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# UNIVERSITIES' ROLE IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SMART SPECIALISATION

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OECD High-Level Event on the Knowledge Triangle, 15-16/9/16

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# Overall Framework

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- Universities commonly seen as relevant players in regional development and an ‚overall economic effect‘ on regional development has been identified in many studies (OECD, 1997; Schubert/Kroll, 2015, Hermansson et al, 2016)
- Yet, **institutional specificities and economic framework conditions at both national and regional level matter** (Koschatzky et al. 2011; Pinheiro/Benneworth, 2012)
- In peripheral regions, particular hopes are placed in universities (Benneworth et al. 2009; Gál and Ptáček 2011)
- Yet, **indications that, in these, traditional high-tech approaches don't work** (Brown, 2016: ‚mission impossible‘ in Scotland)
- Still: evidence of a **strong role for universities in both leading and lagging regions** less in between – based on different approaches than spin-off & high-tech (Koschatzky et al. 2011; Kroll et al. 2015)
- For their regions, **mid-range universities matter**, even if contributions are of relative, not absolute importance nationally (Wright et al., 2008; Huggins & Johnston, 2009)

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# Smart Specialisation

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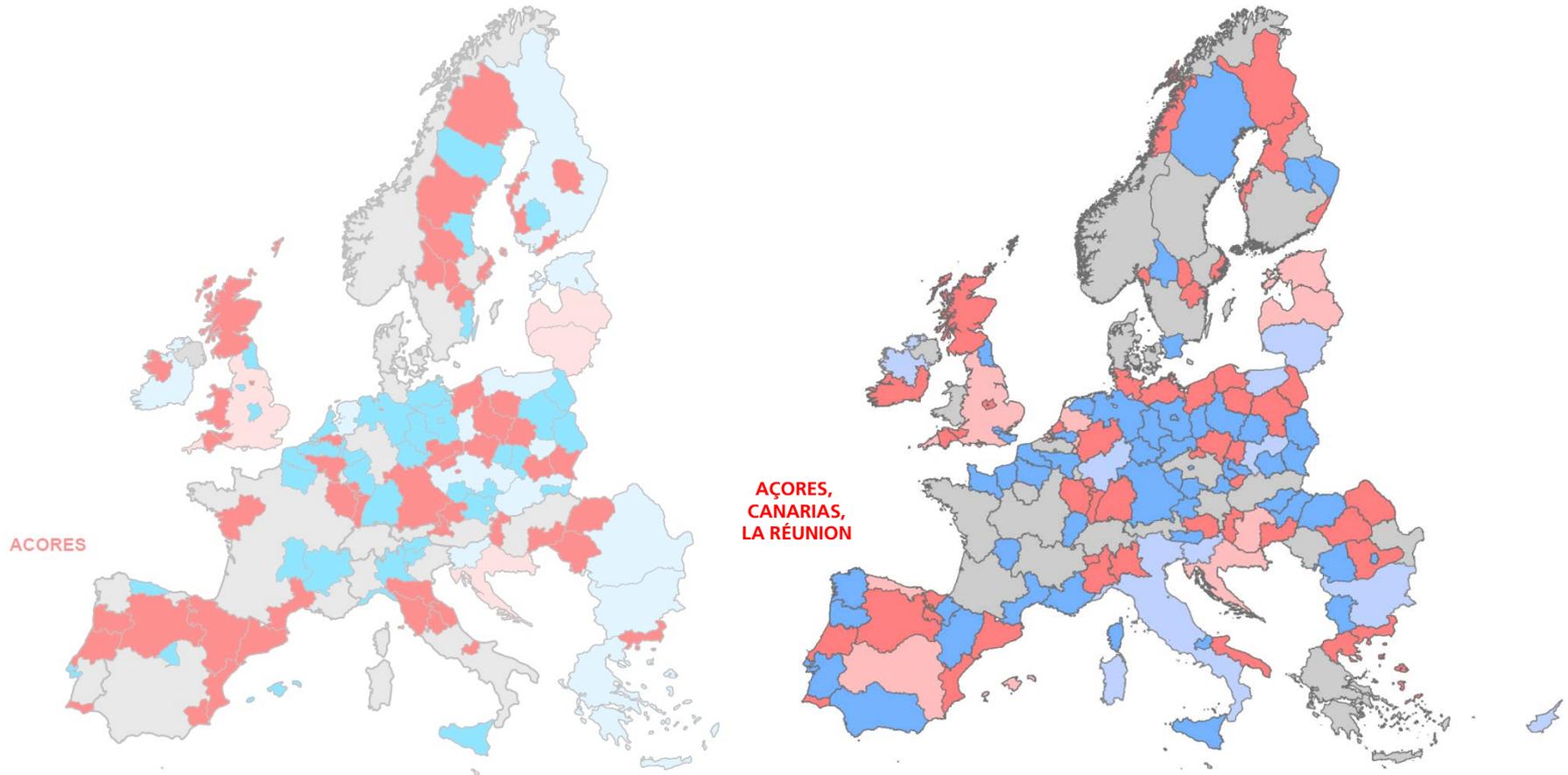
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- RIS3, soberly and in a nutshell
  - focus strategic support on **economic domains** in which the region has a chance to become internationally competitive
  - conceive these specialisations in light of **international value chains/networks** and regions' contribution to that
  - decision on this not centrally, but in collaborative dialogue of government and **local stakeholders who will have to realise economic transformation**
  
- „**entrepreneurial process of discovery**“
  - i.e. ideally the economy will drive it, moderated by local policy makers and involving public research where relevant
  - yet, in the periphery there is little chance of this working:  
weak players, fragmented innovation ecosystem, lack of liberty to engage (subsidiaries)
  - **so: can universities fill the gap?**

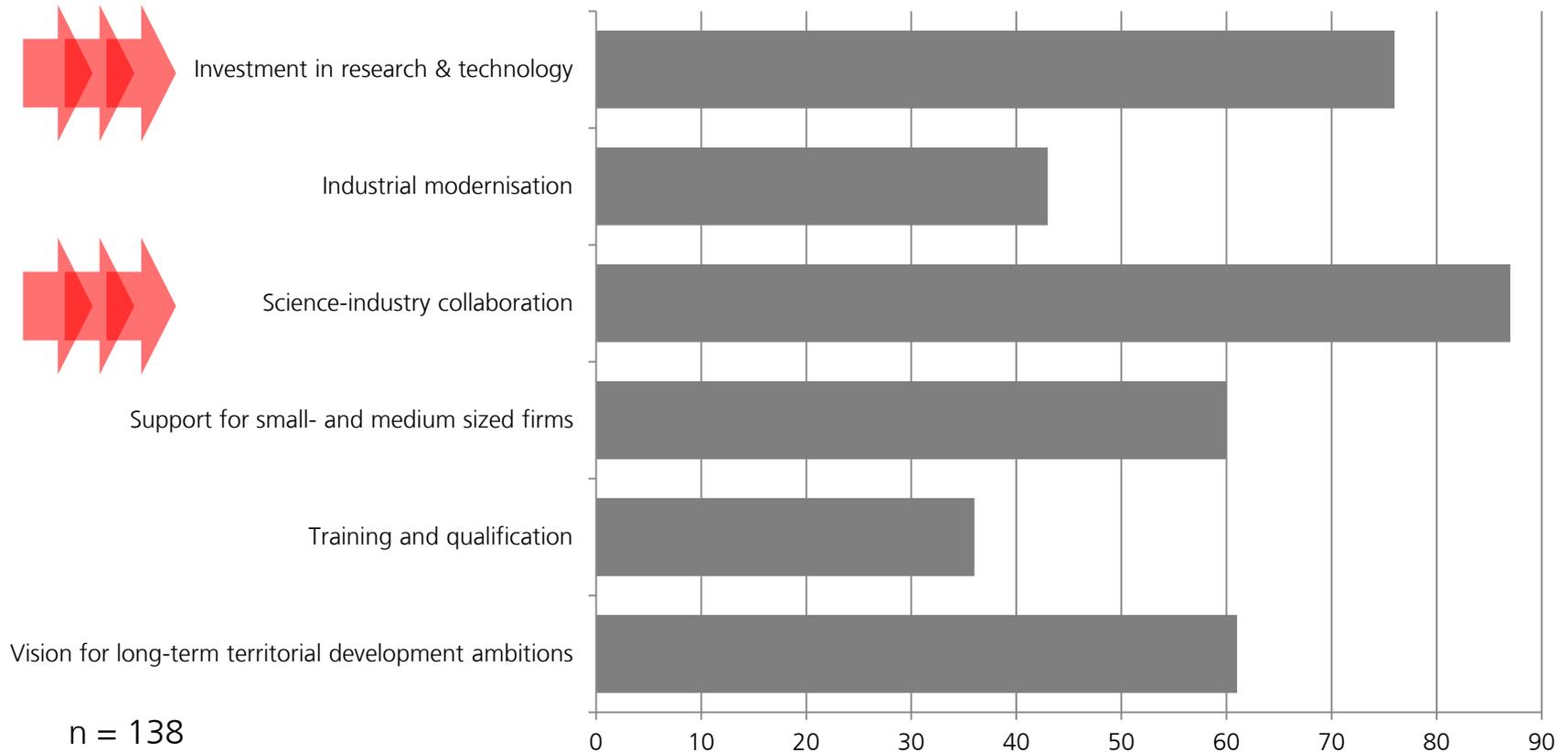
# Empirical Study

(in collaboration with European Commission, DG Regio)

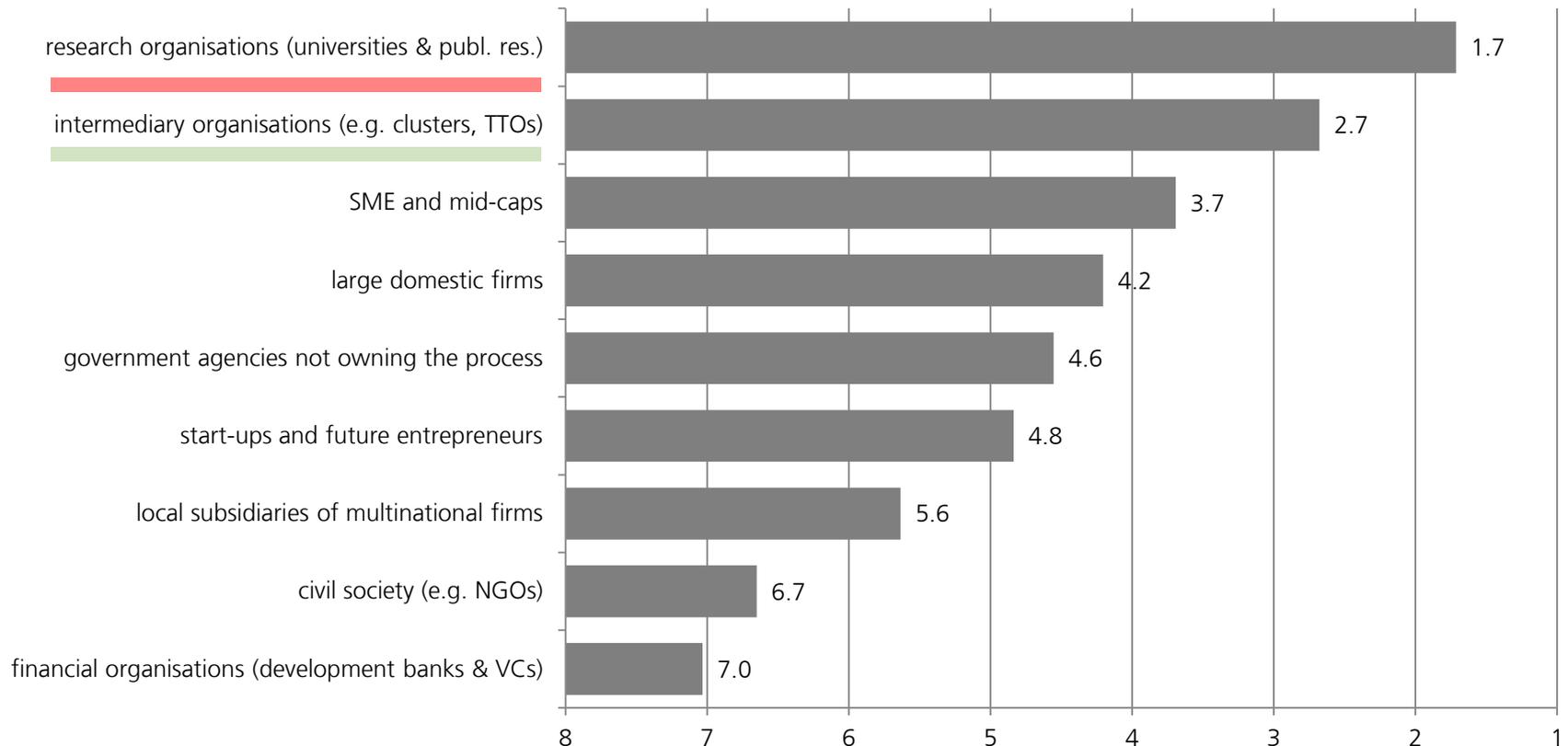
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# RIS3/EDP in fact dominantly focused on R&D and Triple-Helix Policy



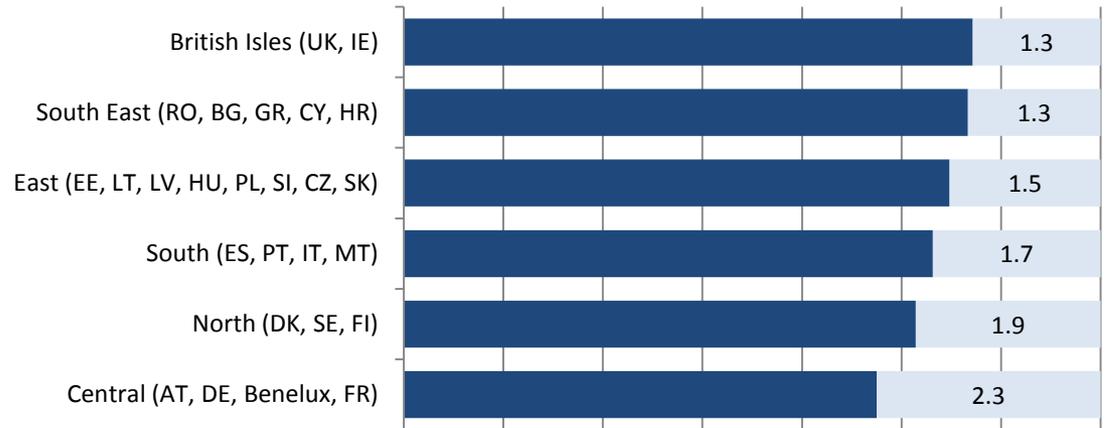
# Accordingly, universities major player in the game



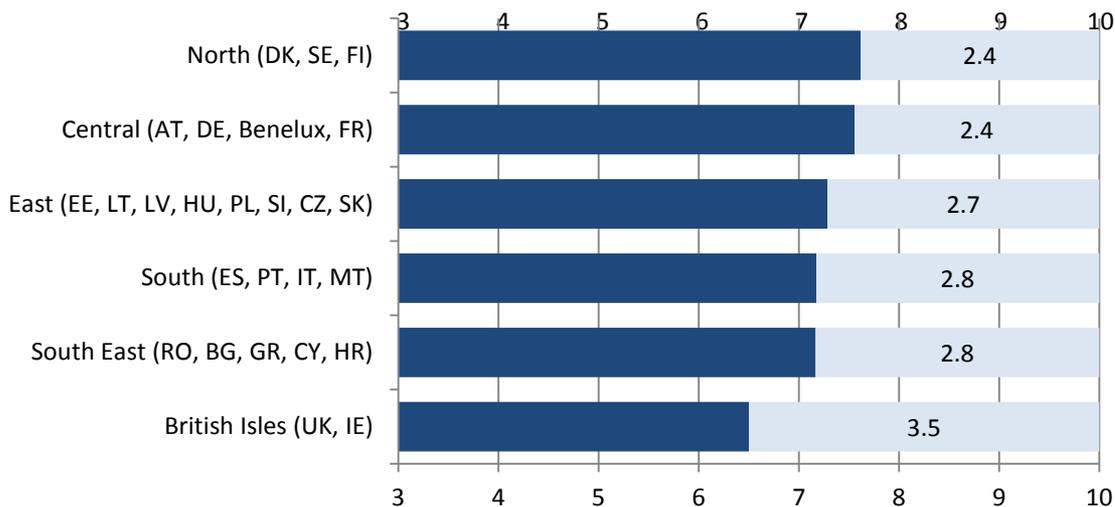
n = ~120

# EITHER universities OR intermediaries Lead the process

universities

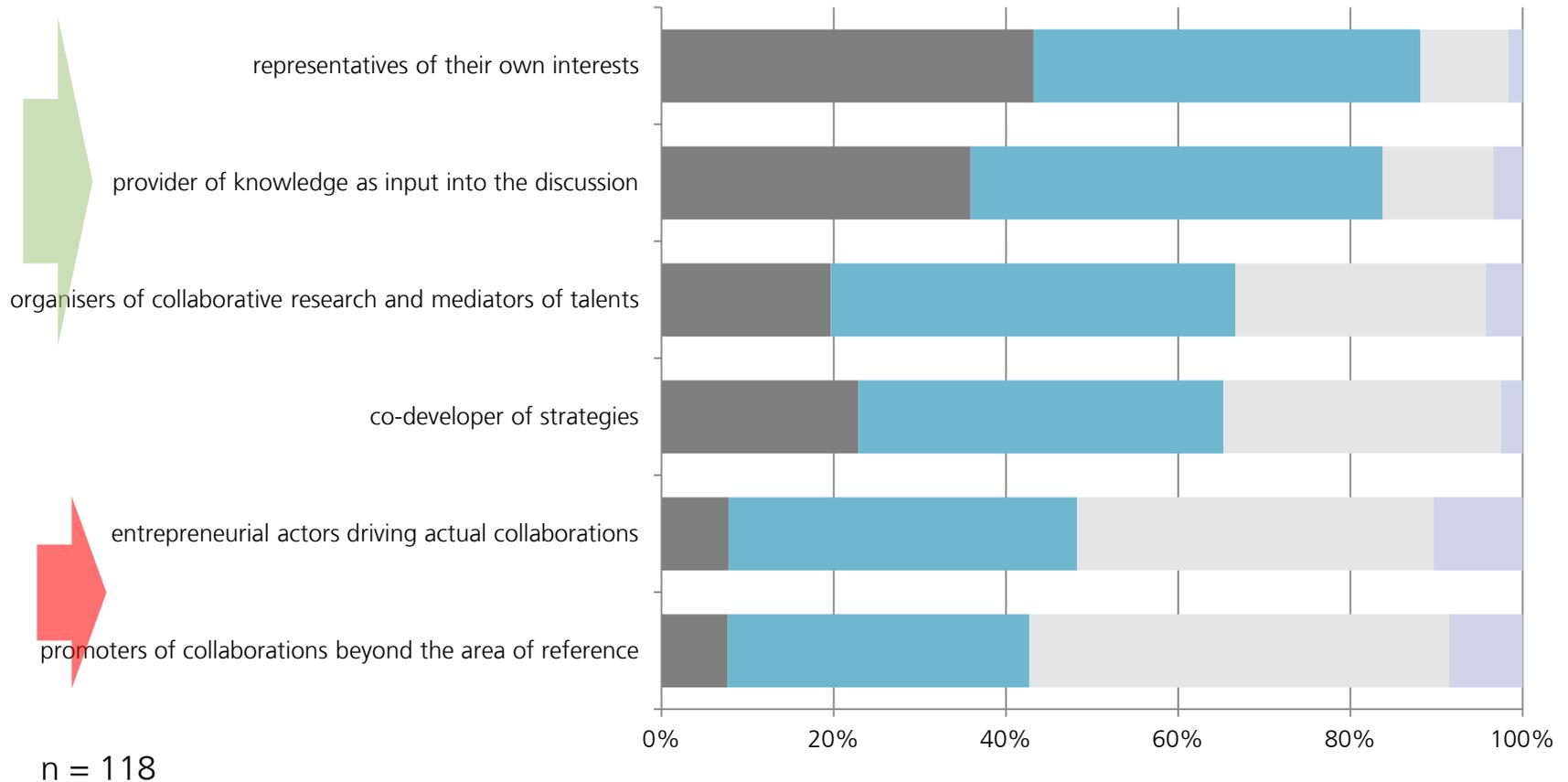


clusters, TTOs, intermediaries

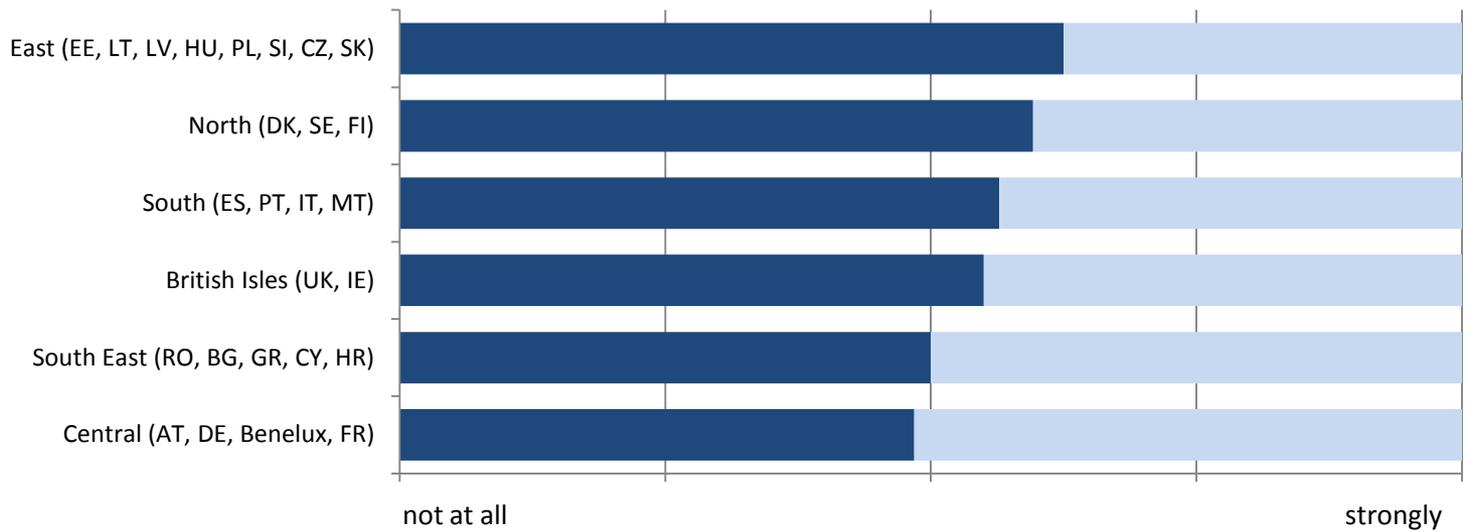
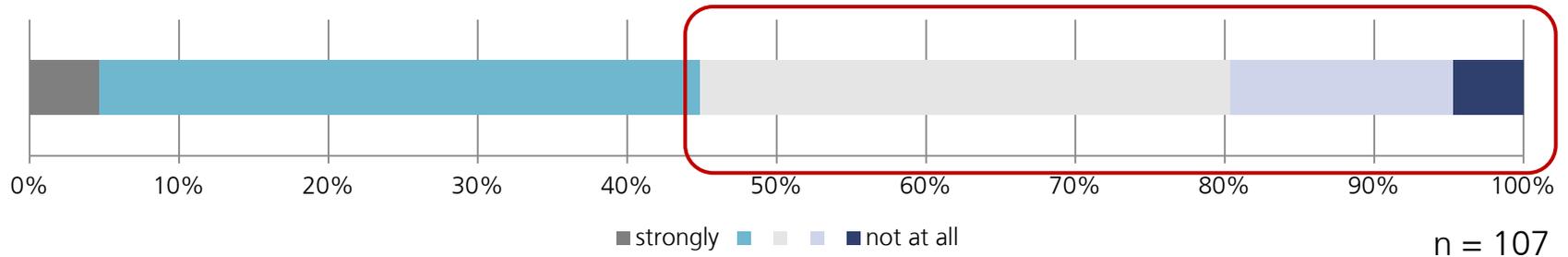


n = ~120

# In EDP, universities mostly engage within their core mandate



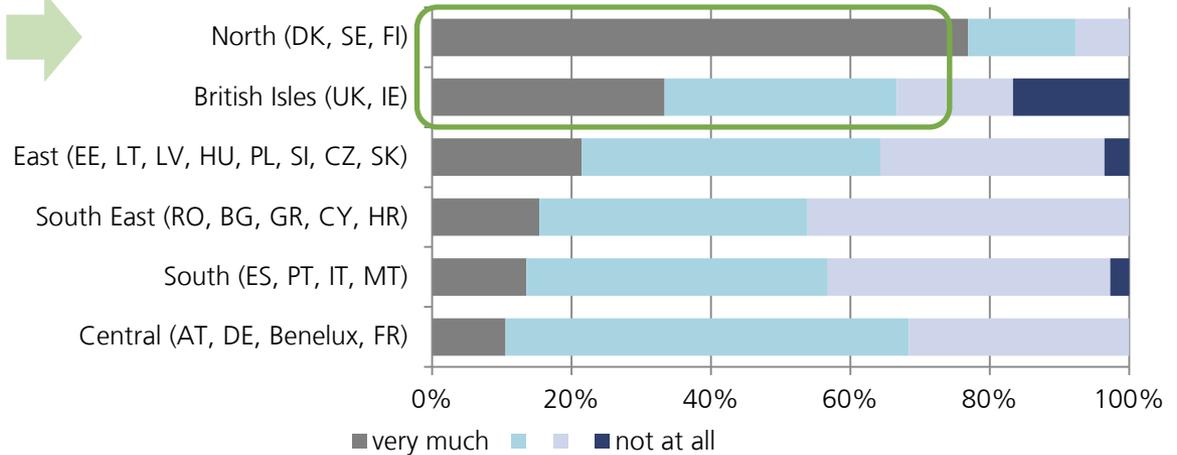
# Leverage on Private Funding



n = 107

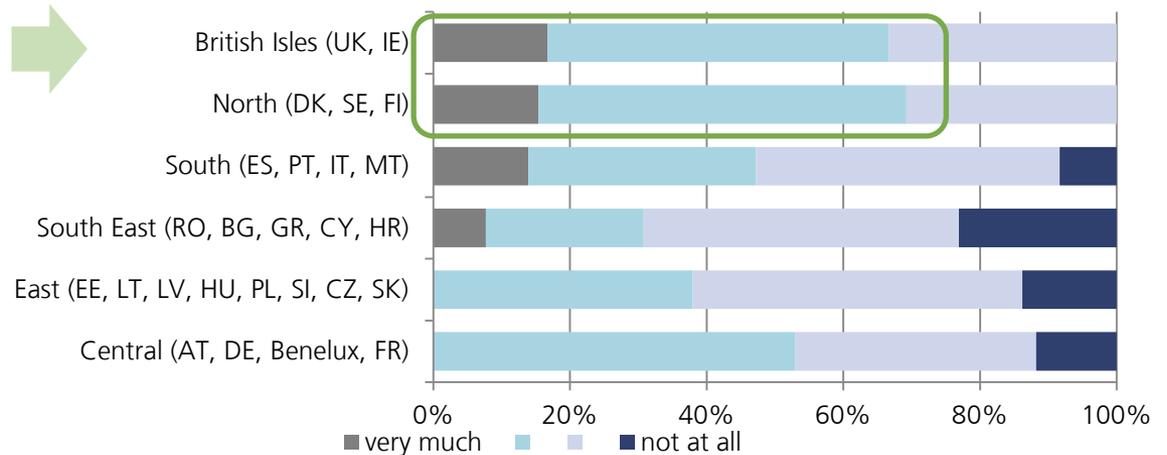
# In Scandinavia and UK, Universities do lead somehow

Co-developer of strategies



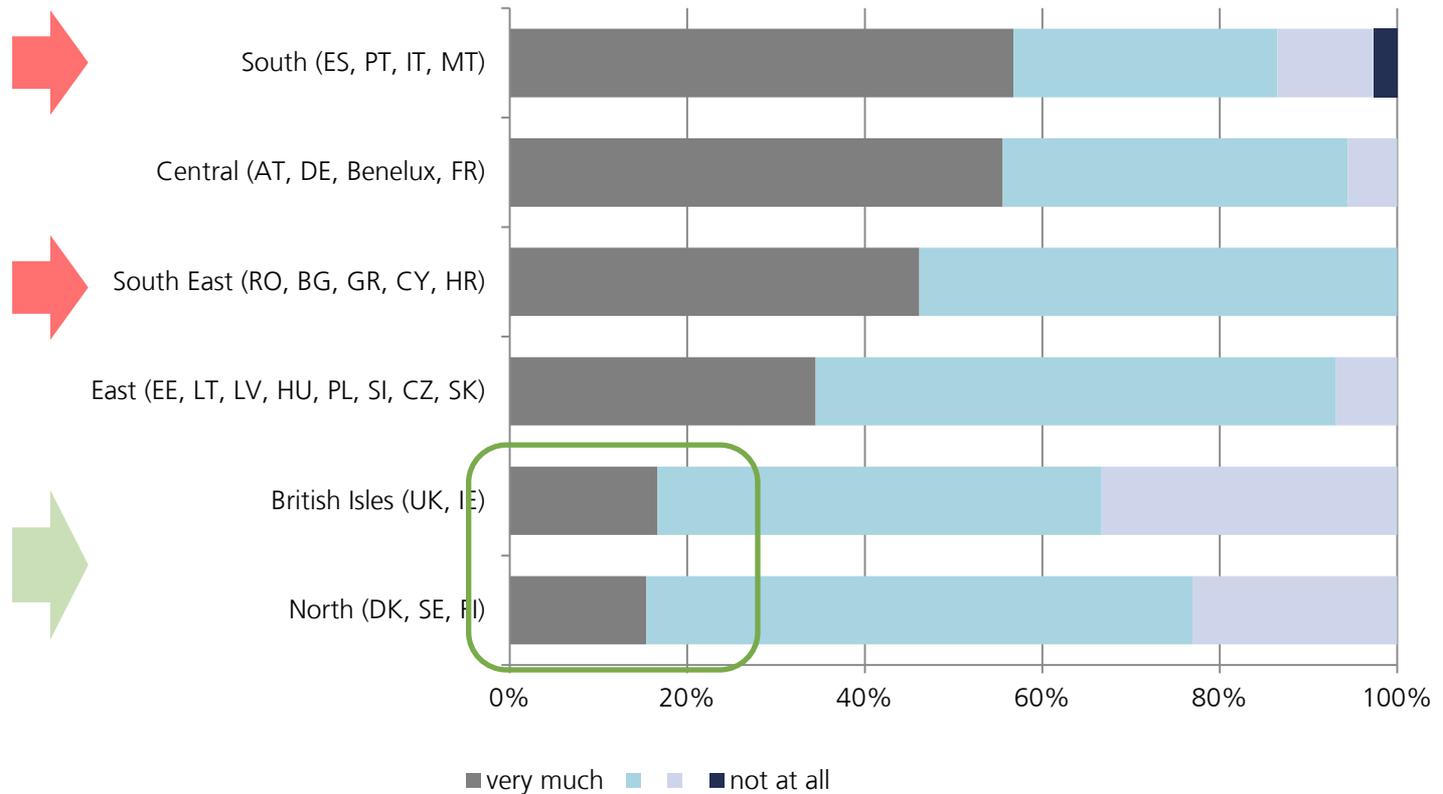
n = 118

Entrepreneurial actors driving actual collaborations



n = 118

# In weaker contexts, they mostly lobby for their own interests



# Conclusions

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- Effectively, universities do play a dominant role in regional strategy design however we choose to assess this
- Their role develops better – or at least stronger – if there are no other regional development organisations (or administrations) driving the process
- Apparently, however, they cannot be very effectively used as “short-term fixes” for the absence of entrepreneurial actors => they cannot easily heal dysfunctional systems
- There may be issues of capture, either driven by universities themselves or from higher echelons, deploying universities for a purpose
- Having universities drive & design strategic regional development has to be in the culture – and be accepted by the university’s, cf. Scandinavia and UK, less so Central Europe
- Roles do and will have to differ between leading research universities, mid-range universities and teaching colleges

*Research – Teaching – Community Engagement/Regional Leadership*