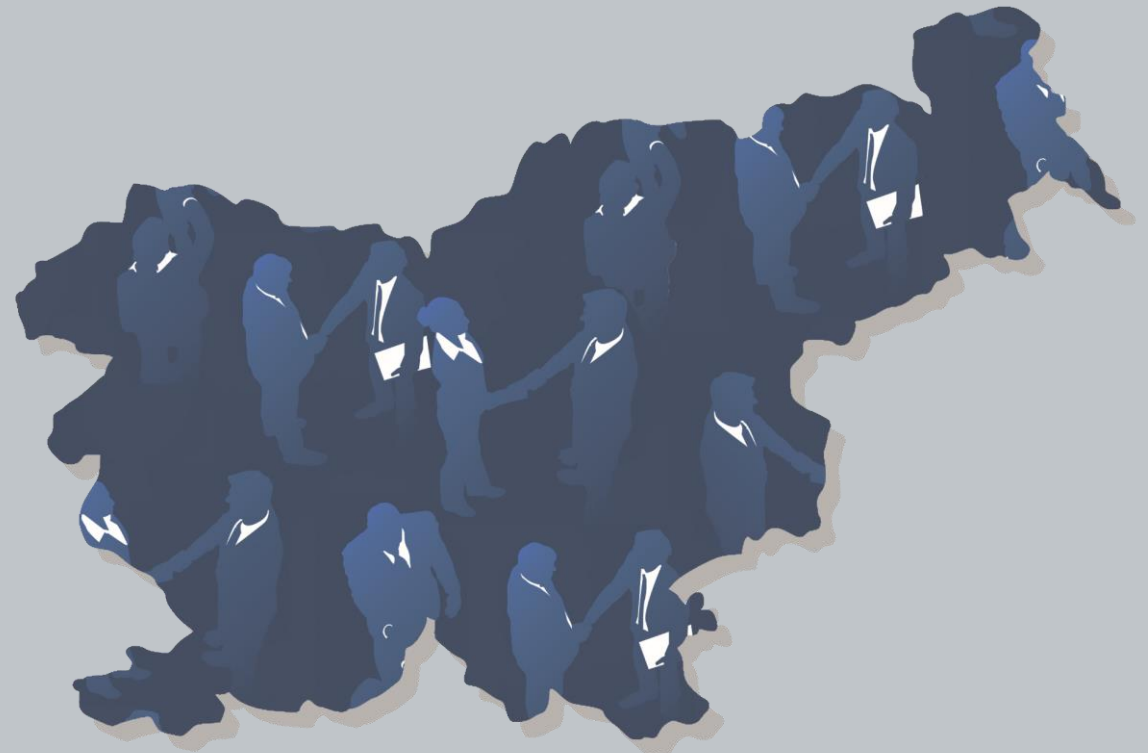


State of University- Business Cooperation SLOVENIA

Business Perspective

Study on the cooperation between
higher education institutions and
public and private organisations



The State of Slovenia University-Business Cooperation: the business perspective

Partners



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Executive summary

Summary

This report seeks to contribute to our understanding of the business perspective on university-business cooperation (UBC). Examining the perceptions of a wide range of businesses provides positive signs for the future, with 99% of businesses that cooperate with universities planning to maintain or increase their cooperation in the future. Yet, more can be done, for example in supporting businesses with the development of initiatives and activities that can support their cooperation efforts, as well as in developing (actual and perceived) capabilities, particularly of those businesses not currently engaged in cooperation.

About the study

The results presented in this report reflect the perceptions of business people in Australia with respect to cooperation between universities and business. Data was collected by means of an online survey sent out via email to a business database that was developed from publicly available information, leading to a total of 41 Slovenian responses. The study measured the perceptions of respondents with respect to their businesses and cooperation efforts.

Education and research most active UBC areas

Slovenian businesses show a relatively high engagement in education related cooperation. Thus, 54.7% of the respondents point out that they collaborate in the area of student mobility at a medium to high level. This is further followed by

lifelong learning. Fewer businesses are involved in the establishment of dual education programmes and in the design of the curriculum. While research-related cooperation activities including joint R&D and consulting are practiced by a large number of businesses in the sample, the cooperation in valorisation and management (e.g. academic and student entrepreneurship, shared resources) is limited.

Slovenian businesses perceive themselves as the main actors reaching out for collaboration (with 56% of respondents stating that they always or usually initiate such cooperation). On the other hand, Slovenian representatives identify internal and external intermediaries that less often initiate UBC.

Cultural discrepancies

Primary barriers identified by respondents relate to a lack of people with business knowledge within universities as well as a lack of people with scientific knowledge within the business. Further barriers echo those of university respondents and refer to missing financial support mechanisms from government. Moreover, business respondents point out differing motivations between two organisations and the universities' focus on producing scientific outcomes.

This report provides a business perspective on university-business cooperation UBC, drawing on a survey of European higher education institutions, academics and businesses. While acknowledging limitations relating to the generalisability of the results due to the non-random nature of the sample, the results provide positive signs both of the present and for the future, while also providing an indication as to areas that require future development.

Executive summary

Relationships matter

While funding to undertake cooperation emerges as one of the top five facilitators, personal relationship factors are seen to be of a high importance. Thus, the existence of a shared goal appears as the most prominent relationship-oriented facilitators. Another relational factor facilitating and driving cooperation is the existence of mutual trust and commitment. Commercial orientation of university is considered as another important facilitator. These results confirm that any effort dedicated to enable and increase cooperation between businesses and universities should focus not only on funding as a basis for UBC but on relationship development.

Benefits of UBC

Slovenian businesses see for themselves less benefits than for university stakeholders, including students, academics, universities and society in general.

But what motivates Slovenian businesses to cooperate with universities? Among the top facilitators are customised solutions, and access to better qualified graduates. This is complemented by the willingness to improve innovation capacity and get access to technologies and knowledge.

Need for more support

A strong emphasis has been placed on the development of UBC supporting mechanisms by

universities. Yet, little is known about such mechanisms in the business realm. This study indicates that top-level management committed to UBC is the most developed indicator with 39% of respondents pointing out it is present in their businesses. Furthermore, 37% business representatives point out that the mechanism of recruiting PhD students into the business is present as well. The most underdeveloped mechanisms in Slovenia include funding of adjunct positions within university and academic-idea competitions.

More to learn

Slovenian businesses perceive themselves as supportive towards cooperation with universities. In particular, they identified their strengths in the ability to absorb the knowledge and technology coming from HEIs. Furthermore, they highlight they have enough university contacts to establish collaboration and they are convinced that they have a lot to offer to universities in developing and delivering research. Yet, Slovenian businesses believe that it is not their responsibility to collaborate with universities in research, placing thus the initiation in the hands of universities.

Introduction

About the study

The study focusses on the cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and public and private organisations in the 28 European Union Member States and 5 associated countries.

The State of European university-business cooperation (UBC) study is executed for the DG Education and Culture at the European Commission (EAC/10/2015) by a consortium led by the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre (S2BMRC), in Germany from January 2016 until November 2017.

The aim of the study is to get a more profound, comprehensive and up to date understanding of the state of UBC in Europe: what is the state of play of a wide range of UBC activities in the different countries, what are the main drivers and barriers for the different stakeholders and at what levels; what is the regulatory framework and socio-economic conditions and what kind of measures/initiatives exist on a national level to support the development of UBC. The project investigates UBC from the perspective of both university and business.

Main activities

The main components of the project were a series of expert interviews with 23 recognised UBC experts, 52 good practice case studies, a UBC policy and indicators review as well as a major quantitative survey of stakeholders within both HEIs and business. The survey was translated into 25 languages and sent to all registered European HEIs (numbering over 3,000) in the 33 countries during

October-November 2016. Through this, a final sample of 17,410 representatives from within HEIs and business was achieved. This makes the study the largest international study into cooperation between HEIs and business yet completed.

Why care about university-business cooperation?

- UBC is considered to be the engine towards knowledge-based societies and economies
- UBC is specially needed in the European context, threatened by increased global competition, with ongoing economic and social problems and high levels of youth unemployment
- UBC helps to create a more connected and functioning relationship between government, business and HEIs, which is at the core of EU funding schemes, such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+.
- UBC direct outcomes include:
 - improving the competitiveness of business,
 - increasing the relevance and innovativeness of research and teaching in HEIs,
 - improving the future job prospects of students and graduates,which can in the longer term:
 - create jobs,
 - stimulate economic growth,
 - increase living standards,
 - reduce hindrances to good living.

Study Objectives

The specific objectives for the study are:

- Chart the current state of play and provide an in-depth analysis of UBC in the countries covered by this study, from the HE and business perspectives
- Deliver 50 case studies of UBC (representative sample, balanced distribution among countries and organisations, balanced distribution of HEI and business led cases);
- Review indicators measuring UBC and propose possible scenarios for the implementations of UBC monitoring in Europe;
- Provide policy conclusions and recommendations for the furthering of UBC and the best approaches to take.



UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS
COOPERATION IN EUROPE

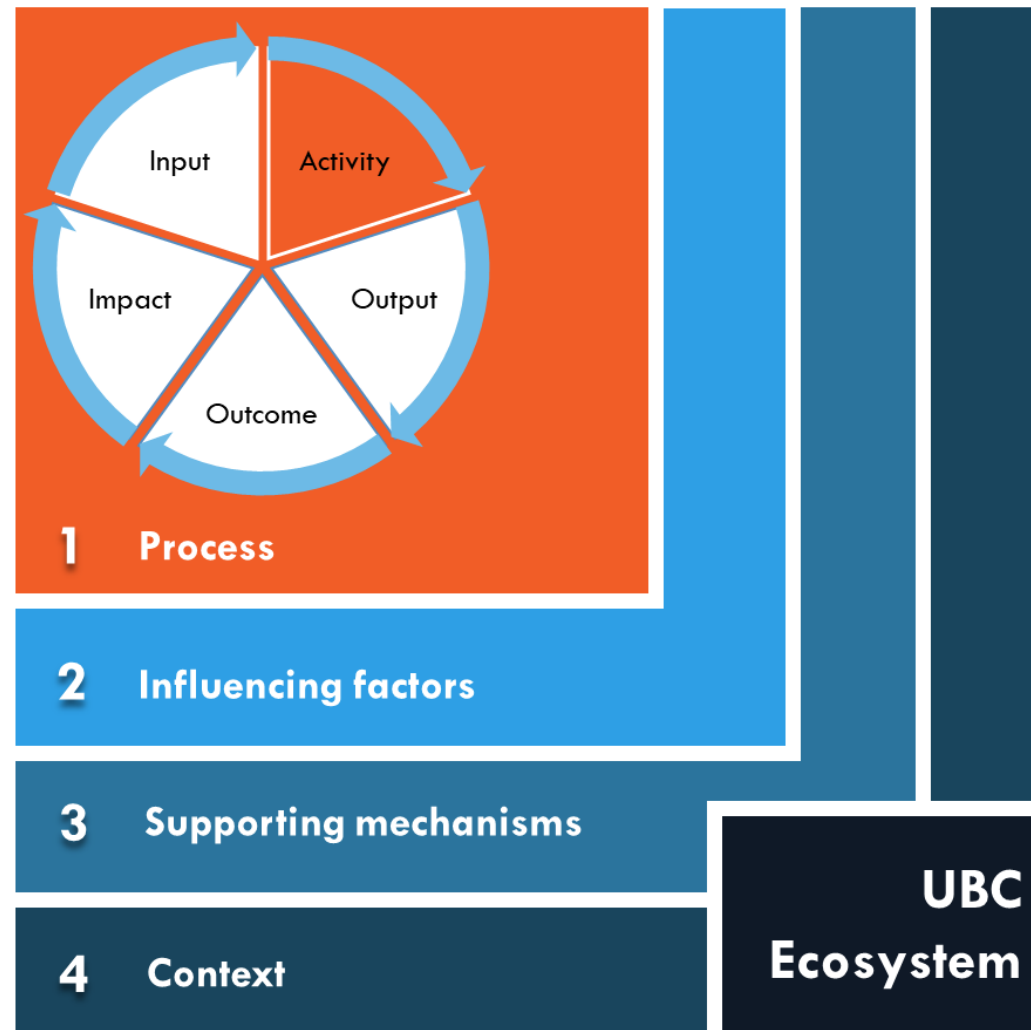
UBC activities

UBC Ecosystem Framework™

In order to best organise the project results, a project conceptual framework was chosen.

The UBC Ecosystem Framework possess a number of interrelated elements including the process of undertaking UBC, factors that are influencing UBC, mechanisms supporting UBC and finally the context in which UBC occurs.

The framework ties together the respective project activities, providing a common thread for reporting results and making recommendations.



Source: Galán-Muros, V.; Davey, T. (2017) *The UBC Ecosystem: Putting together a comprehensive framework for university-business cooperation*. *Journal of Technology Transfer*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-017-9562-3>

UBC activities

Fourteen UBC activities are recognised, commonly categorised into the areas of education, research, valorisation and management.

Area	Activities
Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. curriculum co-<u>design</u>2. curriculum co-<u>delivery</u> (e.g. guest lectures)3. mobility of students (i.e. student internships/placements)4. dual education programmes (i.e. part theory, part practical)5. lifelong learning for people from business (e.g. executive education, industry training and professional courses)
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. joint R&D (incl. joint funded research)7. consulting to business (incl. contract research)8. mobility of professionals (i.e. temporary mobility of academics to business and vice versa)
Valorisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">9. commercialisation of R&D results (e.g. licencing/patenting)10. academic entrepreneurship (e.g. spin offs)11. student entrepreneurship (e.g. start-ups)
Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none">12. governance (e.g. participation of academics on business boards and businesspeople participation in university board)13. shared resources (e.g. infrastructure, personnel, equipment)14. industry support (e.g. endowments, sponsorship and scholarships)

Development of UBC activities

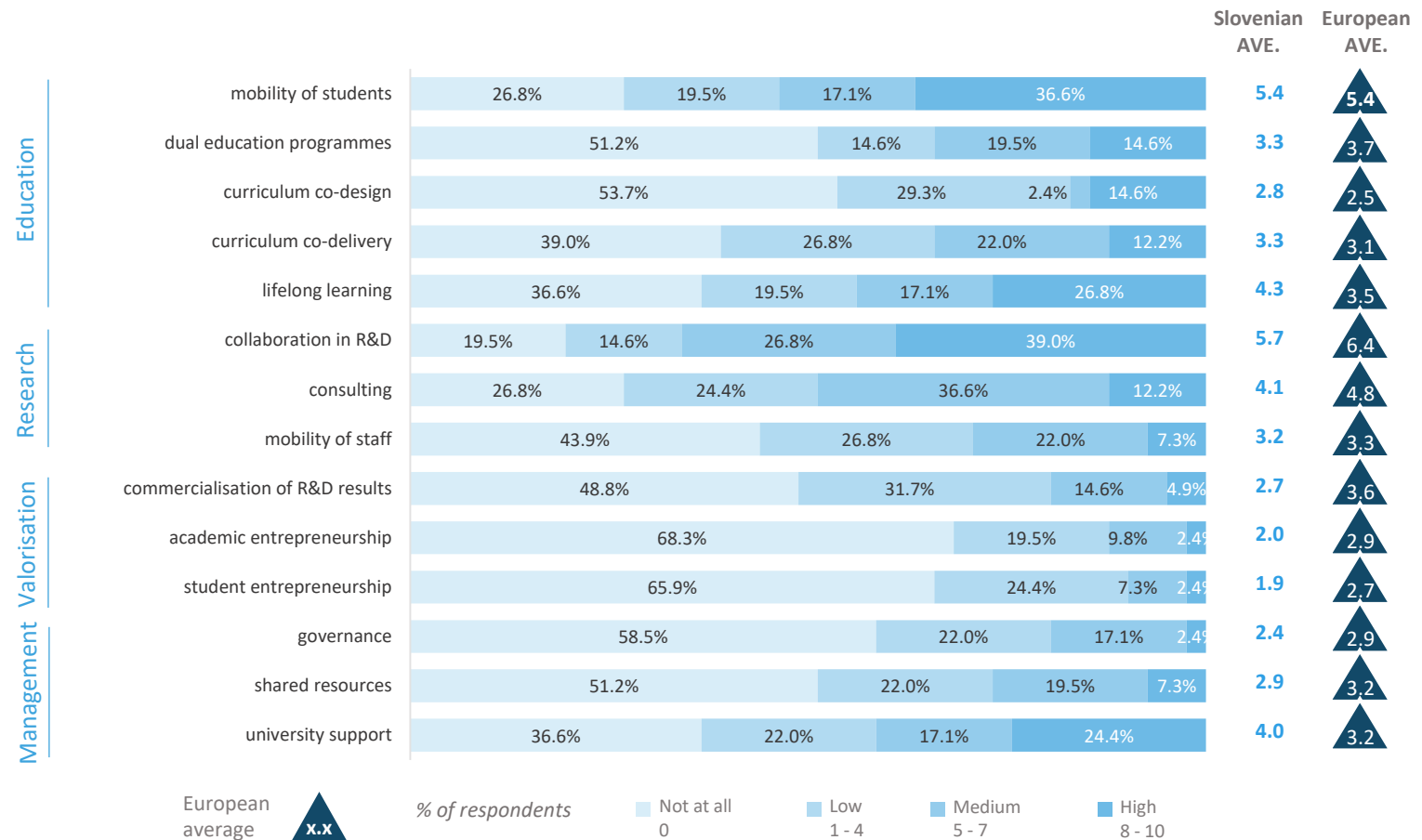
The extent of Slovenian UBC is presented in a range of diverse types, on four different levels of development: None, Low, Medium and High.

Within the different UBC modalities, based on national average research-oriented modalities such as collaboration in R&D (5.7), consulting (4.1) and education related modalities such as 'mobility of students' (5.4), are indicated as the most developed types of cooperation, with respectively 75.8%, 48.8% and 53.8% reporting them to be developed at a medium to high level. Slovenian companies mostly collaborate with universities in the technical and engineering fields, and this is mainly related to specific rather mono-disciplinary R&D collaboration where students and professors have to solve a specific and rather narrow technical issue. The similar situation relates to consultation – i.e. field-specific consultation solving company-specific technical/engineering issues. Further, Slovenian companies very frequently expose that their key motivation to collaborate with universities is to identify graduates, and to test and potentially invest in future human resources.

With the exception of university support (4.0), all management and valorisation oriented activities are not as developed. Around 50% of them do not engage in these activities at all.

UBC activities development

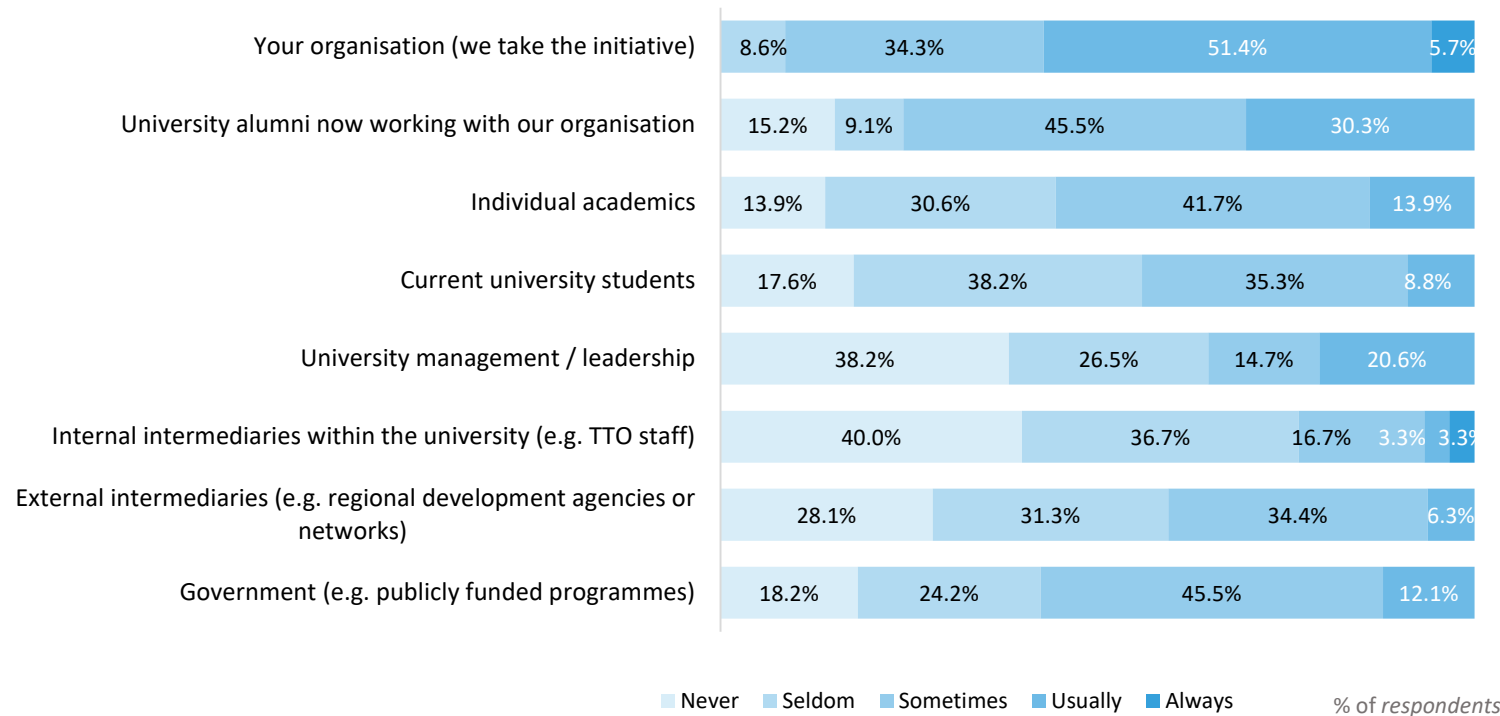
'Which UBC activities do you collaborate with universities in?'



Initiation of UBC

How UBC is initiated

'How often various stakeholders initiate UBC activities'



Slovenian businesses see themselves as the major initiator of cooperation with universities, with 56.1% of respondents indicating that they 'always' or 'usually' initiate cooperation.

This is followed by the 'university alumni' where 30.3% of respondents specified these stakeholders 'usually' initiate collaboration. Alumni employed in the business sector are the ones who still maintain to some extent the connections with their faculties and, even more, with their departments and former colleagues that remain at universities as assistants (as also exposed in the research). There are several good practices in the Slovenian environment that demonstrate this and it could be considered as a strong initiator.

The lowest rated stakeholders are 'internal intermediaries within the university' with 76.7% of the respondents reporting that they 'never' or 'seldom' undertake any first actions towards UBC initiation.

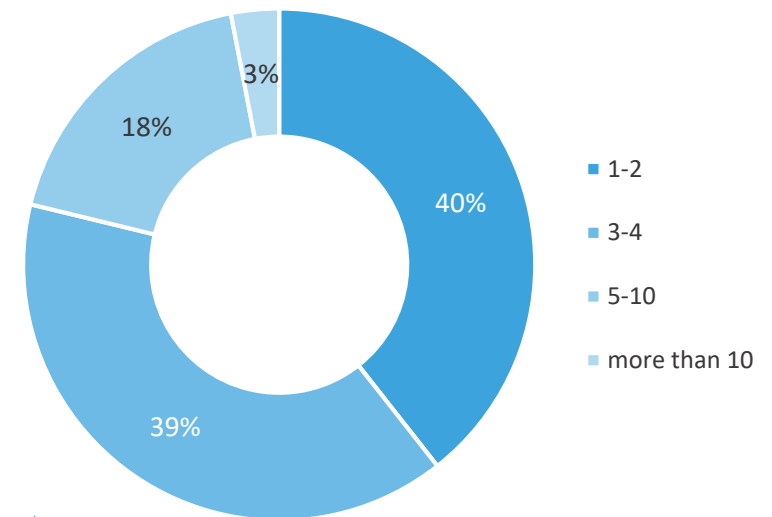
Geographical location still matters

Location of university partners

Percentage of cooperating businesses with...	
universities in their region	87%
universities in their country	93%
universities outside their country	72%

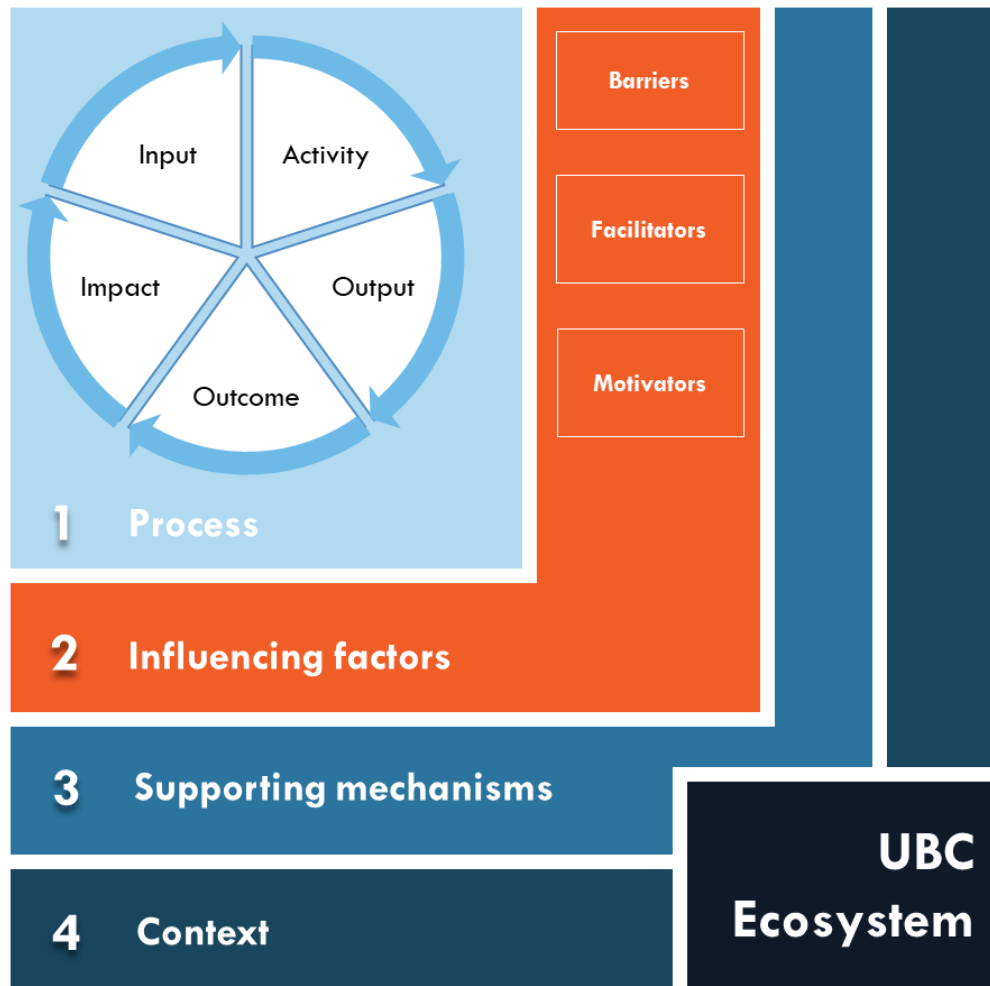
While most Slovenian businesses cooperate with Slovenian universities (93%), the results also report high percentages for universities from the region with 87%. On the other hand, the collaboration with international universities is less developed – 72%. Majority of companies are mainly involved in the supply chains producing components rather than developing final products. Therefore, the companies are usually not dependent on international breakthrough R&D that would rely on international UBC. In this respect Slovenian companies could still be considered as innovation followers, not taking the initiatives on their own (although Slovenia in general has been recognized as a strong innovator based on the European innovation scoreboard 2018).

Number of university partners



With respect to the number of university partners, 79% of Slovenian business respondents cooperate with 1 to 4 HEI partners. While 18% of businesses cooperate with 5-10 partners. Only 3% has more than 10 partners. As most of UBC hinges on personal contacts and good past experiences, businesses tend to cooperate with a small circle of academics who fit these criteria.

Factors influencing UBC



This section outlines the extent to which various factors affect UBC.

Generally, a barrier provides a hindrance or obstacle to do something. Drivers comprise facilitators, which enable or ease the process, and the motivators, which triggers the starting of an activity and are often related to the expected outcome(s).

At the European level, this study has found that removing a barrier does not necessarily create UBC but rather it makes UBC possible. Instead, it is the facilitators and motivators (drivers) that initiate UBC.

For example, even when a lack of funds is often named as a major barrier to cooperation, the presence of funds may not be enough for cooperation to happen if the perceived facilitators or motivators are not sufficient.

Barriers hindering UBC

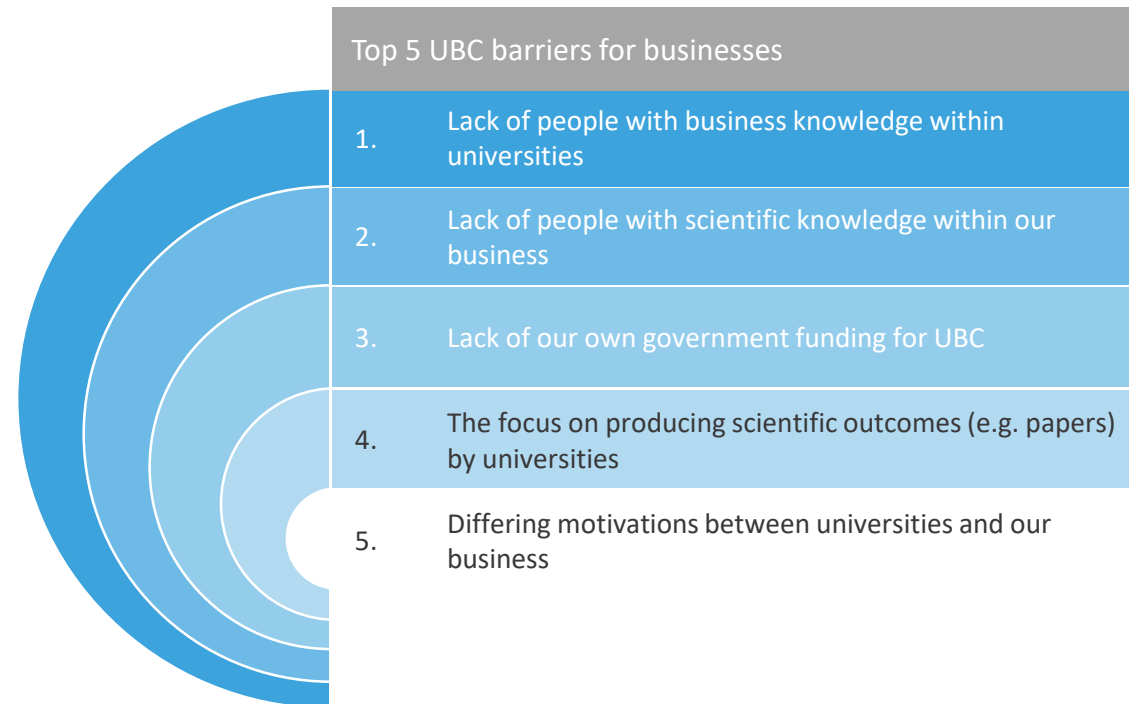
For Slovenian businesses the top five factors inhibiting their cooperation with universities relate to cultural, funding and results-oriented dimensions.

Lack of people with business knowledge within universities emerges as the biggest barrier to UBC and is followed by another cultural barrier, namely lack of people with scientific knowledge within our business. In general, companies (especially SMEs) perceive academic environment as theoretical, focusing on basic research without direct practical and immediate added value for their business. In addition, they believe that there is a need for more entrepreneurial mindset in universities that would understand business' needs and would be able to approach them in a proper manner – i.e. with an “elevator pitch” directly offering a solution for their problems at a low price and, if possible, in a very short time. Therefore, universities would need people that understand business – especially SMEs on which the Slovenian economy is based on.

Further barriers include lack of our own government funding for UBC and the focus on producing scientific outcomes (e.g. papers) by universities. WHY?

Barriers

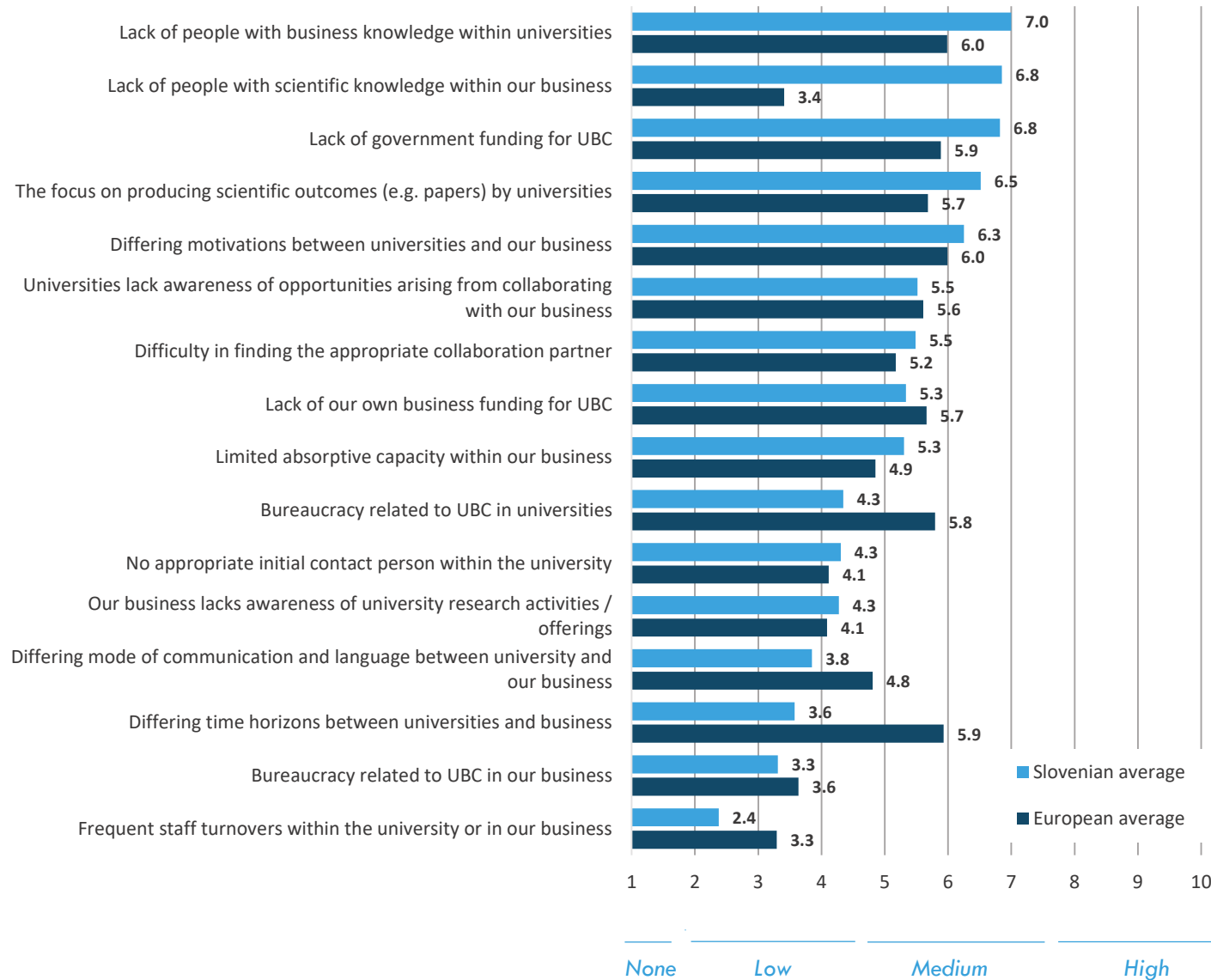
‘What is inhibiting your cooperation with universities?’



Barriers hindering UBC

Barriers

‘What is inhibiting your cooperation with universities?’



The majority of barriers perceived by Slovenian businesses who are involved in UBC, and their European counterparts are quite different.

The top barrier for Slovenian business representatives is the lack of people with business knowledge within universities (7.0), which significantly exceeds the European average.

Even greater discrepancy is visible with the second barrier – namely lack of people with scientific knowledge within our business – with the average of 6.8. Business people perceive themselves as not understanding the academic environment enough and would need additional aid with that – ideally intermediaries that would act as translators between both domains. Also time is an important factor – so someone who would unburden them when it comes to initiating and sustaining UBC activities.

On the other hand barriers such as bureaucracy related to UBC in universities is much lower than in other European universities (4.3). Since UBC is not institutionalized in universities the bureaucracy and administration themselves do not pose as problems.

In both Slovenia and Europe the frequent staff turnovers within the university or in our business is seen as the weakest barrier, and much lower in Slovenian case.

Drivers stimulating UBC

The top five UBC facilitators perceived by Slovenian businesses cooperating with HEIs are found to be related to the relationship factors and funding related factors.

The primary factor is the existence of funding to undertake cooperation. There is no special funding for UBC at the moment. Therefore, existence of any mode of funding would facilitate the UBC.

The following three factors relate to the relationship dimension (namely, existence of mutual goal, trust, commitment).

Another important driver relates to the commercial orientation of the university. This can be explained in line with the results that business is missing people with entrepreneurial mindset at universities and translators between both worlds. They generally perceive the knowledge produced and skills available at universities as of value. However, universities are not capable to properly approach the business world due to dominant lack of entrepreneurial spirit in the Slovenian context.

Drivers are those factors that encourage businesses, academics or HEIs to engage in UBC. Drivers of UBC are divided into two factors:

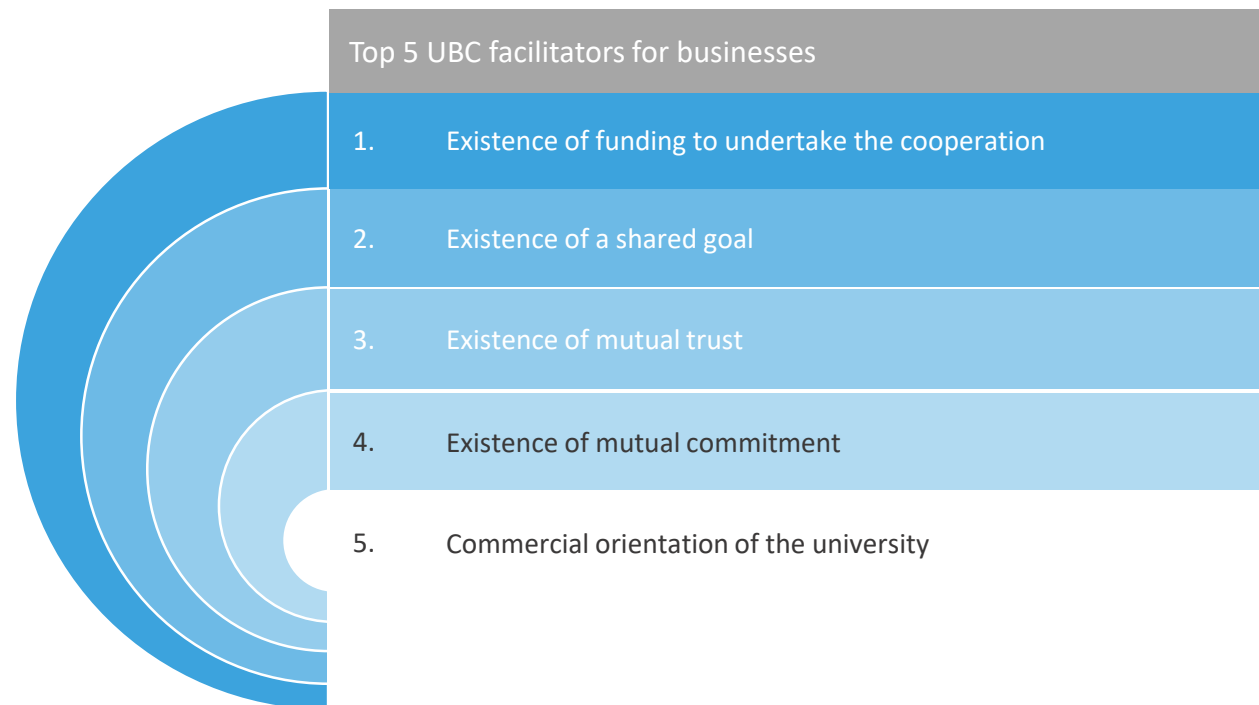
1. **Facilitators** – factors that enable or ease cooperation
2. **Motivators** – incentives or benefits that the respective stakeholders would like from the cooperation

Together, these two factors provide a comprehensive picture of what compels businesses to cooperate.

The 2010-11 State of European UBC study showed that for European universities the existence of strong UBC drivers can overcome the presence of barriers to UBC.

Facilitators enabling UBC

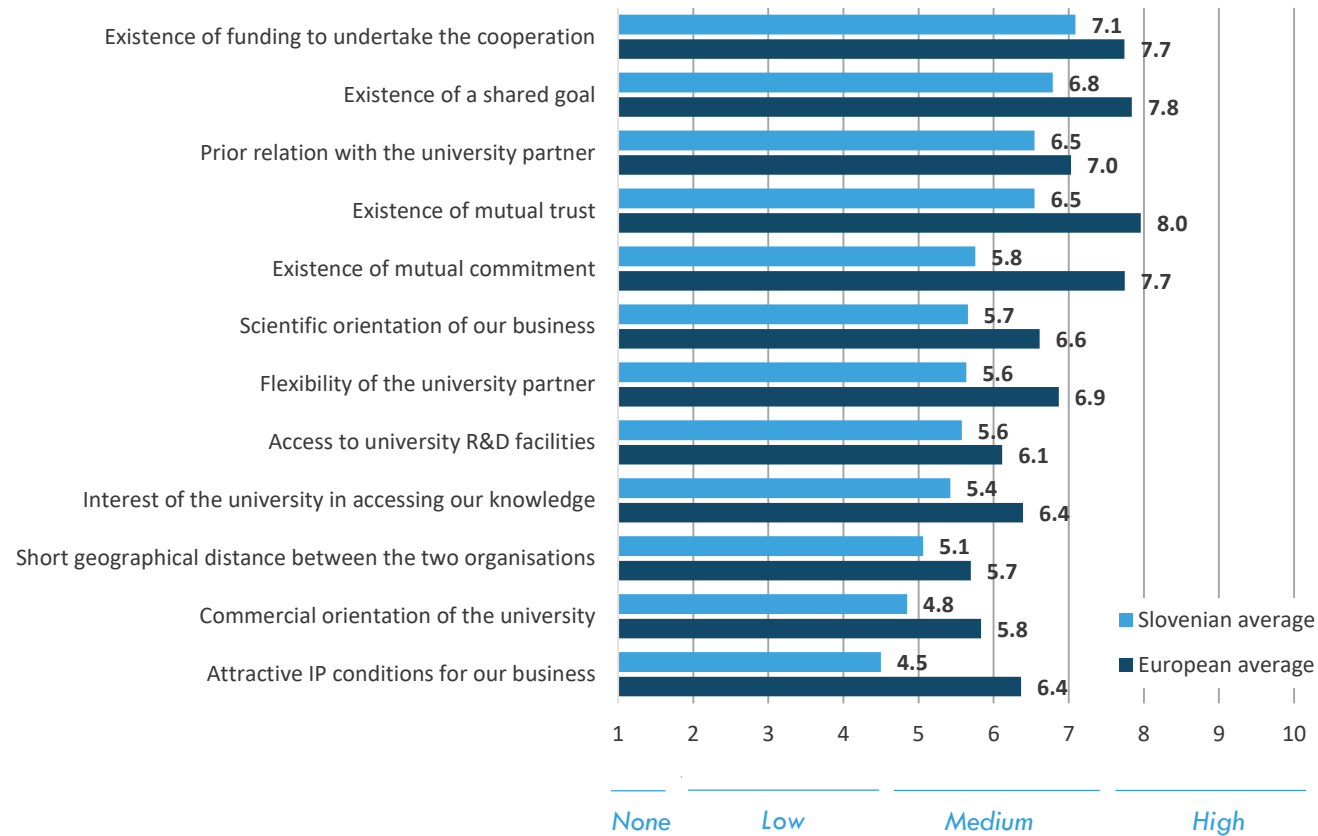
'What is facilitating your cooperation with universities?'



Drivers stimulating UBC

Facilitators

'What is facilitating your cooperation with universities?'



All drivers in the Slovenian context are weaker when compared to European average.

Funding is number one facilitator (7.1), but still not as prominent as it is in the other European businesses.

Relationship facilitators are also at the top of the list like in the majority of European businesses, but again these are developed to a less extent.

The least important facilitator for Slovenian businesses is the attractive IP conditions for their businesses, which is significantly lower than in other European businesses.

Drivers stimulating UBC

The UBC motivators rated most highly by Slovenian business respondents can be classified into two areas: namely education & reputation and research.

The results show that businesses cooperate with universities primarily for their own innovation related purposes, as these are among top four motivators with the motivator of obtaining a customised solution for the business emerging as number one. Business demands customized R&D that is very much result-oriented, solving their specific technical and engineering problems.

The second important motivator is related to the possibility of accessing better qualified graduates. Business demands graduates with skills. There is a general perception in Slovenian society that universities (especially in the domain of social sciences and humanities) do not produce the skills that are needed by companies.

Motivations for UBC are the reasons why businesses collaborate with university.

They provide key information about the outcomes that the businesses seek from their collaborative activities relating to education, research, valorisation and management.

The ability of the collaboration to achieve these outcomes will have a substantial influence on the businesses' assessment of the success of their collaboration.

Motivators

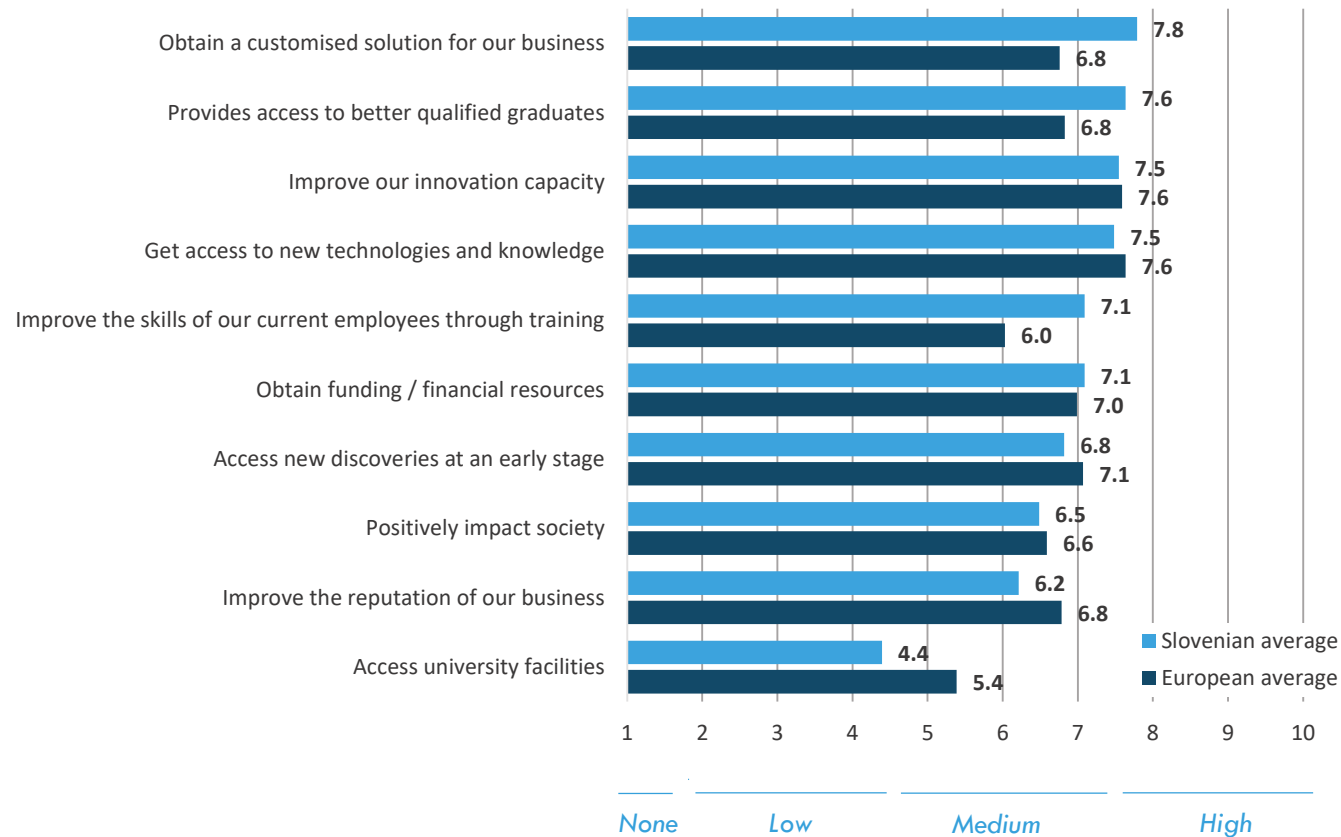
'What motivates you to cooperate with universities?'



Drivers stimulating UBC

Motivators

'What motivates you to cooperate with universities?'



Motivators among Slovenian businesses differ from the European average.

The top motivator is obtaining a customised solution for the business, which considerably exceeds the European average. Basic scientific and strategic long-term research is not something that business (especially SMEs) would favour. This is especially such taking into account the structure of the industry – producing components and half-products, specifically valuing optimization and standardisation of their production and supply chain. Industry demands fast solutions due to market pressures.

Further motivator ranking high for Slovenian businesses and exceeding European average at the same time is obtaining access to better qualified graduates. WHY?

Further important factors refer to improvement of innovation capacity and access to the new technologies and knowledge, with very similar averages as the EU one. WHY?

The least important motivator for both Slovenian and European businesses is the access to university facilities, with the average being much lower in Slovenian case. Slovenian companies are self-sufficient with their own equipment, which generally exceeds in the quality compared to university laboratories.

Benefits of UBC

Slovenian businesses have been asked to what extent various stakeholders receive benefits from UBC. According to the results, students are considered as the main beneficiaries by both Slovenian and European respondents.

Slovenian businesses consider universities as the second group of beneficiaries followed by academics and society. UBC has a potential to improve and enhance entrepreneurial orientation and foster practical applicability of produced results (also students with practical skills).

Interestingly, Slovenian businesses see themselves as not as important benefactors as it is the case with European businesses.

Both groups perceive 'government/public authorities' as being a UBC beneficiary to a low extent.


Benefits are the perceived positive outcomes (financial and non-financial) from undertaking UBC as relevant for the different stakeholder groups that can potentially participate in UBC.

The perception regarding who benefits from such cooperation can influence the decision to increase or decrease their participation or

the involvement of other groups. For example, if academics perceive their own benefits to be low, they may refrain from engaging in UBC. Yet, if they perceive benefits for students to be high, they might undertake actions that contribute to students' involvement in UBC.

Benefits of UBC

'Who receives the benefits of UBC?'

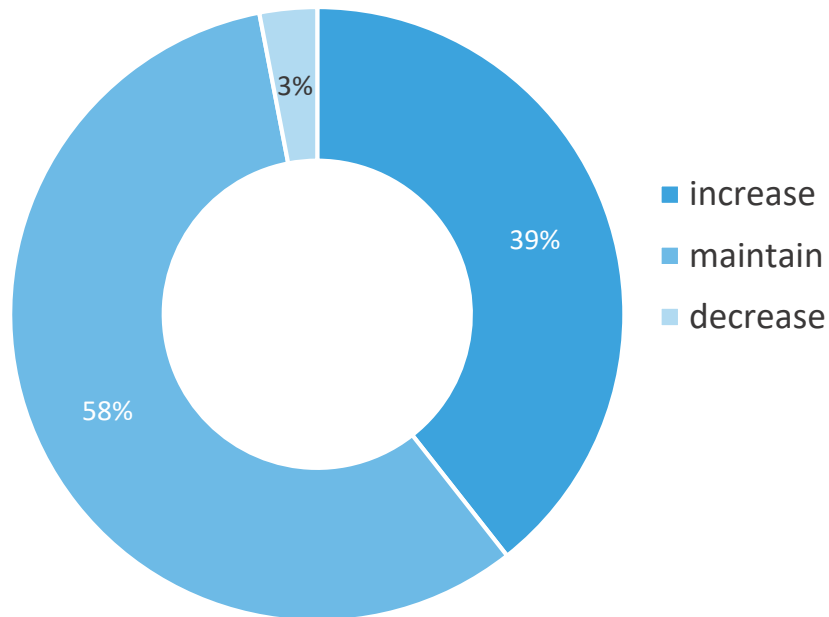


	Slovenian businesses	European businesses
1.	Students	Students
2.	Universities	Universities
3.	Academics	Businesses
4.	Society	Academics
5.	Businesses	Society
6.	Government/public authorities	Government/ public authorities

Future intentions

Future UBC intentions – Slovenia

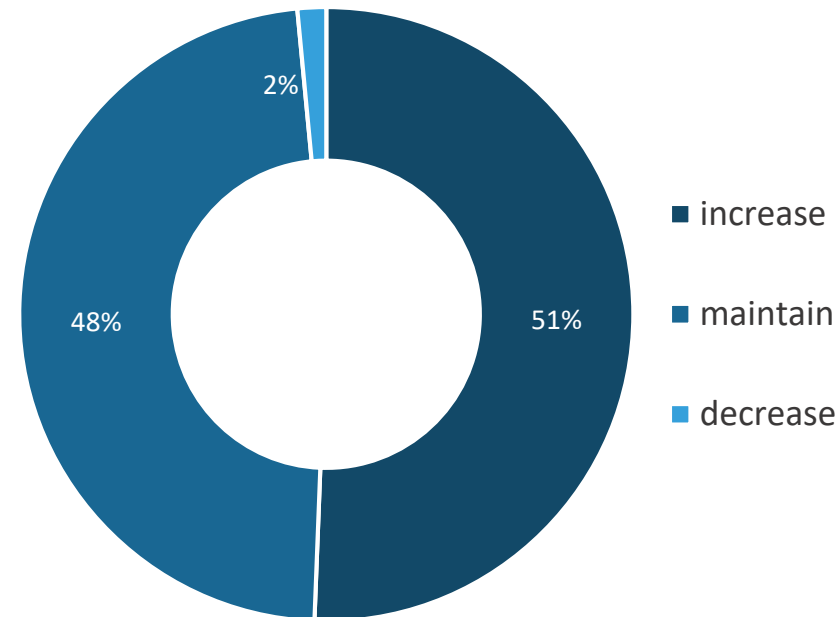
As answered by Slovenian businesses



In a vote of confidence in UBC, 97% of businesses in the Slovenian sample that cooperate with universities indicate that they plan to maintain (58% or increase (39%) their cooperation with universities.

Future UBC intentions – EUROPE

As answered by European businesses



European businesses seem to be even more confident in terms of their future intention towards UBC as it can be observed through a higher percentage of business respondents (51%) that plan to increase cooperation activities.

Willingness to recommend UBC

The willingness of Slovenian cooperating businesses to recommend to a colleague to engage in UBC vary depending on whether this cooperation is in research or in education. In both cases they would not recommend collaboration with universities.

This is more so prominent in the area of education. While only 18% would recommend cooperation with universities in E&T, as high as 43% would not recommending, resulting in negative net promoter score (-25%). Universities cannot modify their curricula based on immediate needs of companies. Therefore, it can be challenging to produce the graduates with required skills. This is one of the key issues that companies experience when it comes to UBC in education in Slovenia.

In the case of R&D, only 26% business representatives would recommend the cooperation with universities while 36% would not recommend it (NPS -10%).

Respondents were asked how likely it would be that they recommend to a business colleague to engage in UBC in the areas of R&D and

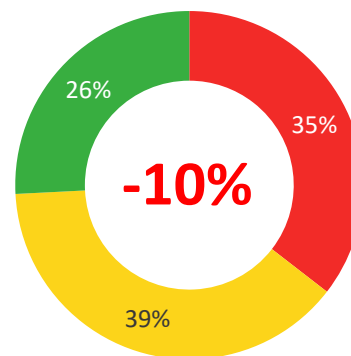
education and training (E&T). The *Net Promoter Score* metric offers a proxy for customer satisfaction.

Willingness to recommend cooperation with universities in R&D or E&T

	Detractors	Passives	Promoters	Net promoter score
Business cooperating with universities in R&D	36%	39%	26%	-10%
Business cooperating with universities in E&T	43%	39%	18%	-25%

Satisfaction with cooperation with universities (net promoter score)

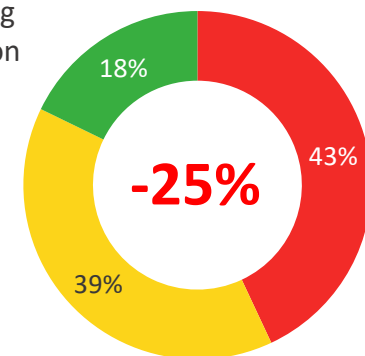
Business cooperating in research



■ Detractors ■ Passives ■ Promoters

European business NPS result: 28.2

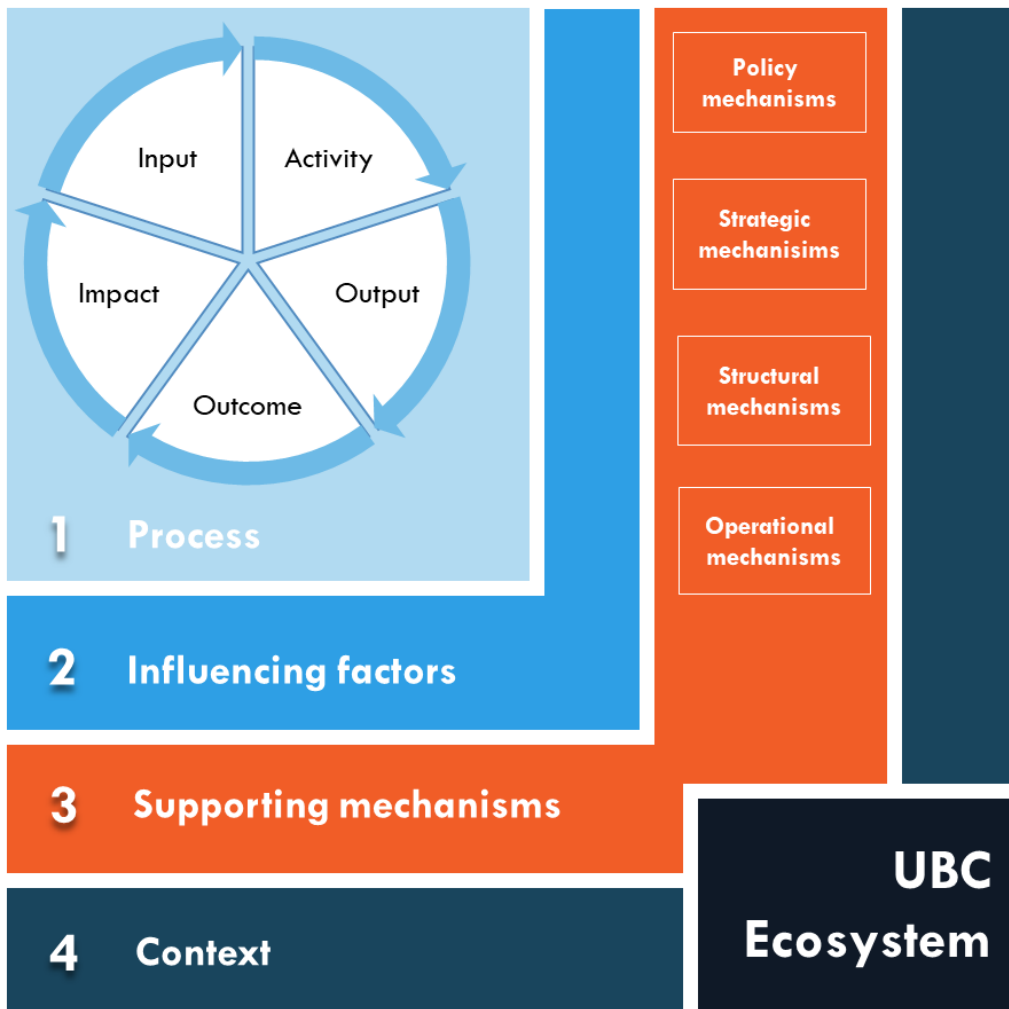
Business cooperating in education



■ Detractors ■ Passives ■ Promoters

European business NPS result: -2.1

Supporting mechanisms for UBC



Supporting mechanisms are interventions designed to support the development of cooperation between HEIs and business.

There are four types of supporting mechanisms:

- Policy
- Strategic
- Structural
- Operational

This section outlines the extent to which UBC supporting mechanisms are developed in this sample from the HEI perspective.

At the European level, the extent of development of all these mechanisms significantly influences the extent of cooperation.

The most developed supporting mechanism for UBC in Slovenia is a top-level management committed to UBC (39%). The practice of recruiting PhD students or scientists into business (37%) and dedication of resources (34%) are the further mechanisms present. High-level EU and national strategies are often highlighting the importance of UBC. Therefore, general commitment is there, but it is not always directly transferred into practice.

Compared to the European average, UBC supporting mechanisms in Slovenia are more common, with a few exceptions. WHY?

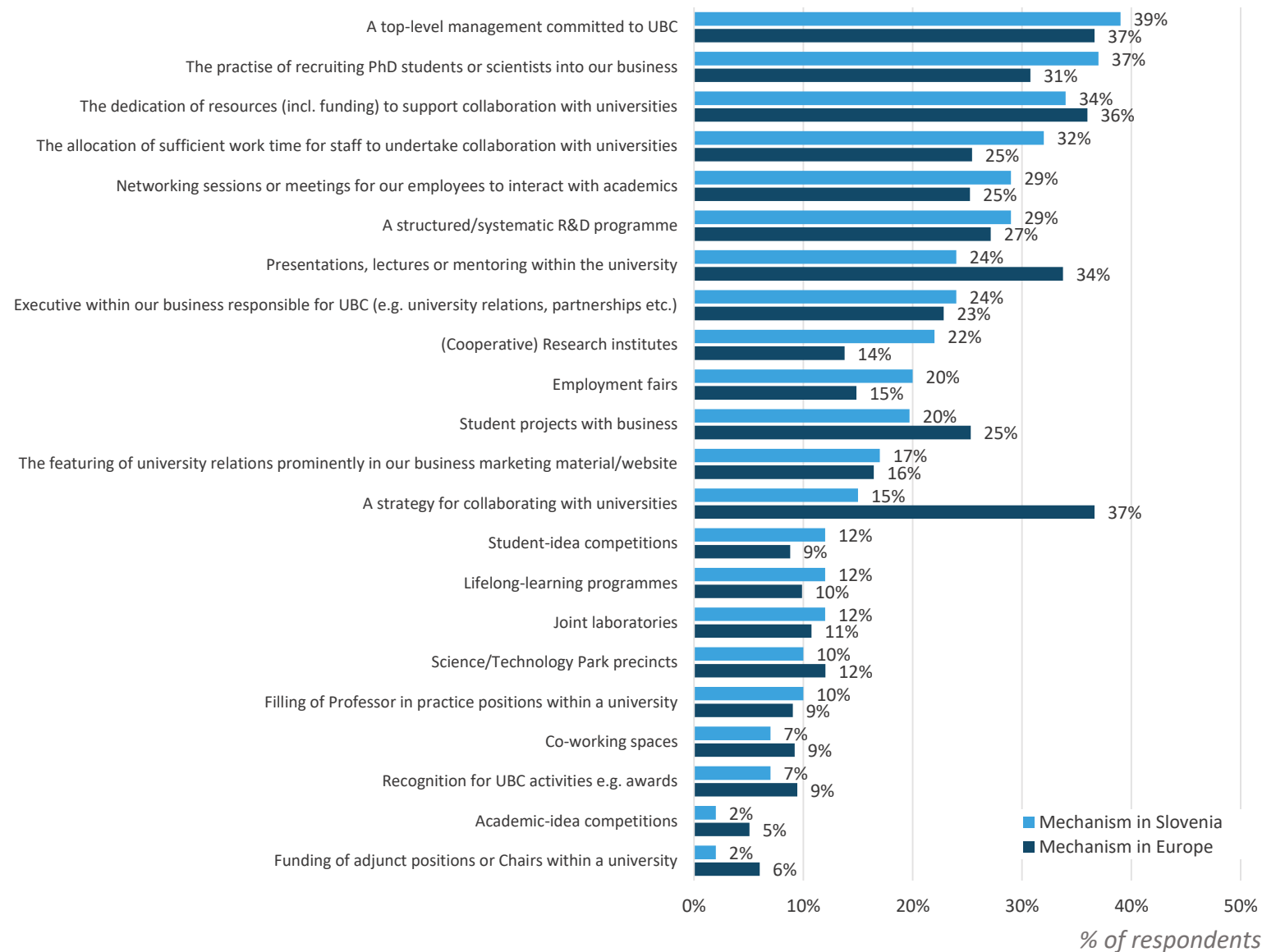
Presentations, lectures or mentoring within university (24%) and student projects with businesses (20%) are less developed than in an average European business. universities do not have general and common interdisciplinary courses that would systematically involve students' projects with business (in which students work on real-life cases with mentors from academic and business side). However, the recently government has initiated a special call for these sort of projects in which students apply for projects together with academic mentors and business representatives. This scheme presents a first and important step towards improving the UBC in this modality.

The least prevalent mechanisms in Slovenian businesses are academic-idea competitions and funding of adjunct positions within a university, similarly to the European case.

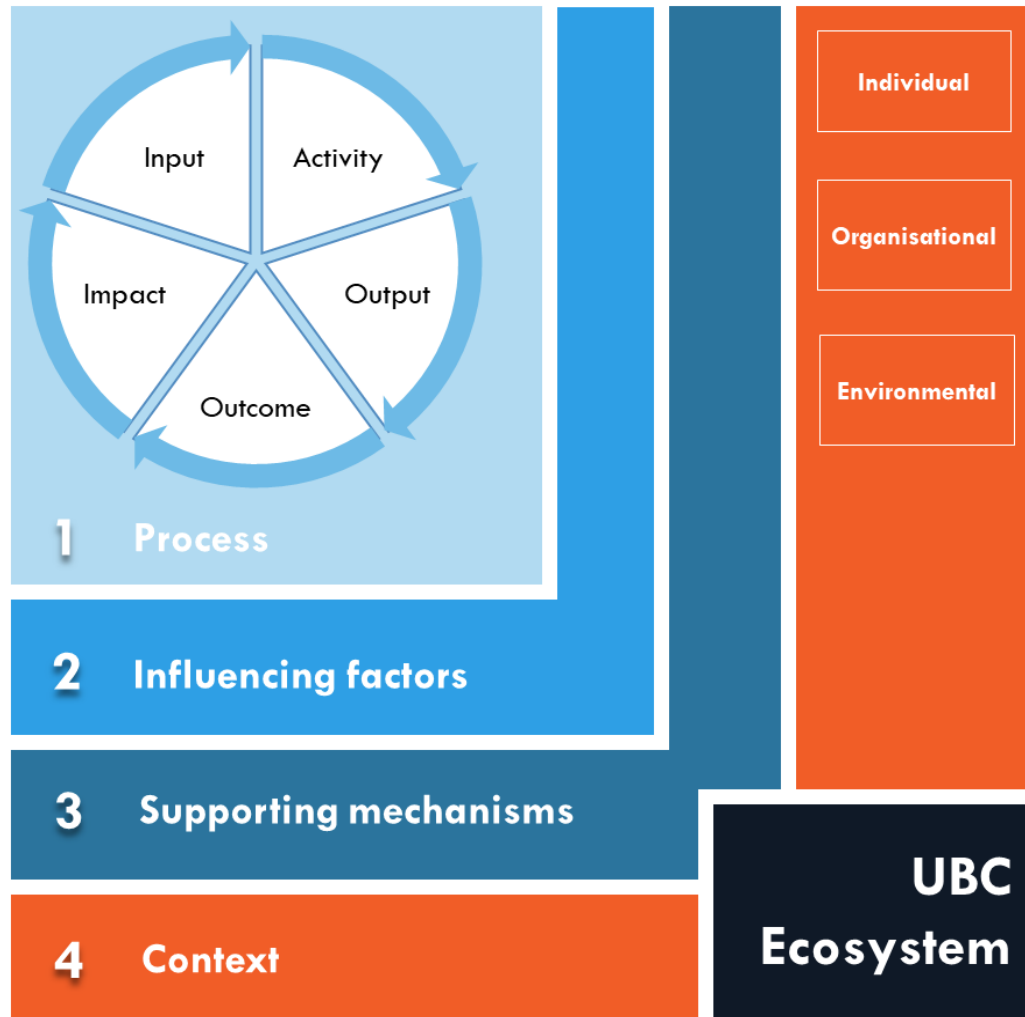
Supporting mechanisms for UBC

Mechanisms supporting UBC

'Do these supporting mechanisms for UBC exist in your business?'



Context



The degree to which UBC takes place is influenced by a set of elements present in the context of the organisation that cannot be changed in short term.

These include the characteristics of individual actors involved, the institutional factors relating to the university and business, as well as by a set of broader environmental factors (political, economic, social, technological, etc.).

This section outlines how some contextual factors influence UBC in the country.

Context

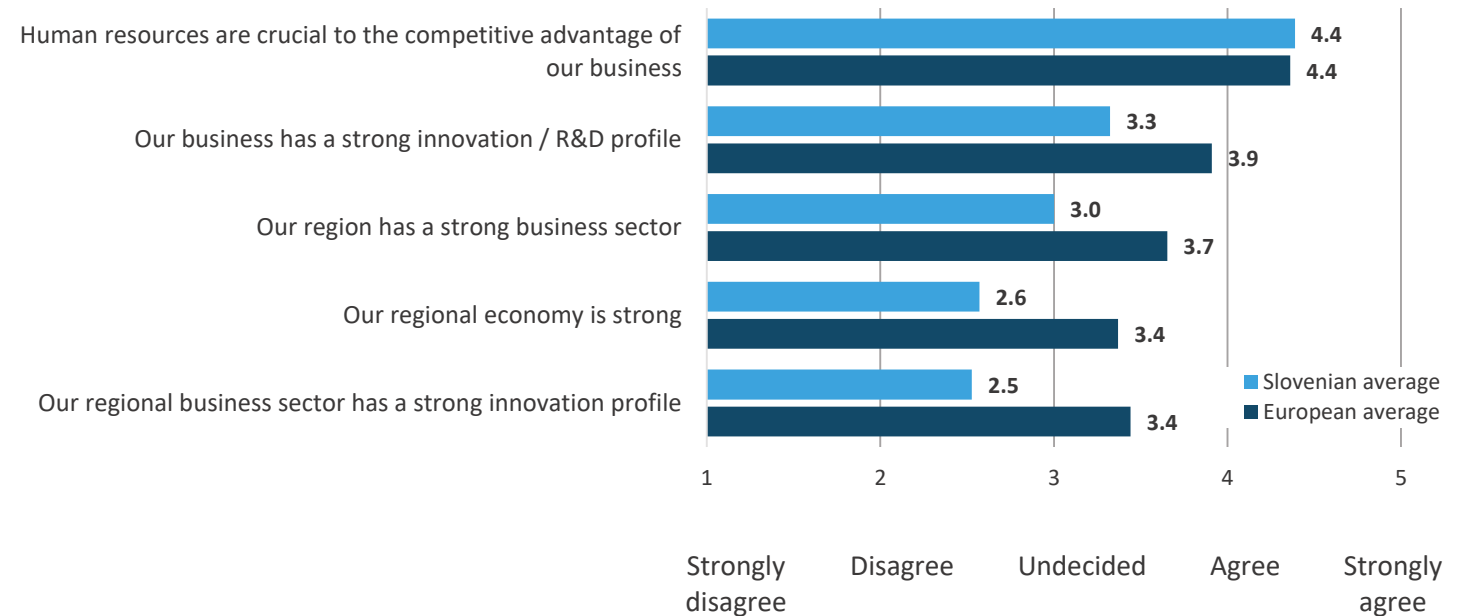
Slovenian business cooperating with universities perceive their context to be less advantageous than European businesses.

Human resources are essential and are deemed to be equally developed as in EU.

On the other hand, all other indicators are less developed with perceptions of strengths of regional economy and innovation profile of regional business ranking the lowest. The structure of economy is mainly constituted of companies who are operating in supply chains, producing components for larger manufacturers (e.g. German automotive industry). So generally, the focus is more on operational management, quality and standardisation rather than innovation.

Contextual factors affecting UBC

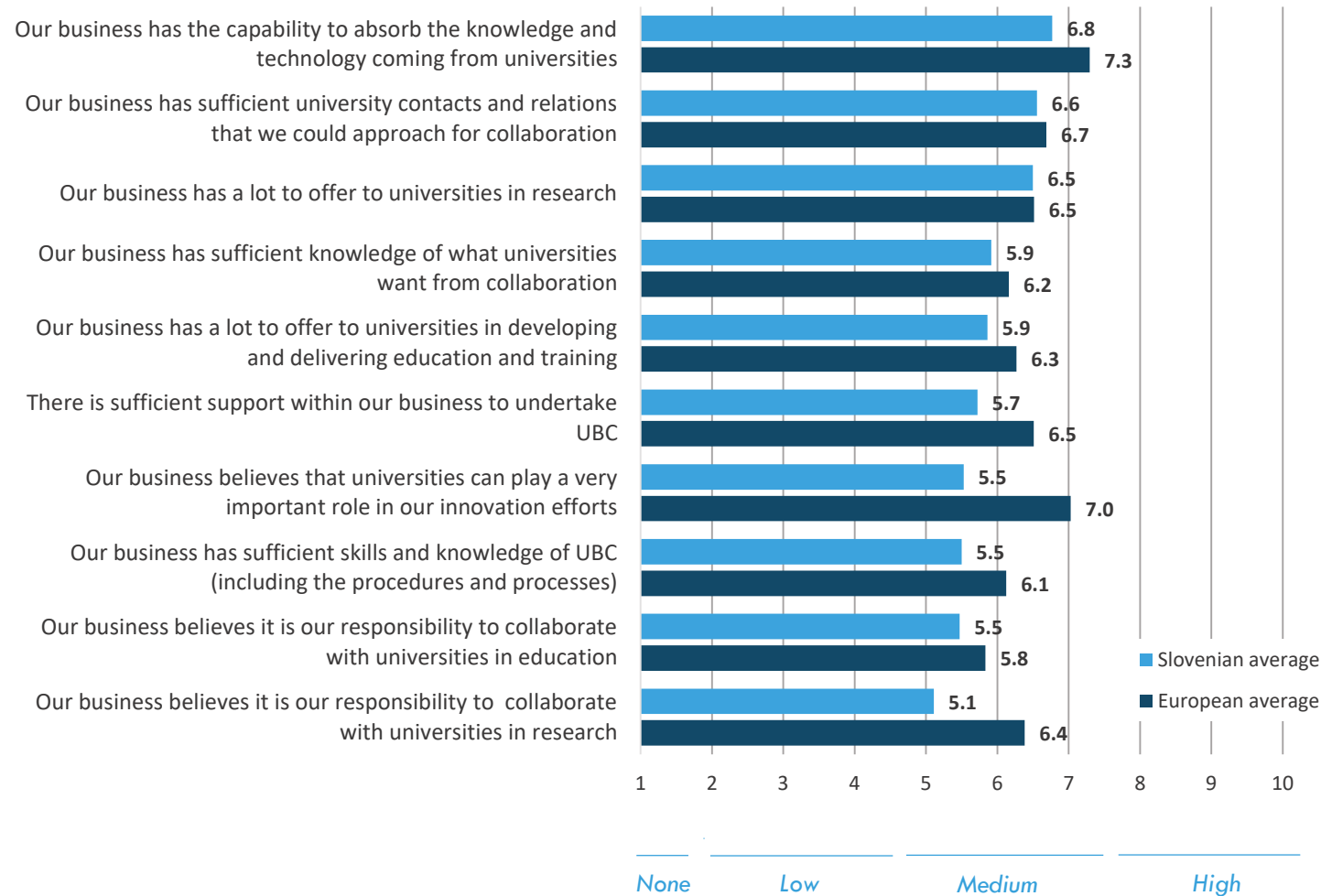
'To what extent do you agree with the following statements?'



UBC capabilities and beliefs

Supportive UBC environment

How supportive are your organisation and environment for UBC?'



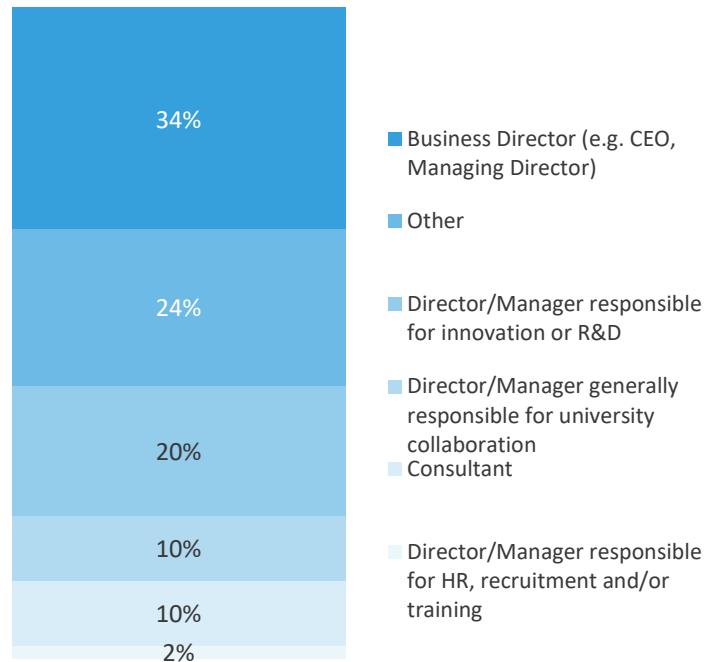
Overall, Slovenian businesses perceive most of their UBC capabilities in the medium range but lower than their European counterparts.

Slovenian businesses perceive themselves as supportive towards cooperation with universities. In particular, they have the capability to absorb knowledge and technology from universities. They also have sufficient university contacts and relations to reach out for collaboration.

Yet, Slovenian businesses do not have strong beliefs that it is their responsibility to cooperate with universities in education and research. Slovenian companies are mainly focused on quality in line with quality standards. They are mainly self-sufficient with their own R&D and innovation departments – especially the large companies. So, they perceive that universities are the ones who need to connect with companies and not vice versa.

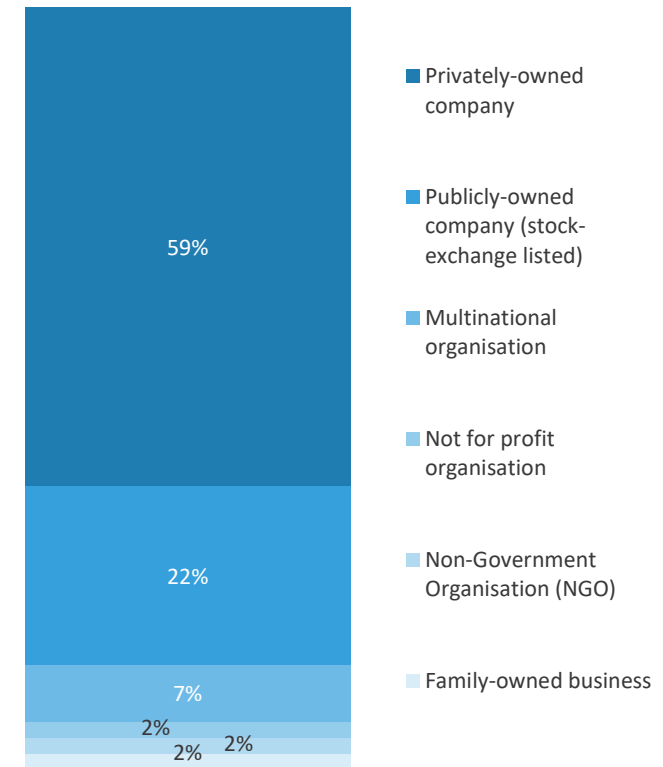
Respondents profile

Position of respondent



'Business directors' represent the largest group of Slovenian respondents (34%), followed by 'directors responsible for innovation or R&D' (20%). The remaining respondents identified themselves as 'directors responsible for university collaboration' (10%), 'consultants' (10%), and 'directors of HR, recruitment and training' (2%). 24% of Slovenian business respondents indicated that they hold 'other' positions.

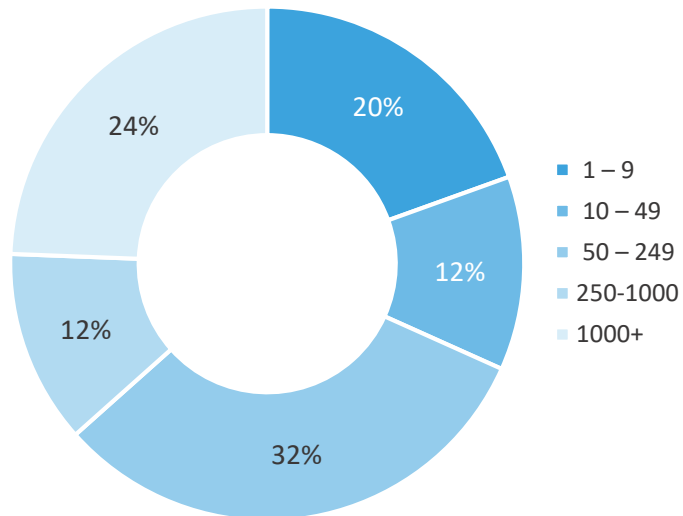
Type of business



A wide variety of businesses were represented in the Slovenian sample, with 'privately-owned companies' forming the largest group (59%), followed by 'publicly-owned companies' (22%) and 'multinational organisations' (7%). The remainder of the sample is represented by 'not for profit organisations', 'non-government organisations' and 'family-owned business' 'family owned businesses' (2% each).

Respondents profile

Business size



Sample Size	
Slovenian business representatives	n = 41
European business representatives	n = 3.113

Businesses are clustered into five groups according to the number of staff they employ. More than half (58%) of the Slovenian sample is comprised by small firms with 1 to 49 employees. Respondents indicating that they work for medium-sized companies accounted for 18%. Large companies with 250 to more than 1000 employees are represented with 24%.

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This report is part of the DG Education and Culture study on the University-Business Cooperation in Europe: drivers, challenges and opportunities in Europe EAC/10/2015. Further information can be found at www.ub-cooperation.eu

This report is also part of the Global University-Business Monitor initiative, a global study into university engagement and cooperation between university and business. Further information can be found at ubc-monitor.com