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Mapping of European Transnational Collaborative Partnerships in Higher Education

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Abstract

This report aimed to map the existing transnational collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions in Europe. In doing so it surveyed representatives from such partnerships. Their responses provided interesting insights which are analysed in this report.

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Executive summary

As part of the work to conceptualise and develop the new initiative on European Universities, the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) carried out a survey in order to map examples of existing transnational collaborative partnerships¹ involving European higher education institutions. The survey was designed on the basis of a review of the literature on international collaboration in education and research, complemented with insights from a stakeholder consultation and feedback from higher education policy makers. Questions focused on: the partnership's characteristics; funding sources, as well as their objectives for engaging in such collaborations; the benefits and added value these partnerships have brought; the barriers they face in further strengthening these collaborative activities; and potential policy options for alleviating these barriers. Representatives from 169 partnerships responded to this call (a response rate of 30%) and provided interesting insights.

The study gathers interesting results that support the new concept of European universities as an added value as compared to what exists:

- 65% of the partnerships do not offer any mobility scheme at Bachelor level;
- embedded mobility is mainly offered at Master level;
- the majority of cooperation occurs mainly only at department/faculty level, on specific topics; 41% of the respondents indicated that their partnership involved the entire organisation;
- only 38% of partnerships covered the 3 missions: education, research and innovation
- strong leadership with common vision is considered an important driver for enhanced and sustainable cooperation;
- half of the respondents consider that existing funding instruments are not suitable for deepening and extending transnational cooperation between higher education institutions;
- there are a number of serious administrative and legal issues which do not allow for more intense and sustainable cooperation, and that could be tackled by European Universities with a European Statute.

Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships involving European higher education institutions

The respondents consisted of partnerships of various sizes and types of higher education institutions, which were funded through Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees, Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships and Knowledge Alliances, as well as Horizon 2020 Teaming and Twinning. The large majority of partnerships had up to nine members. All Member States had higher education institutions that participated in transnational collaborations.

¹ In this report the term "transnational collaborative partnership" is used for the formal cooperation of higher education institutions from at least two European countries in the areas of education, research and/or innovation.

While most partnerships covered more than one mission, only 38% covered all three missions i.e. education, research and innovation. The majority of the collaborations occurred at department/faculty level and involved at least one general/comprehensive university. Technical universities were also well represented.

Drivers for transnational collaborative partnerships

Building on common topics and interests appeared to be a major driver (95%) for higher education institutions' transnational cooperation, which was probably linked to the fact that the majority of the partnerships were at department/faculty level. Five of the ten most important drivers of the partnerships were linked to education, teaching and capacity building. A large share of the respondents (88%) indicated the existing contacts and networks between staff members as a driver. This was linked to some of the supplementary comments where several respondents identified "trust" between collaborating parties as a powerful driver. "Strong leadership with common vision" was also considered an important driver as it motivated participants to work together and look for solutions to administrative and legal barriers.

Benefits of transnational collaborative partnerships

About 90% of the respondents indicated that the added value of their partnerships was improved internationalisation of their institutions. At the same time, the large majority of participants considered that transnational collaborations strengthened their education mission and increased the mobility of both students and staff. "Developing new skills of students", "enhancing their employability", "Increasing the quality and relevance of the educational offer", "improving capacity of teaching staff", and facilitating the "mobility of students and staff" were among the ten most important benefits perceived by the majority of the respondents. International collaborations were also considered beneficial for attracting foreign students, for "increasing the level of scientific excellence" and for producing "more interdisciplinary research".

Barriers

Obstacles related to funding and to administrative and legal issues appeared as the most important for the majority of respondents. In particular, "the lack of sustainable funding" was perceived as a barrier by 66% of respondents followed by "the complexity of existing funding instruments" and the need "to apply every year to multiple calls". Interestingly, half of the respondents believed that existing funding instruments were not suitable for deepening and extending transnational collaborations between higher education institutions.

Apart from the more generic categories "administrative barriers" and "legal barriers", many respondents indicated the "lack of common accreditation standards" and "differences in academic calendars" as impediments to their collaborations. The main barrier related to "organisational factors and leadership", which was considered important by a large share of respondents (44%), was the "lack of incentives for the university staff involved" to take part in the collaborative partnerships.

Possible way forward

Respondents were asked to choose between four policy options to alleviate these barriers: "More funding", "Easier accreditation and quality assurance procedures", "Recognition of learning outcomes" and "Establishment / introduction of a European statute". Many respondents indicated that more funding can be an important enabler of strengthened collaborative partnerships, but this additional funding would need to be long-term to ensure sustainability. While EU level funding is important, most respondents

indicated that it should be combined with national sources. This also reflected the current situation for most collaborative partnerships, which have to complement EU funding with their own resources and/or national funding. The other three options gathered also substantial agreement among the respondents. "Easier accreditation and quality assurance procedures", "Recognition of learning outcomes" and "Establishment / introduction of a European statute" could reduce some of the barriers by strengthening the dissemination of good practices and helping to achieve common EU-wide standards.

These findings reconfirmed the views on drivers, benefits, barriers and future measures for fostering transnational cooperation among higher education institutions, as expressed by transnational partnerships and other higher education stakeholders who participated in consultations² conducted by DG EAC. Further discussion on the findings of the survey in relation to the European Universities initiative is provided in the last section of this report.

² Concept papers, https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en

1 Introduction

At present, Europe is facing numerous political, economic and social challenges. Many of these fall within the area of education policy. The modernisation of higher education, the need to develop sustainable collaborations and to foster cooperation among European Union (EU) Member States in this field, is high on the political agenda³. The continuing process of European integration has been an important driver for increased collaboration. This is stimulated through various European programmes, such as Erasmus+, the Framework programmes for Research and Innovation, as well as policy developments including the Bologna process and the drive towards the formation of a European Education Area and European Research Area. European funding initiatives have also stimulated the emergence of new types of transnational partnerships between higher education institutions which are the subject of this report.

In the European Council Conclusions⁴ of 14 December 2017, the European Commission, the Council and the Member States were invited to take forward "strengthening strategic partnerships across the EU between higher education institutions and encouraging the emergence by 2024 of some twenty 'European Universities', consisting of bottom-up networks of universities across the EU which will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several EU countries and contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities'.

Thereafter, the Education Council Conclusions of 22 May 2018⁵ further stressed the potential of 'European Universities' to significantly enhance mobility and foster high quality and excellence in education and research by strengthening the link between teaching, research and innovation and knowledge transfer, by demonstrating the benefits of multilingual learning, the recognition of qualifications and by developing joint education and research programmes and projects. They also highlighted that the European Universities "could play a flagship role in the creation of a European Education Area as a whole".

Taking this forward, the initiative on European Universities, co-developed and co-created through consultations with national authorities, higher education institutions, students, transnational higher education partnerships and other stakeholders 'European Universities' will have an ambitious mandate aimed at achieving two long-term objectives:

- Promoting common European values and a strengthened European identity by bringing together a new generation of Europeans, who are able to cooperate and work within different European and global cultures, in different languages, and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.
- Reach a substantial leap in quality, performance, attractiveness and international competitiveness of European higher education institutions and contributing to the European knowledge economy, employment, culture and welfare by making best use of innovative pedagogies and striving to make the knowledge triangle a reality. 'European Universities' will be key drivers to boost the quality of higher education and where possible to strengthen its link to the research and innovation landscape in Europe and its outreach towards the society and economy.

³ See 'Leaders' agenda note on education and culture' (November 2017): http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31544/en_leaders-agenda-note-on-education-and-culture.pdf

⁴ See the Council Conclusions at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>

⁵ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8701-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

The initiative is expected to have a long-term structural impact on higher education institutions and the European higher education landscape. It will be **an education-driven initiative**, with links where possible to research and innovation. The initiative will bring cross-border cooperation between higher education institutions to the next level of ambition; to make it more structured and integrated and will impact the education, research and innovation missions of universities.

The initiative will support universities in Europe to:

- Devise a long-term joint strategy based on a shared vision and shared values, for pursuing a high level of enhanced, sustainable cooperation across various levels of the organisation and across different areas of activity (from learning and teaching to research and innovation, where possible) to build on their complementary strengths.
- Set-up a European higher education inter-university campus where students, doctoral candidates and staff (including researchers where relevant) can move seamlessly (physically or virtually) among the partners of the alliance to study, train, teach, do research work or share services.
- Operate on the basis of multidisciplinary approaches, allowing students, lecturers and where possible researchers and companies to co-create and share knowledge and innovation: this could help to address the big societal challenges and skills shortages that Europe faces.

In parallel to stakeholder consultations, a survey of transnational higher education partnerships⁶ was conducted to arrive at a better understanding of the current landscape.

The survey was addressed to the coordinators of different types of partnerships under various funding schemes coordinated by DG EAC and DG RTD. The objective of this survey was to take an in-depth look at the current state of transnational cooperation in higher education in order to: 1) identify drivers, objectives and facilitators; as well as 2) barriers and challenges in achieving a stronger and better collaboration. This report presents and analyses the responses of the collaborative partnerships alongside insights from the relevant literature.

Aside from delivering a mapping of the reflections of those leading higher education partnerships in the EU, this report aimed to identify where EU action in terms of funding design and policy development could create the conditions for further intensification of collaboration among higher education institutions.

International collaboration

Universities have always had an international outlook: they have offered training to foreign students and for their researchers to collaborate internationally. These dynamics have intensified over the past two or three decades thanks to social and technological developments (developments in ICT and transport technologies, economic development), globalisation (see e.g. Held & McGrew, 2003 and Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007) and international university rankings (Hazelkorn, 2011). Such developments have also paved the way for the emergence of new forms of interaction including virtual mobility and joint diplomas.

Based on the work of Knight (2003, 2012) and Katz and Martin (1997), a working definition for international collaboration in higher education and research is: "the working

⁶ "Transnational collaborative partnership" is understood as the formal collaboration of higher education institutions from at least two European countries in the areas of education, research and/or innovation

together of individual academics, organisations or nations across national boundaries to integrate an international, intercultural or global dimension in their research and teaching activities". In this report, the term "transnational collaborative partnership" is widely understood as the formal collaboration of higher education institutions from at least two European countries in the areas of education, research and/or innovation. The terms "partnership" and "collaboration" are used interchangeably throughout the report to refer to these "transnational collaborative partnerships".

This report focuses on organisational level collaboration⁷, but inevitably, this type of cooperation cannot be strictly separated from individual-level collaboration: the nature and success of organisational collaboration is largely dependent on input and activities of individual academic staff members. Similarly, it cannot be fully separated from national-level collaboration, which constitutes an important context supporting or limiting collaboration at lower levels. Universities set up formal structures – if collaboration goes beyond ceremonial activities – to facilitate collaboration in higher education, research or innovation-related activities. The partnerships that emerge from collaboration can be limited in time or open-ended and may be quite different in nature, set up and intensity. Partnerships may, for instance, be restricted to collaboration on a specific theme or in a particular discipline or cover a broader range of activities. Given the assumed close connection between research, teaching and third-mission activities, one may expect the members of a partnership to engage in two or three areas at the same time.

Why do higher education institutions collaborate?

The drivers or rationales for engaging in international activities in higher education can be grouped in four categories: academic, economic, political and social (Knight, 2012, p. 33). We add insights on research collaboration from e.g. Boekholt et al. (2009), Cruz Castro et al. (2015) and Zacharewicz et al. (2017) and the following drivers emerge:

Academic: including an international dimension in teaching or research; enhancing quality through students enjoying and learning from a period of study abroad; extending the academic horizon; increasing the institutional reputation or status; meeting international standards; improving researchers' skills; and greater impact of research.

Economic: generating revenues (fee-paying students); increasing the institution's attractiveness; sharing resources (equipment, data) efficiently (also with respect to developing and exploiting Intellectual Property Rights); sharing risks; and making use of available incentives and greater access to potential resources (e.g. European funding).

Political: improving national security; supporting international diplomacy; supporting peace and mutual understanding; and promoting a national or European identity.

Social and cultural: developing a national and transnational cultural identity (see also Mitchell, 2015); supporting intercultural understanding; supporting citizenship development; and supporting social and community development (capacity building).

The barriers for collaboration

While there are clear motivations to engage in transnational partnerships, higher education institutions face a number of challenges for their successful initiation, development and maintenance. We organise these barriers by theme: international curricular collaboration; staff and student exchange/mobility; and research collaboration.

⁷ But excludes national (rectors' conferences) and international interest groups (e.g. LERU, EUA and CESAER).

In the domain of *international curricular collaboration*, Waterval et al.'s (2015) study is important for it reviewed the literature to find factors affecting the success (and failure) of cross-border curriculum partnerships. They distinguish four domains and list factors emerging from the literature that affect success and failure:

- 1) Students: differences in learning behaviour, differences in entry levels, language differences;
- 2) Teachers: differences in contents and delivery approaches, differences in feelings of ownership;
- 3) Curriculum: differences in local context, differences in attitudes and approaches to assessment, differences in the content of the curriculum, especially in the social sciences and humanities, differences in access to learning resources and support systems, differences in time zones and working weeks;
- 4) Management: relationship and communication between partners, internal commitment, contract and business approach, and quality assurance procedures, referring to the lack of sustainability of initiatives after the funding period), insufficient capacity of university staff, absence of strong leadership and other organisational factors, including legal and administrative constraints arising from governmental decisions, too restrictive provisions in bilateral agreements and the overall legislative framework, etc.

The latter is also addressed by Tauch and Rauhvargers (2002), the JOINMAN report (2008) and the Bologna Process Implementation Report (2018) which referred to the problems related to national legislation concerning joint degrees (accreditation/recognition and student fees). It is striking that a recent Erasmus Mundus evaluation report (2013, p. 24) concludes – after some thirty years of experiences with joint degrees: “Achieving full, consistent and sustainable practices in terms of assessment criteria and grading, transparent conversion methods, robust use of ECTS [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System] and awarding of joint degree takes time”, strongly suggesting that collaboration challenges are difficult to solve.

Mobility of students and staff are individual activities, but often entail organizational involvement, certainly when it concerns “organised” mobility through staff and student exchange, e.g. through Erasmus (Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes). This mobility programme is generally seen as a success - with increasing numbers of participating students and overall high levels of satisfaction. Early investigations on the mobility of students (Maiworm and Teichler, 2003) stated that, the major problems were related to administrative matters, accommodation, financial matters, obtaining credits and credit transfer. Brandenburg et al. (2014) reported that barriers related to financial costs for studying abroad received most attention, but also information deficits, inflexible curricula, study disruption, administrative problems and uncertainty about the benefits of a study abroad seemed to be common obstacles faced by students.

Important insights were gained by comparing mobile with non-mobile students. Souto-Otero et al. (2013) reported that particularly family and personal relationships and lack of foreign language skills were important barriers for those who decided not to be mobile (through Erasmus). Beerkens et al. (2015) performed another analysis on the same dataset and discovered limited differences by home country of the students. That is, the factors that distinguished Erasmus participants from non-participants were rather similar across the seven countries investigated (Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK). Whereas this report focused on organisational level constraints to collaboration, we should not underestimate individual level barriers to cooperation and mobility, including personal factors (family commitments, difficulties with re-integration etc.) which may limit the intensity of cross border exchange (e.g. Souto-Otero et al, 2013).

Regarding *research collaboration*, similar barriers appear in the literature. Katz and Martin (1997) listed the following costs: monetary; time; administrative; as well as costs due to the management of national and institutional differences.⁸ Zacharewicz et al. (2017) and Cruz-Castro et al (2015) made a distinction between internal and external barriers for Public Research Organisations, including Research Technology Organisations (RTOs). Regarding internal barriers, the following are mentioned: strategic orientation, mission and autonomy; effective investments needed and adjustments to run a multinational research organisation; resource constraints and funding arrangements; capacity problems (know-how, skills, intercultural knowledge); high costs (also in terms of administrative support); and strategic barriers (know-how drain, too large benefits to foreign firm). External barriers relate to the lack of collaboration frameworks at the international level; higher levels of competition at the international level; challenges in building trust between collaborative partners across cultural and institutional boundaries; funding dependency and balancing expectations of funders and foreign clients – applying to funders in different countries could entail double jeopardy: being assessed twice for the same application; legal, fiscal and IPR barriers; the diversity of international markets; and the need/size of the domestic market.

The barriers and motivations identified in the literature and discussed in the preceding paragraphs, informed the development of a questionnaire, which will be discussed in the next section.

2 The survey and participants

The mapping exercise was done via an online EU survey and the questionnaire comprised five sections: Information on the partnership; education; research; third mission/innovation; plus drivers/enablers, added value and barriers of collaborative partnership (Annex I⁹ provides the questionnaire used). Each of these sections contained a number of questions, some obligatory and others optional. The majority of the questions were closed-ended and allowed for multiple answers. More information on the methodology can be found in Annex II in a separate document.

Over 500 invitations were sent to coordinators of Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees partnerships, Erasmus+ Strategic partnerships and Knowledge Alliances, as well as Horizon 2020's Teaming and Twinning instruments. Invitations were also sent to participants of a consultative group assembled by the European Commission which comprised student organisations, well-advanced higher education transnational partnerships and other higher education stakeholders. All large networks and associations were invited to forward the questionnaire to any smaller scale partnership developed within their organization. The sampling unit was the partnership. Each partnership coordinator could fill out only one questionnaire, but a higher education institution could lead or participate in more than one partnership. The survey period was 10 days and resulted in a relatively high response rate of more than 30% (from now on referred to as "the respondents"). Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees projects are better represented compared to other funding schemes as projects within this funding scheme covered over 50% of the targeted partnerships invited to participate in the survey.

⁸ Another consideration affecting international research collaboration in especially the social sciences and humanities is the potential incomparability of data and incompatible conceptual approaches across different national boundaries.

⁹ Both annexes constitute separate documents

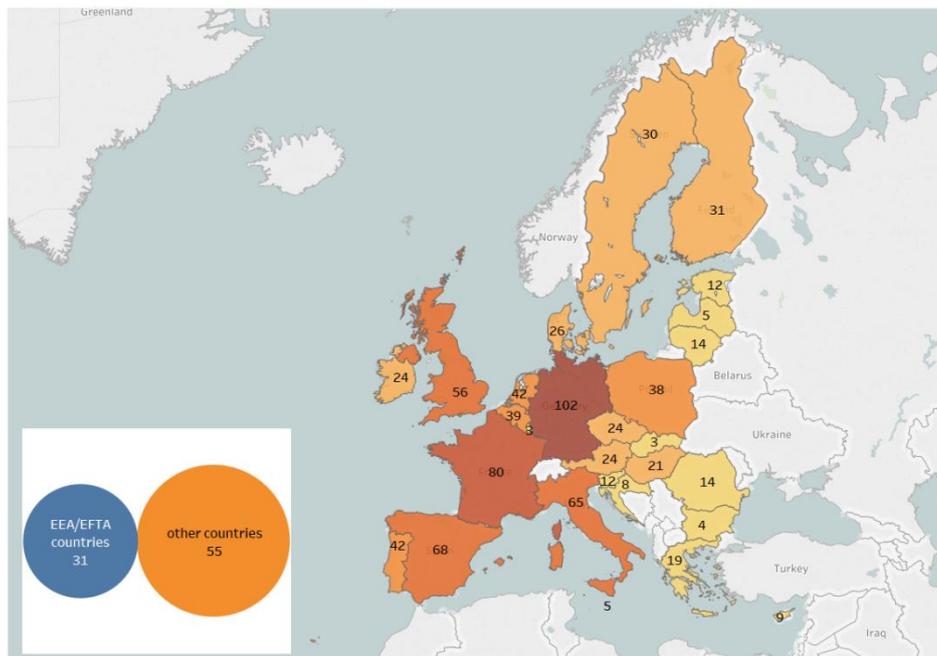
3 Results and analysis of the survey responses

3.1 Respondents' characteristics

Based on the responses¹⁰, and focusing on questions from section 1 of the questionnaire, demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented below.

Analysis of questions 1.3 and 1.4 on the number and origin of the actors constituting the collaborative partnership, enabled an overview of the geographical distribution of the higher education institutions participating in international collaborations. It is clear from Figure 1 that all Member States are represented in these partnerships although not with the same intensity. The darker the colour, the more times the country has been mentioned as a partner in collaborative partnerships. Large countries,¹¹ like Germany and France, have an advantage in absolute number of participating higher education institutions. France and Germany seem overrepresented in comparison to other big Member States, like Poland, Italy and the United Kingdom. If normalization is applied by either dividing the participations¹² by the number of students¹³ or the number of higher education institutions per country, the picture is different and favours small countries or countries with fewer but large higher education institutions. EEA/EFTA countries are not shown individually on the map. A separate circle at the bottom left corner indicates the number of partnerships which include at least one partner from any of these countries. Similarly, the orange circle indicates the number of partnerships with at least one non-EU or EEA/EFTA country as a partner.

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of the higher education institutions in Europe, participating in international collaborations, based on the survey



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

¹⁰ From the 177 responses received, 169 HEIs were considered in the analysis. For details see Annex II on methodology

¹¹ EEA/EFTA countries were treated as a group. Same for non-EU countries.

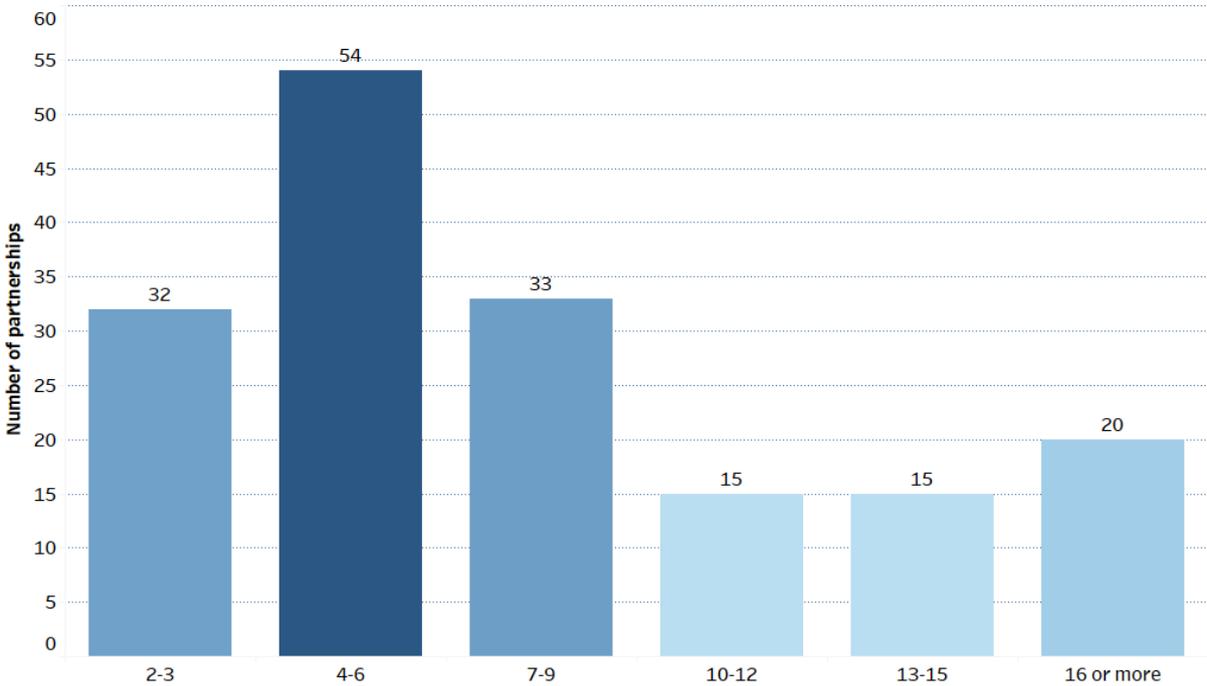
¹² If a university participates in more than one partnership, it is counted multiple times. On the contrary, only one person per partnership was allowed to fill out the survey.

¹³ Big countries population-wise have a large number of students. When the number of partnerships is divided by this number the ratio is very small. For small countries, a limited number of partnerships is sufficient to bring them to the top of the league due to the small denominator.

The different types of university networks currently existing in Europe can be classified according to several dimensions.

One dimension considered is the **size of the partnership** in terms of number of countries involved. The "number of partners¹⁴" varies significantly between partnerships and can best be illustrated if presented in groups (Figure 2). The large majority of the partnerships have up to nine members, whereas partnerships with 4-6 partners represent about a third of the respondents. Taken in the context of the proposed initiative on **European Universities**, an initial **composition of 4-6 partners** with a potential **to grow to 7-9 partners** appears to be feasible.

Figure 2. Existing higher education partnerships in Europe, based on the survey



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

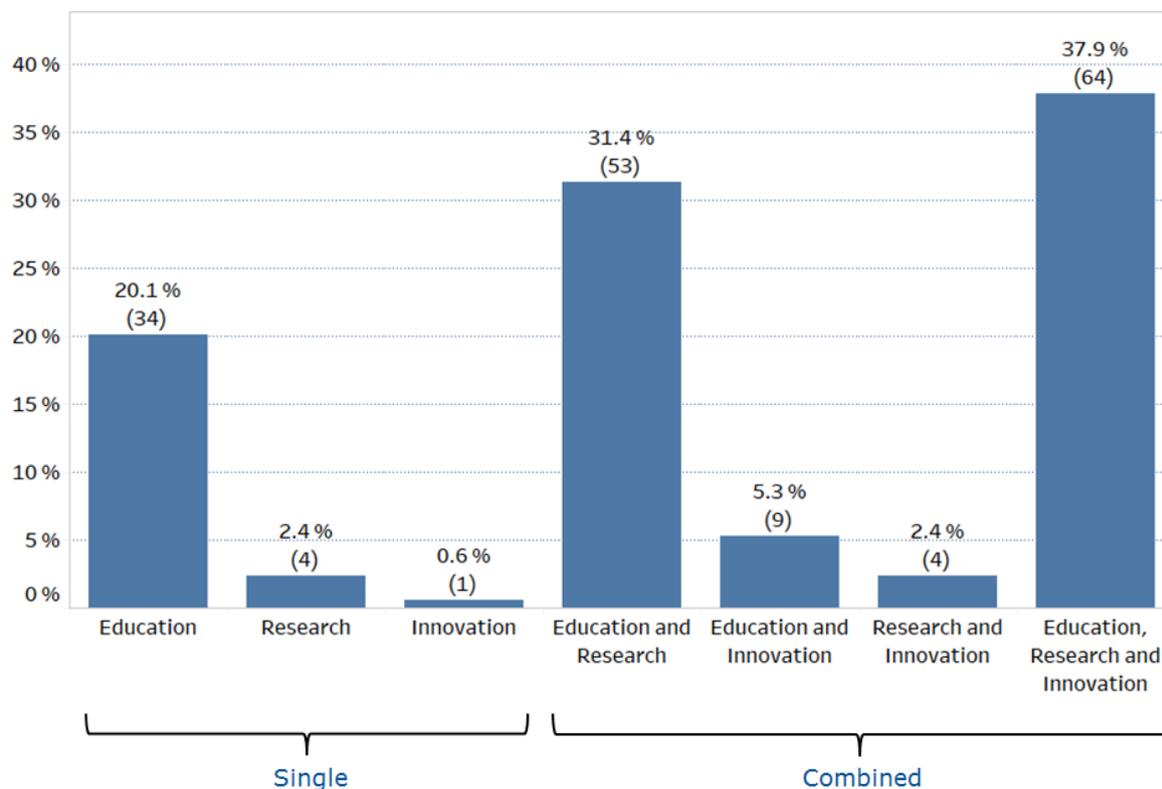
Another dimension is the **scope** of the collaborative partnership, i.e. whether it mainly aims to support collaboration in the provision of education, joint research or innovation activities (

Figure 3).

Analysis shows that while most partnerships cover more than one mission, **only 38% cover all three of them**. However, when the focus is on only one mission (23% of the sample), education is the dominant factor (20%). This reflects the set of respondents, which mostly derive from educational collaborations.

¹⁴ Associated partners were not considered.

Figure 3. Missions where cooperation occurs



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

A third dimension concerns the **types of universities** involved. Given that the question allowed for multiple answers, combinations of several types were very frequent. The vast majority of the respondents (77%) indicated that in their partnership there is at least one general university¹⁵ involved. Technical universities are also well represented (41%) followed by public research organisations (24%) and private enterprises (23%). This finding shows that in the current landscape **diversity of higher education institutions is not a barrier for cooperation and provides support for inclusivity which is one of the key principles identified for European Universities.**

A fourth dimension is the **level of cooperation**, i.e. whether the entire organisation is involved or the collaborative partnership is restricted to a single department or faculty. Analysis showed that **the majority of the collaborations occur at the department / faculty level.** About 41% of the respondents indicated that their partnerships involve, although not exclusively, the entire organisations, and 59% indicated that their partnership remains only at department and/or faculty level¹⁶. This finding shows that partnerships of higher education institutions in Europe have not achieved the level of institutional integration that the European Universities initiative is intended to achieve.

¹⁵ General university or comprehensive university is a higher education institution that covers educational activities and research across a broad range of disciplinary fields. While this could include an engineering school it is distinct from technical universities in which engineering schools are the dominant feature.

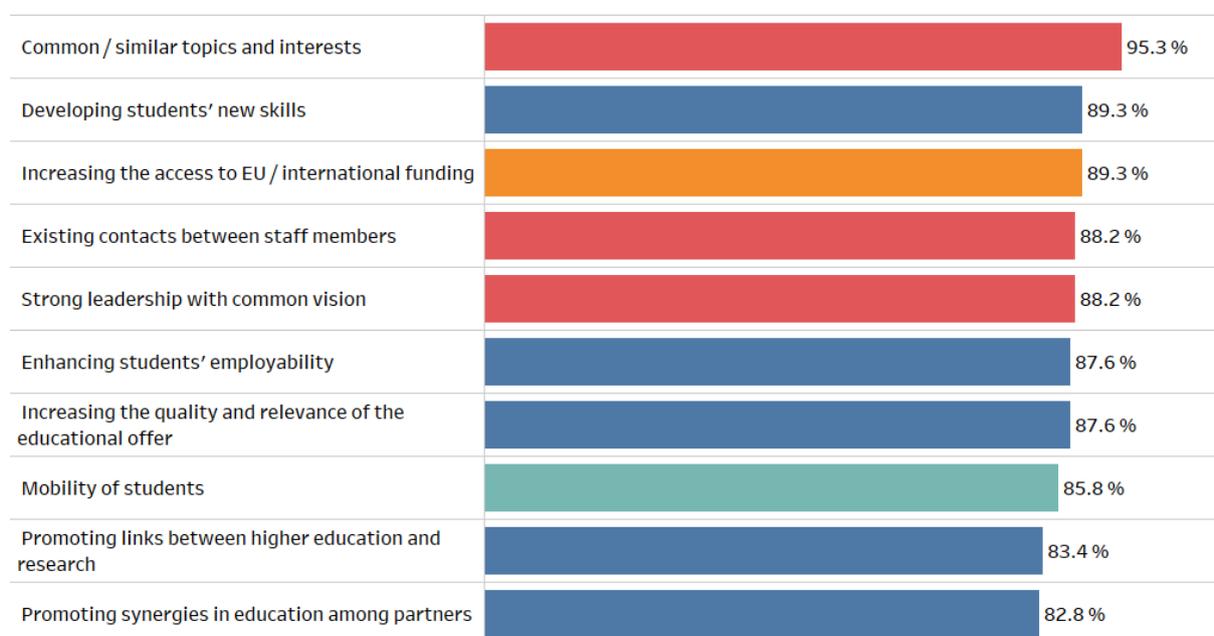
¹⁶ The percentages change when calculations are made based on the number of responses (211). In this case, 66% of the responses indicated involvement of the department or faculty and 33% of the entire organisation.

Other dimensions could be the **duration of the partnership**. With regard to their "year of creation", half of the partnerships were created after 2012, with only a fraction dating back to years before 2000. This may indicate a lack of sustainability of transnational partnerships or it may reflect the reaction of higher education institutions to new (at the time) funding instruments (i.e. Erasmus +).

3.2 Drivers and/or objectives for the set up and successful continuation of a transnational collaborative partnership

The questionnaire provided a number of potential drivers/objectives (see question 5.1 of Annex I) for establishing international collaborative partnerships. These were grouped in several categories: mobility, education, research and capacity building, funding, third mission/innovation and some more general drivers. The respondents had to identify how important each driver was. Figure 4 below shows the ten most important drivers based on the combined share of respondents who answered "agree" or "totally agree" on a given option. Same colour bars indicate drivers belonging to the same group.

Figure 4. The top 10 drivers and/or objectives (based on proportion of "agree" and "totally agree" answers)



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

Building on **common topics and interests** (95%) appears to be a major driver for higher education institutions' transnational cooperation, which is probably linked to the fact that the majority of the partnerships are at department and faculty level, as suggested by the analysis of question 1.10 (See Annex I). It is closely followed by other important drivers. A large majority of the respondents (88%) indicated the **existing contacts between staff members** as a driver, which in a way is linked to some of the supplementary comments where several partnerships identified "trust" between collaborating parties as a powerful driver. While "trust" and "common interests" are important, another driver ranks high among the top ten most important ones – "strong leadership with common vision" (88%). According to the opinions in the supplementary

comments, the role of a strong leadership is to motivate participants to work together, look for solutions to administrative and legal barriers and give guidance and clear vision.

Among the objectives, five of the ten most important ones are linked to education, teaching and capacity building. "Developing new skills of students" and "enhancing their employability" stand out with 89% and 88% respectively." "Increasing the quality and relevance of the educational offer", "promoting synergies in education among partners" and the "linkage between higher education and research" complement this set of goals.

A considerable share of the respondents (~86%) agreed or totally agreed with the importance of the objective "mobility of students". Analysis of the question on mobility schemes currently established within the framework of the partnerships, showed that 65% of the partnerships did not offer any mobility scheme at Bachelor's level and that embedded¹⁷ mobility and long term¹⁸ mobility are mainly offered at Master's level. Short term mobility is the most commonly offered scheme for researchers and teaching staff (offered in 51% and 61% of the partnerships respectively).

A very large share, about 89% of respondents, considers the "improved access to funding" an important or very important motivation. The transnational partnership provides higher education institutions with the opportunity to tap into additional funding and funding sources – either in another country or from the EU (Research and Innovation Framework Programmes and European Structural and Investment Funds). This is crucial not only for the creation and maintenance of a partnership, but also for its expansion and successful delivery of sustainable results which would lead to further internationalisation. The issue of funding features throughout the report. It is further reflected in section 3.4 where we discuss barriers and section 3.5, which deals with potential options to alleviate these barriers.

Finally, some **potential drivers**, such as "geographical proximity" and objectives, "enhancing staff employability" or the ones **related to "third mission/innovation" are less frequently identified by the respondents as actual drivers** for forming collaborative partnerships. As a matter of fact, almost 50% of the respondents indicated that geographical proximity is not a driver at all (disagree or totally disagree with this statement). The respective percentage for the innovation related drivers varies from 14 to 18%. However, this may be partially explained by the composition of the group of respondents which favours education related collaborations. Interestingly, "mobility of administrative and other non-teaching staff" is not considered as a driver for more than 15% of the respondents.

3.3 Added value and benefits in comparison to national partnerships or situations in which no partnership exists

The next step in our analysis was to go beyond the drivers and objectives for creating a partnership and to ask responding partnerships about the added value and benefits of transnational collaboration in comparison to national partnerships or a situation where no partnership exists. Following the same methodology as in section 3.2, Figure 5 shows the 10 most frequently identified benefits from a number of possible benefits.

¹⁷ Embedded mobility is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of the study programme.

¹⁸ Long term mobility refers to a period \geq 2 months

Figure 5. The top 10 added values and benefits (based on proportion of "agree" and "totally agree" answers)



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

It is not surprising that almost **90% of the respondents have indicated that improved internationalisation is a clear added value to them**. In the survey, this question was also linked to funding and increased cooperation with EU and third countries (see the Survey - Annex I). Since many programmes are designed in such a way that tapping into their funding is only possible when international partners collaborate, the transnational partnerships appear to contribute to facilitating this.

Four out of the top-ten benefits are directly linked to the education function of higher education institutions. A **large majority of the respondents see a clear added value of participating in transnational collaborative partnerships for strengthening their education mission**. This is reflected in the share of respondents indicating the importance of the "improved and diversified educational offer" (85%), "improved students' skills" (85%) and "employability" (81%). Two older surveys on the internationalisation of HE, the International Association of Universities (IAU) 4th Global Survey and the European Association for International Education (EAIE) Barometer, showed similar results. According to the International Association of Universities Global Survey, in Europe the most important benefit of internationalisation indicated by higher education institutions was "improved quality of teaching and learning". This emphasis on quality and on student learning is echoed in the European Association for International Education study. In our survey, the benefits are also extended to "teaching staff, developing further their capacity" (66%).

These findings are in line with the analysis of question 1.7 on the beneficiaries of the transnational collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions, which indicates that students are the group that benefits the most from the educational, research and innovation activities of the partnerships. Over 60% of the respondents (partnerships) indicated that more than 20% of their students benefited from the

partnership¹⁹. The corresponding percentages for researchers and teaching staff were 44% and 43% respectively. If the focus is on educational collaboration only (question 2.2), the message becomes stronger as educational collaborations benefit mainly students and teaching staff. Almost 90% of the partnerships indicate that the collaboration was beneficial for a certain proportion of their students. Half of the partnerships estimate that more than 30% of their students benefit from their collaboration.

About 83% of the respondents consider that international collaborations add value to "mobility of both students and staff" and are beneficial for "attracting foreign students" (~80%). International collaboration is expected to improve the quality of higher education institutions (Lepori, 2016). A recent JRC study showed that universities with better reputations attract higher shares of mobile students (Sanchez Barrioluengo & Flisi, 2017). The same study also showed that research orientation and research excellence are more relevant for mobile PhD students.

Two research related categories complete the top-ten list, i.e. "increased level of scientific excellence" (~69%) and "more interdisciplinary research" (~66%). While research related drivers for collaboration are not among the top 10 in the preference of the respondents, research related benefits are reported as important by almost 70%.

The added value of collaboration in activities related to innovation is limited compared to education and research. Benefits related to the third mission such as "increased development and exploitation of Intellectual Property" (~22%) or "increased number or viability of spin offs, start-ups etc." (~22%) are among the five least pronounced benefits. This is in line with the results regarding the main drivers and objectives of the transnational partnerships that responded to the survey. However, given the nature of the sample which is dominated by educational partnerships it may not be representative of all collaborative partnerships in Europe. Many research collaborations also do not lead to spin off companies or significant patents or other forms of IPR beyond publications.

3.4 Perceived barriers to transnational collaborative partnerships

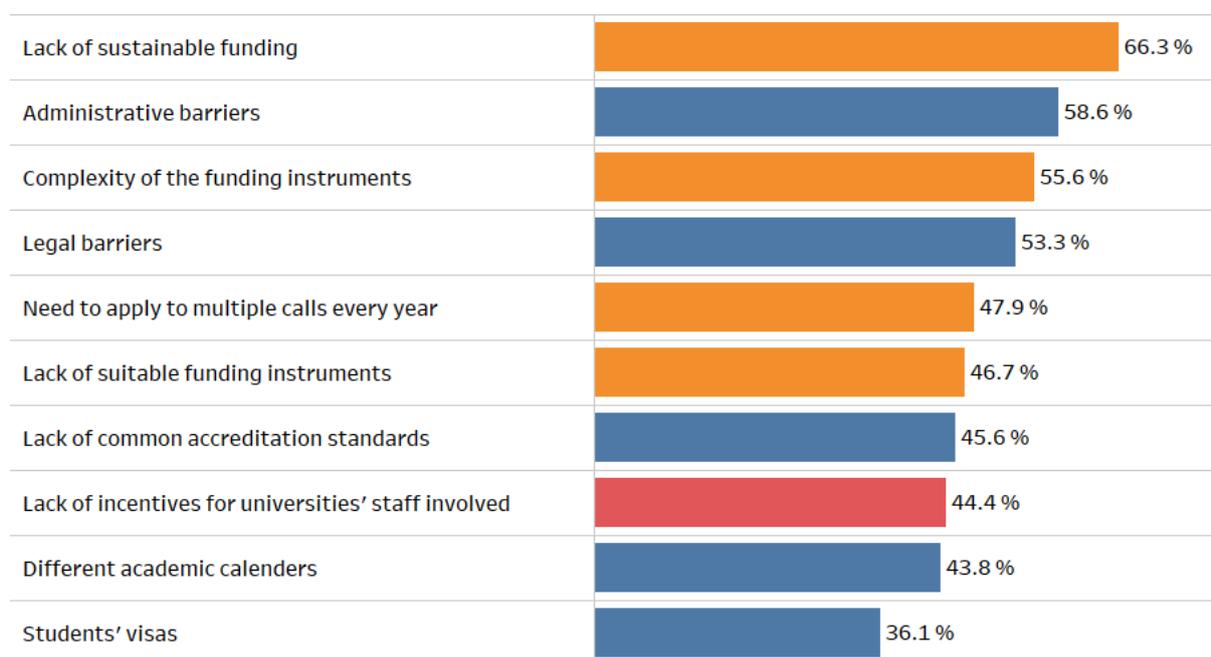
The questionnaire was structured in such a way that all possible barriers were grouped into thematic categories: funding; leadership and organisational factors; administrative and legal barriers; cultural, economic and geographical barriers; capacity of university staff; third mission/innovation. The aim of the mapping was to identify which individual barriers are considered important by the majority of the respondents. Following the same methodology as in previous sections, the aggregated percentage of "agree" and "totally agree" was calculated for each of the barriers.

Figure 6 shows the ten most important barriers, i.e. those with the highest aggregated percentage. Barriers of the same thematic category are presented with the same colour. Contrary to the previous two questions on the objectives and the added values of the collaborations where the respondents show consensus on a significant number of proposed answers, the perception of important barriers is more diversified. This is demonstrated by the lower percentages of the top ten most important barriers as presented in

Figure 6.

¹⁹ The percentage may refer to the number of students in the departments/faculties involved in the collaboration or to the total number of students, in case the entire organisation is engaged in the partnership.

Figure 6. The Top 10 barriers (based on proportion of "agree" and "totally agree" answers)



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

Obstacles related to funding and to administrative and legal issues appear as the most important ones. The need for funding could be linked to lower levels of national funding, lack of suitable instruments or complexity of existing instruments. Partnerships expressed that **having to apply every year in different calls constitutes a burden**. They also need to develop specific institutional capacity to support application and to be able to ensure adequate levels of funding. **"The lack of sustainable funding"** is perceived as the main barrier by 66% of respondents. Sustainability of funding is an issue for many of the respondents also when looking for options to alleviate the barriers (see next section). Though these are structural challenges in all higher education systems, "the complexity of the funding instruments" (56%), the "need to apply to multiple calls every year" (48%) and the **"lack of suitable instruments"** (47%) complete the list of the most important funding related barriers to transnational collaboration. Several opinions expressed in the supplementary comments mention the EU as an important source of funding, but own resources and national funding are also used. This is in line with the findings from the analysis of question 1.6 on the main source of funding of the partnership, which showed that European programmes are the main, but not the only, source for the majority of the partnerships. Interestingly, **half of the sample believes that existing funding instruments are not suitable for deepening and extending transnational collaborations between higher education institutions.**

The second most important category of barriers is related to administrative and legal issues. Apart from the more general categories "administrative barriers" (59%) and "legal barriers" (53%), some more specific obstacles were observed. Many respondents indicated the importance of the **"lack of common accreditation standards"**, (46%) the **"differences in academic calendars"** (44%) and to a lesser extent "students' visas" (36%). It seems that these issues, which have already been reported in the International Association of Universities Global Survey and the European

Association for International Education Barometer in 2013-14²⁰, **still remain a serious concern for higher education institutions, requiring further actions at EU and national level.**

Solving accreditation challenges is also considered a step in the direction of facilitating the cross-border partnerships and is among the options discussed in the next section. While student visas may appear among the top-ten perceived barriers, it affects partnerships with universities in third countries rather than transnational cooperation between universities in EU Member States.

While funding and administrative and legal barriers are well represented among the top-ten concerns, there was only one barrier which is related to **"organisational factors and leadership"**, namely the **"lack of incentives for the university staff involved"**. About 44% of the respondents identified this issue as a serious impediment to their international cooperation. This finding, combined with the need to develop expertise to find ways to increase "funding" and tackle "administrative and legal barriers" as previously discussed, could be an indication of limited institutional capacity.

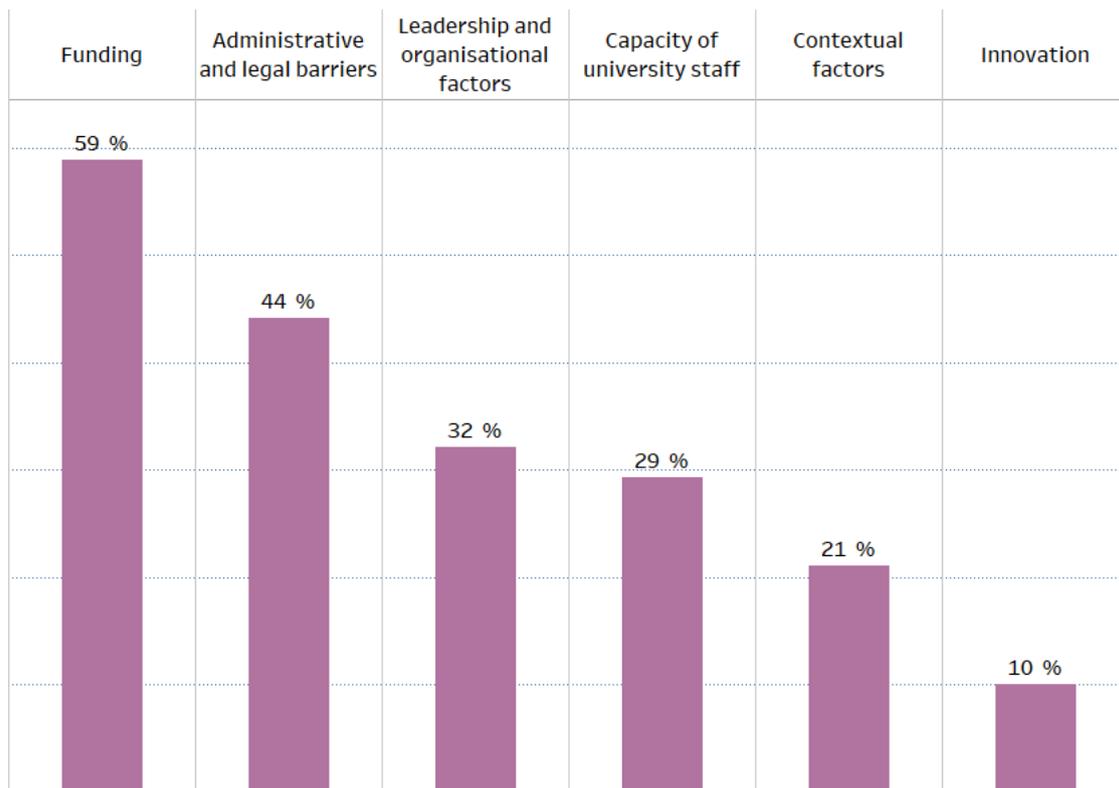
Contextual factors, "Geographical dispersion" (14%), "cultural differences" (21%), "level of economic development" (21%), and to a lesser extent "differences in languages" (24%), are considered barriers by less than 25% of the respondents. Similarly, factors related to innovation do not appear to be significant barriers for more than 10% of the respondents.

Figure 7 below, presents in descending order the average percentages of "agree" and "totally agree" together for each category of barriers. The individual barriers we discussed above fall in one of these categories. It must be mentioned that the questionnaire allowed a neutral position for those respondents who were either indecisive or did not have a strong opinion.

Figure 7. Summary of barriers

²⁰

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2186>



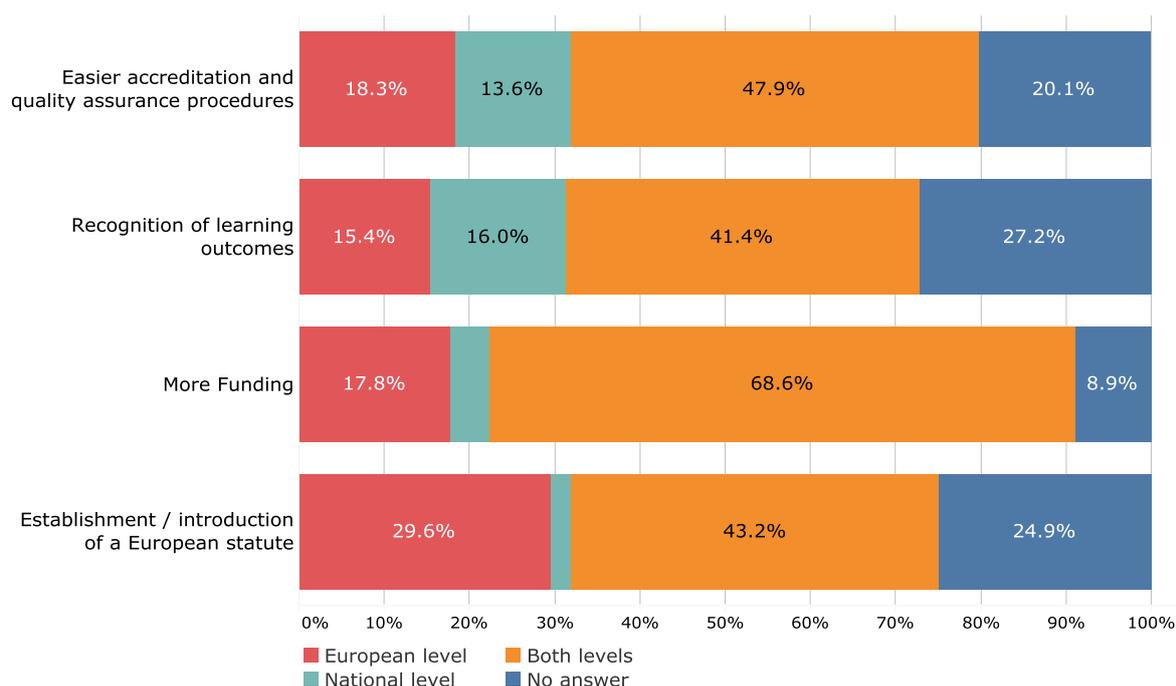
Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

3.5 Policy options to alleviate barriers and to strengthen cooperation

Administrative and legal barriers, together with funding have been identified as the most important barriers to strengthening collaborative partnerships by a large majority of the respondents. Their importance is further reflected when discussing the possible ways to alleviate these barriers and the level of intervention required to most effectively implement such measures. The respondents were asked to choose among four policy options, the most appropriate solution to help alleviate these barriers. They had to specify the level at which these options can be best implemented (i.e. national, EU or both). The four choices were: 1) "More funding"; 2) "Easier accreditation and quality assurance procedures"; 3) "Recognition of learning outcomes"; and 4) "Establishment / introduction of a European statute". Although, respondents were given the possibility to provide other possible ways to alleviate the barriers, only 4% of the respondents did so. It is to be noted that all the four options attracted a very high response rate and numerous in-depth comments were received in addition.

As far as funding is concerned, there seems to be consensus regarding its role as an enabler for successful functioning of a transnational collaborative partnership. The administrative and legal barriers are varied in nature and so are the avenues and options to tackle them. **The need for interventions at either or both the national and EU level is expressed by a majority of respondents for all the policy options suggested** (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Options to alleviate barriers at different levels



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

1. Easier accreditation and quality assurance procedures

One of the commonly perceived barriers to more intense transnational collaboration was linked to accreditation and quality assurance procedures. The responses favouring either exclusively national level (14%) or only European level (18%) solutions are relatively high, compared to the other options answers. But at the same time, 48% of the respondents agree that combined interventions at both levels are needed (Figure 8).

This chimes with the opinions expressed by the respondents, some of which stated that there is a need for "[a] **European accreditation recognised by all EU countries**", because "**accreditation is made complicated [at the] national level**". Other respondents implied that since "**Some EU countries have already put in place easy and efficient accreditation and quality assurance procedures**" perhaps other countries could tap into the experience of these EU Member States. Several respondents called for common, EU-wide standards, e.g. "**All solutions, related to QA and accreditation, should be on a[n] EU level, to be implemented in national legislation of course**" and "**easier and EU-wide accreditation standards would be extremely helpful, also to motivate future educational collaborations across Europe**".

It has to be noted that whatever form and shape this option could take, it should lead to simplified rules and not further bureaucracy, e.g. "*via complicate procedures of quality assurance/ accreditation or recognition procedures etc.*". Still, a shared opinion emerges that common rules for accreditation and quality assurance could lead to "*creating more common programs*", "*help ignite even more student mobility across Europe*", "*facilitate the dissemination / exploitation of partnership results that are about new curricula and new methods of teaching*" and "*motivate future educational collaborations across Europe*".

2. Recognition of learning outcomes

When considering the "recognition of learning outcomes" as a policy measure to alleviate administrative barriers, a relatively large share of respondents (also in comparison to the other four options) selected the national level as the most appropriate level of policy intervention. It amounts to 16% (compared to 2% in European Statute, 5% in Funding and 14% in Accreditation and QA procedures). The share of respondents selecting exclusively the EU level is also relatively high (15%). In the case of Erasmus+ supported measures, it is mandatory to recognise learning outcomes. The high percentage of respondents, indicating this as an option to support further transnational collaboration, could be an indication that requirements are either not taken seriously or not implemented (as indicated by one of the supporting comments). Since the recognition of learning outcomes is an area of exclusive national competence, the relatively high share of respondents indicating that the solution is at EU level (15%) or both EU and national levels (41%) could be interpreted as a need to further regulate this policy.

The comments linked to this option are easy to interpret since they all concur that recognition of learning outcomes is very important and necessary. Many of the opinions touch upon both the accreditation and recognition of learning outcomes and agree that there is a *"need to properly implement [the] Bologna process"* while others consider that the *"ECTS [the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System] is working rather well"*, but suffers from *"local interpretation"*. Because of the differences in interpretation and the difficulties in the recognition process, some partnership's representatives call for a top-down intervention.

At the same time, the benefits of the recognition of learning outcomes are obvious: to students willing to study and work "anywhere in Europe" and in general by helping to "facilitate the dissemination / exploitation" of results, methods and curricula *"without legal constraints"*.

3. More Funding

The option "More funding" triggered the most positive response among the proposed four policy options. The vast majority of the partnership's representatives (69%) gave their preference to interventions at both the EU and national level. Only 5% of the respondents consider that national authorities alone can handle the funding challenge, whereas 18% considered the EU level alone to offer the best possible avenue for intervention. These numbers are further supported by the comments in the replies and are in line with the current funding modalities of the partnerships. Although European programmes are the main source of funding for the majority of the partnerships (78%), very often they are not the only source. About 60% of the respondents indicated that their funding comes from more than one source. This may be partly due to the fact that many of the EU programmes require co-funding.

While **"more" funding** is considered important to expand international activities of universities and cooperation among them in Europe, other aspects are of serious concern, i.e. **including the sustainability, continuity and easier access to funding**. Providing funding may be perceived as a "guarantee" to fulfil the objectives of the partnership/cooperation and is key for mobility and exchanges of students (including through bursaries and scholarships) and staff. More, and more suitable funding could result in a larger number of jointly developed programmes; increased capacity of teaching staff and researchers; better access to research infrastructure; and an increased intensity of jointly conducted education and research activities. Several respondents consider that **achieving tangible results requires long-term funding possibilities**. On the other hand, the lack of financial resources could lead to a reduction of collaborative activities and even the termination of existing transnational partnerships.

Even when initial funding is secured *"Sustainability should also be based on continued funding"*, i.e. the concern with sustainability remains. Complementarity of national and European sources seems to be a convincing argument for universities to engage in transnational cooperation. At the same time, neither the national authorities (incl.

regional), nor the EU alone may be able to solve the access to suitable funding instruments and adequate level of financing. The need for synergy of the Member States and EU level interventions is reflected not only in the high share of responses favouring this option but also by some of the comments: "*Funding for successful projects should be a national and European priority*" and there is a need to exploit "*regional and structural funds*". The leveraging of various sources is perceived as a priority by responding European partnerships and may therefore be an avenue worth exploring. These opinions add further support to the European Universities model which aims to combine EU, national and other funding sources.

4. Establishment / introduction of a European statute

The idea of the European statute is clearly perceived as much more within the scope of EU competences than in the competence of Member States. Only 2% of the answers assign it to the national level of intervention, while almost one third consider that this solution should exclusively be in the hands of the EU. More than 43% of the respondents are of the opinion that the introduction of a European Statute should depend on both the Member States and the EU (Figure 8).

The majority of the opinions expressed were in favour of the establishment of a European statute, one which "*gives direction, justification and a common understanding*". There are expectations that a statute could lessen the administrative burden, facilitate the "*recognition in a framework of multiple or dual degree[s]*" and the "*creation of joint degrees*". The establishment of such a Statute could help in achieving a better position of each institution with regards to recognition of learning outcomes. There are expectations that it will bring about the "*enhanced employability of students*". Some respondents suggested that existing programmes (e.g., Erasmus Mundus) represent a good basis for the further integration towards European Universities. Some others questioned the added value of a European Statute.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

As part of the work to conceptualise and develop the new initiative on European Universities, Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) carried out a survey in order to map examples of existing transnational partnerships involving European higher education institutions. The aim of this survey was to take an in-depth look at the current state of cross-border cooperation in higher education in order to 1) identify drivers, objectives and facilitators, as well as 2) barriers and challenges in achieving a stronger and better collaboration. The findings of this survey provide indications of areas where further support and strengthening measures are necessary for higher education partnerships to advance to the next level. This advance is essential because Europe's higher education institutions are expected to play an increasing role in addressing societal challenges and skill shortages through educating young people to unlock the EU's potential, making the most of opportunities offered by new technologies and global trends.

New, higher and more intense level of cooperation

Building on common topics and interests (95% of the respondents) and existing contacts between staff members (88%) were indicated as the main drivers of transnational higher education partnerships. This is probably linked to the fact that the majority of the partnerships are at department and faculty level (59% of respondents). This finding showed that higher education institution partnerships in Europe have not achieved the level of institutional integration which the European Universities initiative is intended to attain. Department/Faculty level cooperation is perhaps less likely to result in multi-disciplinary approaches which are becoming more important in addressing societal challenges. Another important aspect in advancing the level of cooperation is the strengthening of links between education, research and innovation. The survey showed that only 38% of the partnerships currently cover all three missions (education, research, innovation) and at the same time innovation related drivers and added value are important for a small fraction of the respondents (on average below 30%).

Mobility

A large share of the respondents (86%) placed "mobility of the students" among the key objectives for their partnerships and an equally high share (83%) has seen international partnerships adding value to mobility of both students and staff. On the other hand, the survey also showed that 65% of the partnerships did not offer any mobility scheme at Bachelor's level and that embedded mobility and long-term mobility are mainly offered at Master's level. This implies that at European level there is need and room for improvement in order to give the opportunity to many more students to benefit from the transversal and inter-cultural skills and the higher employability that an exchange abroad brings.

Cooperation leads to internationalisation and is associated with impact

All respondents recognized the added benefit of transnational collaborative partnerships. Higher education institutions in Europe are interested in cooperating in education mainly because of the incumbent benefits for students. Increasing the quality and relevance of the educational offer, linkage between higher education and research, employability and new skills were cited as important benefits. This points to curriculum development and delivery of teaching as important objectives that the European Universities initiative should tackle. The respondents also linked internationalisation and attractiveness of higher education institutions to mobility of students and staff. More than 80% of the respondents consider that international collaborations add value to "mobility of both students and staff" (~83%) and are beneficial for "attracting foreign students" (~80%),

which is expected to improve the quality of higher education institutions (Lepori, 2016). This advocates for European Universities to deliver on the objectives of the European Education Area (EEA), namely, to promote cross-border mobility and cooperation in education and training; overcome obstacles to achieve free movement of learners; to create a genuine European learning space; and to support Member States in improving the inclusive, lifelong-learning based and innovation-driven nature of their education and training systems.

Developing sustainable European higher education partnerships

The respondents indicated that there is room for further enhancing the impact of collaborative partnerships, but perceived a number of barriers to strengthening these collaborations; funding related issues being the most important. Apart from the level of funding these concerned the "sustainability of funding" and "suitable funding instruments". Many respondents indicated that more funding can be an important enabler of strengthened collaborative partnership, but funding needs to be long-term to ensure sustainability. While EU-level funding is important, most respondents indicated that it should be combined with national sources. This also reflects the current situation of most collaborative partnerships: in most cases they have to rely, apart from EU funding also on their own resources and national funding. Half of the respondents believed that existing funding instruments are not suitable for deepening and extending transnational collaborations between higher education institutions. This suggests that the European Universities initiative with its ambitious objective to create truly integrated institutional cooperation supported through combined EU and other funds may fill a needs gap in the current landscape of EU programmes.

In addition to funding, there are a number of serious administrative and legal issues which do not allow for more intense and sustainable collaborations. These include, for example, the lack of implementation of common accreditation and quality assurance standards, different academic calendars and legal barriers. The need for combined interventions at the EU and national levels to alleviate these barriers is apparent. Recognition of qualifications and quality assurance will see several EU policy developments alongside European Universities. Here, national support for facilitation of policy uptake and commitment from higher education institutions to implement the policies is important and necessary. Another area for EU added value is accreditation and quality assurance. Respondents indicated that common rules could lead to creating more common programmes, enhance student mobility, result in better dissemination of joint activities and, in this way, motivate further cooperation across Europe. The potential introduction, in the future, of a European statute is expected by the respondents to be useful, but only in case it is properly designed to address bottlenecks which otherwise could not be tackled.

Sustainability is not exclusively related to funding. It also requires the elements of trust, vision, strong leadership and institutional capacity. Strong leadership with common vision was identified as an important driver for developing and strengthening collaborations. The importance of trust between partners was raised by a number of respondents in open comments. The survey showed that contrary to the students and researchers that have considerably benefitted from the existing collaborative partnerships, teaching and administrative staff have been involved significantly less. In addition, 44% of the respondents identified the lack of incentives for university staff as a serious impediment to international cooperation. These two findings point to the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of higher education institutions in case these two groups of staff category should engage in international mobility more. The initiative on European Universities should take this on board by addressing support for capacity building and best practice sharing of administrative structures and services.

In the current landscape, diversity of higher education institutions is not observed to be a barrier for cooperation. It may even promote inclusivity which is one of the key principles identified for European Universities. Moreover, the distribution of the existing partnerships according to their size aligns well with the proposed eligibility criterion of a minimum of 3 higher education institutions from at least 3 Member States.

In conclusion, the findings on the need for long-term, sustainable funding, combining European and national funds for sustainability of transnational higher education partnerships, contributes to the current thinking behind the European Universities initiative. Where it concerns barriers, the specific areas of accreditation and quality assurance procedures, recognition of learning outcomes and establishment/introduction of a European statute indicated by the respondents, correspond to policy developments the European Commission has identified as necessary and is working to strengthen alongside the European Universities initiative.

Based on the analysis of the results, including the comments from the respondents, some suggestions which could be addressed by the European Universities initiative are presented below:

- The internationalisation of the curriculum and the need for mutual recognition of learning outcomes are issues identified for further efforts.
- Training in management, leadership and administrative capacity for international collaborations in teaching and research is necessary to allow higher education institutions to be more successful in participating and managing their transnational partnerships. In this respect, it is important that one of the key concepts of the European Universities initiative is support for mobility at all levels, from students to administrative staff and university leadership.
- Improved implementation of quality assurance procedures across EU countries could support transnational collaboration in education. Sharing of best practices could be useful in this respect.
- The issue of sustainable funding is very important. It became clear that Europe is still lacking suitable funding instruments, capable to effectively support long term international collaborations. Combining EU funding instruments with national sources could reduce the barriers related to funding. In this sense, the European Universities initiative should strive to ensure synergies between national and EU funding instruments and capitalise on how these two parts could work better together.
- The foundations for the new initiative exist since higher education institutions already collaborate on all three missions. This suggests that there is scope for them to take such collaborations to a higher level of ambition, and to involve in their partnerships, the entire organisation, as is foreseen for the initiative on European Universities.
- There is room for a discussion on how a "European Statute" could contribute to the development of "European Universities", while, at the same time, tackling all other issues related to funding, quality assurance and mutual recognition of learning outcomes.

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List of abbreviations and definitions

CESAER	Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research
EAC (DG)	Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EAIE	European Association for International Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EEA	European Education Area
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
HEI	Higher education Institution
IAU	International Association of Universities
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IPR	Intellectual property rights
JRC (DG)	Directorate-General Joint Research Centre
LERU	League of European Research Universities

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Annexes

Annex I. Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships" (JRC, 2018)

Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport And Culture (DG EAC) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) would together like to invite your organisation to provide us with valuable input on the topic of transnational cooperation involving European higher education institutions.

The aim of the questionnaire is to map examples of cooperation. This will enable us to identify common features and diversity among higher education partnerships in order to give an objective view of:

- 1) drivers, objectives and facilitators; and
- 2) barriers and challenges to sustained collaboration.

This information will be used to identify where EU action on policy development, programme design and funding is necessary for fostering conditions conducive to sustained long-term cooperation among European higher education institutions.

The deadline for responses is **22nd March 2018**.

Enquiries and comments on the questionnaire may be addressed to:

Sumathi.SUBRAMANIAM@ec.europa.eu
and
Athina.KARVOUNARAKI@ec.europa.eu

Section 1 – Information on the partnership

* 1.1. What is the name of your collaborative partnership?

* 1.2. In which year was the collaborative partnership established?

If the collaborative partnership has ended, please specify when

* 1.3. How many institutions are involved in your collaborative partnership?

* 1.4. Please, indicate where the members of your collaborative partnership are based or located. (multiple options are possible)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Austria | <input type="checkbox"/> Finland | <input type="checkbox"/> Lithuania | <input type="checkbox"/> Slovenia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belgium | <input type="checkbox"/> France | <input type="checkbox"/> Luxembourg | <input type="checkbox"/> Spain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgaria | <input type="checkbox"/> Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> Malta | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Croatia | <input type="checkbox"/> Greece | <input type="checkbox"/> Netherlands | <input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cyprus | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungary | <input type="checkbox"/> Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> EEA/EFTA countries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Czech Republic | <input type="checkbox"/> Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> Portugal | <input type="checkbox"/> other countries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denmark | <input type="checkbox"/> Italy | <input type="checkbox"/> Romania | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Estonia | <input type="checkbox"/> Latvia | <input type="checkbox"/> Slovakia | |

* 1.5. What types of organisations/institutions constitute your collaborative partnership? (multiple options are possible)

- General/comprehensive universities
- Technical universities, universities of technology
- Universities of business administration, economics and management
- Other research universities (medical universities, etc.)
- Other universities (thematic universities: music, arts, design, etc.)
- Universities of applied science
- University colleges (excl. universities of applied science)
- Research organisations
- Enterprises
- Other higher education institutions
- Other

Please, specify

* 1.6. What are the main sources of funding for your collaborative partnership? (multiple options are possible)

- National government funding
- Regional funding
- Industry funding
- European funding (FP/research, Erasmus+, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), etc.)
- Other international funding
- Own resources (including student fees)
- Other

Please, elaborate if needed. In case of a combination of funding could you please describe how these sources of funding interact. Please specify whether these multiple sources of funds occurred at the same time or at different stages in the lifetime of the collaborative partnership

1.7. What proportion of the following groups benefit from direct participation in educational, research or innovation activities of the partnership?

	0%	1-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	More than 30%
* Students	<input type="radio"/>					
* Researchers	<input type="radio"/>					
* Teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>					
* Administrative and support staff	<input type="radio"/>					
* University leadership	<input type="radio"/>					

1.8. What mobility schemes are currently established within the framework of the collaborative partnership?
(multiple options are possible)

	Short-term mobility (+/- 2 months)	Long-term mobility (>= 3 months)	Embedded mobility (i)	Blended mobility (ii)	Virtual mobility (iii)	Double cross-border affiliation (iv)	Other	None
• Bachelor students (including short-cycle students)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Master students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Doctoral candidates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Researchers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- (i) Embedded mobility is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.
- (ii) Blended mobility is short-term physical mobility accompanied by virtual mobility/collaboration before, during and after the physical mobility.
- (iii) The term virtual mobility encompasses what would be defined as online education, distance learning, or Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs).
- (iv) An individual (researcher or teaching staff representative) who is affiliated with at least two higher education institutions from the same collaborative partnership, located in different countries.

In case you selected the option "other" please indicate the types of mobility schemes that have been established.

* 1.9. Is your collaboration based on (multiple options are possible)

- A single theme (e.g. specific discipline or research topic)
- A multidisciplinary broad challenge (e.g. climate change) involving different broad fields working together
- A regional proximity (i.e. geographically close)
- Other

Please, specify broad field using the ISCEDF13 definition. (multiple choices are possible)

- F01 - Education studies
- F02 - Arts and humanities
- F03 - Social sciences, journalism and information
- F04 - Business, administration and law
- F05 - Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
- F06 - Information and Communication Technologies
- F07 - Engineering, manufacturing and construction
- F08 - Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
- F09 - Health and welfare
- Other

Please specify

* 1.10. Does your collaboration involve

- A specific department
- A faculty (with several departments)
- At least two different faculties
- The entire organisation (including the central administration)
- Other

Please specify

* 1.11. What are the formal criteria for membership in your collaborative partnership (e.g. co-funding, joint activities, etc.)?

* 1.12. Does the collaborative partnership have a legal base (partnership/consortium agreement, memorandum of understanding or other forms of arrangement, regulating the responsibilities, obligations and rights of the partners between them and/or with regard to third parties)?

- Yes
- No

Please, specify

* 1.13. Please indicate what governance model best describes your collaborative partnership.

- Project management team
- Permanent steering board
- Common secretariat
- Ad hoc structures
- Other

Please specify

* 1.14. Which common administrative structures does your collaborative partnership maintain? (multiple options are possible)

- Common campuses
- Research facilities and labs
- Spin-off centres
- Business incubators
- Technology transfer offices
- Business liaison offices
- Public affairs departments
- Common administrative offices

- Career guidance offices
- Libraries
- Shared information website
- Others
- None

Please, specify

* 1.15. Within the context of your transnational collaboration, in which of the following missions does cooperation occur? (multiple options are possible)

- Education
- Research
- Innovation/ Third mission / Knowledge Transfer

NOTE: the selection(s) in question 1.15 lead to additional questions in the subsequent sections.

1.16. For each mission, please indicate what is the main level of cooperation in your collaborative partnership. (multiple options are possible)

	Institutional / organisational level	Faculty / department level	Individual level	No collaboration
* Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
* Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
* Third mission / innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2 - Education

2.1 What kind of **educational** collaboration do the partners engage in: (multiple options are possible)

	Joint delivery of teaching /courses	Joint development of courses	Joint degrees or dual/double degree	Joint organisation of traineeships (i)	All other forms (e. g., certificates, summer schools etc.)
Bachelor (including short-cycle studies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Master	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doctoral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(i) Joint organisation of traineeships: finding traineeships, relations with employers/trainee hosts, match-making, preparation, administrative and financial management, follow-up.

In case you indicated "other forms", please describe/name them here

2.2. What proportion of students / staff benefit from **educational** collaboration within the partnership?

	0%	1-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	More than 30%
Students	<input type="radio"/>					
Teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>					
Administrative and support staff	<input type="radio"/>					

2.3 How would you rate the intensity of collaboration according to the scale below?

	Not intensive	Somewhat intensive	Intensive	Very intensive	N/A
Bachelor (including short-cycle studies)	<input type="radio"/>				
Master	<input type="radio"/>				
Doctoral	<input type="radio"/>				

2.4 Does your collaborative partnership support student and staff mobility schemes funded through Erasmus+?

- Yes
- No

2.5 If your collaborative partnership supports other mobility schemes, please specify

Section 3 - Research

3.1 When collaborating in **research**, do partners engage in (multiple options are possible)

- Joint development of research

- Joint application for research funding
- Involvement of academics/students in the research projects
- Exchange of researchers
- Exchange of research material (data, samples, cell lines etc.)
- Shared use of research infrastructures / equipment / laboratories
- Joint publications
- Dissemination of research results back into education
- Other

In case you have selected "other", please elaborate

3.2. What proportion of researchers / staff benefit from **research** collaboration within the partnership?

	0%	1-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	More than 30%
Researchers	<input type="radio"/>					
Teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>					
Administrative and support staff	<input type="radio"/>					

Section 4 - Third mission / innovation

4.1 When collaborating in **third mission / innovation activities**, do partners engage in (multiple options are possible)

- Joint commercialisation of research findings
- Joint intellectual property rights (IPR) services (e.g., patenting, licensing etc.)
- Joint business / high tech parks / incubators / accelerators
- Exchange of staff involved in entrepreneurship / innovation support
- Joint development/offering of transversal skills courses to students
- Engage and share the results with their local ecosystem
- Other

Other, please describe

4.2. What proportion of students / staff / researchers benefit from **innovation** collaboration within the partnership?

	0%	1-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	More than 30%
Students	<input type="radio"/>					
Researchers	<input type="radio"/>					
Teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>					
Administrative and support staff	<input type="radio"/>					

Section 5 – Drivers, enablers, barriers and added value of collaborative partnership

5.1. The following drivers and/or objectives are important for the set up and successful continuation of your transnational collaborative partnership:

5.1.1 General drivers

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Geographical proximity	<input type="radio"/>				
Strong leadership with common vision	<input type="radio"/>				
Bottom-up approach	<input type="radio"/>				
Good balance between top-down and bottom-up approach	<input type="radio"/>				
Common / similar topics and interests	<input type="radio"/>				
Existing contacts between staff members	<input type="radio"/>				
Previously established collaboration for participation in international programmes / FP projects	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.1.2 Mobility

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Mobility of students	<input type="radio"/>				

Mobility of researchers	<input type="radio"/>				
Mobility of teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Mobility of administrative and other non-teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.1.3 Education, teaching and capacity building

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Developing students' new skills (e.g. multilingualism, multidisciplinary)	<input type="radio"/>				
Enhancing students' employability	<input type="radio"/>				
Nurturing active citizenship / civic engagement	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing the ability to attract the best students	<input type="radio"/>				
Developing common / similar higher education disciplines, topics and interests	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing the quality and relevance of the educational offer (study programmes)	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting synergies in education among partners	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting links between higher education and research	<input type="radio"/>				
Developing teaching and non-teaching staff's new skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Enhancing staff's employability	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting excellence in teaching and learning (learning environment / learning conditions)	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing the organisation(s)' capacity to design and deliver higher education	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing the organisation(s)' capacity to assess and certify higher education	<input type="radio"/>				

Increasing the organisation(s)' capacity to provide services to students and staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Achieving critical mass to attract funding or (foreign) students	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting attractiveness of institutions to non-EU higher education partners	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting collaboration between universities with different levels of higher education capability (widening / capacity building)	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.1.4 Research and capacity building

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Developing common / similar research topics and interests	<input type="radio"/>				
Developing researchers' new skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Enhancing researchers' employability	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting scientific excellence	<input type="radio"/>				
Strengthening capacity building	<input type="radio"/>				
Achieving critical mass to attract funding or (foreign) staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting attractiveness to non-EU R&D partners	<input type="radio"/>				
Accessing foreign knowledge base / collaborative partners	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting collaboration between universities with different levels of research capability (widening / capacity building)	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.1.5 Funding

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Increasing the access to national, regional or private funding schemes	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing the access to EU / international funding (ERASMUS+, FP, ESIF etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.1.6 Third mission/innovation

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Business development (spin offs, start-ups etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Provision of transversal skills (incl. entrepreneurship education)	<input type="radio"/>				
Delivery of Technology Transfer Office (TTO) services (intellectual property rights, mentoring etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Private firms' funding and support for the exploitation of research findings	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.2 The transnational collaborative partnership offered clear added value and benefits in comparison to national partnerships or situations in which no partnership exists in the following fields

5.2.1 Mobility

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Increased number of foreign students	<input type="radio"/>				
Increased number of foreign staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Increased mobility of students and staff	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

--

5.2.2 Education

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Improved and diversified educational offer (breadth and quality)	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved students' skills (including language, cultural skills)	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved students' employability	<input type="radio"/>				
Increased students' civic engagement	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved capacity of teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

--

5.2.3 Funding

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Diversified and increased funding sources	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved internationalisation – more cooperation with EU and third countries	<input type="radio"/>				
Achieved the necessary critical mass	<input type="radio"/>				
Reduced administrative burden (e.g. maintaining infrastructure)	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

--

5.2.4 Research/excellence

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Improved researchers' skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved researchers' employability	<input type="radio"/>				

Increased level of scientific excellence	<input type="radio"/>				
More and better focused research	<input type="radio"/>				
More interdisciplinary research	<input type="radio"/>				
Shared / better use of research infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.2.5 Third mission / innovation

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Increased number or viability of spin offs, start-ups etc.	<input type="radio"/>				
Improved quality of entrepreneurship education	<input type="radio"/>				
Increased development and exploitation of Intellectual Property (IP)	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.3 The following are perceived as barriers in your partnership:

5.3.1 Funding

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Lack of suitable funding instruments	<input type="radio"/>				
Complexity of the funding instruments	<input type="radio"/>				
Lack of sustainable funding	<input type="radio"/>				
Need to apply to multiple calls every year	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.3.2 Administrative and legal barriers

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Administrative barriers	<input type="radio"/>				
Legal barriers	<input type="radio"/>				
Lack of common accreditation standards	<input type="radio"/>				
Difficulties in recognition of credits	<input type="radio"/>				
Different length of degrees	<input type="radio"/>				
Different academic calendars	<input type="radio"/>				
Students' visas	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

Any other, please specify

5.3.3 Contextual factors (cultural, economic and geographical barriers)

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Geographical dispersion	<input type="radio"/>				
Different languages	<input type="radio"/>				
Level of economic development	<input type="radio"/>				
Cultural differences	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.3.4 Leadership and organisational factors

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Lack of long lasting cooperation	<input type="radio"/>				

Lack of strong leadership	<input type="radio"/>				
Lack of long term vision	<input type="radio"/>				
Different levels of interest or lack of shared vision/common goals	<input type="radio"/>				
Lack of incentives for universities' staff involved	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.3.5 Capacity of university staff

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Differences in staff qualifications	<input type="radio"/>				
Insufficient interest from university staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Capacity obstacles: lack of competences, capabilities, experience at the level of administrative staff	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.3.6 Third mission/innovation

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Competition between universities / university science parks for the attraction of start-up companies and venture capital	<input type="radio"/>				
Different development levels and rules of TTO services between the partner organisations	<input type="radio"/>				

If you agree or totally agree with any of the above, please elaborate on your choice

5.4 Having in mind the barriers you have identified as being of major importance in the previous section, please indicate whether the options below can help alleviate these barriers. Please also specify whether these policy options are best implemented at the national or EU level.

	European level intervention	National level intervention (i)	Both
More funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easier accreditation and quality assurance procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognition of learning outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establishment / introduction of a European statute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(i) National level intervention including regional interventions where applicable

Other, please specify

Please describe in more detail how you think the selected solutions can help alleviate the identified barriers.

* Finally, please briefly describe your role in the collaborative partnership.

Optionally, your name and email address (for communication purposes only, not visible in survey results)

Annex II. Methodology

1. Target population

As part of the work to conceptualise and develop the new initiative on European Universities, Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport And Culture (DG EAC) and Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) carried out a survey in order to map examples of existing transnational partnerships involving European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The aim of the survey was to collect information and views on the drivers and objectives of the collaborations, the added value at student, staff and organization level as well as the challenges and the barriers for closer and more intensive collaboration. In order to be able to identify common features and variations among higher education partnerships, it was important to ensure the participation of a wide range of different types of collaborations. For this reason, the survey was open to all known partnerships which have been developed and supported through European funding instruments like Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020. In this sense the survey was on the available population and no selective sampling methodology was applied. The sampling unit is the partnership. Each partnership coordinator could fill out only one questionnaire, but a HEI could lead or participate in more than one partnership.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees was one of the targeted types of international collaborations which cover high-level integrated international study programmes delivered by consortia of Higher Education Institutions that award full degree scholarships to the most qualified master students. Similarly, partnerships aiming at the development of **Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate Degrees** were also considered although they are not part of the current Erasmus+ programme. Doctorate degree partnerships established under Erasmus Mundus but no longer active, were welcome to provide their views and experiences as well.

The other two targeted types of partnerships under Erasmus+ do not focus on the mobility of individuals, but they promote cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. **Transnational Strategic Partnerships** aim to develop initiatives addressing one or more fields of education, training and youth. They promote innovation, exchange of experience and know-how between different types of organisations. **Knowledge Alliances** between higher education institutions and enterprises aim to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, employability, knowledge exchange and/or multidisciplinary teaching and learning²¹.

Some Partnerships involving HEIs which focus on research and innovation and are funded under Horizon 2020 were also invited to the survey. These include a) those partnerships funded under the **"Teaming" projects**, which create new or update existing centres of excellence in "Widening countries"²² through a coupling process with a leading scientific institution, and b) those funded under the **"Twinning" projects**, which strengthen a specific field of research in an emerging institution in a "Widening country" by linking the institution with at least two internationally leading counterparts in Europe.

The EIT's **Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)** which bring together businesses, research centres and universities, were also encouraged to participate despite their thematic nature, separate funding scheme and relatively large size.

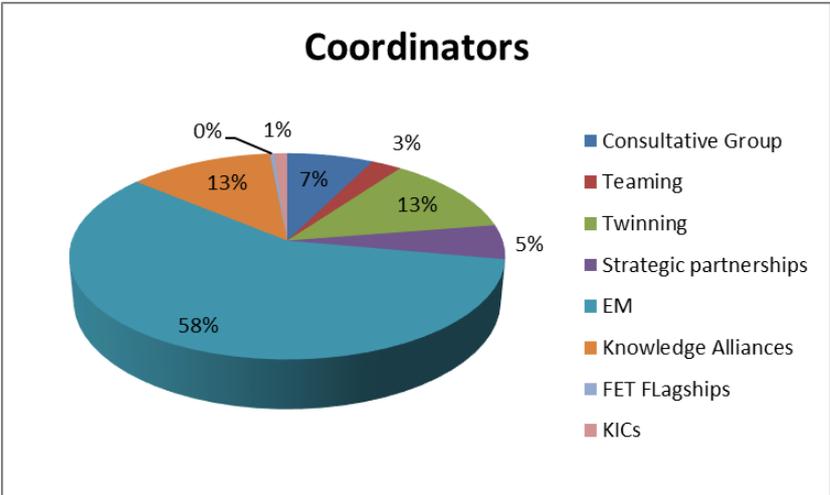
²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/2017-erasmus-plus-programme-guide-v2_en.pdf

²² The Member States currently eligible for Widening support are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Associated Countries currently eligible for Widening support are (subject to valid association agreements of third countries with Horizon 2020): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The survey was not intended for organisations and associations which represent higher education institutions such as the European level associations of universities (League of European Research Universities (LERU), Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER), European University Association (EUA) etc). However, the questionnaire did target collaborative partnerships between a small number of higher education institutions which may be members of such umbrella organisations. Therefore, all large networks and associations were invited to forward the questionnaire to any smaller scale partnership developed within their organization.

Over 500 invitations were sent to the coordinators of the partnerships. The final composition of the target population is shown in Figure 9. Erasmus mobility projects enjoy a larger representation as they cover over 50% of the targeted partnerships. This characteristic is not considered a drawback since the nature and size of this type of international partnerships are close to the envisaged objective of the European Universities initiative. Moreover, the funding instrument does not entirely define the type of partnership. Other factors, such as the mission of the collaboration and the type of organizations involved may be equally important. Both of them are addressed with specific questions in the questionnaire.

Figure 9. Composition of the targeted population of the survey



Source: JRC, Survey "Mapping of transnational collaborative partnerships", 2018

2. Questionnaire

The mapping exercise was done via an online survey. It consisted of an introduction explaining the aim of the survey and 5 sections: Information on the partnership; Education; Research; Third mission/Innovation; Drivers, enablers, barriers and added value of collaborative partnership (Annex 1 provides the questionnaire used). Each of these sections contained a number of questions, some obligatory and others optional. The questionnaire contained mainly closed-ended questions, each with a set of possible answers, complemented by an optional category "other" where the respondent could specify and explain his/her choice. The possibility to provide additional input and supplement an answer was mostly given in section 5, where the respondent was asked to give free-form comments. The majority of the questions allowed for multiple answers and the respondents were notified about this option.

The options provided to answer the closed-ended questions, particularly in section 5 were based on a literature review in the field of internationalization of higher education, on key EU Commission policy documents, on the concept and position papers of University networks and associations with regard to the European Universities initiative, on the discussions and key messages from the first expert meeting of the European Universities Networks (February 2018) and on the feedback and extensive input by higher education

policy makers in the European Commission. To ensure that each respondent has the same understanding of the terms used, prescribed definitions or explanations were provided when needed.

Section 5 comprises four questions, three of which used a traditional 5-level Likert scale to ask the respondents to pinpoint how much they agree or disagree with a statement. The statements of each question were grouped in thematic categories (e.g. mobility, education, research, funding etc.). When analysing these questions, each statement was treated separately and percentages were calculated for each level (Totally disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Totally agree). Subsequently, the two positive answers were added together and their aggregated percentages were used to produce the ranking of the statements in terms of importance. The statement with the highest percentage of agreement is at the top of the ranking. This method enabled a comprehensive and visual presentation of the importance of the benefits and the added value of the international partnerships as well as the barriers to further strengthening collaboration. A similar approach was applied to the two opposite opinions, i.e. disagree and totally disagree. Their analysis revealed which statements are not considered benefits or added value or barriers to the majority of the respondents. In addition, the respondents were encouraged to supplement their preferences with comments.

3. Response rate

The survey period was only 10 working days and we received 177 responses from more than 500 invited recipients. The survey achieved a relatively high response rate of about 30% (from now on referred to as "the respondents"). The name of the partnership, which was a mandatory question, was not sufficient to identify under which EU funding instrument the partnership was developed. In this sense it is not possible to have an exact picture of the composition of the respondents which would allow comparison with the population. Based on a subset of responses for which identification was possible, we can safely argue that all instruments were reflected among the respondents, but the exact percentages are not known.

4. Data cleaning

The survey was published as an open survey without an obligation to identify the responding person. The same person could give multiple responses for different partnerships. Although the invitations were sent to the coordinators of the partnerships with clear instructions to fill out only one questionnaire per partnership, duplicate responses were possible when the invitation was forwarded to several members of the same partnership.

We identified four duplicate answers. For each couple we selected the one with the most completed questionnaire. The other one was excluded from the analysis. We also excluded four responses coming from the "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) because of their size and nature. All KICs were grouped together and their responses will be separately analysed.

The total number of responses used in our analysis was therefore 169.

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