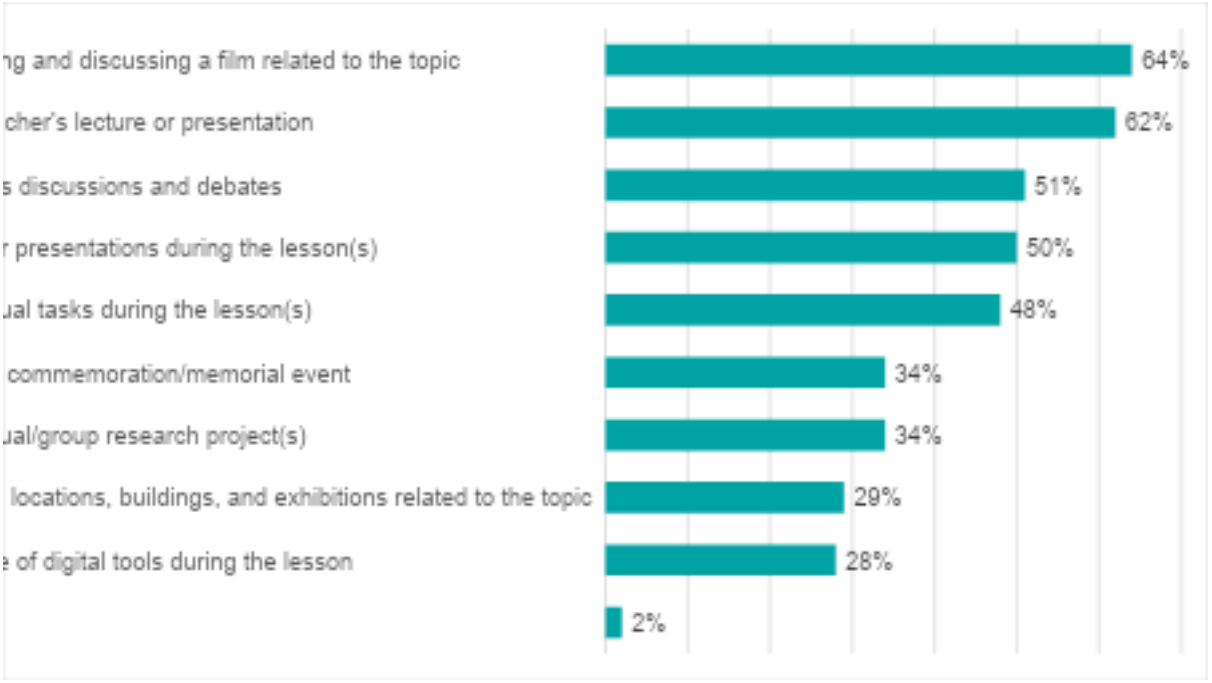
FIGURE 15 SOURCES OF INITIAL AWARENESS OF THE HOLOCAUST, OVERALL



SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 393

As shown in Figure 16, regarding how the Holocaust is taught in schools, based on responses from all students, the majority chose to watch and discuss a film (64%), followed by teacher lectures and presentations (62%), and in-class discussions and debates (51%). In the national breakdown, Greek students indicated that discussions and debates in class (80%), Hungarian and Portuguese students' teachers' lectures and presentations (72% and 60%, respectively), and Italian students watching and discussing a film (83%) were most often indicated.

Figure 16 Modes of Holocaust education in school, overall



Source: Pre-student survey, n = 393

In addition, several questions assessed the direct impact of the IWitness modules on students after they completed them, see Figure 17 below. Across the four countries overall, students' responses indicate generally positive perceptions of the educational material, particularly regarding its impact on awareness, understanding, and attitudes toward Holocaust distortion. A majority of student participants, 31% strongly disagreed, and 32% somewhat disagreed that the educational material did not deepen their understanding of Holocaust distortion, while only 15% agreed to any extent. A further 22% remained neutral, suggesting that the modules were not always perceived as substantially expanding knowledge of Holocaust distortion, but this may also be related to prior knowledge levels.

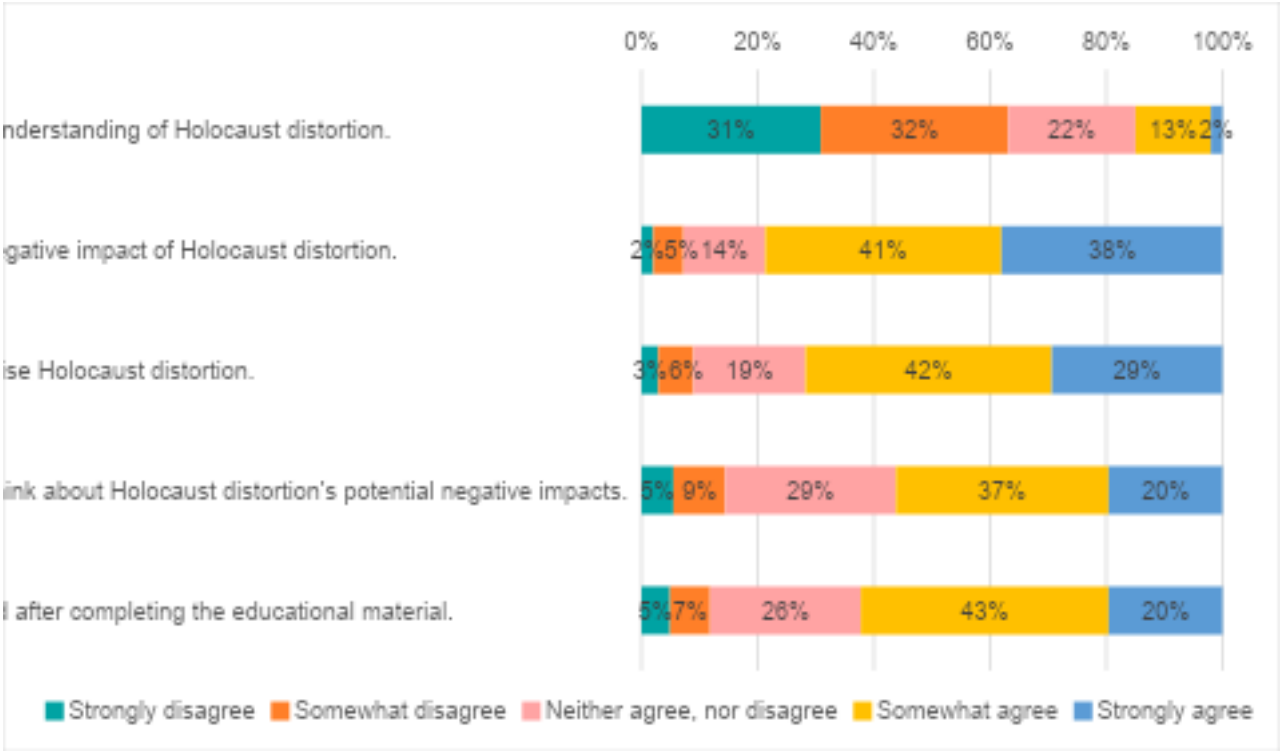
In contrast, the role of personal stories was evaluated very positively. A strong majority – 79% in total – agreed that personal stories helped them understand the negative impact of Holocaust distortion, including 38% who strongly agreed. Only a small minority (7%) expressed disagreement, indicating that this element was particularly effective. Similarly, most students reported learning something new about recognising Holocaust distortion. In total, 71% agreed with this statement (42% somewhat, 29% strongly), while only 9% disagreed. This suggests that the material was successful in building practical recognition skills, even if it did not always deepen conceptual understanding.

Responses were also largely positive regarding attitudinal change. Over half of participants (57%) agreed that the material changed the way they think about the potential negative impacts of Holocaust distortion, while 29% remained neutral. Only a small proportion (14%) disagreed, indicating a moderate but meaningful shift in perspectives. A similar pattern emerged regarding changes in personal perception. 63% of participants agreed that their perception of Holocaust

distortion changed after completing the material, including 20% who strongly agreed. Around a quarter (26%) were neutral, and 12% disagreed, again pointing to a generally positive but not universal impact.

In summary, while the educational material was not consistently perceived as deepening understanding, it was highly effective in raising awareness, supporting recognition of Holocaust distortion, and shaping participants' attitudes – particularly through the use of personal stories.

FIGURE 17 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE IWITNESS MODULES ON STUDENTS, OVERALL



SOURCE: POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 347

The follow-up responses from students regarding their changed perceptions of Holocaust distortion further reveal a significant shift in understanding and awareness after completing the educational material. A lot of them expressed a newfound interest and depth of knowledge about the Holocaust, distortion and denial:

> *"Before the activity, the truth is that I had limited knowledge and interest in the Holocaust in general. But now I feel that I have learned new things and would be interested in learning more about the subject on my own." – a Greek student*

They also emphasised the importance of credible information in an age where misinformation spreads rapidly:

> *"After completing the course, I better understand that Holocaust denial is not just a difference of opinion but a serious problem that leads to the falsification of history and*

> *the violation of the memory of the victims. I realised how dangerous such content can be, especially on social media, where it spreads quickly. Now I pay much more attention to where the information comes from and how credible the source is." – a Hungarian student*

> *"I was unaware of 'fake news' relating to the Holocaust. Although I knew there had been filters and distortions, the educational materials helped me to understand it better." – an Italian student*

Another student's perspective highlighted the nuances of Holocaust distortion, stating:

> *"After completing the course, it became clearer to me that Holocaust distortion is not just denial, but any attempt to relativise, silence, or place events in a false context. I gained a better understanding of why this is dangerous and how important it is to preserve authentic historical memory." – a Hungarian student*

> *"…The educational material helped me better understand how the distortion of the Holocaust can manipulate opinions and threaten historical memory. I became more aware of the importance of combating these falsifications and valuing reliable sources." – a Portuguese student*

Students also commented on how the course improved their critical awareness of manipulative narratives in public discourse. They wrote:

> *"Unfortunately, much of the 'information' passed on by word of mouth is the result of persistent propaganda. Documentaries and informative videos with testimonies are useful for understanding what really happened (at the time of the Holocaust)." – an Italian student*

> *"Now I am much more attentive and critical in recognising these manipulations in public discourse." – an Italian student*

In addition, many students emphasised the usefulness and personal nature of the video interviews in the IWitness teaching materials:

> *"I found this activity very useful because I learned more and better about the topic, as it was a captivating way to learn, watching videos of people who went through the Holocaust." – a Portuguese student*

> *"What happened was devastating for the lives and development of the Jews, and there is no exaggeration regarding the extent of the mental and physical destruction." – a Greek student*

Overall, student testimonials reveal profound insights into students' enhanced understanding of Holocaust distortion and its implications, showcasing the effectiveness of the educational material in fostering deeper engagement with the topic.

In addition, students who gave uncertain or neutral responses regarding the material's influence on their perception of Holocaust distortion were also able to express their opinions. The text responses reveal that the students' neutral replies were more due to their already holding a similar view, rather than to the educational materials being useless.

> *"I (chose) neither agree nor disagree because even before the meeting at school, I had the same opinion about the negative aspects of the Holocaust and how it affected its victims in an inhumane way. However, it helped me to get a clearer and better picture through the eyes of the victims themselves." – a Greek student*

> *"It showed me the dangers of Holocaust distortion better, but I already had a basic understanding of this, so my perspective has only changed partially." – a Hungarian student*

Apart from a couple of negative responses, this situation also characterised those who disagreed to some level:

> *"I was already sure of the falsehoods surrounding it, the distortion of the Holocaust." – an Italian student*

> *"My perception of Holocaust distortion did not change because I was already aware of the seriousness of the problem and how these false narratives circulate on social media and other digital platforms. The educational material reinforced what I already knew, but it did not change my view, as I have always considered Holocaust distortion to be dangerous and unacceptable because of its attempt to erase or manipulate proven historical facts." – a Portuguese student*

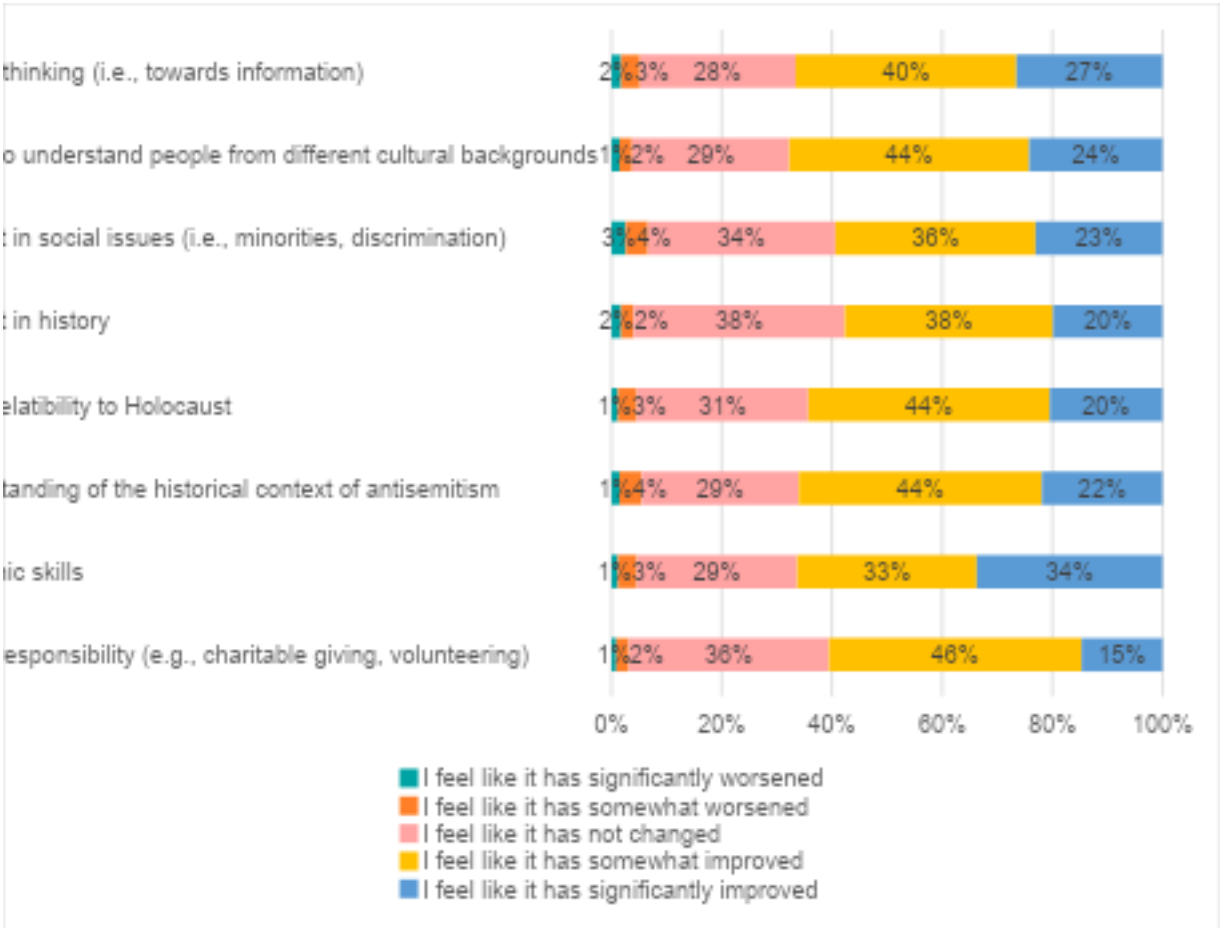
Students also reported mainly positive effects of the educational materials across various measured personal and cognitive aspects (see Figure 18 below). They indicated great improvements in critical thinking towards information (68%) and in their ability to understand people from different cultural backgrounds (67%). Interest levels showed more variation but remained positive overall. 58% of participants expressed increased interest in history, and 59% in interest in social issues, such as discrimination. Students also indicated a greater personal relatability to the Holocaust, with 64% noting improvement. This suggests that the materials made the topic more personally meaningful, reinforcing what was mentioned about the video interviews earlier.

Similarly, 66% of respondents showed better understanding of the historical context of antisemitism, with 44% feeling some improvement and 22% significant improvement, indicating that the material effectively strengthened their historical awareness. Their perceived empathic skills also improved, with 67% of students reporting growth, including 34% who felt significant enhancement. Perceptions

of social responsibility increased for 61% of participants. In every area, only a very small minority (3-7%) experienced negative changes, while 28-38% felt no change.

To sum up, the educational material had a consistently positive impact across many personal and cognitive domains. Although some areas – such as intercultural understanding (68%), empathy (67%), and critical thinking (67%) – showed stronger development, with almost no indication of negative effects.

FIGURE 18 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ON STUDENTS' PERSONAL AND COGNITIVE DOMAINS, OVERALL



SOURCE: POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 347

4.5 Students' Attitudinal Change

The most interesting parts of the student questionnaires were the sections on specific attitude items. Students were asked to share their views on the same attitude questions both before and after completing each IWitness module. As Figure 19 shows below, one set of statements focused on various issues related to social awareness, history, and discrimination.

Overall, students indicated consistently strong socially responsible attitudes, with some modest positive shifts between the pre- and post-questionnaires. They largely agreed that it is important to

learn about historical events, even if they happened a long time ago, and that they remain important; 76% in Q1 and 83% in Q2 explicitly disagreed that history is not relevant, indicating that they recognise the ongoing significance of history. The students also showed very high interest in current global developments (*"It is important to me to know what is happening in the world.")*, with 93% in Q1 and 87% in Q2, affirming the importance of knowing what is happening around the world. Although this interest decreased slightly, overall engagement remained very strong.

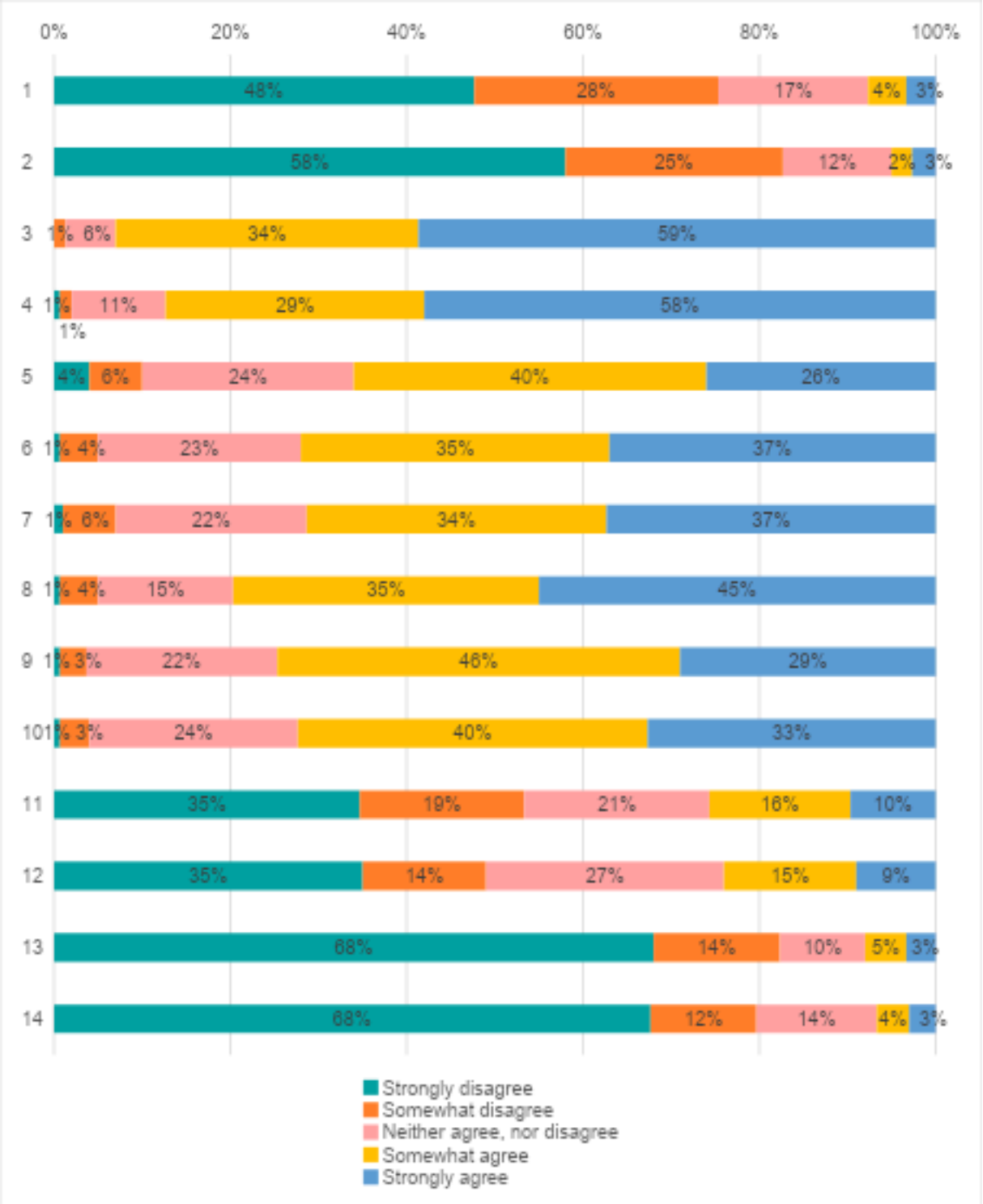
Their agreement on the importance of understanding the lives of local residents in the past increased from 66% in Q1 to 72% in Q2, with strong agreement rising from 26% to 37%, reflecting a growing appreciation for local history. The value of personal stories in history has also gained more recognition. Students' agreement climbed from 71% in Q1 to 80% in Q2, with strong agreement rising from 37% to 45%, supporting findings from earlier that narrative-based testimonies and approaches effectively foster engagement with the projects' topics.

Regarding personal recollections as a tool for self-understanding ("*Personal recollections help us learn about ourselves because we can connect what happened with others in our own lives.")*, agreement saw a slight increase from 75% to 73%, with a small shift from somewhat agree to strongly agree, indicating a deeper understanding of history's personal relevance. Their views on discrimination (*"There are times when discrimination based on cultural, ethnic, gender, or other factors is acceptable in society."*) remained largely critical, though some changes appeared. Strong disagreement with the idea that discrimination can sometimes be acceptable remained at 35%, while neutrality increased from 21% to 27%, suggesting that some participants became more undecided. Still, most students reject discriminatory attitudes – 54% in Q1 and 49% in Q2 – while around one-quarter express agreement.

Participant students also maintained a strong and consistent stance against verbal attacks on people *("It is harmless if someone verbally attacks certain people or groups as long as there is no physical violence.").* 82% in Q1 and 80% in Q2 disagreed that such behaviours are not harmless, showing little change over time and reflecting sensitivity to this issue. It is clear that, among all the statements, this was the one in which the strongest item on the scale was most evident, with 68% strongly disagreeing.

In summary, students began the questionnaire before the IWitness modules with already strong, socially responsible attitudes, leaving little room for major shifts. Nevertheless, some positive changes are evident, especially in the value placed on local history and personal stories, while core views on democracy and anti-discrimination have remained stable. This is not entirely surprising, as the latter tend to develop more slowly, and the former may be easier to influence, especially with the scope of the IWitness modules.

FIGURE 19 ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND DISCRIMINATION (Q1-Q2), OVERALL



SOURCE: POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 300

The second set of statements required students to form opinions regarding typical statements that distort the Holocaust, see Figure 20 below. On the whole, students strongly rejected Holocaust distortion narratives in both pre- and post-questionnaires, with attitudes remaining largely stable over time. Where changes did occur, they generally reflected slight improvements or increased uncertainty rather than shifts toward distortions.

The claim that the number of Jewish victims is greatly exaggerated was rejected by a majority in both questionnaires – 58% in Q1 and 57% in Q2. However, neutrality or indecision increased from 18% to 22%, while strong agreement decreased slightly, suggesting a small shift toward uncertainty. A similar pattern appears in responses to the idea that the Holocaust is overemphasised in history to overshadow other atrocities. Disagreement remained the dominant position – 61% in Q1 and 59% in Q2 – though the level of disagreement declined somewhat and neutrality increased. Agreement stayed around one-quarter – 18% in Q1 and 16% in Q2.

More improvement can be seen in responses to the statement that the Holocaust could have been prevented if Jewish leaders had cooperated with Nazi authorities. Students' disagreement increased from 67% to 69%, driven by a higher rise in strong disagreement from 40% to 50%, while agreement decreased slightly. Agreement levels stayed low here, indicating that most students do not support this narrative and that the IWitness modules strengthened a rejection of victim-blaming interpretations.

Views on whether the Holocaust was primarily the result of wartime conditions rather than systematic genocide remained stable, with around two-thirds of participants disagreeing in both waves, 65% in Q1 and 67% in Q2. Only a small minority agreed with this view, indicating that the majority have a solid understanding of the Holocaust as a systematic process.

The strongest consensus was observed in relation to the statement that Jews are partly responsible for what happened to them, which was overwhelmingly rejected in both waves – 81% in Q1 and 79% in Q2. Agreement remained extremely low, reinforcing the conclusion that explicit victim-blaming attitudes are widely rejected.

Responses to the country-specific statement about Greece, Hungary and Italy's national responsibility, or to Antonió de Oliveira's protective leadership in Portugal during World War II, were more mixed. Overall, approximately 42-39% of participants disagreed, 28-30% agreed, and about one-third remained neutral.

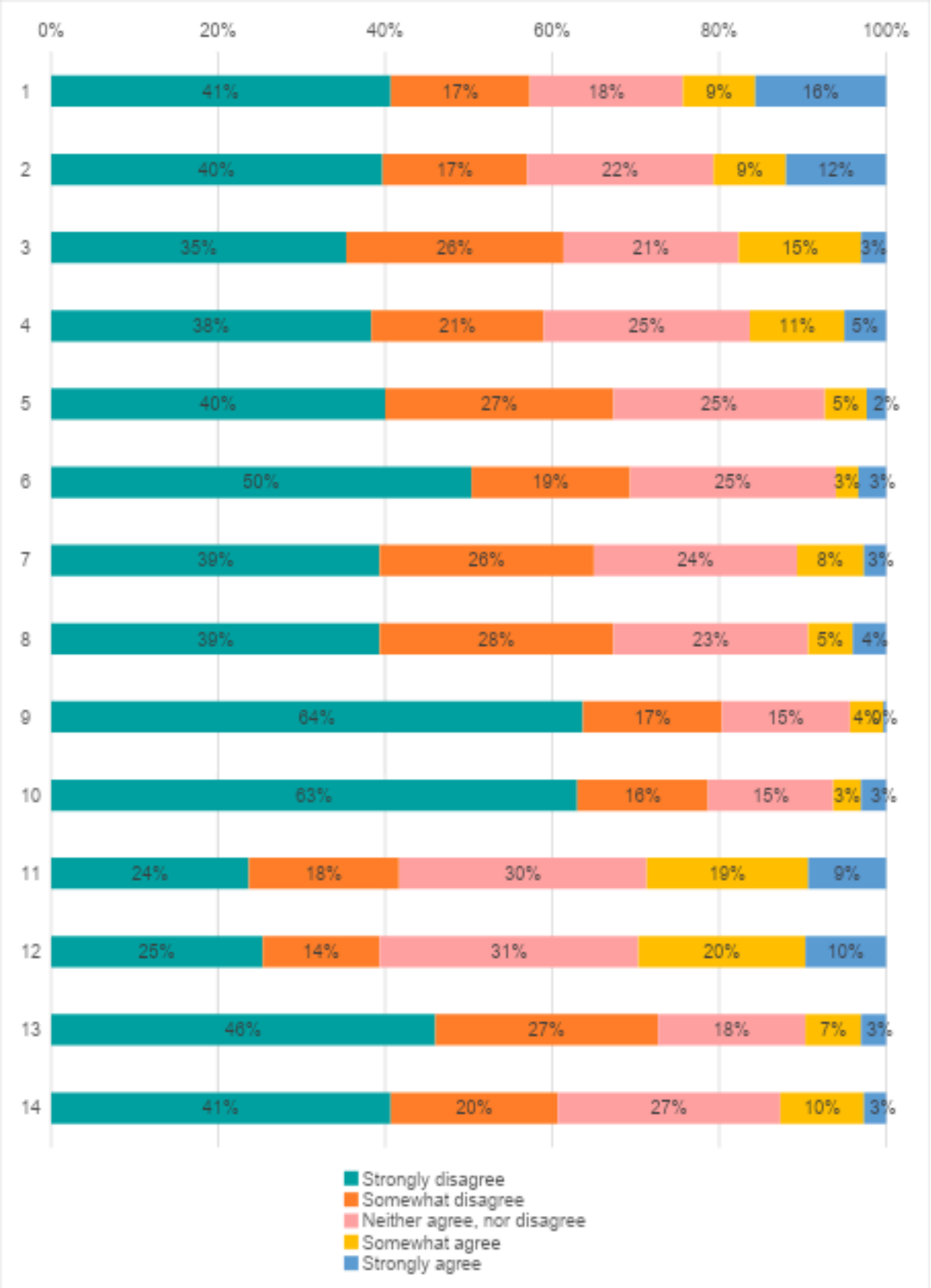
Breaking down by country, see Figure 44 in Annex: Additional Figures, Greek students' opinions remained divided. Although the proportion of those rejecting national responsibility increased slightly (from 40% to 47%), the proportion of undecided respondents remains significant (33-36%), and a smaller but stable group agrees with the statement. In Hungary, the uncertainty is even stronger. The proportion of neutral responses increased from 30% to 36%, while agreement also remained relatively high, 32% in Q1 and 36% in Q2. In contrast, agreement regarding national responsibility is much stronger in Italy. In Q1, the majority (65%) agreed with the statement, and this increased further in Q2 (67%). The proportion of neutral and rejecting responses is lower, suggesting that the historical narrative is more firmly established among participants here.

The Portuguese case – assessment of Salazar's role – involved a different type of statement but shows a similarly interesting pattern. The vast majority of respondents rejected the statement that Salazar did everything to save the Jews, 73% in Q1 and 70% in Q2, while agreement remained minimal. At the same time, the proportion of those who were unsure is relatively high here as well –

about one-quarter – indicating no consensus among participants and that interpretations of the question may vary.

Finally, the idea that the impact of the Holocaust is exaggerated was rejected by a majority of students, though disagreement with this statement decreased slightly, from 73% to 61%, accompanied by a visible rise in neutrality from 18% to 27%. Students' agreement increased modestly but remained low overall, 10% to 13%. In summary, students consistently rejected the core elements of Holocaust distortion, particularly those involving relativisation and victim-blaming, although some responses point to increased neutrality or uncertainty in the second questionnaire.

Figure 20 Responses to Holocaust distortion statements (Q1-Q2), overall



Source: Post-student survey, n = 300

As shown in Figure 21 below, the final, third set of statements concerned the significance and relevance of the Holocaust. Here, students' responses indicate a strong recognition of the Holocaust's relevance and significance, with attitudes remaining stable or showing slight positive shifts between the pre- and post-questionnaires. At the same time, participants expressed more nuanced or cautious views on comparisons with contemporary issues.

A clear majority agreed that the Holocaust has unique aspects that distinguish it in world history, with agreement increasing from 65% in Q1 to 72% in Q2. This shift was mainly driven by a decrease in neutral responses from 29% to 20% and a rise in somewhat agreement, suggesting growing confidence in recognising the Holocaust's distinctiveness.

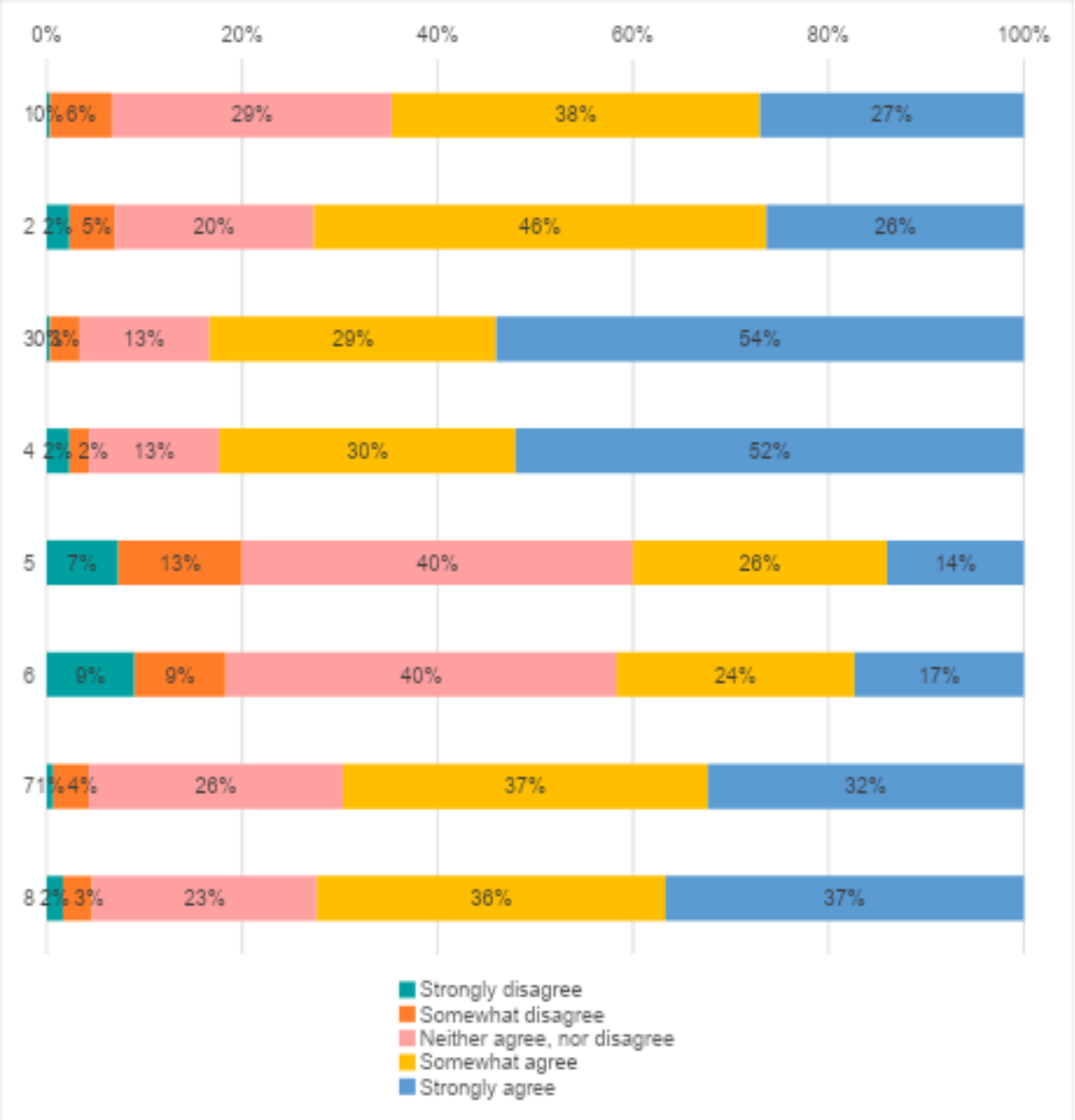
Students also consistently showed strong agreement on the importance of Holocaust education. A very high proportion agreed that learning about the facts of the Holocaust is important for the present and the future, 83% in Q1 and 82% in Q2, with more than half of them strongly agreeing in both. This indicates an established consensus with little change over time.

Views on whether it is appropriate to compare the Holocaust with contemporary political or public discourse issues were more divided. Neutral responses remained high at 40% in both, while agreement increased slightly from 40% to 41%, and disagreement decreased slightly. This suggests that students are cautious and somewhat ambivalent about drawing such comparisons, rather than clearly rejecting or endorsing them.

Finally, there was strong and slightly increasing agreement that distorted historical facts influence how we evaluate the past in the present. Students' agreement rose from 69% in Q1 to 73% in Q2, with a visible increase in strong agreement from 32% to 37%. This points to a growing awareness of the contemporary consequences of historical distortion.

Overall, students demonstrated a stable attitude regarding the importance and uniqueness of the Holocaust, alongside a clear understanding of the risks of historical distortions. While views on contemporary comparisons remain more mixed, there is a slight trend toward greater recognition of the broader implications of how history is interpreted today.

FIGURE 21 PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST'S SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE (Q1-Q2), OVERALL



SOURCE: POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 300

5. Reflections and Lessons Learned

Regarding the teacher trainings we could see that participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the clarity and engagement of the training sessions, with most finding it easy to follow and able to maintain their attention in all partner countries' cases. The use of personal stories emerged as a particularly effective element, significantly supporting participants' understanding of the human impact of the Holocaust and making the topic more relatable.

The training and the IWitness materials were especially successful in developing practical skills and attitudes. The vast majority of teachers reported improved ability to recognise Holocaust distortion, as well as students' gains in empathy, understanding of people from different cultural backgrounds, and critical thinking skills. There were also positive shifts in how students perceive the relevance of the Holocaust and the importance of historical awareness, and a lot of them expressed a newfound interest and depth of knowledge about the Holocaust, distortion and denial.

At the same time, both the surveys and interview results point to a few important lessons and areas for improvement. First, while teachers generally reacted positively to the training, the data suggest that in some cases it did not always deepen their understanding as much as intended. This suggests that future training could place more emphasis to support practical skills. It may also be helpful to include more concrete classroom examples and guidance on discussing sensitive or potentially controversial topics with students, as these can be challenging even for experienced teachers.

Second, the online IWitness modules appear to be effective in several ways – especially through the use of personal stories, which students consistently found engaging and meaningful. However, the results also indicate some limits. Not all students experienced strong learning improvements, and some remained uncertain in their responses, particularly on more complex or controversial issues, which we could see especially in the attitude statements.

According to teachers, this may partly be due to the nature of online learning, in which factors such as time constraints, varying levels of digital literacy, and differing classroom conditions can further influence how IWitness materials are used. Teachers also suggest that sensitive historical topics require careful framing, with enough context and opportunities for reflection to help students fully process what they see.

Finally, the findings raise some useful questions for future research. For example, it would be worth exploring more closely which parts of the training are most effective – such as personal testimonies – and why. It would also be important to examine how lasting these changes are. While the results show some positive shifts in attitudes and awareness, it would be worth analysing whether these persist over time and, if so, how.

DECONSTRUCT

Annexes

Annex: Characteristics of the Interviewees'

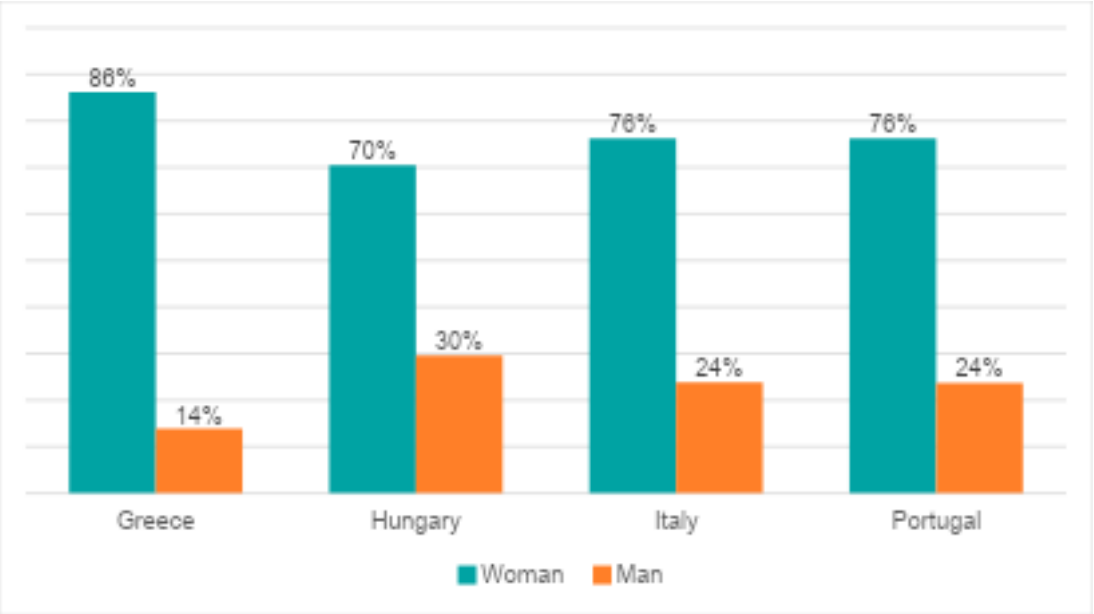
Table 2 Characteristics of the interviewees'

Country	Sex	Years of teaching experience	Subject(s)	School type	School location	Date
Greece	Female	20+	Ancient Greek, modern Greek, history	Public school	Urban	29/11/2025
	Female	20+	Ancient Greek, modern Greek, history	Public school	Urban	29/11/2025
	Female	20+	Ancient Greek, Latin language	Private school	Suburban	28/11/2025
	Male	20+	Social sciences, Greek language, literature, history	Public school	Urban	28/11/2025
	Female	20+	Literature, ancient Greek	Public school	Urban	1/12/2025
	Male	Less than 10	History, Greek literature	Currently unemployed/ adjunct	Urban	20/12/2025
Hungary	Male	20+	Hungarian language and literature, history and civic education	Technical school / public school	Urban	01/12/2025
	Male	20+	English language, history and civic education	Technical school / public school	Suburban	04/12/2025
	Female	20+	Hungarian language and literature, history and civic education, Spanish language	High school, guest lecturer / public school	Urban	12/12/2025
	Male	Less than 10	History and civic education, tourism, geography	Technical school / public school	Suburban	12/12/2025
	Female	20+	Hungarian language and literature, English language, drama	High school / public school	Urban	08/01/2026
	Female	20+	English language, Hungarian language and literature, drama	High school and boarding school / public school	Urban	07/01/2026

Italy	Male	20+	Italian language, history, and geography	High school	Rural	03/12/2025
	Male	20+	Italian language and history	High school	Rural	03/12/2025
	Male	10	History, civic education, philosophy	High school	Urban	03/12/2025
	Male	15 years	Anthropological field (Italian language, history, civic education)	University	Urban	05/12/2025
	Female	20	Human sciences, law and economics, art history	High school	Urban	17/12/2025
Portugal	Female	20+, retired	Portuguese language and literature	Primary school	Capital	25/11/2025
	Female	20	Information technology (IT)	Primary school	Suburban	7/11/2025
	Male	10+	Philosophy	Primary school	Urban	25/11/2025
	Female	Less than 10	History, civic education	Primary school	Capital	11/12/2025
	Female	20+	History, civic education	Training school for teachers	Capital	16/12/2025
	Female	20+	History	Semi-private school – military secondary school	Capital	4/01/2026

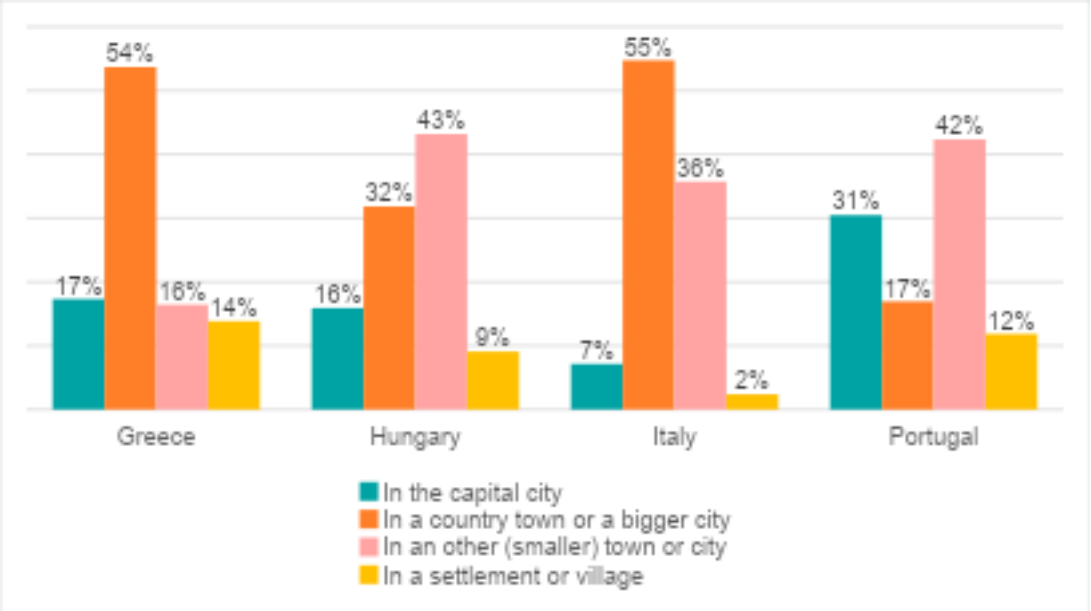
Annex: Additional Figures

Figure 22 Gender distribution of teachers, by country



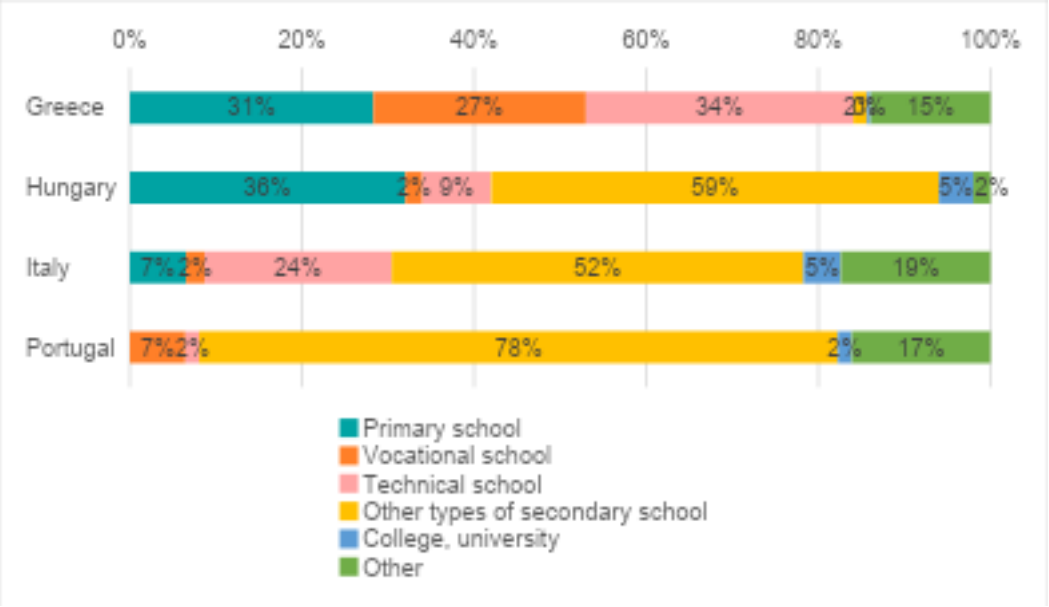
Source: Teacher Survey after the training, n = 376

Figure 23 Types of municipalities where teachers work, by country



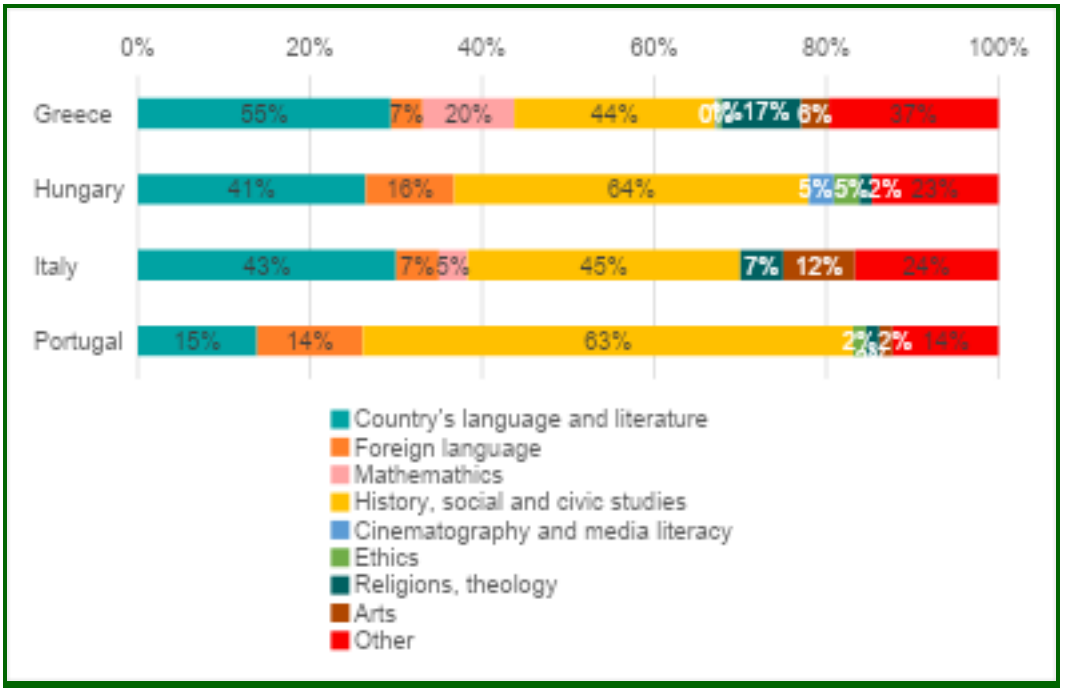
Source: Teacher Survey after the training, n = 376

FIGURE 24 TYPES OF SCHOOLS WHERE TEACHERS TEACH, BY COUNTRY



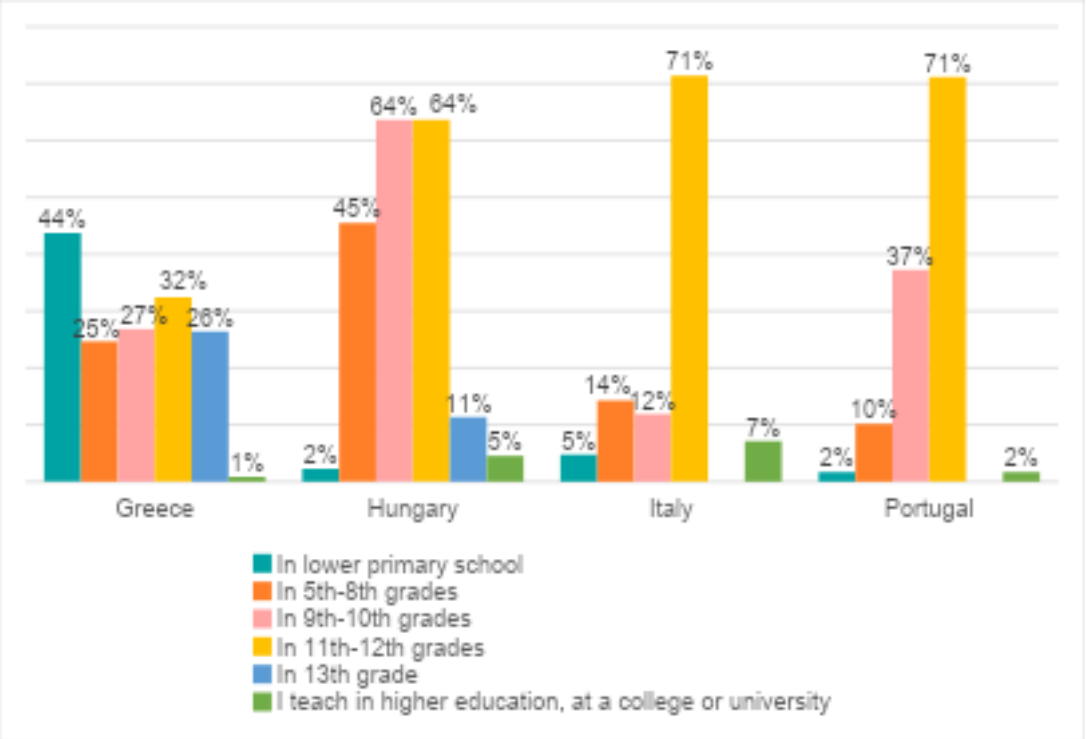
SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

FIGURE 25 SUBJECTS TAUGHT BY TEACHERS, BY COUNTRY



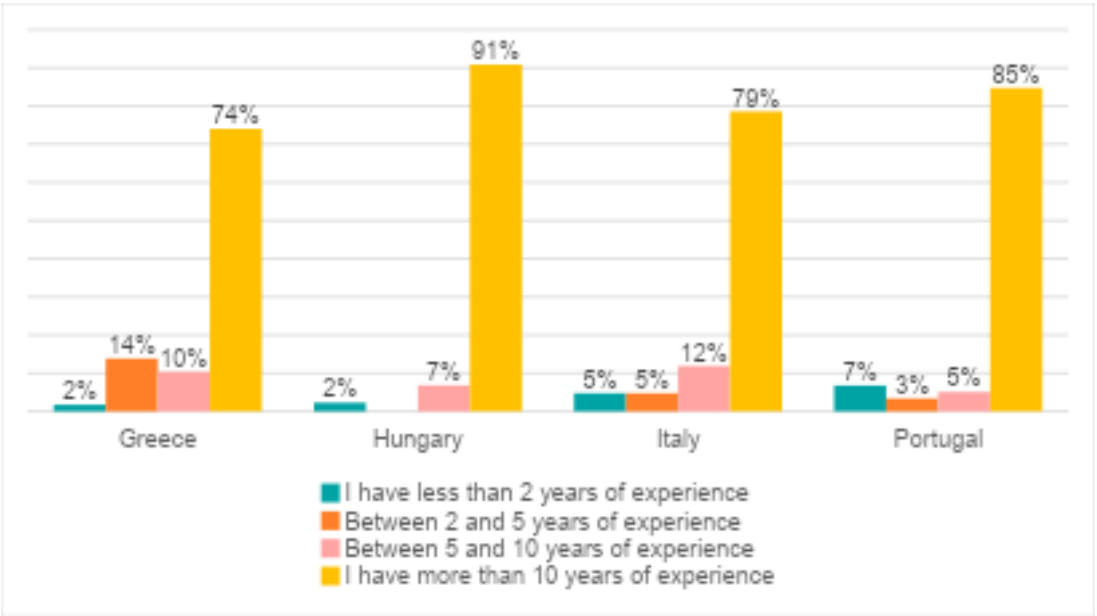
SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

FIGURE 26 YEAR GROUPS TAUGHT BY TEACHERS, BY COUNTRY



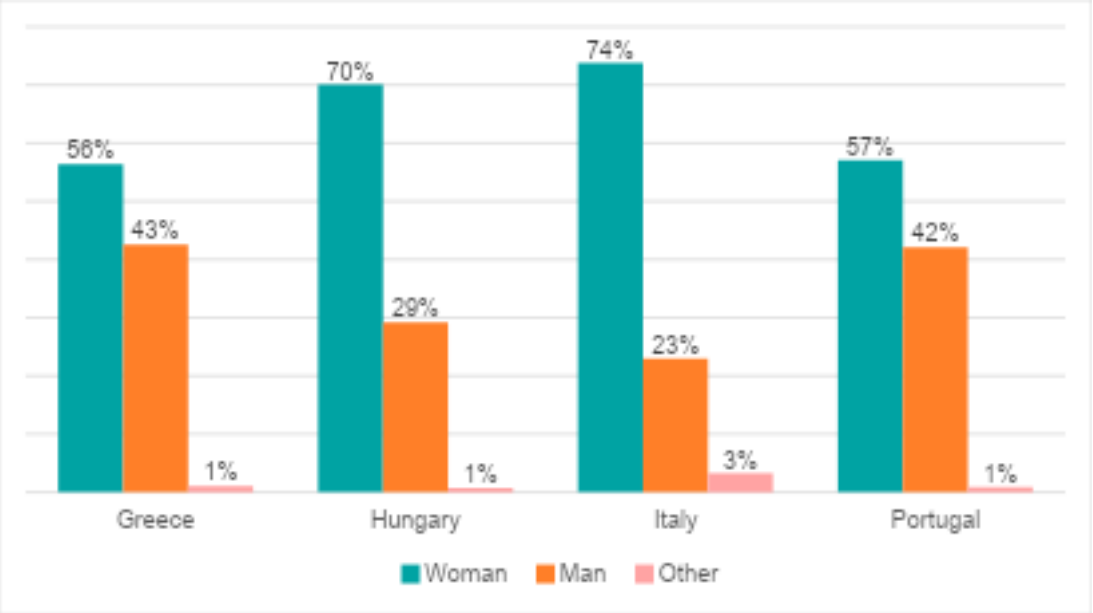
SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

FIGURE 27 YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN CURRENT POSITION, BY COUNTRY



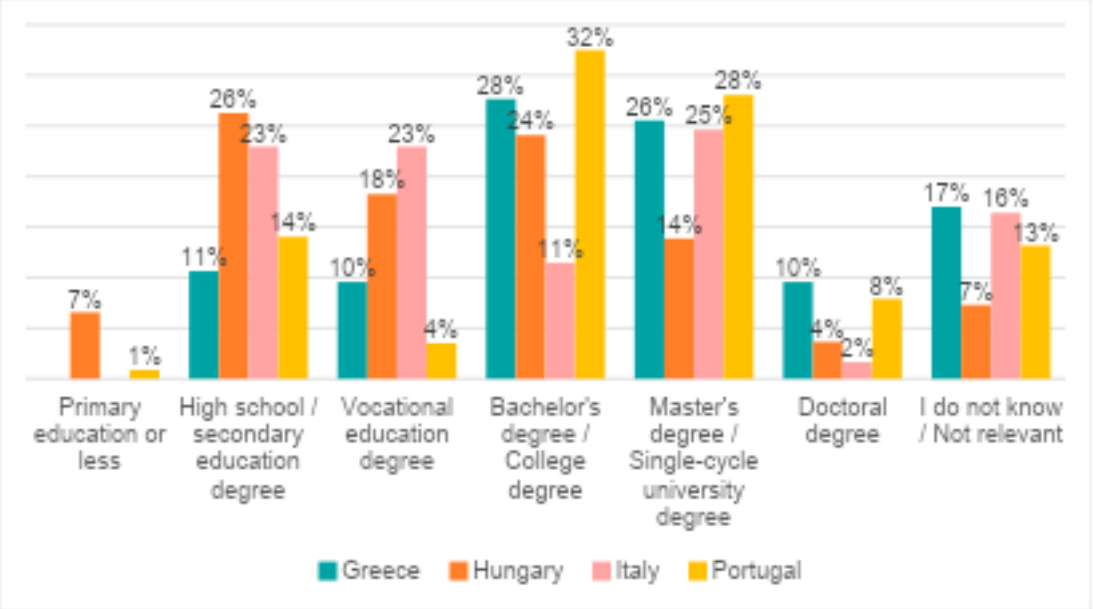
SOURCE: TEACHER SURVEY AFTER THE TRAINING, N = 376

Figure 28 Gender distribution of students, by country



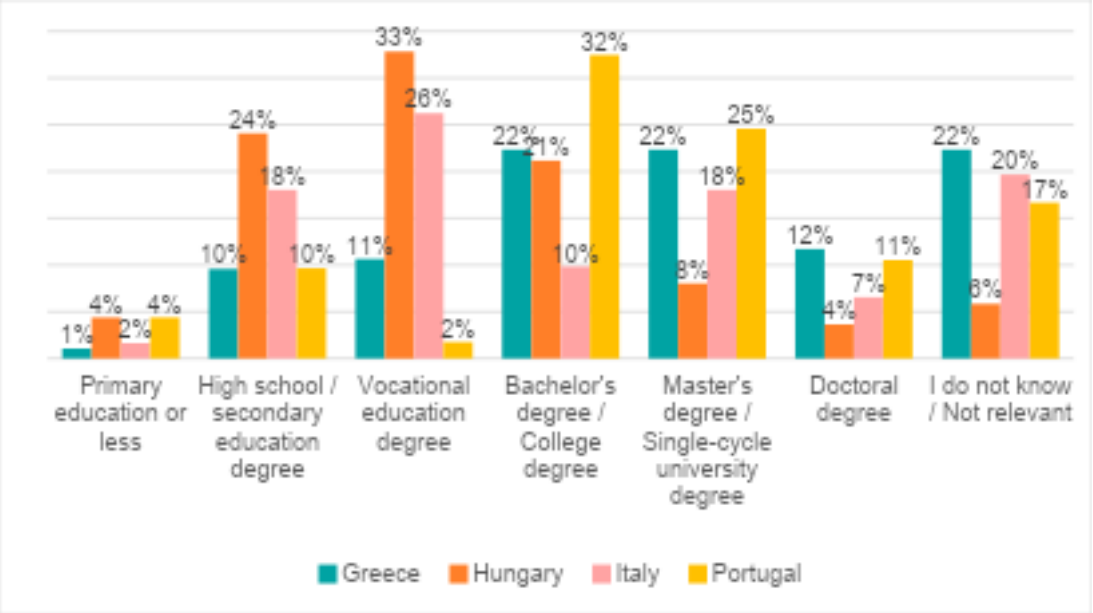
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 40

Figure 29 Students' mothers' or foster mothers' highest level of education, by country



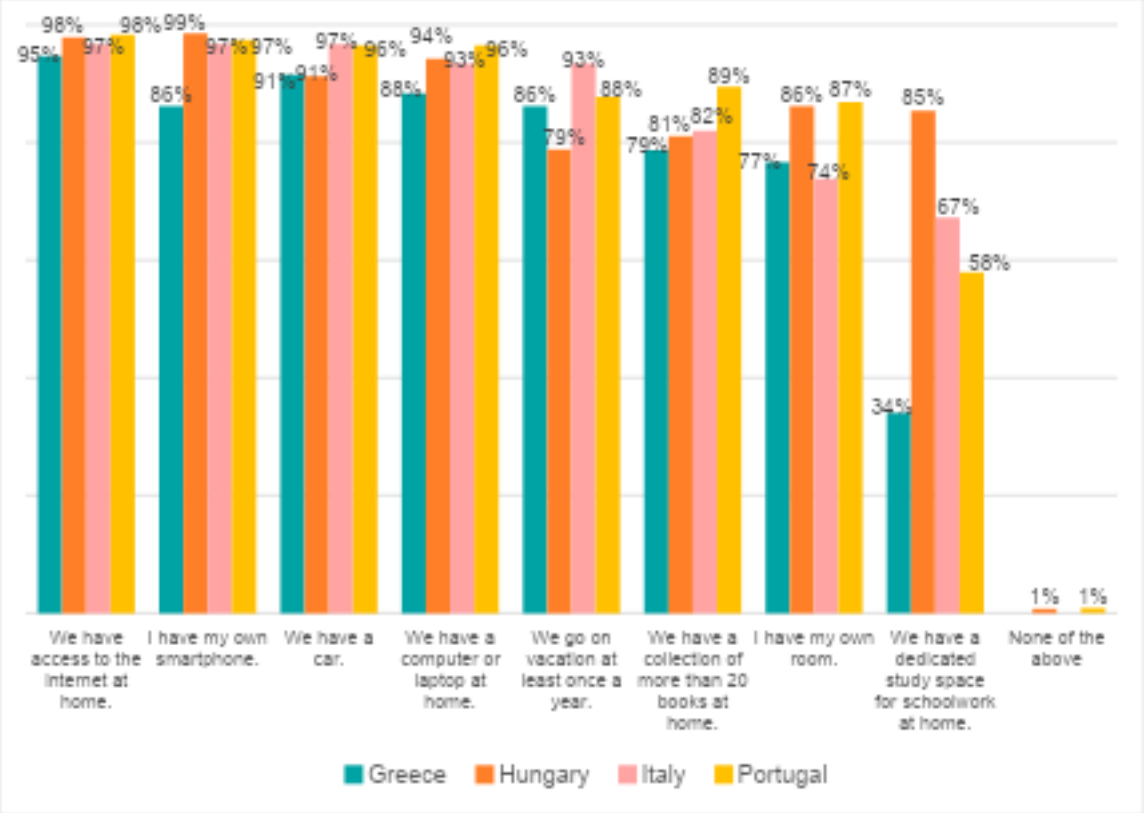
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 406

FIGURE 30 STUDENTS' FATHERS' OR FOSTER FATHERS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION, BY COUNTRY



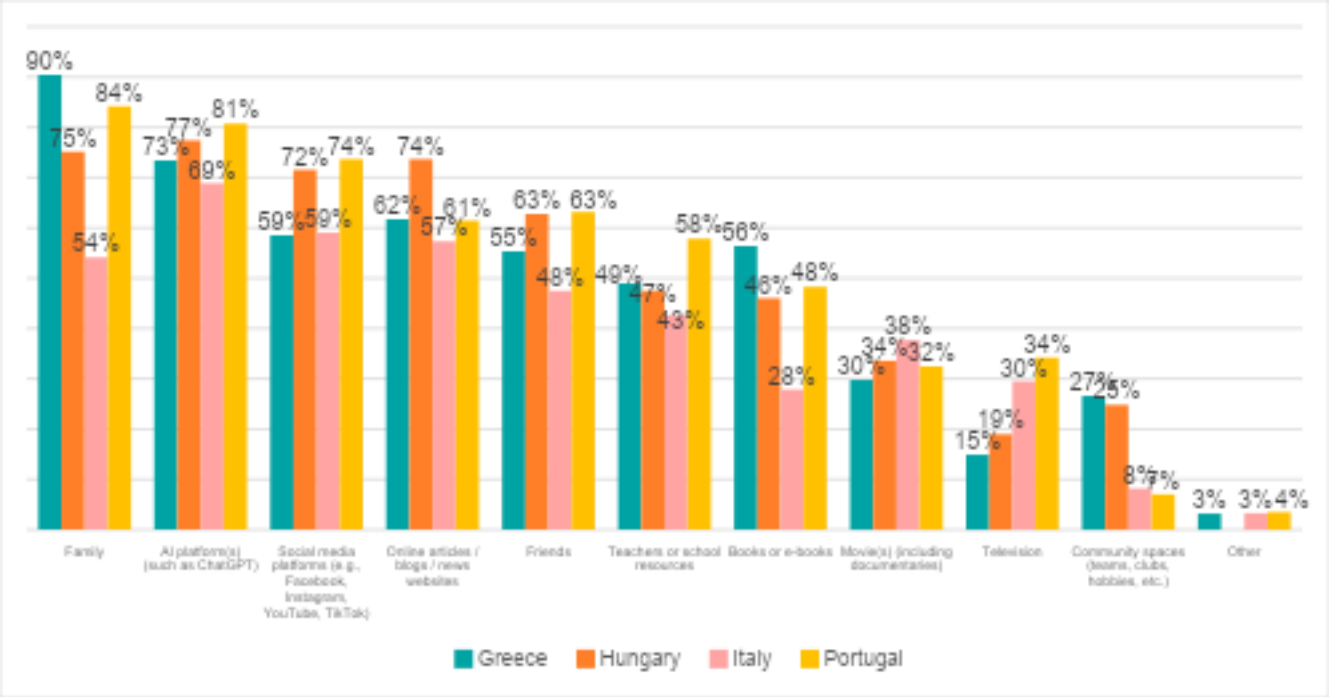
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

FIGURE 31 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS' LIFESTYLES, BY COUNTRY



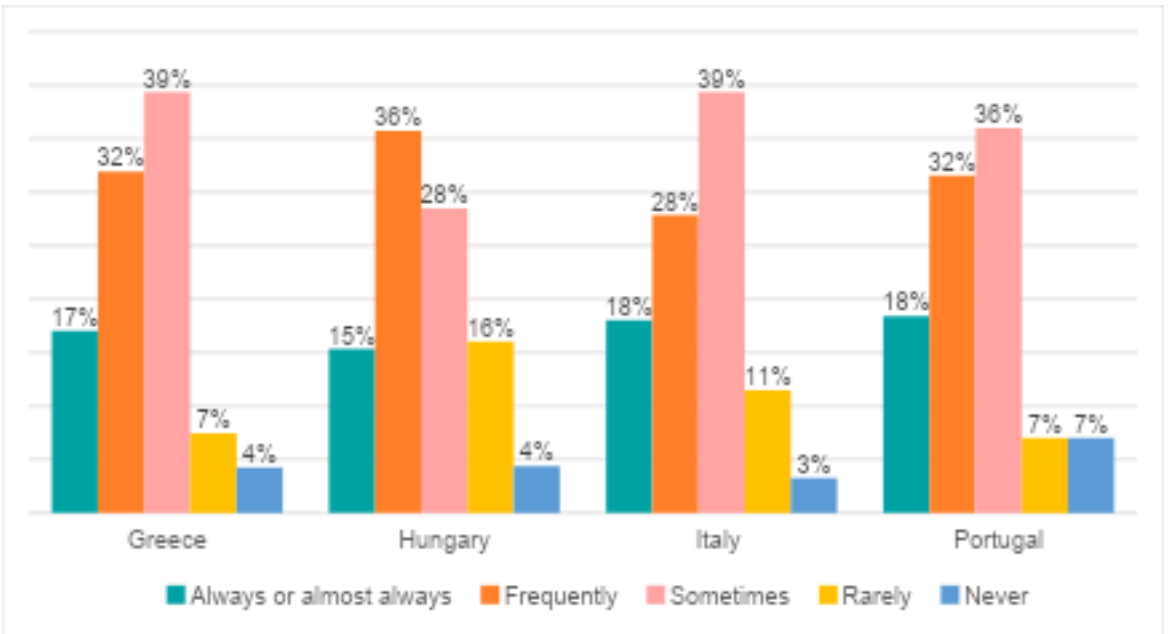
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

Figure 32 Preferred sources for information gathering, by country



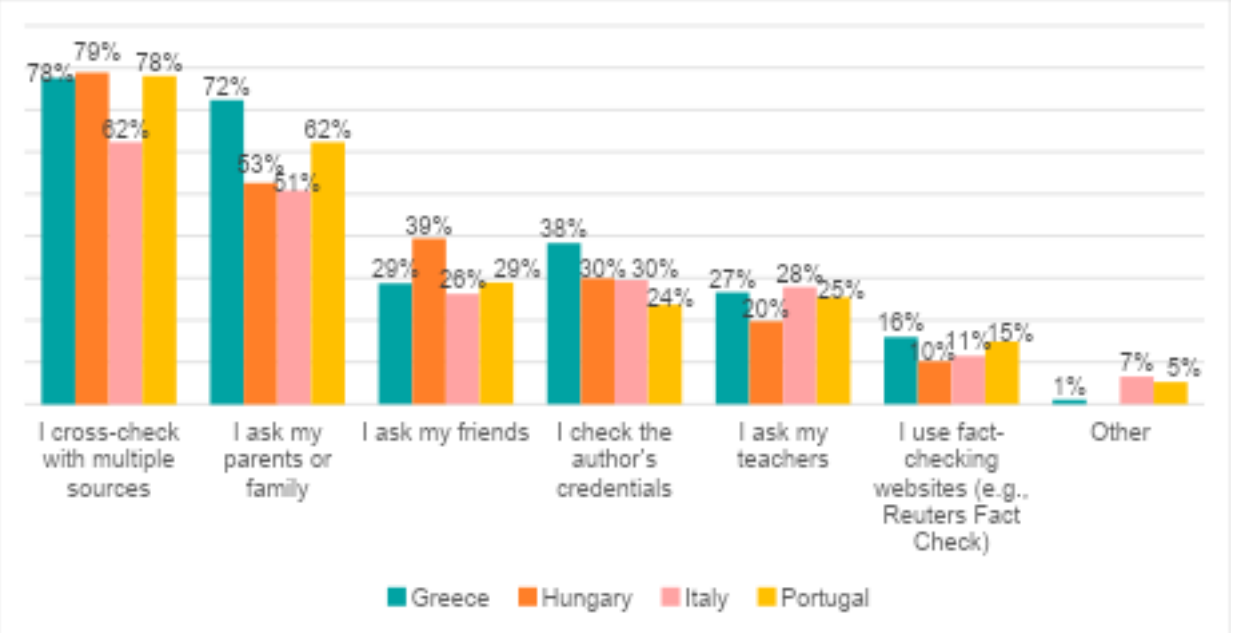
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 406

Figure 33 Frequency of verifying information, by country



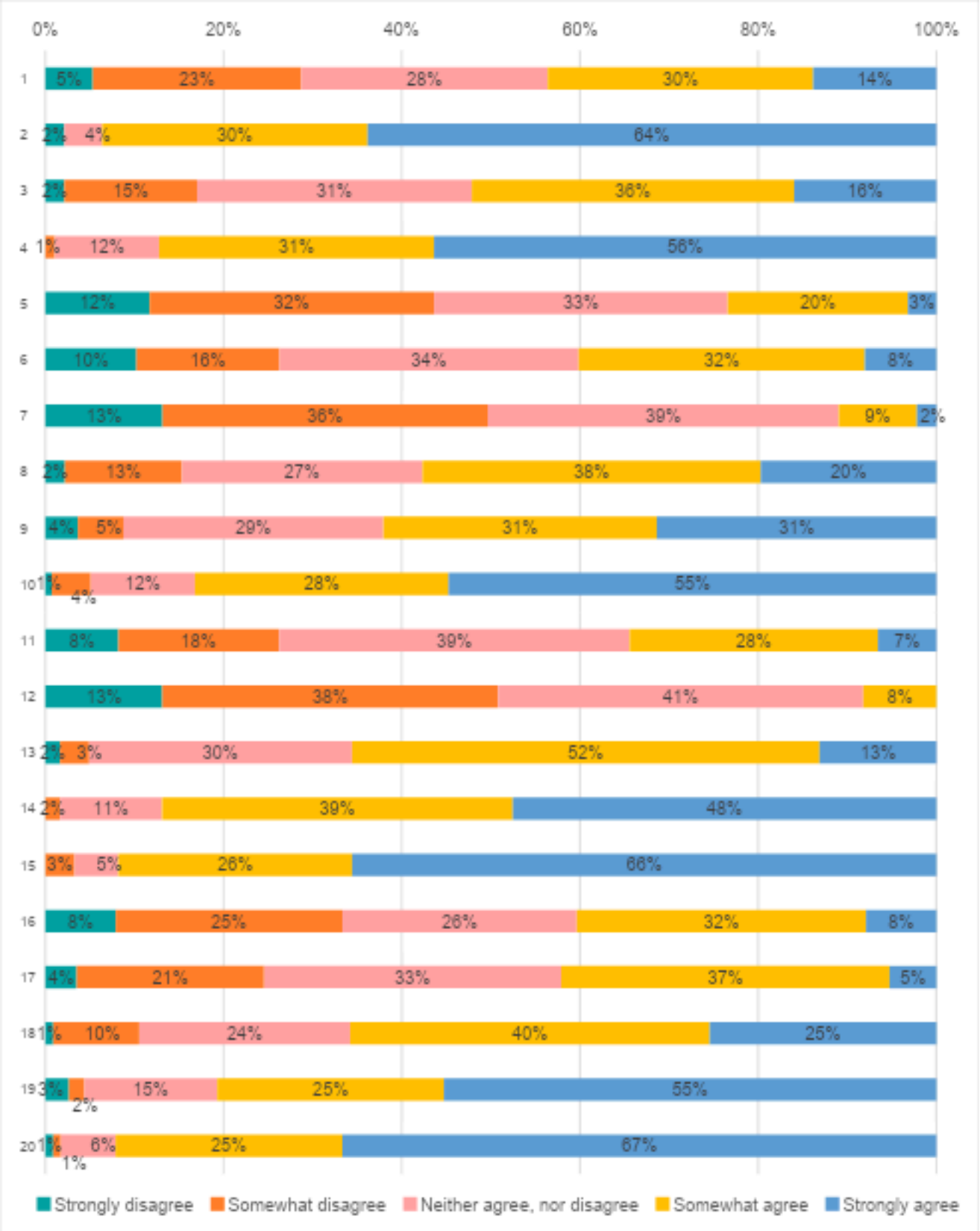
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 406

FIGURE 34 METHODS USED TO VERIFY INFORMATION, BY COUNTRY



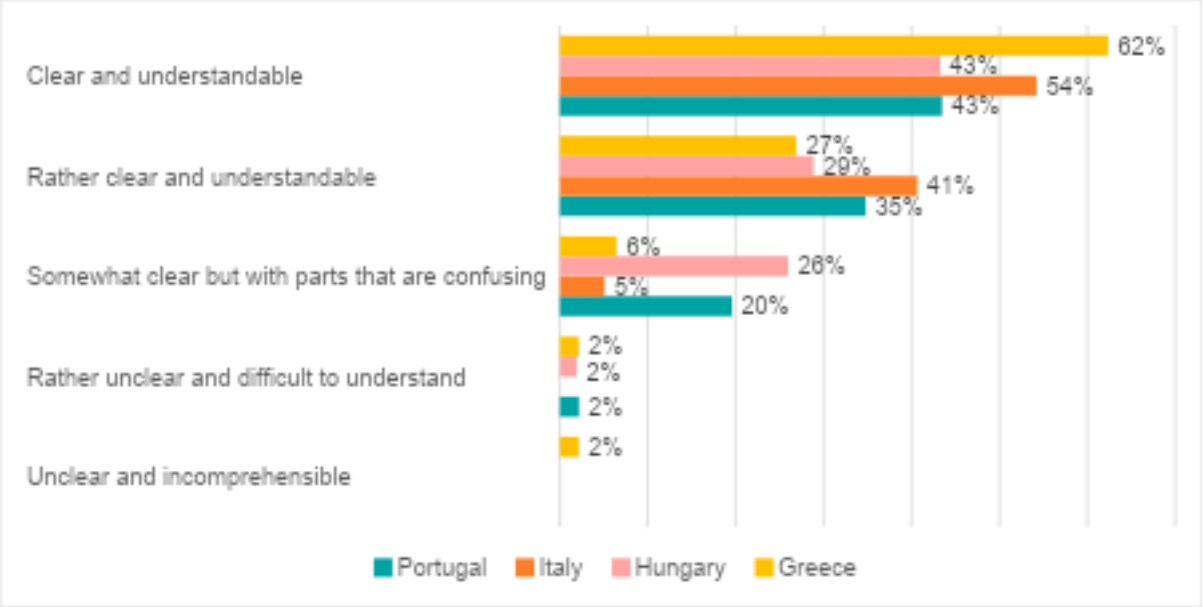
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

FIGURE 35 LEVELS OF AGREEMENT WITH DIFFERENT STATEMENTS CONNECTING TO MEDIA LITERACY, BY COUNTRY



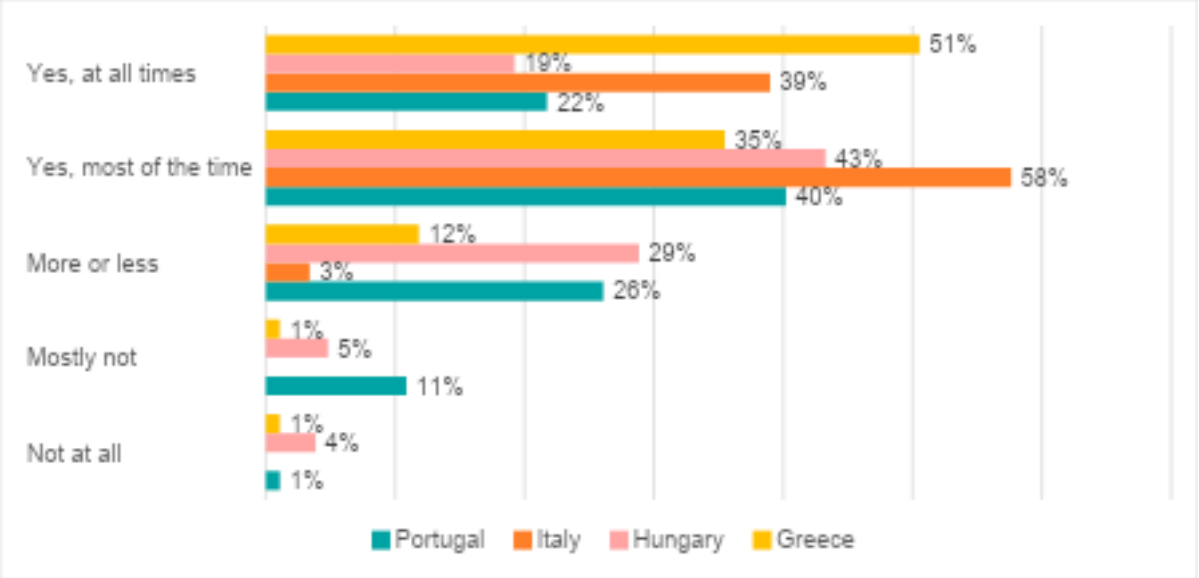
SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 406

Figure 36 Comprehensibility of the completed educational materials, by country



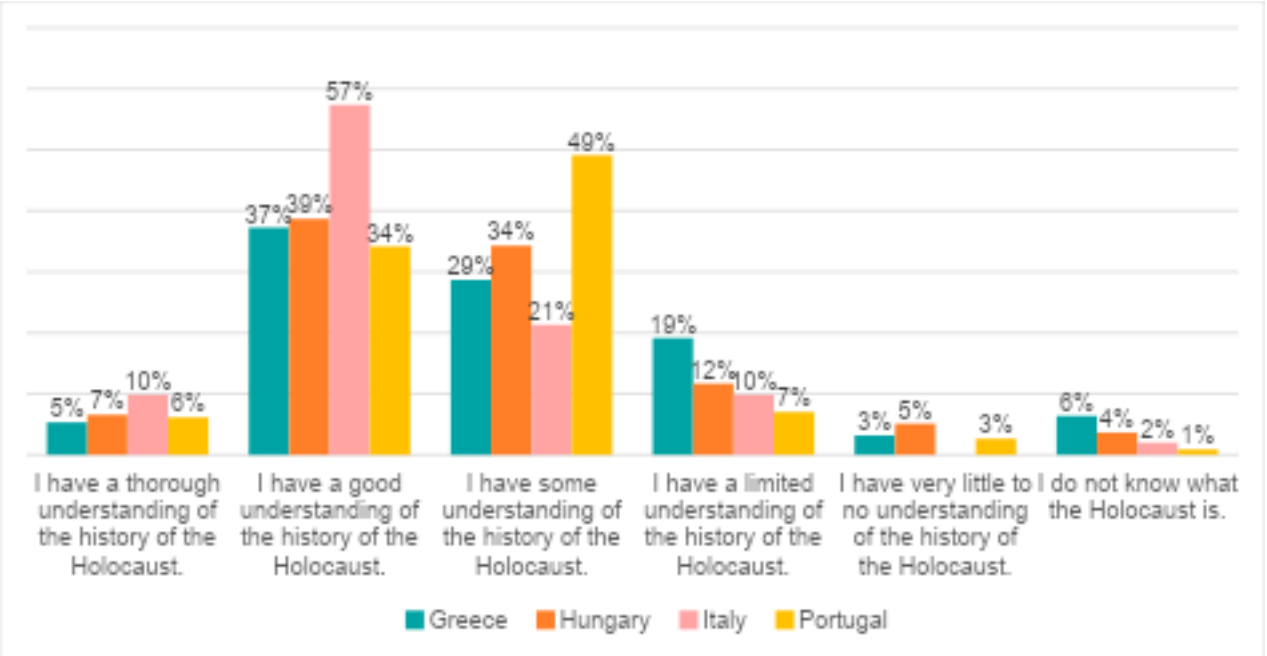
Source: Post-student survey, n = 348

Figure 37 Level of engagement with educational materials, by country



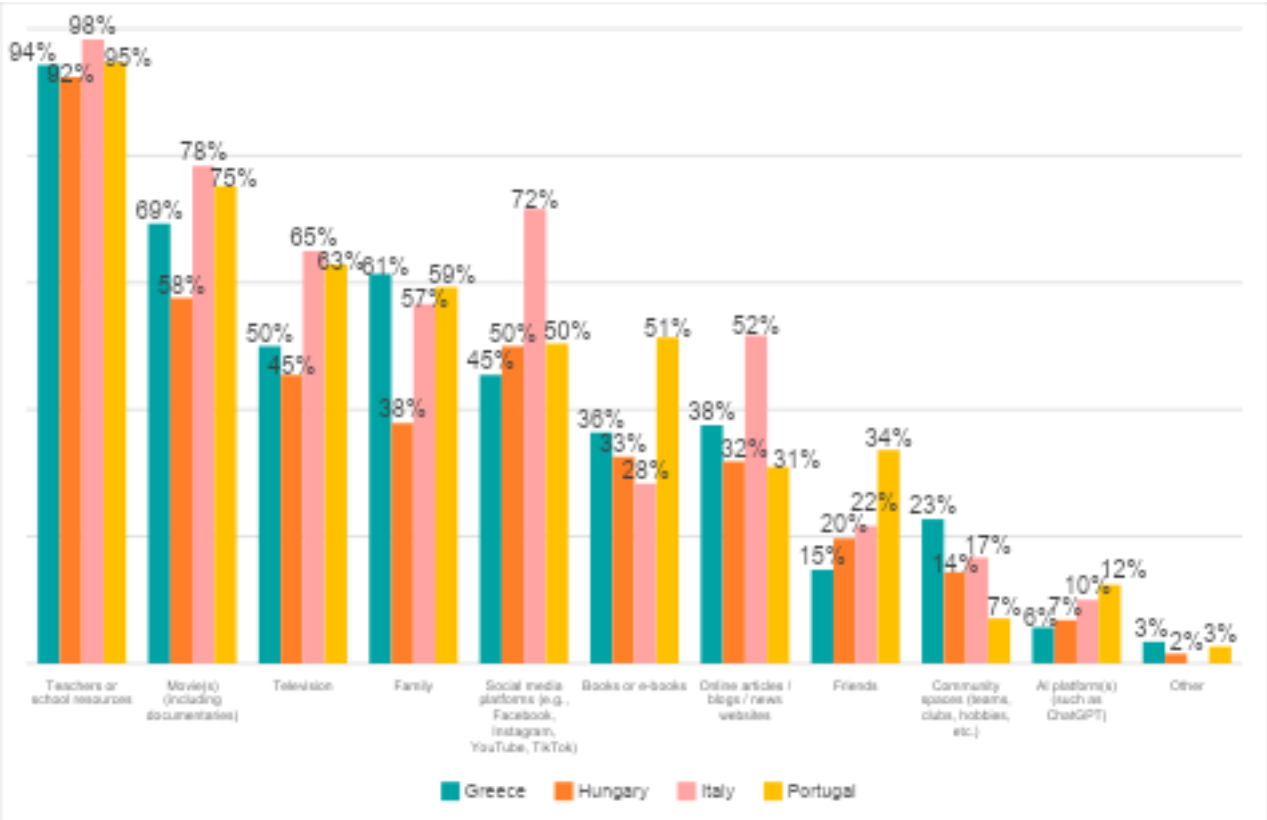
Source: Post-student survey, n = 348

Figure 38 Level of knowledge of the Holocaust, by country



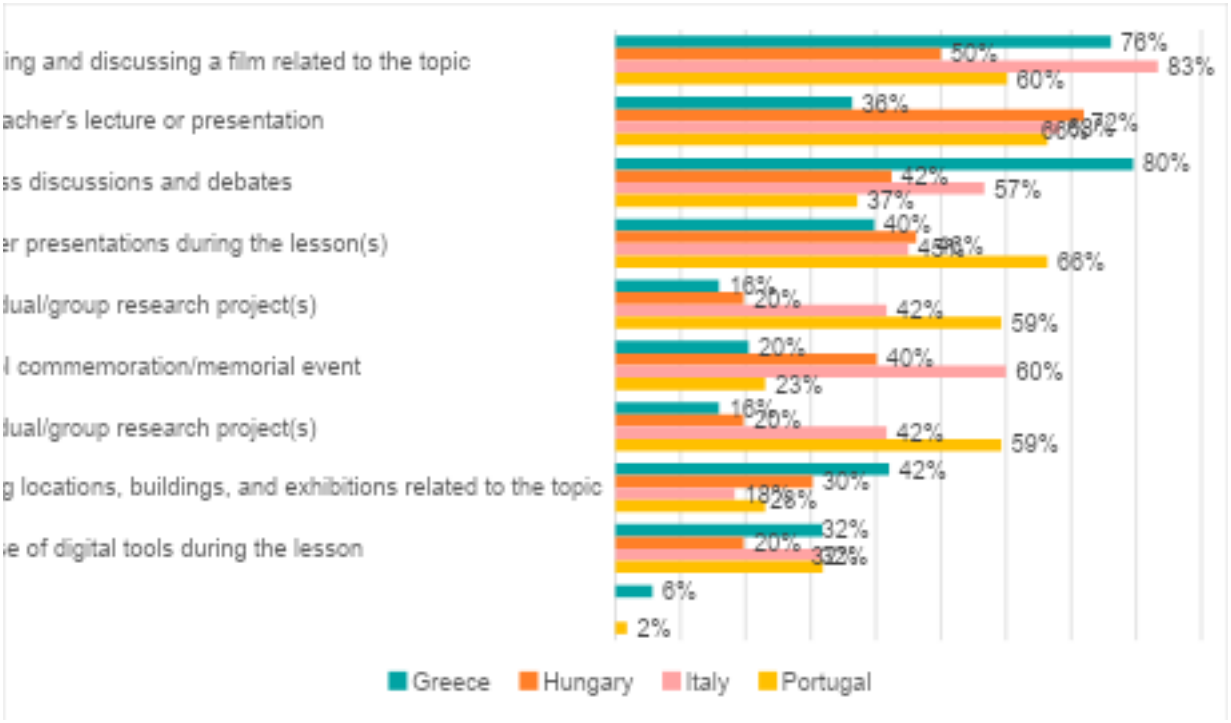
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 406

Figure 39 Sources of initial awareness of the Holocaust, by country



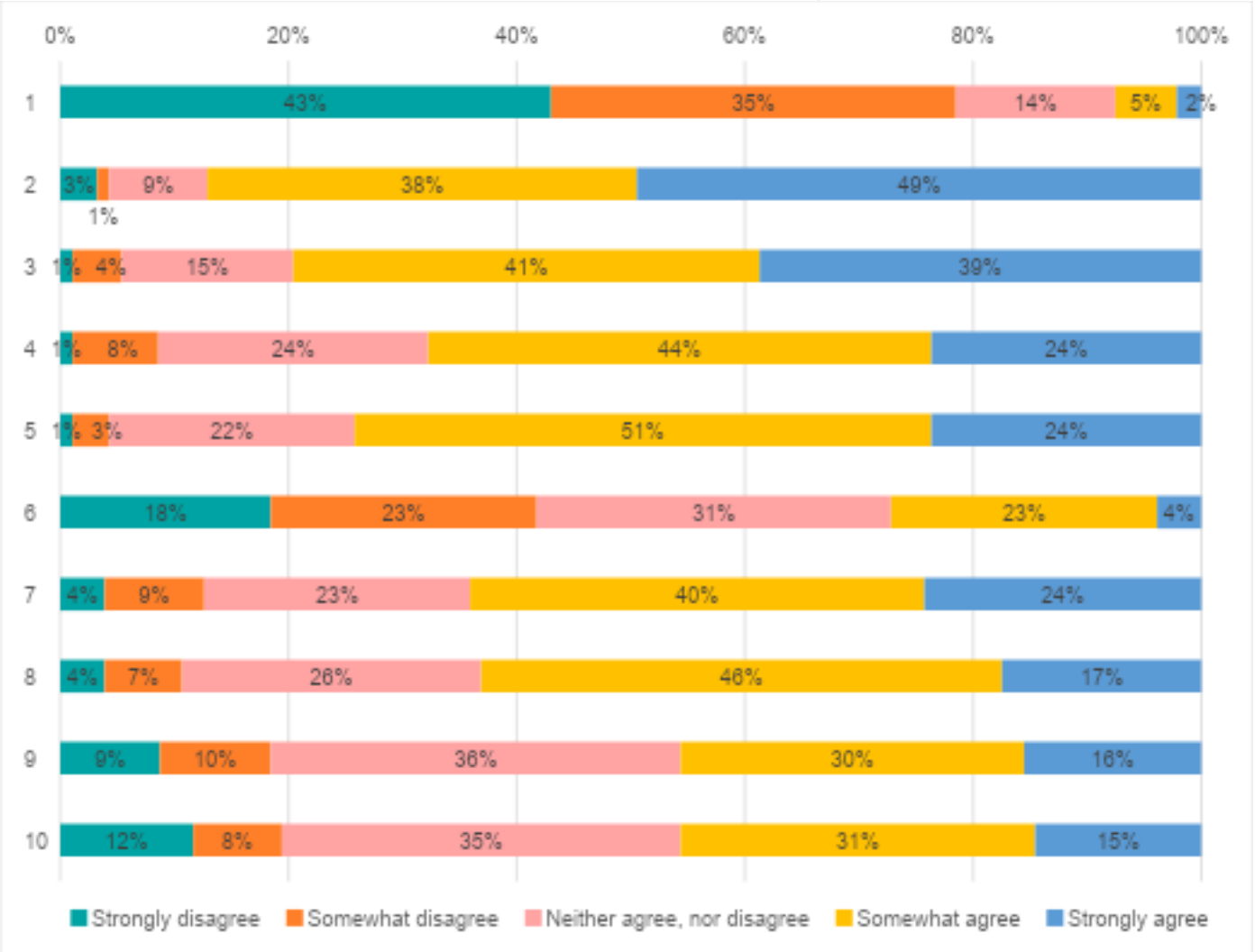
Source: Pre-student survey, n = 393

FIGURE 40 MODES OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, BY COUNTRY

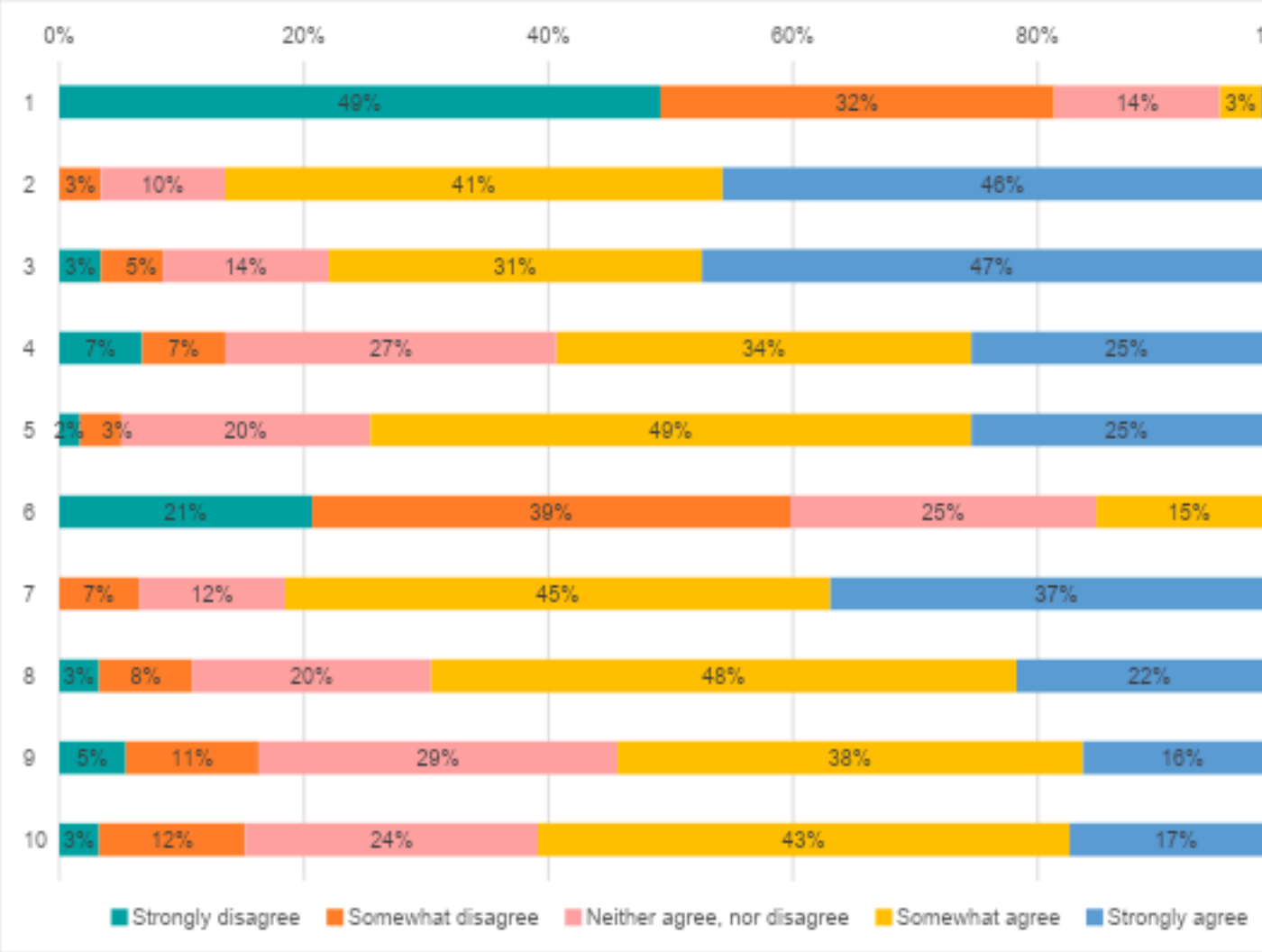


SOURCE: PRE-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 393

FIGURE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE IWITNESS MODULES ON STUDENTS, BY COUNTRY

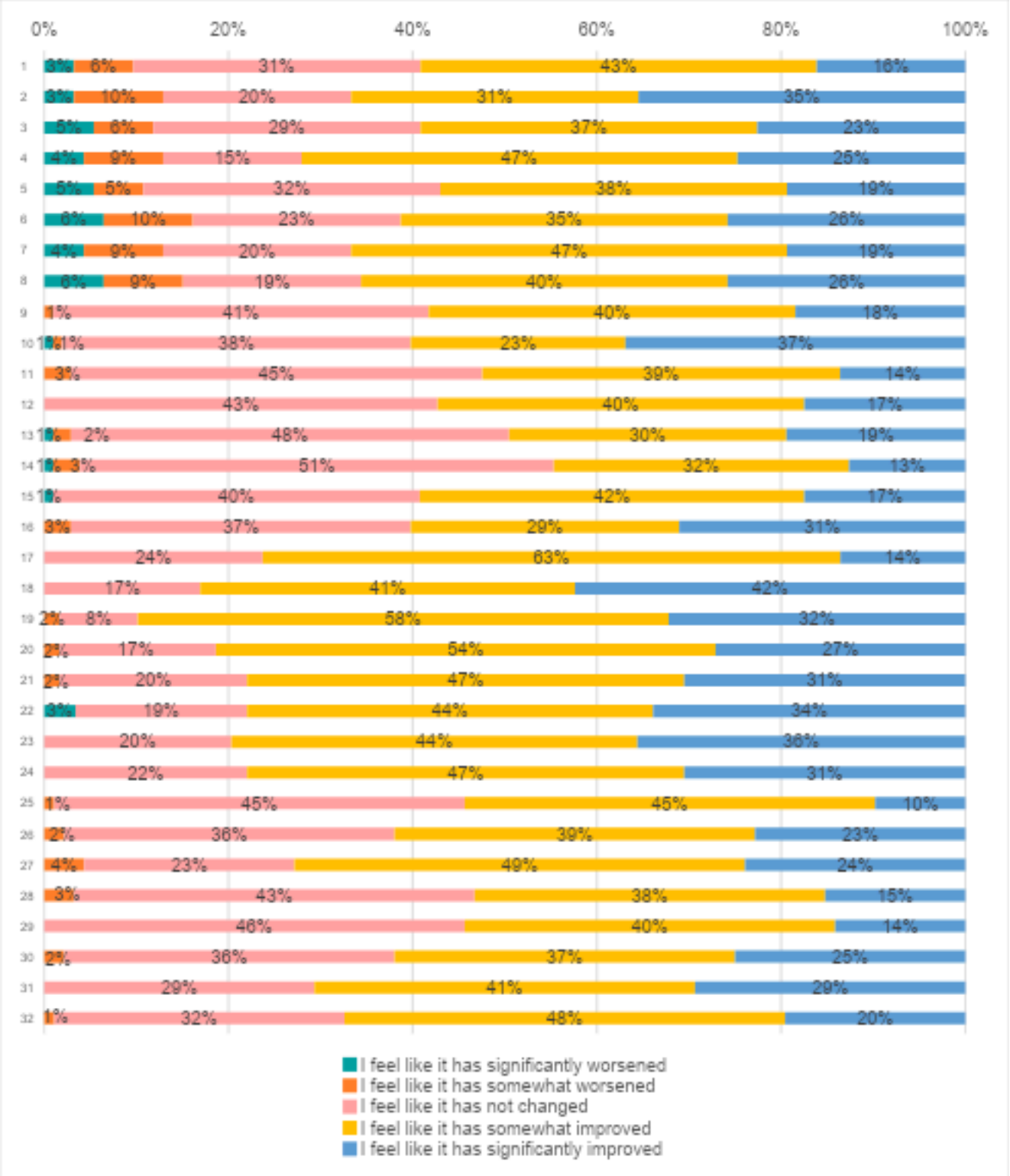


SOURCE: POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 347



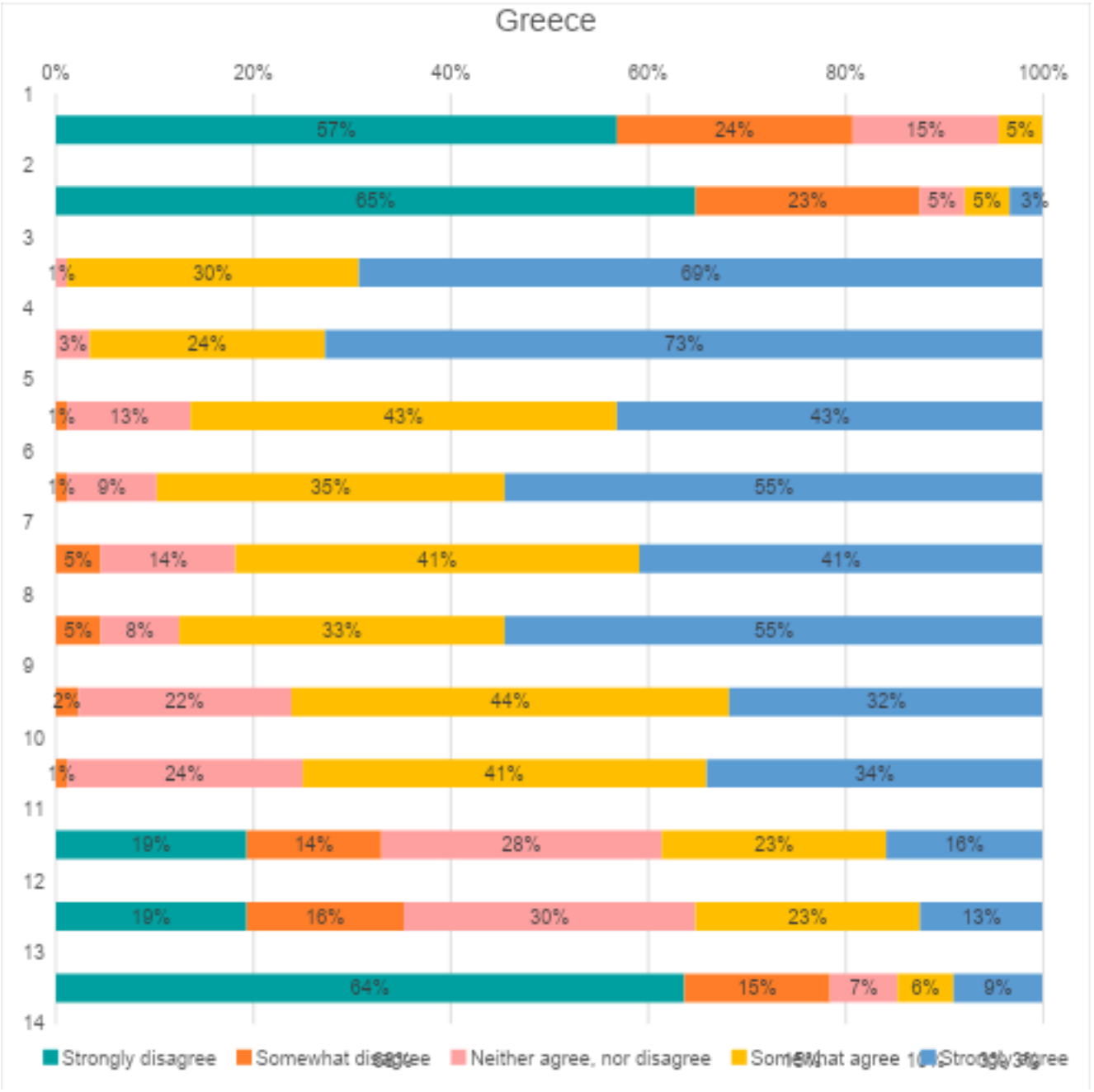
Source: Post-student survey, n = 347

Figure 42 Perceived impact of educational materials on students' personal and cognitive domains, by country



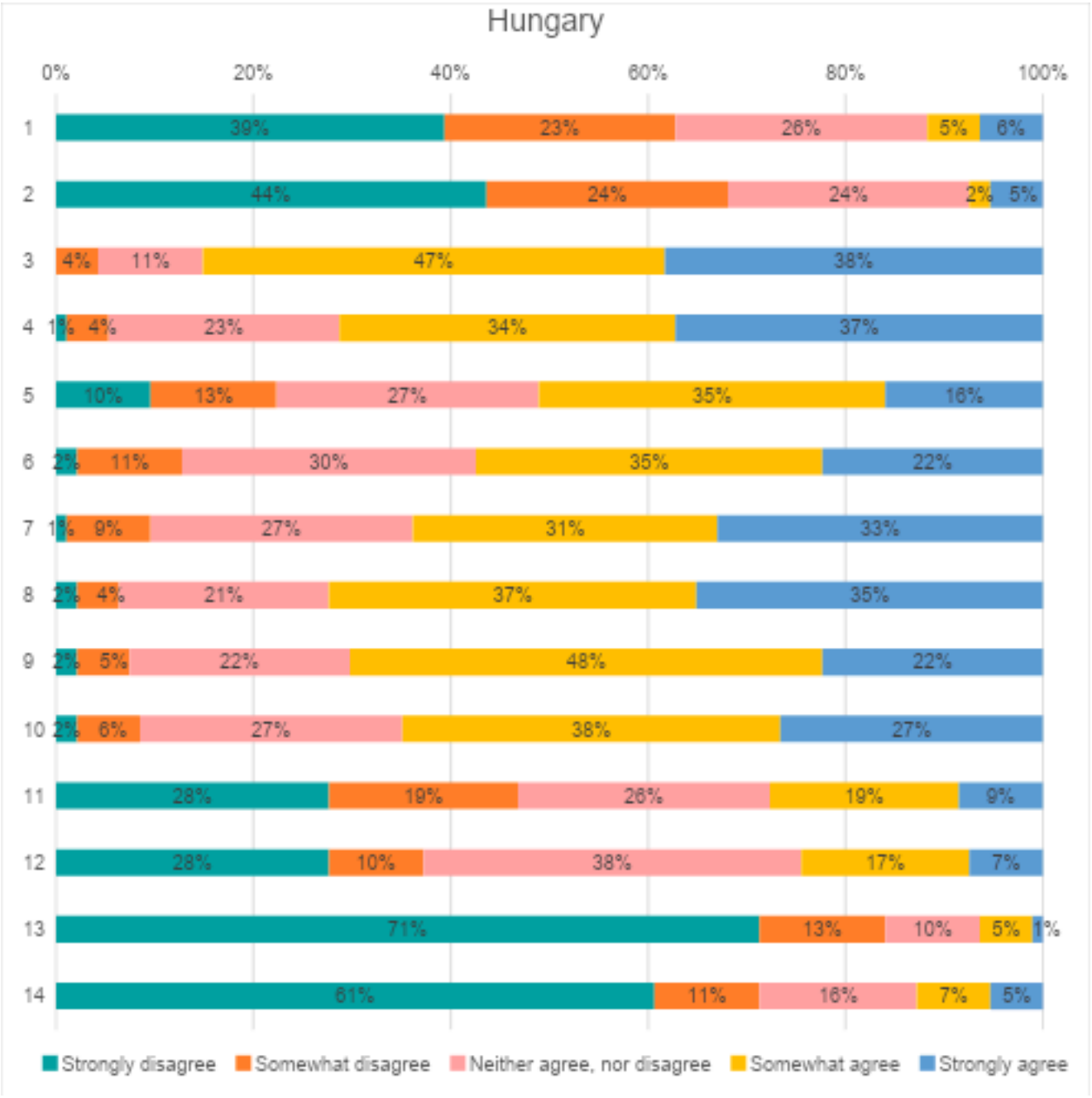
Source: Post-student survey, n = 347

FIGURE 43 ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND DISCRIMINATION (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



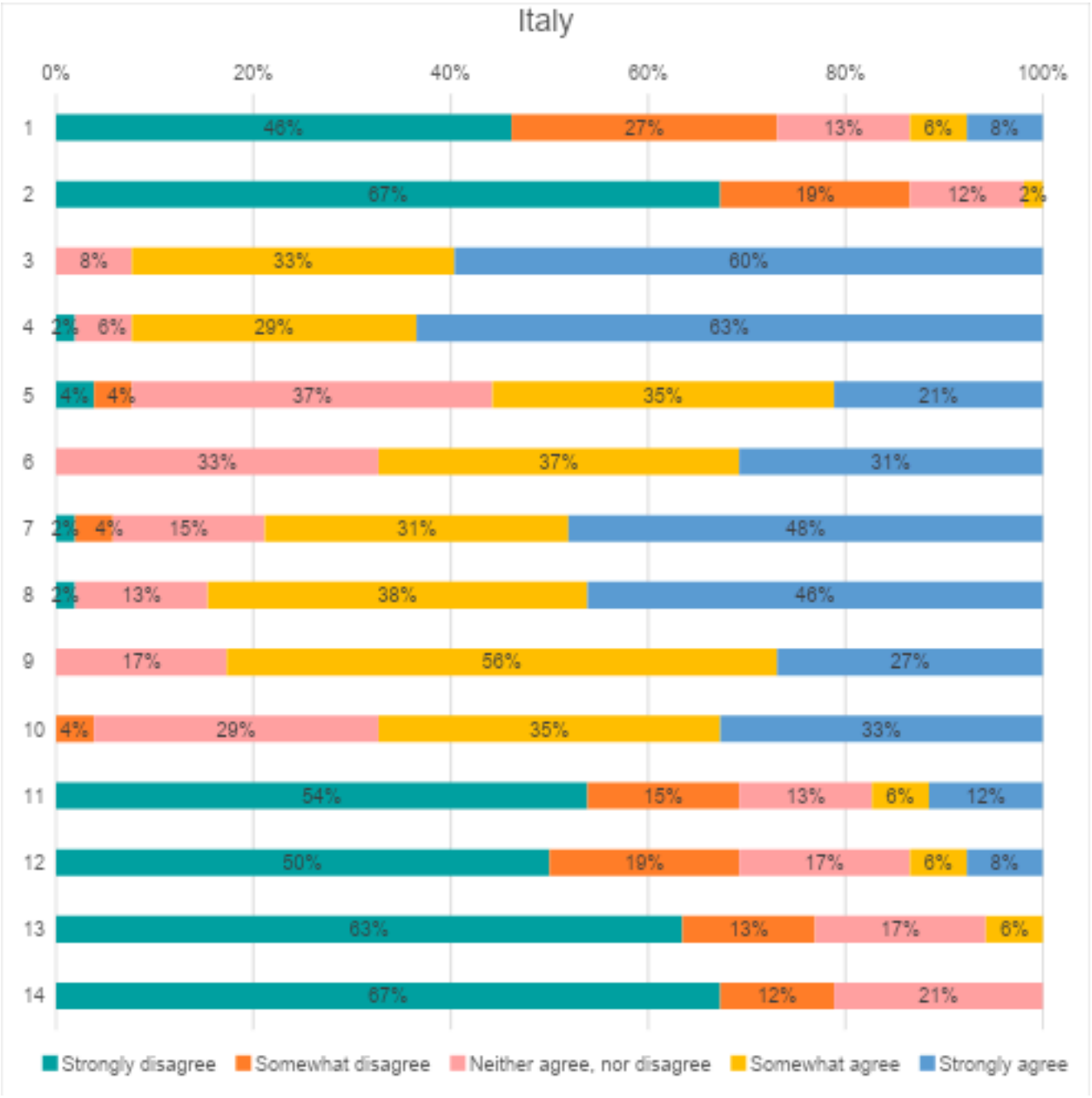
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 88

ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND DISCRIMINATION (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



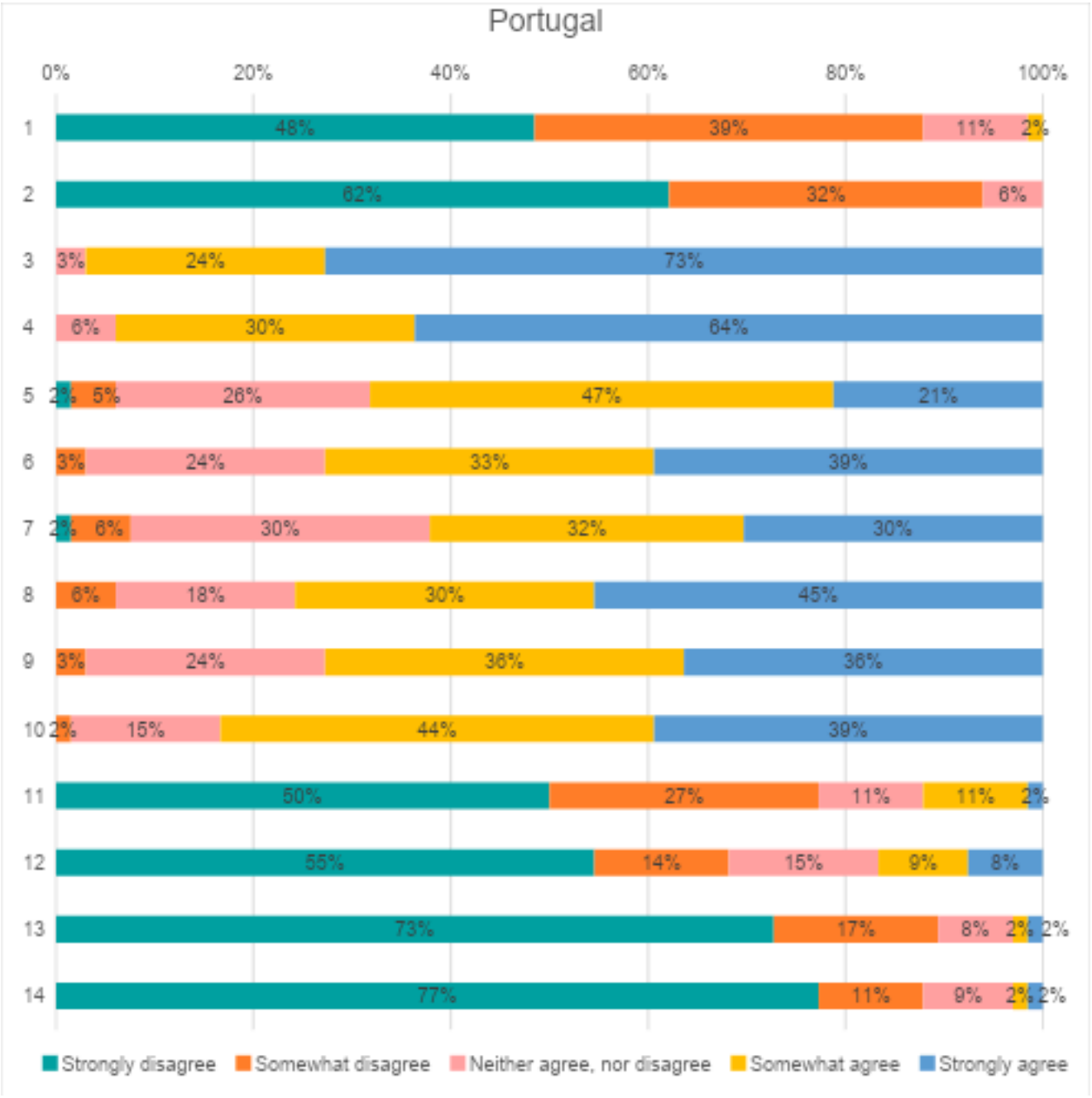
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 94

ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND DISCRIMINATION (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



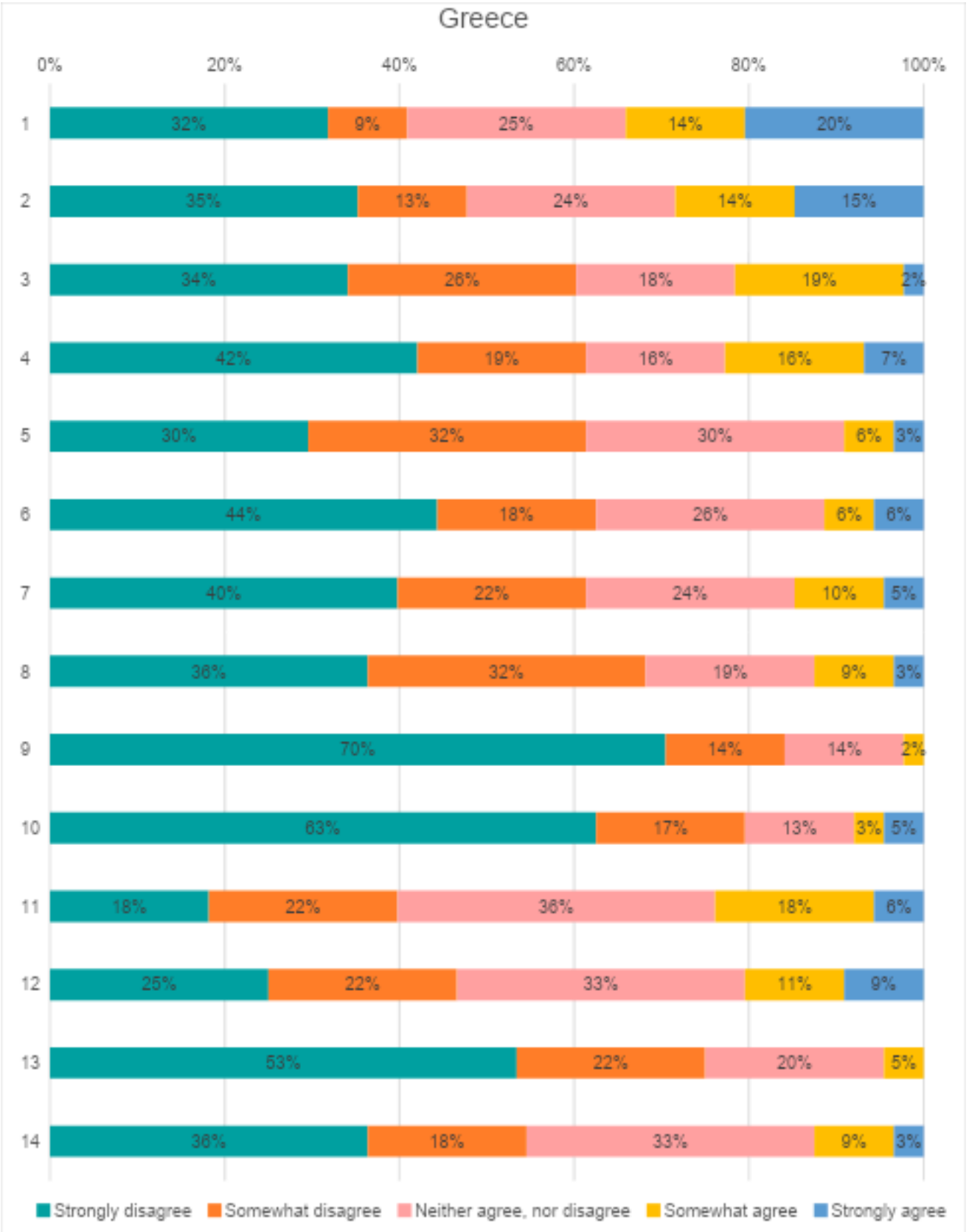
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 52

ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND DISCRIMINATION (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



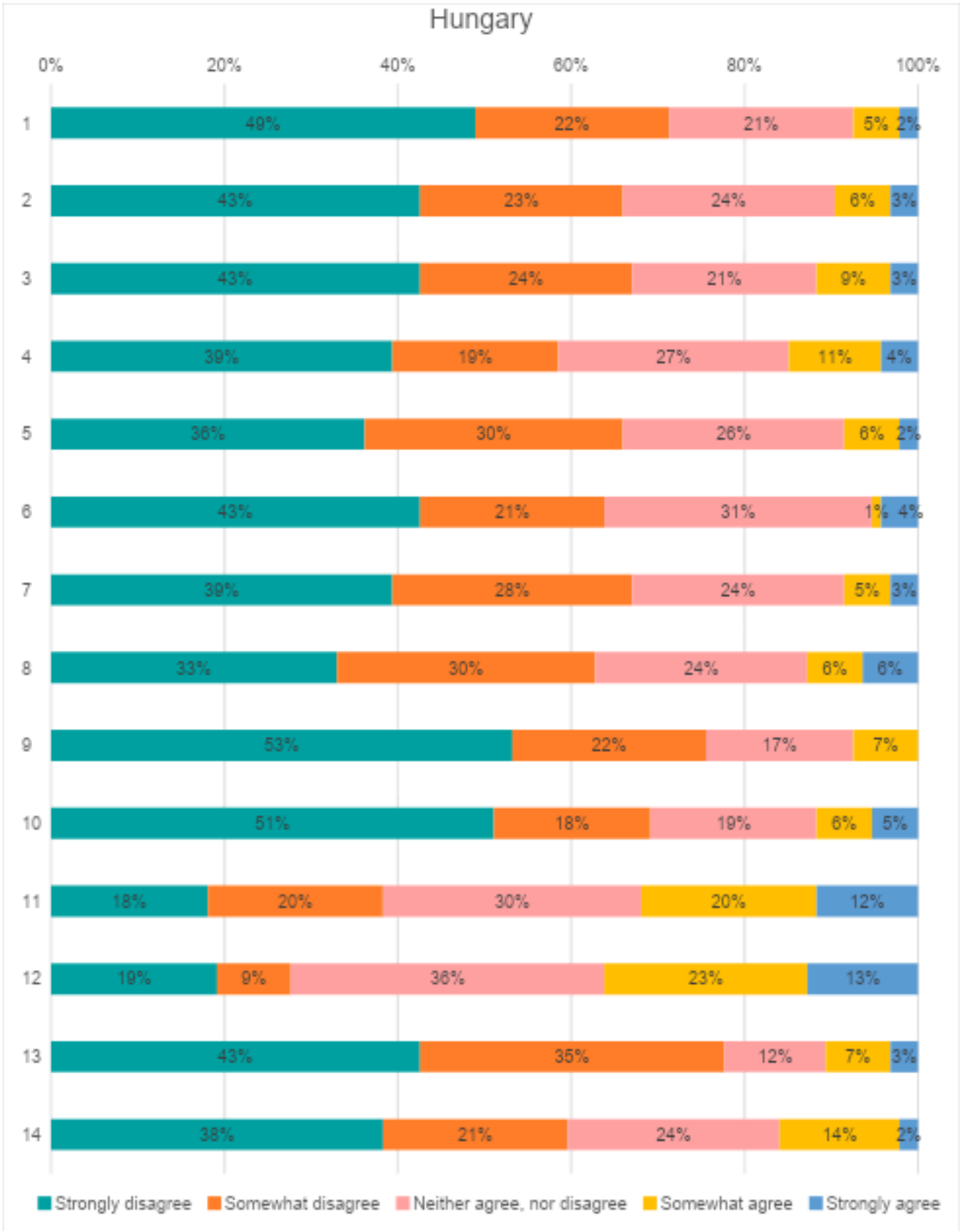
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 66

Figure 44 Responses to Holocaust distortion statements (Q1-Q2), by country



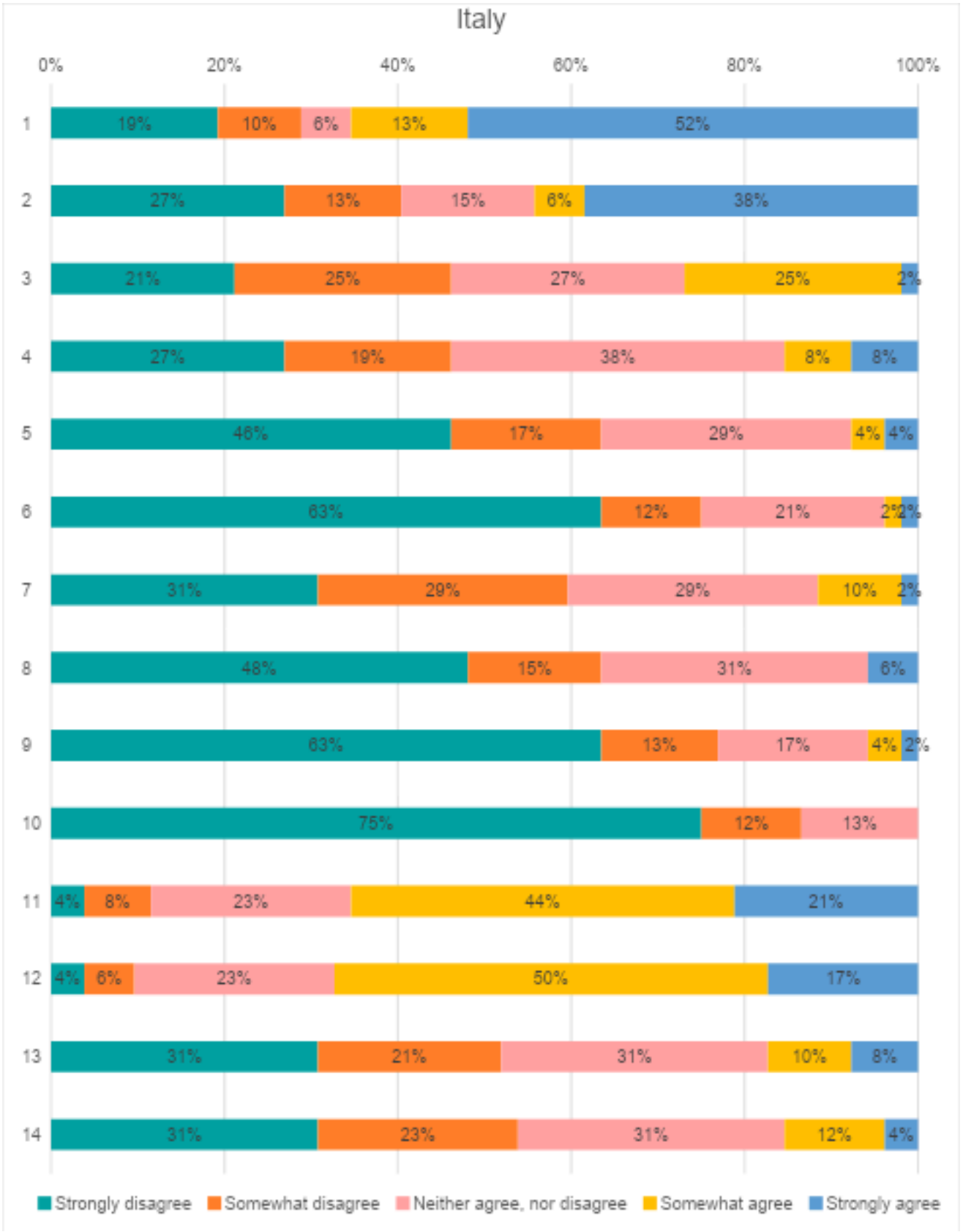
Source: Pre- and Post-student survey, N = 88

Responses to Holocaust distortion statements (Q1-Q2), by country



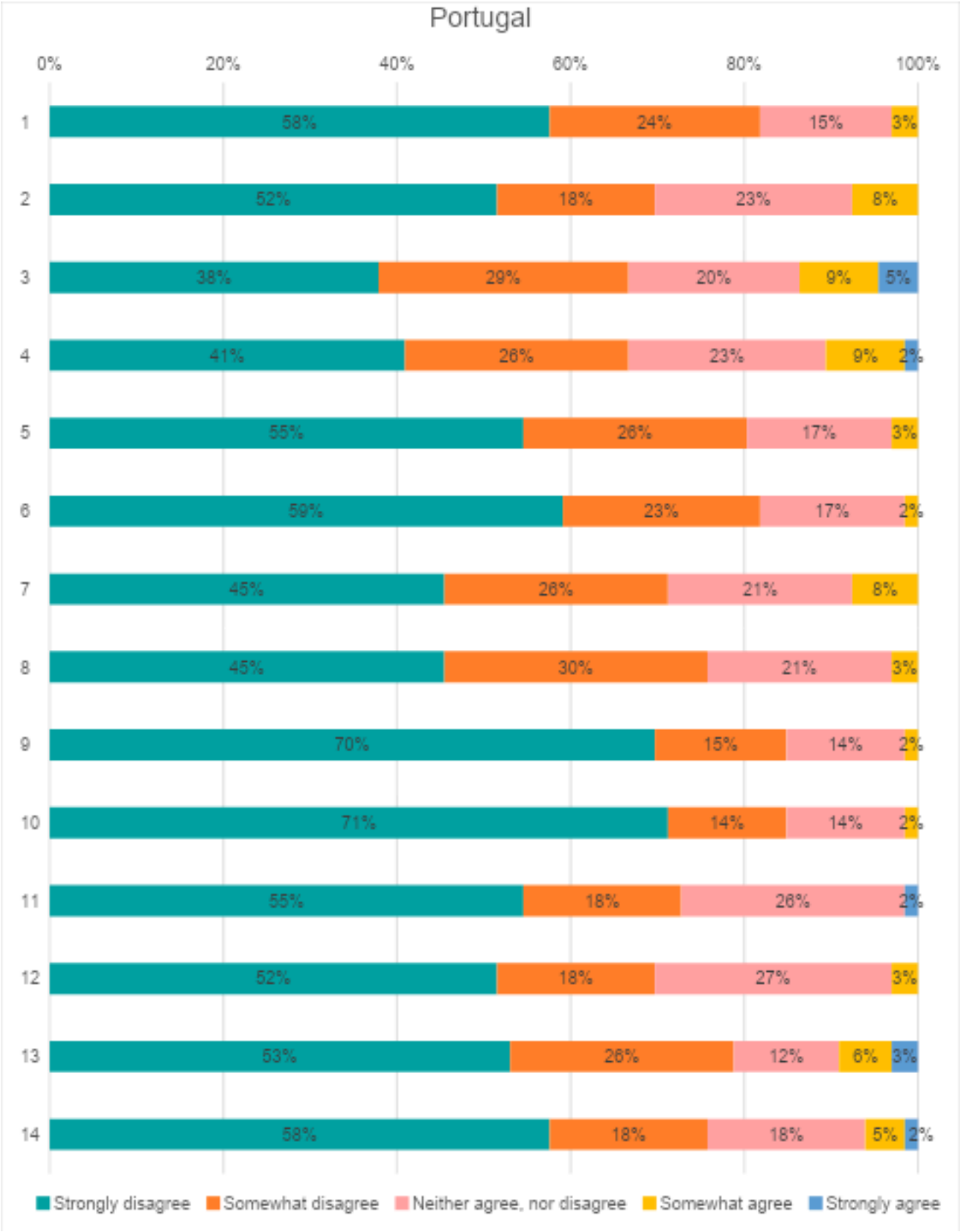
Source: Pre- and Post-student survey, N = 94

Responses to Holocaust distortion statements (Q1-Q2), by country



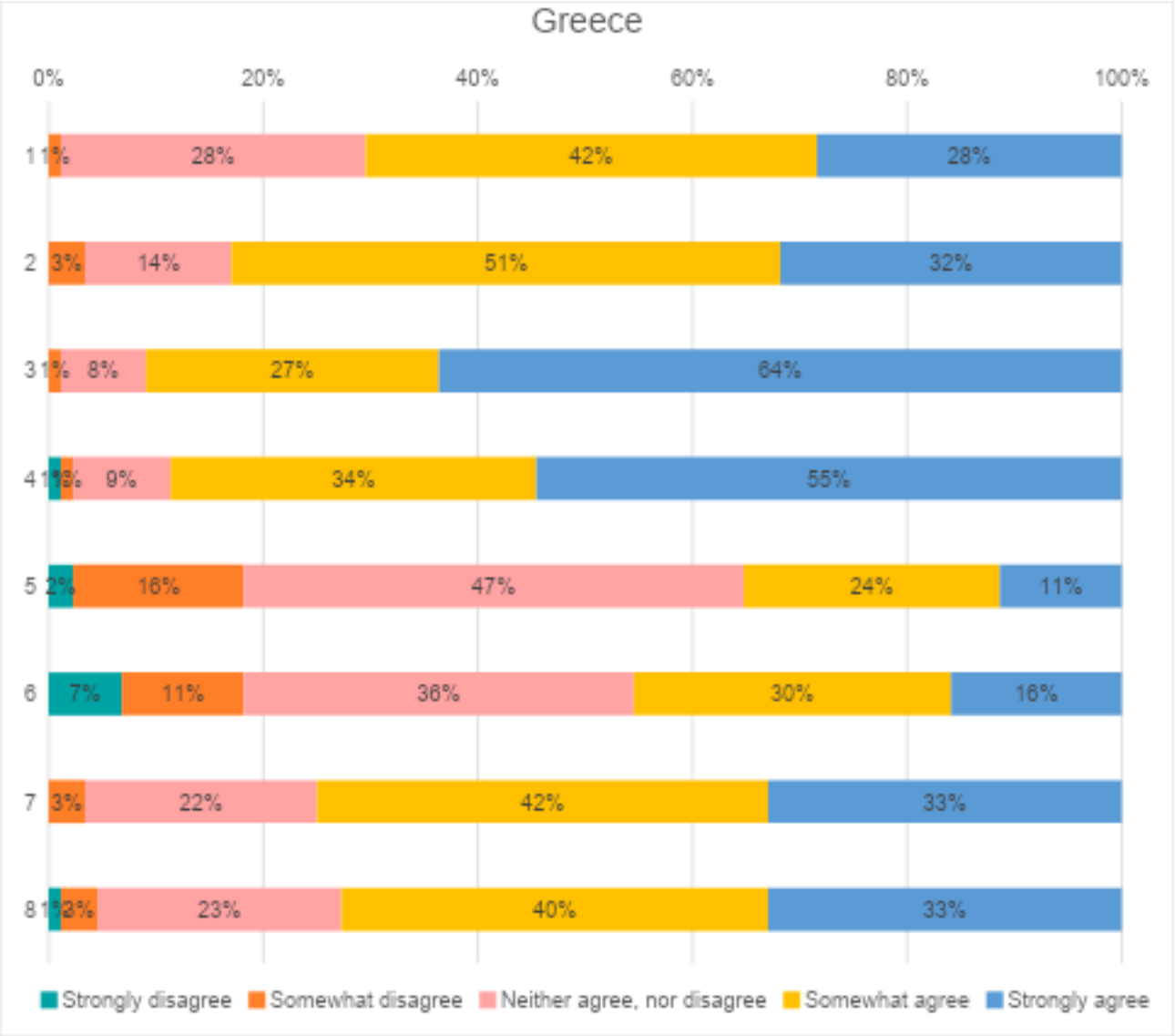
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 52

RESPONSES TO HOLOCAUST DISTORTION STATEMENTS (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY

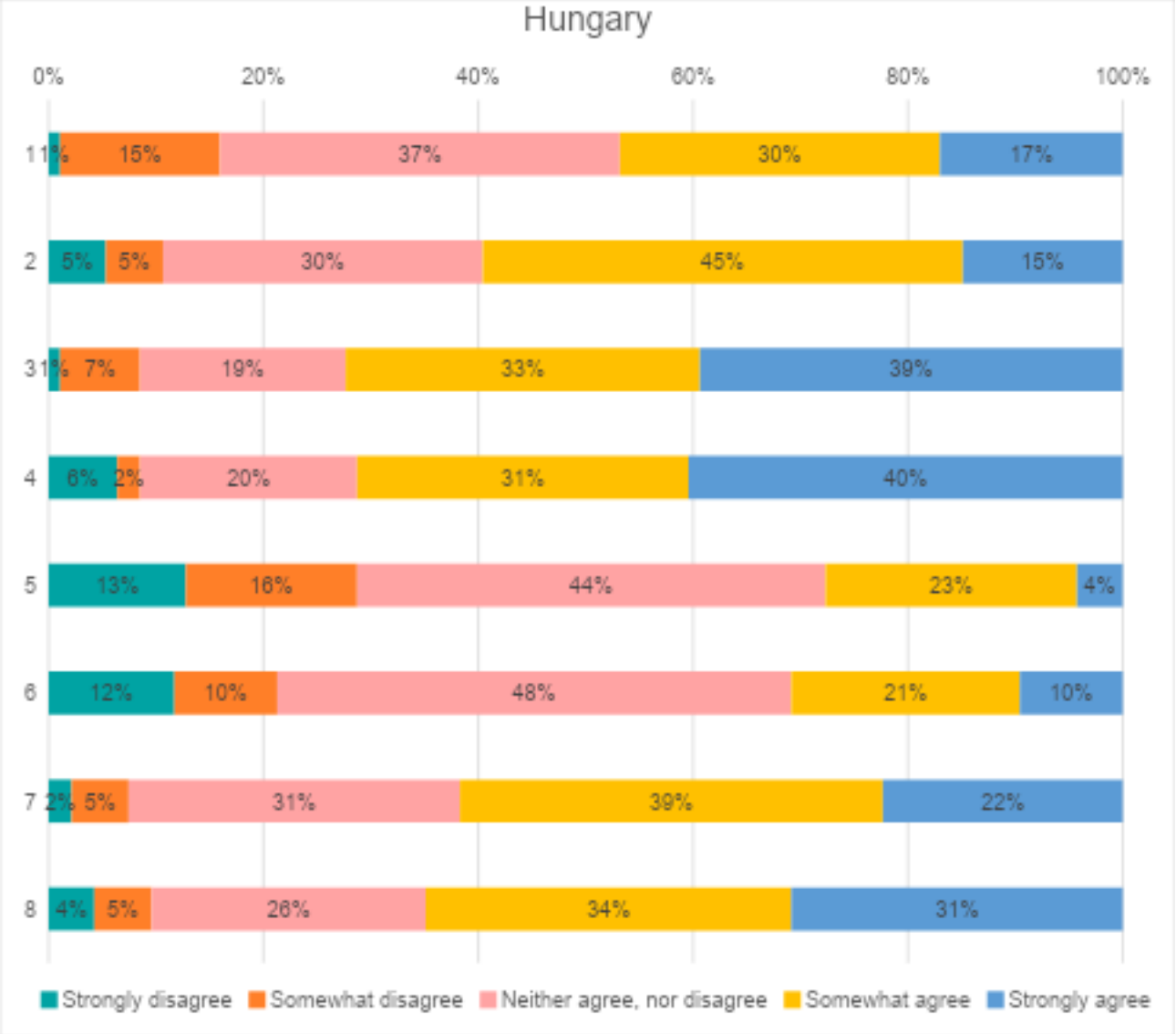


SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 66

FIGURE 45 PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST'S SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY

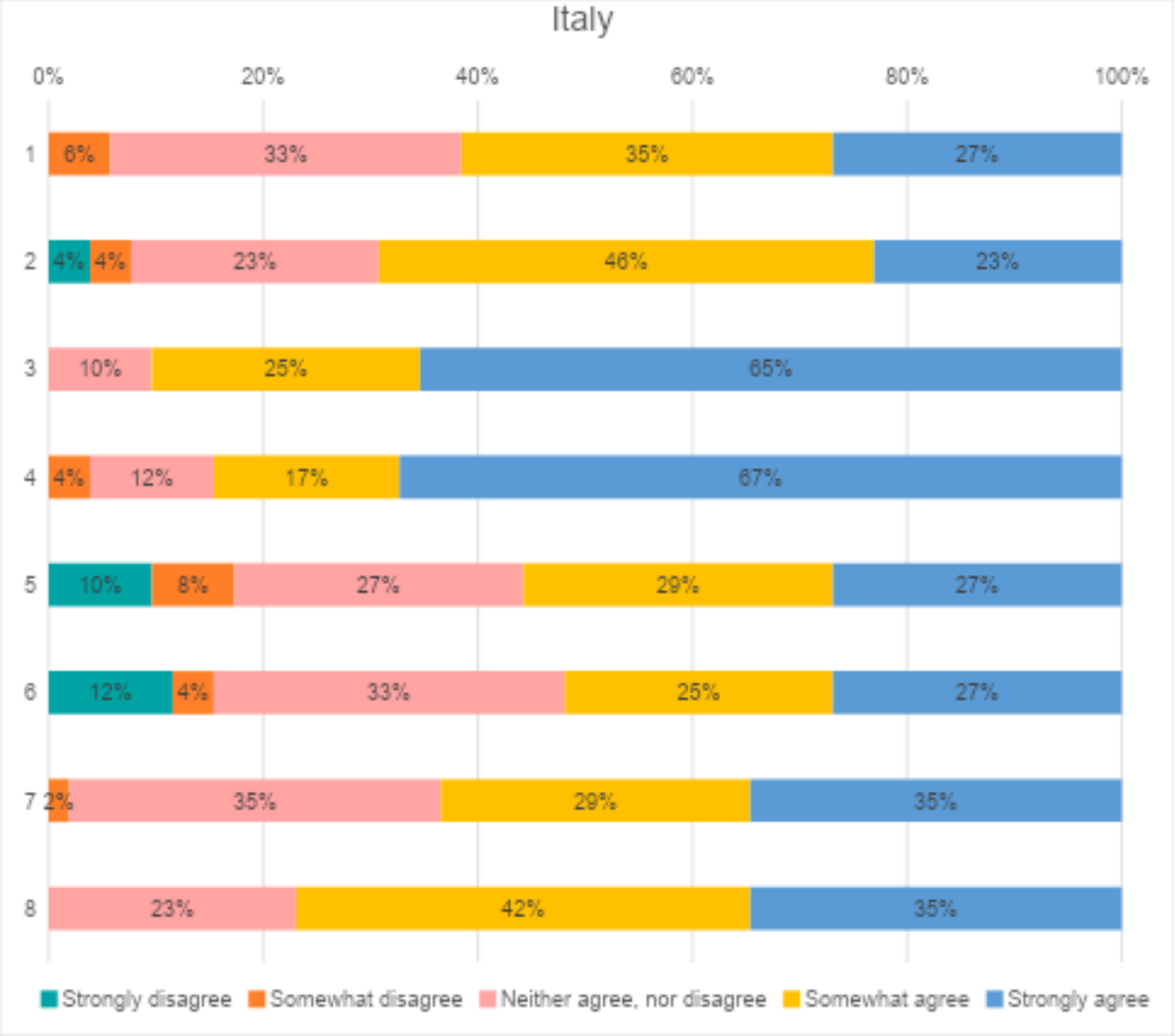


SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 88



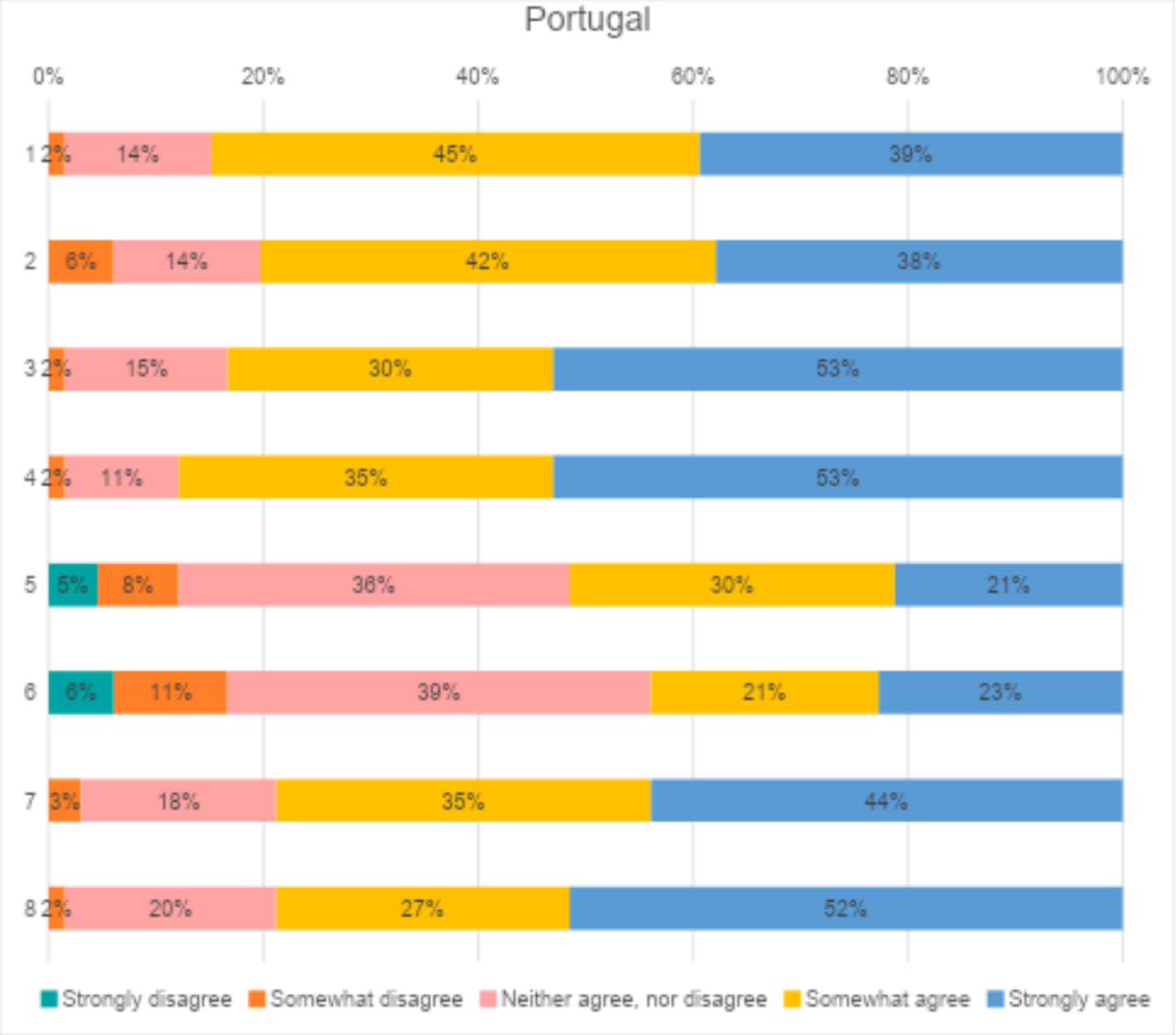
SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 94

PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST'S SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 52

PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST'S SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE (Q1-Q2), BY COUNTRY



SOURCE: PRE- AND POST-STUDENT SURVEY, N = 66

DECONSTRUCT

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