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# FACTORS LEADING TO THE FORMATION OF ALLIANCES. EVIDENCE FROM ETER

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# PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

- ❖ Research Aims
- ❖ Theoretical framework
- ❖ Methods
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Conclusions
- ❖ Questions for Discussion

# MECHANISMS OF ALLIANCE FORMATION – RESEARCH AIMS

- How can we characterise the individual alliances in terms of composition? >>> What are the Mechanisms of Alliance Formation across the European Universities Initiative?

## Caveats:

1. In the two calls (2019 and 2020) *116* applications were received and *41* European Universities have been funded. Our observations are based on those final results of the two calls.
2. We hypothesise about the mechanisms at play as outsiders to the process, by observing existing data available through various sources.

## Mechanisms of alliance formation

### Similarity

- the tendency for alliances to be formed by organisations that share or are similar in terms of some attributes (Siciliano et al., 2021), e.g. reputation and status, values, but also size, age, geography and social environment, or the demographics of 'clients' served.

### Pre-existing network ties

- Organisations are more likely to form alliances with actors with whom they already have ties, organisations they trust, and share a history of a rich exchange of information. This both helps to reduce the search costs and mitigates the risks associated with opportunism (Gulati, 1995; Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999).

### Complementarity

- To create innovation and greater value, organisations must find partners that are somewhat different from their own – as a mechanism, it appears to be both more common and leading to more successful outcomes (Gulati, 1995; Hamel et al., 1989; Mitsubishi & Grave, 2009).

**We expected to observe a mix of the three mechanisms, aiming to identify which is a predominant one, or which of three operate in tandem**

# METHODOLOGY

Mixed-methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative analyses:

- Characterisation of alliances: Use of ETER-based HEI classification.  
Source: **Lepori, 2021**; using data from **ETER**
- Analysis of network ties:
  - "Research" ties: Intensity of collaboration in Horizon 2020 projects (2014-2020)  
Source: **EU Open Data Portal**
  - "Education" ties: Intensity of Erasmus+ student exchanges (2014-2020)  
Source: **EU Open Data Portal**
  - "Institutional" ties: HEIs' joint membership in pre-existing alliances or networks
- Directed content analysis of publicly available information  
Source: **EUAs' factsheets and websites (relevant information found for 39 alliances)**

# METHODOLOGY

Six classes of HEIs (Lepori, 2021):

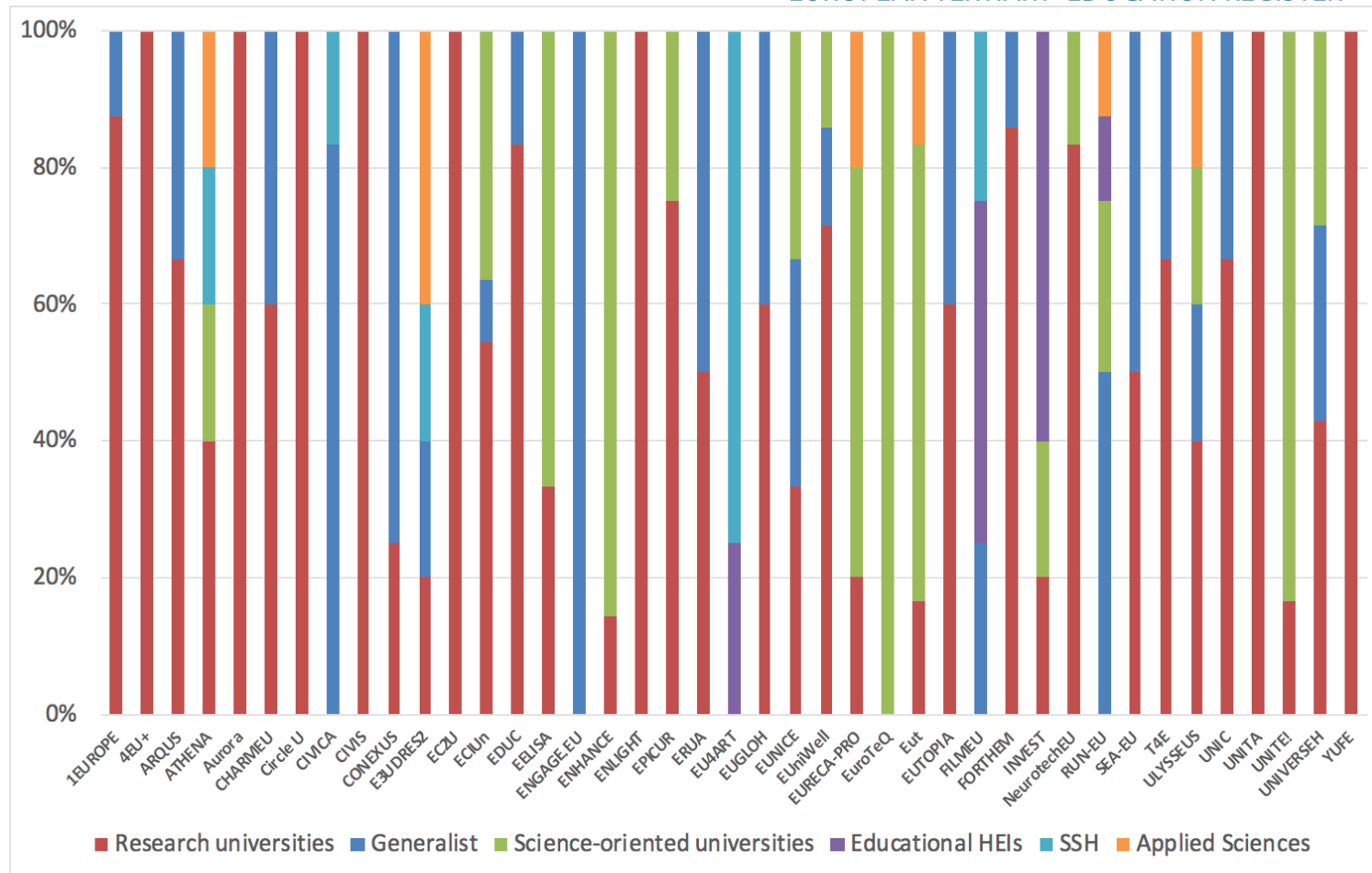
- *Research Universities*: PhD-awarding HEIs with large research output and multidisciplinary.
- *Science-oriented Universities*: PhD-awarding HEIs oriented towards natural and technical or medical sciences, with high research and patent intensity.
- *Generalist HEIs*: Middle-size HEIs enrolling most of the students in social sciences and humanities, with average research intensity.
- *Applied sciences HEIs*: HEIs without the right to award a PhD with an orientation towards natural and technical sciences.
- *SSH-specialised HEIs*: small and specialised institutions in social sciences and humanities, such as academies of arts and music, with a high intensity in PhD education.
- *Educational HEIs*: non-PhD awarding institutions, without research and technology output.

Source: Lepori, B. (2021). The heterogeneity of European higher education institutions: A configurational approach. *Studies in Higher Education*.

DOI: [10.1080/03075079.2021.1968368](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2021.1968368)

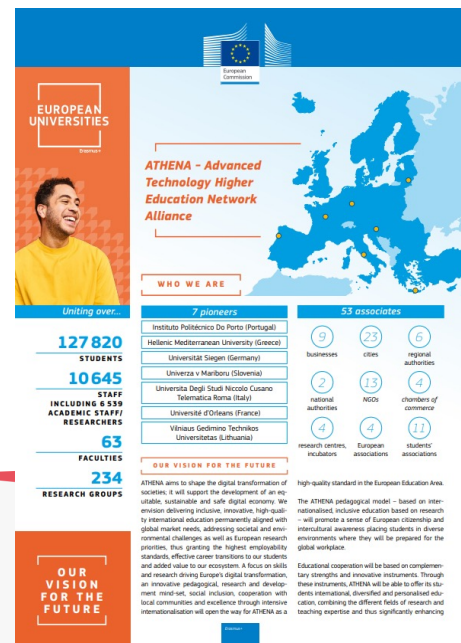
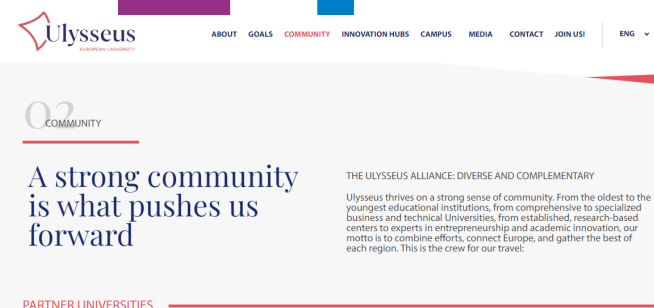
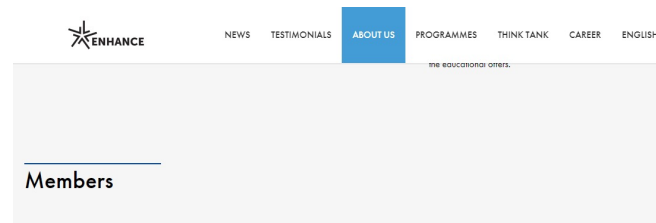
# RESULTS

- Composition of EUAs by classes:
- 8 EUAs are fully composed of **Research Universities**, e.g., Circle U, YUFE, with further 13 EUAs including only one other class (most often generalist, including 2 with ½ Research-Generalist composition)
- 4 are fully or mostly (i.e. including one other class) composed of **Science-oriented Universities**, e.g. EuroTeQ, EELISA
- 3 are fully or mostly composed of **Generalists** institutions: CIVICA, ENGAGE.EU
- 1 includes **SSH** and **Educational HEIs**
- 12 EUAs can be considered as heterogeneous (>2 classes represented)



# RESULTS

- Subject orientation (22/39)
- Activity profile (18/39)
- Specific type of institutions (6/39)
- Geographical characteristics (18/39)
- Reputation (13/39)
- Local and/or regional engagement (12/39)
- Common values (6/39)
- International orientation (4/39)
- Age (7/39)
- Size (3/39)
- Legal status (2/39)
- Diverse student bodies/focus on inclusiveness (3/39)
- Past experiences of bilateral or network collaboration (17/39)





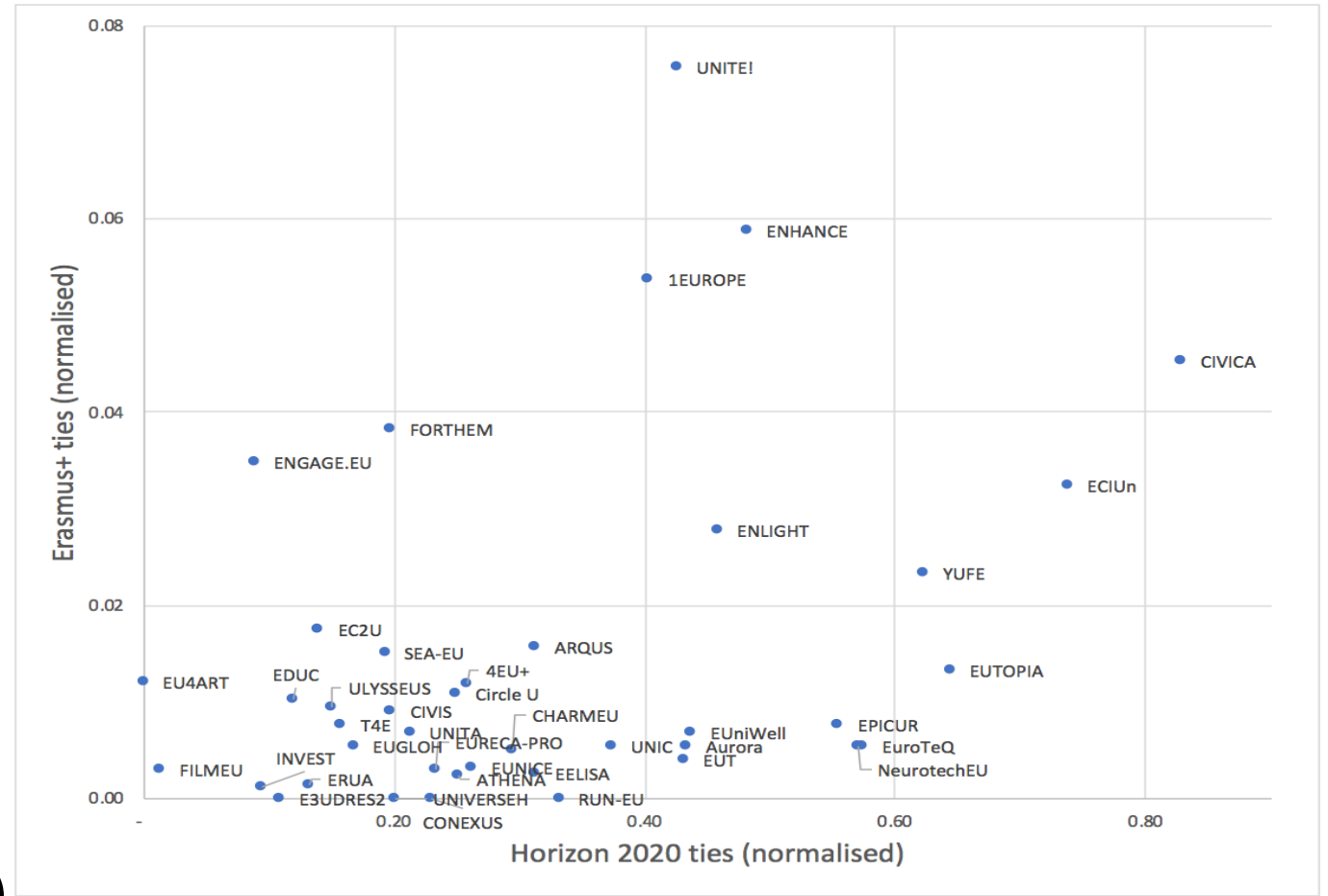
# RESULTS

## "Research" and "Education" ties:

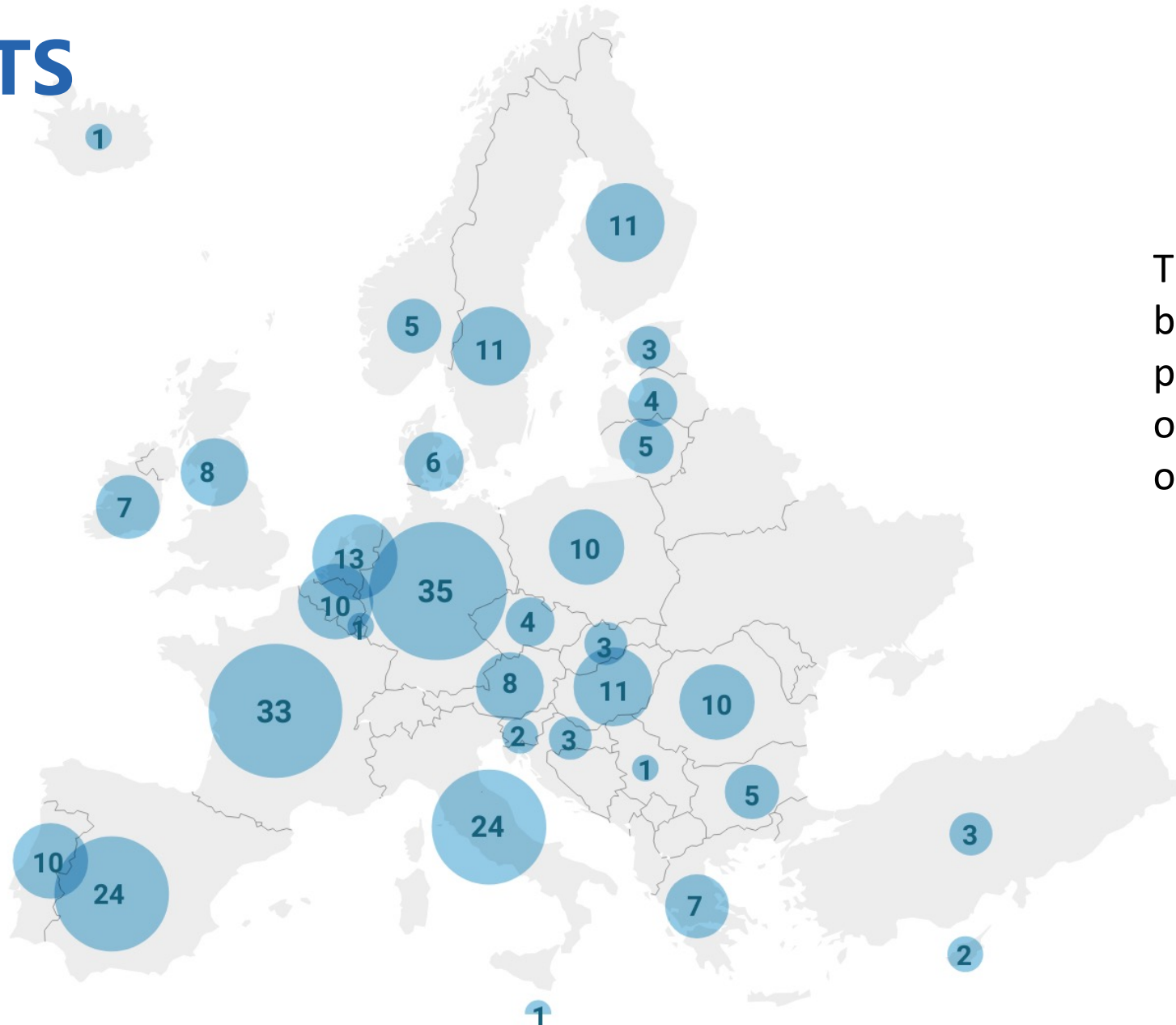
- Higher research & education ties: CIVICA, ECIUn, ENHANCE
- Higher research ties and lower education ties: NeuroTech, EuroTeq
- Higher education ties and lower research ties: ENGAGE.EU, FORTHEM

## "Institutional" ties:

- Common memberships in one pre-existing alliance, e.g., ECIUn (ECIU), YUFE (YERUN), ENHANCE (CESAER)
- Combination of two or more memberships, e.g., UNITE! (CESAER/CLUSTER), 4EU+ (LERU/UNICA)



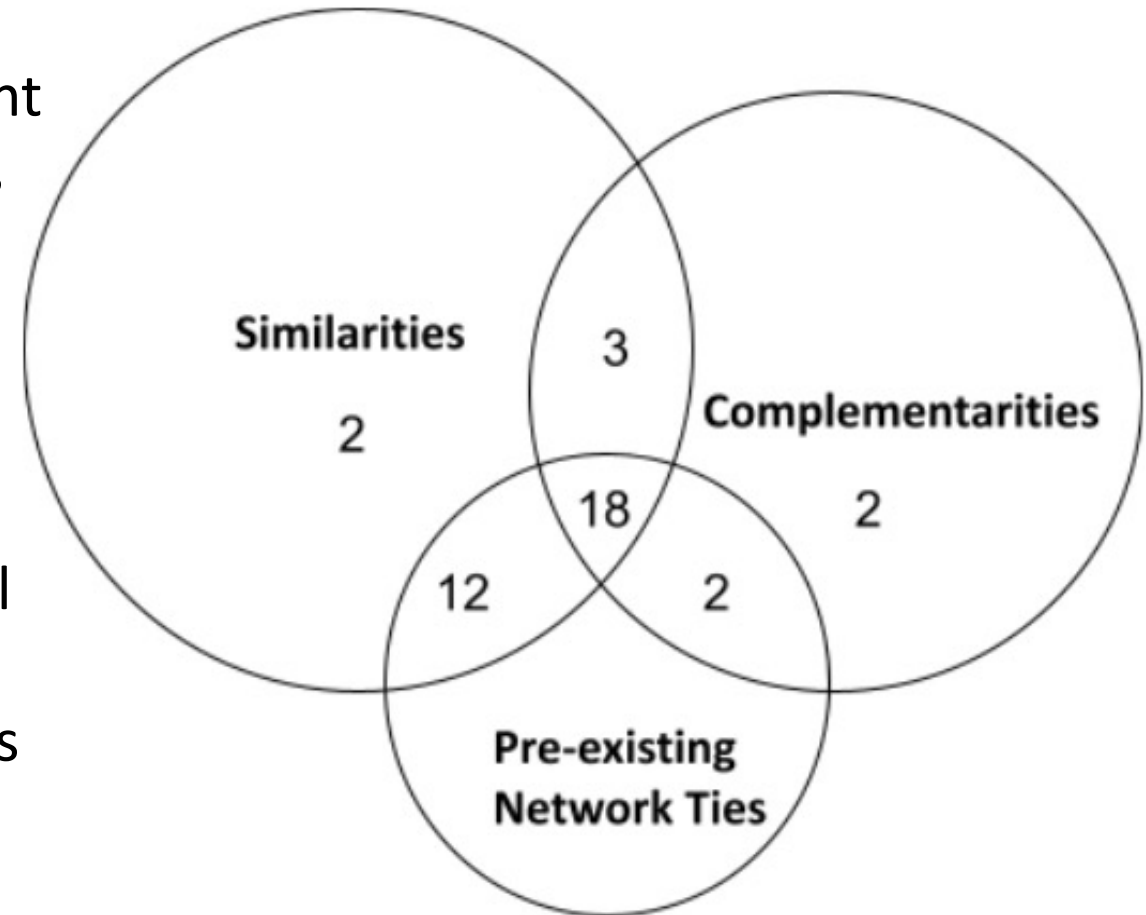
# RESULTS



The EUI is geographically balanced with participation proportional to the number of HEIs in the different parts of Europe.

# CONCLUSIONS

- As expected, **all three mechanisms** appear to have been present in the formation of **18** of the 41 alliances
- **Similarities** and **Pre-existing network ties** are more prevalent
- **Complementarities** become visible through qualitative analysis but relate predominantly to the geographical balance in the composition of alliances, i.e. members representing different parts of Europe
- Complementarity with other studies



# DISCUSSION

- How do you interpret the evidence on the mechanisms of alliance formation?
- What further analysis could be done in relation to alliance formation? With which data?



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# THANK YOU !

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