

# Current Trends in Strategic Partnerships

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# Overview

- Current Trends in Strategic Partnerships:  
Results of an International Survey
- Case Study Snapshot:  
Developing Bilateral and Multilateral Strategic Partnerships at Freie Universität Berlin

# Global Trend

- „Strategic Partnerships“ are increasingly discussed and developed among universities worldwide (partly with varying understanding of what a strategic partnership actually is)
- Strategic wording spreading (i.e. new Erasmus+ program, etc)
- Introduction of new funding opportunities specifically for strategic partnerships (i.e. DAAD Program „Strategic Partnerships and Strategic Networks“)
- Not much research on SPs in higher education:
  - International survey and report on strategic partnerships by Institute of International Education and Freie Universität Berlin (Report in IIE/DAAD „Global Perspectives on Strategic International Partnerships“, 2016)
  - The EAIE Barometer: „International Strategic Partnerships“

# Survey on International Strategic Partnerships

- Online-survey conducted in early 2015 by IIE/FUB
- Initially 258 participating institutions
- 91 qualified to complete entire questionnaire
  - Persons in charge of SPs at institutions that have established SPs and that differentiate between SPs and „non-SPs“
  - North America (28), Latin America (9), Africa and Middle East (3), Asia (4), Australasia (13), Europe (34)

# What is a Strategic Partnership?

## Suggested definition in the IIE/FUB survey\*:

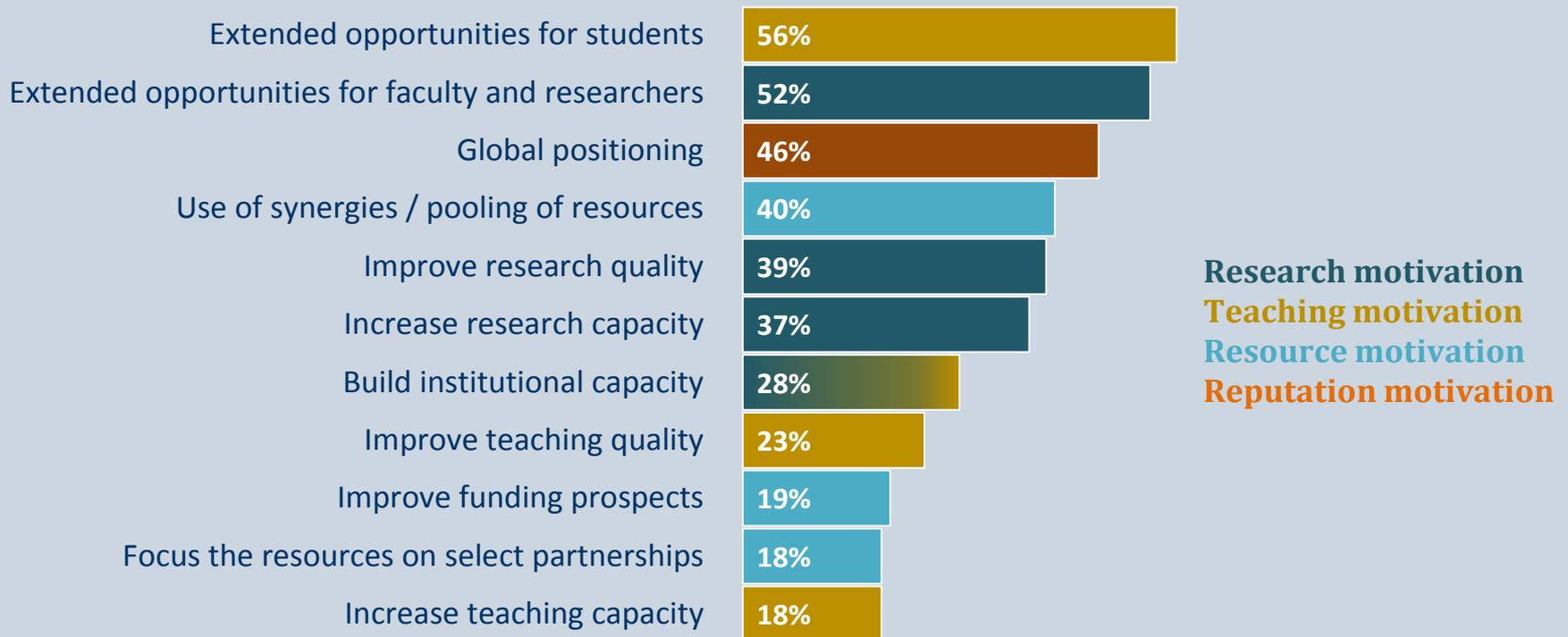
“A strategic partnership is a **formal alliance** between two or more higher education institutions developed through an **intentional process** whereby the partners **share resources** and leverage **complementary strengths** to achieve defined **common objectives**. Strategic cooperation is tied to the strategic goals and objectives of an academic unit, college, or the university as a whole. It indicates a **multi-dimensional engagement** between the involved institutions and implies the joint undertaking of a **diverse range of activities**.”

\*online survey on international strategic partnerships conducted by the Institute of International Cooperation (New York) in cooperation with Freie Universität Berlin, Jan-March 2015

# Motivations, Goals and Partner Selection

# Motivation

## Motivation for institutions for developing strategic partnerships (Multiple answers allowed)



Source: IIE/FUB Survey on International Strategic Partnerships, 2015

# Goals

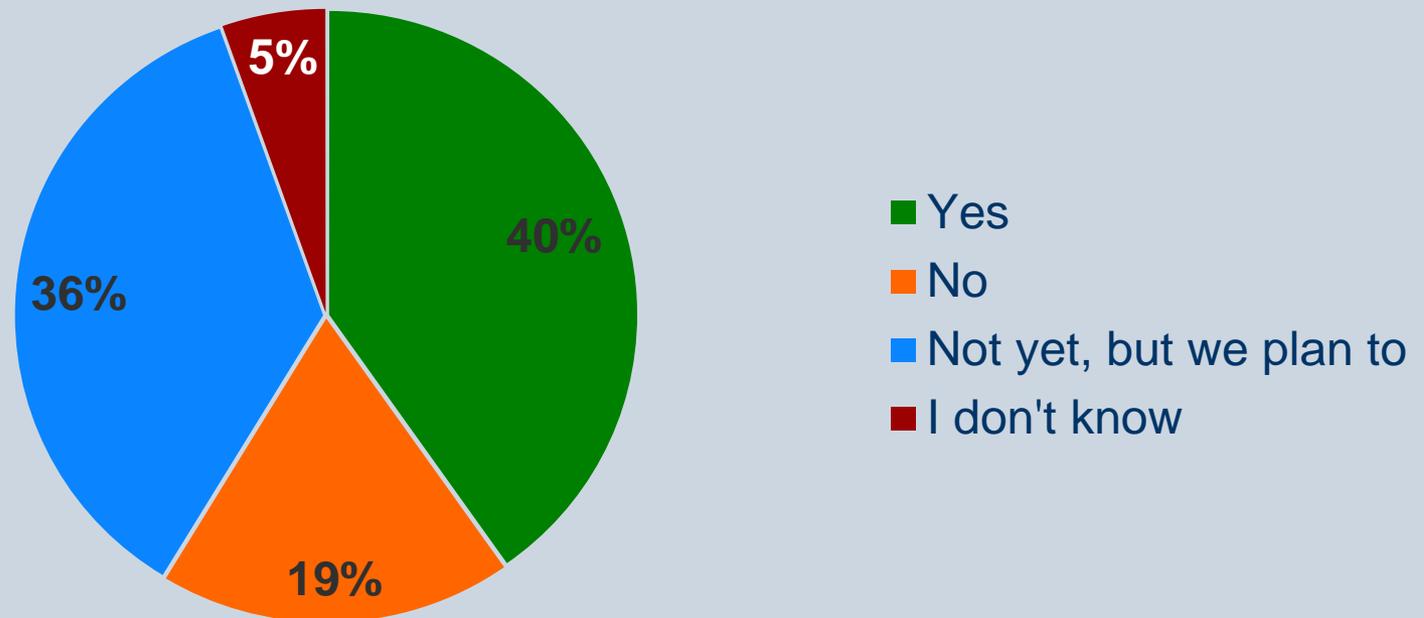
- Most SPs are reported to be part of a larger internationalization strategy
- Majority has defined set of goals that are to be achieved with help of SPs:
  - Improving research: Int. publications, improved research capacity, co-supervising doctoral students
  - Increasing student mobility & international student intake
  - Internationalizing teaching and offering international programs



Source: IIE/FUB Survey on International Strategic Partnerships, 2015

# Goals

Has your institution developed ways/means to evaluate the strategic partnership, its benefits and effectiveness?



# Partner Selection

- SP are mostly developed out of **existing partnerships**
- Majority (65%) developed their SPs through a **consultation process**, incl. **top-down as well as bottom-up** elements (vs 16% purely top-down)
- A variety of indicators used to identify strategic partnerships:

## Highest rated factors for identifying SPs:

- potential for further development
- specific research strengths of partner institution
- compatibility of academic profiles
- degree of interest among faculty
- pre-existing formal relations

## Lowest rated factors for identifying SPs:

- personal preferences of institution's leaders
- international rankings
- political reasons/national priorities
- history of previous cooperation (joint research, publications etc)

# Cooperation Formats, Management, Funding

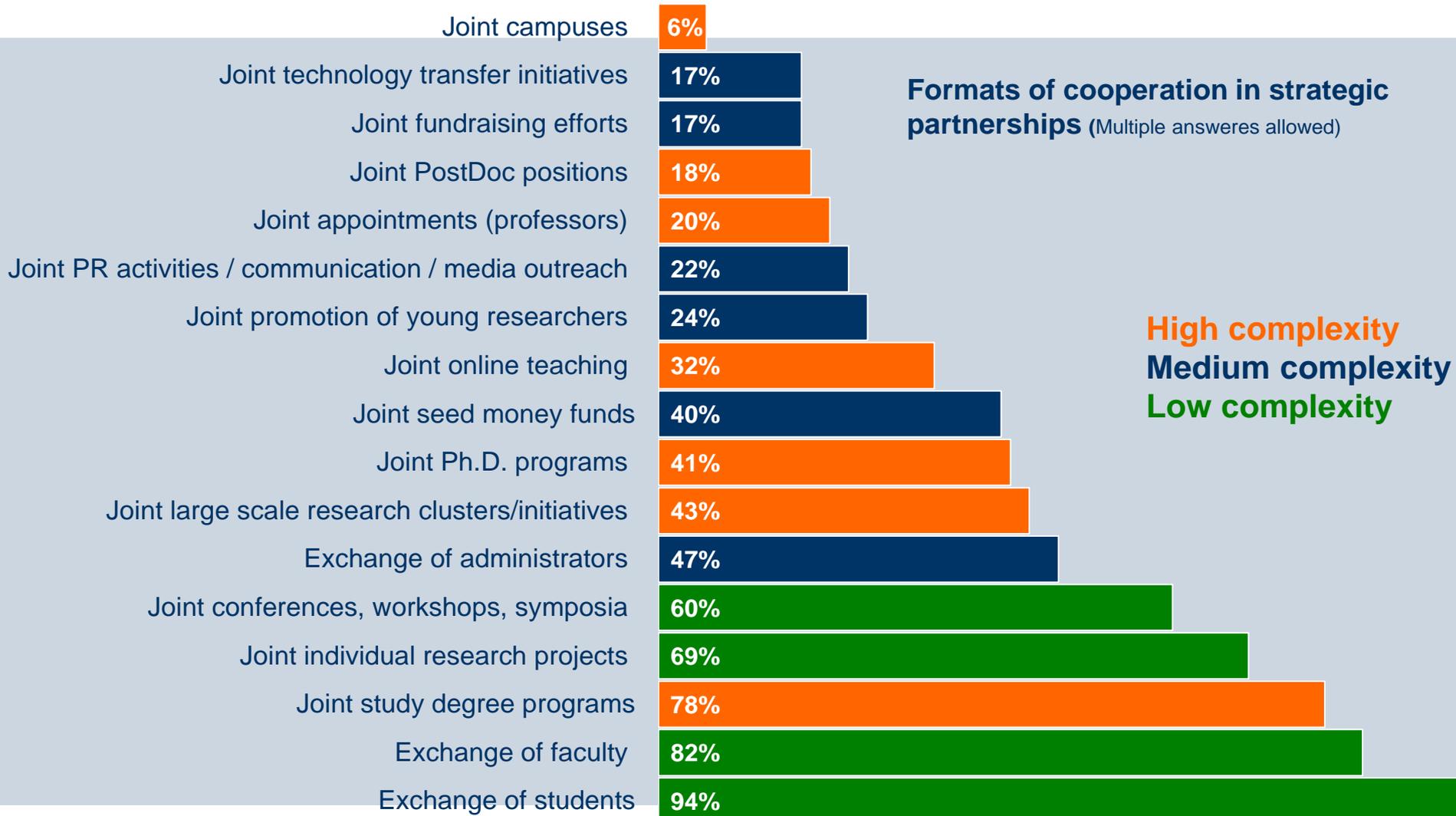
# Forms & Formats of Cooperation

- Bilateral SP settings more common than multilateral/network settings
- Most SPs encompass variety of fields, involve teaching, research, administration
- Fewer SP focus on only one particular academic field
- Most confirm that the SP is a mutually pronounced endeavor
- University-to-university SPs are more common than single faculty/department based ones, but both can co-exist:

**Which of the following best describes the nature of strategic partnerships developed at your institution?**



# Forms & Formats of Cooperation



# Management and Funding

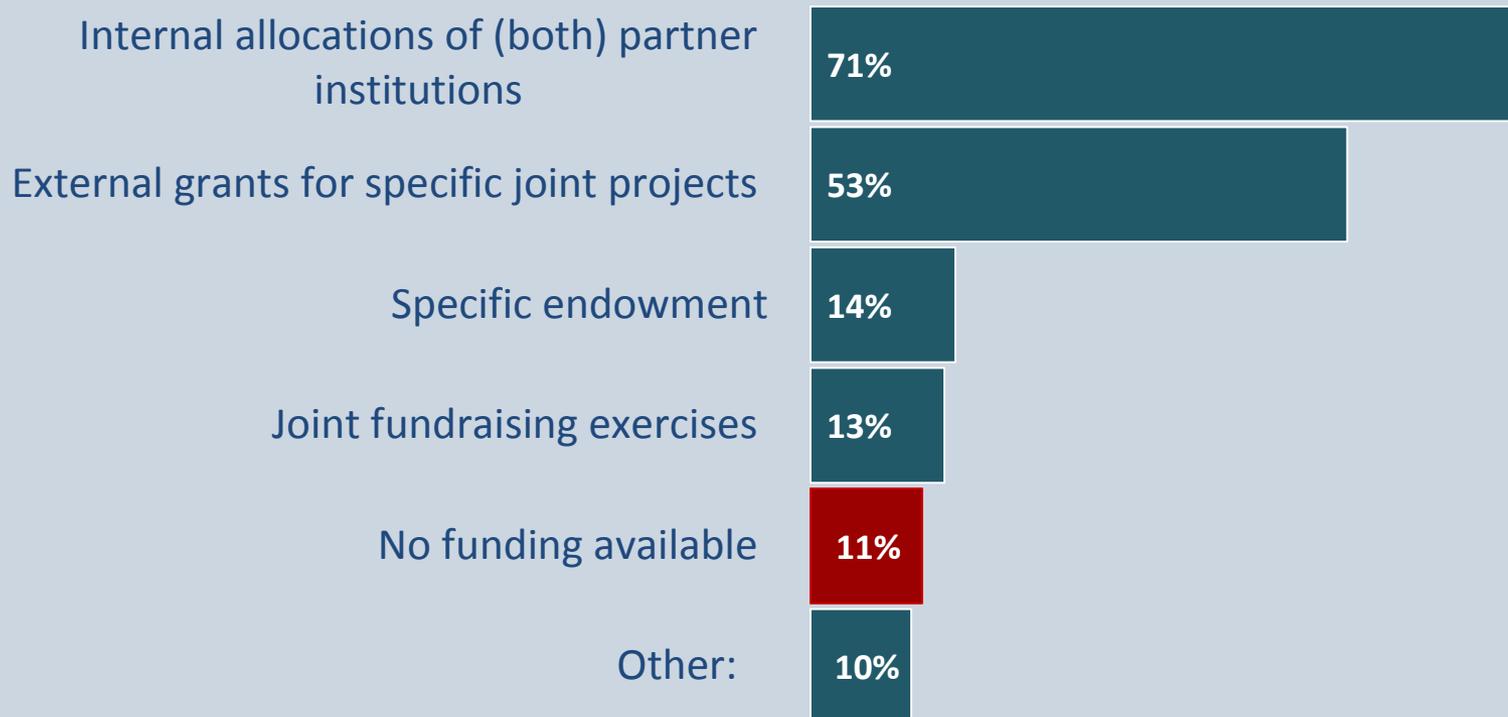
**Does your institution have a specific unit/person in charge of developing and managing strategic partnerships?**  
 (Multiple answers allowed)



# Management and Funding

## How are your strategic partnerships funded?

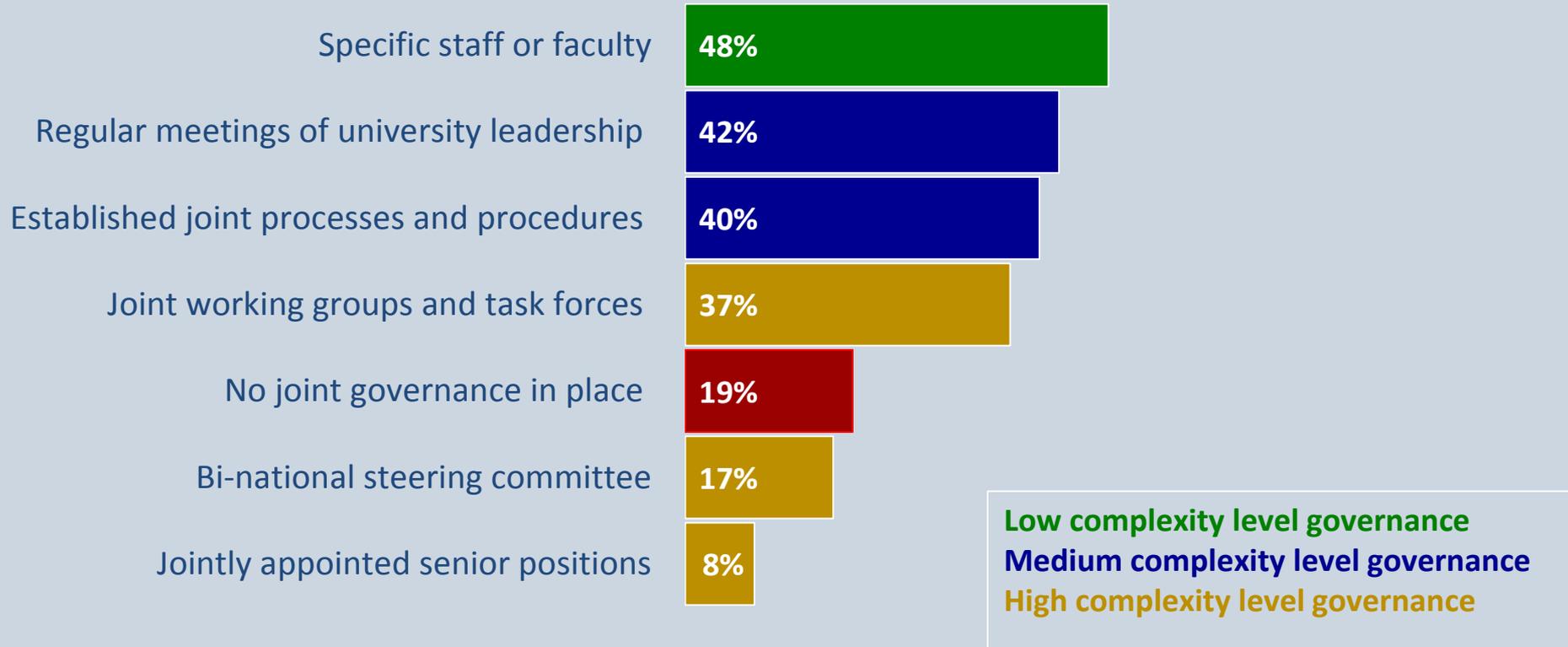
(Multiple answers allowed)



# Management and Funding

## Modes of governance in strategic partnerships

(Multiple answers allowed)



# Impact and Challenges

- Negative effects of SPs on „other / non-strategic“ partnerships? 78% say no
- Most report improved international visibility, brand recognition, reputation and ranking position, increase in new research projects and academic programs
- Transformative effects for the university (especially in admin/management)
- Challenges:
  - Communication and coordination (internal and external)
  - Resources (securing funding and staff)
  - Partner selection (identifying the right partners)
- Cap on number of SPs? About 60% say no, most other report range of 3-12
- 80% plan to develop more strategic partnerships in the future

# Case Study Snapshot: Freie Universität Berlin

# Who We Are

- One of Germany's 11 Universities of Excellence
- Founded in 1948, with strong international orientation
- 32.000 students, 500 professors, 11 departments
- #1 in Germany: highest number of guest researchers, most Erasmus students, most DAAD scholarships, highest number of international doctoral students
- More than 100 partnerships with universities around the world, 54 departmental agreements, 340 agreements within the European mobility programs



## Strategic Focus on Internationalization



Part of FUB's „**International Network University**“ Strategy

- Liaison Offices
- Strategic Partnerships
- Strategic Unit: Center for International Cooperation
- Funding for internationalization measures

# Strategic Partnerships – Means to an end, not an end in itself

## Objectives:

- Deliver additional quality & opportunities for research and teaching
- Deliver complementary strengths
- Promote sustainable research cooperation
- Provide attractive options for students, early-career researchers and established faculty
- Increase international co-publications
- Increase FUB's visibility in specific regions and globally

**Question: Which partners and in which regions are the right ones?**

**Answer: Identify particularly synergetic partnerships in particular regions.**

# Identification Process

## Top-down

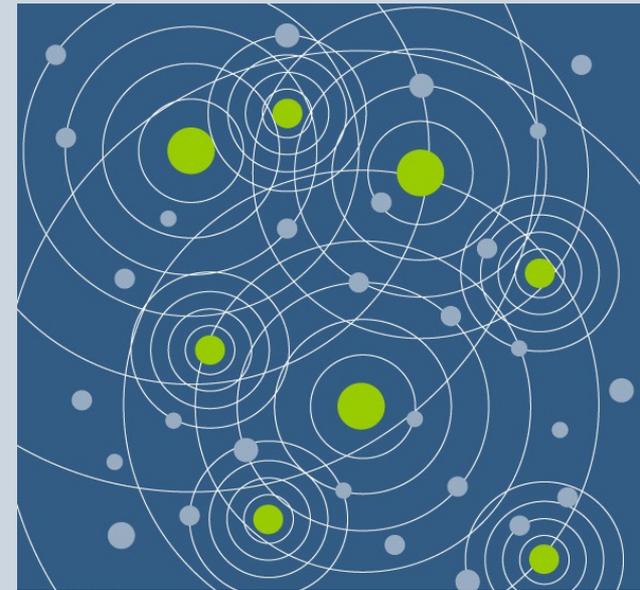
- Focus on regions/countries with high and/or growing research potential
- SPs must mirror faculties' research interest
- Partnerships should have a history of collaboration at min. 3 departments
- Availability of funding opportunities should be taken into consideration
- Process managed by a central unit (Center for International Cooperation)



# Identification Process

## Bottom-up

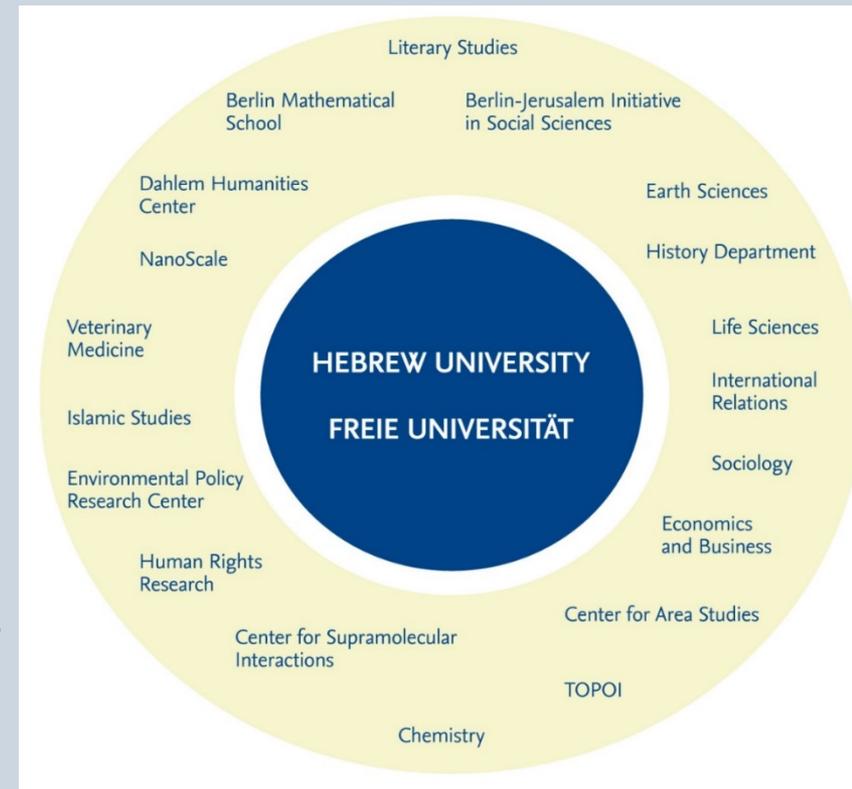
- Target Agreements: Departments map their international activities and develop their own internationalisation agendas
- Consultation process with Deans
- Analysis of existing partnerships (level of activity, mobility, etc)
- Analysis of third party funded research projects (FUB database)
- Analysis of research output (co-publications), where data available
- Analysis of incoming guest scholars / fellows



# Example: Bilateral FUB – HUJI

**Current joint activities involving approx. 100 researchers from FUB und HUJI**

- Joint research projects / joint publications
- Joint Seed Money Fund
- Joint PhD agreement
- Joint PostDoc Fellowships
- Joint PhD Program „Human Rights Under Pressure“
- Joint annual PhD workshops
- Joint initiative in online education
- Student exchange
- Faculty mobility
- Erasmus+
- Regular consultations between university leadership
- Administrative staff exchange
- Joint press releases / marketing
- Joint fundraising



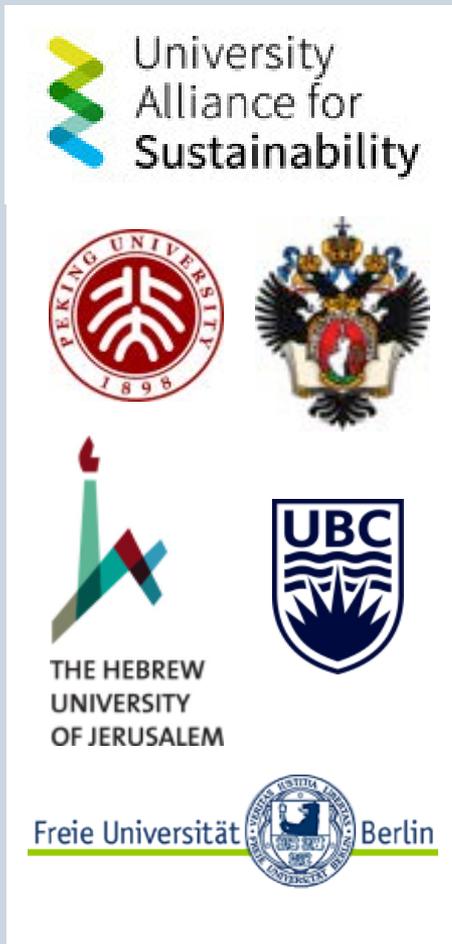
# Example: Multilateral

## University Alliance for Sustainability

Use synergies to promote joint research and teaching on sustainability related issues and foster dialogue and inter-institutional learning with regard to sustainable campus management issues.

Measures:

- Stakeholder Mobility (both ways)
  - Explorative Research Visits
  - Senior & Junior Research Stays
  - Student Research & Study Stays
  - Administrators' Explorative Stays
  - Volunteer Swap
  - Incubators for teaching and management
  - Joint Annual Spring Campus
- 
- Managed by Central Sustainability Unit at FUB
  - Funded by DAAD through Strategic Partnerships Program



# Example: Thematically Focused



- Strategic research network focusing on the topic of “Principles of Cultural Dynamics”
- Combines expertise of leading humanities institutes/centers at FUB, Hebrew U, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, the Chinese U of Hong Kong, and EHESS Paris
- Cooperation promoted through a fellowship & mobility program
- Annual joint Global Humanities Campus with workshops & summer schools
- Strategic network managed by Dahlem Humanities Center DHC at FUB
- Funded by DAAD through Strategic Partnerships Program

# Final Comments and Observations

# Observations from FUB

- Steadily growing number of joint projects and initiatives in research and teaching spurred by strategic partnerships
- Growing number of involved faculty, often in unexpected fields
- Increasing number of admin individuals or units directly involved in SP
- Results in terms of additional research projects incl. publications can be seen but it's too early to draw definite conclusions
- A solid understanding within all four SPs that they are a strategically motivated endeavour and are pronounced accordingly
- FUB's bilateral strategic partnerships begin to show tendencies for triangular or multilateral schemes

# Further Observations from Survey & FUB

- Time: Identifying, developing and managing SPs takes time (and staff)
- Scepticism: Yet another fancy-sounding idea of the central management? Will I be forced to work only with XYZ now?
- Fear of potential negative effects on other existing partnerships
- Exclusion: Faculty might feel excluded if their own field is not reflected in an SP
- Proactivity: Some faculty might feel encouraged to take the initiative for more SPs
- Reluctance: Certain units will not be used to working internationally but might be pushed to do exactly that within an SP context
- Commitment: Do both sides consider the partnership to be strategic? Similar internationalization ethos?
- Communication: A crucial element both internally and externally
- Realism vs wishful thinking
- Measurability of success/output: When/how/who?
- Success is a curse: The better the SP works, the more work there is 😊

# THANK YOU

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Weitere Informationen:



Further information: [www.fu-berlin.de](http://www.fu-berlin.de)