SEA EU | DOC

European University of the Seas

Doctoral Candidate Training and Building Alumni Networks

Presenter
Dr. Avan Antia (Kiel University)
Task leader
Prof. Dr. Leandra Vranjes Markic (University of Split)
with input from all the SEA-EU DOC partners

What training best suits the needs of doctoral candidates seeking a career outside the University?

- to create awareness of opportunities

- to recognise skills they posess and practice

- to learn new skills for jobs outside science

- to create a portfolio by understanding employers' needs

- to have direct exposure to representatives from non-University sectors

Training Events

60 Doctoral Candidates
Representatives from non-University Sectors
Professional Trainers

Career Development for Doctoral Students (Brest, 2021)
- Diversity of the job market
- Know and claim your skills
- Present yourself with impact!

Problem-Solving Skills for Higher Education Learners (Split, 2022)
- TRIS Problem-solving method
- Companies present challenges, participants develop solutions
- Pitch the results

Entrepreneurship Skills (Cadiz, 2023)
- Paradigms for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Skills: Empathy, Creativity, Communication, Branding
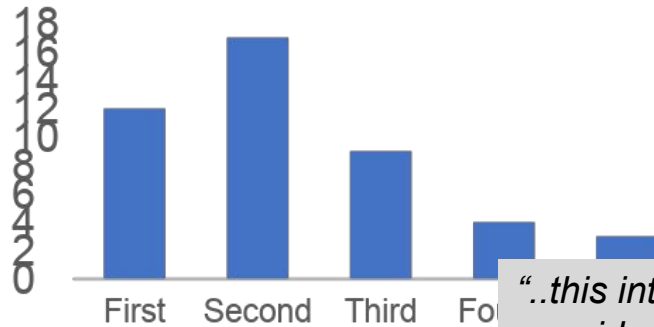- Business Model Canvas

What Doctoral Candidates said

In which year of doctoral studies are you?

First | Second | Third | Fo...

Would you like this to be part of your PhD training?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

38,9%

> *"..this intensive course significantly **helped lower the threshold** to actually consider starting a start-up in the near future."*
> *"I can definitely see myself starting an entrepreneurial project - and I did surely **not consider this in any serious way before**."*

Are the course contents transferrable to your PhD training?

- Yes
- Partly
- No
- I am not sure

19.4%
16.1%
35.5%
29%
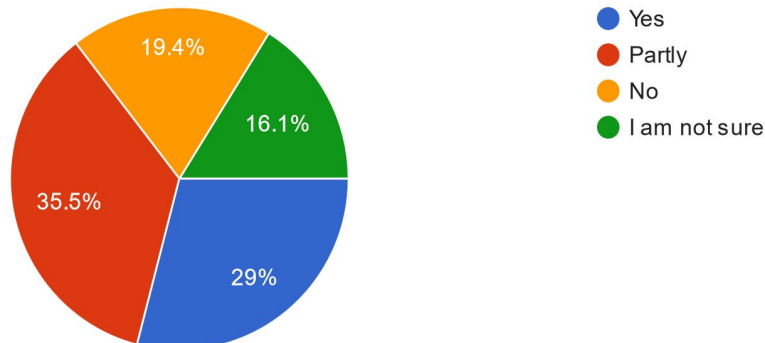
Would you recommend the course to other doctoral candidates?
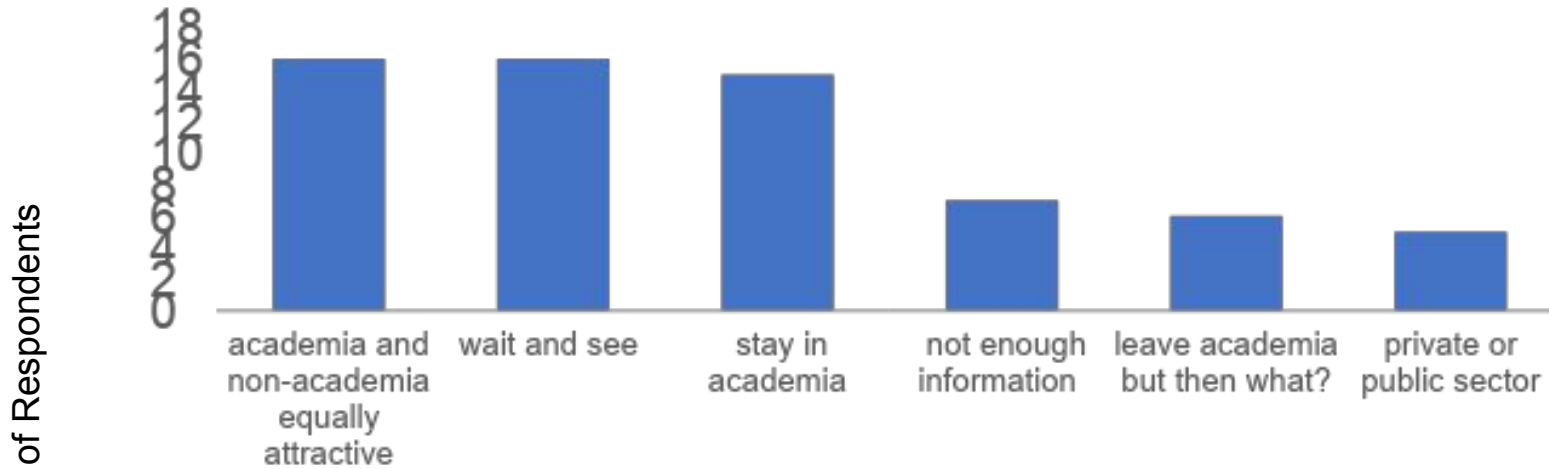
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

88,9%
11,1%
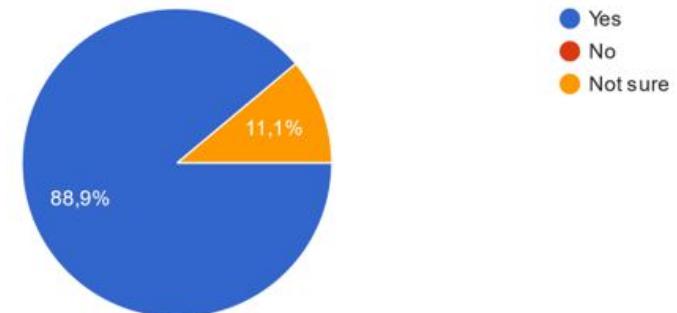
„In our numerous group work sessions, in which we applied the newly learnt contents to concrete ideas, noticeable networks seemed to form, and interdisciplinary work possibilities popped up frequently."
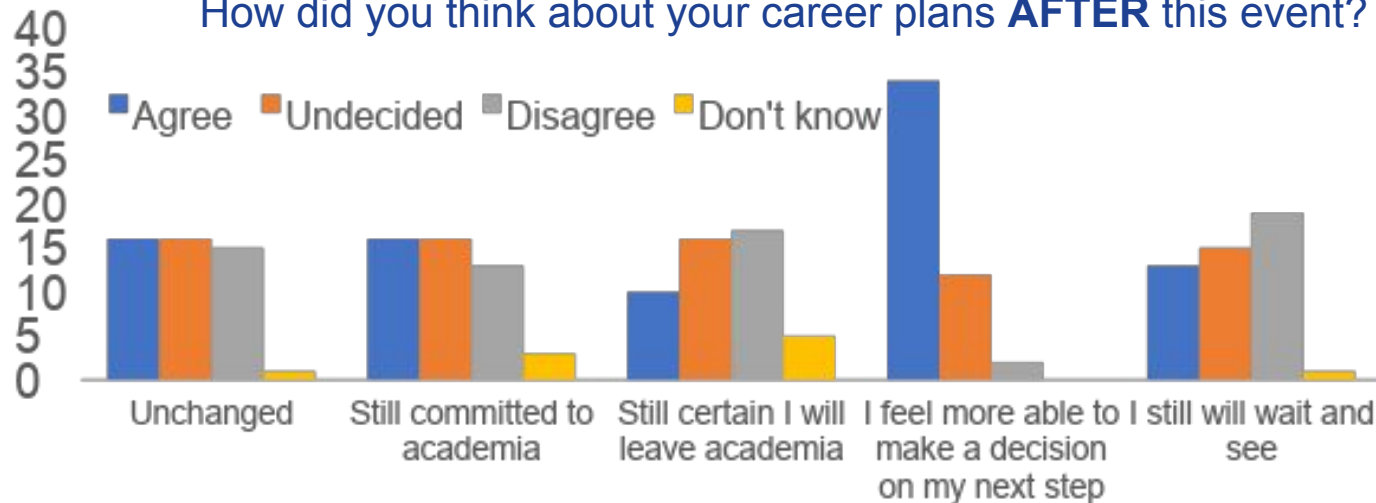
How effective were the training events?

How did you think about your career plans **BEFORE** this event?

Number of Respondents (y-axis)

academia and non-academia equally attractive · wait and see · stay in academia · not enough information · leave academia but then what? · private or public sector

„*The workshop gave me a lot of perspectives and I feel like I'm **more informed to make my decision**, however this doesn't change the fact that it's a big decision for me, and I **need more time to think about it**.*"

How did you think about your career plans **AFTER** this event?

■Agree ■Undecided ■Disagree ■Don't know

Unchanged · Still committed to academia · Still certain I will leave academia · I feel more able to make a decision on my next step · I still will wait and see

Lessons Learned

- Doctoral candidates **orient themselves early in the doctorate**

- Participants reported gaining **skills, confidence and insights** into their career development

- Direct **contacts to the non-university sector** were important!

- Such **trainings** are relevant (also to the doctorate) and desired by doctoral candidates.

- Often, **supervisors resisted** - they need better communication!

Alumni Networks

University Alumni build a large group of highly qualified people who have found diverse jobs outside the University

How can Alumni be harnessed and motivated to contribute their experiences and expertise to those following them?

What can we learn from researching Alumni networks and their mode of operation – successes and challenges?

# Alumni Network Questionnaire
Online form (103 of 284 responded)

- **36 questions, in sections**:
  - **baseline information**, including the relation to the university of origin and staff/volunteers;
  - **funding**;
  - **membership benefits**/fees;
  - **communication with alumni;**
  - **activities and collaboration with stakeholders**, including activities for PhD students
  - **challenges** and means to overcome them
  - relation to **marine, maritime and coastal** thematics;

Alumni benefits

- Benefits normally provided include::
  - **participation at events** (71%)
  - **access to alumni directories** (52%)
  - **access to university literature** (33%)
  - special discounts for **lifelong learning courses** (27%)
  - special discounts for **educational and professional advancement**(23%)…

- Surveyed alumni organisations are also active in **providing assistance with job opportunities (55%)** and **student placement (38%)**

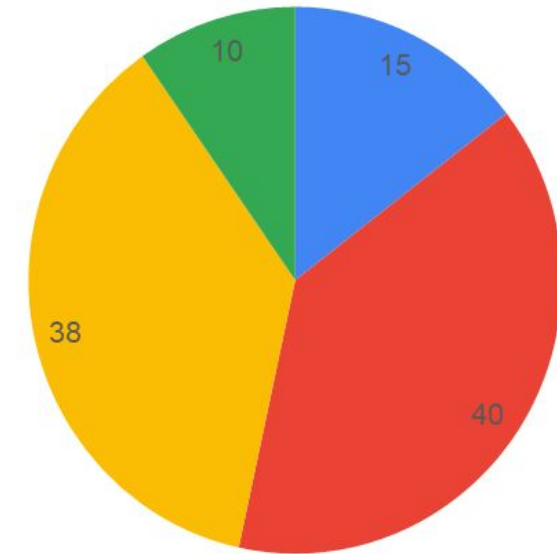# Alumni benefits: primarily networking events
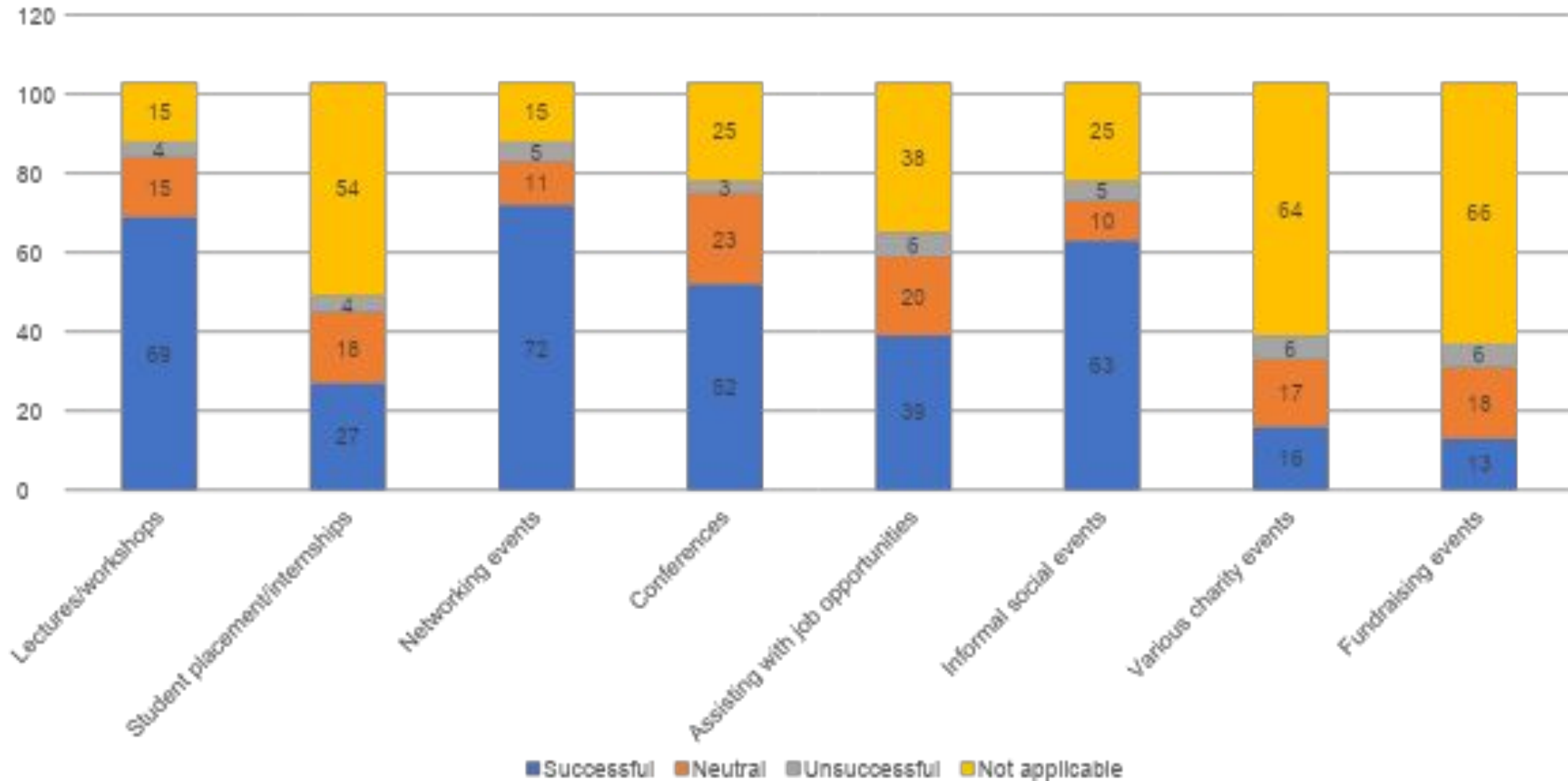
Activities for doctoral students

- **workshops**, conferences and lectures organized for and by PhD students
- **mentoring** programs
- **promotion of PhD students** and their research
- awarding **prizes** for a doctoral thesis
- **round tables, leadership courses**
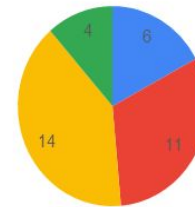- **career talks** with renowned alumni speakers
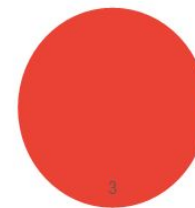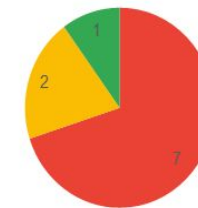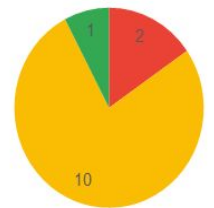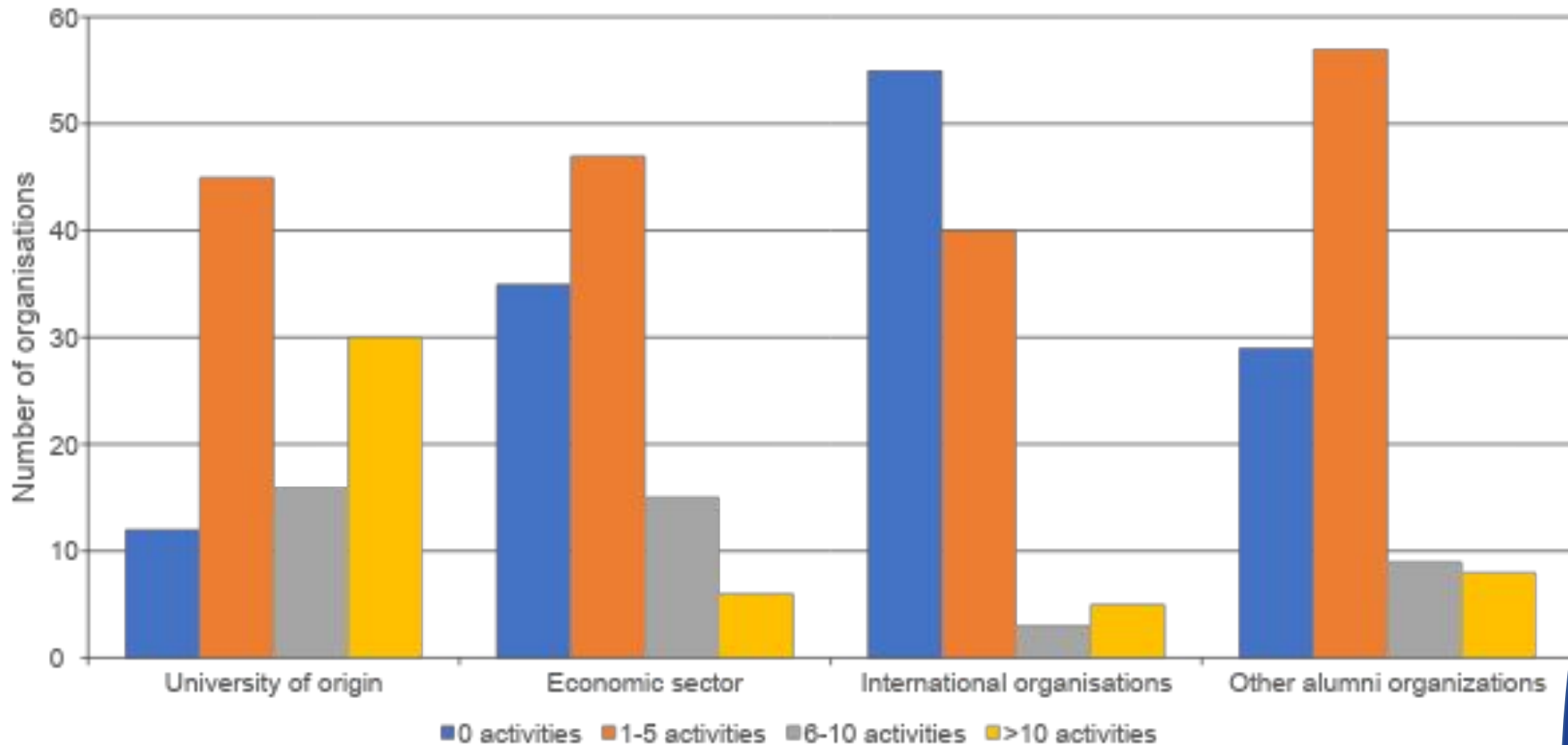
Collaboration with stakeholders

Improving Collaboration with the University

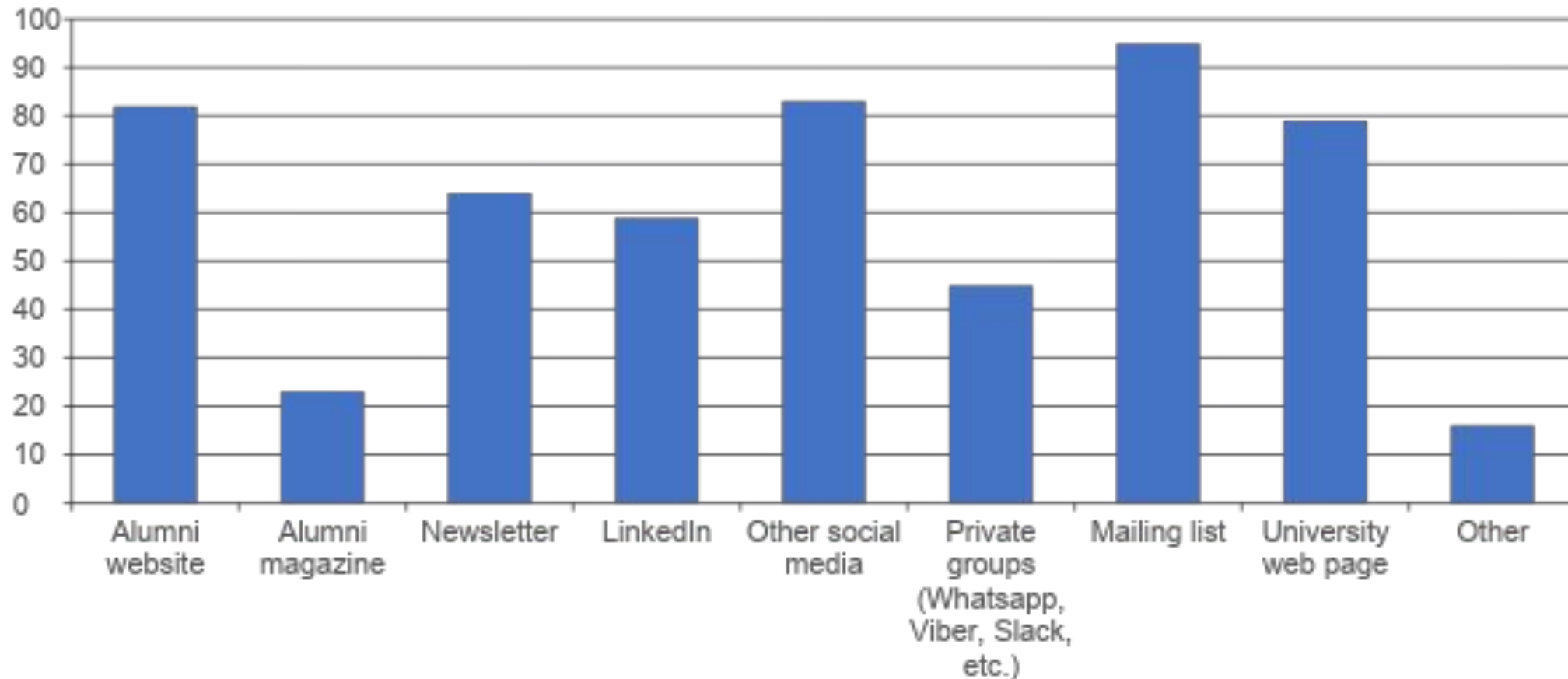## Suggestions

- **funding** for alumni organisations is a major hurdle
- improved **collaboration with management and professors**
- collaboration **agreements**
- being recognized in **university strategy**
- **communication** on as many levels as possible
- **dedicated staff** for communication with alumni organisation
- making alumni organizations more **visible to students**
- student **internships**
- **meetings**, integration **events**
- **career tracking** of alumni and sharing with alumni organisation

Communication with alumni

Communication channels

Channel	Value
Alumni website	82
Alumni magazine	23
Newsletter	64
LinkedIn	59
Other social media	83
Private groups (Whatsapp, Viber, Slack, etc.)	45
Mailing list	95
University web page	79
Other	16

Tracking Alumni

- A significant number reports challenges: maintaining members directory, activating members
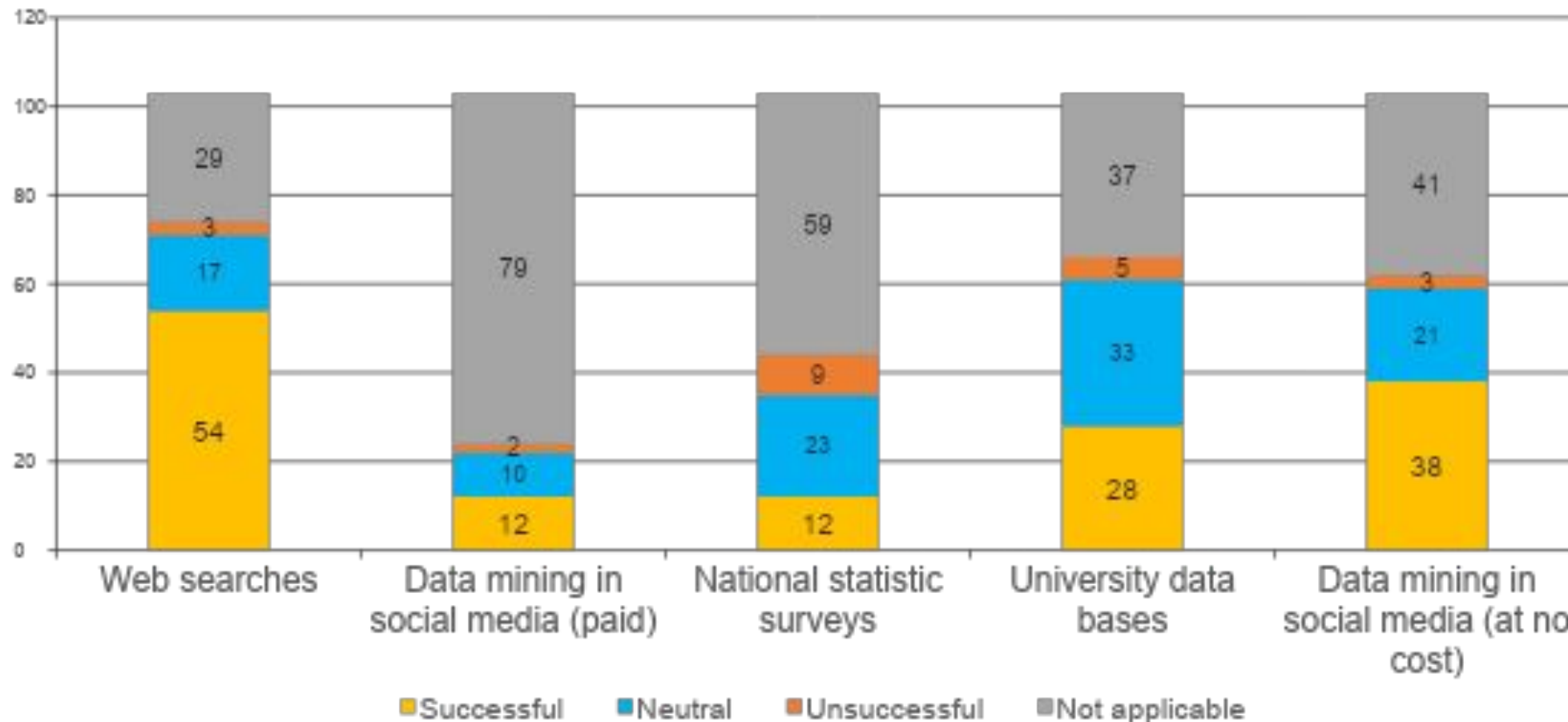
14 Case studies

- **4 European**: Toulouse Alumni doctors, The Sorbonne University network, Association of former students and friends of Dental faculty of the University of Zagreb, University of Helsinki

- **3 from U.S.A.**: Cal Alumni Association, Penn State Alumni Association, and MIT alumni association

- **2 with sectoral focus emphasising maritime theme**: International Ocean Institute alumni and NF-POGO network for the Ocean

- **5 global European network**s related to research and mobility: Marie Curie Alumni association, The Oyster group as a part of the EuroMarine research network, The Erasmus Mundus Student Network, The Erasmus Mundus Association, and Max Planck Alumni Association
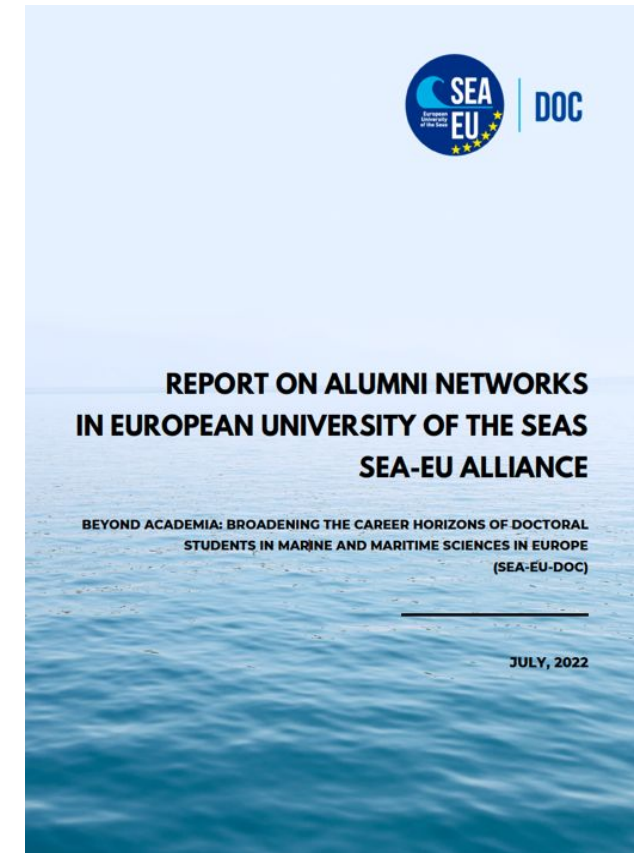
Insights from the case studies

- **Online portals**
  - forum for students and alumni to connect and get most of their career path
  - lifelong email address for members
- **Ambassador program**
  - alumni member who helps young students build work-life networks
- **Internships practices**
- **Local clubs/groups**
  - first meetings organised by the alumni organisation
- **LinkedIn** (especially useful for non-academic world), Twitter
- **Regular surveys** to improve organisation and to follow the trends
  - e.g. doctoral observatory
  - give an overview of current job situation, useful for job seeking strategy

Conclusion

- **Questionnaire results and case studies published in the report**

- Most of the surveyed European organisations are at the beginning
- They can benefit from the best practices of more experienced organisations
- With dedicated time and motivation European university alliances could establish strong alumni networks which could be beneficial also for their PhD students
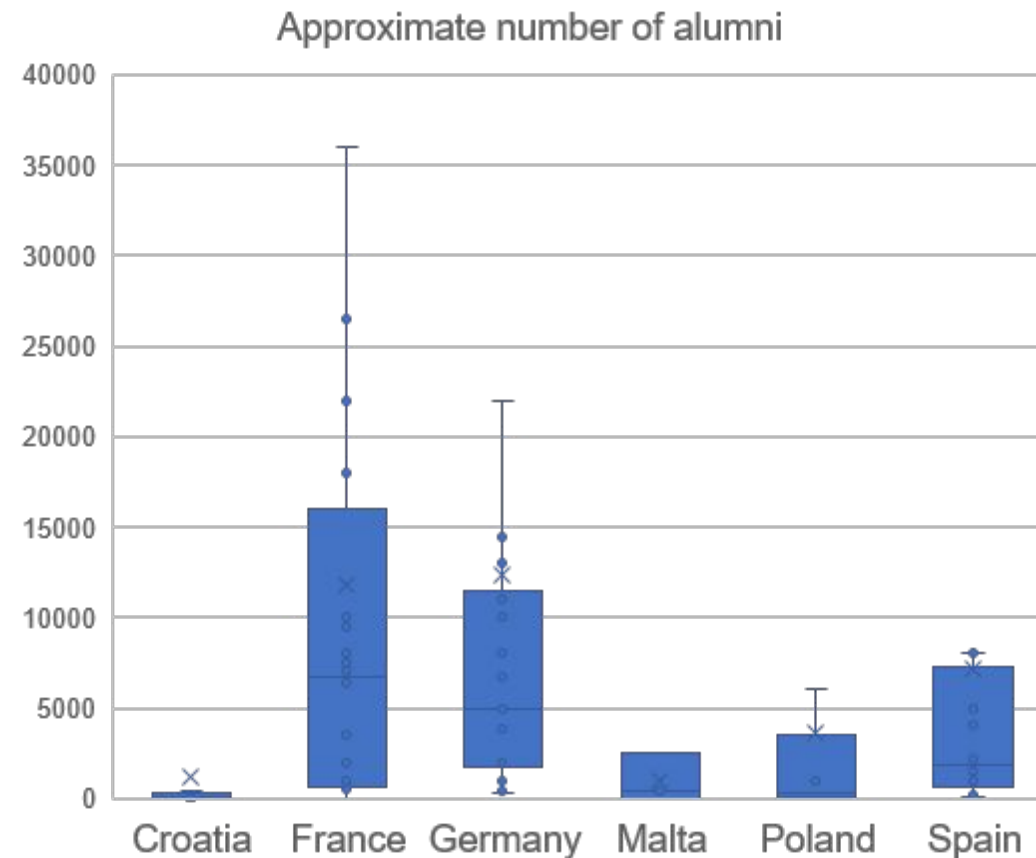

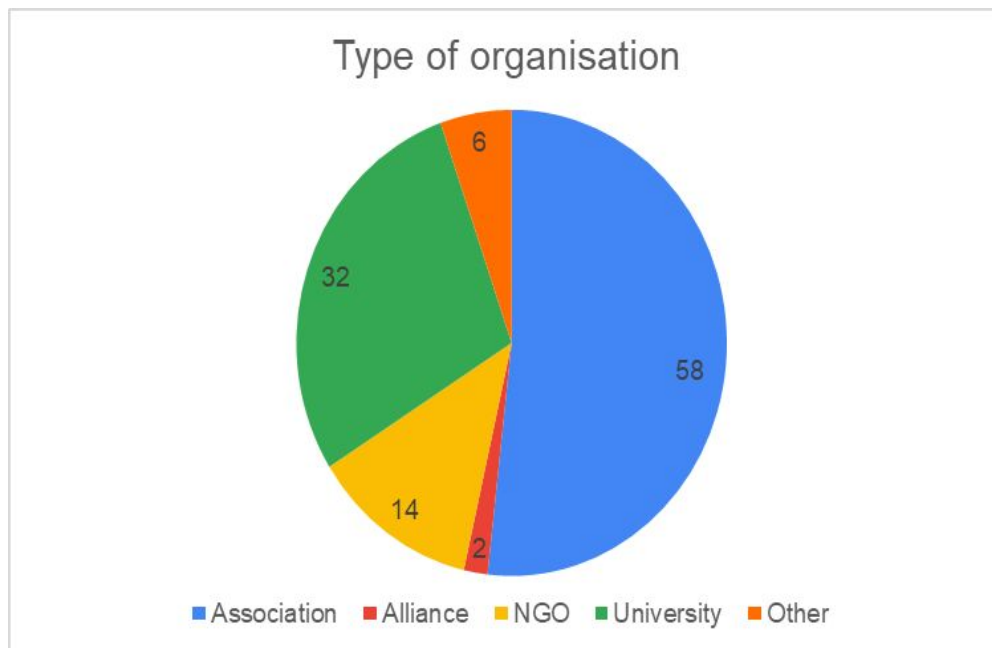REPORT ON ALUMNI NETWORKS IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF THE SEAS SEA-EU ALLIANCE

BEYOND ACADEMIA: BROADENING THE CAREER HORIZONS OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN MARINE AND MARITIME SCIENCES IN EUROPE (SEA-EU-DOC)

JULY, 2022

Thank you for your attention!

Characteristics of surveyed alumni organisations
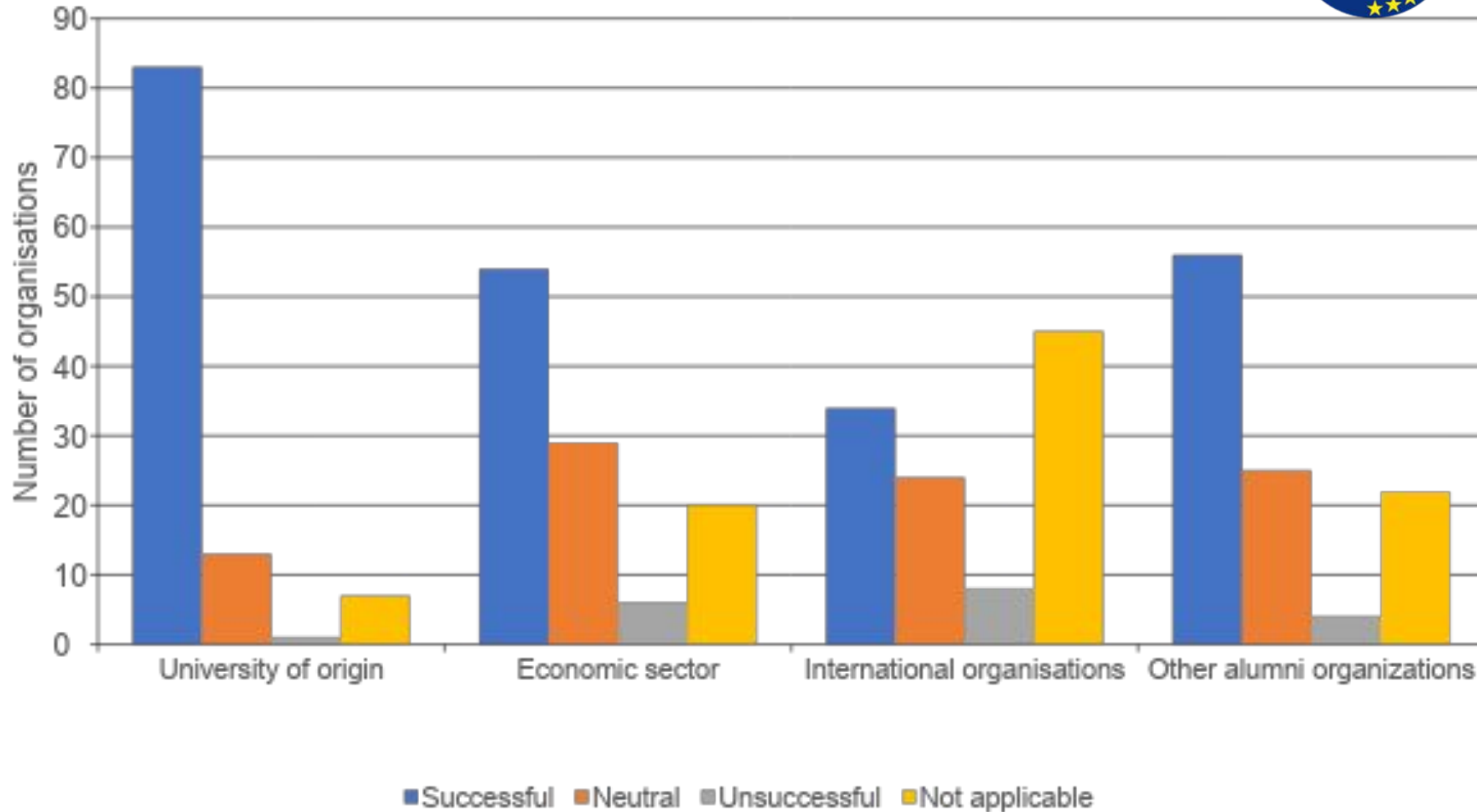
- Variety of **legal forms**
- 39 of 103 have **no employed staff**, 34 have from 1-2 members of staff
- A significant role of **volunteers**

Type of organisation

- Association: 58
- Alliance: 2
- NGO: 14
- University: 32
- Other: 6

Approximate number of alumni

Croatia France Germany Malta Poland Spain

Perceived success of collaboration

Insights from the case studies

- **The crucial role of volunteers**
  - awarding them with volunteer work certificates
  - for large organisations good coordination is important (volunteers as national and program contact points
- **Motivating alumni**

  - questionnaires to determine what is most motivating

  - doctoral alumni want to establish research and innovation collaborations - basis for alumni attachment

- Some of these practices need many years of investing