

## Future and sustainability of alliances: Legal entity status - threat or opportunity?

European Universities Networking Day in Kuopio 9.12.

Mona Roman

Research Director, Metropolia UAS

Lead Coordinator, U!REKA European University

# Workshop agenda

## **1. Warm-up activity** (15 min) - Mona

Start the session by getting to know each other.

Share your name and if they were an animal, which animal would they be and why?

What you expect from the session?

## **2. Discussion** (1 h including a short 5-10 min break)

Intro & state-of-the-art - Mona (5 min)

Examples of good practices – Saara – RUN-EU (10 minutes + 10 minutes Q&A)

BREAK (5 minutes)

Example of good practices - Riikka - YUFE (10 minutes + 10 minutes Q&A)

## **3. Wrap-up** (15 min) - Mona, Ulf

Summarize your key findings and add them in Padlet: <https://bit.ly/allianssipaiiva2025>

Prepare one sentence summarizing your main result to share it with other groups.



# INTRO & STATE-OF-THE-ART

# Brief overview – legal entities in European University alliances

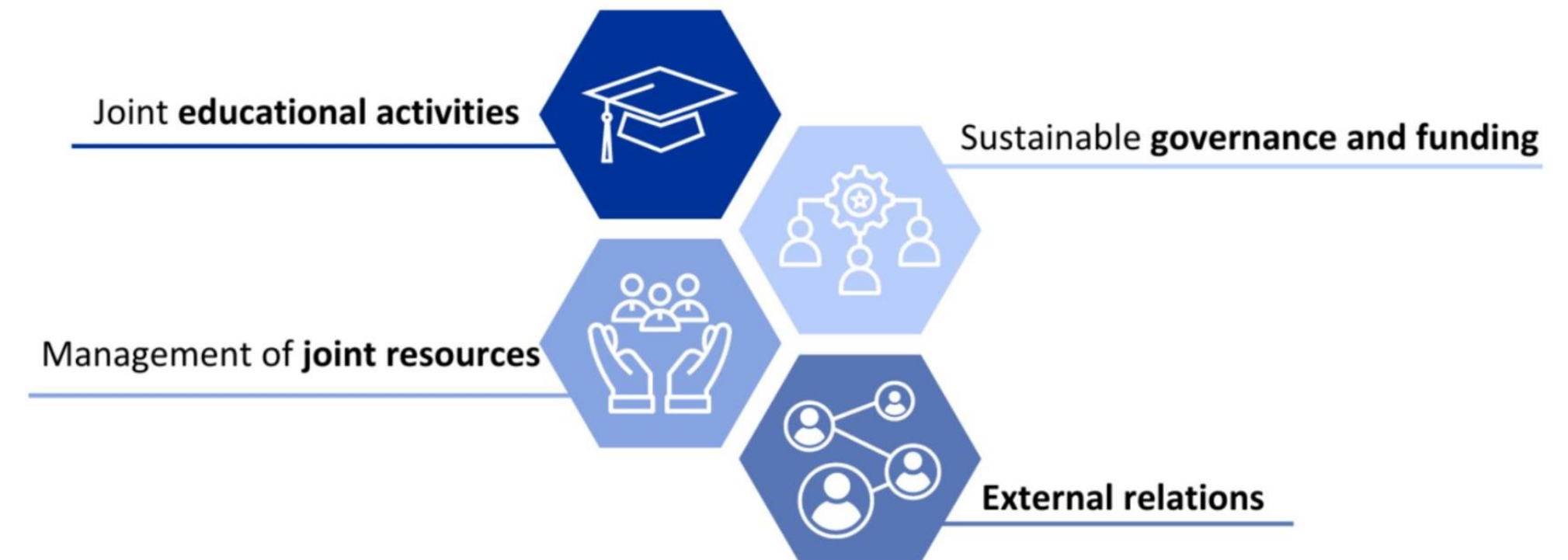
- The European Commission welcomes the legal entities of alliances as a way for a sustainable alliance collaboration, that goes beyond the project funding. There is also a plan to develop a more suitable European level legal entity type.
- There are great difference between the 14 legal entities and the planned further 10 legal entities of the European University alliances; in terms of their vision, use case, activities, staff, legal entity type, regulatory framework.
- There are several alliances that have based their legal entity and have an office in Brussels; these legal entities tend to serve for the overall alliance governance, strategy, communication and EU advocacy.
- There are also alliances that have legal entity based in the country of the coordinator, serving as mainly to support the overall alliance coordination and management, and seeking & managing external project funding on behalf of the alliance.
- There are also alliances of which the legal entity does not have any staff. For the case of RUN-EU initial launch, the legal entity serves as the owner of the joint campus managing underlying IT platforms and services, and as well as the data controllership.



# EU policy context

- The EU Commission has two flagship initiatives: A European degree and a Legal Entity. The EU Commission sees the legal entity for alliances as a way for **making the collaboration structural and sustainable beyond the project mode**.
- The EU Commission funded Erasmus+ pilot projects to analyze legal entities of alliances. It concluded that there are four main needs for alliance legal entity: **1) the delivery of joint study programs** such as the European degree, **2) Management of joint resources**, **3) Management of external relations, and 4) sustainable governance and funding**.
- The legal entity can be **funded by Erasmus+ program**, being one of the project beneficiaries.

## Needs according to the pilot projects





# Conclusions from EU study on Legal entities

1. Alliances face major obstacles without a legal entity
2. Existing instruments do not fully correspond to the needs (especially for joint educational activities)
3. The added value of an EU-level instrument is unanimous
4. An EU instrument must be flexible to accommodate the dynamic nature of higher education cooperation, including but also beyond European Universities alliances..
5. Any EU cooperation instrument should be voluntary, respecting institutional autonomy, and complementary to its partner institutions.
6. It should not be a precondition to access EU funding
7. The EGTC, and possibly also the EEIG, could have potential if amended to recognize the legal entity as a higher education institution. Also, as an alternative, a new tailored EU instrument could be designed





# Legal entity is part of the current call text for Erasmus+ European Universities

- There is currently an open Erasmus+ European Universities call for Alliances funded in 2022 or those existing ones that do not receive currently Erasmus+ EUI funding
- The call has four Specific Objectives. Under Specific Objective 4 "Deepening institutional transnational cooperation and enhancing higher education sector capacity" it is written the following guidance to alliances: "bring current forms of cooperation and governance to the next level, to effectively support for example the joint education provision, quality assurance methods including external formative quality assurance at the alliance level, piloting or fully implementing a common legal status for alliances"
- The EU Commission is thus strongly encouraging alliances at least pilot the legal entity. At the same time, Commission underlines though that alliances can prioritize which specific objectives they focus in their "bridge funding", legal status is not mandatory.

# Key considerations when establishing legal entities

1. What is the mission and goals of the legal entity in your alliance? What does it do, and what not?
2. Is there anything your legal entity is doing that could not be accomplished without it through alliance members' other shared governance mechanisms?
3. What is the legal entity type/form, and under which law it has been set up?
4. Who are the members of the legal entity?
5. Does the legal entity have any staff? If yes, how many and for what purpose? Who oversees the operational work of the staff?
6. Who decides upon the legal entity?
7. What is the annual budget for the legal entity? What are the sources of its finances?
8. How has the legal entity supported the alliance work forward? What are the concrete results/outputs achieved so far?