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The internationalization deficit of research and higher education in the Western Balkans

A CASE STUDY OF THE REGION

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Abbreviations

AMEUP – Agency for Mobility and EU Programs

BH – Bosnia & Herzegovina

CARDS – Community Assistance for Reconstruction and Development to the WB 2000-2006

CCEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies

CEI – Central European Initiative

CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy

EC – European Community or European Commission (depends on period/context)

ECHO – European Community Humanitarian Office

EIDHR – European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ERC – European Research Council

FBH – Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

H2020 – Horizon 2020

HEI – Higher Education Institutions

IAU – International Association of Universities

ICTY – International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia

IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession (since 2007)

IRO – International Relations Office

IS – Internationalization Strategy

IU – Innovation Union

IUC – Inter University Centre

JSI - Jozef Stefan Institute

LLP – Life-Long Learning Program

NPDHE - National Program for the Development of Higher Education 2011-2020

NSI - National Strategy for the Internationalization of Slovenian Higher Education

OBNOVA – European Commission Restructuring Program 1996-2006

OMC – Open Method of Coordination

PA – Principal Agent Theory

PHARE – Program of Community Aid to the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe 1994-2006

PHE – Private Higher Education Institutions

R&D – Research and Development

RISS - Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020

RS – Republika Srpska

SAP – Stabilization and Association Process

SEELS - South East European Law School Network

SSTD - Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development 2016-2020

WB/WBC – Western Balkan/Western Balkan Countries

WBRIS - Western Balkan Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of internationalization of higher education and research within the Western Balkan region, encompassing Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Internationalization is in this context broadly understood as removing barriers to mobility of students and professors and promoting the free circulation of knowledge. The focus on research and higher education is given by the embedding of the research internship within the Inter University Center Dubrovnik, a global university network located in Croatia. This region is particularly relevant for the subject of this study as it is underperforming across several research indicators and important to target in order to consolidate the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

The study showed that internationalization policies are being implemented across various levels (EU, regional, national, academic) and many universities do also actively practice it, but policies are not being properly followed-up and at universities the intensity of those practices is rarely institutionalized but often depend on the profile given by those in power. IUC as an institution is able to shape internationalization to a certain extent within the region, due to their expertise and experience, but changes of a more systematic nature coordinated at higher level are necessary in order to achieve a real breakthrough.

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Chapter 1

Outline of the study

1. Introduction and background

The thesis will address internationalization of research and higher education in the Western Balkan region, which for the purpose of this study will be limited to Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The regional focus is provided by the aspect that these countries have a common political and historical background as being part of the former Yugoslav republic. The issue of internationalization is particularly relevant, as the EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020 provides funding for projects in both member states and associated countries. As the targeted countries within the Western Balkan region are a combination of member states (Croatia, Slovenia) and associated countries (Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina) and are furthermore all categorized as low Research and Innovation (R/I) performing countries (meaning that they score below 70% of the EU R/I average), targeting this area is important to consolidate the European Research Area (ERA; European Commission 2017 p. 5).

When comparing the Scandinavian region with the Western Balkan region, the contrast in international outlook is striking. The comparison is fitting as both regions have a combination of EU and associated countries (Sweden, Denmark and Norway compared to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia) and are both of a smaller population size (respectively 10, 5.8 and 5.4 million vs 8.8, 4.2 and 2.1 million – worldometers.info). The share of H2020 projects participations and of EU contributions are distributed the following way between the studied countries (see H2020 portal): Sweden (3% of project participation and 3.5% of EU contribution), Denmark (2.2%; 2.5%), Norway (1.5%; 1.9%), Serbia (0.3%; 0.2%), Croatia (0.4%; 0.2%), Slovenia (0.8%; 0.6%). The Scandinavian countries receive almost 8% of the EU contributions, compared to 1% of the Western Balkan countries, although they are only 50% more populated with 21.2 million compared to 15.1 million people.

At the university level the picture is the same, when considering the institutions in the capital cities (following data taken from timeshighereducation.com). Consequently, of University of Belgrade, University of Zagreb and University of Ljubljana the two former ones globally rank below 800 and the latter at 601. For Stockholm University, University of Copenhagen and University of Oslo they take up the spots 144, 120 and 132. In terms of international students enrolled, the shares are 4%, 1% and 4% for the Western Balkan group and 8%, 17% and 17% for the Scandinavian group. Finally, their scores for international outlook (combined score of international students, staff and international co-authored publications) are 32.2, 25.4 and 35.8 respectively 72.1, 82.3 and 71.2.

The lack of internationalization in research and higher education within the Western Balkan region is a problem for universities, as it hinders them in attracting outside funding and skilled foreign staff. This deficit in turn has a further negative impact on the national economy overall. Many Croatian employers complain that local graduates are missing key

competences such as foreign language, technical and management skills. This point is reinforced by the fact that only 62.6% of recent Croatian graduates found employment within one to three years of graduation, well below the EU average of 76.9%. (Tomic and Taylor 2018, p. 4).

Currently there are policies at all three levels to promote internationalization in the Western Balkans – EU, national and academic. At the EU level there is first and foremost the Horizon 2020 framework program as described earlier. Taking Croatia as an example, the earlier stated societal problems related to the “brain drain” has led to popular discourse focusing increasingly more on addressing the “push-factors” related to “skilled mobility”. As a consequence, 2014 the parliament adopted the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology introduced by the Social Democrat-led coalition government (ibid p. 7).

At the level of universities, several have published strategic documents whether related directly to internationalization (University of Zagreb 2014) or of a more general nature (University of Osijek 2014) and have institutionalized interregional cooperation. The latter initiatives include the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS a kind of Central & South-eastern European Erasmus), running since the early 1990s and today including all Western Balkan countries. Another example is the Central European Initiative University Network, an organization facilitating cooperation between higher education institutions within the region (Zgaga et al. 2013 p. 62).

The thesis will be written as part of an internship at the Inter University Centre (IUC) in Dubrovnik, Croatia, which reinforces the study’s context within the Western Balkan region. The IUC is a network organization of different universities worldwide. By hosting courses and conferences at their premises, the IUC offers valuable access to academics and scholars. Furthermore, the IUC through its formal set up, may also provide access to other stakeholders, via the organizations governing bodies and institutional connections. The aim of the thesis is via the stay at IUC to gather information on the current state of internationalization within the region. On the basis of the gathered data, I will then outline the barriers and opportunities to internationalization within the region and propose the way forward.

2. Operationalization - The "multilevel" governance approach

Besides the official policies and formal initiatives themselves, the regional background is also important to consider in analyzing the effectiveness of the measures taken. According to Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 61) internationalization of higher education in the Western Balkans is primarily seen as a means for supporting national reforms and institutional capacity building, rather than as a vehicle to enhance the competitiveness of higher education institutions as regarded in the wealthier EU countries. Although the authors find that there is a commitment to internationalization within the region, they observe significant structural problems such as weak foreign language skills and bad infrastructure, e.g. lack of accommodation (ibid. p. 62). Paradoxically, the international presence of higher education

institutions might also further engender costs that makes it difficult to drive internationalization forward – structural reform requirements from the Bologna process and international donors take up a significant share of available resources (ibid p. 66).

This regional perspective is important to consider, when observing the issue. Internationalization as stated above, is rather seen as a means to an end than a goal in itself. This aspect is important for the study, as the internationalization phenomenon will be regarded from a bottom up instead of a top down approach. Consequently, the focus will to a lesser degree be on the implementation gap of policies, but more on the underlying reasons behind their prioritization. Universities have limited resources, whether they are time, money or staff. While finding out whether the policies are being implemented is the first step, the next and more fundamental one is identifying the main obstacles to their successful realization and outlining potential opportunities to overcome them.

As stated earlier, there are policies targeting internationalization of research and higher education at all three levels – institutional, national-governmental and EU. These must be observed in relation to each other, as in order to obtain a fuller picture it is important to consider how these policies complement or overlap each other. Once this step has been accomplished, it will be easier to address shortcomings and identify opportunities for improvement.

3. The status of internationalization through the example of Croatia

Taking Croatia as a starting point considering the location of the IUC in Dubrovnik, I will use it as an example for the operationalization of the “multi-level governance” approach. I will do so by outlining the respective strategies at the level of university, government and EU describing the specific importance of each policy.

Zagreb University has published a 2014 working document on their 2014-2025 internationalization strategy. The strategy takes an ambitious approach to internationalization, regarding it as a tool to foster creativity, high quality science and the updating of teaching processes. The international research activities in particular should be conducive to achieving overall excellence which in turn will increase the global visibility and recognizability of the university. These aspects are further underlined in the university’s mission statement of international cooperation, which envisions the students as global citizens supported by their institution as an international agent (Zagreb University 2014, p. 2).

Zagreb University’s internationalization strategy is guided by a set of principles, which pose a number of institutional demands. The following principles are listed: creativity; excellence; transparency and equitability; culture of dialogue and cooperation; academic involvement and care for Croatian diaspora; alumni. Each principle can contribute in shaping the university’s profile in a certain way. Scientific creativity can contribute in improving the international standing of the institution; research excellence improves the competitiveness of the university; transparency and equitability makes information more accessible, which facilitates cooperation; the latter is in turn enhanced via a culture of dialogue; better

involvement of the diaspora may help in fulfilling otherwise unrealized national potential, which also holds for the involvement of the alumni community. If the latter are globally dispersed, a tight alumni network can contribute even further in realizing the goals related to internationalization as it provides a variety of cross-border insights (ibid p. 2-3)

For these principles to work effectively, Zagreb University has to take a number of actions in order to achieve the greater objectives of their internationalization strategy. On a practical level, University of Zagreb has devised a number of ways to realize international cooperation and a series of steps guiding their strategy. In order to attain better international cooperation Zagreb University foresees a variety of concrete measures, such as the establishment of joint research programs, the membership in university networks and the signing of inter-faculty agreements just to mention a few (ibid p. 4).

Furthermore, in measuring the progress already made, Zagreb University has formulated a **content strategy**, which is evaluated on the basis of two indicators – one measuring the impact of currently realized international activities and another the impact of future projected international activities. The activities are in turn divided into the four subcategories (ibid p. 5):

- International cooperation and recognisability of the university, teacher and student mobility
- Study programs and courses and “internationalization” at home
- Partnerships with international universities and other research institutions
- Promotion of Croatian language and culture with the aim of achieving a feedback effect of the internationalisation

The content strategy is then carried out by means of the **implementation strategy**, which again is divided into the following three subcategories which each need to be fulfilled (ibid p. 6):

- Enhancing institutional capacity for international exchange
- Efficient management of international projects
- Coordinating 34 budgets with the enhancement of international activities (one budget for each of the 34 “constituents”, a type of working group supporting the projects – see ibid. table 2)

At the Croatian government level, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP) together with the ministry of science published a 2017 report evaluating the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). This evaluation in turn serves as foundation for the recommendations of improvement for the Erasmus+ programme, the LLP’s successor. The Erasmus+ programme furthermore has potential to work as a policy support for national initiatives, such as the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (2014).

The emphasis of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology is on fostering a long-term development strategy, laying the groundwork for the shift towards an innovative and knowledge-based economy. For the education and research system to contribute

effectively to this development, it is stressed that it must be flexible and adaptable while being subject to continuous and periodical review. The strategy is particularly significant for this study, as one of its six main goals refers directly to science and technology. The theme of internationalization is reinforced with the first objective being the creation of internationally competitive public universities and public research institutions. Further objectives include increased investment in research and development by improving the public financing system and encouraging investments of the private and social sector in research and development (Central Government Portal).

In the evaluation of the LLP, one of the indicators was “institutional capacity and the management of internationalization”. Overall the reports by international cooperation staff showed that the actions undertaken were insufficient. National implementing regulations require the universities to initiate several procedures, such as for instance introducing quality assurance systems in order to secure that their programs fulfil certain standards. The main advice given to universities, is that they should prioritize internationalization, by providing adequate resources for their international relations offices and undertake concrete measures in order to improve mobility (AMEUP and Ministry of Science and Education 2017).

From the EU level, the research and innovation policies aim at making the EU more competitive at the global stage. By pooling the resources together, the aim is to consolidate the EU’s position as a global leader in science and technology. An important dimension of the EU research and innovation policies are openness. The EU has formulated three dimensions to openness – open innovation, open science and open to the world (European Commission 2016). Open innovation is aiming to get more actors involved in this domain, for example via incentivizing participation by providing better access to investments. Open science targets better diffusion of knowledge by using new digital technologies. Finally, open to the world is a term describing the removal of barriers to international cooperation.

All three of these openness dimensions are significant for internationalization. Open innovation, can improve universities in accessing international funds and securing lucrative grants. Open science can lead to improvement in scientific performance by creating better data sharing technology, making it easier for the actors involved to organize their work. Furthermore, international cooperation is a convenient way to learn from each other and sharing best practices. In this context Horizon 2020 can be a driver to improve internationalization, which is important to secure a strong and stable European Research Area (European Commission 2012). For this to work it is vital that both current member states meet their goals under the framework program (ibid.) and that enlargement countries comply with the candidate criteria, with chapter 25 on science, research and innovation being included under the accession negotiations (European Commission 2017).

After having laid out the policies at different levels related to internationalization of higher education and research, I will try to outline what the main obstacles for improvement are

and which opportunities are available. In order to find this out, it is important to gather data on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. In doing so, I will be able to find out where the main shortcomings are that need to be addressed and how available resources can be used more effectively in order to meet the objectives. In connection with the last point, the thesis will focus on how university networks in general and IUC in particular can be mobilized to stimulate internationalization of research and higher education in the region.

4. Research question

This brings me to a research question consisting of the following three parts:

- a) What are the policies and practices with respect to the internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?
- b) What are the barriers and opportunities for further internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?
- c) How can university networks, in particular the IUC Dubrovnik, play a role in overcoming barriers and using opportunities for internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?

Each of these questions has several dimensions. In order to answer question a, the relevant policies at the different levels must be identified first, as outlined earlier. Following the overview of the policies at EU, regional, national and university level it is necessary to regard whether and how they are being implemented. Is the “law in the books” the same as in practice? One must also consider whether the policies and practices at the different levels are complementing each other, or if there is an overlap or even conflict between them. Identifying the nature of the problem in the previous questions will also be the key to answer the last question. If the problems are of a more structural nature, the IUC might be called upon to promote the advantages of internationalization and raise more public awareness of related deficits. On the other hand, if the problems are more material in scope, IUC could be used as a vehicle to establish new co-operations or raise more funds.

5. Methodology

The overall design of my project will take a qualitative approach, meaning that I will use a formal, objective, systematic process where data are utilized to test the earlier stated research questions.

All three questions are different in nature. The first question is descriptive, outlining the current routines relevant to the topic, which will provide the foundation for further investigation. The second question forms the analysis. The focus will be on addressing barriers and opportunities to further internationalization, identifying current shortcomings and areas which can be improved.

Finally, the third question is of prescriptive character. The aim is then to use the insights to provide recommendations to IUC on how to contribute towards the goal of improving internationalization of research and higher education in the Western Balkan region. The focus on IUC is explained by the research internship being situated within its context and because of the IUC benefitting from certain capacities, such as special funds and connections, that might not be available to other institutions.

5.1 Objectives

The goal of this research is to outline the current state of internationalization of research and higher education in the Western Balkan region and offer recommendations for improvement. The study sample will cover the following countries of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The main challenge of this study will be that due to limited time and finances, I will only be available to focus on key actors and sources, having to omit otherwise useful information.

5.2 Data collection

When collecting the data for my thesis, I will be investigating policies and practices related to the internationalization of research and higher education across several levels – EU, regional, national and institutional. The appropriate method will then be chosen relative to the study target. In relation to the EU, I will base my research on the primary sources available such as laws, framework programs and country reports issued either by the EU institutions or member states themselves. At the regional level, I will investigate whether there are any existing research networks and what their impact is on internationalization. Further to the stated primary sources, I will also have access to specialized literature whether in the form of data banks such as the “National and University Library” in Zagreb or journals such as the “Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal”.

In addition to document analysis, I will at national and institutional level have the opportunity to conduct interviews with key personalities from governments and higher education facilities. Ideal respondents would be officials from relevant ministries or agencies and researchers and administrative staff from universities and research centers. Furthermore, being situated at the IUC I will also enjoy access to their internal archives, where I can gather useful information on e.g. available scholarships, participant satisfaction via conference questionnaires and access to interview candidates through those conferences.

5.3 Data analysis

In analysing the data, I will use the EU documents to outline the overall framework, for internationalization of higher education and research in the EU. This will provide a benchmark for the relative performance of the Western Balkan region compared to the EU in general. At the regional level, the mapping of research networks will give an impression of the current mechanisms of internationalization. Finally, at the national and institutional

level, I will use the knowledge already gathered through the analysis of documents and IUC archives, as basis for further interview questions regarding the form and impact of practices and policies related to internationalization of higher education and research.

The interview candidates will remain anonymous to the readers of the study, but for administrative purposes their names will be documented on a list of respondents, which will be available only to the relevant staff of my host university. Furthermore, interviews will be recorded and a report of it written and sent to the interviewee. There is no strict predetermined number of interviewees, but a prioritized criterion will be to gather as much diversity as possible, whether in respect to country, institution or professional background. Furthermore, I will try to secure that candidate characteristics are somewhat evenly distributed in order for the opinions to be of more or less equal weight.

6. Societal and scientific relevance of the research

The research will ideally contribute to a better understanding of current processes of internationalization, its main obstacles and opportunities for improvement. It is relevant insofar as internationalization has a number of societal benefits, which makes it worth to drive forward. These include, but are not limited to (International Association of Universities (IAU) 2012):

- improved quality of teaching
- deeper engagement with global issues
- better preparation of students as productive members of the workforce
- enhanced opportunities for faculty improvement via mobility
- possibility to participate in international research networks, thereby gaining expertise
- situation of institutional performance within context of international good practice
- improved quality assurance through sharing of experiences across national borders.

Furthermore, internationalization also presents a number of advantages which are specific to the context of the Western Balkan region. Considering the modest global ranking of universities within the region, internationalization could generate additional income from international student tuition fees, enhance institutional prestige and build more research capacity. More importantly, improving research capacity could also have a positive effect on stemming brain drain from the region, which as stated earlier, currently represents a big problem. If there are better opportunities for young people in their home countries, they will be less incentivized to look for alternatives elsewhere (ibid.).

7. Readers guide

After having laid out the operationalization and methodology in chapter 1 above, I will proceed as follows with the rest of the thesis:

Chapter 2

Preliminary review of the literature on internationalization of research and higher education in the Western Balkans, identification of first key factors about barriers and opportunities for improvement.

Chapter 3

Introduction to the case selection, with an overview of the data collected. An analysis of studied documents and completed interviews will follow.

Chapter 4

Description of the relevant policies at the various levels (EU, regional, national, university). Focus will be on the related demands that universities are facing.

Chapter 5

Study of higher education and research practices of selected countries in the Western Balkans (WB). Follow-up analysis on how practices relate to demands imposed by policies and whether there are any discrepancies in their implementation.

Chapter 6

Analysis of barriers and opportunities to the internationalization of research and higher education. Ends with an identification of factors which need to be prioritized in overcoming barriers and making use of opportunities.

Chapter 7

Analysis of the added value of university networks in this context, with a particular focus on IUC. Development of an operational policy plan for the IUC to contribute to internationalisation of research and higher education in the WB.

Chapter 8

Summary of findings, followed by a conclusion and discussion about way forward.

Chapter 2

Internationalization of research and higher education in WB: a literature review

In the introductory chapter I have referred to two works with both direct and indirect relation to the thesis, which will be completed by several other listings throughout this second chapter. The first of those two being the book by Zagaga et al. (2013), "Higher Education in the Western Balkans: reforms, developments, trends", in which the overall situation concerning higher education within the region has been mapped out. In the second one, an article by Tomi and Taylor (2018): "Youth unemployment, the brain drain and education policy in Croatia: A call for joining forces and for new visions", the focus lies on the overall socioeconomic development in Croatia, identifying barriers to and opportunities for improvement.

The book by Zgaga et al. (2013) is particularly interesting as they have dedicated a separate chapter 8 to "internationalization and international cooperation". However, it is important to note that the book has been published by University of Ljubljana, so the process might be viewed from the Slovenian perspective. This aspect should generally be taken into account, as the countries in the region despite their similarities might have different experiences with internationalization and therefore also a different set of priorities. For example, although the higher education sector in Slovenia and Croatia might objectively perform the same in this regard, Slovenian researchers due to their investment in this process might be liable to project their own obstacles onto the region when Croatian researchers are facing obstacles of a different nature.

With that being said, to wrap up the main observations of Zgaga et al. (2013) referenced dispersedly throughout the introduction, internationalization in the region is widely understood as a means for institutional capacity building and the support of national reform policies, rather than an end in itself. The emergence of regional university networks such as CEEPUS and CEI with the participation of several Western Balkan institutions is a sign that the internationalization is moving in the right direction. Still, the actors involved face several challenges whether they would be internal (lack of accommodation and courses in English for international students and researchers) or externally imposed (reform requirements related to the Bologna process), the latter directly connected to the process of internationalization itself.

What has not yet been mentioned and is interesting to note, is that generally internationalization is understood as Europeanization. Both universities and the ministry have had positive experiences in this regard, with researchers appreciating the opportunity to participate in EU projects and government officials being able to engage teachers from abroad. The majority of stakeholders in the Western Balkan have stated that they wish to cooperate more with Western universities, but they face the problem that those universities are already part of established research networks and mostly wish to stay within their own region.

Tomic and Taylor (2018) have focused on the current socioeconomic situation in Croatia and its impact on recent migration trends. The severe impact of the economic recession in 2008 combined with the EU accession in 2013, has led to many, in particular young people moving away and seeking better opportunities abroad. This development has resulted in a steadily growing emigration with an increasingly negative overall net migration rate. The authors assert that people cannot be stopped from emigrating due to the interconnectedness of a globalized world. Therefore, the political focus should be on how to extract the benefits from the brain drain instead of trying to counter it.

As a result of the growing emigration, the Croatian diaspora has reached a considerable size and is currently estimated at a 2.5-3 million people compared to a national population of 4.2 million. A welcome measure, has been the creation of the “Unity through Knowledge Fund”, launched in 2007 by the Croatian government in support with the World Bank, aiming to promote contacts between Croatian researchers working in institutions abroad and researchers at national institutions. These kinds of actions can contribute positively to the development of the country considering its demographic composition. Although it might not be feasible to stop people from leaving, it becomes all the more important to secure their know-how from abroad, particularly when driving internationalization forward.

The problems related to brain drain and youth unemployment in both Croatia and the Western Balkan more generally are further exacerbated by the lack of funding going to research and development of the countries within that region. According to World Bank data, annual spending on research and development relative to GDP in 2015 amounted to 2.2% in Slovenia, 0.9% in Croatia and Serbia and a measly 0.2% in Bosnia Herzegovina.¹ In comparison the EU average was 2%. Besides Slovenia all of the countries are far below the average. However, there is a plausible explanation for Slovenia being an outlier as they have been part of the EU since 2004, with Croatia as the other member only having entered in 2013, thus being able to profit from EU framework programs for longer.

When comparing the Western Balkan to Scandinavia maintaining the regional perspective, the number for Sweden (3.3%) and Denmark (3.0%) are much higher. With Norway as a non-EU member reaching only 1.9% a reverse argument could be made to the one about Slovenia. Over recent years the numbers have been more or less stable, when observing the period from 2012 to 2015. The strongest decrease in absolute terms has been in Slovenia falling from 2.6% to 2.2% and the most significant total increase in Norway going from 1.6% to 1.9%.

When considering these structural problems in the Western Balkan it is important to situate them within the greater regional context in order to get the bigger picture. The Western Balkan is a particular region both politically and historically, as it was included within the formation of the former Yugoslavian republic which was representative of the non-

¹ The data does not distinguish between public and private sources and covers research and development spending across several sectors: business enterprise, government, higher education and private non-profit.

alignment movement during the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War the demise of Yugoslavia followed, but only after it experienced its own devastating civil war. The civil war has left a strong impact on what is now the Western Balkan region, resulting in post-conflict tensions and unstable institutions. There has been a lot of research undertaken in recent years on the historical legacy, geopolitical situation and relations with EU of the region, which I will outline next, before turning the focus more specifically on research and higher education.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia also marked the end to a societal model based on multi ethnicity and multiple confessions. Following the atrocities committed during the civil war public attention turned towards peacebuilding, attempting to create an orderly transition in the post-conflict era. For the reconciliation efforts to be successful, it was important to individualize the guilt and ensuring that collective groups would not be stigmatized due to the acts of their compatriots. With this mission in mind the International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was created (Josipovic 2010 p. 7-8).

1. Regional reconciliation

Reconciliation has consequently been a recurring theme guiding the research on the Western Balkan region (Subotic 2015; Scekic 2016; Touquet and Vermeersch 2016). It is interesting to observe that reconciliation as a concept has been both understood and applied differently, which is also indicative of the disharmony within the region.

Subotic focuses on tracking the divergence in understandings of reconciliation between the jurisprudence of ICTY at the international level and the decisions of domestic policy makers at national level. Touquet and Vermeersch concentrate on the application of reconciliation again across several level by analyzing its implementation in the sphere of transnational justice via ICTY, in the EU's enlargement agenda and locally through civil society and NGOs. Finally, Scekic's analysis targets political hate speech in the media, regarding it as an impediment to reconciliation which he views as a vehicle for creating regional cohesion in the Western Balkan by promoting European integration.

The reconciliation theme feeds into the thesis topic, as it is an important factor to consider when aiming to increase mobility within the region as a foundation for further internationalization. From a governance perspective, Subotic's approach reflects the issues regarding the different levels at which policies are being adopted and implemented, supranational as opposed to domestic. Torquet and Vermeersch angle relates more to enforcement itself – what rules are being made and how to ensure that they are being followed. Finally, Scekic links reconciliation more directly to internationalization as such, seeing it as a mechanism to promote regional mobility and advance European integration.

Reconciliation is a key to ensure stability within the region which ties into the EU policy towards the Western Balkans. There are a number of resources available on the EU's involvement in the Western Balkan aiming to secure an orderly post-conflict transition

within the region. Roodt and Wolff (2012) show how the EU's conflict management towards the Western Balkans evolved over the 90s; Khan (2013) outlines the importance of EU engagement in the Western Balkans, arguing neglect could lead to a power vacuum which could be exploited by transnational actors from the Middle East; Grimm and Mathis (2015) track the recipients of EU financial aid towards the Western Balkan between the years 1991-2010; finally Bazerkoska and Dokmanovic (2017) analyze how the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSFP) from 1990 onwards and the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) launched in 1999 has contributed to conflict resolution and laid the groundwork for the future enlargement process.

According to Rodt and Wolff (2012) the EU's conflict management policy towards the Western Balkans is borne out of the lessons learned during the Yugoslavian civil war in the early 90s. At the beginning of the war the EU implemented an arms embargo against Yugoslavia, which reinforced the existing power balance, making it harder for the insurgents to resist Serb control. In 1991 the former European Community sent its chief negotiator Lord Carrington on a number of peace negotiating missions. An agreement was reached that the EC would recognize Croatian and Slovenian independence if a number of conditions were being met. The EC recognized the independence of the two entities prematurely as not all the conditions had yet been met, undermining their own credibility and resulting in the withdrawal of Serbia from the peace negotiations.

The following year a full-scale military conflict broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which led to the UN deploying peace keeping forces following pressure from the EU. Despite these efforts they were unable to prevent large scale atrocities 1995 in the "UN Safe Area" of Srebrenica. Only with the intervention of NATO and the US brokered Dayton Peace agreement the same year, was the situation resolved and peace installed. After the EU once again was unable to interfere successfully in Kosovo 1998-1999, they were sidelined by the US and NATO another time which had to step in to secure peace (ibid.).

As identified by Khan (2013) the objective of EU engagement in the Western Balkans must be to ensure stability, as weak governance could lead to the reemergence of collapse syndromes that characterized the war period, such as corruption, nepotism and disregard for democratic processes and rule of law. This downward spiral would make the Western Balkan more vulnerable to influence from the Middle East which would result in a number of problems. The combination of poverty and high youth unemployment in the Western Balkans with the increased exposure to demagogues and terrorist organizations in the Middle East, creates conditions rife for the exploitation of the "youth bulge". This in turn will lead to transnational problems by which the EU would also be directly affected, for instance illegal migration, drug-trafficking, terrorism and money laundering.

Grimm and Mathis (2015) document that the EU have primarily used financial aid to invest in socioeconomic development in the Western Balkan. It has done so through a variety of instruments. The EU originally started out with providing disaster relief through the European Community Humanitarian Office in 1994 (ECHO) and establishing the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) that same year, both still in force today. These initiatives were followed by the creation of the Program of Community Aid to the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe lasting from 1994 to 2006 (PHARE), the European Commission's Restructuring Program 1996-2000 (OBNOVA), then the Community Assistance for Reconstruction and Development to the Western Balkans 2000-2006 (CARDS) and finally the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in place since 2007 (IPA).

A main problem of these programs are that they are very top-down in nature. A majority of them are dedicated to ministries and governmental organizations, oriented towards establishing functioning political institutions and an effective state administration. It is advised to complement this approach with a focus on a more "bottom-up" perspective, safeguarding the democratic process and the existence of a vibrant civil society (ibid p. 924) This aspect ties into my thesis, as it is not only the outcome in itself that is interesting but the process leading up to it. It is not enough to find out whether internationalization is happening or not, but the underlying causes contributing to or the lack thereof must be investigated as well.

Bazerkoska and Dokmanovic (2017) illustrate the shift in the EU's policy towards the Western Balkan, following the second debacle in Kosovo 1999. The development started with the introduction of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) following the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam, thereby strengthening the diplomatic role of the EU. This move was complemented by the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) launched in the same year, tailored especially for the Western Balkan aiming to secure an orderly process of post-communist transition, post-war reconciliation and EU integration. The SAP granted the countries from the Western Balkan the status as potential candidate countries and build on the foundations laid out by the "Copenhagen criteria" for accession, negotiated during the 1993 European Council meeting.

In 2003, the Thessaloniki Agenda promoted political dialogue and cooperation in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the strengthening of parliamentary cooperation and institution building. The basis for this action was the statement of then Commissioner for External Relations, Chris Patten, that the EU had a choice between exporting stability to the Balkans or the Balkans exporting instability to the EU. The measures taken gave the EU better possibilities for conflict management in the Western Balkans, as they now had a number of bargaining chips at their disposal to incentivize compliance: granting visa free regimes, candidate status, starting negotiations and the personal influence of the High Representative (ibid p. 113).

The failure of EU diplomacy during the height of the civil war in Yugoslavia, was to a large part caused by a lack of unified vision at the level of EU member states and weak institutional capacities at a supranational level. With the new Western Balkan strategy at the

turn of the century, several of the problem factors causing the weak response were addressed – mechanisms for conflict resolution, institutional capacity and the appeal of membership were all strengthened in order to incentivize compliance (p. 120-121).

2. European integration

The reconciliation and stability focused research on the Western Balkans has subsequently been complemented by increased studies of the European integration prospects of the region. In recent years a number of scientific journal articles have been published on this new study area, such as Börzel (2011), Sabriu (2013), Stevanovic and Ristanovic (2016) and Lindsay et al. (2017). Since there has been many recent developments in this field the articles taken together give a better idea of how the process has evolved.

At the time of Börzel's (2011) article she assesses that the EU conditionality approach to the membership of the Western Balkan countries does not fully incentivize deeper change, due to weak statehood of the countries. Building on the largely successful experiences with implementing the *acquis communautaire* in the central and eastern European states prior to enlargement, it was only partly possible to achieve similar results in the Western Balkan due to a host of problem such as unsettled borders, ethnic tensions and clientelistic networks severely mitigating state capacity (ibid p. 11, p. 6).

Out of the surveyed countries relevant for this thesis (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina), the development of Croatia was the most promising, hardly surprising when considering its, at the time, soon upcoming EU membership. The performance of Serbia falls in between the two countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina falls behind due to its problems of bad governance with regards to the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of its domestic institutions (ibid p. 6). Overall the assessment is that the EU failed due to its lack of state building measures. It was reluctant to engage in settlements of territorial disputes and establish mechanisms of institutional power-sharing, which would have laid the foundation for democratic reform (ibid p. 12).

Sabriu (2013) mostly shares the assessment of Börzel (2011) in regard to the European integration perspectives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. With Bosnia Herzegovina the main problem is its territorial fragmentation, being split into two political entities – The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (populated by ethnic Bosniacs and Croats) and Republika Srpska (predominantly Serb population) – with low interconnectedness (ibid. p. 434).

This split also makes it hard to create a unified vision for the country, as the two entities often disagree on key issues. For instance, due to their close ties to Serbia and their view on the Kosovo issue, Republika Srpska is skeptical towards European integration and opposes NATO membership, whereas the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina is in favor of both (ibid.). In connection to this aspect, Serbia's unwillingness to recognize Kosovo's independence is also one of the main roadblocks to its EU membership (ibid. p. 438).

In outlining the European integration process of the Western Balkans it is important to keep the institutional context in mind. As evidenced by Ker-Lindsay et al. (2017) the founding Treaty of Rome proclaims the desire of the people of Europe to pursue “ever greater union”, which manifests in the logic of expansion (ibid p. 512). However, despite this provision future accession is not that straightforward as implementing the *acquis communautaire*. The European Council must give their approval, effectively granting the member states the status of veto players. Due to the concerns expressed in the previous wave of enlargement in regard to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the European integration process of the Western Balkan has been characterized by stronger conditional requirements from the member states than before (ibid p. 519).

To close the gap between this more general overview of the European integration process of the Western Balkan and the internationalization of the research and higher education system within the region, I will refer to Stevanovic and Restanovic (2016). EU regional policy towards the Western Balkan has been accorded a significant role through the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). As a prerequisite for the implementation of these funds, governments need to adopt a national development strategy in accordance with EU regional policy (ibid p. 180). There are various development areas, one of them being education. Previous education mobility programs such as Erasmus Mundus and Tempus IV, aim to respectively improve the quality of teaching and institutional capacity, both through international cooperation (ibid p. 185). Internationalization of research and higher education is therefore not an isolated undertaking but contributes to the overall effort of improving cohesion through an effective EU regional policy.

3. Research and higher education

There have been a number of studies regarding both the status of research and higher education and its progress on internationalization in the Western Balkans. Vukasovic (2012) has undertaken a review of the literature available regarding the impact of the European integration process and more precisely European higher education initiatives on the national policy developments in the Western Balkan countries (WBC). Complementary to the work of Vukasovic, Klemencic (2013) has analyzed the impact of the Europeanization process on the diversification of higher education institutions in the WBC. Zgaga which has been mentioned several times before has, in another of his co-edited books from 2013, written a chapter giving an overview of higher education reforms in the WBC. Finally, Papadimitrou (2014; 2017) has in his later work mapped out the regulatory framework in WBC for private higher education institutions during the period 1990-2015 and in his earlier work investigated practices of WBC universities related to strategic planning and benchmarking.

Vukasovic (2012) has focused on the implementation of the Bologna Process and the EU Lisbon Strategy into the national policies of the WBC (p. 5). While both policies aim to create a “Europe of Knowledge” there is a key difference in their institutional set-up. The Lisbon Strategy is more supranational in nature as it is shaped exclusively through the EU via the

Open Method of Coordination (OMC; *ibid.* p. 16). The Bologna Process on the other hand has a more intergovernmental character, as it has no administrative capacity on its own or direct funding attached to it, rather it is implemented on a more voluntary basis with ministries coordinating their approach through the Bologna Follow-Up Group (*ibid.* p. 17).

To sum up Vukasovic's work, the author studies whether there is a "policy transfer" from EU to WBC level. Policy transfer is hereby broadly understood as a process in which knowledge gathered from one setting is being used in another (*ibid.* p. 25). Policy transfer, in this context adaptation to European rules, can take place at several institutional levels: I) macro level (higher education system), II) meso level (universities and their organizational units) or micro level (individual academics) (*ibid.* p. 20).

Overall the author, in undertaking the literature review, laments that there is a lack of research on this topic leading to "double isolatedness", both from the European integration process in general and from valuable social science insights specifically. If better data is available on the WBC region, better implementation can be achieved. There are specific aspects where WBC are similar and others where they are different. In order to become more effective resources need to be pooled where there is common ground and specialization needs to play to individual strengths (*ibid.* p. 35-37).

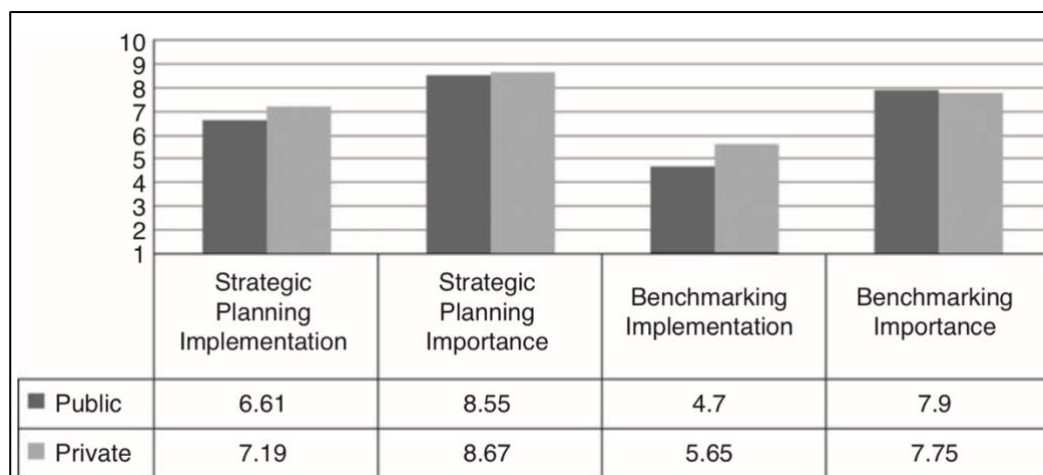
Since the 1990s Zgaga (2013) has identified three regional developments in the higher education system of the WBC. The first trend is massification as in many parts of the region enrolment levels doubled or even tripled in the decade leading up to the 2000s. Another trend is the growth in number of higher education institutions, particularly private ones. The final trend is the different waves of legislation (*ibid.* p. 348-350).

The waves of legislation are once again divided into three subsets. The first wave of legislation took place during the 90s, with the adaption of the WBC to the new political and economic order. The second wave occurred during the beginning of the 2000s, with the implementation of the Bologna process. The third wave took place from 2005 onwards and concerns the ongoing amendments made to educational policy reforms (*ibid.* p. 350-352).

Zgaga has investigated the response to the reforms made since the change of the century. The author has based his interviews on three themes: I) reforms in general II) implementation of the Bologna process III) international policy impact in the region (*ibid.* p. 352-353). For the first part, respondents particularly criticized the unregulated growth of private higher education institutions, which undermined the credibility of the academic sphere (*ibid.* p. 353-357). In the second theme, the general opinion was that reforms were made too fast, without proper transition and funding (*ibid.* p. 357-362). Finally, respondents argue that conditionality as an incentive instrument by the EU has failed, as the WBC do not share the same conception of education policy (*ibid.* p. 363-366). Therefore, it is also important from an EU perspective to develop a plan for well-organized Europeanization reform in the WBC, in order to avoid accusations that the EU is acting neocolonial in "prescribing" their own rules to "passive" periphery regions and because an orderly transition to a new system is in the WBC's own best interest (*ibid.* p. 366-369).

The emergence of private higher education institutions (PHE) in the WBC has been the central topic of the article by Papadimitrou et al. (2017). The authors have studied the legal framework governing those institutions within the region and have identified a trend of “delayed regulation”. Regulation has been very general, mostly limited to granting a legal status for PHEs allowing their operation. More detailed rules regarding their management has been adopted sporadically (ibid. p. 809-810). This is especially problematic due to the very strong growth of PHE, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina where they did not even exist in 2005 and only five years later already accounted for 16.7% of total student enrolment (ibid p. 807). The PHEs could benefit the system in a number of ways, a.o. by saving public funds, increasing competition and boosting innovation. However, in order for them to retain their credibility and legitimacy it is important to have a coherent legal framework in place (ibid p. 801).

In a previous article, Papadimitrou (2014) analysed the organizational routines of public and private universities in the WBC. In particular the author was interested in identifying activities related to strategic planning and benchmarking. Strategic planning is in this context understood as the periodic review of current initiatives, while benchmarking relates to making recommendations for improvement based on identified strengths and weaknesses (ibid p. 263). Upon interviewing institutional leaders, the author came to the result that both public and private institutions on a scale from 1 to 10 value the importance assigned to both strategic planning and benchmarking as being significantly higher, than the current progress on implementation (see figure below from ibid. p. 267).



It is interesting to note that the gap between importance and implementation of benchmarking is much higher than for strategic planning, the former amounting to 3.2 for public and 2.1 for private institutions while the latter is respectively 1.94 and 1.48. It is also worth observing that according to the (potentially biased) respondents from the institutions themselves, private actors are performing better than public ones as both their implementation score and gaps toward importance are much smaller. The findings overall

indicate that the importance of stable organizational routines is valued, but that implementation remains inconsistent. This insight is valuable for the purpose of this thesis, as effective administrative practices are important in order to achieve internationalization.

In relation to the legal framework for higher education, Klemencic (2013) investigated whether there have been undertaken any policy measures at national level to implement European Commission recommendations for institutional diversification (ibid. p. 117). The EC recommendations are manifested in their “Modernization Agenda for Universities”, which advises institutions to specialize in a certain niche in order to promote excellence (ibid. p. 124). In this area Croatia and Slovenia are, through their networked efforts via EC and Council working groups, showing promising progress for “institutional profiling”, creating local centers of excellence in different domains. Serbia however is not able to draw on the same connections and is more concerned with absorbing the growing student demand (ibid. p. 134).

A number of studies have assessed the potential of the WBC to develop a knowledge economy (Dolenec 2016; Cvetanovic et al. 2015; Svarc 2014). Dolenec has studied how the Bologna Process and Lisbon Agenda was incorporated into the national policy agenda of the WBC. Cvetanovic et al. analyzed how developed the knowledge economies of the WBC are, based on competitiveness and innovation as factors. Finally, Svarc examined the innovation systems in the WBC through the lens of so-called “Triple Helix Spaces”, which are based on university-industry-government collaboration.

Dolenec states that Bologna and Lisbon both pursue the same four objectives: mobility, employability, attractiveness and competitiveness. While the Lisbon Agenda is a growth strategy, with knowledge and innovation at its core, the Bologna Process aims to standardize European education (ibid p. 23). In line with the previously referred findings of Zgaga et al. (2013), Dolenec comes to the conclusion that the implementation of the EU policies at national level failed in the WBC due to the high reform requirements. WBC politicians were eager to be welcomed by the EU and wanted to show good faith by committing to the policies. However, their failure manifested itself at two levels: first no workable plan for implementation was developed at national level and secondly there was a lack of critical discussion on the policies (ibid. p. 36).

Cvetanovic et al. showed that a strong knowledge economy has a positive impact on innovativeness which in turn improves efficiency (ibid. p. 47). Knowledge economy is in this context understood as the ability to efficiently use knowledge for economic development (ibid p. 35). It is interesting to note, that compared with the EU the innovativeness of the WBC has no impact on their competitiveness (ibid.). Competitiveness here being understood in the narrow sense of economic theory, as a country’s ability to export its products to the world market (ibid. p. 36). The finding that the innovativeness of WBC has no effect on its competitiveness, suggest that the research and development sector is relatively weak compared to other EU countries (ibid p. 50-51). This problem is further exacerbated by data

showing that the WBC are significantly falling behind in the development of their knowledge economy relative to their neighboring EU countries (ibid. p. 39). This aspect makes it even harder for the WBC to secure long-term economic growth (ibid. p. 29).

Svarc (2014) in her assessment of the university-business-government triad, finds that in the WBC policymakers do not adequately prioritize industrial development, scientific research and universities as key mechanisms for long-term economic development. This also makes it hard to establish a strong innovation system, as there is insufficient coordination of policies between the sectors and a lack of available funds for research and development (ibid. p. 179). In order to improve the innovation system, the author sees two concrete measures that WBC should employ while putting the universities at the forefront of this development: I) policy measures are needed to improve the production capacities and strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit in the region II) Research and educational capacities should be improved to increase the economic impact of R&D, along the principles of smart specialization (ibid. p. 185-186).

Following the overview of literature regarding the adoption of EU higher education policies into the national legal framework and the integration of the higher education system into the knowledge economy, there are several academic pieces available on the specific impact Europeanization has had on academic institutions. These include Arandarenko and Bartlett (2012) outline of the mismatch between labor market demands and employee skills available in South-Eastern Europe and the role the expanding and Europeanized higher education sector should play in addressing these needs; Kozma et al. (2014) analysis of how the Bologna Process has been implemented in a selection of Central and Eastern European countries, including a number of WBCs; Savoia et al. (2016) study of the impact of EU cross-border cooperation through the interregional “AdriaHub” project and finally Milutinovic (2015) and Kotarski (2016) country level studies, on respectively the impact of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Program on the Internationalization of Serbia and of European funding on the research capacity in Croatia.

To sum up this chapter, I reviewed the available literature on the WBC region, aiming to provide some background of the thesis topic before going more into detail. In the first half of this chapter I focused on the reconciliation efforts taking place in the region, following the civil war. These efforts were marked by the prominent intervention of ICTY in order to at least offer some amount of judicial remedy for the disastrous act that have been committed. Additionally, the EU tried to maintain a positive influence on the WBC and seek an orderly transition via the establishment of the SAP. This latter aspect was further elaborated upon in the next section of the chapter, concerning the progress made in the gradual adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in the WBCs.

The second half of this chapter was devoted to a more in-depth overview of the status of research and higher education within the WBCs. Three major subthemes were touched upon: I) progress of internationalization II) development of the knowledge economy

III) region and country level studies. The first theme focused on the implementation of Lisbon/Bologna; the legal framework for higher education; organizational routines of academic institutions and whether they are diverse enough in their offers. The second theme looked at aspects such as compliance with EU rules; innovativeness and competitiveness of the system; coordination between business, university and government in furthering research and development through synergies and mutual linkages. Finally, a number of regional and country studies were presented, which could provide more specific and broken-down data where needed.

After having given an overview of the available literature, I will in the next chapter on case selection elaborate more on the thesis itself – the specificities of this case, the theoretical framework that I am using, what kind of data that will be collected, how I will proceed with the analysis etc.

Chapter 3

Case selection and data overview

1. Case selection

The WBC is a particularly interesting case to study as they possess a number of commonalities, while also being different in crucial aspects. The shared historical and political background makes it natural to treat the WBC as one region, while the dissimilar sociocultural composition of the population (ethnicity, religion, nationality etc.) provides for a more varied analysis. This aspect lends further legitimacy to the research, as it both increases the representativeness and variation of the sample, two factors which contribute to a more complete study (Seawright and Gerring 2008, p. 196).

The study follows the approach of “the most similar cases” method as described by the same authors above (ibid. p. 304-306). Since the thesis takes the form of a regional case study, the WBC will for this purpose be considered as one entity. The goal of a most similar cases-study is to find two cases which are similar across all background conditions, except the independent variable of interest. This point is illustrated in the table below (ibid. p. 305).

Table 2
Most Similar Analysis with Two Cases

Case	Variable		
	X_1	X_2	Y
1	+	+	+
2	-	+	-

Note: Plusses and minuses represent the score demonstrated by a case on a particular dimension (variable), coded dichotomously. X_1 = the variable of theoretical interest; X_2 = the background/control variable or vector; Y = the outcome.

In an ideal scenario the two cases would be similar on all background conditions (X_2), except for the key indicator (X_1) presumably leading to the outcome (Y). Considering that the sample of this project is rather limited (EU periphery regions), it is not very likely to find another region that is similar to WBC across all background conditions. In this situation the two cases are selected on the basis of approximate matching. A “propensity score” is subsequently given reflecting the match in background conditions (X_2). The higher the score the better the match between the two cases.

While assigning a propensity score goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I compared the WBC to Scandinavia in the introduction as approximately matching entities due to some shared features in their background condition X_2 (population size, shared/similar language(s), mix of EU and non-EU states etc.). At the same time the outcome Y (internationalization) is very different due to a number of key factors X_1 (national research funding, administrative capacity etc.).

As the interaction between X1 and Y seems quite obvious (higher national research funding and better administrative capacities free up resources to pursue internationalization), the purpose of the study is to go beyond that observation and in the WBC look at how the lack of X1 concretely is reflected in everyday routines and practices leading to a deficit of Y. In other words, the purpose of this study is one of exploration (how does the interaction between X1 and Y manifest itself), rather than hypothesis-testing (what is the interaction between X1 and Y). However, this includes the caveat, that with the WBC and Scandinavia being rather different across a variety of factors, the case cannot be used for a comparative study of the isolated interaction between X1 and Y (ibid. p. 304).

In addition to choosing a case method the tools for implementing it must also be considered. The interpretation of the studied case itself is already an important starting point, as it cannot be done in isolation. The particular case is always studied in context to a certain framework. For example, in the field of journalism Alonso and Barredo (2013) assert that national cultures are embedded within a broader international system that is composed of general political-economical structures and global ideological values (p. 208). This observation is not only limited to journalism but is of transdisciplinary character. For instance, national research policies in the WBC are developed within the European framework of Lisbon/Bologna as shown earlier.

This point situates the study within a specific paradigm. Most relevant in this context is the North-South and West-Rest method. The first relates to research that focused on the wealth gap between the industrialized North and the developing South, while the second investigates how Western concepts have spread to other parts of the world. In this connection the authors make a point which is highly relevant for the thesis, that international comparative studies must take the approach of hybridization in which the *“analysis of the whole (transnational cultures) is always more than the sum of its parts”* (ibid. p. 209-210).

According to the *“Open Education Sociology Dictionary”*, cultural hybridization is *“the process by which a cultural element such a food, language, or music blend into another culture by modifying the element to fit cultural norms”*. Applying this insight to the thesis, the research culture in the WBC has its own particular traditions but must be observed in the context of the impact of Europeanization which forms the transnational culture. The latter manifesting itself across various platforms, such as EU Framework Programs (H2020), research agendas (Lisbon), qualification frameworks (Bologna), mobility programs(Erasmus+) and so on all contributing to the formation of common goals underpinned by a shared logic. The differentiation between a transnational and national culture is further reflected in the etic vs emic analysis, as the etic emphasizes universal theoretical concepts and how the studied culture relates to that, while the emic focuses on a specific culture and how it is viewed by its members (ibid. p. 210).

The study of the internationalization process in the WBC can be done across three levels of analysis: I) cognitive II) evaluation III) behavioral (ibid. p. 211). In the field of journalism, the

cognitive level reflects the perception of a news story and the evaluation the interpretation of it. The behavioral is then the working method of the journalist, which is decisive for how the story is being transmitted. This model works well for studying the implementation of internationalization at local level. National decisionmakers have their own perception and interpretation of internationalization, which subsequently guides the implementation.

An important methodological issue to clarify is whether to take a qualitative or quantitative approach to the collection of data. Each approach pursues different objectives and subsequently has a distinct set of benefits and disadvantages. Quantitative methods enjoy stronger external validity as the bigger n-sample increases representativeness of the study. The qualitative method on the other hand, allows for a more in-depth study which makes it suitable for analyzing activities taking place within a given socio-cultural context (ibid p. 217). While quantitative studies facilitate generalizations, qualitative help the interpretation of specific actions. When combining both methods they can complement each other's strengths, while minimizing their distortions, whether it would be too much subjectivism (qualitative) or excessive standardization (quantitative), (ibid. p. 222).

In order to integrate both methods, to obtain a more complete research result, I have used the method of triangulation (ibid p. 220-221). The quantitative data on research in the WBC (R/D spending as percentage of GDP) and of related internationalization (incoming/outgoing students, EU research funds and projects) will be complemented by observation of the routines and practices in the research and higher education sector of the WBC. This way the quantitative results will be supported by a qualitative review, contributing to a better understanding of the problem as not only will the effects be addressed but also the underlying causes (ibid.). This follows the logic, that in order to treat a disease, the illness itself need to be targeted rather than its symptoms.

2. Limitations

Other than considering the methodological approach, one must also keep in mind the inherent pitfalls that potentially emerge when following a specific paradigm. One such limitation concerns the interpretation of the research outcomes. Referring to the earlier distinction between etic and emic, this argument feeds into the choice between analysis and synthesis (differencebetween.net 2011). The analytical approach relies more on specialization and top-down, testing a general theory on a specific case. Synthesis on the other hand moves in a bottom-up direction, merging two seemingly opposing viewpoints – thesis and antithesis – into the synthesis, thereby creating a new idea. This is also reflected in the terms deduction, moving from the general to the specific or induction going the other way (Web Center for Social Research Methods 2006). According to the interview with a respondent from University of Ljubljana, research should ideally combine both approaches, as analysis can provide more detailed knowledge, but on its own lead specialization to the extreme, thereby ignoring other perspectives.

Another problem is due to the circumstance that what works in one context, might not in a different one. For example successful efforts undertaken at internationalization in Scandinavia, might not be applicable in the WBC. This can be demonstrated on two factors – EU project participation and the criteria on which topics for those are selected. Research was made in Austria that if the success rate for EU project applications fall below 10% it is not profitable to apply for them, particularly as coordinator, due to the high expenses associated with the process. Furthermore the selection committee often prioritizes “cutting-edge” topics, which might not be relevant in the WBC and not implementable due to the missing infrastructure (ibid.). These two aspects – application related expenses and topic criteria - must therefore be considered in the specific context of the WBC, as their impact might be different than for instance in Scandinavia.

A further important aspect to consider is that the research is necessarily limited in scope, as it is never possible to know and therefore account for all variables. The chosen indicators reflect certain aspects of internationalization, while others are neglected. For instance, meetings, online communication, informal networks could also have been relevant but are not being included in the study. Only a certain part of the picture is being conveyed, representing an approximation of reality, but not the reality as such (ibid.).

Furthermore, it should be stressed that internationalization as a guiding concept should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Concepts are not absolute entities, but an outcome of a negotiation between different interest groups. They are in a way social constructs, which presupposes that they have a social function as otherwise they will potentially create distortions. Therefore it is important to keep in mind the context in which a concept is being applied and its purpose (ibid.).

For example, in Africa US agricultural methods were introduced as a development aid measure, that ended up being counterproductive – resulting in the expansion of the Sahara desert, due to not taking the local context into account. Another example relating to the purpose is auditing, as it should be a means to achieve transparency, but not an end in itself which would create unnecessary bureaucracy. These two examples illustrate that the concept needs to be integrated within an overarching framework – internationalization is not a goal in itself, but a means to improve the quality of research (ibid.).

In connection with the debate concerning the limitations of research is also the issue of whether the results are subjective or not. In the domain of economic theory, Gunnar Myrdall and Lionel Robbins are often upheld as representatives of two separate schools of thought, as evidenced by Caldas and Neves (2012). Traditionally Robbins is considered an advocate for the position that economics is positive rather than normative, putting forward objective fact-based knowledge. Myrdall on the other hand, is often thought of as denying the possibility of “positive” economics, regarding knowledge to be derived from a set of valuations and fact premises (ibid p. 1).

At the core of Myrdall’s principles lies the belief, that there are no objective values but only subjective valuations (ibid. p. 4). This point led to an intellectual struggle for Myrdall in “*..reconciling the impossibility of a normative science with the wide agreement that*

economics ought to be practical." (ibid. p. 5). Myrdall eventually came to the conclusion in his groundbreaking 1969 book "Objectivity in Social Research", that since economics is guided by subjective valuations which is an outcome of the negotiation between "powerful social groups", these positions should be openly declared in advance (ibid p. 6). That way economics as a science can refrain from claiming a universal normative character, without rejecting the existence of an underlying political dynamic. Nevertheless, Myrdall is of the opinion that some value premises are more legitimate than others and should therefore be accorded more societal importance and be placed at the forefront of research. These factors include societal relevance, universal significance and technical feasibility (ibid p. 11).

This approach is very different from Robbins' to whom economics should be "*a collection of value-free generalizations regarding the choice of means susceptible to alternative applications, not about the choice of ultimate ends.*" (ibid. p. 6). In other words, Robbins saw the objective of economics as offering a causal explanation for the dynamics of a certain action chain. However, Robbins at one point did not deny the possibility of economics being impacted by certain valuations but saw the solution in establishing a subdiscipline of political economics to deal with those issues, thereby keeping the neutral scientific status of the economics field as such (ibid. p. 14-15).

Relating this discussion to the thesis, the work by Caldas and Neves (2012) echoes a lot of the points made by Zagar. It is necessary to be aware of the limitations of the research both in relation to the validity of the findings as well as their generalizability and to be conscious of the fact that the choices made reflect a certain ideational orientation. As mentioned earlier, due to the impossibility to account for all factors, indicators for internationalization (exchange, EU projects and so on) as well as the sample (not all universities or stakeholders can be covered), does not make it feasible to provide a fully validated picture of internationalization at the particular institutions nor to make it completely generalizable for the whole region.

3. Data overview

The main part of the thesis will be based on interviews with various actors and stakeholders involved in the internationalization process of research and higher education in the WBC. Since almost two thirds of the respondents are based within Croatia, the emphasis of the thesis will be on the experience of internationalization in the WBC from a national perspective. However, comparisons will be drawn when appropriate to other countries within the WB region. Since no single one of the other countries is strongly represented in the study sample, references will be made on a general basis or where relevant individually.

Where broader aspects of internationalization are concerned the situations at Croatian universities will be compared with the greater region as such. On the other hand, more specific factors of internationalization will be compared between a Croatian university and another university where the applicable data is available. For example, the number of EU projects and amount of their funding can be compared on a national-regional basis between Croatian and the WBC. Whereas, for a narrower dimension such as the intensity

and workload connected to specific projects a comparison between individual Croatian and WB universities would be more fitting.

A broad range of institutions were covered throughout the interviews. 25 persons have been interviewed from 11 institutions in total, with 11 of those being from 6 Croatian institutions. To respect respondents' request for anonymity neither their names, nor specific position will be mentioned in order to not disclose any direct institutional affiliation of the interviewees. In addition to those listed, I have further interviewed a foreign researcher now based in Croatia and a former researcher from University of Zagreb, which I will refer more to in chapter 7.

Throughout the region all the main capital universities have been covered (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo and Belgrade). From Zagreb, other than the university respondents have also been included from the Agency of Mobility and EU Programs (AMEUP) and the Ruder Boskovic Institute (RBI). From the rest of Croatia research have been interviewed from the university of Split, Rijeka and Dubrovnik. In Slovenia a respondent has been included from the Jozef Stefan Institute (JSI), a research centre. In Bosnia and Herzegovina respondents were included from a private university and an NGO. The names and positions of all respondents are known by my supervisor, who also stores a list of the respondents and interview transcripts.

The interviews were mostly obtained directly via the IUC network, either by contact through colleagues or access via databases. The interviews were being conducted face to face at the organizations premises. In addition, several interviews have been conducted via skype, through mail by receiving answers to questions in writing or by undertaking a field trip to meet the respondents. The latter was the case were I went to Zagreb and met up with people from Zagreb University, RBI and AMEUP which I got access to through IUC's professional network. Finally, I also drew on connections from my own network, which allowed for a skype interview with a researcher from JSI. A list will be included in the annex with number of interview respondents and institutions.

The interviews have been conducted under the form of an semi structured format. A short introduction of the background and scope of the thesis was given, followed by a discussion on the concept of internationalization. Usually I would give a short definition of the term, upon which the respondent would share their understanding of it, followed by me elaborating on its operationalization in the thesis. The questions were set up around the three main research themes mentioned in the introductory chapter – policies and practices related to the internationalization of research and higher education; barriers and opportunities to further improving in this area and finally how IUC and other networks can contribute to its promotion. The candidates would either answer the questions directly, share their own experiences related with the topic or a combination of both. For the purpose of this thesis, my aim is to evaluate the interviews and establish some patterns of similarities/discrepancies in order to map an overall trend. This will then serve as a basis for mapping out opportunities and barriers, upon which I will develop a set of recommendations for the IUC and other networks to potentially follow.

The interviews will be complemented by various other data. These include secondary literature on recent trends and developments in this area as referred to in the second chapter. Relevant policy documents will furthermore be incorporated in order to substantiate the data with the information obtained through primary sources. Also, statistics from various databanks (World Bank, Times Higher Education, Horizon 2020 Information Portal among other) will be included, relating to indicators such as GDP spending on R&D, ranking of universities, success rate of EU projects and so on.

Finally, I will also make use of IUC archives as a source of interesting, relevant and unfiltered information. This includes survey data from participants in IUC courses, data on the nationality of participants and internal documents on funding, grants and other financial instruments. Under the statute of the IUC, the organization is obliged to make most of their internal documents and archive accessible to the public, so from a legal point of view there is a clear mandate to proceed with the research accordingly. Obtaining this kind of internal information will help map out the current activities of IUC in more detail and identify specific areas for improvement, which can be included under the policy recommendations in the final chapter of the thesis.

Before evaluating the different aspects of internationalization in chapter 5-7 I will in the upcoming chapter 4 give an outline of the relevant policies at the respective EU, regional, national and university level. This overview will then provide the foundation for the analysis in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

Internationalization policies at 4 levels

1. EU

The internationalization of research and higher education plays a prominent role in the development of EU policies, as it is at the center of several flagship projects. To name a few these include the Innovation Union (IU), The European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The IU places innovation at the forefront of EU competitiveness. It considers innovation as one of the main drivers for economic growth following the financial crisis and as a valuable tool to solve societal challenges such as climate change and energy scarcity (EC 2010 p.2-3). The major role accorded to innovation in the development of the EU is reflected in its central position of the Europe 2020 Strategy (ibid.), the EU's strategy for economic growth (EC website) and successor of the earlier referenced Lisbon Strategy (National Bank of Belgium 2014). The major problems related to innovation are underinvestment, poor framework conditions and too much fragmentation (EC 2010, p. 2-3). These problems are also impeding mobility and knowledge circulation in research, making their presence even more salient in relation to this thesis.

This point is further reinforced by higher education and research being a main component of successful innovation, reflected in their central position of the IU. In 4 of the IU's 10-point program research and higher education is being particularly emphasized. These points include the call for more university excellence; the consolidation of the ERA; the strengthening of the role of the European Research Council (ERC), a EU research funding agency and grant body (ERC website) and finally more international cooperation in R&D (EC 2010, p. 2-3).

The following definition of ERA is based on the Lisbon Treaty and European Council Conclusions: *"a unified research area open to the world based on the Internal Market, in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely and through which the Union and its Member States strengthen their scientific and technological bases, their competitiveness and their capacity to collectively address grand challenges."* (EC 2012, p. 3)

The commitment to the IU and Europe 2020 is reinforced in the EC communication on the ERA. The key aims of the ERA is to reduce the brain drain from weaker regions and close their performance gap towards stronger ones, while aiming at excellence across the EU through Smart Specialization (ibid. p. 2). In order to achieve this goal, the European Council has called for ERA to be completed by 2014 (although according to the EC 2016 progress report on the ERA it is still incomplete), with the member states having committed themselves to spend 3% of their GDP on research annually by 2020 (EC 2012 p. 2).

For the implementation of the ERA the EC foresees five priority areas: I) more effective national research systems II) optimal transnational co-operation and competition III) an open labor market for researchers IV) gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research V) Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge including via digital ERA (ibid p. 3-4). In order to complete these steps, the EC outlines a number of requirements for themselves, the member states and research stakeholders while stressing the need for appropriate monitoring mechanisms to be put in place (ibid. p. 14-16).

The EHEA is closely interlinked with the Bologna Process, as it was formally introduced during a 1999 ministerial conference in Bologna, from which the process derives its name. In the 1999 Bologna Declaration, issued jointly by the European ministers of the 29 signatory countries their common vision for the EHEA was laid out. Noteworthy in this regard was that in the declaration direct reference is made to the instability of the WB at the time, stressing the importance of *“education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies(..)more so in view of the situation in South East Europe”*.

Overall the declaration foresaw the EHEA as a way to promote citizens’ mobility and employability and the continent’s overall development. In order to achieve this goal a number of objectives were formulated: I) the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees II) the introduction of two main academic cycles, graduate and undergraduate III) a system of credits, known as ECTS IV) promotion of mobility V) promotion of mechanisms of quality assurance VI) promotion of European dimension in higher education such as exchange programs and joint degrees.

Looking back at the years passed, significant progress has been achieved. A common framework has been developed via the consolidation of ECTS and EQF and a number of tools for their harmonization have been established, notably the Diploma Supplement and the Lisbon Recognition Convention (EHEA 2015, p. 2). The most important distinction to keep in mind when differentiating between the Bologna Process and the EHEA, is that the EHEA is the outcome that should be achieved, and the Bologna process are the various steps taken towards finalizing this goal since the 1999 agreement was made (ibid. p. 4).

A unified framework for the internationalization of European higher education and research was put forward with the *“European Higher Education in the World Strategy”* (EC 2013). The EC considers the strategy as being one of comprehensive internationalization, focusing on three key areas: I) international student and staff mobility II) the internationalization and improvement of curricula and digital learning III) strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. It is important to note that all three elements should not be considered in isolation but as part of an integrated policy (ibid. p. 4). For each of these three key elements, the EC identified a number of key priorities for higher education institutions (HEIs) and member states (MS) that should be accomplished.

In order to fulfil these goals, the EC will contribute by providing policy support and financial incentives for internationalization strategies. It will do so via two main instruments,

Erasmus+ and H2020. Erasmus+ supports international mobility by providing funding for joint degrees and cooperation partnerships, including with HEIs outside the EU. Whereas Erasmus+ is more oriented towards education, H2020 focuses on strengthening the competitive aspect of research and innovation through funding (ibid. p. 10-11) The EC contribution via Erasmus+ and H2020 is centered around two policy objectives: I) increasing the attractiveness of European HEIs by improving quality and transparency II) increasing worldwide cooperation for innovation and development through partnerships, dialogue and capacity building (ibid.).

In order to understand the structure of Erasmus+ it is important to be aware that the program encompasses a broad range of sectors. For each sector there is a subcategory of Erasmus+ with its own distinct name, subordinate to the overall “brand”. Out of the 8 total categories, 3 target higher education and research. These include Erasmus which relates to the field of higher education and targets Program Countries. The appropriation of the brand name, reinforces the priority of this category. The others include “Mundus”, relating to joint master degrees and “Jean Monnet” associated with the field of EU-studies (EC 2018, p. 6).

The Erasmus+ as such is structured around three key actions: I) learning mobility of individuals II) cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices III) support for policy reform (ibid. p. 27). Various measures related to the different subcategories are foreseen in each of the three key actions. In this regard it is highly relevant, that the international dimension of higher education is emphasized in each of the three key actions. Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees are included under key action 1; capacity building projects with HEIs in partner countries, particularly those neighboring the EU are included under key action 2, the latter being very relevant for WB; support to policy dialogue through the network of Higher Education Reform Experts in partner countries neighboring the EU is finally included under key action 3 (ibid. p. 8).

H2020 is the biggest research and innovation program of the EU, providing 80 billion Euros in funding across the 2014-2020 period. The program focuses on three key areas: excellent science; industrial leadership and societal challenges. The goal is to ensure Europe produces world class-science and technology that drives economic growth (European Commission 2014, p. 5). In the 2011 EC communication on H2020 under section 8 “*spreading excellence and widening participation*” it was stated, that projects would be selected on the basis of merit throughout a competitive process and without any consideration of geographical distribution (p. 11). However, in the interim evaluation of H2020 it was concluded that this policy led to a worsening of the research gap between regions (EC Decision 2017, p. 6). Consequently, several corrective measures were introduced under the same section of the 2018-2020 H2020 Work Program in order to strengthen research and innovation institutions in low performing countries (ibid.).

2. Regional

The main framework for intra WB cooperation is provided by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The RCC was launched following a meeting in 2008 of the ministers of foreign affairs of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) in Sofia (RCC(a) website). The SEEC consists of 13 national members from the region, including Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina and was also established in Sofia, during a 1996 meeting between the ministers of foreign affairs, in order to promote good neighborly relations (RCC(b) website).

The creation of the RCC in 2008 is symptomatic of the further institutionalization and expansion of the SEEC. The RCC today has 46 members, many from outside South East Europe (SEE) (RCC(c) website). The RCC promotes both the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the SEE, is guided by their own 2020 Strategy striving to remove obstacles to increased mobility, enhanced connectivity and improved competitiveness- all factors that are relevant for furthering internationalization in higher education and research (RCC(a) website).

The RCC as forum for intraregional cooperation, laid the foundation for the creation of the “Western Balkan Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation” (WBRSI). Through the support of the RCC General Secretary, a coordinated effort for the development of WBRSI was taken with the signing of the Joint Statement in Sarajevo in 2009, by the ministers from the WB and the European Commissioner respectively responsible for science and research. In June 2011, the World Bank signed an agreement with the European Commission (EC) to provide technical assistance for the development of the WBRSI. The technical assistance for the development of WBRIS was undertaken by the World Bank between December 2011 and October 2013 under joint coordination of the RCC, the EC and WBC government officials. The World Bank furthermore visited participating entities between January and June 2013, as part of a broader consensus-building effort (Correa 2013, p. 4).

Following the finalization of the WBRSI in October 2013 it got endorsed by the ministers responsible of science and education in 7 of the WBC, including Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The WBRSI called for two levels of action, policy reforms and strategic investments, in order to achieve four strategic goals: I) improve the research base and conditions for excellence II) promote science-industry collaboration and technology transfer III) enable business investment in research and innovation and start-up creation IV) better governance of the research and innovation sector. The four goals together have the common objective of stimulating growth, competitiveness and job creation in the WB (Correa 2017, p. 6).

The evaluation of WBRSI came to the conclusion that technology transfer requires more than finance. A number of framework conditions that need improvement were identified: research excellence needs to be promoted more; intellectual property rights should be more clearly defined; specific regulations needed for technology transfer organizations in line with their special status; simplification of rules and better incentives for

science-industry collaboration needed and finally better access to venture capital funding required (Correa 2017, p. 3).

Complementary to RCC another multigovernmental regional institution is the CEI, which also includes the four WBC although it is not limited to South-East Europe. The CEI was established in 1989 and acts as forum for political dialogue between its members. It supports European integration and sustainable development through internal coordination and cooperation with the EU, as well as other international and regional organizations. Everyday activities are coordinated through the executive secretariat in Trieste and the organizations priorities are defined every three years through the triennial plan of action (CEI website).

At the academic level, CEEPUS provides a platform for exchange between universities from the Central and Eastern Europe including all four WBC (CEEPUS website). CEEPUS has been recognized at the highest political level, its foundation being based on an international agreement signed by the member states in 2010 and open for accession (CEEPUS III agreement 2010). The governance of CEEPUS is organized through a three-level structure (CEEPUS website). At the highest level, the Joint Committee of Ministers meet once a year and takes all strategic decisions. The coordinating role lies within the Central CEEPUS office, consisting of only two persons, which is occupied with program development. Finally, each country has a national CEEPUS office, usually integrated within the appropriate agency, responsible for program implementation (ibid.).

CEEPUS cooperation covers the mobility of students and teachers and should ideally lead to the development of joint programs, particularly doctoral programs. In this respect, each member state has pledged in the CEEPUS agreement to provide in total at least 100 scholarship months per academic year through national participating universities. It has further been specified that these grants be comprehensive ones, linked to the national cost of living. So far experience has shown that this system works very well (ibid.).

At faculty level there is the South East European Law School Network (SEELS), established as a vehicle for inter-regional scientific cooperation. SEELS was established in 2011 and brings together 12 distinct law schools from the region, including Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia. Under the general info tab of the SEELS website, direct reference is made to the European integration process. SEELS considers it their role to provide regional guidance for the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* and the harmonization of national legal systems with EU law in order to improve the membership chances of associated countries within the WB. The importance of this aspect is reinforced by rule of law being one of the accession conditions included under the Copenhagen Criteria.

On a practical level SEELS aims to improve the performance of regional law schools by stimulating competition and institutionalizing the exchange of legal academic know-how and information. Specific measures will be introduced at three levels (education, research and publishing) targeting three respective groups (students, academic staff and legal

professionals). The main implementing mechanisms in order to achieve these objectives will be the promotion of mobility between institutions and the harmonization of curricula. The SEELS will on a regular basis, review current activities, develop new ones and identify funding priorities (SEELS charter 2010, p. 3-5).

As shown in this section, regional policies are institutionalized and in place both at the level of governments as is the case with the RCC and CEI, at the combined university/government level via CEEPUS or at faculty level through SEELS. This observation points towards that there is awareness of the need for regional capacity building in various sectors and that there is political willingness in working towards creating better framework conditions.

3. National

Considering that I have already emphasized Croatia in the introductory chapter, providing insight into the government's Strategy of Education, Science and Technology and the internationalization strategy of Zagreb University, I will in the current and the following section turn my focus to the other Balkan countries. This will hopefully contribute to a more balanced picture of the whole WB. In the current section I will outline strategies adopted by the other WB governments (Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina), whereas in the final section on universities the sample will be limited to the main capital institutions (Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo).

a. Slovenia

As the other EU country in the WB than Croatia, I will start the overview with the example of Slovenia. In 2010 the Slovenian parliament adopted the "Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020 (RISS)". The RISS is structured around five key areas: I) Effective governance of the research and innovation system II) High-quality research in the public sector III) Establishment of capacities in support of R&D IV) Innovative economy V) Promotion of science, creativity and innovativeness in society and education (RISS 2010, p. 1).

The RISS is developed in the context of the financial crisis, which revealed that Slovenia is too dependent on low technology industries and traditional services, limiting the competitiveness of their economy. In order to achieve long term economic growth, RISS should contribute in building a knowledge society by ensuring that science responds to social challenges while safeguarding the autonomy of research institutions. In order to stimulate innovation, the government has pledged to invest 1.5% of GDP in R&D by 2020. The RISS is in line with Europe2020 and builds on the previous "National Research and Development Program" running from 2006 to 2010 and is coordinated with the "National Program for the Development of Higher Education 2011-2020 (NPDHE)." (RISS 2010, p. 2-3).

The NPDHE contains a subchapter on internationalization, which is regarded as a valuable tool for capacity-building. The program furthermore refers to the development of a National Strategy for the Internationalization of Slovenian Higher Education (NSI), which has

been adopted in the meantime (NPDHE 2011, p. 37-43). The NSI was adopted by the government in 2016 running until 2020 and prepared in cooperation with the EC (NSI 2016).

The aim of the NSI is to improve the quality of Slovenian education through international cooperation, allowing it to enter the global higher education area by 2020 (ibid.). In order to achieve this goal, the NSI is focused on five main areas (ibid p. 10): I) Mobility as a key component of the Slovenian higher education community, open to the international environment II) Quality international scientific research and development cooperation III) Promoting the development of intercultural competences IV) Targeting priority regions and countries V) Promotion, support and monitoring of the Strategy for the Internationalization of Slovenian Higher Education.

b. Serbia

The Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development 2016-2020 (SSTD) is a national roadmap for integration into the ERA with the essential novelty to its 2010-2015 predecessor strategy, that it focuses on “research for innovation”, in the function of economic and overall social development of the country (ibid. p. 6). The SSTD was developed due to the dissatisfaction with the research having insufficient societal impact. In order to reverse this situation, innovation must take a more central role in research, providing the foundation for economic growth and societal improvement (ibid. minister remarks). The SSTD rests on two main pillars, excellence and relevance. Excellence is hereby understood as the quality and international visibility of research, whereas relevance is the societal and economic impact (ibid. p. 5).

The evaluation of the 2010-2015 predecessor strategy, showed that despite the economic recession significant results were achieved particularly in the domain of scientific research excellence. Nonetheless, despite this promising conclusion, major areas for improvement still remained. Among the problems was, that Serbia is not fully integrated into the ERA and that an insufficient number of their scientists participate in international projects. In order to achieve better results, the SSTD aims to improve the effectiveness of the scientific research system. This will allow firstly for the creation of new knowledge and technologies which will help solve complex social and economic problems and secondly the education of high quality research personnel that will be able to utilize these opportunities. In order to achieve these objectives, the SSTD defines six key actions, one of them being the improvement of international cooperation in the field of science and innovation (ibid. p. 7-8).

In the fifth key action on international cooperation the SSTD has identified four implementing measures: I) establishing a coordination body for international cooperation II) Strengthening participation in H2020 III) Strengthening regional cooperation in the WB and Danube region IV) Ensuring access to international research infrastructure. The measures are complemented by key performance indicators, which track the achieved progress (ibid. p. 23-25).

c. Bosnia & Herzegovina

In Bosnia & Herzegovina (BH) the situation is more complex than in the two other countries, due to being split between two entities as mentioned earlier: the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina (FBH) and Republika Srpska (RS). According to the constitution of BH, the coordination of educational policies and the development of an international strategy is being undertaken at national level through the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The concrete policy development and its implementation is undertaken at entity level, through the Ministry of Education and Culture in RS. In FBH policies are coordinated through the Federal Ministry of Education and Science and further developed and implemented by the ministries of education of each of the 10 Cantons within FBH (SPHERE website).

Complicating the situation even further, within FBH there is a semiautonomous Brcko District placed under the FBH government (EACEA 2017, p. 1), but developing educational policies through its own Department of Education (SPHERE website). To sum up educational policies are coordinated by BH, with development and implementation being undertaken by FBH and RS respectively. While administration at RS is centralized, in FBH it is further split at level of cantons and Brcko District. All together 14 institutions in BH at various administrative levels are involved in shaping and coordinating educational policies (SPHERE website), making it difficult to create a unified vision.

This fragmentation has produced various parallel strategies. At national level, the BH Ministry of Civil Affairs adopted the *“Strategic Directions for Education Development in BH with implementation plan for 2008-2015”*. This strategy then laid the foundation for the subsequent adoptions of respectively *the “Strategic Directions for Development of Higher Education in the FBH from 2012 to 2022”* (in 2013) by the FBH Federal Ministry of Education and Science and also the *“Draft Strategy of Educational Development of RS for a period 2015-2020”* (in 2015) by the RS Ministry of Education and Culture. After the 2008-2015 BH Strategy expired, it got replaced by the adoption of the *“Priorities for Higher Education and Development in BH for the period 2016-2026”* (in 2016) (EACEA 2017, p. 2).

The international aspect of Bosnian higher education is evident by the fact, that the document on priorities was developed through a joint EU-Council of Europe working group before being adopted by the BH government. It is stated in the introduction that higher education in BH is inadequately funded and ranks low in the list of priorities, not allowing the sector to realize its potential for contributing to economic growth, the democratic culture and quality of life improvement. The document further identifies a number of key priorities that must be addressed, in order for BH to fully join the HEA (p. 4-5).

Internationalization is one of the seven identified key priorities. The document has divided internationalization as a priority into three actions, which can be summarized as: I) allocating a budget item to support internationalization of HEI II) improve regional and cross boarder cooperation through joint registration and participation in projects III) through training programs ensure that all actors in HE understand the development of the Bologna Process and properly implement it. For each of these actions a number of responsible actors have been listed, including relevant ministries, agencies, student organizations, unions,

government representatives, experts, Erasmus+ office staff (ibid. p. 26). Taking into account the earlier fragmented political structure of BH identifying an appropriate delegation of tasks is a useful exercise.

4. Academic

a. University of Ljubljana

The 2016 internationalization strategy of the University Ljubljana is connected to the university's overall 2012-2020 strategy, with the internationalization being one of the latter's six strategic priority areas (University of Ljubljana 2016, p.4-5). The internationalization strategy (IS) follows two key objectives: improving the university's position on the Shanghai List and move up in the ranking to the 250-300 echelon; become more visible and attractive to foreign applicants. The IS is further divided into four general goals: I) create strategic partnerships II) increase the number of exchange students by one third III) increase number of foreign teachers and researchers by 50% IV) set up an international network of Slovene educators and researchers (ibid. p. 6-7)

In order to achieve these goals, the university has identified a number of activities in the field of education and research and developed an action plan for teaching and student management (ibid. p. 8-12). The education related activities generally aim at increasing mobility via staff and student exchanges, provide more programs in foreign languages, hire more foreign teachers and increase share of international research via better networking and dissemination of cutting-edge scientific works (ibid. p. 8). In the field of research focus is on increasing the number of international projects and publications and participate more at the global stage in research groups and the development of science policy (ibid. p. 10).

The action plan includes measures to incentivize internationalization in teaching, by creating more open calls, changing habilitation criteria, creating global networks and promoting membership in them and organizing international conferences and summer schools (ibid. p. 9). Several initiatives target students as well, such as better preparation for outgoing exchange students, more joint degrees, more programs in foreign language and streamlining administrative procedures through easier recognition of foreign diploma and certificates (ibid. p. 11-12). However, a number of challenges remain such as ensuring consistent implementation and continuous monitoring of the IS (ibid. p. 13).

b. University of Belgrade

The academic activities that University of Belgrade participate in, particularly those related to science, technology and research, take place within an internationalized context, which creates the demand for a targeted strategy. Internationalization can further be considered as a tool for increasing the international visibility and competitiveness of the university, factors which might also help attracting more foreign students in face of the negative demographic student trend in Serbia. The IS is the first legal document of its kind in the history of University Belgrade and is incomplete in the sense that it provides general

strategic directions without yet putting concrete policy measures in place (University of Belgrade webpage).

The IS sets out that it is developed in the tradition of the university's establishment of global academic relations and international exchange programs. The IS further establishes its general aims of including the university further into circles of international academic cooperation and creating an accommodative environment towards student mobility. These aims are further specified into three categories: I) creating ample opportunities for student and faculty exchange II) forge stronger links with students living abroad and support alumni associations III) educate students to become internationally competent in their respective fields (University of Belgrade 2014, p. 1-2).

In order to reach these aims, the IS identifies three overall objectives. The first one being prioritizing internationalization adequately, by among other providing appropriate levels of financial support and improve coordination across the university. The second one concerns the internationalization of study programs, which should be promoted by offering more international programs in English and preparing students for international professions. The final objective is to attract more foreign students to the university, through a better marketing campaign, providing better accommodation and facilitating administrative issues such as obtaining student visa and health care. In the next three years the goal is for 5% of all enrolled students to be international and 10% long term. The rectorate of the university has declared its support and will take on a number of responsibilities in realizing these objectives (ibid p. 3-4).

c. University of Sarajevo

I did not manage to find an separate internationalization strategy by the University of Sarajevo. On the webpage of the university's international relations office (IRO) however, there are a number of official reports published additionally in English language. The IRO annual performance reports are listed from 2010 to 2016, with the 2017 one currently in preparation. Out of the listed reports, the 2014 and 2016 versions are available in English, while the 2017 will also be once it has been published (Erasmus-uns.ba).

The first page of the 2016 report, refers to the university's internationalization strategy. Upon closer inspection however, it can be established that there is no comprehensive policy as such, but rather an outline of the conceptual understanding of it and a track record of related activities. Mobility is mentioned as an important aspect of internationalization as it facilitates recognition, cooperation and integration into EHEA. Participation in international projects also provide opportunities for access to external funding, where otherwise finances might be limited (University of Sarajevo, 2017 p. 1).

Other than the benefits, several difficulties are also listed in connection to internationalization, mainly it being difficult to host international students due to problems related with lack of courses offered in English, lack of accommodation and administrative support. Despite the possibilities which internationalization offer, there is no clear future vision in this regard due to a lack of national mobility schemes and scholarship programs. For

this reason, most internationalization efforts are limited to changes in degree structures, rather than greater and more comprehensive actions (ibid.).

I have made a table below, in order to provide a brief overview of the policies mentioned according to the level at which they have been adopted and whether they have been adopted by a single or multiple entities.

	Unilateral	Multilateral
EU		Horizon2020, Erasmus+
Regional		RCC, WBRSI
National	Government policies on higher education, research and innovation	
Academic	University internationalization strategies	CEEPUS, SEELS

5. Performance evaluation

UNESCO released a comprehensive report in 2015 on the global state of science. The report included a regional chapter on South Eastern Europe encompassing all four WB countries and further individual country profiles. In the regional chapter, the report concluded that Bosnia & Herzegovina was falling behind, showing the slowest and most uncertain dynamic, Croatia and Serbia would perform fairly due to their relatively developed infrastructure and institutions, while Slovenia would take on the leading position (Kutlaca 2016, p. 274). This observation is reinforced when measuring national capacities by using the “National Innovation Capacity Index” an aggregation of the factors, supply of R&D; technological absorption and diffusion; demand for technological generation and finally its utilization (ibid.).

Overall the situation in the WBC is rather bleak. Measured in a ranking of 144 countries, the WBC range in competitiveness between Serbia in 94. place and Slovenia in 70. In a ranking of 148 countries in the capacity to retain and attract talent WBC fall between Bosnia & Herzegovina occupying the 143. and Slovenia the 109. spot in the former case and Serbia in 143. and Slovenia 120. in the latter (ibid. p. 279). However, despite these negatives, there are also some positive developments. Numbers of researchers per million inhabitants is growing strongly across all WBC from 2005 to 2012, increasing at the lowest base level from 293 to 325 in Bosnia & Herzegovina and from the highest starting point from 3821 to 5969 in Slovenia (ibid p. 281). Scientific output has also increased in the entire WB. Bosnia & Herzegovina with the lowest starting point grew from 91 in 2005 to 323 in 2014, while Slovenia at the highest starting point grew from 2025 to 3301 in the same timespan (ibid. p.

283). These kinds of data are valuable for measuring the impact of R&D policies like the ones outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 5

Internationalization practices at universities in the Western Balkans

1. Croatia

a. University of Dubrovnik

At the level of universities and research institutions, a number of practices related to internationalization have been identified, with each university having their own distinct profile and traditions. In this connection, the neighboring institution to IUC University of Dubrovnik is only few years old, but already well connected internationally. The university of Dubrovnik was established in 2003 and is a small university with 1800 students, spread across 6 departments. Contrary to bigger public universities, Dubrovnik university is an integrated university, meaning that faculty autonomy is limited, administrative activities are centralized and international projects are coordinated at central level. Dubrovnik is more focused on teaching than research, reflected in their internationalization activities.

Programs at Dubrovnik have been taught in accordance with Bologna Declaration from the beginning. Before Erasmus university started off with TEMPUS projects and established an international relations office, within first 1-2 years of existence. 2010-2011 Erasmus program was incorporated. Currently more than 110 courses are being taught in English language for 112 exchange students, mostly in economics and business. Dubrovnik has proportionately a lot of exchange students, as in Croatia only 1% of total student population goes to the university, but 10% of all exchange students do. Dubrovnik offers three MA double degrees taught in English together with an Italian university.

b. University of Split

University of Split is one of the bigger universities with autonomous faculties, as opposed to the smaller integrated University of Dubrovnik. This is an important distinction to make, as respondents from Split will be able to give a more comprehensive picture of ongoing internationalization activities at faculty level, opposed to those from Dubrovnik which have a university wide frame of reference.

Respondents from University of Split, painted an overall positive picture of internationalization-related developments at their faculty. They noted that the faculty participates regularly in programs for international research projects (Erasmus, COST, CEPUS). Currently the faculty is leading six different projects with EU partners, including leading the Croatian side in a big European aid program with 13 partner institutions from 12 different EU states. Faculty cooperation also extends to several universities outside Europe, such as Australia, Chile and Korea. Another measure of the faculty is hiring foreign professors as lecturers. In general, the level of internationalization is considered to be quite high, particularly considering that the faculty is rather young.

c. Zagreb University

At Zagreb University I have interviewed both administrative staff and researchers. The administrative worker told me that Uni Zagreb has participated fully in the Erasmus program since 2011 and with a budget of 3 million Euros this year (with 1.7 million being earmarked for students), has one of the biggest for European standards. In this connection, 800 students are being sent abroad annually for studies and internships under the Erasmus program. The whole internationalization development in Croatia has been very fast, as the links that have been established prior to the civil war were mostly eliminated and the current ones have been established since then. Nonetheless internationalization efforts are at a quite advanced stage, as Zagreb has 850 partners in Erasmus program countries and 20 in partner countries. Regional networks where Zagreb participates includes the “Rectors Danube conference” and the “ALPS Adriatic conference”.

The researcher from Zagreb University stated that at his faculty there are currently 80 Erasmus students enrolled, with 120 courses being offered in English language for all students. The Erasmus program also allows for exchange of academic staff, which both teaching and administrative personnel is taking advantage of. Both kind of cooperation even extends to China, with them sending 1-2 students per year to the faculty. Further to these exchange agreements, there are also policies in place to allow for foreign students of Croatian origin to get enrolled more easily. These measures include waiving their school fee upon approval from the faculty council and facilitating their access to Croatian citizenship. Overall the financial situation at the faculty is quite good, with significant money being obtained through school fees. Funds are sufficient to cover visits to other universities abroad, without having to rely on external sources.

Another respondent from a different faculty of University of Zagreb supported the observation that internationalization is improving. In his area of specialization, he remarked that local researchers speak English fluently and are writing international project proposals and at faculty level there is a large ongoing cooperation with Austria and Germany. Internationalization is particularly important in this field, as it is rather expensive and would be difficult to pursue without access to EU funds. The office for international cooperation consist of 2-3 people and is helping with the administrative work involved for projects. The government is also promoting internationalization by financing a share of international projects (e.g. if EU funds project with 100.000 Euros, government contributes 20.000 Euros). Finally, at secondary level, teachers receive a 15% higher salary if they are involved in international projects, it could be advisable to implement this model at level of tertiary education to stimulate internationalization.

d. Ruder Boskovic Institute (RBI)

Furthermore, I visited the Ruder Boskovic Institute (RBI), the leading research center in Croatia, where I had the opportunity to interview people in a variety of functions. The RBI is deeply rooted with the process of internationalization, as one of their specialized

administrative support departments (henceforth “The Department”) was founded in 2007 by the ministry of science following the introduction of the 7. EU Framework Program on research requiring more administrative staff to handle the project application process. The RBI is financed mostly by the state but derives 30% of their budget from project and market services. The RBI currently entertains 12 H2020 projects in a total value of 6.5 million Euros.

The RBI has a long tradition of research being founded in 1950 and also with related internationalization activities. The RBI has been well connected from an early stage, having direct contact with research offices at the universities of Zagreb and Rijeka and with the ministry of science through the latter’s national contact points. With the emergence of international project offices at universities, such networks are losing their significance. Another coordinative measure has been taken by the ministry of science, which initialized a new work group issuing a guide for H2020 funding.

The advantage of the RBI relative to a university in the area of internationalization, is that RBI researchers have no teaching obligation which allows them to dedicate more time to projects. The occupancy of RBI researchers is accounted for in a monthly time sheet, which calculates how much the designated project time takes up of their schedule. The contract of the researcher stipulates that he/she has to publish a certain number of articles per year, which makes them eligible for re-election every five years. In the case of EU projects, the EC refunds the RBI for the working hours of their researcher, from which 35% goes to the researcher as a bonus, so it becomes a win-win for both RBI and the researcher.

The IRB employs 550 staff in total, of which 30 are foreigners. Currently there are 83 ongoing projects valued at 10 million Euros, usually of 3-4 year duration. There are number of financial support mechanisms available for researchers participating in international projects – H2020 compensates for relocation, Marie Curie project participation gives stipend to help families with relocation, RBI is able to finance project related travels to other institutions in Europe and even China through bilateral agreements of the Croatian ministry. Other measures include the Department sending out calls for EU Structural Funds Projects to entire IRB mailing list and supporting applicants in the process, all vacancies being announced through Euraxxes and HR having arranged all practicalities in advance for foreign employees.

Other respondents from RBI add that the positive development in internationalization has also been due to various institutional measures and policies. It is only possible to get a permanent position at RBI after having spent time abroad, more scholarships have become available upon EU entry and the participation of the RBI in ERA-chair project makes it easier to attract foreign researchers to the center. The latter includes actions such as teaming and twinning, which aim at bringing experts over from abroad in order to improve capacities in lesser developed areas. The researchers praise the contribution to internationalization made by the ministry through the bilateral agreements outlined above and also affirm that the RBI office has been very helpful in organizing workshops on project applications and giving useful feedback.

e. Agency for Mobility and EU Programs (AMEUP)

From the AMEUP I had the opportunity to interview staff on the implementation of Erasmus+ and H2020. The implementation of Erasmus+ is divided between AMEUP and EACEA dependent on the characteristics of the so-called actions. This aspect makes it hard to establish national success rate, however it is clear that there is a performance gap between old and new member states. One of the reasons behind this result is, that the longer you participate in EU programs the bigger is the probability of success due to the accumulated experience. The core work of AMEUP is centered around the implementation of “decentralized” Erasmus+ actions. These include Key Action 1: mobility of students and staff – both teaching and non-teaching and Key Action 2: strategic partnerships in the form of consortia type projects.

The specific task of AMEUP consists of providing administrative support for Erasmus+ project applications. The AMEUP is in contact with various Erasmus+ coordinators, checking the eligibility of applications and consulting with external evaluators before passing them onto the EC. AMEUP furthermore takes on a preparatory role by holding information sessions on proper project implementation and conducts monitoring of through annual checks of selected beneficiaries. The overall framework of Erasmus+ is that it is a tool to finance EU policies in education through the Key Actions, so the AMEUP tries to help the applicants to shape their project around those policies. Every 7 years the EC presents a new mobility program which in general is similar in outline to the others, but with some novelties. The general national policy on internationalization is included in the “national strategy on education, science and technology”, while specific measures are issued in the national action plans on internationalization of education by the ministry of science and education, although the one for 2018 has not been released yet.

The main difference between the role of AMEUP in regard to the Erasmus+ and H2020, is that in the former they have an active role in policy implementation whereas with the latter their function is to inform and advise. In relation to H2020 there is a division of tasks between the ministry of science and education and AMEUP. The ministry is responsible for coordinating the system of national contact points, with some being placed within it but others dispersed across various agencies, such as AMEUP but also other ones such as the innovation agency. The main incentives for HEIs to participate in H2020 are the opportunities to receive financial support and benefit from the sharing of knowledge through working in international project consortia. AMEUP contributes to this process by issuing guidelines on financial conduct of H2020 projects. In this connection AMEUP recently co-organized an event with the EC in which they together with launched a guidelines report that is available for potential H2020 applicants.

2. Region

a. Slovenia

From Slovenia respondents were interviewed from University of Ljubljana and the Jozef Stefan Institute. The respondent from University of Ljubljana explained that at the base of internationalization at her faculty there are three circles of cooperation: 1) trans-border

(with neighboring countries Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary) II) transnational (with countries within specific regions – Danube, Central Europe, Adriatic, Mediterranean) III) transregional (with other regions, ESPON program is an example, but faculty is not very active therein). In addition to these three circles of cooperation, there are three levels of institutional cooperation as well: I) strategic partners based on reciprocity (Louvain, Utrecht, Cologne, Vienna) II) other type of partnerships with institutions within the ERA III) partnerships with institutions outside of ERA (China, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, Russia – from the latter strategic partnerships are signed with Southern Caucasian University and University of Saint Petersburg).

Regarding the specific data relating to internationalization, the faculty has signed 180 agreements with HEIs from Erasmus program countries and 38 bilateral agreements with HEIs from Erasmus partner and third countries (these include Latin America and other WBCs such as Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia). Out of the 3500 total faculty students there are 300 incoming and outgoing mobility students annually. Regarding research, the faculty submits around 100 international project applications annually, 70 as partner in a consortium and 30 unilaterally by itself. Out of the 100 applications 25 are within H2020, 30 within Erasmus, 25 within other EU programs and 20 within other international programs. The yearly success rate for projects is usually between 20% and 25%, with the projects usually lasting between 3-5 years each. On a yearly basis there are around 50 ongoing projects, of which 20% are new ones. This is a strong improvement compared to 15 years ago where faculty international office was established and there were only 10 projects, since its establishment around 200 projects have been registered at the office.

The research centre encompasses 800 employees and derives 20% of their budget from EU funds with 1-2 of the researchers currently receiving ERC grants. Internationalization is very important to the department the respondent works in, as it would not be able to function without. Currently there 6 EU projects being worked on. Upon entry into the EU international research has improved a lot, as before it was only possible to pursue via scholarship schemes. However, in recent years it is more difficult to get applications for EU projects accepted as projects have become bigger, but fewer. This is reflected in the acceptance rate which has dropped from 15% initially to now less than 5%. There are policies at place both at institution and government level to promote internationalization. At government level, there are workshops organized on available EU funded schemes, scholarships are offered for professors going abroad and foreign visiting professors and the agency for research also funds internationalization efforts. At institutional level, scientists are ranked according to their research performance on basis of an “impact score” with international activities being awarded more points. This score is considered when applying for projects and promotion. Furthermore, the institute also organizes expert lectures informing on how to apply for projects and the department has a secretary for managing EU projects.

b. Serbia

Respondents from Belgrade University were from two different faculties. As a general starting point, it was noted that Belgrade University figured relatively high on the Shanghai List between position 200-300, which reflects the positive internationalization efforts undertaken in relation to employing competent staff and standardizing curricula. A year ago the university started to require that all faculties send out complete syllabus of their courses in English, efforts were undertaken to promote Erasmus mobility and gradually more faculties within the social sciences started taking part in consortiums for H2020 projects.

At one of the faculties, a major initiative was taken 2-3 years ago, implementing a policy that all courses should have the possibility to be taught in English, with the introduction of courses completely in English a year ago. The faculty is hosting a Jean Monnet Module and currently there is a new application for a Jean Monnet Chair. Furthermore, the faculty has also been a member of a H2020 project related to grading efficiency of HEI. In addition, the faculty participates in several regional research networks related to their field of study.

At the study level the faculty introduced a EU-based masters' program 10 years ago, which has been relatively international in outlook, with 40 of the 400 students enrolled since program existence coming from abroad and with several foreign guest lecturers actively participating in it. The faculty has close cooperation with an Italian university, from which they receive 3 incoming students out of the 25 enrolled in the particular masters' program alone. Domestic students are also increasingly using mobility going to various destinations like Italy, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands.

The other faculty also regularly receives Erasmus students and is furthermore involved in several Tempus exchange programs, that also offer joint graduate degrees with London and Salzburg. The respondent is herself involved in a COST project and the faculty gets several foreign visiting professors. This observation is also shared from the other respondent from the same faculty, with herself and several colleagues having also participated in COST projects. Other forms of international cooperation at the faculty include the establishment of specific centers for regional study (US/German/Russia/SEE) which are maintaining ties within their geographical sphere; a regional journal launched jointly by Belgrade and Zagreb University; The launch of a foundation with close ties to a German university, that has led to the two HEIs inviting students from one another to their respective summer schools and created a network of scholars collaborating through that same foundation.

c. Bosnia & Herzegovina

From B&H interviews were evaluated of one respondent from the University Sarajevo, and from two political figures which are also academically active. The understanding of internationalization by the two latter respondents comprises the access to knowledge from different international universities, various forms of networking (exchange, cooperation etc.)

with foreign resource persons and more generally a set of standards guiding research that are accepted at international level.

Concrete measures related to internationalization in B&H were taken with the adoption of the Bologna declaration by the government. This also led to the creation of the national agency for standardization of higher education, which certifies all universities. Foreign and private HEIs are beginning to emerge in B&H with Birch University and International University Sarajevo being particularly successful. Some international joint degrees are starting to pop up, fx the master in European studies between the University of Sarajevo, Bologna and London School of Economics. At Birch University many students come from various parts of the Middle East, also shaping their profile. Many HEIs have a dean for international cooperation which shapes the institutions profile by concluding bilateral project agreements. Another measure is securing the permanent position of professors returning from abroad, by hiring temporary replacement staff during their leave.

The professor from University of Sarajevo painted a rather bleak picture of the status of internationalization at his faculty. At the moment he said there were no projects connected to internationalization going on that he knew of, with a lack of information on the status of it and unwillingness from the higher ups to introduce any changes.

3. Summary

a. Croatia

In Croatia the interviews have touched upon a wide variety of institutions – universities, a research centre and a government agency. The universities have had a lot of variation between them, ranging from a modern, small integrated University in the case of Dubrovnik and the large capital university in Zagreb with a long tradition, with the one in Split somewhere in between. The respondents from the other two entities RBI and AMEUP have also come from different backgrounds, including researchers, administrative staff and in the latter case policy officers.

Due to the different nature and characteristics of the institutions it is difficult to identify one particular development, but nonetheless some common trends appear. Overall internationalization has been increasingly everywhere in this decade with the implementation of EU mobility and framework programs. The process however is still quite young, with Dubrovnik University existing only 15 years and the faculty of the respondent from Split University being even younger. Zagreb University however, even with its longer tradition has only participated in the Erasmus program fully since 2011. In general, the internationalization process despite only having started recently, is relatively well underway at all three universities whether through the large uptake of Erasmus students in Dubrovnik, the frequent project participation and in some cases leadership in Split or through the high budget allocation in Zagreb.

Interviewing respondents from AMEUP and RBI, I gathered that RBI are among the frontrunners in Croatia if not the WB region in regard to internationalization and that their practices therefore generally correspond to the ambitions of AMEUP. This is particular the

case in regard to H2020 where AMEUP has an informing and advisory role. Accordingly, the promotion structure in the IRB necessitates international project participation and the RBI office is well versed in H2020 offering administrative support to researchers during the application process.

b. Region

From Slovenia respondents of University Ljubljana and the JSI stated that internationalization for both institutions played an important role. However, there were somewhat contrasting statement regarding the success rate between the two entities. In the case of the university the yearly success rate for international projects is usually around 20-25%, whereas in the case of JSI it is below 5%. This is with the important caveat that at the university the success rate for all international project is calculated, whereas for the research centre the number strictly retains to H2020.

Around 25% of all international projects at the university are derived from H2020, which is nonetheless still a notable share. At the research centre the success rate used to be 15% during the previous framework program but has dropped due to projects becoming bigger and fewer, which could also be a reason for the higher university average if it is calculated across several years going back. In this regard it is relevant to note, that according to a 2015 report by the EC, the overall EU average success rate for H2020 applications for funding is 16%, a stark decrease from the 22% in the FP7 as noted by the JSI respondent. However, for Slovenia the average has dropped from 16% during FP7 to 11% in H2020.

In Serbia, respondents from the Belgrade University stated their institution was ranked quite high on the Shanghai List which is also reflected in its relatively international outlook. Erasmus exchange agreements are in place, faculties are taking part in H2020 projects, more programs are being taught in English and international joint degrees are being organized with other universities. Centres for various regional studies have been created, a journal has been launched with Zagreb University and a summer school exchange and scholar network has been created with a German university.

In B&H the Bologna declaration has been adopted by the government, but the situation differs between Sarajevo as the main public university and various private universities. In the private universities, patterns of internationalization are emerging, with the appointment of deans for international cooperation, the establishment of joint degrees and the encouragement of research placements abroad. At the public Sarajevo university on the other hand, there are no information of the subject, no international projects going on and a general unwillingness to introduce any changes.

c. Comparison

In this chapter I have given an overview of the relevant practices relating to internationalization, before evaluating it by looking at the barriers and opportunities linked to it in the following chapter. Croatia has been more intensely studied, which allows for a more realistic assessment of the situation there, then compared to the rest of the region.

From the information gathered about Croatia, the internationalization process seems to be well established in the functioning of the universities through frequent project participation and exchange practices. The infrastructure at RBI is well developed and in support of AMEUP's vision.

In the region as such the picture is quite diverse. In Slovenia the University of Ljubljana also frequently participates in exchange agreements and project consortium, with the JSI falling somewhat behind in the latter domain. In Serbia, the picture painted at Belgrade University is largely the same as in Slovenia. The main outlier is B&H where the situation is starting to improve with the emergence of private universities as a competitor with their own distinct profile, but significant problems remain and at public universities systemic inertia prevail.

Overall the picture so far shows Croatia as the regional leader, with B&H falling behind and Slovenia and Serbia being somewhere in between. Following the rather general listing and identification of practices made in this chapter, the next one will provide more in-depth information about the barriers to and opportunities for improvement of internationalization. This will provide the background on the reasons behind the internationalization dynamics and their concrete impact and also provide the foundation for developing a plan for the way forward throughout the rest of the thesis.

In the table below I have summarized the internationalization performance of HEIs in the various WBCs on the basis of the indicators mobility and knowledge circulation (B&H is on the following page).

	Mobility	Knowledge circulation
Croatia	Relatively high (Zagreb University with many ties, support for Erasmus+ via AMEUP)	Relatively high (RBI as regional frontrunner, support for H2020 through AMEUP)
Slovenia	Moderate high (University Ljubljana with intense exchange agreements)	Moderate (University Ljubljana performing well, Jozef Stefan Institute weaker, agencies staffed rather poorly, high fluctuation in EU support offices)
Serbia	Moderate (University Belgrade with many exchanges and English courses offered at graduate level, but capacities still weak at undergraduate level)	Moderate (Researchers from University of Belgrade participate in project consortia, international publications included in promotion criteria at university, but lack of support by government agencies)

Bosnia Herzegovina	Low (archaic structure at public universities, more open private ones only recently emerging)	Low (lack of institutionalization, no public support)
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Chapter 6

Barriers and opportunities to internationalization

1. Croatia

a. Dubrovnik

As for the barriers and opportunities to further improve internationalization a number have been identified from the various respondents. Starting off with Dubrovnik University as in the previous chapter, one of their respondents noted that a major problem is that the law about quality assurance in Croatian higher education has not yet met the EU standard. This factor is an obstacle towards creating further joint study programs with other EU universities (like the MA's with the Italian one) and accredit English taught study programs. Another obstacle is the socioeconomic situation and the political response to it. Croatia was severely hit by the financial crisis going into a recession. The economy only recently started to grow again in 2016 and many of the post-crisis restrictions are still in place. One such restriction is that universities are not allowed to promote current staff or hire new one, which increases job security but disincentivizes internationalization efforts such as participating in EU projects.

However, respondents from Dubrovnik also noted a number of opportunities related to internationalization within the current system. Previously it has been difficult to find suitable accommodation for exchange students, but the situation is improving as the university has been allocated structural funds from the EU to build a new dormitory. Another opportunity that Erasmus offers, is for university staff to go on training seminars abroad to improve their skills, as these visits are mostly if not fully refundable.

b. University of Split

The respondents from University of Split noted several barriers to the further improvement of internationalization at their institution. The main underlying one being, that the faculty is rather young, but the government sets very ambitious goals for the standard of internationalization that needs to be reached. This ends up being counterproductive as the faculty is not able to handle these demands and might actually end up having to cut back on some of their other functions as a result to reach these goals, leading to an overall worsening of the quality. A good example of this is that EU project participation is valued higher than the quality of the research itself. Rather than improving the research and creating a competitive base for participation in higher quality projects, the faculty prioritizes sending out more applications.

Opportunities at Split are mostly related to mobility. The faculty's network allows for professors to teach at a foreign university for a semester while receiving administrative and

financial support. The faculty is often hosting international conferences with participation of various recognized foreign universities, which feeds into and reinforces their network. Finally, internationalization related projects are rewarded when applying for mobility as they are reflected in the university's selection criteria.

c. University of Zagreb

A barrier towards improving internationalization further identified by a respondent from the university is that the Erasmus scholarship scheme falls under the national tax law, which discourages students going on mobility. All income above 2000 Euros annually is taxed, so if one wishes to promote internationalization the law will have to be amended in order to ensure that scholarships are excluded from this regulation. This aspect also undermines the bonus on top of the scholarship scheme that is given for mobility students with special needs. Another obstacle is that Zagreb is a decentralized university with faculty autonomy, but since Erasmus is administered centrally it has to act as an integrated one for the purposes of the program. Zagreb encompasses over 70.000 students and consists of 31 faculties, 3 academies and 1 department. This makes administration very difficult, as a limited number of people within the IRO have to process all the applications.

The latter point is also presents an opportunity for improvement, as the university has recently released an internationalization strategy, coordinating the process at central level of the IRO with the individual faculties. Other opportunities are manifested in the international policies themselves. The European Qualification Framework allows for easier recognition and better comparability of diplomas. This also opens the door for mobility measures, such as the establishment of joint programs and exchange agreements. Another one is the financial aspect, as EU structural funds provide a major contribution to universities budget when national public spending is limited. This point is particularly relevant, as the assistance from the European Social Fund has increased in the latest period, thanks to successful negotiations by the national ministry.

At one of the faculties of University of Zagreb, the international accreditation committee has remarked that 90% of the faculty staff has graduated from within the institution. This is rather a symptom of the lack of internationalization, then an underlying cause, but is also due to the fact that Zagreb is the leading Croatian law school with law being for the most part national-based. The research network which the faculty participates in organizes various courses throughout the Balkans which is a positive aspect in this regard, as they contribute to the cross-border exchange of knowledge in order to avoid the danger of "academic inbreeding". Another research networks on the Balkans is cofounded by the German Max Planck Society, which is also valuable in this regard.

Notable barriers to further improvement as viewed by the same respondent, are strict citizenship requirements which could impede skilled migration, such as attracting researchers from outside EU. Citizenship requires 8 years residency, followed by 1-2 years of processing applications. This point is also connected to the lack of migration strategy. At university level itself, the system is rather inert making it difficult to introduce big changes.

Academic staff can get permanent contracts early on, which makes it harder to employ foreign researchers or change focus of programs, the latter also being a problem as the studies have not adapted to the globalized labor market. In connection to the last point more people with PhDs are needed in the Croatian economy in order to improve competitiveness, but potential is not being realized as there are no scholarships available.

Nonetheless, there are opportunities for improvement. Following the Bologna Process, an integrated degree (5+0) rather than a bachelor/master (4+1) was introduced at the faculties of all four major Croatian universities. Introducing a one-year masters could be an opportunity to attract more international students. This would however have to be undertaken in a coherent way as the last year cannot be split into a master by itself of only 60 ECTS. Another opportunity would be to incorporate IUC courses into international programs. That way Erasmus students would get accredited for participating in courses at the IUC, which could also be an attractive selling point. When compared to Serbia, Belgrade university appears relatively high on the Shaghai List (between 200 and 300) as they integrated the leading national research center into the institution. If University of Zagreb merged with the Ruder Boskovic Institute it could be a way to improve in the ranking and thereby increase visibility and reputation.

The particular problem related to the internationalization of science identified by the respondent from another faculty of Zagreb University, is in the missing political direction and lack of prioritization of science. There is a general trend towards decline in public funding for higher education and science irrespective of the government profile, which is worsened by the fact that there is no industry to step in and compensate for the reduction. Politically speaking, science and research is low on the agenda of voters reflected in the low budget prioritization. The lack of strategic vision is made worse by quarrels inside the government party. Two years after the currently appointed government has entered into office, they are already on their third minister of science and education. There is no systematic change starting at secondary level, which could create the transition into tertiary education but rather short-term ideological government impulses, such as whether humanities and social science subjects taught in schools should have a more liberal or conservative profile.

d. RBI

At the RBI one respondents did not consider there to be any specific barriers towards improving internationalization as it is already deeply ingrained within the functioning of the center, which is also rather well equipped and staffed. If problems have been encountered they have been related to specific projects. For instance, the Erapermed project was an initiative to finance projects in the area of personal medicine, where each of the signatory countries would fund their own participants. Croatian participants were severely underfunded, being allocated only a third of the amount their Hungarian colleagues received. Although at the RBI the situation is overall good as the center is accommodative towards supporting mobility through offering grants and administrative help, many other

institutions in Croatia do not have the same possibilities. Consequently researchers elsewhere miss out on many of the benefits connected to internationalization due to lack of expertise, as they do not have access to such offices providing administrative and financial support.

On the other hand at RBI there are many opportunities associated with internationalization which to a great extent are also being made use of. Studies show that there is a correlation between the participation in conferences and the publication of papers, so conference participation is being funded, while the publication of papers is being incorporated into the criteria for promotion. The expansion of internationalization related processes in research has also led to the emergence of a whole new professional sector at the labor market, such as administrators and consultants working at university and government offices. This factor could be very beneficial in creating new jobs in a stagnating economy. Last but not least, internationalization also gives the opportunity to drive excellence in science forward by promoting cooperation with foreign researchers, making available sources of external funding to finance better equipment and overall spreading know-how and insights on cutting-edge science.

Barriers to internationalization identified by the researchers at RBI are among other the low wages in Croatia, which makes it harder to persuade foreign researchers to prolong their stay after projects such as the ERA ones are finished. This issue is made worse by unfavorable bureaucratic procedures, as foreign researchers are not always properly informed in advance about all required documentation and processes. The problem with attracting foreign researchers also extends to domestic students as many of them travel abroad to get a PhD and are not interested in working at the IRB since it is difficult to get a permanent contract and they are searching for stability.

This point also connects to the problem with brain drain. A targeted policy must be developed to make use of the competences young people acquire when going abroad and make it more attractive for them to return. Between 1999-2003 the ministry would fund conference visits of selected young researchers, this was a useful measure. Furthermore, a long term scientific strategy must be developed prioritizing certain fields in order to build capacity (in line with smart specialization), that is not vulnerable to changes in government. Also, domestic higher education needs to be improved – in other countries they are able to fund PhD placements in CERN. The opportunities were mostly connected to the activities of the RBI office itself, which have already been covered.

e. AMEUP

From the perspective of the staff at AMEUP, there are a number of barriers hindering further progress in internationalization. These include the prevalence of traditionalistic attitudes at HEIs, some people prefer the status quo and blocking changes to the system; connected to this point, slow transition is another barrier as improvement is slow and gradual; lack of relevance in Erasmus+ project applications lead to a lower success rate than possible,

despite the supportive efforts of AMEUP; lack of personnel at universities, due to not having internationalization related offices and staff available; lack of connections as many WB universities have trouble being included in working groups. In regard to H2020 the main barrier towards improving the success rate is oversubscription, a factor which has also been noted in the interim evaluation. Sometimes projects which receive a high rating and fulfil all criteria do not get approved due to a combination of lack of funding and connected herewith low demand.

In order to overcome some of these obstacles the respondents from AMEUP have identified the following opportunities for improvement of internationalization: the publicity efforts of AMEUP has contributed to a gradual shift in mindset, as more stakeholders within HEIs are starting to realize that Croatia cannot longer afford to only focus on national level but have to start looking outwards; funding of H2020 successor program will be doubled, hopefully reducing levels of oversubscription; in this connection ministry have started to take some measures to reward high ranked, non-approved projects in order to encourage further applications. Other changes which could be implemented is to integrate internationalization more into criteria for career advancement and create better synergies between Structural Funds and H2020 successor programs, in order to match efforts to encourage excellence with drive to increase regional cohesion.

2. Region

a. Slovenia

Barriers to further internationalization in Slovenia is the lack of national support networks to aid in obtaining EU grants, which they have in other neighboring countries such as Austria. This point is also reflected in Slovenia not having a national office for EU research support and their national FP7 contact point in Brussels being underfunded. Furthermore, the special agency for structural and regional funds in Slovenia is understaffed and the fluctuation of people working in offices for EU grants is high, which impedes continuity. All of these problems are further worsened by the drop of GDP research spending following the crisis. As research staff are public officials they are particularly impacted by these budget cuts. Low and inflexible wages makes it difficult to combat brain drain and to attract foreign researchers, therefore a special mechanism is needed in order to introduce a better reward system for high performing researchers.

At the JSI the identified barriers were mostly of technical nature. In the last framework program there was a problem with aligning the way EU computes costs with how the JSI does. At the JSI research expenditure is calculated both for research wage and department overhead costs, but the Structural Funds were allocated only to the researcher salary on a per hour basis, creating a minus in departments finances when accounting for EU projects. Another problem are the tax rules, which also echoes the point made of the staffer from Zagreb University. In Slovenia money from a person's bank account need to be taxed, which caused a major obstacle in a case where a Slovenian postdoc was staying Finland on a

research scholarship which he had to pay taxes on despite the high living expenditures there.

Opportunities for improving internationalization identified by the Slovenian respondents lie in creating better staffed and well connected research offices both at local level for administrative support and at national level as a contact point for up-to-date information about recent developments; in this domain also establishing specialized agencies with the needed expertise and know-how; create a policy to attract foreign researchers and offer bonuses for high performing ones; offer more tutorials and workshops on how to write successful project proposals; in the connection with the last point the initiative to financially support EU proposals at the application stage is a valuable measure to incentivize further internationalization.

b. Serbia

One of the respondents from Belgrade University noted as a general remark, that the embargo imposed on and isolation faced by Serbia during the 1990s had left a strong impact on Belgrade University, which was the biggest public HEI in the former Yugoslavia with a long research tradition. Subsequently it took a long time to rebuild many of the relations although some important ones survived. At the faculty level, the problem is that the institutional capacities are not very developed. There are few courses in English at the undergraduate level making it hard to attract foreign students and at the level of research there is a lack of funding for international cooperation and mobility in the form of field trips, conference visits etc.

All three respondents from the university mentioned a combination of missing coordination between faculties and unfavorable bureaucracy as a major impediment towards further improving internationalization. As an example, communication is missing between university management and faculty administration making it difficult to align their policies, considering the autonomy of the latter. In Erasmus exchanges between professors this problem is reinforced as the process is divided between the two entities which makes it less efficient. In an exchange between Belgrade and a German university, a memorandum needed to be signed between the universities despite the agreement being made at faculty level. Faculties are left with all the responsibilities but none of the support – it falls on the faculties to raise external funds for international programs.

Other obstacles are inflexible teaching norms, which makes it harder to pursue international research collaborations. This aspect decreases the quality of teaching and education, making it harder to publish internationally due to weak methodological training of aspiring researchers, resulting in a negative feedback loop. Lack of research performance remains the main bottleneck towards further improvement. This problem is further exacerbated by a host of other issues such as high conference fees, making it harder to promote your research if funding is not available; missing administrative support when writing proposals for calls; a lack of political prioritization of research; insufficient

consultation of HEIs by government when developing new policies; lack of regulation on quality assurance of private HEIs and therewith connected the proliferation of non-peer review publishing in those places, undermining systematic efforts of improvement as a whole; the last point also makes it harder to reach international standardization requirements, which creates difficulties in transferring credits to or from foreign HEI students.

Despite these barriers, opportunities are also present to improve internationalization. Belgrade is a big university and regardless of the deficits, there are a lot of exchange agreements and the mobility in relation to both incoming and outgoing students is increasing. Efforts have already been made as outlined in the previous chapter, in promoting internationalization, concluding Erasmus agreements and introducing curricula in English, but these have to be further expanded and complemented to be effective. Other opportunities include the various initiatives such as “perform”, a swiss program that supports social science research in the Balkans; in this connection the ongoing intensive exchange and project collaboration with a Swiss university; the introduction of finance and methodology workshops for doctoral students and the availability of scholarships from international organizations for the university’s IUC courses.

c. Bosnia & Herzegovina

Among the barriers towards improving internationalization are a lack of political prioritization, fx local elections are coming up but science and research is not very high on the agenda, neither locally at grassroot level, nor from a top-down perspective in regard to the focus of the current EU enlargement program. This lack of prioritization is further reflected in the lack of funds and investment in the HEIs, for instance until recently there were no scholarships available for PhD students. The former point is also connected to the low political importance accorded to research, which takes up less than 1% of GDP spending and in government circles it is rather considered an expenditure than an investment. In this relation the “bigger picture” is missing – there is a lack of awareness about the benefits that can be realized by investing in science, such as improved competitiveness and knowledge generation. This lack of a unified vision is partly due to the territorial fragmentation of B&H as mentioned earlier, as there is no ministry dedicated to research and HE at a national level and policy adoption and implementation being split between FBH and the centralized RS. In addition, there are also problems with the rule of law, for instance at Tuzla University the cantonal government took over the appointment of academic officials going against normal procedure and in Sarajevo similar attempts were made, although unsuccessfully.

Finally, at the level of HEIs themselves, the root of the problem is that internationalization depends too much on individual goodwill – it is not institutionalized via the regular organization of conferences for instance and professors that strive to push process forward by opening up their programs or participating in international projects are not being adequately rewarded or compensated for their efforts by reducing other

professional obligations. Further exacerbating this problem are several administrative issues – all changes at department level needs to be approved by the faculty board; participation in international endeavors is not being considered in the criteria for career promotion; there is a lack of access to international journals at HEIs and accreditation of foreign transcripts by returning exchange students is still deficient; the government has not introduced much needed reforms to raise quality and international outlook of education by establishing special trainings, supervisory mechanisms etc. In general, the government only assists in certifying universities, so they are able to conclude international agreements, but the general process of internationalization is entirely left to the universities alone. Even then, the certification process is not properly enforced as many PHEIs are easily validated due to deregulation.

In order to improve the situation a number of steps must be taken. Political responsibility must be taken at cantonal level or from RS as the funds are available, but there are not committed or being used. Once the willingness is there, opportunities need to be promoted for exchange and summer schools as first measures to increase the short-term mobility and long-term circulation of knowledge. In support of this point, a mobility program should be developed for the region, which could also contribute to the ongoing reconciliation efforts. Such a program should be prioritized politically by the governments of the WBC with dedicated funds and scholarships established for this purpose. This kind of network would also be a way to make better use of the regional transport infrastructure that is available, but not being used to its full extent, such as highways, railways and flight. Finally, at the HEIs management including rectors and deans need to be in charge of international cooperation and commit their 4-year mandate to setting strong standards in this area that cannot be overturned anymore after they leave their position in order to secure a long-term perspective.

3. Summary - barriers

a. Croatia

At the base of the Croatian problem in regard to internationalization lies the brain drain. Qualified and talented young people are leaving Croatia looking for better opportunities abroad, which further worsens existing deficits such as lack of skilled workers and competent researchers and reinforces the impact of budget cuts, badly implemented legal reforms, rising unemployment and overall economic maladjustment. The impact of budget cuts is manifested by the hiring restrictions imposed on universities following the financial crisis; the low political prioritization of research and herewith connected the low amount of public spending dedicated to it. Although other areas might not be directly impacted by the lack of finances, there are indirect follow-on effects. HEIs might have difficulties setting up IROs as they are not able to afford competent staff; young skilled people are leaving as it is difficult to obtain permanent contracts, while it is difficult to attract foreign researchers due to the low wages. This combination of weak administrative capacities due to understaffing of IRO offices and difficulties both keeping domestic talent and attracting foreign one, is

reflected in a weaker research performance and lower success rate for international projects.

In addition to these barriers linked to the insufficient availability of resources, several legal obstacles are also in the way. Respondents from AMEUP lament the slow transition in improving internationalization at the HEIs, in their view due to the prevalence of traditionalistic attitudes. At University of Split on the other hand, the respondent states that the reason policy objectives are not being met is due to the goals being too ambitious and not in line with administrative capabilities. Other legal barriers include weak enforcement of quality assurance making it hard to ensure program credibility; taxation of scholarships impeding mobility; strict citizenship requirements and a missing migration strategy to attract skilled foreign workers. Also, at the level of HEIs themselves there are structural problems, such as lack of a unified institutional policy and missing coordination between faculties, which is problematic in regard to Erasmus where universities are being treated as integrated entities despite being decentralized in nature. This kind of miscommunication is also linked to the systematic inertia that is encountered at HEIs, making it difficult for stakeholders to introduce larger scale changes.

b. Region

Many of the barriers identified in the case of Croatia also apply to Slovenia including low GDP spending on research; unfavourable tax legislation on scholarships and low and inflexible wages, making it difficult to attract skilled foreign workers, while retaining domestic talent. Further country specific obstacles are the lack of national support networks and EU contact points for obtaining EU grants, understaffed government agencies and high fluctuation of personnel making it difficult to achieve policy continuation.

In Serbia as well several similar problems to the ones identified in Croatia were noted. These include missing coordination between the autonomous faculties within the decentralized Belgrade University; weak administrative support; low political prioritization; lack of adequate quality assurance mechanisms. Further obstacles include the lack of courses held in English at undergraduate level; missing guidance for faculties that are left bearing the brunt of internationalization; inflexible teaching norms that disincentivize internationalization, as obligations in one area are not being offset following increased workload in another. This also leads to lower quality of education as opportunities for international knowledge acquisition go unused. Finally, like in the case with Zagreb University many of the institutional ties developed previous to the war were disrupted, requiring arduous reconstruction efforts.

In B&H the situation as mentioned earlier is the worst. Several of the problems already mentioned are also present in B&H – lack of political prioritization; no reward or compensation for undertaking efforts of internationalization and a largely inactive government. These problems are further exacerbated by more severe problems in B&H compared to the other WBC such as a missing access to the international knowledge market, due to restrictions caused by a underdeveloped and unconnected HE sector; little foreign

direct investment in the country and no R&D intensive industrial sector which could step in and generate economic activity and finally also the territorial fragmentation making it difficult to gather a bigger picture and create a unified vision in order to reverse this development.

c. Comparison

Several barriers are common both in Croatia and throughout the region. The HE-sector in all WBCs is plagued by low spending and low political prioritization, which are at the roots of the researcher brain drain. Young and skilled people are not incentivized to stay in the region when there is insufficient funding available for adequately staffed IROs and other administrative support services. When despite these obstacles, researchers do put effort into pursuing internationalization they are being discouraged by their circumstances, as they are not being rewarded for their action through career policies or being compensated by a lessening of other job burdens.

4. Summary – opportunities

a. Croatia

Some of the opportunities related to internationalization are connected to the Europeanization of higher education and research. EU structural funds can offer a valuable financial contribution to university budgets, particularly if they manage to create synergies with other EU funds such as Erasmus or H2020; EQF facilitate the comparison of diplomas, opening up the opportunity for creating joint programs and establishing new exchange agreements; Erasmus permits university staff to go abroad for training within refundable schemes.

Further opportunities are related to the development of relevant policies that help reap the rewards of an efficient implementation of internationalization – whether it be through the strategy of the Croatian government or Zagreb University. These measures should support the positive socioeconomic impact of internationalization, which gives the opportunity to pursue research excellence and creates a new sector of administrative value-adding jobs in a struggling economy. This aspect is particularly reinforced by the doubling of funds for the H2020 successor program.

Finally, the opportunities are also connected to the specific measures put in place by the HEI themselves, such as mobility policies allowing for the refunding of conference visits and trainings abroad or incorporating internationalization into the promotion criteria in order to further encourage such efforts.

b. Region

In Slovenia and Serbia, the identified opportunities also apply to the Croatian context. These include creating better staffed and well-connected research offices, develop specific policy strategies tailored to the needs of the country (such as an effective migration strategy), expanding current efforts and intensify cooperation within existing networks. The Slovenian

respondent furthermore mentioned the need to establish specialized agencies with needed expertise and know-how. This aspect seems to have been incorporated in the case of Croatia with the AMEUP, but more information is needed on the effectiveness of their Brussels-based liaison offices, which in the Slovenian case are not functioning optimally.

As mentioned earlier in B&H the circumstances are different and consequently the opportunities for improvement are more specific to the national conditions. Political action must be taken by FBH cantons and through RS, which rely on the willingness of HEI management in order to achieve long lasting change. The development of a regional mobility program and better infrastructure usage, would in this context probably benefit B&H the most, as they are ones most desperate in need of capacity building and have the most room for improvement.

c. Comparison

The picture of opportunities presented within the region has some parallels to one concerning the barriers. While Croatia together with Slovenia and Serbia face similar barriers as mentioned in the previous section, several of the identified opportunities apply to all three countries – developing strategic internationalization policies, create measures to attract skilled researchers to reduce the negative effects of brain drain and build on the available capacities, such as research offices, personal connections and institutionalized networks. In B&H the situation requires more deep-rooted change due to the territorial fragmentation of the country and their worse off economic situation.

After having identified internationalization related practices and given an overview of the herewith associated barriers and opportunities to further improvement within the WB with a particular focus of Croatia, I will in the next chapter use this analysis as a foundation for developing a policy plan for the IUC. The objective will be to develop a concrete proposal for how to overcome current obstacles and make use of the factors available, in order to improve the situation while accounting for present needs.

In the table below an overview is presented of the barriers and opportunities at the regional level, which are common to all countries and subsequently at national level specifically.

	Barriers	Opportunities
Regional	Low political prioritization of HE and research; Low GDP spending on R&D; Brain Drain	Development of targeted internationalization policies; Build better capacities; Create strategic migration policies;
Croatia	Traditionalistic attitudes; weak quality assurance; unfavorable tax legislation; missing coordination between university and faculties	Mobility policies are in place at the level of HEI (conference visits are refunded); support of AMEUP in the

		implementation of H2020 and Erasmus+
Slovenia	Unfavorable tax legislation; understaffed agencies and EU offices	Improvement of agencies and EU offices needed
Serbia	Isolation during war; missing coordination between universities and faculties	Current exchanges and collaborations of University Belgrade need to be further intensified
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Little foreign direct investment; no access to knowledge market; territorial fragmentation	Political responsibility needs to be taken either through RS or FBH; Support of reforms needed by HEIs.

Chapter 7

Operationalization of IUC policy plan

1. An outside perspective on Croatian higher education and research

As identified in the previous chapter, the main objective of internationalization must be to offset the systematic deficits, caused by budget constraints and insufficient political prioritization of research and higher education. These two latter factors are causing a series of domino effects, spilling over to other areas. Weak quality of research and higher education makes the economy less competitive, creating stagnating wages due to low demand, causing young skilled workers to move abroad searching for better opportunities which reinforces this negative feedback loop.

Although the IUC does not possess any political power or economic resources to reverse the negative development, they might be able use to their networking function to create synergies between various researchers and institutions in order to further promote internationalization within the WB. In order to better tailor the IUC policy plan to the specific needs, I will first provide some of the insights I gathered from two interview respondents, a foreign researcher currently employed in Croatia and a Croatian researcher having spent significant time abroad academically. The two respondents might give a more holistic view of the situation in Croatia, complementing the sometimes institution-specific perspective of the other candidates. The gathered insight will then be factored into the theoretical analysis, which I will use to provide a public administration view on how the problems impact regional governance, in order to better illustrate the mechanisms behind the underlying power dynamics. This aspect is important, as in order to create an effective policy plan one needs to be aware of the regional context in which it is being implemented.

The foreign researcher stated that the newly released 2020 Strategy on Science and Higher Education by the Croatian government is mostly empty rhetoric, as it does not address the underlying systematic issues that sabotage any efforts for improvement. These are reflected in two aspects of the national HE-system: I) Its introverted nature II) Distortive effects.

The introverted nature of the Croatian HE-system is due to international links relying on individual efforts, rather than being institutionalized. As a consequence, AMEUP was hardly able to find foreign researchers in Croatia. The distortion is caused by RBI having strong connections to the ministry, resulting in them being prioritized financially and being better able to build international links. As staff moves between RBI and the ministry, internationalization can be measured according to their own criteria, further undermining the leveling of the playing field. This kind of clientelistic network structure, is also observable in the selection process of new Centers of Excellence (CoEs). Often CoE proposals are being graded by examiners with ties to the applying entity, which are then selected by the National Council due to their inflated score, whereas CoEs proposals with an objectively high rating are being dropped. To sum up the main obstacles are a lack of internationalization due to the introverted system, which is partly responsible for creating weak CoEs as several of them

succeed first and foremost due to personal ties within Croatia. The RBI further distorts the system due to their connection with the ministry, as natural science is being prioritized at the expense of social science on the basis of its supposed link to the labour market. Further to the distortion caused by RBI, the dominance of the HE-sector by Zagreb University also causes a certain imbalance, as they account for a third of both national student enrolment and total university budget.

The other respondent reported having had bad experiences with the research system, during his time in academics in Croatia. He was part of a consortium for an international research project, where throughout the work process institutional failure became apparent through a number of mechanisms. There were too few checks and balances, ensuring that the external funds received would go through the right channels, leading to financial maladministration. Due to the organizational structure of higher education institutions this effect is worsened as personal relations interfere with administration and governance. In practice this means, that throughout a project people in the higher echelons of the institutional hierarchy have the power to interfere within the process, by blocking or speeding up administrative procedures as they see fit.

To sum up the respondent sees three main pillars behind the systematic failure of internationalization in the Croatian higher education system. These are: I) Non-formal practices and policies through which science policy is made in Croatia II) Clientelistic networks III) Lack of outside perspective. The first point manifests itself through the constitutional provision which grants autonomy to HEIs making it virtually impossible to contest their internal policies. The second point is linked to researcher salary being paid from the national budget and independently from research performance, disincentivizing the participation in elaborate international projects which demand a lot of time and effort. The third and final point relates to the introverted nature of the system, already elaborated upon by the previous respondent.

The current respondent also reports having witnessed ambiguous hiring practices at university level, as the application of higher qualified researchers with international publishing experience is being rejected and instead the average candidate having published in national journals is being chosen, due to the people in charge of the decision often also being among the editors. The lack of encouragement to participate in international activities have led to the national success rate of H2020 projects falling below 5%. When talking with the media, experts are expressing the need to reform the system, but when they are in a position of power within their institution they do not undertake any changes. The crisis within the system is not only being observed by the respondent himself, as he states that the Ivo Pilar institute for social research conducted a survey on the perception of how academia in science works in Croatia. 70% of the respondent said it worked on a clientelistic and not merit-based foundation, a number which might even be higher if asked face-to-face in a private setting.

Building on the observations made above on the nature of the Croatian higher education system, I will at the end of the chapter outline a policy plan for the IUC on how to contribute in promoting internationalization in Croatia and the surrounding region, given the environment they are operating in. Before reaching that stage, I will in the following sections of this chapter outline the views obtained throughout the interviews on the envisioned role of the IUC and substantiate those with the relevant information gathered through access to IUC's internal archives.

2. Interviews

a. Croatia (excluding Zagreb)

A respondent from Dubrovnik university stated that he appreciated the contribution of IUC to the internationalization of research and higher education in the WB and that their own board would like to extend cooperation with IUC. Dubrovnik University would for example be able to offer rooms for IUC conferences and thereby creating synergies, allowing IUC to expand their program while the university could profit from connections gained by their network. A respondent from Split University agreed that the IUC helps improving internationalization and proposed that the IUC work on their publicity in order to promote their courses better for their own sake, but also so other HEIs can make use of the possibilities that are being offered. One of the main contributions being, that frequent participation of scientists at IUC courses improves the quality of education and research at their home institutions.

This argument was followed up by another respondent from Split, who expressed that the IUC is an ideal forum for the exchange of research findings and the consistent follow-up on progress in a specific research field by regular participation in certain IUC courses. Furthermore, with the Croatian ministry of science offering scholarships to national IUC course participants, these kinds of actions can be undertaken without the individual participants having to spend too much of their own money. A respondent from University of Rijeka, reinforced this argument by saying that the IUC gives opportunity for people to meet, that would not have met otherwise, which partially could be thanks to the scholarship scheme. In this regard it is especially valuable for young people that might not yet be that well connected to help them establish academic and professional links to further their personal and career advancement.

b. Zagreb

Respondents from the various Zagreb-located institutions that were interviewed (Zagreb University, RBI, AMEUP) also shared their view of how IUC could contribute to the regional internationalization process. One respondent saw IUC as an ideal forum for discussions on internationalization. In this regard it could be used as a venue for networking and sharing of best practices between researchers and other stakeholders. Building on the idea of IUC as an intermediary, another respondent advised the secretariat to take on a proactive role in facilitating strategic interactions between coordinators and researchers from Croatian HEIs.

These two parties could then work together, by combining the expertise of the coordinator and the ideas of the researcher when applying for new international projects. Other actors, such as national contact points and agencies could also be included in order to provide targeted and up-to-date information. This whole dynamic could then be linked to a conference or a similar event, that could be used as a mechanism for knowledge exchange and consortia building. This perspective feeds into the argument of another respondent, who envisions the IUC as a center for “policy-learning”: by making seminar with the IUC member universities on specific topics, during which policy workshops are being offered, new solutions to societal issues can emerge.

Respondents from Zagreb further replied that IUC would be a good place for establishing new cooperation, as such connections are often created at individual level and rarely institutionalized. In order for the IUC to get more publicity and attract more foreign researchers on a stable long-term basis, IUC courses could get integrated into international study programs and get accredited for visiting Erasmus student and more targeted advertisement of the IUC would be needed, for example by better tailoring their mailing list. These measures would lead to the IUC becoming more well-known in academic circles, also through secondary recommendations. The availability of scholarships for IUC courses is another great measure to motivate potential participants, as it promotes social mobility by encouraging the attendance of scholars which otherwise might have not had the opportunity. While the money is there to fund individual participation, the financial situation at IUC is proving more difficult as they receive limited funding and rely on the government financially, which frequently changes and shifts their priorities. In order to envision a more long-term development, better financial stability is needed for planning purposes.

c. Other WBC

From the other WBC, respondents noted that the IUC had an important historical-political role as a meeting point between researchers from East and West following its establishment in Yugoslavia 1972. In this way IUC was an institution that could promote dialogue between the two fronts at a lower level. Today there are a number of problems, since the IUC has lost some of its reputation as the WBC in their separate national forms do not possess the same international “brand” name as Yugoslavia did. Therefore, it is advisable to take a more proactive approach by the decision-makers. Possible measures include a better recognition of its potential by Zagreb University and a formal inclusion into their organizational structure as an opportunity to attract foreign researchers and strengthen mutual complementarity; recognition of its potential by the state and transforming it into public “brain storming centre” at Dubrovnik as an desirable location; becoming a Centre of Excellence in EU studies such as the master college in Bruges, European University Institute in Florence and other similar institutions. All these measures should aim at guaranteeing that IUC retains and develops their function as a meeting point for worldwide academics. With the IUC providing the venue for the organization of recurring courses they help keep existing networks alive. Furthermore, IUC could build on their current capacities by offering better information on

how to create new courses and market their courses better towards young academics, also offering them pilot possibilities for creating new ones.

A further respondent pointed out, that the IUC has both formal and informal network functions. Regarding the former they provide membership, regular activities etc. In the latter function they offer a space in which individuals can meet and establish avenues for collaboration. These networks are multipliers, meaning that friendships and connections once formed often extend beyond a single event and lead to multiple collaborations in various forms such as projects, articles and so on. Therefore, it is important that the IUC is funded in a systematic way as such investment multiplies, in the sense that it produces results through both formal and informal activities. This effect was also noted by another respondent, remarking that an initially established connection might set off a positive “chain reaction” producing results in several other areas. The previous respondent also mentioned the point made earlier, that stable and secure funding would be needed in order for an organization such as IUC to implement strategic planning and produce long term results. Targeted investment could then be made in a program focused around ethnic studies and diversity management, as it would be both a great reconciliatory and preventative measure in a region suffering many conflicts and can only be measured on the long-term indirect effects it would produce. A different respondent commented that the know-how of the IUC is valuable in regard to connecting universities with each other and creating jointly organized courses. This know-how could also be used to help HEIs apply for cross-border cooperation projects and help them with how to receive funds. A related development could be to build focal groups at different universities through IUC that together would be working to build capacities in certain areas.

d. IUC colleague

Building on the previous interview respondents, I have also talked with an IUC colleague in order to get their perspective on the current IUC capabilities and where there is room for capacity building. The colleague stated that IUC was created with the mission to promote internationalization worldwide. However, a major obstacle towards achieving this goal, is that professors notice at their home HEIs that they are lacking funding and time to write international project proposals. This matter has been brought to the attention of IUC’s governing bodies, but IUC themselves are currently only able to offer limited assistance within their means. In order to really achieve a breakthrough more skilled staff and financial stability is needed, if the IUC is to take on other administrative tasks than purely organizational ones, such as supporting the application for EU grants. In IUC’s current capacities there is no further room for improvement as they are already deployed to their fullest extent and the staff is working to their maximum capabilities. A plan would need to be developed with achievable goals and gradual implementation, accounting for current possibilities. When coming up with such a strategy, it is also important to consider the important role of course directors, as the IUC rely on them for providing academic substance

to the courses. The course directors themselves are volunteering their work for the IUC, so it is very limited what can be demanded of them, and due to the organizational structure, the secretariat should not encroach on their competencies. This aspect should also be considered if changes of a more systematic nature are being envisioned.

3. IUC archives – document analysis

a. Surveys

IUC conducted a survey of participant satisfaction for IUC courses held during the 2017 calendar year. The survey was answered by 321 respondents, split into the following four groups: Lecturers (102), organizers (45), professionals (83) and students (77). Of the lecturers more than half replied that they were not able to establish new international cooperation following their course participation and more than two thirds will not organize a new program and cite lack of connections and inadequate funding as main obstacles towards pursuing more international collaboration. Of the course organizers several mentioned better provision of scholarships as a major tool to attract more participants. The group of professionals were particularly affected by inadequate funding as about 40% had to finance their own participation fully by themselves. Of the students almost half responded that they did not receive ECTS credits for attending their course and less than a third would publish a paper related to it.

Another survey of course directors was undertaken for the academic year 2013/2014. Interestingly, many of the criticisms made in the 2017 survey were also reflected in the 2013/2014 one. Among these were lack of available funding for international projects, missing accreditation for course participants and the absence of affordable accommodation. Especially the last aspect makes it difficult to attract new course participants from the region and undermines social mobility, with the lack of funding also presenting an important explanatory variable for why not more international collaboration is emerging following IUC courses. Furthermore, course directors mentioned that decreased international ambitions of their home HEIs combined with increased workload made it hard to find time for creating new IUC courses and participating in international projects. This particular point was recurring throughout the interviews made for this thesis and may well be connected to the restrictions imposed by the Croatian government on HEIs following the financial crisis. Blocking of new hires and promotions would lead to an increase in teaching obligations and disincentivize the pursuit of internationalization. The impact of these restrictions could also be one of the reasons for 2013 being the year with the fewest course participants in the 2010-2017 academic program period.

Recommendations made by the course directors mostly aimed at increasing IUC publicity by creating a newsletter on existing courses and new projects, better inform about low budget accommodation facilities in the vicinity and overall better promote IUC activities through advertisement. The latter point is of particular importance, as many students and professionals were not aware of the IUC prior to being invited by their professors or course

organizers. In order to secure better accreditation for students, course directors furthermore recommended IUC to intensify collaboration with University Dubrovnik.

b. Statistical data

Considering the overall development of IUC, statistics of the year 2017 show that overall the number of courses, conferences and participants has increased since 2010. The number of courses has grown from 50 to 53, conferences from 8 to 16 and participants from 1452 to 1926. However, it has not been a steady growth, as some years throughout the period the number of courses has been lower than 2010 (2011, 2013, 2015) along with fewer participants in 2011 and 2013. Data on the nationality of course participants shows that out 1926 total participants in 2017, 1013 have come from EU and North America (53%), 547 from Croatia (28%), 160 from the surrounding region (8%) and 199 from other countries (10%). A fundamental question that deriving from the analysis of this statistical data is what kind of distribution one should strive for. If only “Western” participation is targeted the connection with the region gets lost, however if WBC are dominating the scene there might be insufficient input from foreign leading HEIs and lack of global knowledge exchange. In view of the actual numbers however, it seems appropriate to prioritize more participation of regional scholars outside Croatia for the future as they are the fewest and the majority of participants are already from the West and the second most are coming from Croatia alone.

c. Kathy Wilks

Internal documents provided insight into the engagement of late IUC Executive Committee chairman Kathy Wilks (1988-1996) for access to scholarships from the Soros Foundation. The correspondence between Wilks and the Soros Foundation have been stored in the archives. Wilks managed to secure the “Young Scholars Grant Scheme” which the Soros Foundation would make available from the academic year 1987/1988 on for scholars under 35 years from Central and Eastern Europe, including at the time Yugoslavia, participating in IUC courses on philosophy and social science. The scheme proved very successful as already the following year the age got increased to 40 and the applications surpassed the grants awarded by five times. Following the break-up of Yugoslavia Wilks remained active in her efforts to optimize the functioning of IUC. She strived to maintain the scholarship scheme; applied to UNESCO to secure financial support for third world country participants of IUC courses and mapped out the functional separation between the newly established Central European University and IUC. More notably she also oversaw the running of IUC during the wartime with its new role as a local refugee center and secured financial support of various international institutions.

4. Developing a strategy

Drawing on the observations made in this chapter, most respondents were satisfied with what IUC had to offer, but several ones advised IUC to better market themselves. If not a lot of HEIs are aware of the existence of IUC to begin with, they will not be able to make use of

the available opportunities and the organization will have less of an impact overall. This aspect is particularly relevant in light of the survey results, where many respondents answered not having heard of the IUC prior to having received an invitation through their personal network.

As mentioned earlier, a strategy has to be developed in consideration of the current limitations. Some factors, such as political uncertainty due to frequent changes between or even inside the government, or financial instability due to inadequate funding provisions and unforeseen budget cuts, are outside the control of IUC. Therefore, actions need to be identified that are achievable in view of the available capacities. Taking account of these considerations I have proposed a strategy on the basis of the five points listed below:

I. Advertise benefits better

Due to the structure of IUC, the organization heavily relies on third parties – whether it would be through the thematic contribution of course directors or its member universities constituting the network that shapes the overall environment. In order to develop an effective strategy, it should be tailored according to the actors and stakeholders involved – particularly if they are as important as in the case of the IUC. Since a lot of the IUC functioning is dependent on others' goodwill and volunteering, a good approach would be to create more awareness and better advertise the benefits which IUC is able to provide. That way the relationship becomes less one-sided, as other parties involved are not only doing it out of their own generosity but are also getting certain advantages out of it.

II. Create synergies with University Dubrovnik

A concrete step which could be taken would be to initiate negotiations with University Dubrovnik. They have declared interest in offering room for IUC courses and conferences and could potentially also help with securing better accreditation and promoting IUC activities, for instance via their Erasmus network. In turn the University Dubrovnik would profit from increased international exposure, being part of a dynamic process of knowledge exchange and get access to more international connections.

III. Integrate diversity management and ethnic studies into the course program

Another action which would be advisable to undertake, is to focus more on diversity management and ethnic studies as mentioned by an interview respondent. The region is still marked by the war and such a measure would pay off due to its reconciliatory effects and preventative aspect. In order to realize the full potential of such a policy, more non-Croatian participants from the region should be included, considering their relatively low number. Publicity efforts of the IUC could be targeting this region, for example by targeting call for proposals to relevant HEIs. The implementation of such a policy would also contribute to the efforts of promoting internationalization within the region.

IV. Establish a platform to execute joint activities

In connection with the two previous points on creating synergies with University of Dubrovnik and integrating diversity management and ethnic studies into the course program a platform could be established for the execution of joint activities. Universities could include the courses at IUC into their study program and collaborate with other institutions in order to create a common program, for example within the framework of joint degrees. The University of Dubrovnik could in this connection be a valuable partner, as they might be able to help with certification related issues. Offering courses at the IUC as an integrated and certified part of a study program, could present a “pull-factor” in attracting foreign students due to the favorable location and also provide a formal avenue for expansion of current institutional and personal networks.

V. Make use of organizational dynamics to offer related services

Due to the high visiting numbers of scholars from member universities all over the world, current data and statistics can be applied practically in order to offer “match-making” services for interested researchers. The database already stores a record on the institutional affiliation of the participants. Often connections are not institutionalized but rely on personal ties. If a researcher has a vision for a specific collaboration, they could contact IUC with a short outline of their ideas upon which the organization could set them up with interested participants that have opted in on being involved in such a scheme. The candidate proposal of IUC could then be done on the basis of specialization and experience of the participant in regard to the courses they attended.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have answered all three of the research questions:

- a) What are the policies and practices with respect to the internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?
- b) What are the barriers and opportunities for further internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?
- c) How can university networks, in particular the IUC Dubrovnik, play a role in overcoming barriers and using opportunities for internationalisation of research and higher education in the Western Balkans?

Summary of findings

Question A

Policies

In the first question I have outlined the relevant policies at all four levels – EU, regional, national and university. At the EU level, the overall framework for the various EU flagship projects – IU, ERA, EHEA is incorporated into the “European Higher Education in the World Strategy”. The strategy foresees Erasmus+ mobility program and Horizon 2020 research framework as key instruments in order to fulfil the objectives of comprehensive internationalization within the EU. While the Erasmus+ program primarily addresses students, providing a platform for exchange agreements, Horizon 2020 gives scholars the opportunity to apply for projects in consortia thereby promoting the transfer of knowledge. The programs complement each other well as they each address different target groups and different components of internationalization that however are interconnected. Mobility and knowledge transfer can only function to a limited extent without one another.

At regional level the RCC provides an intergovernmental forum for the consultation and coordination of policies, laying the foundation for the adoption of the WBRSI. The high-level participation of the EC and World Bank bears testimony to the deficit in research performance being a grave concern for the region and a matter of great international importance. In addition to this overarching policy framework, initiatives are also created at academic level, as witnessed through the CEEPUS platform for university exchanges or the SEELS research network.

These intergovernmental and interinstitutional measures are furthermore complemented by more immediate national actions. Each country has adopted their own set of policies on matters relating to higher education, research and innovation, many in which internationalization is figuring predominantly. At academic level capital universities even

have specific internationalization strategies aiming at increasing their involvement in the global knowledge market. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the university lacks a distinct internationalization strategy and the adoption of a national policy is made more difficult by implementation being undertaken at subnational level.

Outlining the various policies, it is also relevant to account for whether the implementation is being properly followed up. If there are no monitoring mechanisms in place, there is no way to ensure that what has been agreed to on a paper is actually being carried out in practice. In this regard, the latest 2015 version of UNESCO's 5-year reports on the state of global science showed that although the WBCs are showing some improvement in their research performance they still score low across all major indicators.

In consideration of this kind of benchmarking I interviewed the various respondents in order to see whether the outlined policies are reflected in everyday university practices and what impact they have. At a more fundamental level the aim was also to find out why the objectives are not being met and where the problem lies. As mentioned in chapter 3, the goal was to identify how exactly the underlying mechanisms causing a lack of internationalization throughout the WB manifest themselves and on that basis which recommendations to make for improvement.

Practices

The picture obtained of Croatia was the most complete one, as access to the biggest number and institutional variation of respondents was available. Frequent project participation and comprehensive exchange practices point to relative comprehensive internationalization taking place, measured on mobility and knowledge transfer. From the limited picture gathered from the other WBCs, Slovenia and Serbia fall somewhere in between Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Internationalization is similarly well integrated into the organization of University Ljubljana and Belgrade University, with the former being relatively well involved and the other being able to draw on their wide network due to their dominance within the region, despite having suffered significant losses during the war. Bosnia & Herzegovina falls behind as traditionalistic attitudes prevail in University of Sarajevo, but the emergence of private universities might start to counteract this situation.

Result

Taking a more analytical, rather than descriptive stance to question a, the findings show that there are a variety of internationalization policies in place at several levels, but they are only being partially implemented at the levels of universities and other similar institutions. Erasmus+ and Horizon2020 are both prevalent strengthening the educational and research component of internationalization. Nonetheless as seen from the statistics gathered from various databanks, the international outlook is still rather weak throughout the region. Erasmus+ and Horizon2020 might be formally available, but the underlying organization could be missing in order to secure efficient implementation – for example practical aspects,

such as offering courses in English for foreign students or providing adequate administrative support in project implementations. These aspects were addressed in more depth in the answer to the next question b on barriers and opportunities.

Question B

Barriers

Problems related to the deficit in internationalization of research and higher education have similar roots throughout the region. There is a low political prioritization of research and higher education as it is not considered a priority. As a consequence, it is accorded lower societal importance and much needed national reforms are being neglected. The subsequent problems are further exacerbated by the lack of funding which is connected to the former point. If the area is not regarded as being important, there will be less willingness to devote a significant share of the public budget to it. This aspect is negatively reinforced by the commonly held view of higher education spending being considered more of an expense rather than an investment. As conditions are not being improved many young people go abroad looking for better opportunities, resulting in brain drain and making the economy less competitive. In turn this leads to declining growth and rising youth unemployment.

In addition to these more general negative trends, that are common throughout the region, also specific country and university level barriers have been identified. In the case of Croatia these include traditionalistic attitudes held at universities; weak level of quality assurance undermining the credibility of degrees; a missing coordination between the autonomous faculties and university management within a decentralized system of governance and unfavorable regulations as scholarships fall under mobility tax schemes. The weak level of quality assurance and lack of university-faculty coordination is also the case in Serbia, whereas the tax problems figure in Slovenia as-well. In Slovenia, there is furthermore also a lack of competent administrative personnel, as national agencies are understaffed, and EU offices undergo frequent fluctuation making it difficult to maintain continuity. Finally, the situation is worst in Bosnia & Herzegovina, which suffers from a lack of investment into the country and where researchers lament a lack of access to the knowledge market, through restrictions to journals that are available in other WBCs. In view of the barriers it also important to consider the various national political conditions which the countries operate it and the effect they might have. These include the international isolation of Serbia during the war and the territorial fragmentation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Opportunities

Regarding the opportunities a similar picture presents itself relative to the one on barriers. The systematic deficits identified throughout the region (low political prioritization of HE and research; low spending relative to GDP; brain drain) require concrete political action to be taken, such as creating targeted internationalization policies, creating better capacities and

developing strategic migration policies. Building on the barriers identified previously, concrete opportunities for improvement also differ between the countries dependent on the situation they are in. In Croatia the weak level of quality assurance needs to be improved; in Slovenia more stability needs to be ensured in EU offices and national agencies by hiring competent long-term staff; in Serbia current exchanges and collaborations need to be further intensified in order to produce significant results and finally in Bosnia & Herzegovina, political responsibility needs to be taken either through FBH or RS in order to initiate the development of a unified strategic vision for the national research sector and ensuring that HEIs are being brought with on board.

Result

In answering the second question, I have shown that besides the specific barriers and opportunities present at the individual level of the countries and universities, there are also more general negative trends throughout the region that require a more coordinated approach. These are mostly of socioeconomic nature, necessitating concrete political action. This aspect leads to the following question on the role of the IUC. The systematic issues are inherent to the environment IUC is operating in. This is not to diminish the role of the organization, as they are not capable to solve such large scale political problems. It is rather to underline, that internationalization of higher education and research as their niche area should not be treated separately but as part of a whole. In effect, the importance of internationalization becomes more significant due to its wider societal impact as observed earlier on in this thesis.

Question C

When it comes to the contribution of university networks, in this particular case IUC, there are a number of possibilities for how they can promote internationalization within the region. The IUC works as a forum for institutionalized dialogue between university members within its network. They have the available infrastructure to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and research practices between scholars participating in their courses and conferences. This is in particular an opportunity for ambitious emerging academics, as they can present their own work to a greater audience and establish connections for future international collaboration. However, due to the limited funding available of the IUC and the unstable political environment they are working in, it is difficult to plan ahead long-term. More generally, due to the way that the IUC is set up as mentioned by the interviewed colleague, they rely heavily on the input of the course directors for the realization of their purpose. The course directors are volunteering their efforts in order to help, limiting the demands that can be made of them. Due to these circumstances, the limited capacities of IUC and their reliance on course directors volunteering efforts, the developed strategy was focused on how to use current capabilities efficiently, in order to make the most with the resources available.

Building on these observations, I created a policy plan which uses current capacities more efficiently in order to promote internationalization. It is built around the five outlined points: I) creating a platform to execute joint activities between universities II) create synergies with University Dubrovnik III) Integrating diversity management and ethnic studies into the course program as a mechanism for regional reconciliation IV) more IUC engagement in advertising the benefits of membership and marketing their activities V) create match-making service for academic collaborations by the IUC secretariat. At the core of this plan is the idea, that the IUC optimizes their existing function as a forum for dialogue while creating incentive structures for their participants to motivate to become more involved.

Outlook

Following a comprehensive analysis of the various forms of data gathered from a diverse range of sources (databanks, policy documents, interviews, IUC archives) during the research for this thesis, the main takeaway is that IUC makes an important contribution to internationalization within the region, even though they are operating in a sociocultural, economic and political environment that is only moderately conducive towards achieving those goals. IUC has certain organizational experience and expertise which makes it possible to achieve significant results with the limited amount of resources they have available, provided that they are able to use the infrastructure efficiently. This potential is already partly realized, as evidenced by the growth in activity reflected in the statistics and the extensive access to scholarships through the engagement of former chairman Kathy Wilks. Nonetheless in order to address deeper underlying societal issues, that are hindering a real breakthrough in research performance and more deep-rooted internationalization, more concerted action at higher political level is needed. This should also be accompanied by proper auditing, monitoring and follow-up. As described earlier, a plethora of policies are already in place, but without proper checks and balances, there is no way to guarantee that what has been agreed on paper is being carried out in practice.

The implications for future research is that better and more detailed country level studies are needed on how national power structures impact the functioning of their higher education system. As the WBC share common traits in relation to factors such as political legacy, socioeconomic development and certain cultural aspects they are also very different in other key factors such as demographic composition, level of European integration and internal governance. These issues require a more intense and specialized studies in order to envision a coordinated policy that tackles common problems prevalent in the WB, but which is also receptive to the various structural differences between WBCs. The region has long been plagued by frequent political instability and has been ravaged by the relatively recent devastating civil war, which is still strongly present in the collective memory. In order to fully overcome these hardships and create long-lasting sustainable development and prosperity a targeted strategy is needed, that is adaptable to local conditions were required. So far supranational and intergovernmental approaches by the EU and World Bank as identified,

have only brought limited success. This aspect makes it even more important to take these considerations on board next time, in order to achieve permanently good results.

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ANNEX

List of respondents

Croatia (16)

- University of Dubrovnik (4 – 2 administrators, 2 researchers)
- University of Split (2 - both researchers)
- University of Rijeka (1 researcher)
- University of Zagreb (4 – 2 administrators, 2 researchers)
- Agency for Mobility and EU programs (2 - both policy officers)
- Ruder Boskovic Institute (3 – 1 administrator, 2 researchers)

Serbia (3)

- University of Belgrade (3 – all researchers)

Slovenia (3)

- University of Ljubljana (2 – 1 administrator, 1 researcher)
- Jozef Stefan Institute (1 researcher)

Bosnia Herzegovina (3)

- University Sarajevo (1 researcher)
- 2 political party officials

Other (3)

- Foreign researcher based in Croatia
- Former researcher from Zagreb University
- IUC colleague