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Evaluating participation of top class universities in European research programmes: what insights for policy debate?

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AIMS OF THE WORK

To assess motivations and effects produced by the participation to EUFP at the level of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The focus is on University participation to EUFP7, taking top-class research universities as specific cases.

Combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to control the motivations and impact of EUFP7 participation in top-research universities with those of other European research universities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

- What indicators can provide better insights about top class universities participation to EUFPs?
- To what extent they can provide policy makers with useful information about Programmes design and implementation?

We assume motivations and effects of EUFPs participation to be highly diversified also across top class universities

Differences of motivations and impact mirror countries' differences in EU programmes involvement and characteristics of national R&D systems.

BACKGROUND

Increasing evaluation of EUFPs exploiting different approaches to highlight its capacity to foster large EU research policy objectives such as widening participation, improving integration, increasing synergies across member states and enhancing performance.

Changes in the evaluation frame:

- *focus* -from national aggregates to individual actors (Lepori and Reale, 2012)
- *aims*: from measuring to the understanding of rationales for the programmes design (Primeri and Reale, 2012; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2005)
- *instruments*: from performance based indicators to evaluation frame aimed at capturing motivations and impact (Reale et al., 2014)
- *use*: formative role of evaluation (Molas Gallart and Davies, 2006)

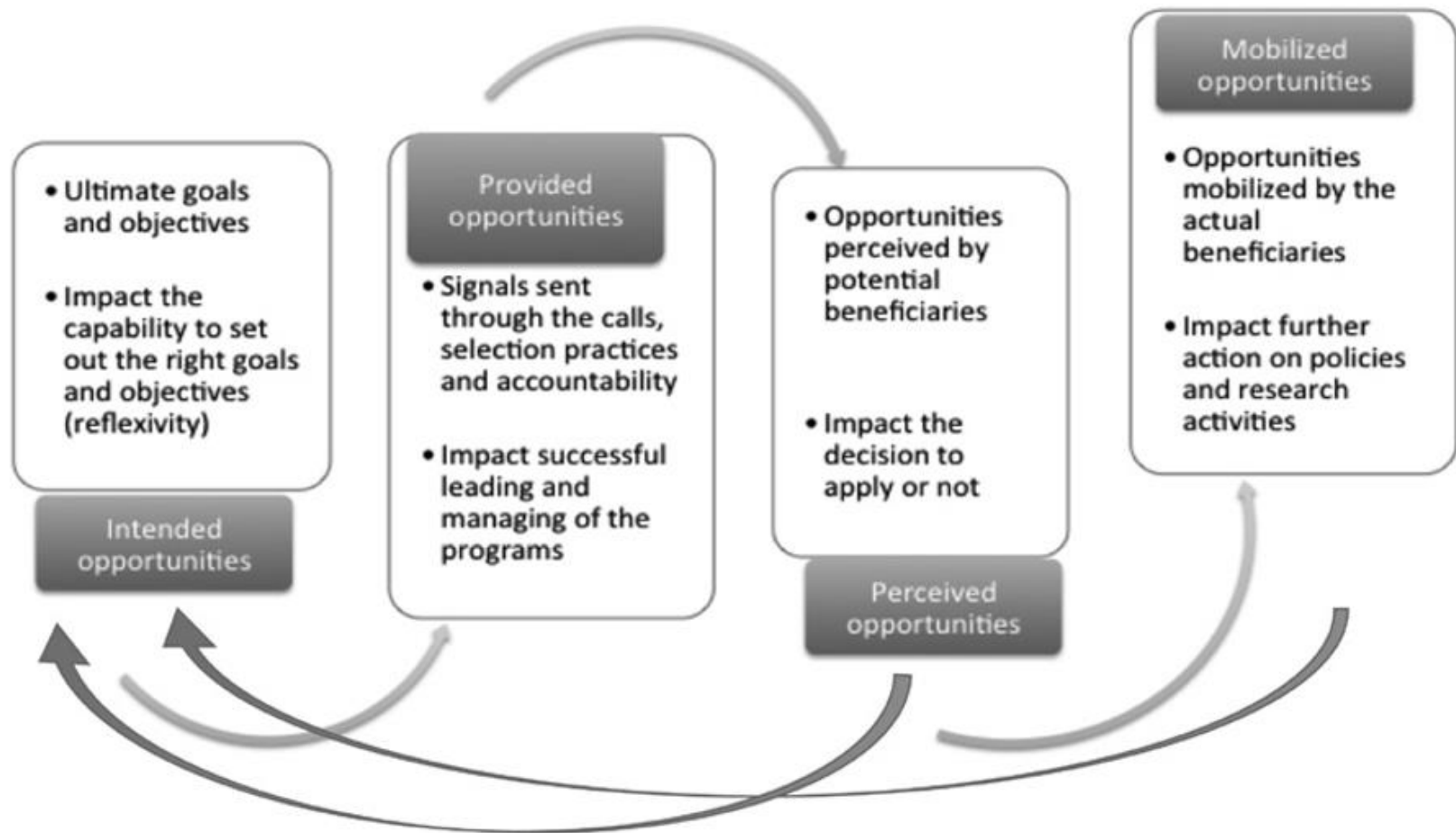
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Impact of EUFPs defined as opportunities intended and provided or expected and mobilized (Reale et al., 2014; Nedeva et al., 2015)
- Different modes in which universities understand the opportunities supplied by the programmes and decide to act accordingly (Reale et al., 2014).
- Inconsistencies between
 - *intended and provided opportunities highlight possible shortcomings of the policy action;*
 - *provided and perceived opportunities shed light on problems related to the programmes design;*
 - *perceived and mobilized opportunities provide evidences about different internationalization strategies.*

MAIN LIMITATIONS:

- Only scientific impact can be figured out (social impact?)
- Analysis carried at the University level instead of groups or individuals (differences across disciplinary fields or research areas not emerging)

FRAME FOR THE ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS AND IMPACT



Source: Reale et al. 2014

METHODOLOGY

25 case studies on European high performing research universities participating in EUFP7 selected according to

- a) world standing in research activities (positioning in main international rankings);
- b) high participation in EU FPs (baseline EU FP6 and FP7);
- c) both generalist universities and technical universities;
- d) geographical representation to avoid a concentration of cases in few countries.

In depth analysis for 5 very top universities among the 25 selected.

The methodological approach integrates results from descriptive analysis, qualitative information coming from a survey involving 100 universities participating in EUFPs (from EUFP IV to EUFP VII), of which 25 are those investigated through the case studies and 30 in depth interviews.

THE UNIVERSITIES SELECTED

UNIVERSITY	Country
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	UK
POLITECNICO DI MILANO	IT
UNIV. BOLOGNA	IT
AARHUS UNIVERSITET	DK
THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH	UK
UNIVERSIDAD POLITECNICA DE MADRID	ES
CHALMERS TEKNISKA HOEGSKOLA	NL
UNIVERSITY OF UPPSALA	SE
KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN	BE
THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS	UK
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER	UK
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON	UK
ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE	CH
KARLSRUHER INSTITUT FUER TECHNOLOGIE	DE
TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT	NL
TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT EINDHOVEN	NL
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON	UK
EIDGENOESSISCHE TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE ZUERICH	CH
KAROLINSKA INSTITUTET	SE
UNIVERSITY COPENHAGEN	DK
UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT	DE
DANMARKS TEKNISKE UNIVERSITET	DK
LUNDS UNIVERSITET	SE
PIERRE MARIE CURIES	FR
THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM	UK

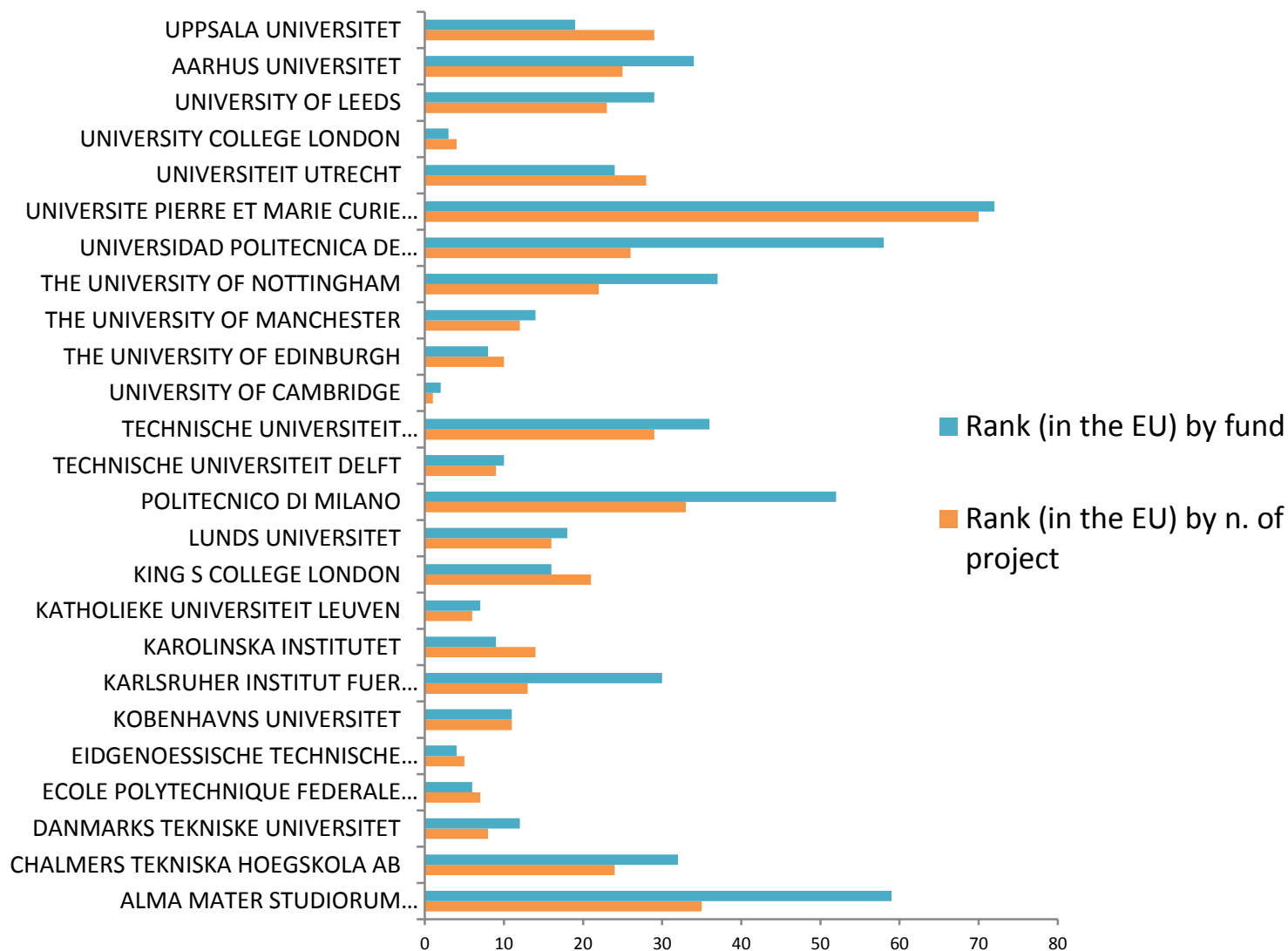
DIMENSIONS FOR THE ANALYSIS

EUFPs main opportunities	Key dimensions assessed	Main items/indicators
Funding	Amount and duration of funding	Access to funding Consistency of funding with research objectives
Networking	Collaborations building and duration	Entering new networks Long lasting collaborations Public-private collaborations
Innovation and excellence	Building reputation	Improvements of reputation and excellence Achievements in terms of scientific outcomes Gaining leadership
	Knowledge improvement	Risky and innovative research Frontier research Access to new knowledge and equipment Knowledge acquisition, use of new equipment
	Knowledge mobilization	Training opportunities for researchers/Phd Researchers career
	Research outcomes	Development of intellectual property Dissemination of research outcomes
New fields	Fields innovation in research	Interdisciplinary Cross field research
Additionality	Added value of EUFPs	Benefits of EUFPs compared to national resources Possibility to replace EUFPs

MAIN RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

Motivations	All universities	Top universities
Funding	High	Not relevant
Reputation	High	Very High
R&D Outputs (excellence and productivity)	High	Relevant
Multidisciplinary research	Low	High
Training PhD/early researchers	Low	Low
Networking	Relevant	Very High
Leadership	Low	Very High
Benefits	All universities	Top universities
Funding	High	Relevant
Reputation	Relevant	Very High
R&D Outputs (excellence and productivity)	High	Relevant
Multidisciplinary research	Low	High
Training PhD/early researchers	Low	High
Networking	Relevant	Very High
Leadership	Low	Very high

Rank by funding and by projects granted



Source: eCORDA 2015; Note: the lower the value the higher is the position of the University in the ranking

RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

- Top-class universities are not an homogeneous group of performers with respect to all the dimensions concerned (i.e. funding, networking, excellence, etc..)
- Participation in EUFPs and positioning of the HEIs in the international rankings are highly correlated.
- Excellence is the main objective to be achieved by EUFPs and strategic importance and role of ERC and Marie Curie (self-reinforcing mechanism).
- Generally no interest nor perception of ERA as an issue related to EUFPs (especially for the 5 very top universities).
- Organizational issues as elements of differentiation across top universities (e.g. EU funds offices, researchers' support, dedicated grants emerge especially for the 5 very top universities).

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation frame based on the 'opportunity framework' confirms its capability

- To provide relevant insights about the policy rationales for EUFPs construction and development (Reale et al., 2014)
- To highlight the extent to which different motivations and impact of participation mirror inequalities and shortcoming of EUFPs as policy instruments for the creation of ERA (Henriques et al., 2009)
- To deepen differences between strategies and implementation policies within actors that are assumed to be an homogeneous group (Altbach et al., 2009)
- To improve reflexivity on public policies (Mollas Gallart, 2006)

FINAL REMARKS

The study highlights the increasing influence of a managerial paradigm on European Framework Programmes (Young, 2015).

The capacity of EUFPs of widening academic scientific quality and the programmes design should be questioned.

Lock in mechanisms in EU research policy instruments design emerges instead of instruments to widening participation.

Should top down approach be balanced with a more bottom up definitions of priorities and thematic areas?

Thank you for listening