

International strategic institutional partnerships and the European Universities Initiative

Results of the EUA survey

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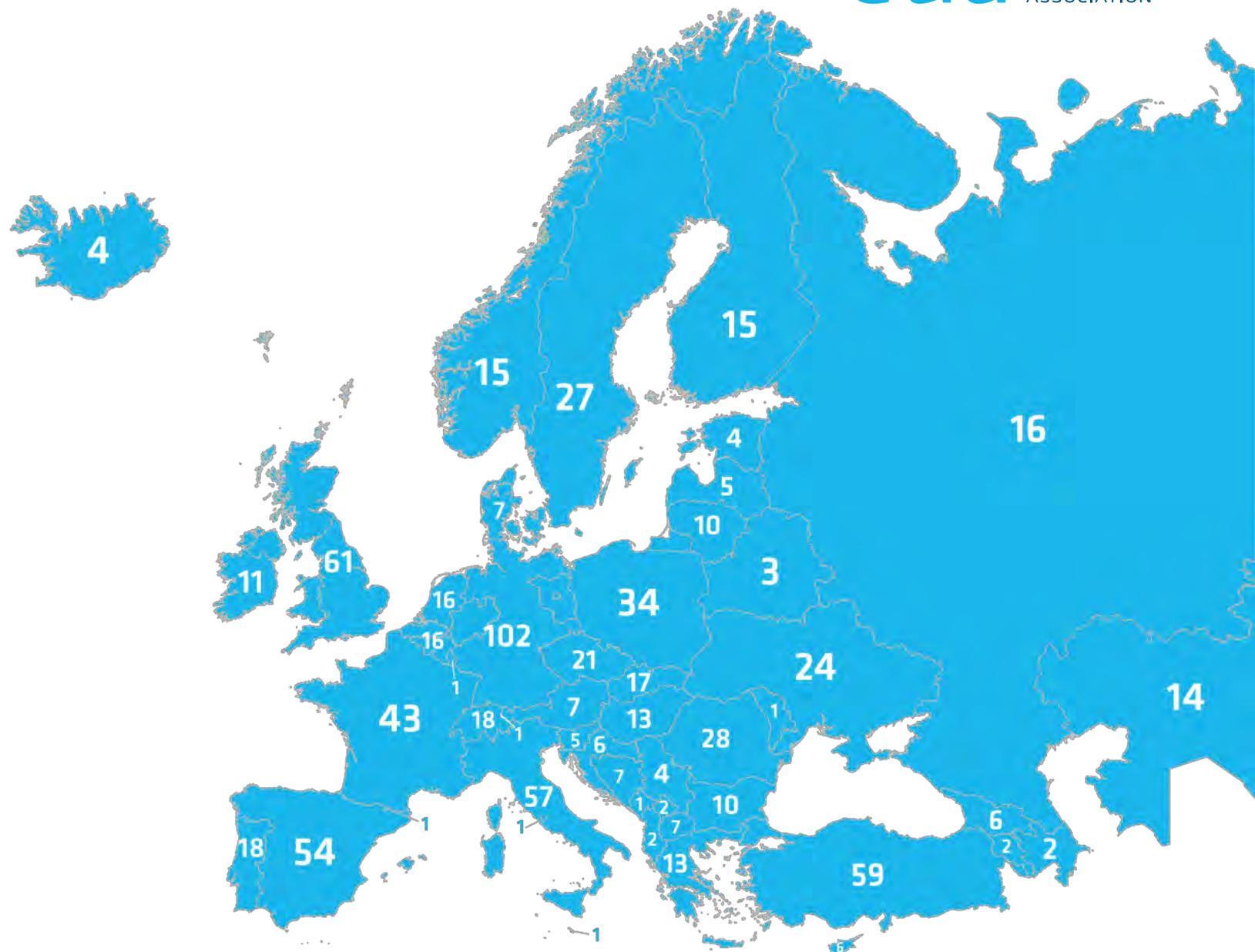
Want to know more?

EUA project team

EUA

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

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

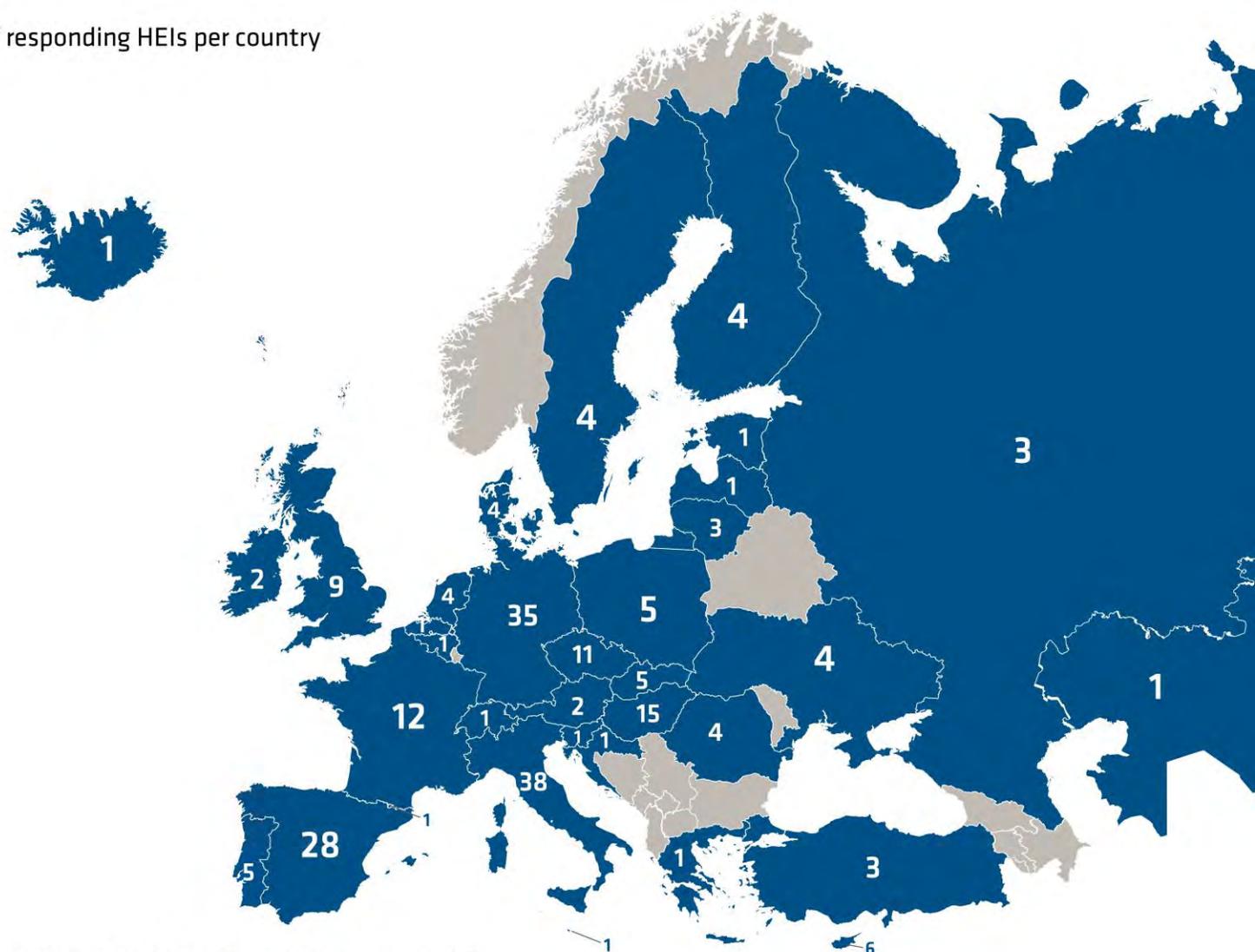


The sample

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

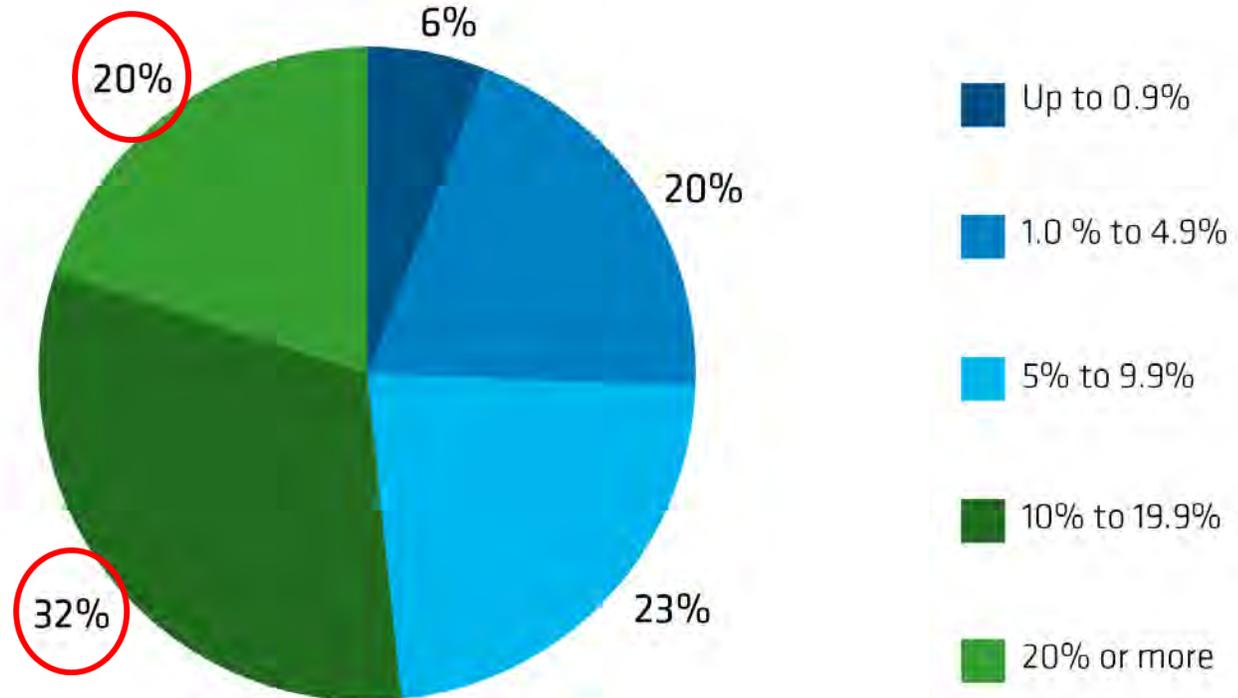
The sample is uneven as the number of responses from some systems compared to their size is relatively low (e.g. France, Poland and Romania for instance), while others are highly represented (e.g. Italy, Germany, Hungary for instance). This has to be taken into account when looking at the results.

Number of responding HEIs per country



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

Percentage of international students enrolled in 2018/2019

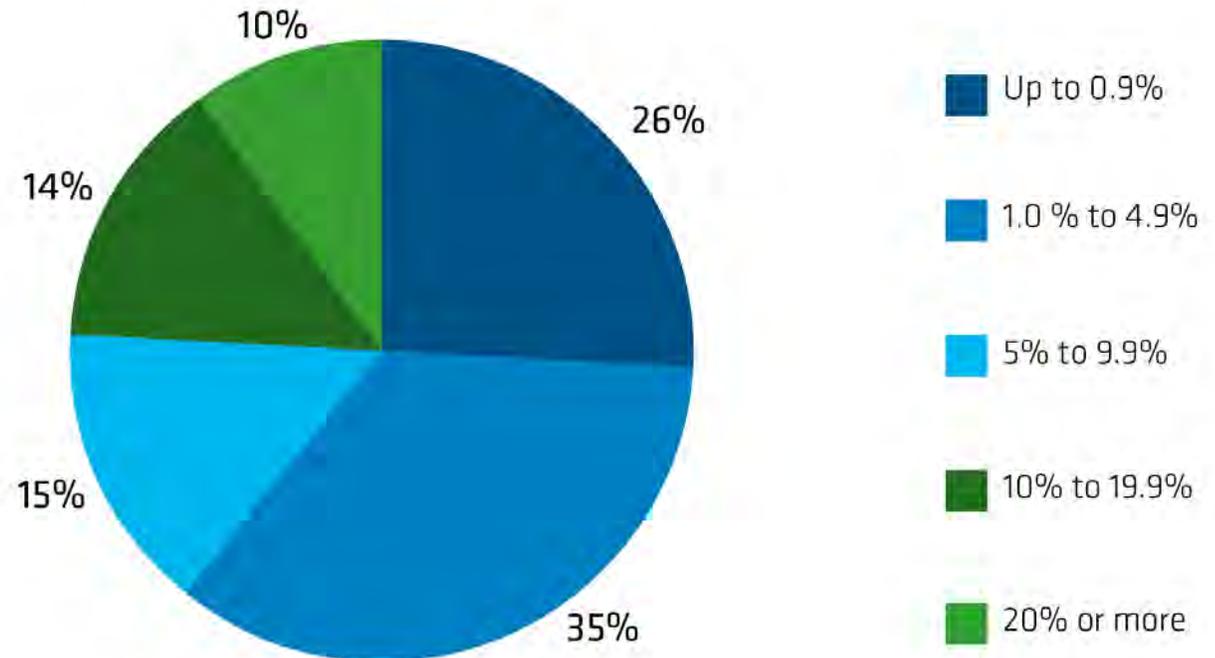


More than half of responding higher education institutions have 10% or more international students.

EUA Survey Q10: What is the percentage of international students at your institution?

N=217

Percentage of international staff in 2018/2019



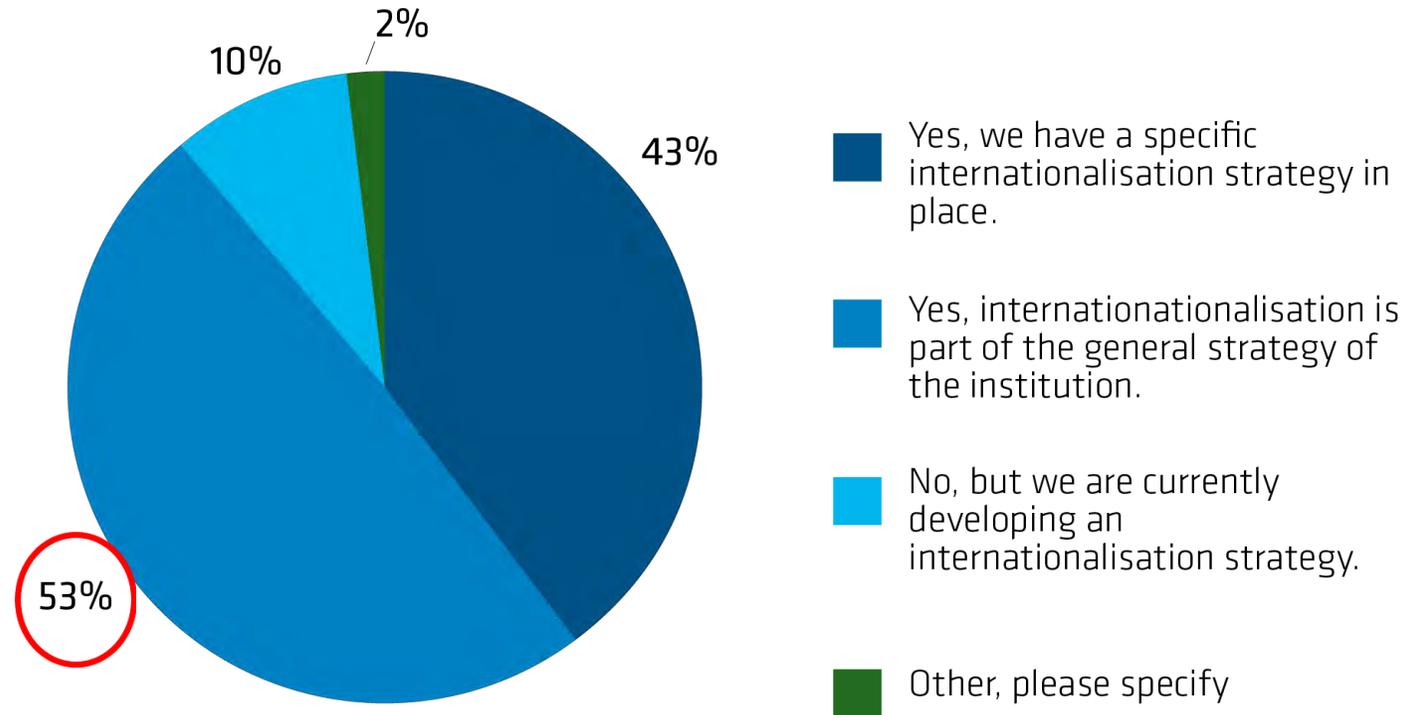
More than 60% of responding institutions have less than 5% international staff, while about one quarter has 10% or more.

EUA Survey Q11: What is the approximate percentage of international staff at your higher education institution?

N=210

Internationalisation strategy

Internationalisation has been a strategic issue and an integral part of the activities at many institutions for quite a while, as also shown by the EUA Trends study. In this sample, 53% of respondents indicate that it is part of their general strategy, while 43% have a specific internationalisation strategy.

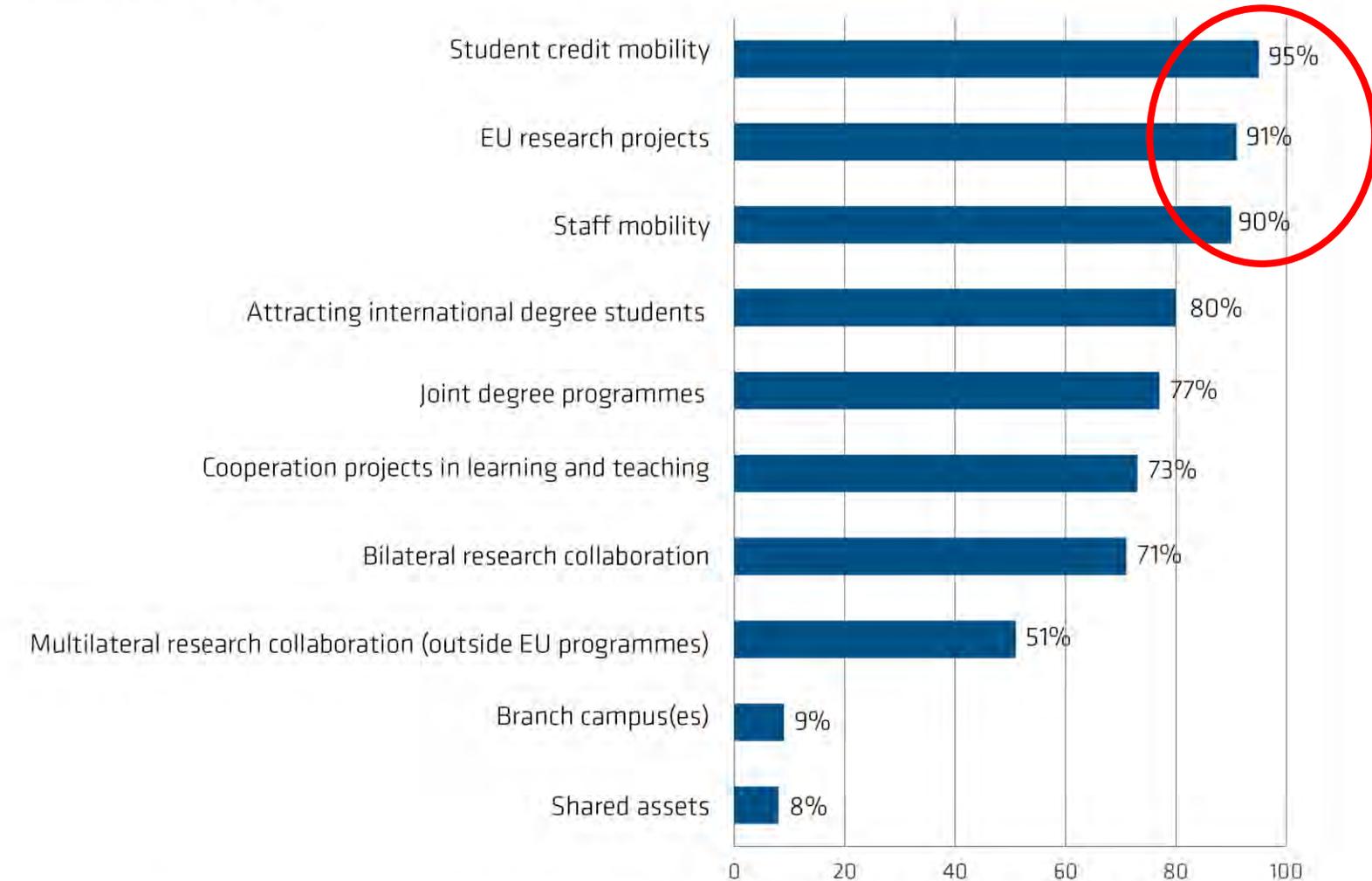


EUA Survey Q12: Do you have an internationalisation strategy in place at your institution?
N=238

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

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

International activities

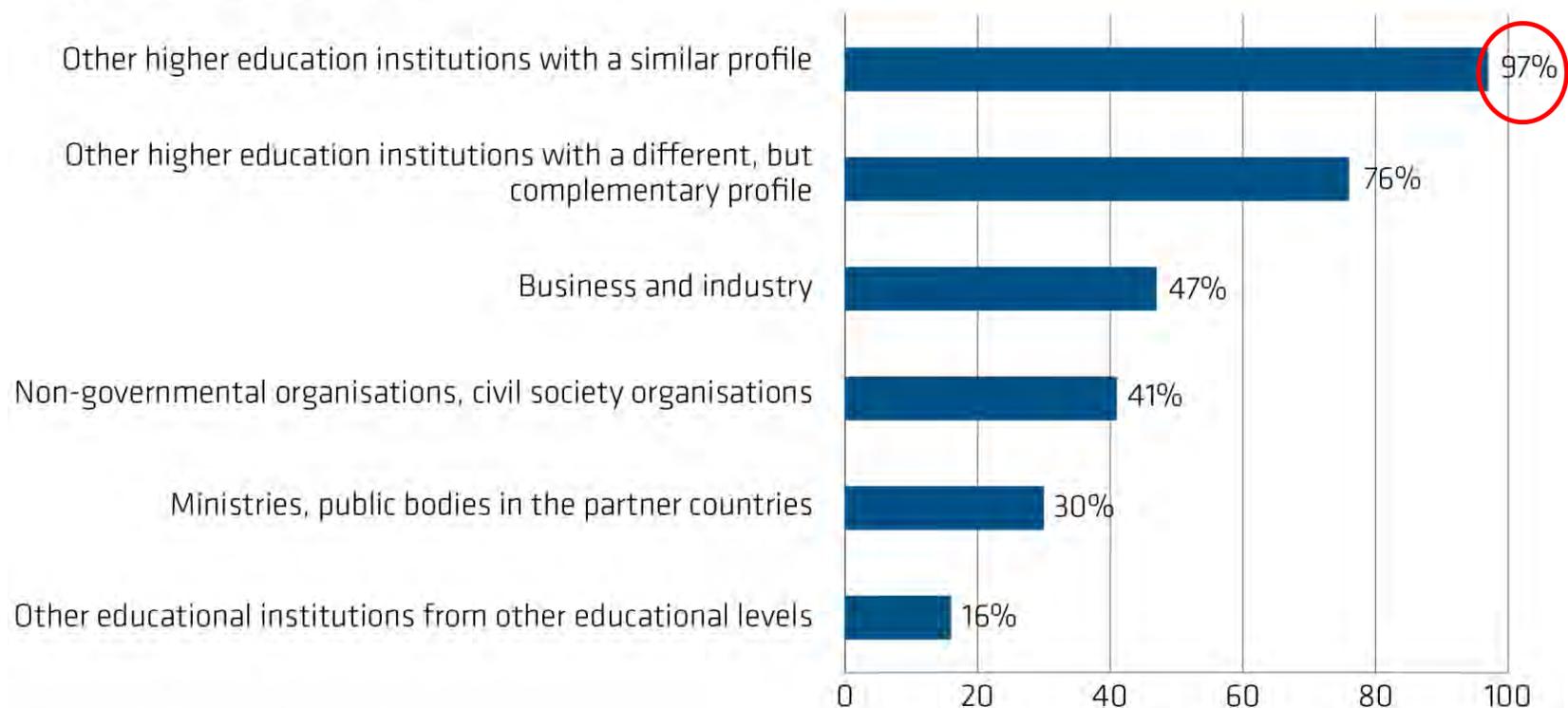


EUA Survey Q18: In which international activities is your higher education institution engaged?
N=219

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

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

Types of partners abroad

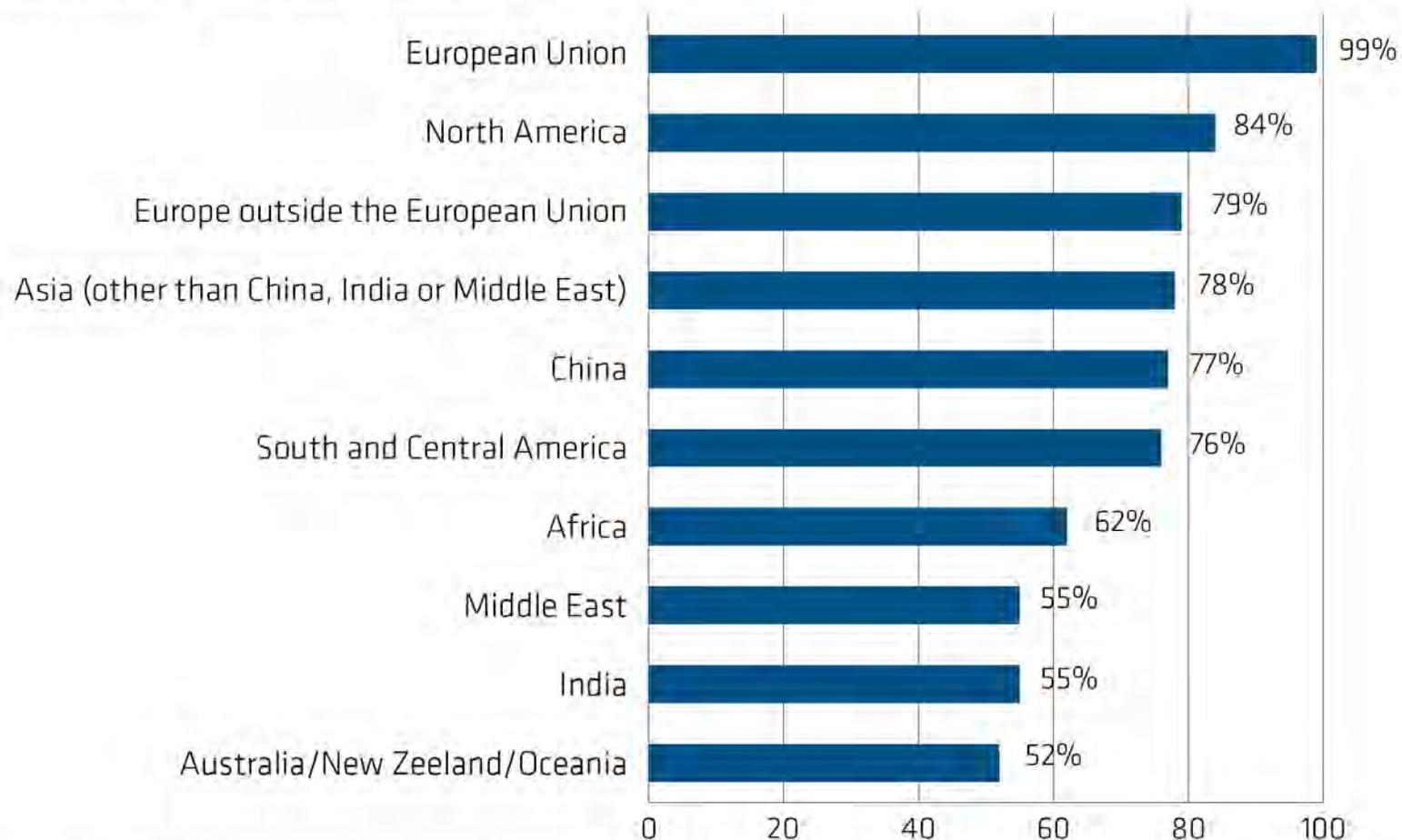


EUA Survey Q14: Who are your institution's partners abroad?
Please tick all applicable.
N=219

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

Most collaboration takes place with partners in the EU, followed by North America. About three quarters collaborate with partners in Europe outside the EU, Asia (other than China, India or the Middle East), China and South and Central America. Close to two thirds work with Africa and more than half of respondents collaborate with the Middle East, India and Australia/New Zealand/Oceania.

International partners' location



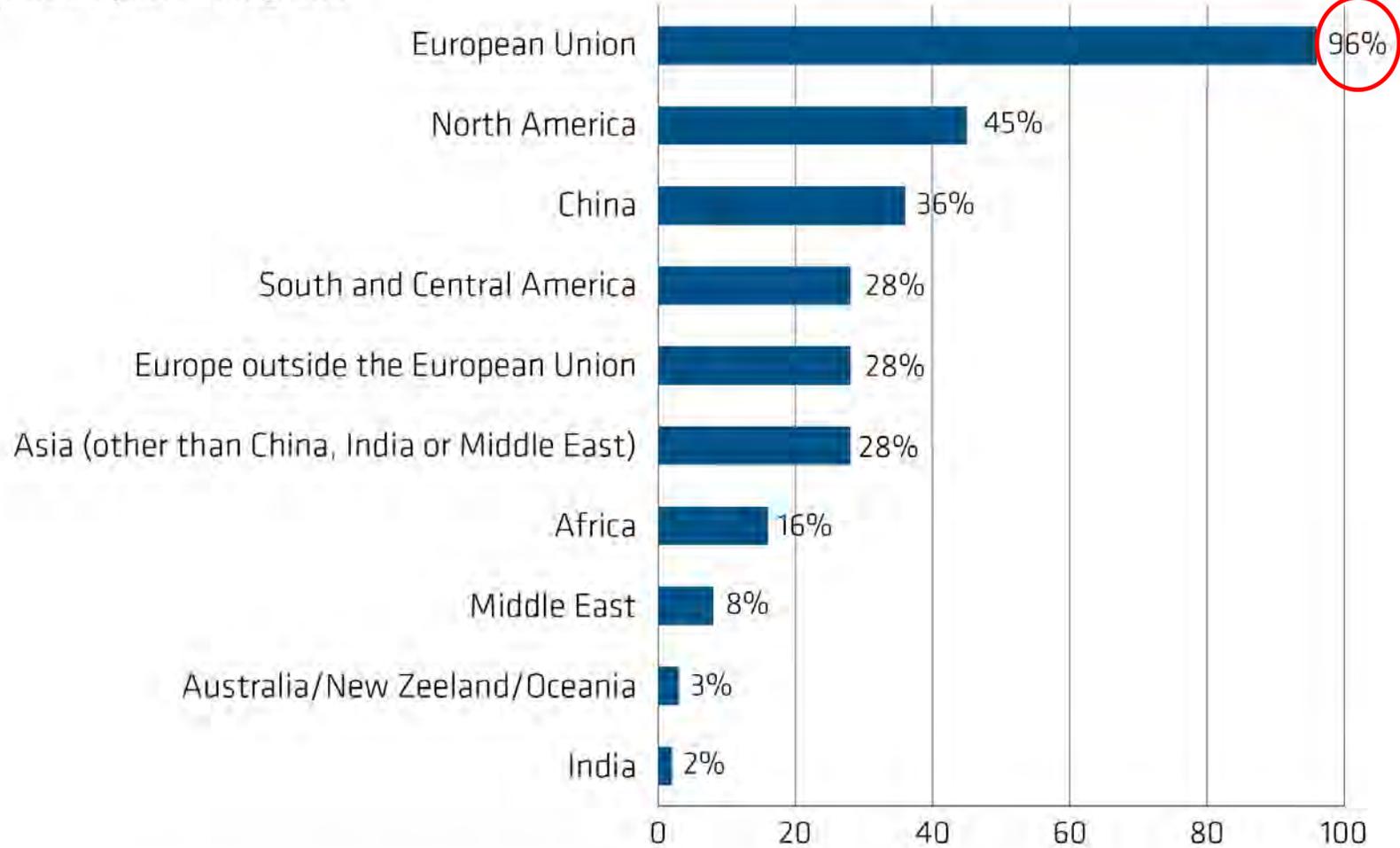
EUA Survey Q15: Where are your institution's partners located? Please tick all applicable.

N=219

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

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

Top three partner regions

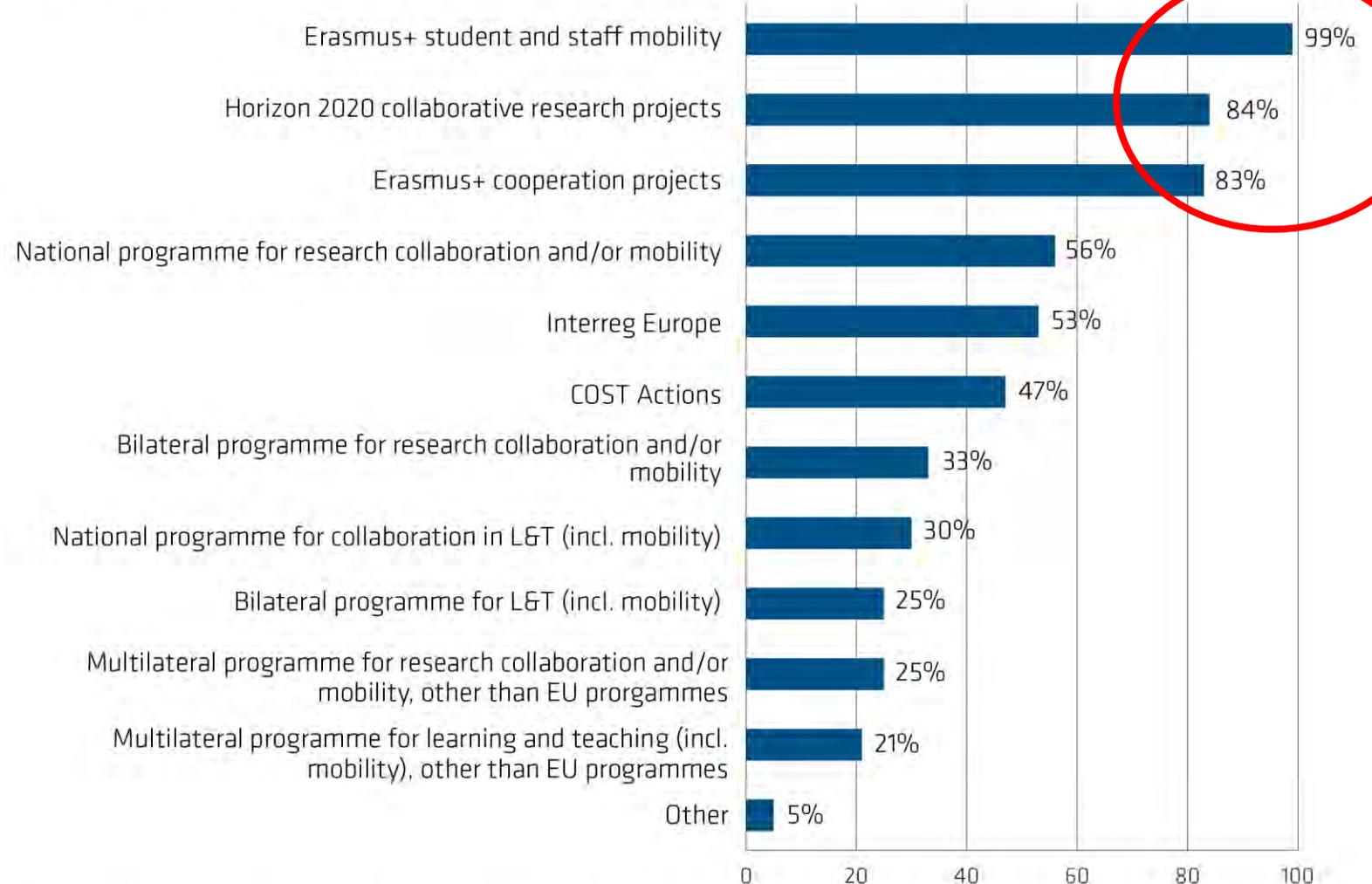


EUA Survey Q16: What are your three most important partner regions in the world for your institution?
Please tick three from the list below.

N=219

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

Frameworks of international collaboration



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

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

Top 5 priorities for internationalisation



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

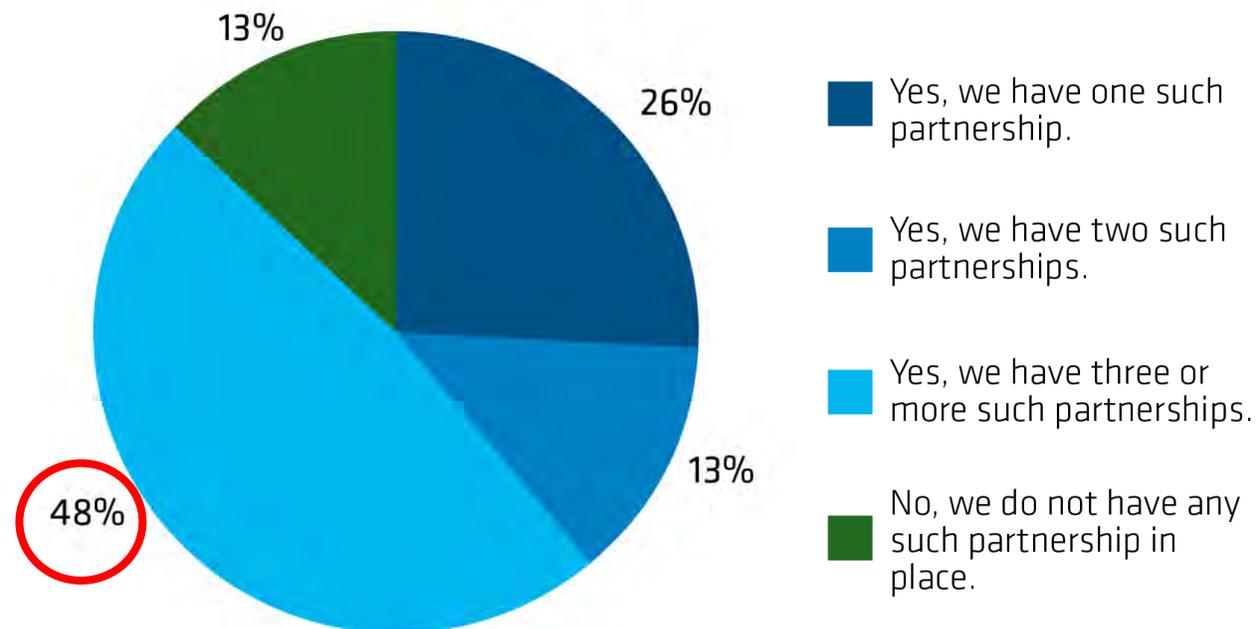
Many universities have strategic collaborations with partners abroad.

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

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

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

International strategic institutional partnerships

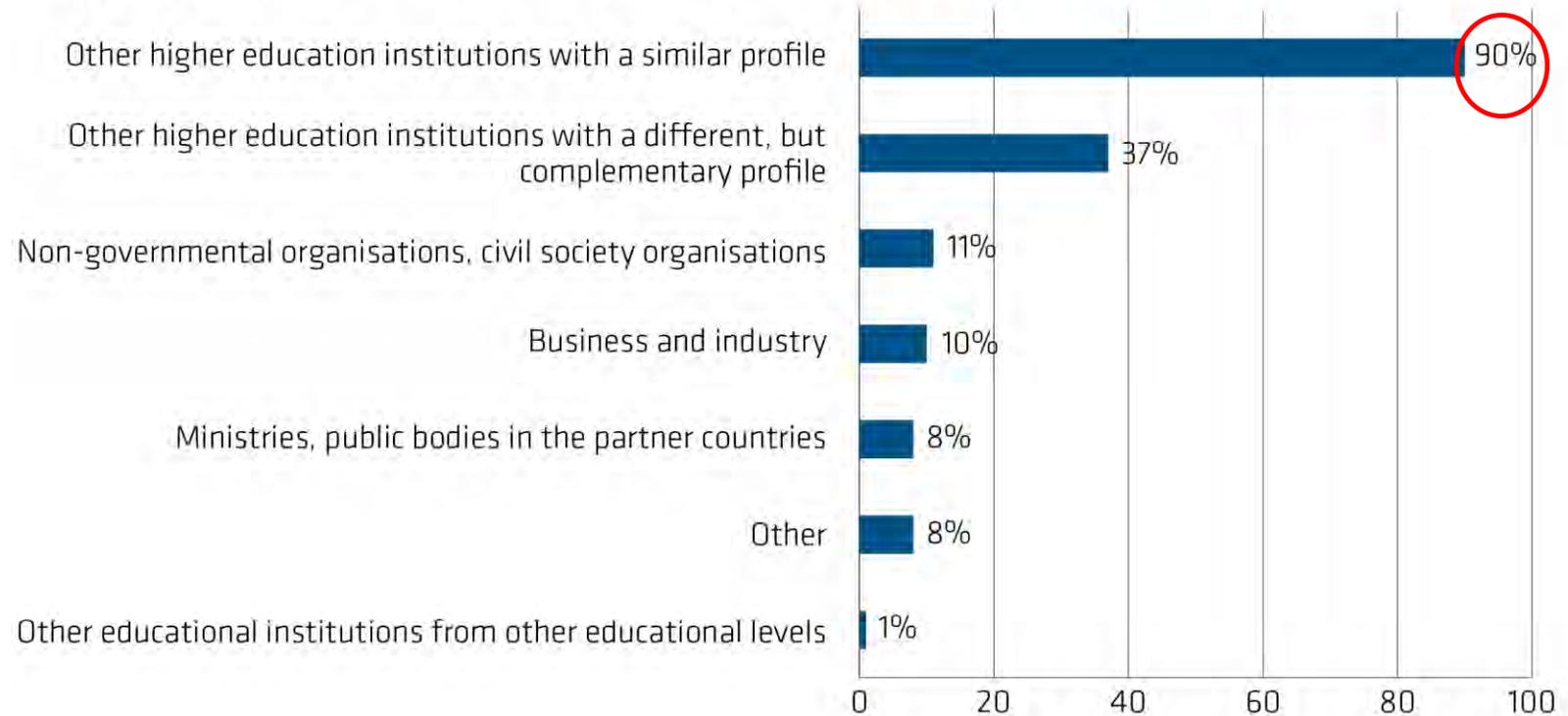


EUA Survey Q20: Do you have a strategic institutional partnership with higher education institutions abroad in place or under development?
N= 214

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

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

Types of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships

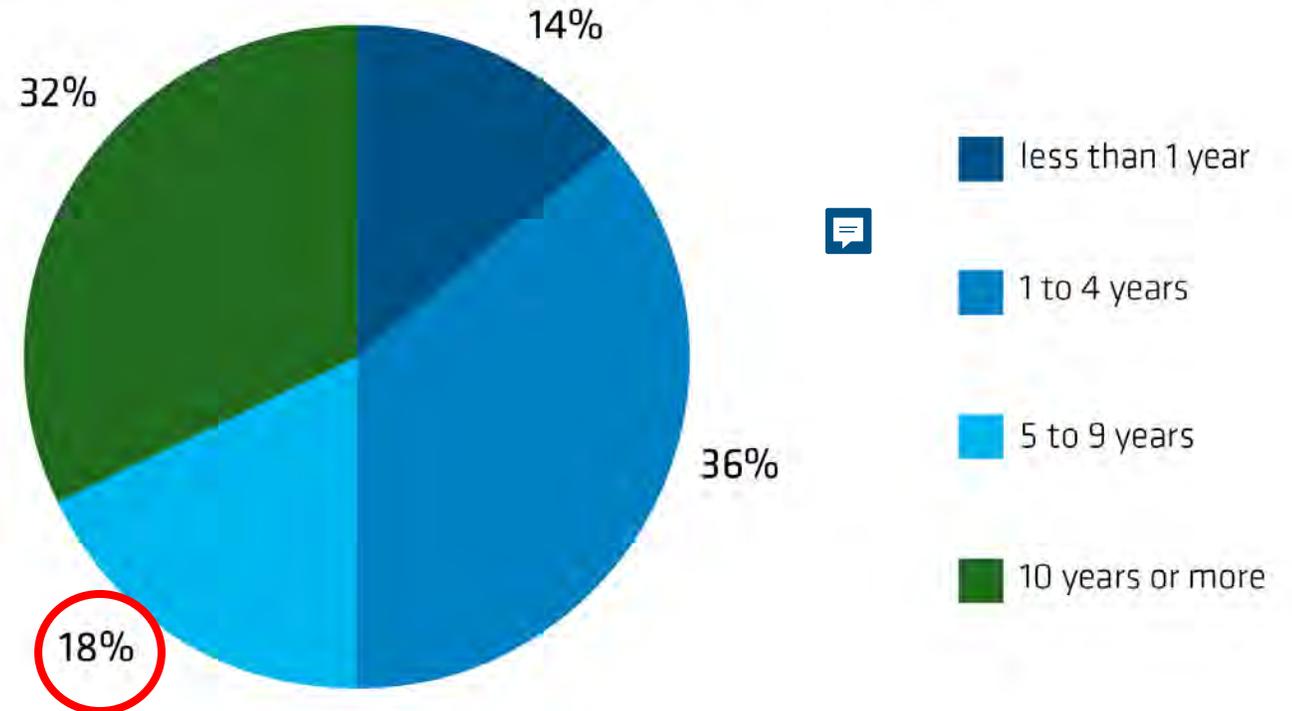


EUA Survey Q24ff: What type of organisations are involved in your partnership?
Please tick all applicable.
N=219

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

About 8% of partnerships mentioned in the sample are directly linked to the European Universities Initiative.

Age of international strategic institutional partnerships



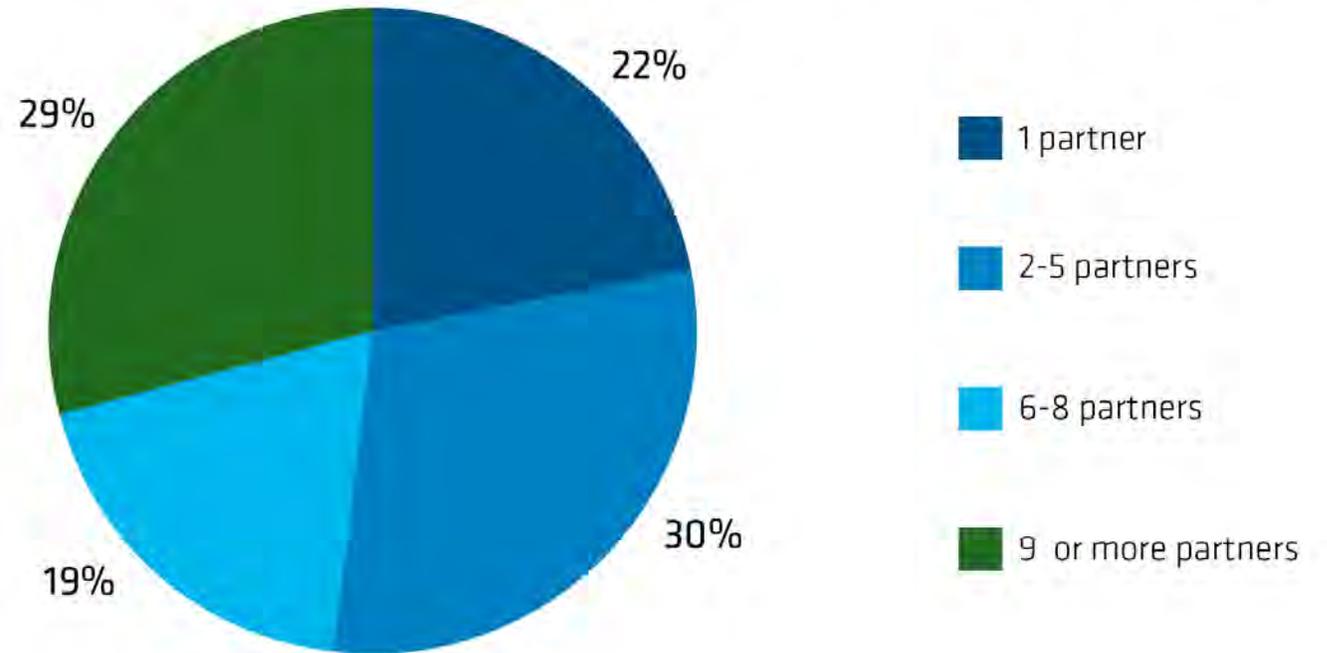
EUA Survey Q29ff: Since when does the partnership exist?

N*= 329

* number of partnerships described in the survey by 219 respondents

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

Number of partners in international strategic institutional partnerships



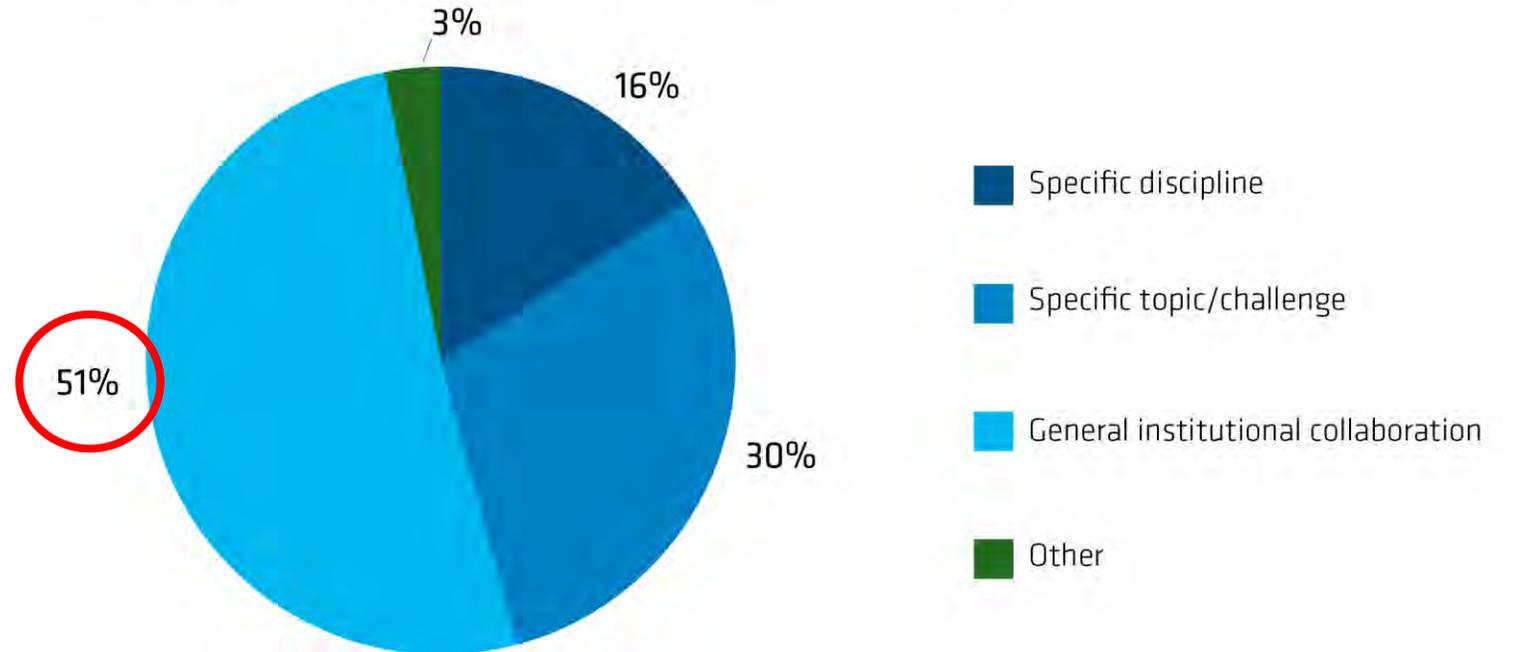
EUA Survey Q22ff: How many partners are involved in your partnership?

N*= 329

* number of partnerships described in the survey by 219 respondents

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

Focus of international strategic institutional partnerships



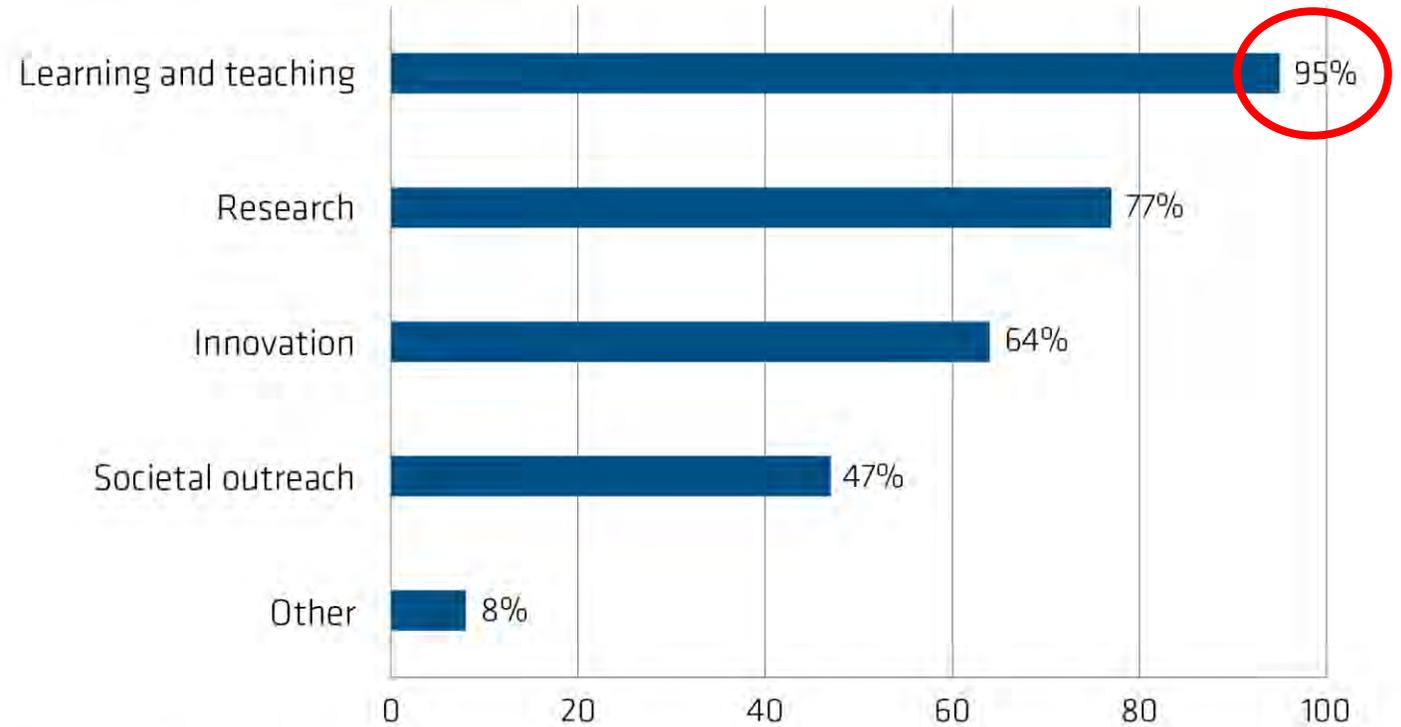
EUA Survey Q27ff: What is the focus of the partnership?

N*= 329

* number of partnerships described in the survey by 219 respondents

Most partnerships encompass several university missions, with learning and teaching being most often covered. Those working on several missions, most often combine learning and teaching with research, followed by learning and teaching combined with innovation and then learning and teaching combined with societal outreach.

Areas covered by the partnership



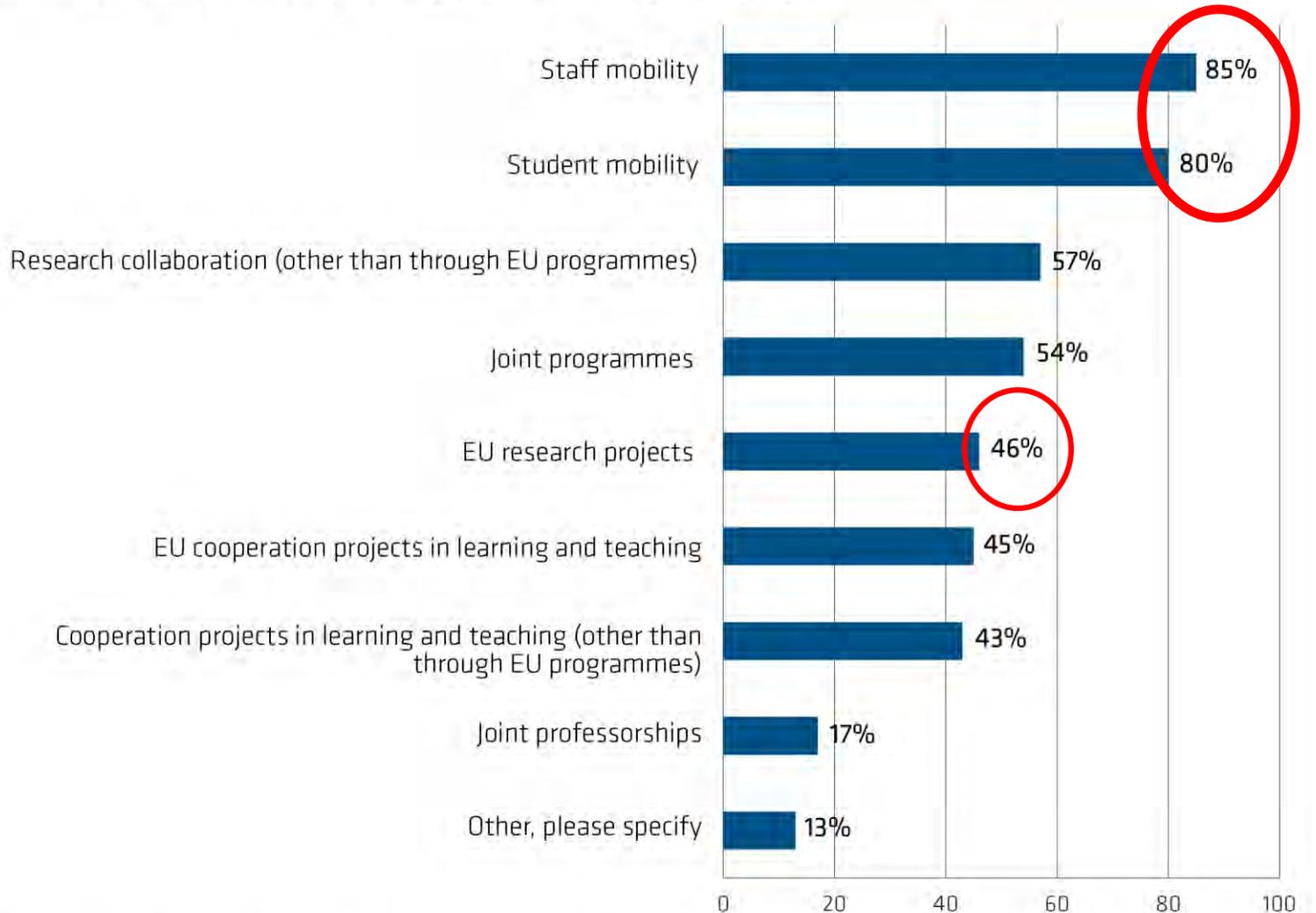
EUA Survey Q26ff: Which area(s) does the partnership cover?
Please tick all applicable.

*N**= 329

** number of partnerships described in the survey by 219 respondents*

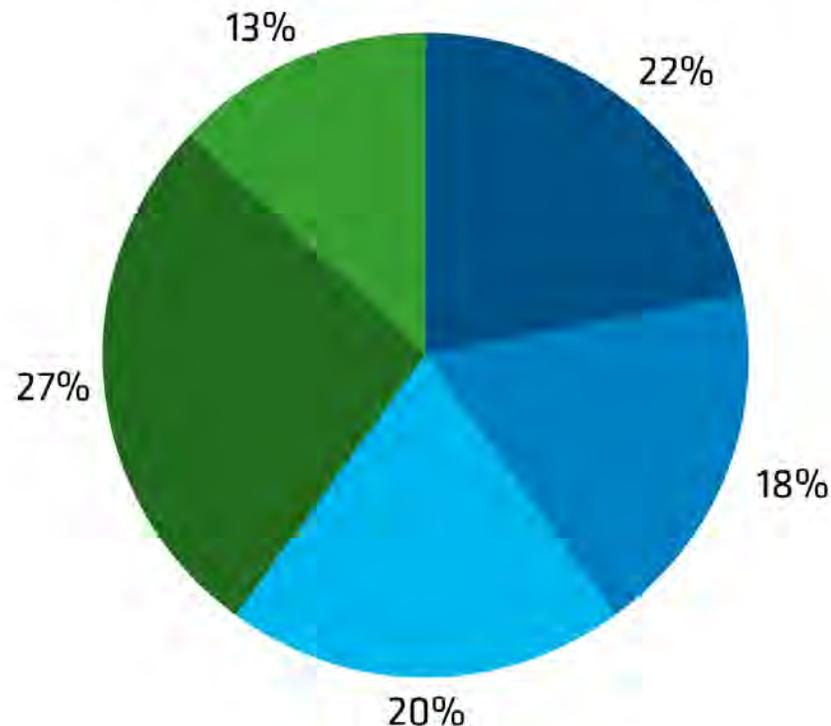
Staff mobility closely followed by student mobility are most often mentioned as activities of such partnerships, in line with the focus on learning and teaching of many of such partnerships. While more than 90% of respondents engage in EU research projects (cp. Q18 slide 7), these are only part of a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

Activities of international strategic institutional partnerships



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

Participation in the European Universities Initiative



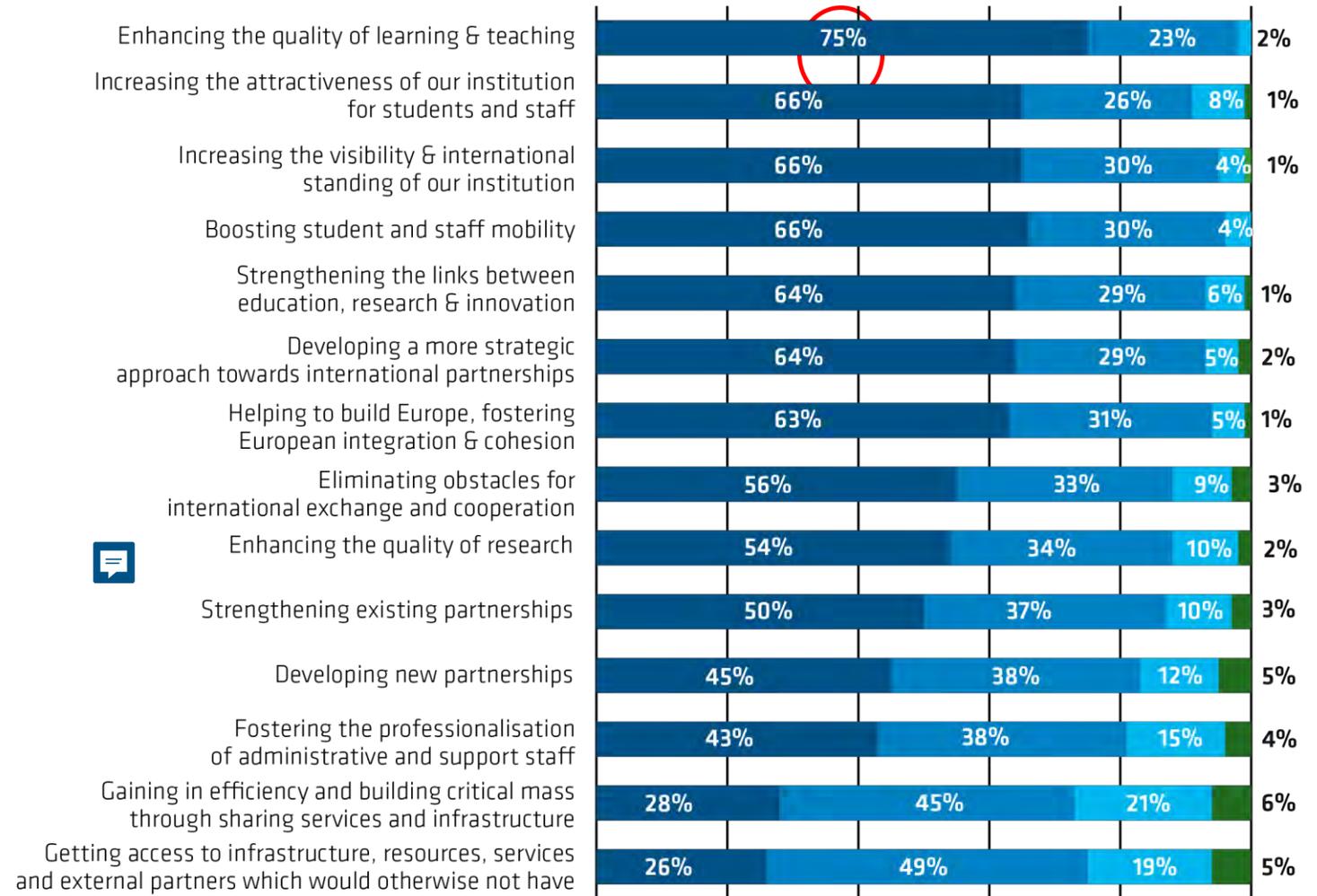
- Yes, my institution has been selected in the first pilot call.
- Yes, my institution has participated in a proposal during the first pilot call, was not selected, but participates again in the second pilot call.
- Yes, my institution is involved in a proposal under the second pilot call (but did not participate in the first call).
- Not yet, but we intend to participate in one of the next rounds under the new programme as of 2021.
- No, we are not participating and have no plans to do so for the moment.

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

N=214

Expected benefits from participating in the European Universities Initiative

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



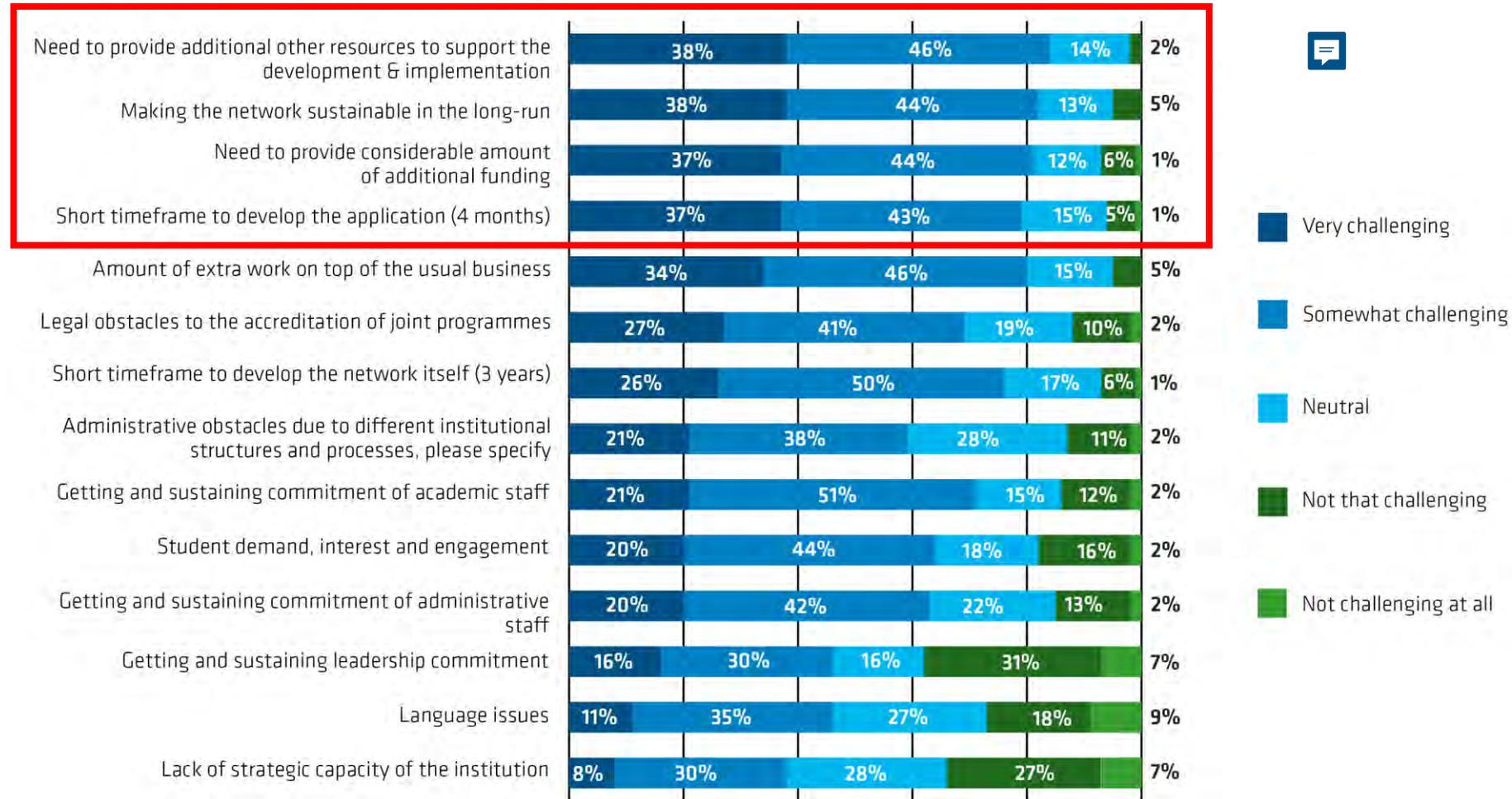
EUA Survey Q88: What are/might be the benefits that you expect for your higher education institution from participating in the initiative?

N=171

Very important Somewhat important Neutral Not that important Not important at all

Challenges in participating in the European Universities Initiative

Respondents perceive the need to provide additional resources, considerable amounts of co-funding and ensuring long-term sustainability as the most challenging for participating in the European Universities Initiative.

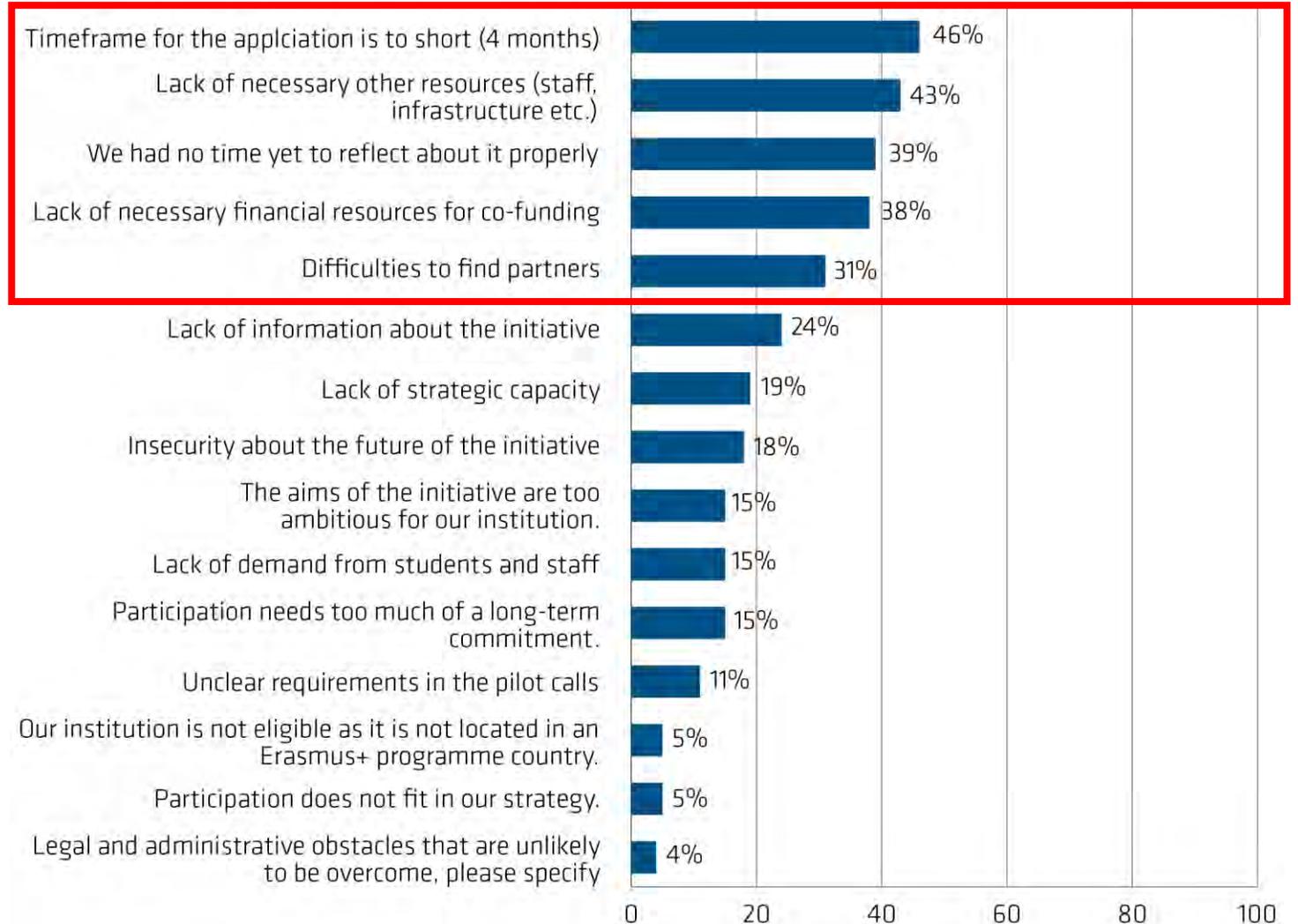


EUA Survey Q89: What are/would be the challenges for your institution in participating in the initiative? Please rate the degree of the challenges listed below. - Language issues
N=190

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

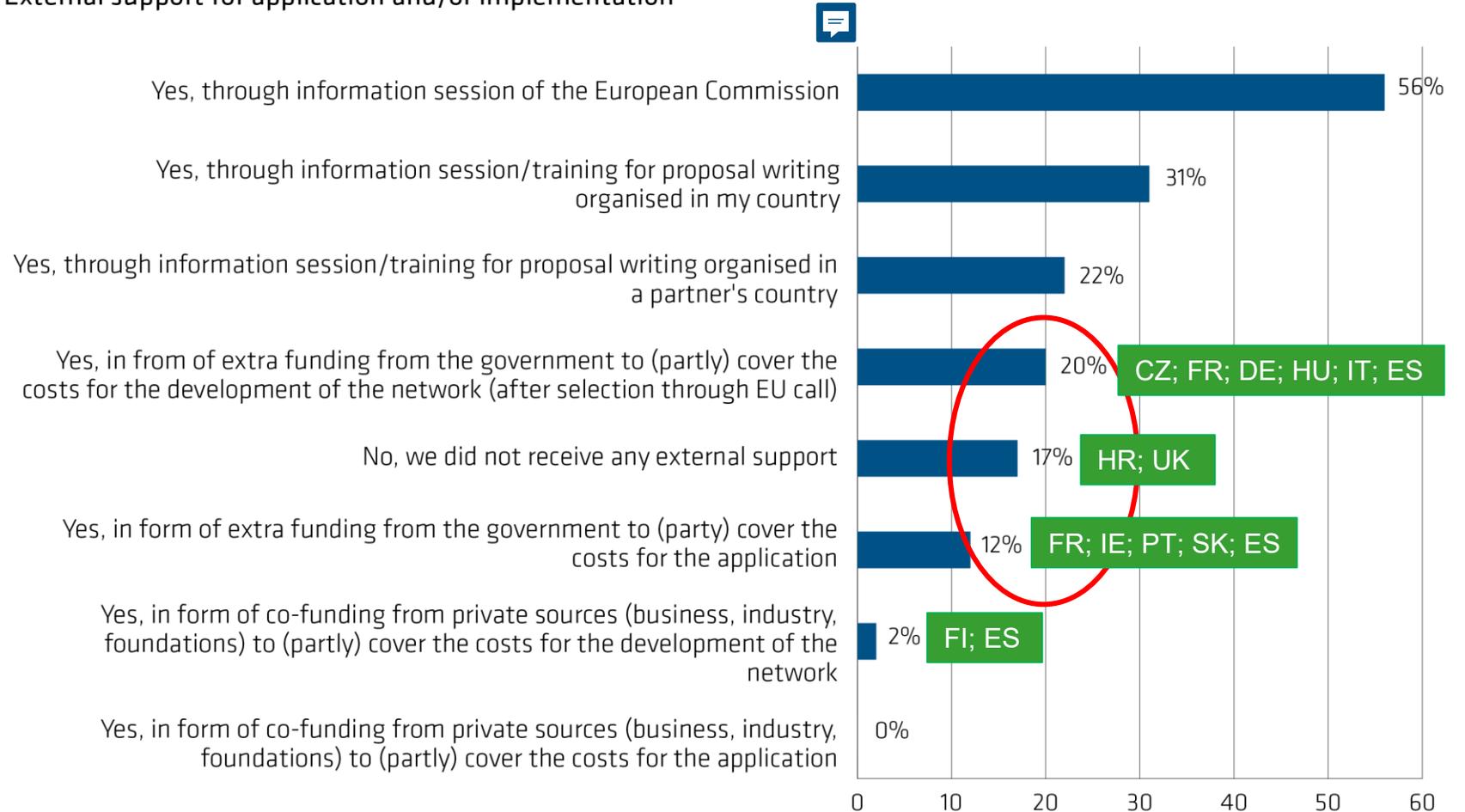


Reasons for not participating



Responding institutions which participated in the pilot calls of the European Universities Initiative often received some sort of external support, mostly in form of information sessions or training for proposal writing. Only a minority received extra funding for the application and/or for the development and implementation after successful selection at EU level. This is an indication of the uneven playing field for HEIs across Europe participating in the competition.

External support for application and/or implementation

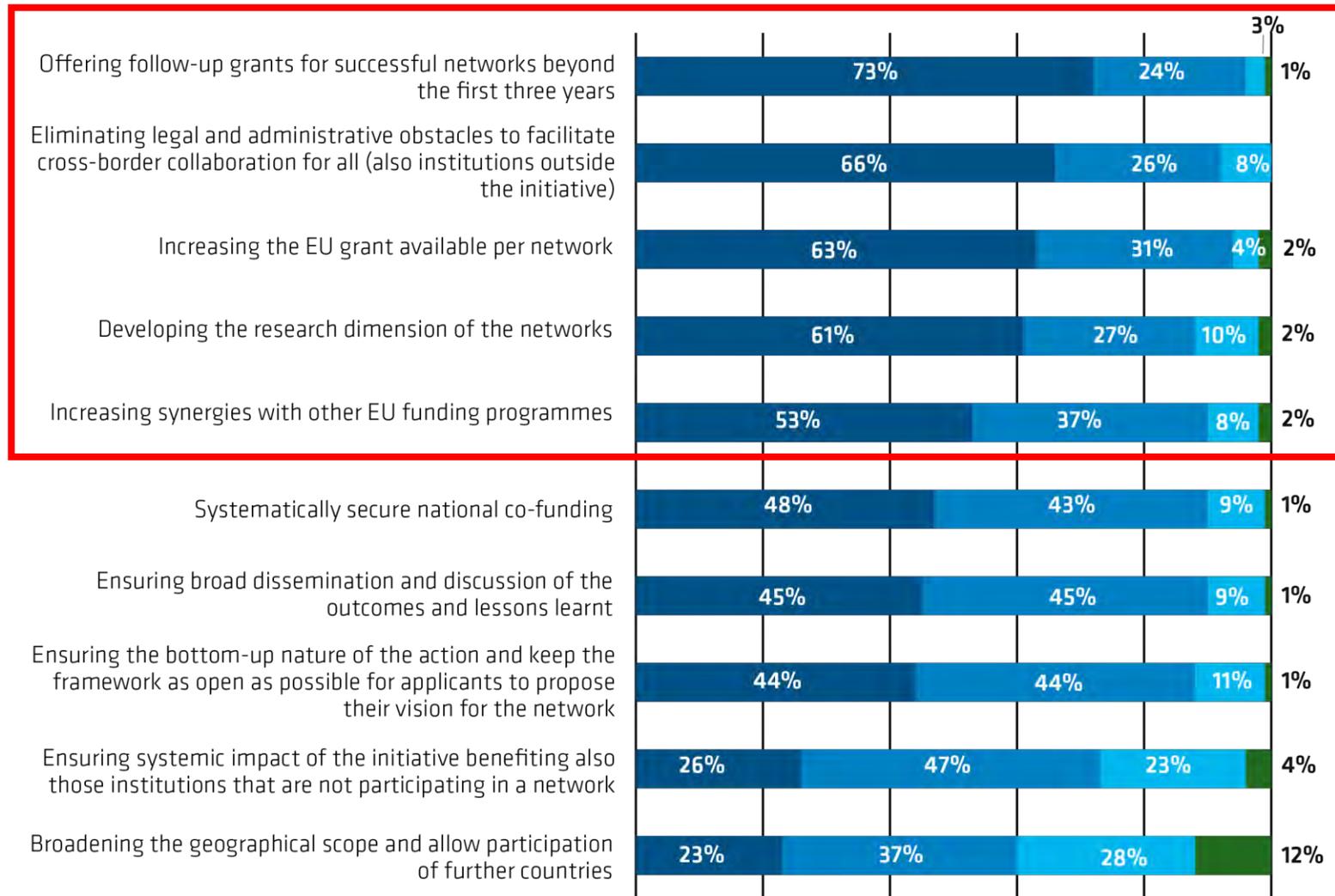


EUA Survey Q93. Did you receive any external support for your participation in the pilot call?
N=121

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

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

Recommendations for the future



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

Very important Somewhat important Neutral Not that important

Key points

- 1.** Internationalisation has been a strategic issue for higher education institutions for quite a while. They collaborate with different partners all over the world in various ways, while by far most collaborations take place with partners in the EU.
- 2.** International strategic institutional partnerships are not a new phenomenon. While many have existed for a long time, new ones have been set up over the past few years, often building on previous collaborations. Alliances under the European Universities Initiative are also included here and represent 8% of partnerships covered by the survey.
- 3.** The interest of responding institutions in the European Universities Initiative is high. 59% are participating in the pilot calls and another 27% wish to apply in the future.
- 4.** The benefits expected by respondents from participating in the European Universities Initiative square well with their general internationalisation priorities. The enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching is at the top of the list of expected benefits, followed by six other benefits rated as very important by about two thirds of respondents: increasing attractiveness, visibility and international standing, boosting student and staff mobility; strengthening the links between different university missions, developing a more strategic approach towards international collaboration and helping to build Europe and foster European integration and cohesion.

Key points

- 5.** The need to provide substantial amounts of co-funding and ensure long-term sustainability are perceived as most challenging for participating in the European Universities Initiative. A lack of funding and other resources, time constraints as well as the difficulty to find partners are the reasons most often cited for higher education institutions not to participate.
- 6.** The fact that only a small number of countries provides co-funding for participation in the European Universities Initiative is an indication of the uneven playing field in this competition.
- 7.** The five top recommendations rated as very important by the majority of respondents for the future of the European Universities Initiative are higher grants and follow-up funding, the elimination of legal and administrative obstacles, the development of the research dimension and increasing synergies with other EU funding programmes beyond Erasmus+.

Want to know more?

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



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