

Research capacity in the Western Balkans

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Overview

- Background and objectives of the study
- Methodology
- Overview of a research capacity
 - strengths, weaknesses, potential
- Main challenges
- Emerging conclusion and recommendations

Background and objectives of the study

Commissioned by EC under SPHERE contract
implemented by University Barcelona & European
University Association (EUA)

Time-line: January to December 2017

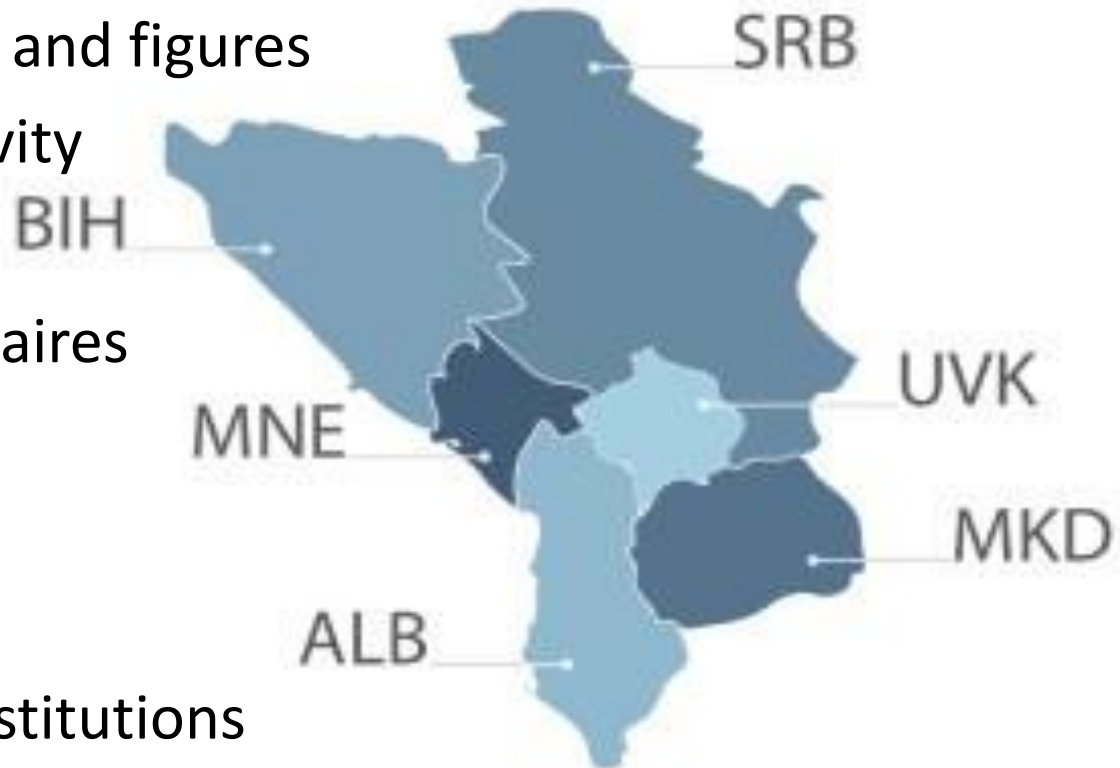
Objective:

To assess the research capacity at higher
education institutions in the Western Balkan
countries: AL, BiH, FYRM, KO, ME, SR; and

Provide recommendations to national and EU
level policy makers for improvement.

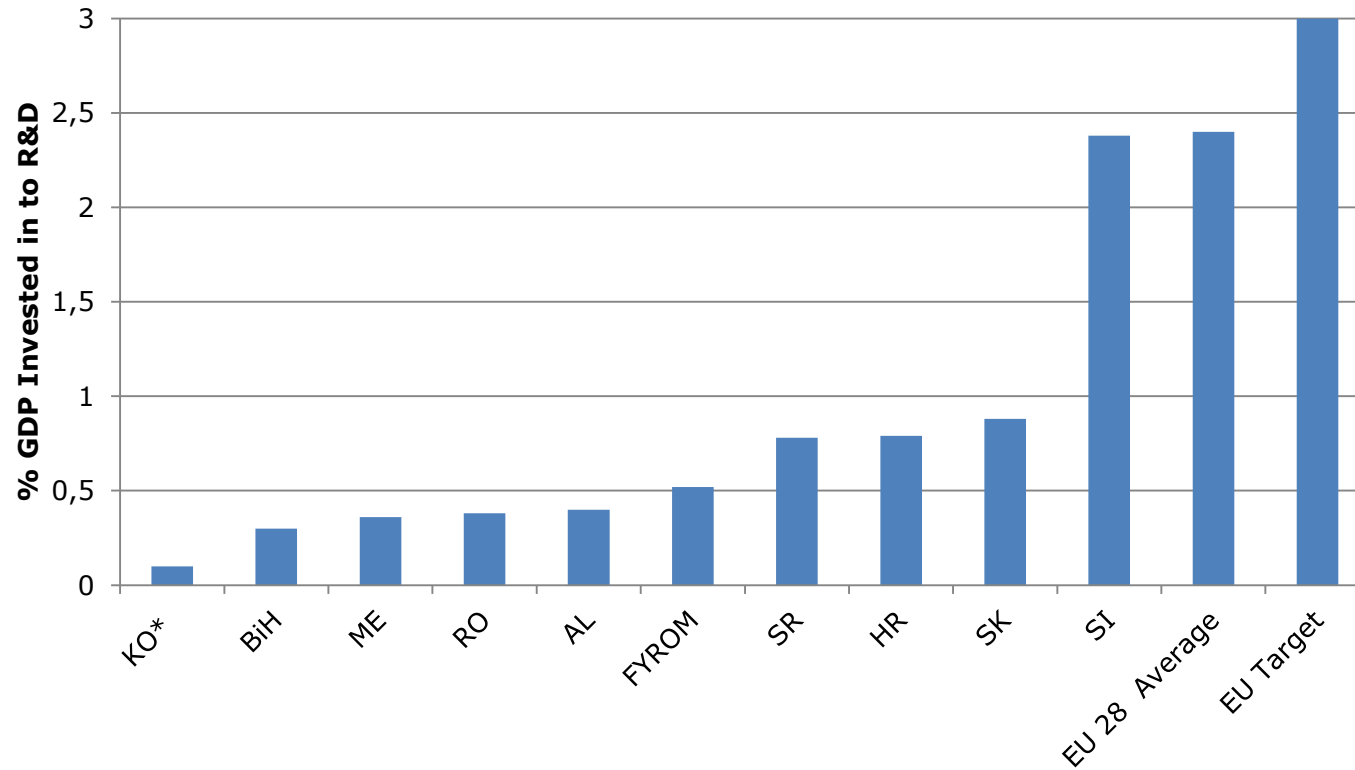
Methodology

- Desk research
 - Country level facts and figures
 - Research productivity
- Data collection
 - 3 online questionnaires
 - <1250 individuals
 - <90 HEIs
- Site visits
 - 6 countries, 15 institutions
 - interviews <100 participants



Relevant background statistics

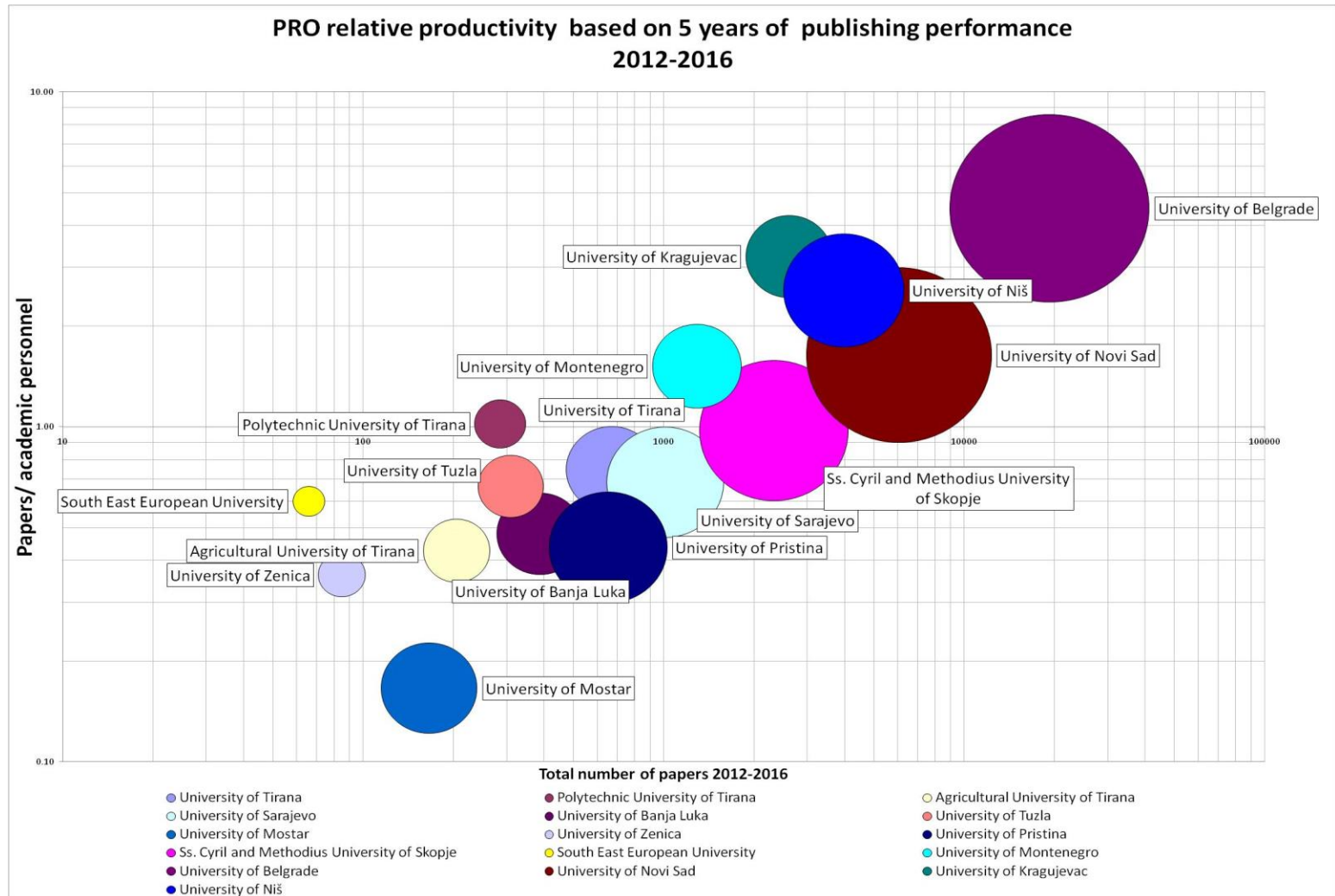
% GDP invested in to R&D in WB countries and selected EU MS



Source: EC

EU Target: 3%

Research productivity



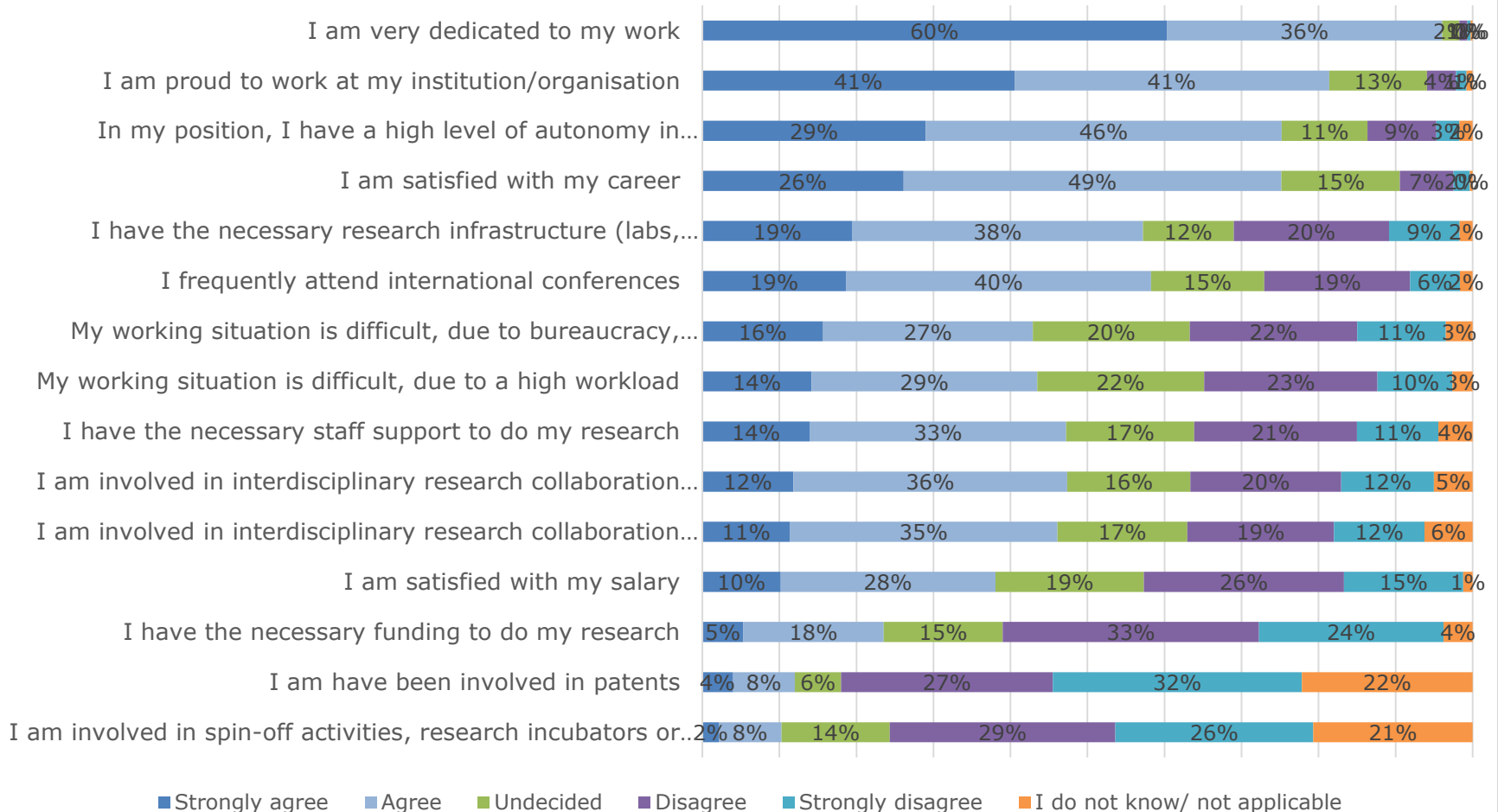
- 5 year consolidated figures

Strengths and Potential

- Examples of good practices
 - New requirements for research productivity
 - Internationalization of research
 - Development of structural documents, policies
- Successful and motivated individual researchers
- New type of leaders
- Shift of generations

Overall perception of individual situation

Q 22 Which of the following describes your situation?



Weaknesses

- Persistent and long lasting lack of funding for research
- HE a low national strategic priority and still perceived as a cost, not investment
- Slow and inadequate reform of HE system
- Decentralised universities with strong faculties
- Weak strategic research planning, no clear research policy
- Outdated research infrastructure
- Low level of administrative support
- Research subordinate to teaching
- Out-of date and inadequate development of young researchers
- Low level of internationalisation
- Low collaboration with private sector

Drivers for change

- Increase investment in to in R&D (3% EU goal)
- Change governmental and social perception of research relevance for the national economy and societal development
- Make a better use of available funding schemes
- Shift research governance to improve productivity
- Emphasize the role of research within the university system (2nd stream Mission)
- Develop a 3rd stream mission (Research Impact: Profit, People, Planet)

Improving research capacity: key policy messages (I)

1. Research funding

- Increase investment in to research (% GDP);
- Support the development of national performance oriented, competitive research funding prioritizing interdisciplinary research;
- Make provision to improve and maintain research infrastructures and ensure their shared access.
- Establish funding opportunities for inter- and multidisciplinary research, supporting increased collaboration among and within institutions.

Improving research capacity: key policy messages (I)

1. Research funding (cont.)

Consider a regional level fund to:

- bridge the gap from national to EU funds;
- foster more regional level collaboration;
- permit a focus on regional priorities (emerging S3);
- enhance sustainability of systems;
- Counteract brain drain.

Permit inclusion of EU partners, but limit their activities to:

- hosting mobility;
- mentoring;
- joint PhD supervision and
- visiting lectureships.

Improving research capacity: key messages (II)

2. **Administrative/ management support for research**

- develop adequate administrative support for research
- provide training for proposal writing and project management

3. **Research/ teaching balance and career progression**

- Research capacity would be improved by the creation of dedicated research positions, training for PhD mentors and doctoral candidates and better recognition for high quality research in career progression.

4. **RI and facilities**

- Investment in to RI is needed but funds also need to be made available to enable shared use and maintenance.

Improving research capacity: key messages (III)

5. Research governance

- Support the development of more fit for purpose governance and management with appropriate levels of subsidiary and staffing.

6. University mission and roles

- **Education:** Enable transversal and entrepreneurship training at all levels.
- **Research:** Better define the role of teaching and research, and accordingly, recognition of research relevance for academic promotion;
- **3rd Stream (Innovation):** Create more grants schemes to encourage collaborative research and permit industry sponsored PhDs. Permit representatives from business to teach and supervise students.
- **Internationalization:** Assess and value international collaboration alongside career development

Emerging conclusions

- The WB countries share many features related to research capacity however research conditions and environment still significantly differ among six countries.
- Although on a system level there are many weaknesses and constraints, motivated and successful individual researchers demonstrate the potential for improvement of research capacity; individuals could play an important role in change management.
- More funding is needed to unlock capacity.
- The gap between the WB and the EU27 needs to be better bridged.
- The differences between EU and WB priorities need to be better reflected.
- Examples of good practices pave the way for more widespread change and better use of existing resources.

Next steps

- Feedback from this meeting would be welcomed.
- Production of draft report.
- Study finalised December 2017
- Action?

Contact points

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