

# International strategic institutional partnerships and the European Universities Initiative Results of the EUA survey

April 2020

Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, Thomas E. Jørgensen, Henriette Stöber et al.



### Contents

### EUA

### The sample

- 1. Internationalisation
  - 1.1 Percentage of international students enrolled in 2018/2019
  - 1.2 Percentage of international staff in 2018/2019
  - 1.3 Internationalisation strategy
  - 1.4 International activities
  - 1.5 Types of partners abroad
  - 1.6 International partners' location
  - 1.7 Top three partner regions
  - 1.8 Frameworks of international collaboration
  - 1.9 Top 5 priorities for internationalisation
- 2. International strategic institutional partnerships
- 2.1 international strategic institutional partnerships
- 2.2 Types of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships

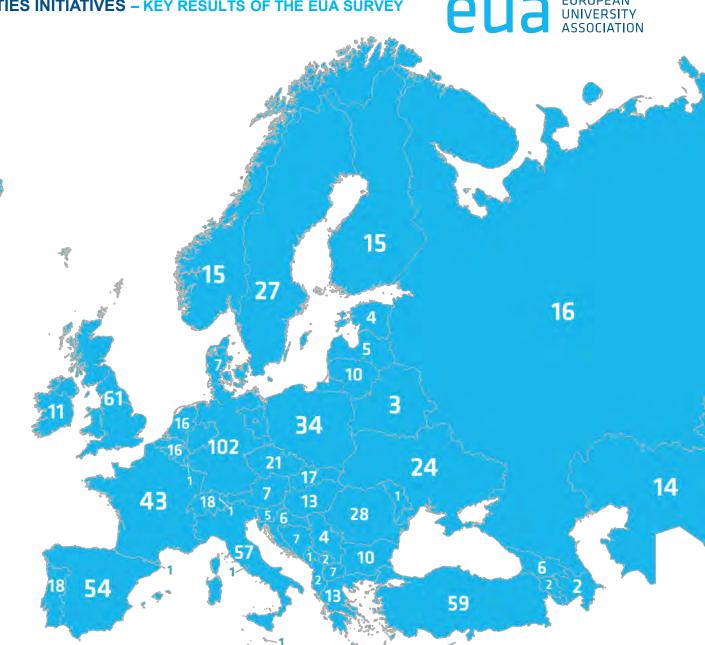
- 2.3 Age of international strategic institutional partnerships
- 2.4 Number of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships
- 2.5 Focus of international strategic institutional partnerships
- 2.6 Areas covered by partnerships
- 2.7 Activities of international strategic institutional partnerships
- 3. The European Universities Initiative
  - 3.1 Participation in the European Universities Initiative
  - 3.2 Expected benefits of participating in the European Universities Initiative
  - 3.3 Challenges for participating in the European Universities Initiaitve
  - 3.4 Reasons for not participating
  - 3.5 External support for application and/or implementation
  - 3.6 Recommendations for the future
- 4. Key points
  - Want to know more?
- EUA project team

#### INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVES – KEY RESULTS OF THE EUA SURVEY

## EUA

The European University Association is the largest and most comprehensive organisation representing universities in Europe with more than 800 member universities in 48 European countries and 33 national university associations.

In early 2020 EUA conducted a survey to map the state of play of universities' international engagement, explore in particular the topic of international strategic institutional partnerships and collect views about the European Universities Initiative.

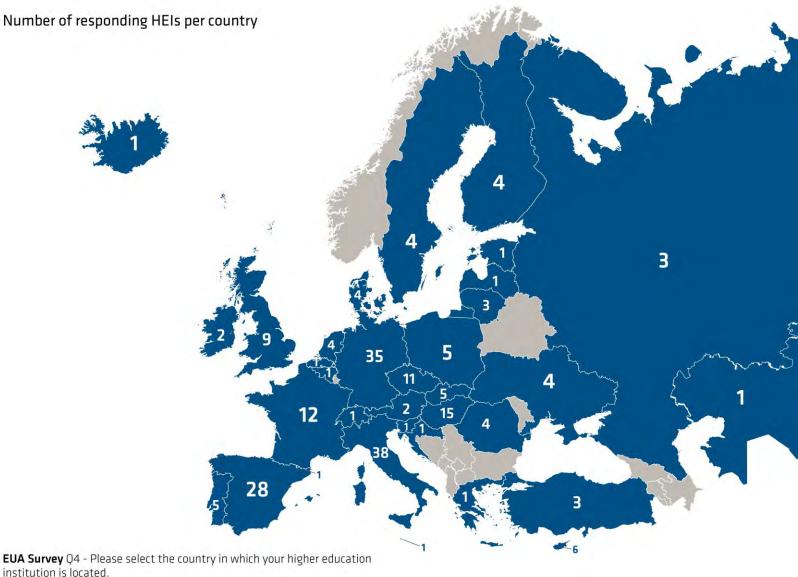


## 

## The sample

219 valid responses from higher education institutions from 34 systems across Europe were submitted.

The sample is uneven as the number of responses from some systems compared to their size is relatively low (e.g. France, Poland and Romania for instance), while others are highly represented (e.g. Italy, Germany, Hungary for instance). This has to be taken into account when looking at the results.



EUA Survey Q4 - Please select the country in which your higher education institution is located N = 219



Percentage of international students enrolled in 2018/2019

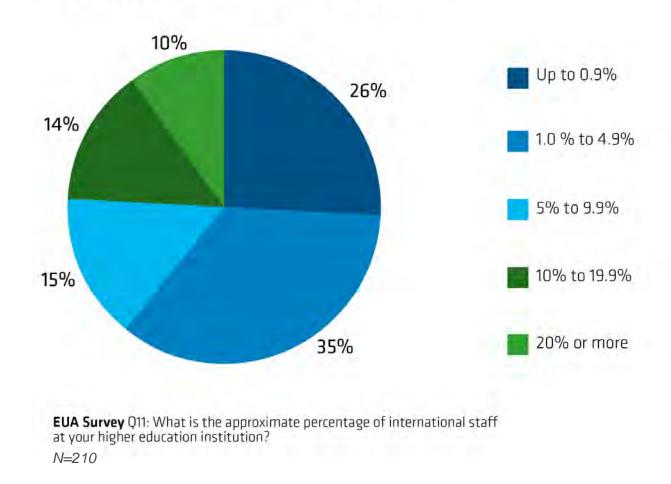
6% 20% Up to 0.9% 20% 1.0 % to 4.9% 5% to 9.9% 10% to 19.9% 23% 32% 20% or more

**EUA Survey** Q10: What is the percentage of international students at your institution? N=217

More than half of responding higher education institutions have 10% or more international students.



More than 60% of responding institutions have less than 5% international staff, while about one quater has 10% or more.



Percentage of international staff in 2018/2019

43% have a specific

internationalisation strategy.



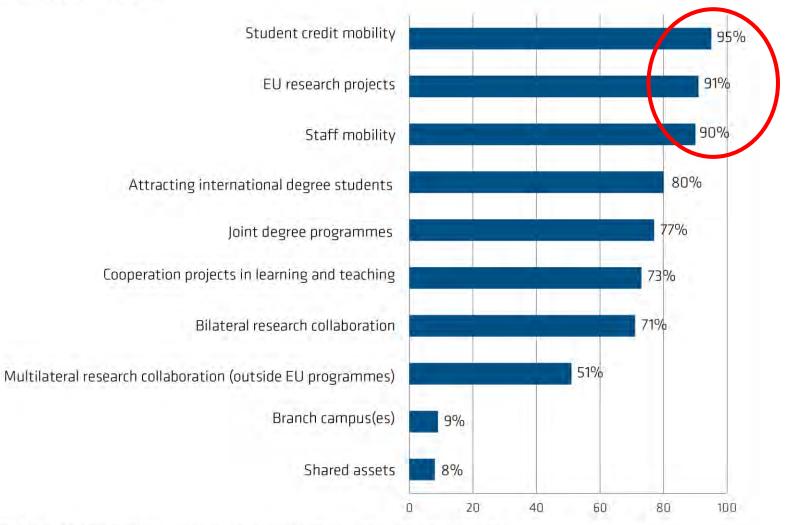
2% 10% Yes, we have a specific 43% Internationalisation has been a internationalisation strategy in strategic issue and an integral part of place. the activities at many institutions for quite a while, as also shown by the Yes, internationalisation is part of the general strategy of EUA Trends study. In this sample, the institution. 53% of respondents indicate that it is part of their general strategy, while No, but we are currently developing an internationalisation strategy. 53% Other, please specify

> **EUA Survey** Q12: Do you have an internationalisation strategy in place at your institution? N=238

Internationalisation strategy

With 90% are more of respondents citing student credit mobility, EU research projects and staff mobility, higher education institutions engage in a variety of international activities. 80% work on attracting international degree students and about four quarter of respondents collaborate on joint degree programmes, other learning and teaching projects and bilateral research activities.

Multilateral research collaboration outside EU programmes are mentioned by about half of respondents. Only a small number of institutions in the sample have branch campuses abroad or share assets with partners in other countries. International activities



**EUA Survey** Q18: In which international activities is your higher education institution engaged? N=219



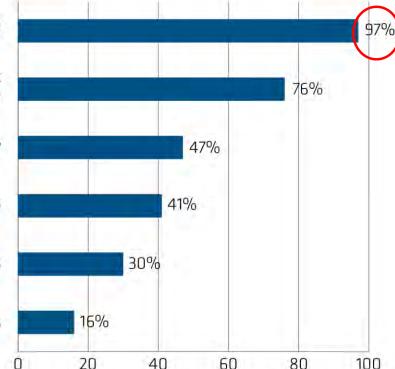
Higher education institutions work with a variety of different partners abroad for different purposes and in different contexts. Most collaboration takes place between institutions with similar profile, followed by collaboration of institutions with different, but complementarity profiles.

Business and industry abroad are highest on the list for collaboration with non academic partners, followed by NGOs, ministries and public bodies, while only a small minority of institutions collaborates with foreign education institutions from other levels such as secondary schools.

### Types of partners abroad

Other higher education institutions with a similar profile Other higher education institutions with a different, but complementary profile Business and industry Non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations Ministries, public bodies in the partner countries 30% Other educational institutions from other educational levels 16% 20 0 40

**EUA Survey** Q14: Who are your institution's partners abroad? Please tick all applicable. *N=219* 





Universities work with partners around the world in different ways. Almost all institutions in the sample have partners in several other world regions beyond Europe, making them truly global actors.

Most collaboration takes place with partners in the EU, followed by North America. About three quarters collaborate with partners in Europe outside the EU, Asia (other than China, India or the Middle East), China and South and Central America. Close to two thirds work with Africa and more than half of respondents collaborate with the Middle East, India and Australia/New Zeeland/Oceania. International partners' location 99% European Union 84% North America 79% Europe outside the European Union 78% Asia (other than China, India or Middle East) 77% China 76% South and Central America 62% Africa 55% Middle East 55% India 52% Australia/New Zeeland/Oceania 20 40 80 100 60

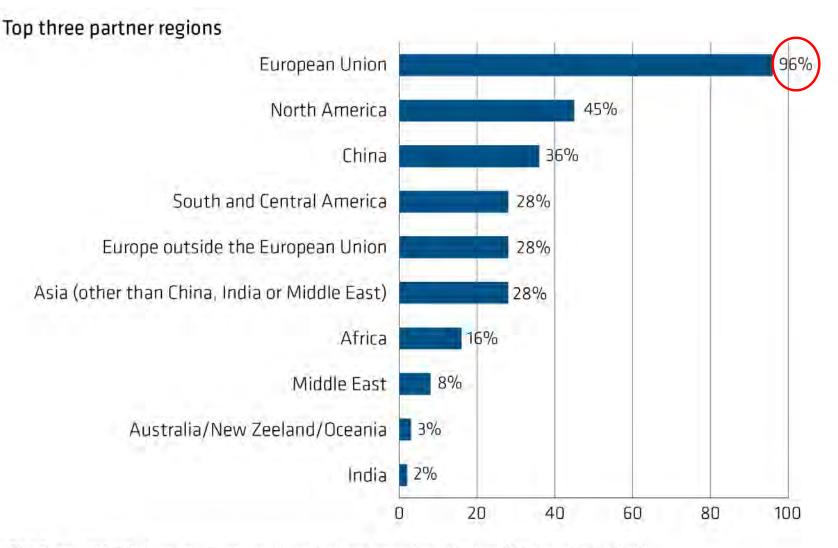
**EUA Survey** Q15: Where are your institution's partners located? Please tick all applicable. *N=219* 

#### eua european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

When asked about their top three partner regions in the world, most higher education institutions in the sample put the EU first.

Almost half of respondents have North America among their top three partner regions and about one third indicates China among their three priority regions, followed by a bit less than one third mentioning Europe outside the EU, South and Central America and Asia other than China, India or the Middle East.



**EUA Survey** Q16: What are your three most important partner regions in the world for your institution? Please tick three from the list below.

N=219

#### INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVES – KEY RESULTS OF THE EUA SURVEY

#### european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

#### Frameworks of international collaboration

Erasmus+ student and staff mobility 99% Horizon 2020 collaborative research projects 84% Erasmus+ cooperation projects 83% 56% National programme for research collaboration and/or mobility 53% Interreg Europe 47% **COST** Actions Bilateral programme for research collaboration and/or 33% mobility 30% National programme for collaboration in L&T (incl. mobility) Bilateral programme for L&T (incl. mobility) 25% Multilateral programme for research collaboration and/or 25% mobility, other than EU prorgammes Multilateral programme for learning and teaching (incl. 21% mobility), other than EU programmes Other 5% 20 80 100 n 40 60

**EUA Survey** Q19: What are the collaboration frameworks that you use for international collaboration? N=219

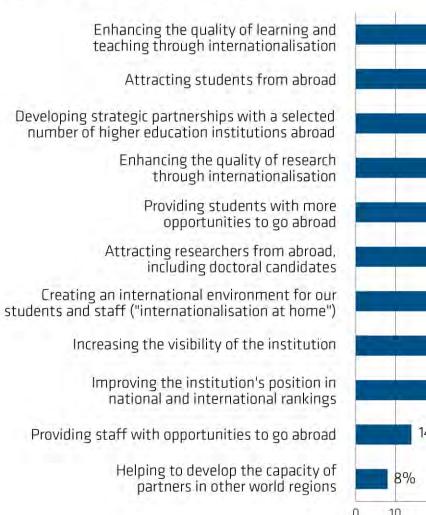
EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 are essential for university collaboration with partners abroad, far more than other frameworks. This shows the added value of EU programmes and their essential role in the internationalisation of higher education institutions in Europe.

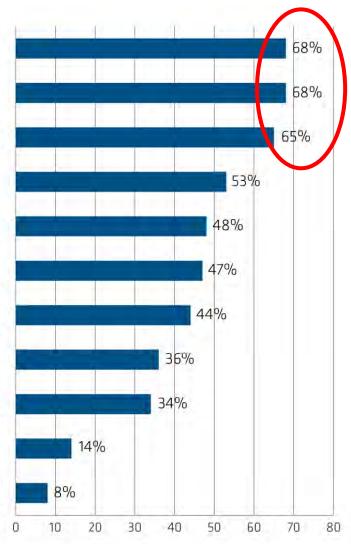
#### european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

Top 5 priorities for internationalisation

Developing strategic partnerships with a selected number of higher education institutions abroad is among the top five priorities for internationalisation for almost two thirds of respondents right after enhancing the quality of learning and teaching and attracting students from abroad.

This is followed by the aim of enhancing the quality of research, which is mentioned by more than half of the respondents.





**EUA Survey** Q13: What are the top priorities for internationalisation of your institution? Please tick the five most important priorities from the list below. N=219

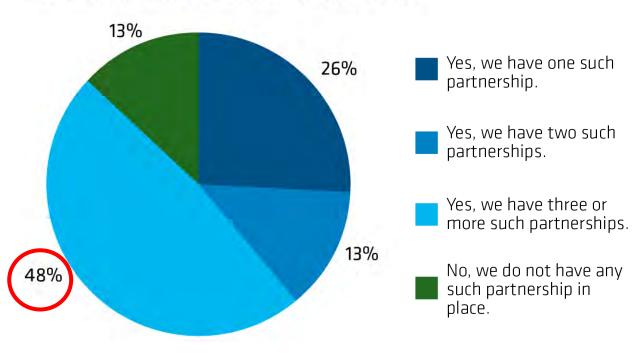


Many universities have strategic collaborations with partners abroad.

By "international strategic institutional partnerships" we mean any long-term collaboration of a higher education institution with one or more partner organisations in another country that goes beyond a specifc project or a student exchange programme. Alliances developed under the European Universities Initiative are only one example of such collaborations.

Almost half of the respondents have three or more such partnerships, another 13% have two, and one quarter has one such partnership in place. Only a minority of 13% indicates not having any such partnership in place.

The nature of these partnerships may be different depending on the purpose and the partners involved, but all of those have a strategic value for the institution. International strategic institutional partnerships

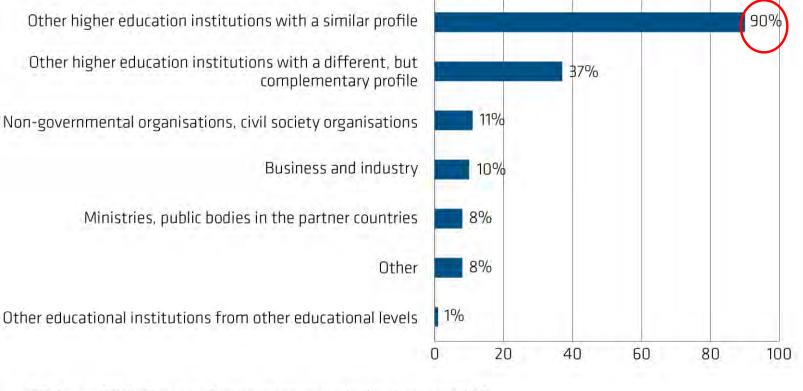


**EUA Survey** Q20: Do you have a strategic institutional partnership with higher education institutions abroad in place or under development? N=214

Most of such partnerships are concluded between higher education institutions of similar profiles, while a bit more than one third of respondents also have such partnerships with higher education institutions of different, but complementarity profiles.

Non-academic types of partners, such as NGOs, business and industry, ministries and public bodies and institutions from other educational levels, play a considerably smaller role and are less often included in such partnerships compared to other types of international activities of institutions in the sample (cp. slide 8 Q14).

### Types of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships



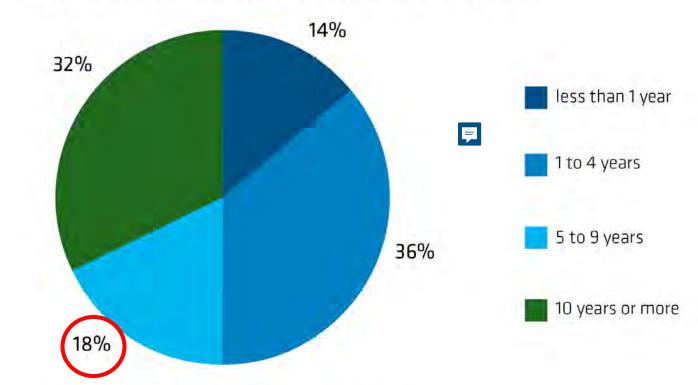
**EUA Survey** Q24ff: What type of organisations are involved in your partnership? Please tick all applicable. *N=219* 



european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

International strategic university partnerships are not a new phenomenon, but there has been a certain acceleration over the past few years, which might also be due to the European Universities Initiative. 32% of partnerships reported in the survey have been in place for 10 years or more and another 18% for five to nine years. 36% have been established in the last one to four years and a smaller number of 14% has been initiated within the last year.

About 8% of partnerships mentioned in the sample are directly linked to the Europen Universities Initiative. Age of international strategic institutional partnerships

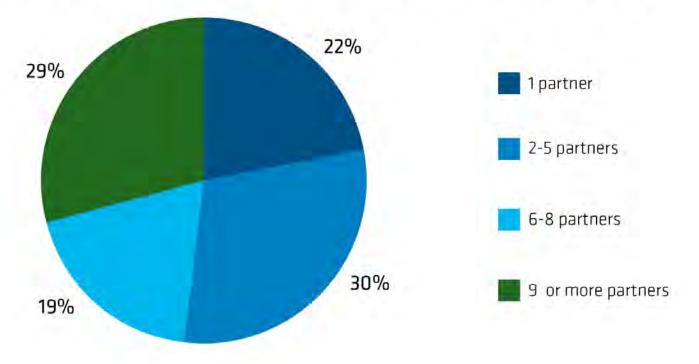


EUA Survey Q29ff: Since when does the partnership exist?

N\*= 329



The number of partners in such partnerships varies considerably between one and up to nine or more partners, but the large majority (78%) are multilateral partnerships with several institutions from different countries, while 22% are bilateral partnerships of one higher education institution with one other partner.

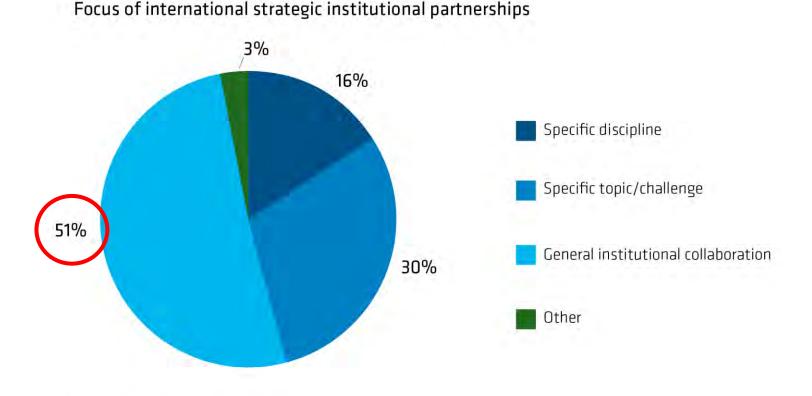


Number of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships

**EUA Survey** Q22ff: How many partners are involved in your partnership? *N*\*= 329



More than half of all international strategic institutional partnerships are about general institutional collaboration, meaning they usually also include several levels and different parts of the institution. 30% focus on a specific topic or a challenge and 16% on a specific discipline, while 3% have another focus.



**EUA Survey** Q27ff: What is the focus of the partnership?

N\*= 329

Areas covered by the partnership



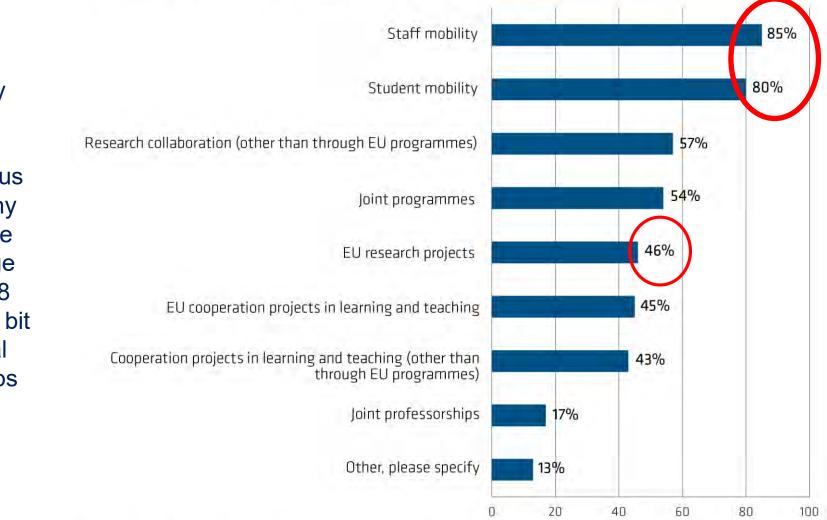
Most partnerships encompass several university missions, with learning and teaching being most often covered. Those working on several missions, most often combine learning and teaching with research, followed by learning and teaching combined with innovation and then learning and teaching combined with societal outreach. Learning and teaching 959 Research 77% 64% Innovation Societal outreach 47% Other 8% 20 40 60 80 100

**EUA Survey** Q26ff: Which area(s) does the partnership cover? Please tick all applicable.

N\*= 329



Activities of international strategic institutional partnerships

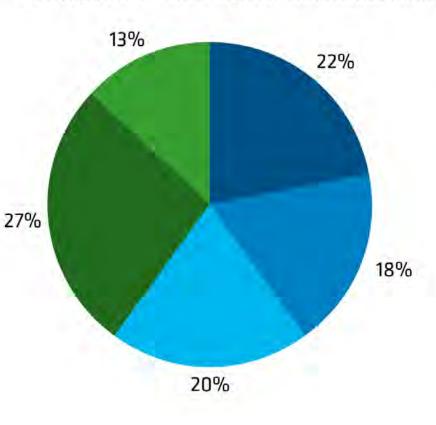


**EUA Survey** Q28ff: Which activities are part of the partnership? Please tick all applicable from the list below. N=329

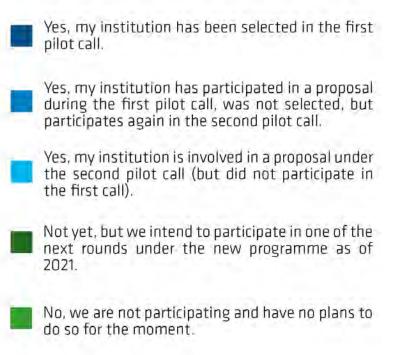
Staff mobility closely followed by student mobility are most often mentioned as activities of such partnerships, in line with the focus on learning and teaching of many of such partnerships. While more than 90% of respondents engage in EU research projects (cp. Q18 slide 7), these are only part of a bit less than half of the international strategic institutional partnerships captured by the survey.



The interest of respondents in the European Universities Initiative is high. 59% are participating in the pilot calls and another 27% wish to do so in the future, while only 13% do not have any plans for participation so far.



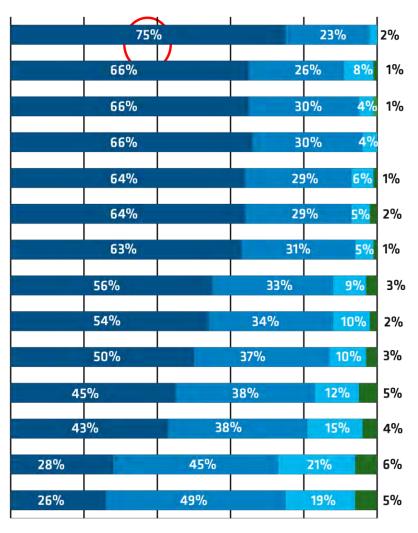
Participation in the European Universities Initiative



**EUA Survey** Q87: Is your higher education institution participating in the European Universities Initiative? *N=214* 

#### european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

Expected benefits from participating in the European Universities Initiative



Enhancing the quality of learning & teaching Increasing the attractiveness of our institution for students and staff

Increasing the visibility & international standing of our institution

Boosting student and staff mobility

Strengthening the links between education, research & innovation

Developing a more strategic approach towards international partnerships

Helping to build Europe, fostering European integration & cohesion

Eliminating obstacles for international exchange and cooperation Enhancing the quality of research

Strengthening existing partnerships

Developing new partnerships

Fostering the professionalisation of administrative and support staff

Gaining in efficiency and building critical mass through sharing services and infrastructure

Getting access to infrastructure, resources, services and external partners which would otherwise not have

**EUA Survey** Q88: What are/might be the benefits that you expect for your higher education institution from participating in the initiative? *N*=171



=

Universities expect many benefits from participating in the European Universities Initiative with enhacing the quality of learning and teaching being at the top which is in line with their general internationalisation priorities. For about two thirds of respondents six expected benefits are very important: increasing the attractiveness of the university, visibility and international standing, boosting student and staff mobility, strengthening the links between different university missions, developing a more strategic approach towards international collaboration and helping to build Europe and foster European integration and cohesion.

challenging for

Initiaitive.

participating in the



Need to provide additional other resources to support the 46% 14% 2% Ę 38% development & implementation 38% 44% 13% 5% Making the network sustainable in the long-run Need to provide considerable amount Respondents perceive the 37% 12% 6% 1% 44% of additional funding need to provide additional 37% 15% 5% 1% Short timeframe to develop the application (4 months) 43% Very challenging resources, considerable Amount of extra work on top of the usual business 5% 15% 34% 46% amounts of co-funding Somewhat challenging Legal obstacles to the accreditation of joint programmes 2% 27% 10% 41% 19% and ensuring long-term Short timeframe to develop the network itself (3 years) 26% 50% 17% 6% 1% sustainability as the most Neutral Administrative obstacles due to different institutional 21% 38% 28% 11% 2% structures and processes, please specify Getting and sustaining commitment of academic staff 2% 21% 12% 51% 15% Not that challenging **European Universities** Student demand, interest and engagement 20% 44% 2% 18% 16% Getting and sustaining commitment of administrative Not challenging at all 20% 22% 13% 2% 42% staff Getting and sustaining leadership commitment 16% 30% 16% 31% 7% Language issues 11% 35% 9% 27% 18% Lack of strategic capacity of the institution 8% 27% 7% 30% 28%

Challenges in participating in the European Universities Initiative

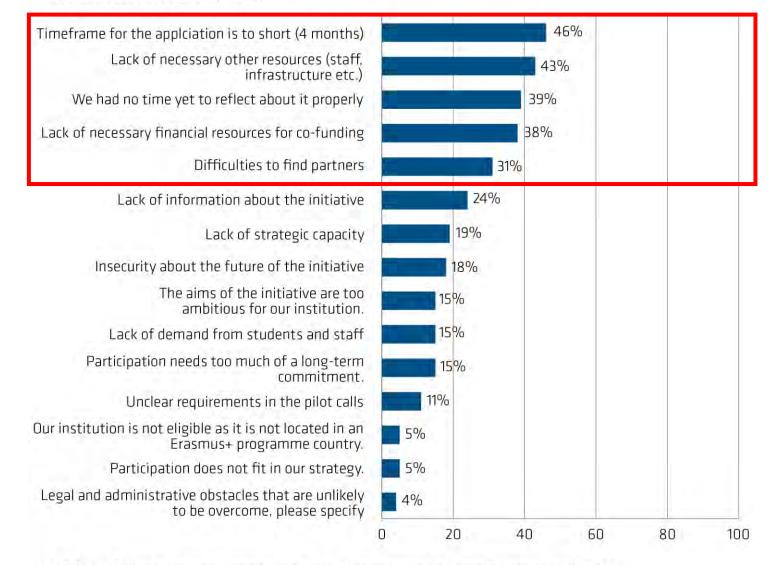
**EUA Survey** Q89: What are/would be the challenges for your institution in participating in the initiative? Please rate the degree of the challenges listed below. - Language issues N=190



The lack of resources is also high on the list of reasons for institutions to not participate in the European Universities Initiative, together with time constraints as well as the difficulty to find partners.

F

Reasons for not participating



**EUA Survey** Q92. Why does your institution not or/not yet participate in the European Universities Initiative? *N=80* 

#### european UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

External support for application and/or implementation Responding institutions which 56% participated in the pilot calls of Yes, through information session of the European Commission the European Universities Yes, through information session/training for proposal writing 31% Initiaitve often received some organised in my country sort of external support, mostly Yes, through information session/training for proposal writing organised in 22% a partner's country in form of information sessions or training for proposal writing. Yes, in from of extra funding from the government to (partly) cover the 20% CZ; FR; DE; HU; IT; ES costs for the development of the network (after selection through EU call) Only a minority received extra funding for the application and/or No, we did not receive any external support 17% HR; UK for the development and Yes, in form of extra funding from the government to (party) cover the FR; IE; PT; SK; ES 12% costs for the application implementation after successful Yes, in form of co-funding from private sources (business, industry, selection at EU level. This is an 2% FI; ES foundations) to (partly) cover the costs for the development of the indication of the uneven playing network field for HEIs across Europe Yes, in form of co-funding from private sources (business, industry, 0% foundations) to (partly) cover the costs for the application participating in the competition. 0 10 20 30 40 50 60

**EUA Survey** Q93. Did you receive any external support for your participation in the pilot call? N=121

The green boxes indicate the countries of respondents that ticked the respective option. Please note that this does not mean that the respective support was available for all respondents in the respective country. For the option 'no external support received' only those countries where listed, where no respondent received any type of such support.

#### INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVES – KEY RESULTS OF THE EUA SURVEY



Higher grants and follow-up funding, the elimination of legal and administrative obstacles, the development of the research dimension and increasing synergies with other EU funding programmes are the five top recommendations declared as very important by the majority of respondents.

#### 3% Offering follow-up grants for successful networks beyond 73% 24% 1% the first three years Eliminating legal and administrative obstacles to facilitate cross-border collaboration for all (also institutions outside 66% 26% 8% the initiative) Increasing the EU grant available per network 31% 2% 63% 4% Developing the research dimension of the networks 2% 61% 27% 10% Increasing synergies with other EU funding programmes 2% 53% 37% 8% 48% 43% 9% 1% Systematically secure national co-funding Ensuring broad dissemination and discussion of the 45% 45% 9% 1% outcomes and lessons learnt Ensuring the bottom-up nature of the action and keep the framework as open as possible for applicants to propose 44% 44% 11% 1% their vision for the network Ensuring systemic impact of the initiative benefiting also 26% 47% 4% 23% those institutions that are not participating in a network Broadening the geographical scope and allow participation 23% 37% 12% 28% of further countries

Recommendations for the future

**EUA Survey** Q91. What do you think should be done when further developing the initiative under the future generation of EU funding programmes (2021-2027)? Please rate each of the following aspects according to the level of importance for your institution. N=186

Neutral

Not that important



## **Key points**

Internationalisation has been a strategic issue for higher education institutions for quite a while. They collaborate with different partners all over the world in various ways, while by far most collaborations take place with partners in the EU.

International strategic institutional partnerships are not a new phenomenon. While many have existed for a long time, new ones have been set up over the past few years, often building on existed for a long time, new ones have been set up over the previous collaborations. Alliances under the European Universities Initiative are also included here and represent 8% of partnerships covered by the survey.

The interest of responding institutions in the European Universities Initiative is high. 59% are participating in the pilot calls and another 27% wish to apply in the future.

The benefits expected by respondents from participating in the European Universities Initiative square well with their general internationalisation priorities. The enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching is at the top of the list of expected benefits, followed by six other benefits rated as very important by about two thirds of respondents: increasing attractiveness, visibility and international standing, boosting student and staff mobility; strengthening the links between different university missions, developing a more strategic approach towards international collaboration and helping to build Europe and foster European integration and cohesion.



## **Key points**



The need to provide substantial amounts of co-funding and ensure long-term sustainability are perceived as most challenging for participating in the European Universities Initiative. A lack of funding and other resources, time constraints as well as the difficulty to find partners are the reasons most often cited for higher education institutions not to participate.



The fact that only a small number of countries provides co-funding for participation in the European Universities Initiative is an indication of the uneven playing field in this competition.

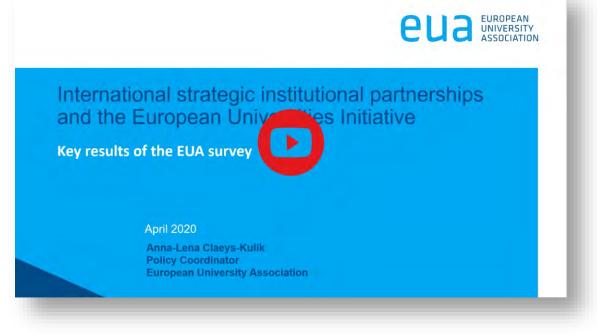


The five top recommendations rated as very important by the majority of respondents for the future of the European Universities Initiative are higher grants and follow-up funding, the elimination of legal and administrative obstacles, the development of the research dimension and increasing synergies with other EU funding programmes beyond Erasmus+.



## Want to know more?

## Watch the video explaining the key results: https://youtu.be/xHnS9GeQk48



Contact: EUA Policy Coordination Team policy@eua.eu



### **EUA Project Team:**

Thomas E. Jørgensen, Senior Policy Coordinator Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, Policy Coordinator Henriette Stöber, Policy Analyst, Higher Education Policy Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director, Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development Michael Gaebel, Director, Higher Education Policy Tia Loukkola, Director, Institutional Development Anna Gover, Programme Manager, Institutional Development Vinciane Gaillard, Acting Director, Research and Innovation Monika Steinel, Senior Policy Analyst Christel Vacelet, Director, Communications, Public Affairs and Membership Jessica Carter, Deputy Director Communications – Head of Media Relations Inès Mezher, Junior Digital Media Officer

