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**NEW TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
KEEPING UP WITH THE CHANGE**
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Higher Education Reform in the Western Balkans

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CENTRE FOR
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1.0 Introduction

The 'concerted' *European higher education reforms* (1999 – 2016): time for reflection.

The 'Bologna success': from 30 to 48 countries.

By rule, national HE reforms have been carried out in the context of the trans-national '*Bologna brand*'.

Implementation: the 'Bologna success' vs. 'failure'.

'Full implementation' of the Bologna agenda – in 2016? The context has changed immensely!

Therefore, *reflection* and *reconsideration* rather than 'full implementation' of an idea of 1999.

Reconsideration always requires *reflection of the past*.

2.0 Europe and its HE: diversity vs. convergence

A background survey *Trends and issues in European higher education* (presented at the Bologna Conference in 1999), by G. Haug and J. Kirstein. Key findings:

→ *extreme diversity*, to such a degree that it may well be called confusion, or even chaos; the dense jungle of degrees, institutions and systems is *the single biggest obstacle to more mobility in HE in Europe*;

→ no ready-to-use external model (e.g. in the USA) that would be replicable; *Europe needs to develop its own model* to suit its unique cultural and educational needs;

→ a convergent set of reforms recently introduced or in progress in several European countries: they signal *a move towards shorter studies*.

2.1 The Birth of the Bologna Process (1999)

"We are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need **to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe**, in particular building upon and **strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social and scientific and techno-logical dimensions**." […] "We **engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach** in the short term, and in any case within the first decade of the first millennium, **the following objectives**":

(1) adoption of a system of easily **readable and comparable degrees**;

(2) adoption of a system essentially based on **two main cycles**;

(3) establishment of the **system of credits**;

(4) **promotion of mobility** […] to the effective exercise of free movement;

(5) promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance**;

(6) promotion of the necessary **European dimensions in higher education**.

Bologna Declaration, 19 June 1999

2.2 "Concerns for the post-Bologna" in 1999

G. Haug and his five "*main areas of concern for the post-Bologna developments*" (EAIE, December 1999):

☐ *the risk of non-concerted reforms* ("if some countries were to introduce superficial, window-dressing reforms, e.g. taking a long curriculum and just cutting it in bits and pieces");

☐ *the risk "to focus on very small differences rather than looking at the big common issues"* (e.g. tracking the minor differences in content and organisation between degree in chemistry in two countries) ;

☐ *the risk that the challenge from abroad remains under-estimated* (e.g. transnational education, etc.);

☐ *the risk if "not all countries in Europe be included in the process* of setting up the European space for higher education";

☐ *"the most important risk* […] is *that HE institutions themselves under-estimate the level of change* […] and wake up a little bit too late".

2.3 What have we achieved until 2010?

"3. The Bologna Declaration in 1999 set out a vision for 2010 of an internationally competitive and attractive EHEA where higher education institutions, supported by strongly committed staff, can fulfil their diverse missions in the knowledge society; and where students […] can find the best suited educational pathways."

"6. […] While much has been achieved in implementing the Bologna reforms, the reports also illustrate that EHEA action lines such as degree and curriculum reform, quality assurance […] are implemented to varying degrees. Recent protests in some countries […], have reminded us that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained. We acknowledge and will listen to the critical voices raised among staff and students. We note that adjustments and further work, involving staff and students, are necessary at European, national, and especially institutional levels to achieve the EHEA as we envisage it."

Budapest/Vienna Declaration, 12 March 2010

2.4 Reforms: From design to implementation

Implementation of structural reforms – HE reforms in our case – is always *a risky* and *uncertain process.*

National HE reforms: they have been centrally initiated but responsibilities are (should be) shared between all HE partners at different levels.

The *'Bologna' reforms*: voluntary process of "connecting" and "harmonising" national reforms.

Design at the European level – legal system at the national level – implementation at the institutional (HEIs) level.

EHEA : EU-28 vs. EU-48 => ?

The risk of *different* (even *conflicting*) *interpretations* and different views on priorities and pace of reforms.

3.0 HE Reforms in the Western Balkans (WB)
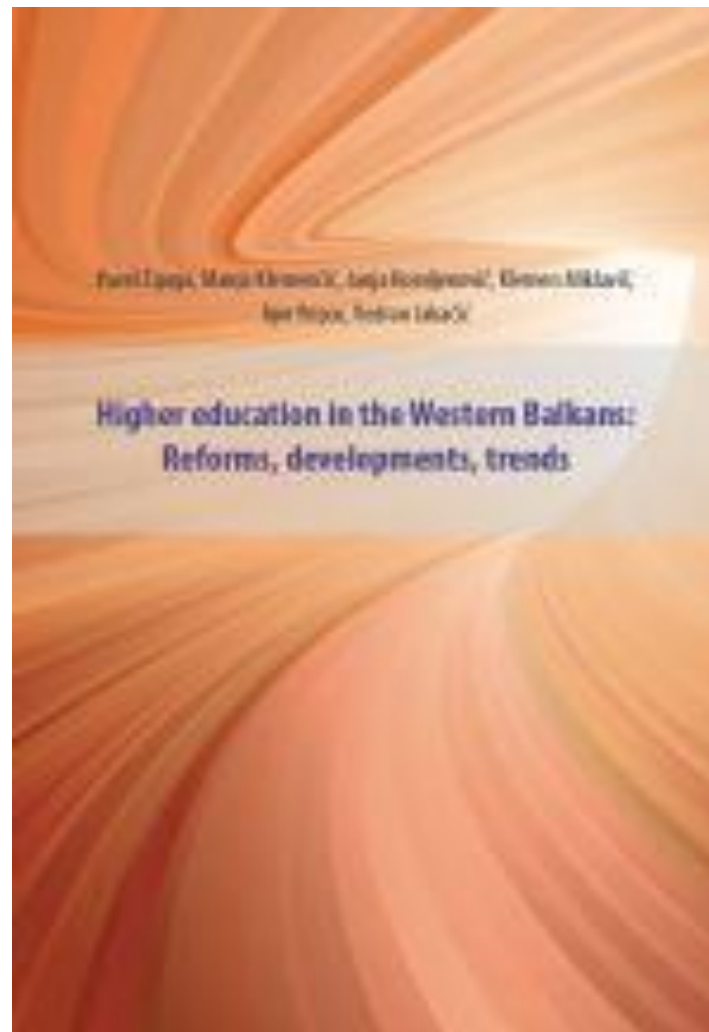
A case study within the DEP research project (2013)

http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si/images/stories/doc/hewb.pdf

3.1 Survey on HE in the Western Balkans (WB)

- Field research carried out in Spring 2012 (publ. 2013)
- *8 countries* (independent countries from the territory of the former Yugoslavia + Albania)
- *17 universities* (two per country; an 'old' and a 'new' one)
- 78 interviews (academic leaders; policy makers; experts)
- 1 questionnaire (academic leaders; policy makers; experts)
- 1 questionnaire (academic staff)
- Desk research: policy documents; reports; legislation; statistical data from official sources

3.2 General post-1990 trends: *legislating HE in WB*

On the surface, the most visible feature is *expansion* and *massification* of the national HE systems in WB.

Three waves of legislating:

- the ***first wave*** (the 1990s): the existing 'philosophy' of HE remained largely the same;

- the ***second wave*** (late 1990s – early 2000s): managing the 'post-conflict' period and 'reintegration into Europe'.

- the ***third wave*** (the 2000s): 'Bologna' implementation.

Independence (the constitution of new states; political pluralism) and the question of the national HE system:
: The *politicization* of higher education;
: *Privatization* of higher education.

What is this? This is the last preBologna train for doctorates!

Oslobođenje (Sarajevo), 11/01/2014

3.3 The entanglement of national and international impact

International policy influences (BP but also WB, OECD, etc.) vs. *specific national contexts / needs / problems.*

The result? – Transvestism of particular reform aims (at least in some countries) into '*Bologna reforms*' (the phenomenon of 'pan-boloniasation'):

➔ an inadmissible *broadening* of the 'Bologna' action lines into various '*bolonia*' scenarios (e.g. "*bolonia* requires that students pay fees in all countries" etc.);

➔ nationally constructed '*bolonia*' reform aims as an *excuse* for domestic pushes and clashes;

➔ *darkening of the national responsibility* for HE (excuses like "*Brussels requires it*" etc.).

4.0 Between Bologna and '*bolonia*'

In 2003 there was the introduction of the Bologna system that has a lot of good points, *however, it has been* introduced with a little force, hastily. (Interview 29; 9/3/12)

With us there is the situation that whatever the Bologna Process proposes the legislators or government officials quickly put into law. [...] *An impression emerges that* we are doing something that someone else told us to. (Interview 04; 23/3/12)

We started with a plan to reduce a 4-year study programme to 3 years [...] *and we conceptualised the MA programme as research-based* [...]. *Then there was madness in the then Ministry* [...] *and study programmes were extended.* [*Now,*] *we have an undergra-duate study programme which lasts 5 years. Total madness.* [...] *Today, people study with us for five years to get the same title* [i.e., a degree], *which was previously awarded after 4 years of study.* Someone is making fun of us. (Interview 42; 27/2/12)

9/16

4.1 Perceptions of the "Bologna" reforms in WB

"The Bologna Process has contributed importantly to the quality of my institution" – assessments given by decided respondents (by countries and institutions). – (8 countries; N=1,742; © CEPS 2013)
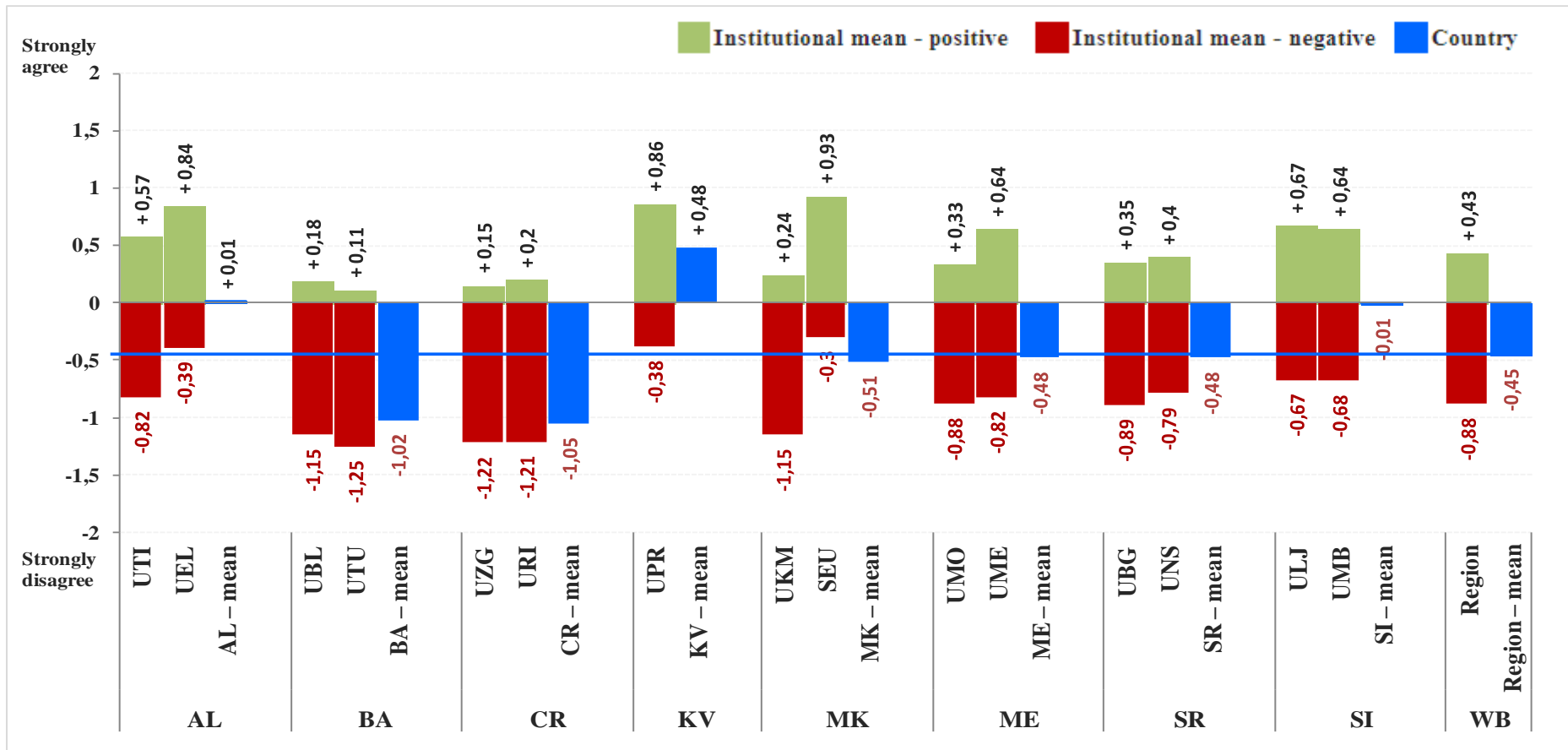
4.2 Politicization and privatization as key concerns

Who shapes higher education policy at the national level? Four to five individuals. All these people have established private universities, faculties. […] *We are shutting our eyes if we believe that the university, faculties and experts are shaping higher education policy.* [With us today,] *higher education has become 'politics.com'* (Interview 42; 27/2/12).

[…] *the latest legislative proposals from two years ago were aiming at the privatisation of higher education and the goal was to destroy* [our] *University* […]. *This was the aim of politics for reasons of personal gain. The idea is that the university would be cut into several smaller ones and the declared reason was said to be international comparison – that 'this is being done elsewhere in Europe'* (Interview 29; 9/3/12).

"When the country is collapsing and Europe sinking into crisis, knowledge is the only solution."
Promotional poster of a private college in Ljubljana (2013).
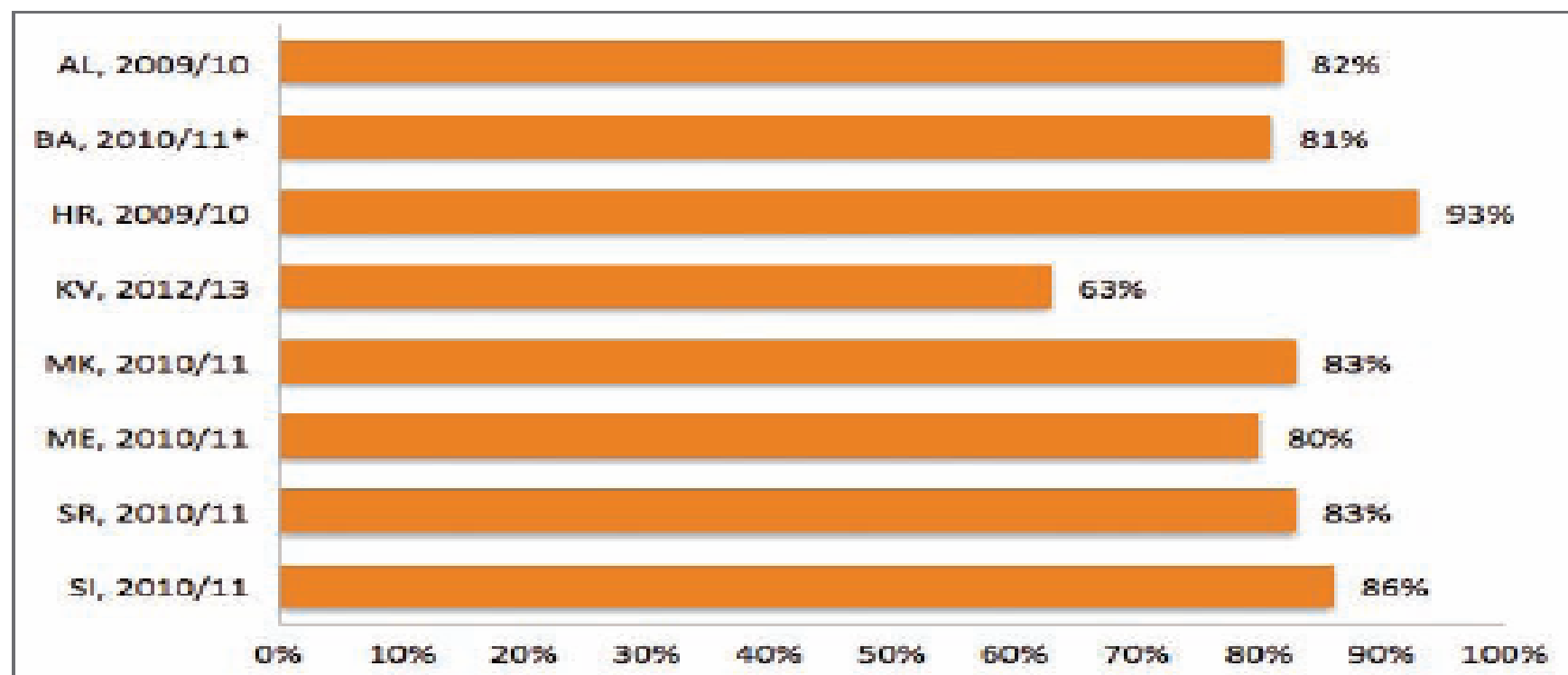
4.3 Steep rise of private HEIs …

Two noticeably different (incompatible) post-1945 traditions in educational systems: SFRY and Albania.

During 'the transition', in the territory of the former Yugoslavia the new nation-states have developed their new HE systems in different ways, and Albania has moved far away from its autarchic past.

New legislation allowed the establishment of private HEIs.
1990 in SFRY: *19 universities* (21 million people);
1990 in Albania: *one university* (founded in 1957);
2012 in the WB region: *47 public UN* as well as *about 250 private UN and other HEIs*.

4.4 … but low share of students in private HEIs

Figure 9: Students in public higher education institutions – percentage by countries

Country	Percentage
AL, 2009/10	82%
BA, 2010/11*	81%
HR, 2009/10	93%
KV, 2012/13	63%
MK, 2010/11	83%
ME, 2010/11	80%
SR, 2010/11	83%
SI, 2010/11	86%

Note:

* These data present the number of enrolled students in *public* higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, but without data for the Brčko District. Data for the Brčko District could not be obtained.

(Source: Compiled from national statistics offices)

4.5 Motives for private provision of HE

Very diverse across the region:

- Finding alternatives to meet the growing interest for enrolment into tertiary education

- Enthusiasm about liberalization, market, choice, competition, efficiency, etc.

- ethnic divisions and the need for HE (e.g. in BiH)

- Transnational expansion (especially American and British universities), e.g. in Kosovo and Albania

- Post-conflict intervention (e.g. SEEU Tetovo)

- The transition friction between the elites and the establishment of new power relations in society

4.6 Concerns for quality

In the region we have a flood of private faculties. Adequate accreditation standards need to be urgently formulated and these faculties need to be evaluated according to these standards. Private faculties often do poor work. […] They are established out of political reasons with support from individual politicians. (Interview 23; 01/03/2012)

There was no profiling of the institutions because the effect of copy-pasting from the public sector. There was also no competition due to the same fact. There was diversification expected from growth of the private sector which was considerably inhibited by the above mentioned effect of commuting academic staff. (Interview 53; 15/3/12)

Can regional/international cooperation be a good response?

4.7 HE cooperation within the WB

My institution should primarily seek cooperation with universities or higher education institutions from the *Western Balkans* – percentage of those agreeing or strongly agreeing, by countries (N=1,742; CEPS 2013)


Country	Percentage
AL	94%
BA	60%
HR	26%
KV	98%
MK	78%
ME	44%
SR	28%
SI	20%
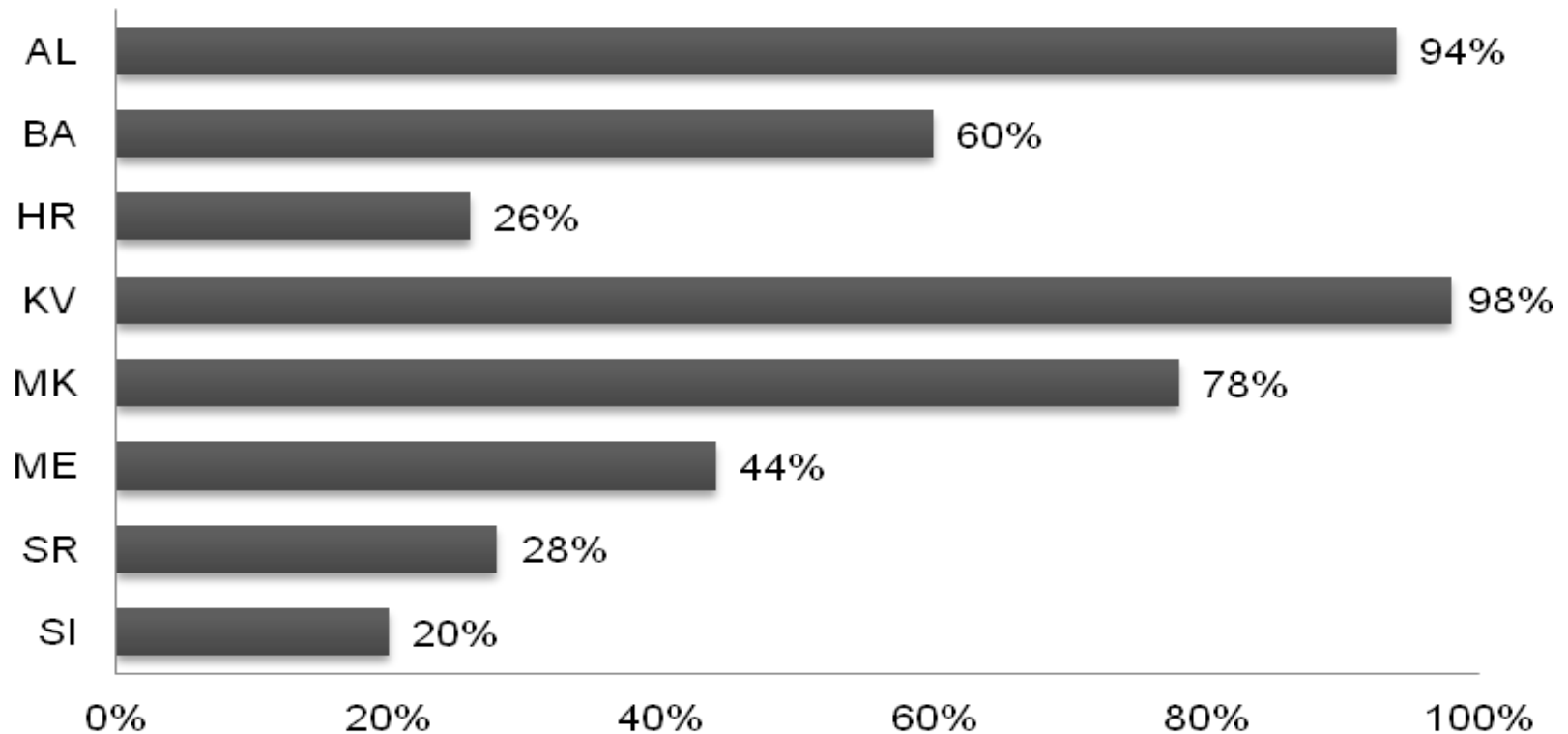
4.8 HE cooperation beyond the WB

Percentage of respondents by countries giving a particular *world region or country* a high or the highest priority for academic cooperation (N=1,678; CEPS 2013)
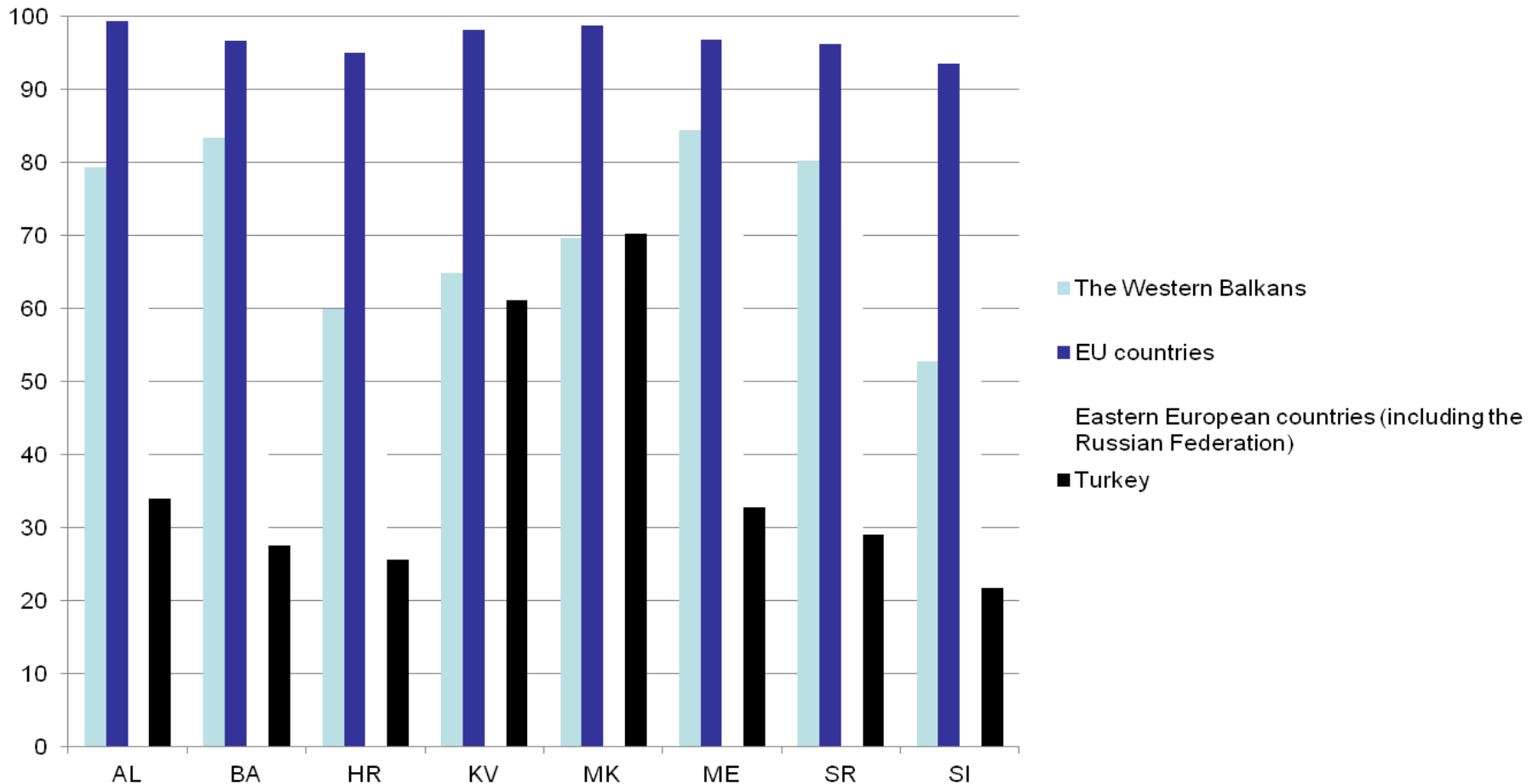
4.9 WB and HE cooperation worldwide

Percentage of respondents by countries giving a particular *European region or country* a high or the highest priority for academic cooperation (N=1,678; CEPS 2013)
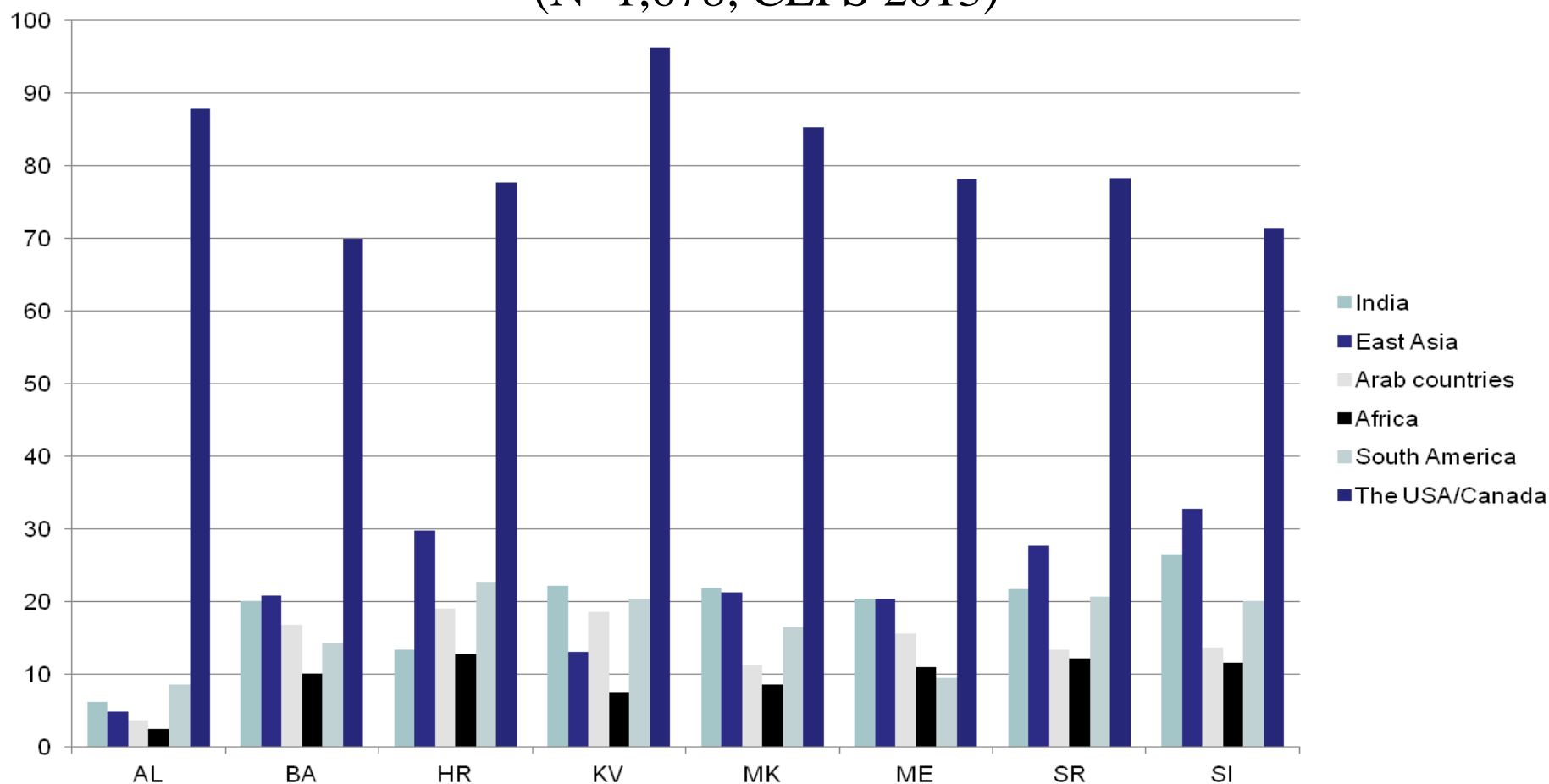
5.0 Conclusion

In the past twenty-five years, the gap between the 'top' and 'below-average' HEIs *increased* (massification, etc.).

Here, uniformed approaches and expectations (e.g., focus on 'fast runners', 'world class' HEIs, etc.) make *damage*.

International cooperation of HEIs is *not an end in itself*; in WB, it must be primarily to *strengthening their capacity*.

Diverse strategies are needed for *diverse institutions*.

On a general level, there are two essential needs:

- To *modernize teaching and learning* (e.g. in terms of 'student-centred' approaches rather than in technical terms);
- To *reinforce research,* also by overcoming its fragmentation (institutional, national, regional and international level).

Both needs require *enhanced international cooperation*.