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Erasmus+ Training and Cooperation Activity (TCA):

**Spreading innovative results from  
EUA to other higher education institutions:  
Compilation of session reports**

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## Preface

The European Universities is a flagship initiative of the European strategy for universities that sets out an ambition to establish transnational alliances of higher education institutions, aiming to develop long-term structural and strategic cooperation. Initiated in 2018, the action intends to support 60 European Universities (involving more than 500 higher education institutions), which will link up education, research, innovation and service to society in an interconnected and innovative way.

During several years of intense cooperation, more than 40 EUA (EUAs) have developed innovative results, which are of great interest for other European higher education institutions (HEIs) and various stakeholders. In order to spread these results, four Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs) have co-created an international conference. The aim of this conference was therefore twofold; 1) to identify and spread innovative results and best practices from EUAs to HEIs, and 2) to discuss and explore the transformative impact of the EUAs on higher education in Europe.

The conference is co-created by four Erasmus+ National Agencies, based in Austria (OeAD), Germany (DAAD), Hungary (Tempus Public Foundation) and Norway (HK-dir). The conference was hosted by the Norwegian Directorate of Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir). It was organised as a fully onsite event, which took place in Bergen (Norway) on the 3-5 of May, 2023.

The conference was scaled for 140 participants, representing EUAs, NAs, other higher education institutions (HEIs), national authorities, the European Commission, student representatives and various stakeholders. The programme included four plenary sessions, twelve of workshops and several networking events, which provided participants with opportunities to connect, share experiences, identify good practices and learn more about the transformative footprint of the EUAs in Europe.

The content of various plenary and workshop sessions was reported by numerous rapporteurs, most often representatives from other NAs or selected research candidates. This report presents a compilation of all available conference materials, summaries and highlights, presented in a chronological and systematic order. In addition, the report presents some recommendations regarding further steps, which could be taken into consideration in other relevant arenas, where similar topics are discussed.

### Key numbers:

- 140 representatives from 19 countries.
- 40 EUAs represented by over 65 consortium members on different levels (mostly representatives of the university leadership, coordinators of EUAs, etc.).
- 37 HEIs which do not have “alliances” status yet, but have an interest for, or have applied for it.
- 21 NA staff from Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden.
- 17 other stakeholders, such as student representatives (ESN), national authorities (representatives of ministries of education and research from Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway), Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in (NOKUT) and others.

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## Session reports & highlights

### Plenary session 1: EUAs as role models

#### Panel 1: The impact of EUA on national and European policies for higher education

##### Speakers:

- Martin Gradl, Head of Sector Erasmus+ Higher Education, Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation
- Stephan Geifes, NA DAAD Director, German Academic Exchange Service
- Márton Beke, Deputy Director, Directorate for the Internationalisation of Higher Education, Tempus Public Foundation Hungary
- Vidar Pedersen, NA Director, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

##### Moderator:

- Gro Tjore, Deputy Director, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

##### Rapporteur:

- Flavia Soares de Oliveira Colus, Researcher, Public Policy and Management Institute

*How well known are the EUAs outside of the HE sector? What are key national experiences with EUA so far, as seen by NA Directors? What are key expectations for EUA?*

Martin Gradl, Head of Sector Erasmus+ Higher Education, Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

- High demand and interest from Austrian HEIs.
- Austria has a national co-financing for EUA.
- A lot of interest for the initiative from different stakeholders other than HEIs.
- Cooperation between European Commission, alliances, NAs and ministries is important for the implementation of the EUAs initiative.
- Our ambition is to convince HEIs that an institutional approach/involvement is key, yet another key point is to disseminate results and involve other HEIs that will never be a part of an alliance.
- It is also important to embed a stronger formal involvement of students in the alliances, it is great that the ESN takes part at the TCA.

Stephan Geifes, NA DAAD Director, German Academic Exchange Service

- Germany has obtained the national support from the federal and regional governments.
- German HEIs responded very actively in the calls for EUAs; most HEIs involved in the alliances in Germany are universities.
- Expectations, or demands, from the German side is that EUAs should comprise different dimensions, i.e. open space for cooperation within research and innovation, not only education. It is also important to secure real and reasonable funding for the initiative which achieves its results long-term. In addition, it is important to work for widening inclusion and have a distribution that is fair, not only those HEIs which are already international, but also those who want to become. German hopes for the next call is targeting “newcomers”, i.e. the next call is open to universities that have not been so international yet.
- Linking up initiatives and programmes is important, we should think how NAs work on EUA, i.e. the role of NAs as large entities with multiple programme instruments linking up national and European policies.

- EUA should be regarded as widespread networks, thus highlighting the importance of the inter-European cooperation on the global dimension should be emphasized.
- On the daily life, EUAs will hopefully have an impact via the students telling their parents and friends.
- Expectations may also be grouped around timeline: 1) A short-term expectation is to have more representation of German HEIs in the next call; 2) A mid-term expectation is to build upon the work done now, mapping and overcoming obstacles to internationalisation, for example developing recognition systems, as alliances generate pressure to change regional legislation. This change can help other HEIs which are not in alliances yet to benefit from the transformative impact generated by EUAs; 3) The long-term ambition should be to become attractive and visible from outside Europe.

Márton Beke, Deputy Director, Directorate for the Internationalisation of Higher Education, Tempus Public Foundation Hungary

- 10 HEIs in the alliances: an outstanding number in relation to the size of the country and the number of HEIs (62). A nice surprise at the first round and a convincing successful continuation, better than expected.
- EUA are not well-known yet, and maybe in smaller cities the impact of alliances in the society is bigger. Associate partners as the key bridge to society.
- The participating HEIs are in the (national) spotlight in many aspects: new ways, experiences and experimentations in several fields: mobility, joint programmes and teaching, innovation, management etc.
- The Initiative has brought together relevant organisations and stakeholders. Hungary has monitoring events (fora of the alliances and national organisations). They get together with alliances, national organisations, student organisations and etc to exchange progress and challenges. Regular meetings organised by the NA and the Ministry. Discussion on outcomes, impact, hinderers, challenges. Working group on legal issues - QA process has been changed due to the alliances – easier to accredit international joint programmes.
- Role of NA: facilitating the above discussion, organising meetings, joining together the Alliances and other organisations, disseminating the results.
- The transformative impact of EUA, for example legislative aspects. The needs of the alliances have led to several legislative changes, e.g. easier accreditation of study programmes as well as the impact on all HEIs and international cooperation.
- National co-funding: covering the own contribution. We expect sustained interest by other Hungarian HEIs, some new HEIs involved in the 2023 and 2024 calls. We also expect further cooperation *between* the Alliances: sharing of challenges, burdens and solutions.
- Hungary wished for this not to be an exclusive action that is only for the best universities.
- Main challenge will be sustainability of the achievements and a possible spin-off effect. It will be decisive to see if the Alliances will be able to continue their activities after the funding period and also how much they will contribute to the creation of the EEA, the ERA and in more general terms to a more resilient, inclusive and globally competitive European education.

Vidar Pedersen, NA Director, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

- In Norway the initiative was met with a very positive and almost enthusiastic response from the sector. There are nine HEIs in alliances now, which is very good in a country where our universities have until now under-exploited the potential in the centralized actions in Erasmus+.

- EUA are considered “the place to be”. This may sound slightly negative but is not meant that way. There is curiosity as to how the alliances will develop, which is how it should be with laboratories, which I think is a fitting description of this action. However, not only is there curiosity; there’s also a strong willingness to participate and contribute to the lab.
- We must realize that even three years is not a long time for this kind of institution-wide cooperation, and with many HEIs joining only last year, the experience one has with participation is limited for many. However, we see that in several cases, participation in alliances is at the core both of the HEIs’ international cooperation and on their work in quality enhancement in education and studies.
- It’s also very positive that we see that the Norwegian HEIs that participate in EUA have established a well-functioning network where they have frequent contact and meetings, where they address issues of common concern among themselves and *vis-a-vis* the authorities.
- There is only one call left, in 2024, and we hope for another two-to three successful Norwegian applicants, hopefully one or two of our university colleges among them. Looking into the crystal ball for the alliances in general, I think we will see diversification in methods, goals and achievements.
- At the same time, EUA will need to work together and in close cooperation with the Commission and national authorities, as they set out to find solutions to obstacles caused by national legislation.
- How the outputs and outcome from alliances will be spread to the higher education community at large will be an important question in the years to come if the EUA are to take the role foreseen in the European strategy for universities. The importance of this point cannot be overestimated.
- The pilot calls on a European degree label and legal status for alliances will most likely yield results that will need close follow-up in the years to come. How far is one willing to go in establishing degrees and legal status at trans-national level?
- Long-term funding will be an issue. Is it feasible that the alliances receive programmatic funding from Erasmus+ into eternity, so to speak? I would argue against this, as we need to secure continuous development and also give room for other actions within the programme. This means that the question of sustainability must be addressed, first and foremost by the alliances themselves.



From the left: Stephan Geifes (DAAD), Gro Tjore (HK-dir), Vidar Pedersen (Hk-dir), Márton Beke (Tempus Public Foundation) and Martin Gradl (OeAD). Photo credit: Ieva Serapinaite (HK-dir).

**Panel 2: Great expectations - what does it mean to be a role model? How do EUA and other stakeholders interpret this role?**

Speakers:

- EUGLOH: Camilla Brekke, Pro-rector for Research and Development, the Arctic University of Norway
- Sara Repo, ULYSSEUS Coordinator, MCI Management Center Innsbruck
- EDUC: István Tarrósy, International Director, University of Pécs
- Christina Hansen, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity, University of Passau
- Svein Hullstein, Policy Officer, European Commission

Moderator:

- Veronika Kupriyanova, Senior Policy Coordinator, Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)

Rapporteur:

- Flavia Soares de Oliveira Colus, Researcher, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI).

EUGLOH: Camilla Brekke, Pro-rector for Research and Development, the Arctic University of Norway

- Nine world-class, research-intensive universities. UIT entered EUGLOH in the opening round thanks to its strong research profile. It also aims to play a key role in global challenges joining forces with nine other high-profile universities.
- Each member of the alliances is a role model for the others and they pull each other up by working together. The alliance aims to establish joint procedures and structures between campuses. The alliance is also a testbed and a pilot for the European Student Card. EU-GLOTH is currently at the phase to test this out in one of the partners (Hamburg); members are also testing out other structures (agreements, co-tutele models, etc).

*What do we need to enable alliances to be role models?*

- Long-term perspectives and research goals (collaboration, research-based learning...).
- European calls targeted alliances after the funding period is ended.
- National and international forums to share best practices.
- Internal communication within the university.
- Engagement from students, faculties and administration within the alliance.

Christina Hansen, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity, University of Passau

- The University of Passau is not yet part of an alliance, but has ambition to join.
- The concept of the “role model” is unidirectional, what we need is reciprocity, networks. It depends on the reciprocal recognition. The role model needs to be able to anticipate the needs of those that look up to it; thus anticipatory thinking is important.
- Being a role model involves reciprocity and anticipatory thinking and requires dedicated structures for participation (i.e. common space) to stimulate spill over effects. Common ideas need to be given space. It's not enough to know what various networks exist – we need to build enabling spaces – widen participation, share knowledge and experience.

*What do we need to enable alliances to be role models?*

- Role models provide conditions for others to become role models themselves.

Svein Hullstein, Policy Officer, European Commission

- EUI is voluntary and alliances follow their own way. Being a role model is the *raison d'être* of the alliances.

- Member states have great expectations towards the transformational impact of the EUI as the alliances push boundaries.

*What do we need to enable alliances to be role models? We need to create arenas:*

- The European Commission created a forum for discussion among alliances, which will become an annual event. There is also a dedicated higher education working group established as part of the EHEA.
- EUA set up informal structures such as FOREU 1 & 2 to exchange experience and learn from each other.
- Support at the national levels is important since education is regulated on the national level.
- EUA also need to take next step internally by creating the enabling spaces with institutions and acting as intra-institutional role models. Enabling spaces within institutions will mobilise more students and faculties in a holistic way.

Sara Repo, ULYSSEUS Coordinator, MCI Management Center Innsbruck

- One third of the Austrian HEIs in the EUI are universities of applied science. ULYSSEUS is a very diverse alliance in terms of different types of institutions involved.
- Open and transparent dialogue is very important for alliances (this TCA is a good opportunity to establish and reinforce this dialogue.)
- Being a role model means aiming high for a whole new level of integration. **For** Ulyseus, it means **strengthening** the soft power of Europe in the world. To operationalise this goal, the alliance is planning to create branches in the priority regions (the first will open next year.
- To define the “Ulyseus”-branch, it was necessary to identify what were the priority regions. It was facilitated by the alliance-wide strategic decision involving rectors from universities from the beginning, as rectors' involvement is a key to align priorities.
- Being part of an alliance was a strategic decision for the members, so the rectors have been involved since the start, which was key for aligning the priorities.

*What is needed to enable alliances to be role models?*

- Both the Austrian ministry and the **NA are** very supportive and organise regular meetings and exchanges for/with the alliances. The Austrian accreditation agency is also reacting very positively to the European approach. The EUI is linked to national funding and accreditation processes.
- To reach a 50% mobility, it is necessary to go beyond the Erasmus+ programme and look ahead, not only based on the previous achievements; we need to build new structures, new organisations “from the scratch”.

István Tarrósy, International Director, University of Pécs, EDUC

- EUA and their members are already role models as they are the engines/drivers of change. We represent a new dimension of thinking about partnership in Europe and beyond. EDUC considers it important to foster change in institutional culture towards agility. Europe is experimenting with different governance models, it's a connection between the macro and micro levels in alliances. Great expectations involve great responsibilities.

*What do we need to enable alliances to be role models?*

- Further positioning of EDUC as a strategic framework for the participating institutions. Further strengthening of the societal outreach will be achieved through the establishment of the EDUC Knowledge Investment Fund, and expansion of the EDUC Teaching Academy, along with the engagement of citizens through open science formats. Encouraging and enabling enhanced student involvement, also in governance.
- Enabling legal environment/context to foster multiple academic programmes, degrees.



## Plenary session 2: Re-thinking education, research, innovation and social dimensions – the transformative impact of the EUA

### Speakers:

The potential impact of EUA – challenges and benefits in the Norwegian context

- Agnete Wiborg, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

Focus on Education in the EUA EUniWell

- Beatrix Busse, Vice-rector for Student Affairs and Teaching, University of Cologne

Focus on Research in the EUA Arqus II

- Andreas Raggautz, Head of Performance and Quality Management, Supervision of the Joint Research Action Plan, University of Graz

Focus on Innovation & Entrepreneurship in the EUA RUN EU

- Eszter Lukács, Vice President for Global Strategy, Széchenyi István University

Focus on European Values, Inclusion & Societal Outreach in the EUA Engage.EU

- Stig Tenold, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, NHH Norwegian School of Economics

Moderator:

- Jon Gunnar Simonsen, Head of Department for European Cooperation and Quality Enhancement, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

Rapporteur:

- Flavia Soares de Oliveira Colus, Researcher, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI).

### Agnete Wiborg, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

- The first pilot period of EUA was dominated by administrative tasks and involved mostly administrative staff.
- It has been challenging to mobilise academic staff because research comes before teaching, and/or lack of time or interest.
- The profile of alliances sometimes restricts involvement to a few departments within HEIs.
- EUI is maybe more a catalyst of existing processes than a game changer.

### Beatrix Busse, Vice-rector for Student Affairs and Teaching, University of Cologne

- Transformation is only possible through innovation – later followed by mainstreaming innovation. The chain is from innovation, to implementation, to impact.
- Innovation is the role of universities anyways, even without the alliances.
- EUniwell teacher education academy.

### Andreas Raggautz, Head of Performance and Quality Management, Supervision of the Joint Research Action Plan, University of Graz

- Triangle of expectations (European research area/universities within alliances/society with swafs/researchers, who want financing to conduct their own research). In addition, each university has their own research strategy and agenda, which is not always shared or aligned by all partners.
- Researchers want to reduce bureaucratic processes in their research process by joining the alliance. That is one of their main expectations towards the EUI.
- The alliance has carried out joint workshops with ca. 50-60 researchers working together on climate change. This initiative has also a challenge to intensify cooperation, to create mutual trust among researchers to work together.

### Eszter Lukács, Vice President for Global Strategy, Széchenyi István University

- Mobility should underpin the 3 pillars (education, research and innovation). EUI may be regarded as soft diplomacy in EU. This is how we make European HE visible in the

global arena. This is crucial, as global visibility of European universities, measured in terms of rankings is declining.

- RunEU has established innovation hubs (bioeconomy, future economies and social innovation). In the second call, each hub is being bounded with the Erasmus+ call goals to increase the measurability of performance, for example bioeconomy is coupled with sustainability, future industries become digitalisation. The number of joint submission EU projects is an important KPI; 35 applications has already been submitted.
- Széchenyi István University has changed their R&I strategy because of the alliance.
- Government expects HEIs to feature on international rankings. Society expects HEIs to educate students that are immediately employable and meet labour market needs. While rankings are controversial, universities are often financed according to them, and students chose their mobility institutions because of them. Some universities climbed positions in rankings remarkably due to joint EUS publications.

Stig Tenold, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, NHH Norwegian School of Economics

- In the last call, the term European values comes up many times, but the question is what are European values? There is a document called the atlas of European values made by Tilburg. Engage.eu strategy is very aligned with EU values.
- Universities have lost their status over the last 50 years. Social media is monopolised by influencers based on emotions; it is more important to be seen than be knowledge-based. Universities need to rethink our societal outreach.
- For academics, research is what counts, yet we should not forget education. Travelling to Singapore as a student, I learned a lot about Singapore, but I also learned a lot about Norway; and students are the key to the transformative change. NHH sends out about 50% of their students abroad.
- EUI should not be conceived as us (EU) against the world, it is us with the world, towards the world. Spread EU values across the world!
- Is the EU values a good narrative, or should it be just human rights values that we translate to our context? (a question asked by ESN). How to make them non colonialist, as it is not about missionaries and colonising.

### **Workshop session 1: Re-shaping the landscape of higher education in Europe – how can the transformative impact of EUA be transferred and multiplied?**

- **WS 1A: Re-shaping education within EUA**

Presenters:

- ENHANCE: Julian Irlenkäuser, Mobility Officer, Technische Universität Berlin
- Circle U.: Mette Oftebro, Project Coordinator, University of Oslo and Viktoria Menczel, Project Manager, University of Vienna

Moderators:

- Elisabeth Tauch, Senior Officer EU-Programmes, NA DAAD
- Birgit Siebe-Herbig, Head of Unit Research and Internationalisation, University Networks, DAAD

Rapporteur:

- Yi Wang, Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, Germany

Through their deep transnational collaboration, EUA are experimenting with a variety of innovative forms of teaching and learning. By developing joint programmes, micro-credentials or common

learning infrastructures as well as by offering more mobility opportunities and supporting sustainable education, EUA also identify barriers to cooperation and test solutions in a safe space of collaboration. In the workshop, two EUA will present innovative forms of education. They will discuss with participants the potential benefits for other HEIs, the outcomes and good practices to be shared, and the most appropriate means for the transfer to happen.

The workshop included two presentations from the alliances ENHANCE and Circle U., followed by five group discussions on the following topics: 1) Innovative educational offers, 2) Learning infrastructures, 3) (Automatic) Recognition of new forms of learning, 4) Sustainable education.

### **Presentations**

In his presentation, Julian Irlenkäufer from TU Berlin (ENHANCE) raised the thought-provoking question: To which extent does the limited budget of the EUI allow the universities to „reshape“ their education? It is, in Julian’s opinion, crucial for the alliances to set realistic goals and manage the expectations accordingly.

**ENHANCE** has set up a joint education strategy as a framework for the new educational approach based on joint educational offers, increased mobility (physical and virtual), society-centred education, sustainability, social diversity of students and lifelong learning. The ENHANCE European education pathways and micro-credentials are two of the innovative formats that have proven to be promising; “100% international, not 100% physical” is the key concept. The European Education Pathways are currently run in 5 pilot degree programmes. Key success factors are automatic recognition and the integration of courses into the curriculum. In the long run, this could be combined with a European degree label. Joint micro-credentials combining online courses and physical learning experiences have been developed and implemented on topics like climate action, higher education teaching, language tandem programmes or data literacy. The attractiveness of the certificates, either the European degree or the micro-credentials, still needs to be tested by or in cooperation with the labour market.

For the alliance **Circle U.**, education is understood as a multi-layered system, targeting different groups of learners. While specific joint MA/PhD programmes linked to thematic priorities are being developed for specific groups of students, more general joint educational activities even go beyond the member institutions and are accessible for a large number of learners within and outside the alliance. In this respect, the Circle U. academic chairs acts as enablers to bring academic and scientific content to the ecosystem of the alliance. They have a key role in fostering bottom-up initiatives. Great attention is also paid to students’ initiatives, challenge-based learning (CBL) which is core to Circle U.’s educational approach, and to the linkage to industry and society. Solutions to overcome challenges regarding the development of joint programmes were suggested, such as flexible formats of collaboration allowing for different degree involvement. Challenges and opportunities regarding the involvement of associated partners, the integration of joint innovative teaching in the curricula, or the need to go beyond the project dynamic were also mentioned.

### **Group discussions**

In the group discussions on “**Innovative Educational Offers**”, micro-credentials were the topic that the participants dedicated their greatest attention to. Various aspects were discussed, including the target group (whole society?), the funding, the time frame and the selection of partners. Challenges such as recognition and rewards for the professors, reciprocity with local governments, the recognition of the learning outcomes, as well as the linkage between academic pathways and other career options have been identified. Some possible solutions were suggested in the groups: Setting up centres for learning and innovation or living labs to strengthen the connection to the society and industry is one example.

For “**Recognition of new forms of learning**”, the participants agreed on the importance of flexibility, pragmatism, digitalisation and the trust between partner institutions.

Colleagues also attached great importance to the “**Learning infrastructure**”. They did, however, have different definitions for this term. Digital infrastructure was the most mentioned aspect. And most participants emphasised the simplicity and functionality of the digital tools. Questions like “How far to go with digital infrastructure?”, “Should EU take the responsibility to develop the mobility tools?” or “How to keep the balance diversity and capacity?” were raised in the discussion.

When it comes to “**Sustainable education**”, participants followed the key question “Does sustainable education mean online education” or what else is needed to achieve it? The common understanding was that sustainable education had to be student-centred. Students should be engaged as multipliers and change-agents. A multidisciplinary approach was also seen as essential.

## WS 1B: The impact on research within the EUA

### Presenters:

- Aurora Alliance: Thomas Baumgartner, Head of Aurora Office, University of Innsbruck
- Arqus II: Andreas Raggautz, Head of Performance and Quality Management, Supervision of the Joint Research Action Plan, University of Graz

### Moderator:

- Martina Friedrich, EU Programme Officer, OeAD - Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

### Rapporteur:

- Kerstin Fuchsberger, Head of Rector’s Office, University of Salzburg, Member of CIVIS

With the research dimension, EUA expanded their joint activities to another core mission of higher education. At least starting with the H2020 SwafS funding, the Alliances started the capacity building and experimenting with activities for ESR and joint research actions like workshops, skills trainings or project applications. Alliances also learned on barriers to cooperate and tested new formats of collaboration. In the workshop, two Alliances will present their approaches and lessons learned. They will discuss with participants their respective experiences, helpful tips and possible hurdles on further joint research activities.

The first presenter, Thomas Baumgartner, Head of Aurora Alliance Office of the University of Innsbruck, reflected on the research dimension of the Aurora Alliance. Aurora, as a partnership of research-intensive universities, set out to intensify collaboration not only in the mobility area but also to enhance collaboration in research, namely in four key domains: Sustainability & Climate Change, Digital Society & Global Citizenship, Health & Wellbeing and Culture, Diversity & Identity. In the area of academic collaboration, the Alliance’s focus was on building community and establishing joint structures and instruments which is particularly reflected in the H2020 SwafS Work Package (WP) “Sharing infrastructure and resources”, that is led by the University of Innsbruck. Within this WP, a [map of research resources](#) was generated, which complements initial academic collaborations actions from the Erasmus+ pilot phase, like a [dashboard on the contributions to the SDGs](#) by alliance members or the [Aurora Doctoral Pool](#). Mobility opportunities (physical/virtual) were created through [Academic Events](#) as well as through the provision of [PhD Thesis Grants](#). One very special vehicle to support mobility and scientific exchange were the [Aurora Mini Grants](#) that were introduced to support individual and tailor-made projects related to the objectives of the Alliance (4-5 TEUR per project, 10 in total). Not surprisingly, Thomas Baumgartner emphasises that even small incentives can generate momentum. Aurora 2030 will focus in the field of R&I, which is an own Work Package in the new Erasmus+ bid, in on research assessment (COARA), academic collaboration and community building as well as infrastructure and open science.

The second presenter, Andreas Raggautz, Supervisor of the Joint Research Action Plan of Arqus II at the University of Graz, focused on reflecting on the Joint Research Action within the Alliance. He stressed that Arqus partners were significantly more successful in jointly acquiring research projects within the H2020 framework programme. The Joint Research Action Plan, that resulted of high-level seminars bringing together the Vice Rectorates responsible for Research & Innovation, is currently being updated. In addition, Arqus II will focus on enhancing the networking between researchers of the Alliance by offering bridging workshops for potential interdisciplinary projects. Also, the University of Graz (and other Arqus Universities will actively support research assessment initiatives (CoARA) by conducting a pilot on alternative research assessment procedures. Main learnings are that in joint research there are no “quick wins” and that a strong support is needed on the administrative level over a long time to succeed.

**Main results of questions discussed (summary and selection):**

**Positive experiences/aspects** in connection with research within EUA. What works well? What was well implemented?

- Joint research projects were initiated after identifying common goals and research areas, by mobilising drivers of research and elaborating joint research strategies. Joint research increased the rate of funding opportunities (more successful proposals) and the impact of research results. The provision of seed funds (like Mini-Grants) and the involvement of high-level governance representatives of the respective universities were seen as crucial in this process.
- Diversity and the multi-disciplinary aspects within the projects were perceived positively. Diverse expertise is coming together and creating something new. The value of inter- and trans-disciplinarity cannot be highlighted enough. Intra-institutional dialogue was stimulated through the Alliances and networks were successfully built.
- The working conditions for ESRs were improved by involving them in the Alliances and by aligning their working conditions within the Alliance but also by concrete measures such as broadening the pool of PhD supervisors for PhD students.

**Challenges:** What are the problems or obstacles (e.g. administrative, content, legal, institutional) that occurred? What were the solutions? Do you have examples of lessons learned or suggestions for improvement?

- It is nearly impossible to control the progress of the work of all partners.
- Finding mechanisms to register intellectual property fairly is challenging.
- Finding and hiring (administrative) staff is difficult. Staff are often overworked and underpaid which leads to a reluctance to change practices.
- A lack of funding, especially on the national level to support with the necessary Co-Funding, leads to imbalances in the consortia. Also, there are too many different funding sources that must be applied for separately. In addition, the “turf war” in the European Commission between RTD & EAC does not help either.
- Motivational challenges were observed: It is of utmost importance to sustain interest, activity, and communication. Discontinuity/changes in the (coordination) team can lead to problems - Do not let partners leave!
- Unrealistic expectations on what can be achieved led to dissatisfaction. The speedy development of the education and research component were stressful. Awareness for the onboarding process needed to be raised.
- Different legal frameworks, structures, rules, and priorities needed to be harmonized. Different systems should not be imposed onto each other.

**Lessons learned:** What can non-EUIs learn from this transfer of ideas and lessons learned?

- Make sure to have ONE funding and ONE team. Include the research dimension from the beginning, in the planning process as well as in setting up the management/governance of the whole Alliance. Don't promise quick wins and/or high numbers! There is always a reasonable way to go if your university is committed.
- It's a disruptive and systemic challenge that needs comprehensive institutional, regional, national & EU-sustainable support and patience, perseverance and optimism to focus on opportunities and added value. Building joint research policy requires time and you need to be able to rely on a strong political will. Pre-existing structures for research stimulation and collaboration help.
- Think about how to incentivise international research collaboration from the beginning. Build on already established collaborative structures and don't necessarily invent something new.

### WS 1C: The impact on innovation by the EUA RUN EU

Speaker:

- Eszter Lukács, Vice President for Global Strategy, Széchenyi István University

Moderator:

- Márton Beke, Deputy Director, Tempus Public Foundation

Rapporteur:

- Imre Gombkötő, University of Miskolc

The EUA are expected to contribute to „the ambitious vision of an innovative, globally competitive and attractive European Education Area and European Research Area, in full synergy with the European Higher Education Area”. This means that the EUA themselves should develop their members' innovative potential and influence on other higher education institutions, as well as a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The RUN-network comprises HEIs that through their activities, in cooperation with their partners, stakeholders and the surrounding innovation ecosystem, intend to increase the competitiveness of their regions. During the workshop, the representative of the AEUA will present this approach and, with the involvement of other participants, will explore the possibilities the EUA can present to all European HEIs.

The topic of the workshop was the impact of EUA on innovation within the European Education Area and European Research Area. The workshop aimed to explore the possibilities that these Alliances can present to all European higher education institutions, promoting collaboration and innovation among universities in Europe. The objective of the workshop was to engage participants in a discussion about innovation and how EUA can contribute to the ambitious vision of an innovative, globally competitive, and attractive European Education Area and European Research Area. The workshop aimed to identify ways in which the Alliances can develop their members' innovative potential and influence other higher education institutions, partners, and stakeholders.

The discussion was divided into four tables, each with participants representing both HEIs in alliances and HEIs outside of alliances. The first task was to discuss the definition of innovation. The participants agreed that innovation involves creating something new that addresses a need in the market and is used by users. They also recognized that innovation could take many forms, including processes, products, structures, and paradigms. The last comment, "turn research into value," suggests that the group recognized the importance of translating research and ideas into practical applications.

During the second phase of the workshop, participants discussed various aspects related to innovation in higher education institutions and alliances.

- One of the key topics **was the main obstacles that hinder innovation in their respective institutions**. The participants identified various obstacles such as culture, mindset, lack of

motivation, incentives, rigid structures, lack of connections with the market/stakeholders, and the need to change the mindset in institutions.

- Some experts highlighted the importance of having a policy framework that provides incentives, culture (vision, lived values, target agreements), and staff with long-term perspectives **for boosting and supporting innovation**. They also emphasized the importance of understanding societal needs, building bridges, and addressing information overload.
- The participants also discussed **the definition of innovative or innovative output within their alliances and how to measure it**. Some experts pointed out that there is no common definition, but the focus is on value creation and bringing ideas to the region. Other experts suggested that innovation should include internal and external innovation, innovation in teaching and education, and teacher education. However, some experts mentioned that there was no time to measure innovation within the EUA activities or that there was no agreement on how to measure it.
- Regarding the **benefits of innovation for alliance members**, the experts agreed that joint shared activities, job shadowing, teaching method transfers, joint services, sharing knowledge, learning from each other's experiences, and using students as vehicles of impact are some of the ways to ensure that all members benefit from the innovation.
- When discussing whether **non-alliance members can benefit from the innovation of higher education institutions**, some experts pointed out that there are communication hurdles that need to be overcome. However, the consensus was that making the whole thing visible for all is essential for non-alliance members to benefit from the innovation.

Overall, the experts agreed that innovation is essential in higher education institutions and alliances. To promote innovation, institutions need to address the main obstacles, create a supportive policy framework, and have a common understanding of what innovation means within the alliance. Additionally, institutions should strive to ensure that all alliance members benefit from the innovation and make their innovation visible to non-alliance members.

The workshop resulted in several outcomes, including a better understanding of the role that EUA can play in fostering innovation in Europe. Participants recognized the potential of these Alliances to develop their members' innovative potential and influence other higher education institutions, partners, and stakeholders.

The workshop also resulted in the identification of several challenges that EUA may face in promoting innovation, including funding, cultural barriers, and the need for better collaboration among stakeholders. The group discussed ways in which these challenges can be addressed, such as by developing a common vision and mission for the Alliances and by promoting greater collaboration and exchange of best practices among universities and other stakeholders.

At the end of the workshop, all participants were asked to mention one takeaway message. Among the mentioned notions, three major takeaways are outstanding with its importance more participants mentioning them. These three major takeaway messages were:

- **Lack of common understanding on the measurement of innovation:** While there was a clear consensus on the definition of innovation, a joint understanding of how to measure it was missing, which hindered effective communication and collaboration among higher education institutions.
- **Mindset and culture are crucial for innovation:** Participants emphasized the need to adjust the mindset and culture of higher education institutions to foster innovation, as rigid structures, lack

of ambition, and resistance to change were identified as major obstacles. **All individuals have to take individual action and be a bridgebuilders.**

- Collaboration and knowledge-sharing are key to innovation: Participants highlighted the importance of complementarity, co-creation, and knowledge-sharing among alliance members and non-members to facilitate innovation and maximize its impact. They also stressed the importance of storytelling to communicate innovation and its benefits effectively - **Tell your story and walk your talk.**

### **WS 1D: The impact on the societal dimension: What's it all for? How do we ensure outreach and multiply impact from the EUA?**

#### Presenters:

- FORTHEM: Claire Jortveit, Institutional coordinator, University of Agder
- ENGAGE.EU: Anders Hereide, Student and member of Engage.EU Board of Learners

#### Moderator:

- ENGAGE.EU: Linda Rutledal, Institutional Coordinator, NHH Norwegian School of Economics

#### Rapporteur:

- Mathilde Begrand, Coordinator Higher Education, NA Erasmus France

In this interactive workshop we will focus how the EUA can reach out to create lasting impact beyond the participating institutions themselves. The EUA have been identified as lighthouses in the higher education landscape, forging new paths to increase the attractiveness and quality of higher education and research in Europe. Little is so far known about the effect of these alliances outside the institutions directly involved. If the EUA are to serve as inspiration for the wider higher education sector, and create impact both locally and at the European level, the question becomes: How do we achieve this? We will hear from alliance representatives, students, and stakeholders from local ecosystems. Participants will be invited to share their own good practices of involvement, outreach, and impact building, and discuss the potential benefits for both other HEIs and society in general.

**Impact on civil society:** The two alliances highlighted their initiative to include civil society. This is called "Impact through outreach". In particular, this involves the co-creation of knowledge involving a variety of actors: students, local authorities, associations, the local authorities, schools, etc., working on subjects of common interest. Everybody brings in their experience and knowledge. Why is it important? Due to several aspects, such as discovery, emphasizing evidence, verifying truth, combatting fake news and raising awareness and interest in research. "Challenged-based learning enables the interaction, collaboration and co-creation of new knowledge and solutions by researchers and learners, together with external stakeholders. It offers unique learning experiences and an inspiring cooperation that generates value for society. "

#### **Examples of initiatives:**

*ENGAGE.EU Think Tank* provides a platform where you can focus on research and push your expertise forward together with fellow researchers and leading experts from industry and politics. Example: Topic: Tackling gender inequalities to build a more sustainable "new normal" in Europe, Date: 30 May-2 June 2023, Toulouse France. *ENGAGE.EU Labs* focus on ideation where researchers and other stakeholders identify pressing societal challenges and co-create solutions (e.g., startup ideas) together with learners. Running Labs:

- [Tilburg Lab on Climate and Energy Transition](#)
- [Mannheim Lab on Culture, Arts and Creative Entrepreneurship](#)
- [LUISS LDIS Lab on emerging technologies & climate change](#)



*FORTHEM: Involve the public people in scientific practises* and Teacher Education: teachers are excellent multipliers (Citizen sciences). *FORTHEM CoLAB* works with co-creation and social innovation and has a human-centered perspective as a starting point. It facilitates co-creation between private, voluntary and public actors, and involve academia and students in common work. CoLab has existed for 3 years at the University of Agder and will be extended to Forthem by the end of 2023. It is a platform for collecting topics. The university connects external partners' challenges with students who are given interesting real-life tasks. The students work with design thinking methodology and throughout the semester will solve the challenges by researching, defining, ideating, prototyping and testing. Questions discussed:

**How can this initiative be promoted to the public?** Forthem have signed local partnership agreements with schools, museums, companies and public authorities. There was a communication campaign on social networks. It's important to be involved in the local community to raise awareness of what EUA might bring to the local public and private structures. EUA are a powerful tool for engaging in dialogue with a wide range of actors in our society (local authorities, the private sector, etc.).

**How can we measure the impact in the short, medium and long term?** The short-term impact is measured in terms of the number of participants in these events. The long-term impact will be difficult to quantify as it involves systemic change in the university and in society.

**How can students get involved in the activities offered by European universities?** Engage.EU has decided to involve students in the project through a number of initiatives:

- Board of learners: Student-driven group from all partner universities and Student perspective. Its role is to exchange ideas, voice learners' wishes and concerns in the ENGAGE.EU Board and Executive Committee.
- Student-driven work package - make ENGAGE.EU more known to students by student ambassadors, student conference and joint events.

Student interest is growing - the number of summer school applications has increased to 200 thanks to EUA. It means that more students can be reached, especially those who cannot go abroad for a long period. Students may be involved via the different channels, such as student unions and committees, social networks, showcasing opportunities and organising peer feedback. Other possible initiatives may be to connect student associations/clubs (theatre, sport, etc.) and increase student participation in the decision-making bodies of EUA.

**How recognise student voluntary engagement?** The discussion should involve partners, because situation differs in various countries. It is an important subject to address in order to involve all students; not just those who can afford it. Students who work may not have the time to get involved, if it is not recognised as part of their studies. We need to make use of existing mechanisms: ECTS, integration into the curriculum, release time, remuneration, diploma supplement, etc.

## **Workshop session 2: Building innovative and sustainable structures on different levels**

*Levels of Impact: Which impact to expect in relation to various target groups? What are solutions and hindrances for further transfer and adoption?*

### **WS 2A: Mobilising and including students, researchers and administrative staff**

Speaker:

- CHARM EU: Ferenc Takó, Head of Office, Rector's Cabinet CHARM-EU Office, Eötvös Loránd University

Moderators:

- Márton Beke, Deputy Director, Tempus Public Foundation

- Bettina Ugrósdý-Beregi, Senior Internationalisation Coordinator, Tempus Public Foundation
- Rapporteur:
- Birgit Siebe-Herbig, DAAD

The EUA are expected to deliver outstanding results in the field of mobility for both a significant proportion of their students, as well as both administrative and teaching staff. They need to re-think the possibilities, as well as the limits of physical, blended and virtual mobility. The EUA need to tackle the challenges of inclusiveness and the various obstacles we all face in the current world. Members of the CHARM-EU Alliance intend to establish mobility as a norm for European students and university staff. They identify mobility as a key tool for enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning. Therefore, they developed a tailor-made mobility framework for intra-alliance mobility that has plenty of potentials to be expanded in various directions of extra-alliance mobility. The Interactive Mobility Matrix is a dynamic network of concepts and implementation tools in support of embedding mobilities into the curricula, teaching and learning strategies, and services. This, and several further aspects of their mobility strategy, will be presented in the workshop.

The aim of the workshop was to introduce some central approaches to mobility through the practices and challenges of the CHARM-EU alliance, and to elaborate on these issues in the form of group discussions. The session served the purpose of collecting interpretations of and solutions to common challenges of EUA related to mobility, with a particular focus on results that can be applied by institutions not yet participating in the work of alliances. After introducing CHARM-EU, presenting its core values and educational principles, Ferenc Takó presented the CHARM-EU mobility principles. According to these principles, mobility is a key tool for quality enhancement of teaching and learning processes and “the norm” in the alliance. Following topics were discussed in subgroups:

**How can mobility serve the policy objectives and pedagogical principles of EUA?** The term “mobility” is still unclear. A definition of “mobility” is required from the EU-COM. However, it should not be too rigid. Mobility numbers should not be counted only inside the Alliance but also outside. In a fully-fledged EUA the mobility term is contradictory because mobility is the norm. As a general remark, EUA should not force mobility but encourage it. The CHARM-EU approach:

- Tailor-made Interactive Mobility Matrix Scheme for curriculum designers to develop, embed and deliver integrated mobility actions.
- Challenge-based learning supported by mobilities.
- Targeted promotion and funding for green mobility.
- Systematic support of inclusive mobility.

**Joint programmes and mobility.** The group shared experiences and found that the challenges are almost the same whether universities are in an EUA or not, for example financing (due to tuition fees for students outside the EU). A solution may be to develop joint programmes with external partners who contribute to financing. This is the approach of CHARM-EU:

- Following the principle of the “lowest common denominator” when it comes to National differences in terms of NA and accreditation rules.
- Common financial principles, diverse implementation at partners to handle differences.
- Non-EU mobility is offered only in exceptional cases based on institutional opportunities.
- Not centralised, but coordinated approach when meeting challenges regarding Time schedule, administrative procedures & technical support.
- Interruption of semester mobility grant for the period of BIP with semester vs. blended mobility.

**Types of mobility and funding.** The group discussed two trends; short-term mobility (e.g., summer schools) and virtual mobility. Participants reported about an imbalance with BA/MA mobility in comparison to PhD mobility (one reason being that PhDs are often categorized as staff). As concerns financing of mobility, a promising approach could be addressing regional partners. This is what CHARM-EU is planning to do in this regard:

- Continue and fine-tune of the mobility forms in the first project (2019–2022).
- Extend mobility to any study programmes of the partners.
- Still Erasmus+ in focus, but any mobility scheme to be used for sending students/staff.
- Great focus on professional development, with a specific action line for doctoral mobility.
- Separate mobility targets for the different types of mobility inside the EUA (physical mobility / blended mobility / virtual exchange).

**Management and administration of mobility.** The group discussed financial challenges, as mobility is financed mainly via Erasmus+ is not sufficient, and an additional budget is needed. The trend of the short-term mobilities was observed also by this group, yet it was unclear who manages virtual mobilities – International office or faculties? Counting of mobility needs to be centralised (instead of exchanging excel sheets). Difficulties of effectively managing mobility were experienced, as Erasmus+ agreements are bilateral in most cases (not multilateral). This is how CHARM-EU proceeds:

- Working group dedicated to mobility (*developing & implementing the mobility scheme*).
- One member of the Joint Virtual Office is responsible for the coordination of mobility (*in relation to the joint master*).
- Multilateral Interinstitutional Agreement *simplified legal background* for all mobility types.
- CHARM-EU mobility – integrated in the normal Erasmus+ procedures (but separate calls for the joint master), *to avoid building parallel structures and increasing efficiency and to ensure organisational learning*.
- Exchange of best practices; collaboratively improving the mobility scheme (simplifying procedures; handling joint challenges); stronger promotion; close networking.

**Transnational online learning.** The group discussed the relatively high drop-out rate with online courses. After Covid many students avoid them, as teaching and learning experience is not the same as with on-site courses. Students' engagement is often lower, and efforts from teachers higher. Online courses may be a solution for students with jobs or children. Teachers should communicate more positively about online courses which can serve as testbeds on methodology. Online courses should be open, inclusive and preferably in English. This is the approach of CHARM-EU:

- Currently in the preparation phase (mapping the institutional context (legal / administrative preconditions, Mapping the international scene).
- Transnational courses will be selected in an open application procedure.
- A common course catalogue will be published.
- Main challenges: Different administrative / legal context at partners, incentives for academics, setting-up a proper team at university level (inter-departmental collaboration), nomination, registration, evaluation and credit-recognition.

## **WS 2B: Building new institutional cooperation structures at the EUA FORTHEM**

Presenter:

- Ludmila Samochwalow, Project Officer, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU), Germany

Moderator:

- Yvonne Schnocks, Team leader EU-Programmes, NA DAAD

Rapporteur:

- Franziska Schenk, Joint Director, Office of International Affairs, University of Hohenheim

In this workshop we will focus on the governance of EUA. What institutional cooperation structures have been developed, what challenges have to be faced and what are possible solutions? A project representative will give an insight into the cooperation structures of a EUA. The aim of the workshop is to share knowledge about the institutional cooperation structures of the EUA and to discuss how these solutions can be transferred to other universities.

The workshop focused on the **governance of EUA**, e.g. the cooperation structures and processes EUA have developed and the challenges they have faced on their way. The aim of the workshop was to **discuss solutions and identify best-practice examples** that can be applied by other universities and networks.

The EUA FORTHEM served as a reference example and as starting point for the following discussion. The presenters gave an insight into the challenges for the development governance structures within FORTHEM and shared their main observations:

1. EUA as a **new kind of organisation** on the development path from project, network, alliance to university also needs a special kind of governance.
2. Thus, the governance oscillates between a partly conflicting **project logic** on the one hand and **alliance logic** on the other hand:

Alliance	Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercultural collaboration</li> <li>• Strategy and long-term development</li> <li>• Finding common ground</li> <li>• Joint decision-making and consensus</li> <li>• Building a shared vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Short-term objectives and impact</li> <li>• Opportunity for pilots</li> <li>• Efficiency and outputs</li> <li>• Delivering together</li> </ul>

FORTHEM has put focus on four aspects to implement a governance structure balancing alliance and project logic. The presenters shared their experiences and helpful good-practice examples:

Firstly, FORTHEM took time to **build a collaboration of trust** in order to define common ground and practice inclusion and involvement of all partners by consensus-oriented decision-making, on-site meetings also of the university management and focusing on different missions. The FORTHEM **Missions & Boards** served as means to connect long-term and short-term objectives and to include experts from all partners. These groups consist of one expert per partner in order to avoid lengthy discussions with larger groups of people from different levels.

Secondly, FORTHEM continuously has work on **increasing the added value** by collaborating on different levels, testing pilots and taking on challenges. FORTHEM implemented this by aiming at the **overlap of research & innovation, teaching and service-to-society** to achieve a closer alignment of the levels, esp. exchange and research. Driver for this development was the admission of new partners into the alliance that posed the question what FORTHEM actually did for their universities (output).

Thirdly, FORTHEM has put **focus on community-building** within the participating universities to find balance between bottom-up and top-down activities and to bring people together on all levels beyond the usual International Office contacts. A wide array of pilots and initiatives for network and community building have been implemented to support the **FORTHEM community**, e.g. Labs for co-creation, Working groups & Meetups for exchange, the Online FORTHEM community and student projects. It has become evident that this aspect contributes to the sustainability of the network significantly.

In this regard, the question of **language barriers** was raised that might prevent collaboration on all levels. However, the recommendations included tandems and digital solutions as well as generally continuing meetings despite comprehension problems to ensure inclusion. Furthermore, several **digital tools** for alliance-internal community-building were mentioned (comparable to ResearchGate or LinkedIn).

Lastly, FORTHEM has attached great importance to **strategy development** from the very beginning. Strategies or rather action plans are developed at the various levels such as higher education, the missions, communication and mobility. These strategy processes are very different and are perhaps also somewhat extensive. The question posed by the presenters was to what extent the organizational culture at each partner has the greater inertia than newly developed strategies (“Organizational culture eats strategy for breakfast...”).

The following discussion evolved around three questions posed by the presenters:

**How do you build trust in an international collaboration?** One of the aspects considered most important by the audience were **personal encounters and physical meetings** opposed to virtual meetings. Related to this are some recommendations for agenda-setting, e.g. giving time for ice-breakers, taking intercultural differences into account (are we on the same level), socializing.

**Formalizing and structuring the collaboration** by concluding multilateral agreements helps keeping the momentum and “getting things done in the initial phase of a European university alliance. This also contributes to trust-building by securing first successes (low-hanging fruits).

**How do you bridge the gap between research, education and innovation?** The discussion unfolded around aspects such as **entrepreneurship, challenge-based learning and research-based learning** to connect the spheres. Concrete examples were presented such as a Think-and-Do-Tank on innovative pedagogies and financial incentives to develop pilots bridging the gap (fostering co-creation and ownership).

Following this, **comprehensive approaches in funding strategies** were also presented and discussed. Here, proposal support and grant-writing in research and teaching are no longer seen separately, but are processed together to create synergies. It can be observed that this development is further triggered by the funding logic in Horizon and EIT.

**How do you build community beyond the alliance members?** It became clear that EUA can act as **door-openers to work with industry and society**. However, the feedback showed that most alliances present at the workshop were still concentrating on internal community-building rather than external. A couple of ideas presented evolved around student challenges and start-ups.

## **Workshop 2C: European University Initiative: Impact, outcomes and learnings for National Agencies**

### Moderators:

- Martina Friedrich, EU Programme Officer, OeAD - Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation
- Martin Gradl, Head of Sector Erasmus+ Higher Education, OeAD - Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

### Rapporteur:

- Bára Křenek Sobotková, Czech National Agency for international education and research

In this workshop we will focus on the role of NAs in accompanying EUA. We will exchange our experiences and activities with representatives from NAs, HEIs and other stakeholders. The aim of the workshop is to collect ideas for the future role of NA to support the EUA and the dissemination of their work to HEIs, which do not take part.

### Activities offered by NAs in relation to the EUI

NAs support HEIs participating in EUA in many ways since the very beginning of their “life cycle” – most of them are guiding them through the application phase, assisting them during the implementation, helping them to connect, to exchange good practices and searching for the ways to spread them among the whole HE sector.

All NAs present at the session (AT, CZ, DE, ES, FR, HU, NL, NO, PT, SE) are **actively promoting** Erasmus+ centralised actions opportunities, including the EUA. During the **application phase**, most of these NAs offer consultations (both online and in person), organize info sessions or even joint infodays (e. g. Central European Joint Infoday by AT, CZ, HU and SK NAs), help with partner search etc.

As for the funded Alliances, NAs play a key role in **promoting good practices** (e. g. showcasing them at events; inviting them as keynote speakers), **increasing awareness of the EUI** among the general public, facilitating **networking and exchanges** among Alliance members, but also connecting them with not involved HEIs (e. g. organizing thematic workshops or events such as this TCA).

NAs are in general involved in the **national networks of HEIs** participating in the Alliances, although their roles differ – in some countries, they are coordinating the national network (e. g. organizing regular meetings enabling exchange of good practices/challenges, inviting relevant experts), in others the HEIs rather coordinate themselves (or the NA’s role is mainly in setting up the network), in some countries the ministry is the main coordinator. These networks serve as platforms to **connect actors on the national level** – Alliance members, NAs, ministries and national authorities (as important enablers of necessary legislative changes). NAs see their role as a **mediator between national authorities and HE sector**, fostering dialogues and exchanges. In some countries, the close cooperation among national actors already resulted in legislative changes (e. g. implementing and pursuing the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes).

Among other activities, NAs are **analysing results** and publishing them in newsletters and reports, however this effort is to a large extent complicated by the **lack of information and data from the European Commission**. Missing data also makes **supporting unsuccessful applicants very difficult**. Some NAs are also (in cooperation with national authorities) involved in monitoring of the impact of EUI on internationalisation of participating HEIs/HE sector in general.

As EUI is currently in the spotlight and attracts a lot of attention, NAs are trying to take advantage of this momentum to **raise awareness of other Erasmus+ opportunities** and promote **synergies with other decentralized and centralized actions**. NAs are presenting **Erasmus+ as an ecosystem**, with EUI as an excellence initiative on the top, but at the same time highlighting other actions that are also beneficial (and in some cases can represent more adequate option for a particular HEI or serve as a “first step” towards Alliance). In this regard, it’s important to consider the overall level of internationalisation of each HEI and its previous experience with Erasmus+.

This also works the other way around, as HEIs are now, thanks to the EUI, more interested in other Erasmus+ opportunities. This is definitely an interesting (yet maybe unintended) side effect of the EUI. NAs agree that **looking for synergies** within Erasmus+ as well as with other EU programmes, initiatives and funding mechanisms is one of their roles as well.

In most of the countries represented at the workshop, the national authorities offer additional financial support, a few NAs are administrating this funding on their behalf, e. g. Austria or Germany.

## NA plans for the next 12 months & wishes for the future

Within the next 12 months, NAs will focus on the **upcoming open call**, information dissemination and support for applicants. NAs have discussed how to achieve the target of 10 % HEIs involved in the EUAs and, related to that, what are the profiles of HEIs represented in EUA. The **evaluation/analysis** in this regard would be highly appreciated, as universities of applied sciences, art or smaller institutions are rather under-represented (some NAs suggested a special call for them, other NAs prefer keeping the calls open, not limited to certain types of HEIs).

Of course, the question of **continuous funding and support** is occupying NAs as well and they would like the **funding beyond 2027 to be secured**. NAs are interested how the EUI and its support will develop, as this decision will impact other Erasmus+ actions as well. NAs also wish the EUI to be more **harmonized with other Erasmus+ actions** (e. g. to have a road map). As there are many goals within the programme, there is also a question of dividing sources among various key actions. In particular, the question on integrating KA1 mobilities into Alliances was raised. For NAs it is also very important to ensure exchange between HEIs participating in EUI (10 %) and HEIs that are not part of EUI (90 %).

NAs will also **keep supporting their national networks**, organize thematic and other exchange-stimulating **events** and will start or continue connecting EUI members with not participating HEIs (while searching for the best format for this purpose).

As for the future prospects, NAs wish for a closer cooperation with the European Commission, the EACEA and a more profound **co-creation process** – they would like to be seen as **serious partners and EUI multipliers**. NAs are aware of their potential in **spreading the good practices and outcomes of Alliances to the whole HE sector**. It would be really useful to be **more included in the dialogue between the European Commission, EACEA and EUA**, as NAs have the overall knowledge of (as well as links to) the national HE ecosystems as a whole and could therefore bring also non-participating HEIs perspective to the debate. Having the first-hand information on the progress and challenges of EUI from a national perspective would also enable NAs to foster the spill-over effects.

On a more practical level, it would be useful to have a **more elaborate overview of EUIs and their offer**, as this would make dissemination and promotion of EUIs much easier. For example, a catalogue or a support structure could be set up (both could be inspired by the Erasmus Mundus).

Last but not least, NAs wish for more **information exchange opportunities** (with the Commission, Alliances as well as other NAs) and express the need for **more data and information** (especially from the Commission, but also for example outputs from ForEU1 and ForEU2 meeting would be valuable).

## WS 2D: Piloting innovative European structures and instruments

### Presenters:

- Co-creating new cooperation structures - the role of University Alliances and other university networks: Veronika Kupriyanova, Senior Policy Coordinator, Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
- Increasing student engagement in EUA: Juan Rayon Gonzales, President of Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- Towards a possible European Degree, Flavia Soares de Oliveira Colus, Researcher, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI)

### EUA:

- YUFE: A Pilot on European Degrees, Magdalena Kohl, Policy Advisor, Maastricht University
- ECIU: A Legal Status for European Universities, Trym Holbek, ECIU Institutional Coordinator, University of Stavanger

### Moderator:

- Ieva Serapinaite, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

Rapporteur:

- Nadia Manzoni, PhD researcher of EU's higher education policy and the European Universities initiative, Central European University

EUA are expected to build bridges and shape innovative structures for European higher education cooperation. By pooling capacities and resources, alliances are expected to co-create new approaches and instruments enabling European higher education institutions to cooperate closer and deeper, to facilitate joint transnational programmes and degrees, or award new quality labels. This session will open for presentations of new experimental developments, experiences from EUA and the discussion on possible future steps, which may have a significant impact other higher education institutions.

This workshop was dedicated to discussing the new cooperation mechanisms and instruments designed to facilitate cross-boarder cooperation of EUA and in particular, the European degree and the European statute for alliances.

- The session commenced with a perspective from Veronika Kupriyanova, a representative of the Brussels-based Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) who provided a chronology of the stakeholder consultation processes linked to the EUA. These consultations offered an important avenue for ACA to feed its members' position and inputs into the policy co-creation processes, with the aim to create a fair playground for innovation across the entire higher education system and for all types of higher education institutions.
- The students' perspective on the issue was provided by Juan Rayon Gonzalez, the president of the Erasmus Student Network, who emphasised that students struggle with recognition, they have trouble accessing international education and civic engagement is not part of their academic journey even though they would like it to be. He highlighted the fact that instruments like the European degree, even though they will serve a small elite of students who will attend joint programmes, should not be seen as niche solutions to niche problems but rather as catalysts for broader change and potential positive spill over effects on the entire sector (for instance through innovation in teaching, internationalisation of staff, etc.). Transferability of the knowledge to the whole sector is the key to the success of the initiative.
- Flavia Colus from PPMI delivered a presentation on the now completed study on the 'Road towards a European degree' where this consultancy was commissioned by the European Commission to survey the relevant stakeholders and propose a way forward for the implementation of a European degree based on stakeholders' needs. The study compared two most viable options, one being the a certificate-style European degree *label* and the other a full blown European degree qualification and concluded that the roll out should happen step-by-step starting with a label and finishing with a qualification. In response to the question of the added value of a new label compared to existing Bologna tools, the answer provided was that fresh impetus and new energy for implementation is needed which the European degree policy provides. Also, the European degree needs to cater for innovative forms of learning such as short-cycle courses and micro-credentials, which previous tools don't serve as well.
- An example of one of the 6 ongoing projects funded by the Erasmus+ projects to pilot the European degree was presented by Magdalena Kohl from the YUFE alliance. The project entitled FOCI (Future-proof criteria for innovative education) brings together 8 universities from three alliances (YUFE, ECIU and EPICUR) alongside 17 partners such as accreditation agencies, ministries, student organisations and one employer organisation under the coordination of University of Rijeka. The project kicked off on 1 April 2023 and will run until



spring 2024. The specificity of the project is that it goes beyond the certification of joint degrees and tries to test solutions that work for other innovative educational models that do not lead to the full degree. The project analyses the fitness for purpose of possible European degree criteria on the examples of 10 study programmes that are offered by one or more of alliance members like joint degrees, multiple degrees, Erasmus Mundus, short term programmes, single course offers etc. The focus is on strong stakeholder involvement and on usefulness for the students as well as applicability in different regulatory frameworks.

- Finally, an ongoing pilot project on the European statute was presented by Trym Holbek, institutional coordinator for ECIU at the University of Stavanger. The project entitled “European Status for ECIU University” is led by ECIU and brings together a very wide range of partners that will aim to recommend to the EU a suitable legal instrument for cross-national cooperation of universities. The project methodology consists of legal experts doing a SWAT assessment of four existing legal instruments (such as EGTC and European Cooperative Society (SCE)) against 8 use cases (such as hiring staff, attracting private and public funding, providing flexible learning paths for students at European level, attracting private revenue on continuous education, investing in facilities, joint dana and IPR management and others). The ambition of the project partners is to create institutionalised structures that can more successfully face the modern disruptions in higher education. The project will see a consultation with ministries in the summer 2023 and another one with universities and alliances in autumn 2023. If none of the existing legal instruments are suitable, the project will recommend creating a new instrument to the European Commission.

Finally, from the discussions in this workshop it worth noting that not all stakeholders are convinced of the need for new instruments such as the European degree (whereas the European statute seems less controversial). And some stakeholders question the necessity of going beyond what Bologna Ministers have agreed to in 2015 in terms of the Joint Approach to Accreditation of Joint Programmes. Some stakeholders start questioning whether a treaty change that would afford the European Union more powers in higher education is an option that is on the table for the implementation of the European degree and the European statute. Others are wary of real disruptions to the way higher education institutions function and prefer continuity rather than a radical change. It is undeniable though that the alliances have ambitions that challenge our mindsets as well as the actual structures in universities.

### **Plenary session 3: Sharing experiences, knowledge and results**

*Challenges and solutions concerning the dissemination of results, transferring models and innovations from EUI to other higher education institutions.*

Existing strategies for outreach and dissemination

- EPICUR: Nora Korp, European University Manager, BOKU - University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Austria
- CIVICA: Enora Palaric, Manager International Alliances, Hertie School Berlin

World café round 1 & 2: Discussion of strategies with EUAs

Moderators and rapporteurs:

- Beate Körner, Head of Unit Erasmus+ Partnership and Cooperation Projects, NA DAAD
- Martina Friedrich, OeAD - Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

In this session, two alliances presented their existing strategies for outreach and dissemination, followed by an interactive World Café. During the World Café participants around 16 different group tables discussed the following aspects:

- Positive experiences/aspects in connection with dissemination/outreach. What has been implemented and works well?
- Challenges: What are problems or obstacles (e.g. administrative, content, legal, institutional occurred)? What are solutions and lessons learned or suggestions for improvement?
- What can other HEIs learn from this transfer of ideas and lessons learned?

All tables were to asked to summarize the discussion in 3 important ideas and one main message on a padlet ([TCA 'Spreading innovative results from EUA to other higher education institutions'; Plenary session 3: Sharing experiences, knowledge and results; World Café \(padlet.com\)](#))

### **Sharing knowledge and experiences within the alliances community**

- Clear and unified branding of the Alliance is crucial for the dissemination activities. Internal dissemination seems to be even more challenging than external communication (different approaches to different internal stakeholder groups are needed).
- It is very important to involve all members of the university community and to create effective communication channels from the working groups to the ultimate decision-makers. Generate an environment of co-creation and collaboration.
- More sharing across alliances of concrete details and actions would be helpful - less focus on sharing the big idea, concept and approach but highlighting practices that work, concrete examples.
- Good branding is important for all stakeholders within the HEI and alliances to identify with. Promoting EUI at a university comes down to rising awareness of opportunities and eliciting engagement of the target groups.

### **Sharing information beyond the alliances (other HEIs and the general public)**

- Targeted communication is a key, to some targets such as other alliances and HEIs that are not members of EUI we should not be afraid of communicating our failures.
- All agents (governments, agencies, universities, citizens) are extremely important in promoting process of EUIs, only a good relation between these agents can guarantee that the promotion campaigns will be successful and societies will understand what EUIs can offer and why they are so important.
- Dissemination should not only be a way of disseminating our successes, but also a way of building long-term relations with the rest of the society so that fruitful -and horizontal- projects can be developed in the future. It is important to establish mechanisms for communicating not only within the alliances but beyond. Main keywords are: synergy, balance, unity. Importance and inclusion of local stakeholders and bodies from the national level. Very important to disseminate information about the failures and lessons learned, not only about the success and polished stories.
- Long term activities require clear strategic approach from all universities involved.
- Discussion on how to disseminate about the opportunities to the other HEIs and especially those who are not yet involved urgently needs to be intensified.

### **Workshop session 3: Co-creating knowledge and innovation eco-systems**

*How can effective cooperation structures be created and maintained? How is inclusion and wider societal outreach achieved?*

### **WS 3A: Impact and Learnings on European University Initiative**

Presenter:

- E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>: Hannes Raffaseder, CEO and Lead Coordinator of the European University, St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences

Moderator:

- Martina Friedrich, OeAD - Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation
- Rapporteur:
- Iris Waringer, IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems

Co-creating knowledge and innovation ecosystems is key to solving the societal and economic challenges of our time, both at regional and European levels. This session discusses first impacts of EUA and shares their experiences and best practices to engage with regional communities, empower multi-directional knowledge exchange with various stakeholders across the knowledge-square and benefit from pan-European collaboration.

In this workshop, Hannes **Raffeseder** gave an overview of the EUI E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>, its core values and strategies and the already realized activities and projects. Entrepreneurship, sustainability and engagement are not only keywords for E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> but essential for the establishment of the culture and environment of the alliance which aims to be a Future University. The co-creation of knowledge and innovation ecosystems is one of the key aspects of E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> and was realized through a number of different activities presented as follows. Within joint educational activities joint Bootcamps, Hackathons, I Living Labs and iResidencies could be realized. As for innovation activities within the alliance, Hannes Raffeseder presented the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> [Entrenovators](#) Network, an initiative funded by Horizon Europe as well as the [E.I.N.S.](#) (Entrepreneurship and Innovation Network for Smart and Sustainable Regions) with all alliance universities as well as the UIIN (University Industry Innovation Network) as partners. Research activities take place within the following different Innovation Hubs, which are led by the different partner universities: Creative and Digital Media; Digital Health and Social Innovation; Smart and Sustainable Working and Learning Environments; Digital Technologies and Advanced Manufacturing; Smart and Sustainable Cities and Villages; Food and Agriculture.

**Positive experiences/aspects in connection with impact and learnings within EUA. What works well? What was well implemented?**

- A strong focus on talents, strengths and opportunities (rather than on barriers and problems) is fostering the success of the alliance's activities. It was seen as crucial to collaborate, to join forces and to learn from each other instead of competing. Another success factor was to enable creative ideas more than to enforce academic performance. Generally, EUIs are perceived as playground for new structures and activities, enabling innovation in HE.
- EUIs foster intensive collaboration among rectorates and university management as well as networking with European Associations as well as the European Commission. Within the alliances, trust was established which makes a lot of procedures easier (close, non-formal contacts). Organizational learning (from each other) was also mentioned.
- The increased focus on and improved procedures for internationalization and international collaborations in general was stressed. As a consequence, a rise in mobilities (as it is a precondition), and a greater variety of mobility formats (short, blended) were mentioned several times.
- Universities which are part of EUIs experience a higher attractivity/visibility as well as an increase of regional impact for their own HEI.
- One controversial but successful approach was the strategic decision of one EUI NOT to focus on joint programs BUT on smaller joint educational offers (e.g. micro-credentials).
- Student engagement could be increased in many cases within the alliances.

**Challenges: What are the problems or obstacles (e.g., administrative, content, legal, institutional occurred)? What were the solutions? Do you have examples of lessons learned or suggestions for improvement?**

**Challenges**

- Most widely mentioned were administrative and legal obstacles, for example when it comes to differences in national laws which makes the design of joint programs (with joint degrees) very complex. In this regard, different academic calendars, differences in recognition procedures and the ongoing/implementation of the Bologna Process handled differently by the different partners was mentioned.
- Sustainable funding as well as the lack of support with co-funding on national level and the lack of funding for resources not covered by the EUI budget was identified as a key challenge for all EUI.
- On student level, student engagement and commitment for student activities were identified as poor in a lot of cases.
- Further administrative challenges were GDPR regulations (while there is a need of sharing student data) and the identified requirement of joint IT/software systems for student administration.
- All EUIs would welcome the European Degree Approach for their joint educational activities to facilitate collaboration among the partners.
- Within Lifelong Learning activities, the involvement of students and legal formats were identified as main challenges, but also mobility is perceived as very difficult in LLL.

#### **Solutions**

- Seeking for political support, putting pressure on national level as well as lobbying on national and EU level was seen as the most effective solution for the main challenges.
- A lot of alliances were already successful in finding alternatives for financial funding and thus enabling sustainability for their projects and collaboration.
- One success factor that has been identified broadly is for alliances to start with small programs and projects to realize activities.
- One solution and necessity for alliances was the joint development of shared IT systems.
- Seeking commitment on local, institutional level, getting students and staff engaged can be seen as crucial. For that, internal dissemination/communication and commitment is key.

#### **What can non-EUIs learn from this transfer of ideas and lessons learned?**

- The take-aways for Non-EUIs were manifold such as for example that multilingualism can be enriching and that diversity is a key success factor of the alliances. Also, the societal impact and the outreach of the alliance should be considered from the beginning on.
- Commitment from Management/University Rectors was identified as decisive as well as intercultural understanding and an international spirit.
- A lot of learnings with regard to the organization of alliances were shared as for example possible governance structures (associations, legal entities etc.). A separation within alliances of project management and project lead seems to be difficult but sometimes not to avoid. Also, time was mentioned as a critical success factor – as everything always takes more time than expected.
- With regard to financing, resource sharing within alliances was positively perceived.
- Further recommendations given were that concrete, operative ideas & examples are necessary to start activities.
- A general desire for a platform for sharing best practices (as well as failures and things that did not work so well) for non EUI and other EUI was expressed as well as the need for good practices guidelines on joint/collaborative courses/programs.
- It is recommended to define policies for acquisition of external partners and adding new partners as well as for internal structures and management of alliances (e.g. rotating presidency).

### WS 3B: Strengthening impact on other higher education institutions in the EUA

#### Presenters:

- CIVICA- Enora Palaric, Manager International Alliances, Hertie school Berlin, Germany
- Christian Brauweiler, University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, Germany

#### Moderator:

- Beate Körner, Head of Unit Erasmus+ Partnership and Cooperation Projects, NA DAAD

#### Rapporteur:

- Josephine Ravenstein, Senior Policy Officer, National Agency Erasmus+, Nuffic

Effective cooperation structures are a need for (the internationalization) all HEIs in Europe regardless of their involvement in a 'European University'. This session looks at the needs of non-EUI and how they can benefit from newly created models or good practices at existing EUIs in terms of innovative and inclusive cooperation structures in general and with respect to the wider society.

**Presentation of CIVICA** by Enora Palaric, Manager International Alliances, Hertie school Berlin, Germany. In her presentation Enora presented the cooperation structures of CIVICA with regards to inclusion and outreach and lessons learned so far. The implementation structure is divided in 3 pillars: Education, research & innovation and **service to society**, which was the focus of the session. CIVICA aims to achieve lasting impact on a diverse and inclusive community, promote European values, access to knowledge and HE, global partnerships with key actors. Enora showed interesting examples on collaboration activities for staff, for first generation students, refugee students, inclusion workshops. They developed a platform where participants can share experiences. They also developed joint partnerships with non-HEI's, such as the Google CIVICA policy summer institute open for first generation students. This kind of activities need to be developed more, and it may be challenging. Examples for connecting student communities and fostering student initiatives had added value. Producing and presenting innovative research on core themes relevant to the broader society was another important topic, for example developing data driven technologies for the social sciences. Using the platform with shared common values CIVICA intended to achieve alignment, so that everybody would speak with one voice to the world outside the alliance. Key messages regarding opportunities and challenges for non-EUA's:

- All collaboration activities may be transferred on a smaller scale to other HEIs. Higher impact can be achieved by joining forces & achieving synergies; this will also reinforce the attractiveness of the institution.
- Coordination costs for joint activities is a challenge, like additional resources and some degree of central coordination; prerequisite is commitment of the leadership.

#### **Presentation of Christian Brauweiler, University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, Germany**

As the university was not part of an alliance, Brauweiler listed possible reasons why German universities of applied sciences (UAS) were not well-represented with EUA so far. In Germany, only 4 UAS were members, out of 250 HEIs which formed alliances. Possible reasons might be that UAS often have smaller numbers of students and are located in smaller cities. Their focus is often local, the society regional. Traditionally they were not allowed to have PhD tracks although the situation is changing. UAS Zwickau implements international projects which are nationally funded, but the number ss such projects could be higher, so that the university becomes more international.

The presentations were followed by a discussion in 2 groups.

Group 1 discussed **internal cooperation structures** for inclusion and wider societal outreach. The main message was that within EUAs the societal outreach is often focused on the region, companies and civil society. An EUA offers an opportunity for apprenticeships/ traineeships, workshops with

companies, joint and dual degree in collaboration with companies, capstone projects, supervisors for companies. Student communities organize student-driven events for public. The added value and benefits of being in an alliance is thus synergies and knowledge sharing (common portal to share these ideas). Being part of an alliance can raise awareness on certain topics. Example: as an HEI you may think that you've made good progress on diversity and inclusion, but in the exchange with partners you become aware that you can learn more on this topic. For companies the added value can be that they have access to a broader pool of students and researchers. Not just about developing the new but also about the dissemination of the new. Structures to do it are funded, how to replicate them?

**How can results be transferred to non EUAs?** With the help of NA's. Non EUA's do not need to reinvent the wheel if there is enough communication between EUA's and Non-EUA's. It is not enough to only disseminate the results through a website. You also need conversations, collect best practices from all universities. Local collaboration is needed. A database with all alliances and members with all the topics and best practices from all the alliances is needed.

Group 2 discussed **cooperation structures to increase societal outreach**. The group had a broader approach in their discussions than a focus on outreach and inclusion. Main learnings of the discussion on what factors enable successfully operating networks:

- It is an **advantage** if the partners have previous cooperation experience or a part of a current network. Active support of the **leadership** or at least a positive signal is very important for the success of cooperation structures.
- **The pilot phase** in building a cooperation structure is crucial. Failures may build experience, but it is necessary to identify the 'group of the willing' and use a step-by-step approach.
- **Valorise** existing structures and processes and choose a liaison person close to the institution's leadership.
- **Communication and responsibilities** are key, create ownership for the work packages.
- **Involvement of stakeholders** at the right time is also important: The students at an early stage, academics may come later. The involvement of society and industry remains a challenge.

### WS 3C: Impact on national structures (round table discussion)

Speakers:

- Laura Sinóros-Szabó, Head of Department for Strategy and Institutional development, the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, Hungary
- Lene Oftedal, Senior Adviser, Section for EU/EEA, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research
- Kristin Hess, Desk Officer Unit, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Stephan Venzke, Head of Unit 22 "State Universities", Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (Germany) representing the Bundesrat (federal states)

Moderator:

- Bettina Ugródsy-Beregi, Senior Internationalisation Coordinator, TPF

Rapporteur:

- Bára Křenek Sobotková, Czech National Agency for international education and research

EUA are transnational partnerships, yet we must not forget impacts need to take root at national levels in case positive changes and long-term effects are expected. This round table discussion focuses on how the benefits of the Alliances can be adopted and utilized by the domestic educational frameworks and what transformational changes are catalyzed by the alliances. The aim is to investigate how different countries transmit their achievements and outcomes to their ministries, how do they manage the information received, what is the impact on national structures

and where all this can take us. The discussion is open to all participants of the conference. Questions are welcome.

### **Added value of the activities of Alliances in Germany, Hungary and Norway, their most significant impact on national educational structure & challenges Alliances are facing**

German Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are represented in **37 Alliances**, both Hungarian and Norwegian HEIs are involved in **9 Alliances**. All the panellists agreed that Alliances have a potential to be innovative, globally competitive **flagships of transformation**. They are real **role-models** and their innovative approach and internationalised “Alliance mindset” could be inspiring for the whole HE sector. Also, they have already proven their potential to be the **drivers of change**, to stimulate new solutions and to accelerate developments in relevant legislative issues. Alliances are setting requirements for cooperation on European, national as well as local level.

As for the challenges, **uncertain continuation of EUI beyond 2027** is the main one. However, ministries will play a key role in the EUI future – especially by supporting the initiative through the Erasmus+ Committee, mid-term evaluation and other platforms they are involved in. **Tuning EU policy to (sometimes conflicting) national legislations** is another challenge, as the primary responsibility for education policies lies on the national/regional level. Council Conclusions and Recommendations are not binding, but panellists agree they are creating a necessary pressure to move things forward (to review national legislation, implement Bologna tools etc). While discussing this topic, a question was raised whether Alliances are more of a challenge, or a chance – as there is no clear narrative and both perspectives are relevant; and sometimes we might focus too much on challenges than on the benefits. Also, the Alliances are in the process of building their identities, it is difficult to say at present how successful they will be in this work.

### **The role of ministries in European Universities Initiative according to you**

The question was opened by a brainstorming on the “role of ministries”, here are the key words by the audience: facilitator and enabler (of necessary legislative changes), bridge, providing support (including additional funding), listening (to the Alliances’ needs).

The ministries represented at the panel are aware of their role as **enablers of change** and they are also taking active steps in this regard. In **Germany**, Alliances had a strong political as well as financial support from the very beginning. An **accompanying national programme** for German HEIs was set up as of 2021, composed of two programme lines: 1) top up for HEIs with successful Alliance application (now up to 175.000 EUR/year), 2) contribution for approved but not funded Alliances with a high-quality application (up to 150.000 EUR/year). This has provided German HEIs not only necessary support and funding, but applying for the top-up serves as another incentive to think about what HEIs could and should deliver within Alliances.

In **Hungary**, a **monitoring group** was set up at the very beginning to learn about Alliances’ needs. Some of those were later reflected in the updated Hungarian Higher Education Act from 2020, especially the European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Degrees, which was an important first step to enable smoother international cooperation. In addition, the ministry also assumed the 20% self-reliance. In **Norway**, the ministry is also cooperating closely with national authorities, NA and Norwegian HEIs participating in Alliances to **identify and remove obstacles** of international cooperation. In respect of this, Norway is now about to implement the European Approach to QA of Joint Degrees. Norway is not providing additional funding for HEIs participating in Alliances, as they say it’s up to HEIs, how they decide to manage their funds and prioritize international activities (also there are other flagships – CoVE, Erasmus Mundus etc.).

### **How do the activities and outcomes of the projects relate to national strategic objectives**

Alliances are not only drivers of change, but in many ways also drivers of strategies. In **Germany**, the dialogue with Alliances is strongly established on both federal and state levels. The **federal** ministry is now updating the Strategy for internationalization (introduced in 2013), which will draw from the Alliances' experience and use them for setting up the strategic objectives. From the perspective of a **state** ministry, the impact is visible not just in the field internationalisation, but also in the whole HE national system: fostering cooperation on European, national and regional level is essential for innovation and pursuing development of relevant competences and skills.

In **Norway**, the Alliances are considered as crucial players in the green and digital transition. As the society needs to adapt to changing conditions continuously, it's much appreciated that the EUI (and HEIs in general) are focusing also on life-long learning, re-skilling, micro-credentials etc. The ambitions of the university alliances are aligned with the Norwegian Strategy for Higher Education and Research, Strategy on Erasmus+ and EHEA as well as approach to competences development. In **Hungary**, the EUI topics are relevant to the national government as well, therefore there is an established cooperation e. g. on the topics of micro-credentials or women in STEM fields. Some priorities, such as increased mobilities and research collaboration, are present in both national and Alliances strategies. In Hungary in 2021 performance funding was introduced in higher education, which affects 36 higher education institutions out of the 63 in Hungary. Among the performance indicators there are KPIs to which Alliances also contribute (e.g. increasing internationalization/mobility, moving forward in international rankings, enhancing scientific performance).

#### **How Alliances should support the transformation and inclusion of HEIs not participating in Alliances**

One of the Alliances missions is spreading the outcomes and impact to other HEIs, as they should be pioneering changes and paving the way for the whole HE sector. However, there is a **potential risk of creating a gap** between Alliance and non-Alliance HEIs. The panellists are well aware of that and from their point of view, close **cooperation on the national level** is a key. In order to share experience, outcomes and enable the spill-over effect, it's important that ministries, NAs, other national authorities and HEIs are in a close touch (e. g. roundtables, conferences). The wider societal outreach is important as well (e. g. in Germany, podcast focused on Alliances is streamed, in Hungary the legislation created to support EUI, later was extended to European international programmes in order to benefit HEIs outside EUI). Another important thing is to improve the framework for international cooperation on the national level and think about the strategies how to get smaller HEIs involved. From the Hungarian perspective, the risk of potentially growing gap among HEIs is highlighting the need for a proper evaluation of the EUI.

#### **Ensuring the sustainability of the Alliances and their achievements; countries positions regarding the possible European Degree and the Legal Status of the Alliances**

Ensuring sustainability of the Alliances should be a shared responsibility of the Commission, ministries, HEIs and all relevant stakeholders. Alliances are now at the turning point and it largely depends on them, how they would like to develop/continue/reshape their cooperation and set the direction to the future; the ministries are here to support them.

**European Degree** and **Legal Status** are both quite new initiatives, also ministries represented at the panel debate approach these topics differently. From the German and Norwegian perspective, evaluation and analysis of pilot projects are necessary to decide on the next steps and development in these areas. Hungary emphasized that a decision on the further development of the Alliances is only possible after the evaluation of the EUI, however, education is the responsibility of the member states, and any further progress can be supported by respecting this.

#### **WS 3D: Co-creating strategic impact on European education and society at large in the EUA**

Speaker and moderator:

- ECIU: Trym Holbek, ECIU Institutional Coordinator, University of Stavanger



Rapporteur:

- Elisabeth Tauch, Senior Officer, EU programmes, NA DAAD

Delivering on all four university missions is important to achieve strategic impact at European level and co-create the future of universities. This requires a holistic approach to long-term strategy and cooperation and cross-programme funding. This session looks at how the ECIU University alliance works to establish a sustainable organizational structure, its overall impact framework, how joint structures deliver solutions on funding challenges and regional community building activities all contribute to achieving systemic impact at European level.

Delivering on all four university missions is important to achieve strategic impact at European level and co-create the future of universities. This requires a holistic approach to long-term strategy and cooperation and cross-programme funding. This session looked at how the ECIU University alliance works to establish a sustainable organizational structure, its overall impact framework, how joint structures deliver solutions on funding challenges and regional community building activities all contribute to achieving systemic impact at European level.

The session was run by Trym Holbek, ECIU institutional coordinator at the University of Stavanger. His presentation highlighted the contribution of ECIU to co-create the future of universities in Europe and generate a strategic impact at European level. The presentation triggered discussions on how joint organisational structures can be established, innovative teaching and learning formats put in place, on solutions to funding challenges and regional involvement.

**Presentation of ECIU and its long-standing history.** ECIU University belongs to the EUA funded under the first pilot call in 2019, growing from 11 to 13 university partners today. The alliance originates from a long-standing network founded in 1997 by a group of young and entrepreneurial universities with a strong regional roots. The universities are situated in regions that have undergone a transition from traditional industry to knowledge-intensive society (e.g. Stavanger University: going from fishery to oil and green energy). They are research universities committed to shaping the way European higher education is delivered to the green and digital transition and to the 2030 sustainable development goals. The ECIU concept was co-created with many stakeholders as associated partners (businesses and social stakeholders like cities and region municipalities, employers' associations, etc.). ECIU has a Mexican associate university partner with an outstanding expertise in challenge-based education (which is at the core of ECIU university).

**ECIU long-term strategy: A concept for a new university.** The alliance wants to create an open European ecosystem, not to become a traditional university at European level. In such an open ecosystem, education, research and innovation in the member universities meet their stakeholders and learners, contributing to Europe and its region. In this flexible and inclusive space, communities of practice are built around urgent and relevant societal topics and innovative learning formats and collaborative approaches are developed making use of digital and physical opportunities. ECIU relies on the creation of both physical campuses and a virtual campus.

**Shift from running a project to a programmatical approach.** In the pilot phase of the Alliance (2019-2022), the focus was on running a project. Now, at the beginning of the second development phase (start-up phase 2023-2025), there is a need to establish a programme level so that successive expansion and growth phases can be put in place till 2030.

While in the pilot phase the organizational structure was very much work-package-related, the current start-up phase relies on a programmatical organisation. The legal entity of ECIU (a Dutch foundation) is the face of the network and organises the work. As a preparation for entering into an ecosystem

model, central staff has been recruited. ECIU communities, innovation hubs, ECIU spaces and an Engage platform (for ECIU people) are currently being developed.

**At the core of ECIU: - the challenge-based learning (CBL).** It is a pedagogical approach that actively engages students in a situation that is real, relevant and related to their environment. It takes place through the identification, analysis and design of a solution to a socio-technical problem. The learning experience is typically multidisciplinary, involves different stakeholders and aims to find a collaboratively developed solution. The design of CB-courses are defined by several universities. In the discussion the importance of getting ECTS credits for this learning experiences and to integrate them in all programmes was highlighted. The question of how to motivate teaching staff was also raised. For this, ECIU relies on their own champions paving the way and in particular on the training offers for teachers within a capacity development work package.

**Achieving impact on society through learning activities around the SDGs.** As ECIU members are located in smart cities, ECIU chose SDG 11 „Sustainable cities and communities“ for delivering on their fourth mission. Successful examples of activities were presented and discussed like an ECIU strategic challenges on „Towards a climate-neutral campus“ or „Big data and climate change“ or „Sustainable telecommunications and remote work in the mountains“ that were organised at different member universities for ECIU students.

**From degrees to flexible learning pathways through micro-credentials.** ECIU strives to provide European higher education that serves societal needs. For this it has to re-invent the traditional approach to degrees through a shift to flexible learning pathways. ECIU designed tracks for learners that are not pre-designed but rather flexible and thematically open to the learners to choose from. The micro-credentials are stackable, credit-bearing and quality-assured. A platform for the storage, sharing and portability of micro-credentials is to be launched later this year. ECIU is at the forefront for the development of micro-credentials: it published various papers and runs a micro-credentials observatory managed by their Irish partner.

In contrast to flexible pathways which are at the core of ECIU education, joint degrees are rather not considered as a central issue as they serve less the alliance’s stakeholders and their development is sometimes seen as a „mission impossible“. However, ECIU has also been represented in the sub-group of the European Alliances on European Degrees since the start in 2020.

**Quality assurance & lessons learned.** For fully achieving ECIU’s ambition to provide challenge-based higher education learning in an excellent and inclusive way, training and focus on recognition is needed. Micro-credentials do not fit easily into traditional frameworks of recognition in higher education. In the pilot phase, ECIU started mapping national regulations for accreditation of HE provision, looking for different practices and obstacles. Although European EHEA (Bologna) tools are in place, national regulations still hamper joint operations. That is why ECIU involved relevant stakeholders (NARIC, ENQA) to discuss the flexibility of current degree systems and accreditation regulations. In Norway, the institutional QA system was adapted to make the ECIU learning provision fit into the course catalogue of the university.

**Conclusions.** This session was of great interest to participants as they received valuable insights into the activities and the approach to long-term strategy of ECIU, one of the most experienced EUA, very active both on the operational and on the strategic level and aiming at achieving a systemic impact on European education and society in the long run. Their good organisational structures - programmatical and not just project-based, will help them to achieve these goals. In the long run, they hope to develop a sustainable „business model“ capable to attract very diversified funding beyond the current Erasmus+ project funding.

#### Plenary session 4: European higher education in the future?

Key points from the final presentation on the transformative footprint of EUA.

##### **The role of EUA in European higher education** by Bjørn Stensaker, Vice-Rector for Education, University of Oslo

- EUI is an initiative that has been embraced by so many people, at the same time there is an expectation overload. It is impossible for the EUIs to solve all of EU challenges.
- 10 years ago, the latest policy fashion was the knowledge triangle to facilitate linkages between research, education and innovation. Policy makers realise collaboration is tricky, so it makes sense to delegate this to universities. It's the same policy logic, but the tools and instruments are different.
- University alliances have existed for a while. It is a global phenomenon. Asia established a lot of strategic alliances, this co-existed as a part of globalisation. It is the other side of the competition logic in the globalised scenario (the collaboration logic).
- A lot of alliances emerged to better brand themselves in the competition. In Europe, we have alliances also as advocacy groups (LERU, the Guild, etc) to influence policies. The EUI result in alliances formed from the innovation logic.
- Open question: Is this a fundamental change or a policy fashion?
- How to make sense of alliances: Alliances as a special breed of organisations (meta-organisations). In a meta organisation, the members are also organisations. (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008). In a meta organisation, the members are very powerful. In a normal organisation if 10 members (individuals leave) the organisation still survives. Meta organisations are ineffective in the short run, but more important over time (Ahrne & Brunsson).
- Maassen, Stensaker & Rosso (2022) alliance capacity analysed along four dimensions – demonstrating both strengths and potential weaknesses related to alliance capacity. Often alliances consist of like-minded institutions creating a cultural glue which is a strength.
- What is new about alliances? Mobility is not new, joint degrees are not new. What is the novel aspect here? It's not about having as many agreements as possible; it is about having agreements that work. EUI is going from quantitative logic to a qualitative logic when it comes to partnerships and mobility. Mobility can be important, but internationalisation is more than that. International exposure doesn't necessarily mean mobility – more focus on hybrid events, mobile teachers. Most likely there will be a change in how internationalisation will be perceived in the years to come
- EUI will always cover a minority of HEIs in Europe. Right now, the focus is on the EUI. What is the policy for those that are not a part of these alliances? This could lead to a more stratified European landscape? Elite institutions?
- A lot of governments put EUI=internationalisation. It is more than that. The border between what is national and what is international will be more blurred in the future. Hence, it will be interesting to see the impact of EUI on domestic HE policy
- How will alliances change the current multi-level governance dynamics in Europe, Power shift between European, national and institutional level?
- Consensus based organisations create cultural unity that can actually create the basis for much faster implementation in the long run.