



Wednesday, 21 May 2025

# EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES LEGAL ENTITIES MEETING





09:15 – 09:45

# KEY POLICY MESSAGES FOR LEGAL ENTITIES OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

**Stefan ZOTTI**  
DG EAC, Deputy Head of Unit B1 for Higher Education

# A European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions

## Key policy messages

European Universities Legal Entities meeting, May 2025

*Stefan ZOTTI, Deputy Head of Unit EAC.B.1*

# Policy context

*You should continue work on [...] stimulating skills academies and partnerships and **supporting European Universities alliances.***

– President Ursula VON DER LEYEN, Mission letter to Roxana MÎNZATU, Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness

*Key deliverables of the Union of Skills:*

*[...]*

*Explore the **development of a suitable European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions.***

– ‘The Union of Skills’ Communication



# Alliances of higher education institutions with a legal entity

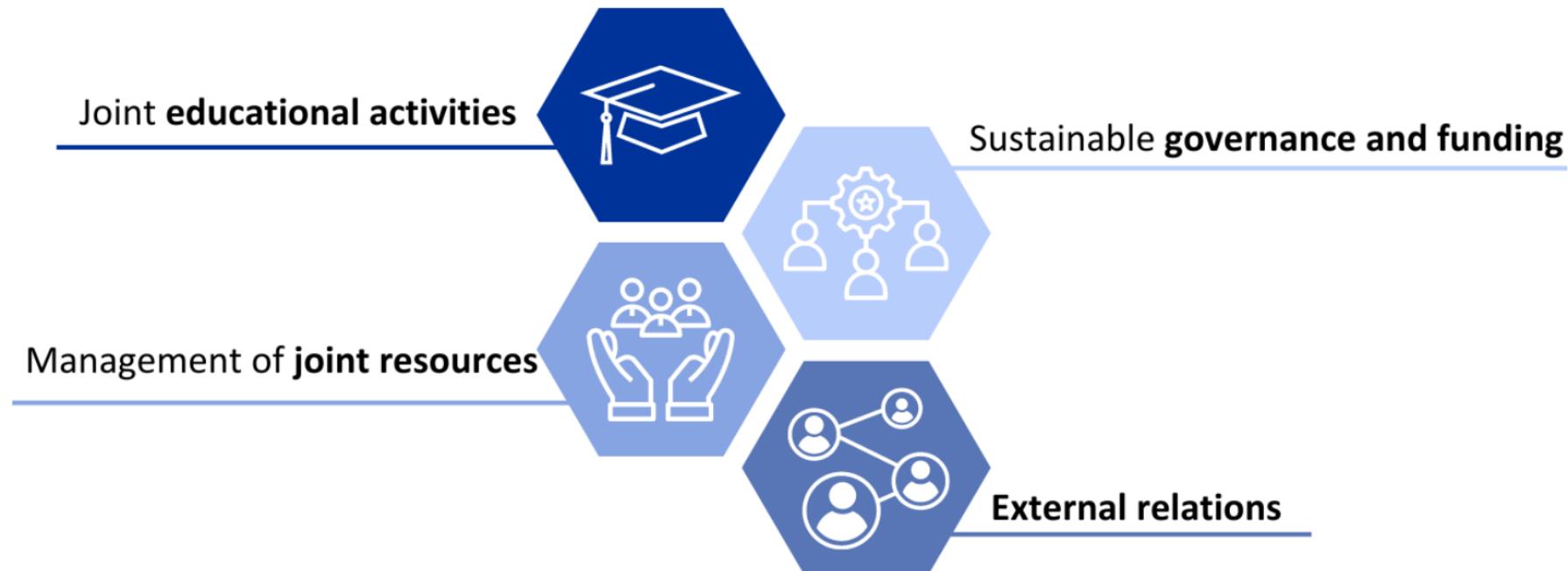
**14**

**European Universities** alliances  
have already set up a legal entity

**+10**

**European Universities** alliances  
(approximately) are in the process of  
developing a legal entity

# Needs according to the pilot projects





## Pilot projects' conclusions (1/2)

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





## Pilot projects' conclusions (2/2)

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 recognise the legal entity as a higher education institution. Also, as an alternative, a new tailored EU instrument could be designed



# The way forward

**Need to  
conduct an  
impact  
assessment**

**Preliminary  
discussions  
on future  
pathways**

**The need for  
a continued  
bottom-up  
push from the  
sector**



09:45 – 10:30

## INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE LEGAL ENTITIES

### **Session 1**

Legal entities that are a beneficiary under a European Universities grant

**4EU+ e.V. | Circle U. AISBL | ECIU Foundation | EUNICE AISBL |  
FilmEU Association vzw | Una Europa vzw | UNITA GEIE**



4EU+ European University Alliance

4eu+

Elena Del Giorgio – Secretary General



# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- The 4EU+ legal entity is an **non for profit association under German law (e.V.)** with a branch office registered in Brussels. We are currently in the process of setting up an **ASBL** under Belgian law and of completing the **transfer of the legal entity to Brussels**.
- The idea of building up a **robust governance model** and **legal entity** was there **since from the start** of the Alliance (to favour coordination, enhance the pooling of internal resources, facilitate the management of EU funding, strengthen external visibility). After a thorough mapping of available options, the decision to create an e.V. was based on its flexibility and the possibility of initially hosting the office within a university. The move to Brussels was driven by a desire to further strengthen networking and policy dialogue with EU institutions, other alliances, and stakeholders.
- Consulted lawyers advised the ASBL option because of its agility, especially during the start-up phase
- All 8 partners of the Alliance are members in the German association and will be full members in the Belgian one.



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- The legal entity is funded through annual fees paid by member institutions. Additionally the association is **coordinator of our main E+ project** - 1Core - and beneficiary in **other EU funded projects** (FOREU4All, RM Framework, MICI4EU+)
- The overall budget of the association is managed by the General Secretariat under the responsibility of the Secretary General. The budget also includes funding for some internal Calls/specific initiatives managed directly by the GS (Visiting Professorship Call; Flagships Budget).
- We are currently in a transition phase with 3 full time employees in Brussels (Secretary General, 1Core Project Manager, Financial and Administrative Officer) and 3 part-time employees in Heidelberg.



### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

- The 4EU+ legal entity acts as Coordinator of the 1Core project. As such, it is responsible for the overall management of the grant and the implementation of the project.
- The legal entity is directly responsible for the implementation *WP1 Project Management and Coordination* and for the implementation of activities under *WP6 – Sustainable governance of the Alliance*
- With regard to sustainability, the legal entity is the operational level supporting the implementation of the recently launched 4EU+ Strategy 2025 – 2035 which builds on and aligns with the work done in 1Core and in WP6.

<https://4euplus.eu/4EU-1001.html>



A legal entity – **Circle U. AISBL** – to support the transformational dynamic of the alliance (not a project)

Kevin GUILLAUME, Secretary General

# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- **What and when?**

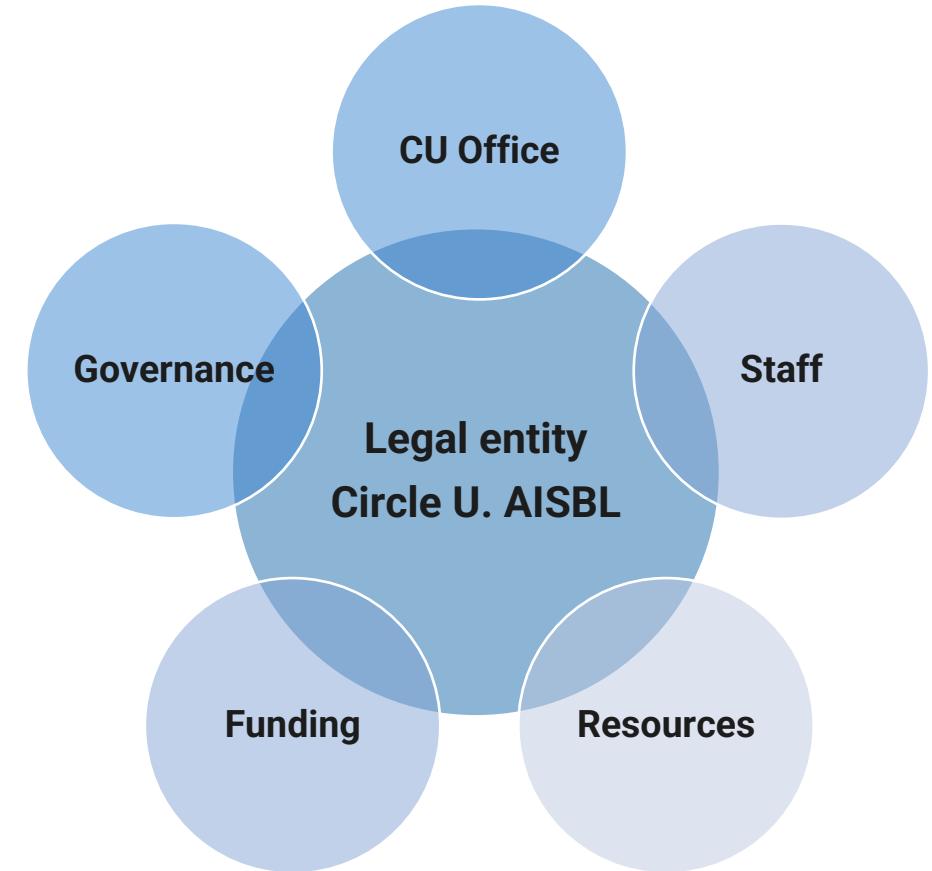
**AISBL** under Belgian law, formally established in **April 2021**

- **Why?**

- Fit-for-purpose
- Easy to set up
- Evolutive
- Experience of one partner (UCLouvain)

- **Who?**

All **9 member universities of Circle U.**, including non-beneficiary of EU projects (e.g. King's College London)



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- Two main **funding sources**:
  - Annual membership fees (~45% total budget)
  - EU grants (~55% total budget)
- Main **governing bodies** and responsibilities:
  - **General Assembly** (rectors/presidents) is highest **decision body** on the legal entity (strategic objectives, budget, appointment of Board members, admission of new members)
  - **Management Board** (VR/VP) is responsible for **preparation and implementation of GA decisions** and in charge of the administrative and financial management of the legal entity
  - **Secretary General** (and CU Office) oversees the **daily management of the legal entity**
- **CU Office** is composed of
  - Secretary General (1 FTE)
  - Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) officer (1 FTE)
  - Operations assistant (1 FTE)
  - Communication officer (1 FTE)
  - Interns (1-2 per term)





### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

- Circle U. AISBL is **NOT** coordinating the Erasmus+ project,
- But contribution to specific tasks, deliverables and milestones – mainly linked to **governance, ecosystem, sustainability and communication**
- Strong dimension on **impact through MEL strategy**, but goes beyond the project
- Management of Circle U. **seed-funding scheme** (self-funded) and **other funding schemes** (EU funded)

#### Strategic

- Ensure the fulfilment of our mission
- Represent the alliance externally
- Defend the interests of the alliance

#### Executive

- Ensure well-functioning governance
- Support the different governing bodies
- Facilitate decision-making

#### Operational

- Support projects' activities
- Developing alliance's activities
- Monitoring and evaluating alliance's progress



**ECIU Foundation**

& its alliance the

**ECIU University**



Olga Wessels, Head of ECIU Brussels Office



# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- Type of legal entity: Dutch Foundation
- Reason for choosing a specific type of legal entity: Flexibility of the Dutch Foundation; legal entity of the ECIU Network since 2006
- Composition of legal entity and partners involved: Legal entity consists of all ECIU universities:
  - European universities: Full partners (Rector, President/Director or Vice-Rector, all jointly responsible);
  - Non-European universities: associate partners



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- **Finances:** Annual membership fee and additional financial contributions from the partners, EU funding
- Accountability and **management** of the legal entity: All 12 European partners are jointly responsible and form the ECIU Foundation Governing Body. The Presidium (four members), supported by the Secretariat, is mandated to take decision in between Governing Body meetings
- **Staff** members working within the legal entity:
  - Based in Belgium: Giulia Falchi (FOREU4ALL manager), Olga Wessels +2 future employees (intern + 1 FTE) --> ECIU as registered organisation in Belgium
  - Based in Italy: Laura Paternoster (funding advisor) --> ECICU as registered organisation in Italy
  - Based in the Netherlands: Katrin Dirksen, ECIU Secretary General and Michael de Vries (treasurer)
  - Seconded staff for EU projects in which the ECIU Foundation is a beneficiary (between 10-20 people)



### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

The ECIU Foundation is a full partner in the ECIUn+ GA, and stands as the pivotal legal entity driving the establishment of a centralized organization for the alliance:

- employer of dedicated staff;
- holds critical assets of the alliance, including the IT system, which encompasses intellectual property rights (IPR), data transfer, services, and licenses;
- is the authorized issuer of centralized micro-credentials for ECIU University Learning Opportunities;
- owns the trademark for the ECIU University brand;
- ECIU coordinates FOREU4ALL.



**EUNICE AISBL**  
Secretary General  
Magdalena Sikorska

# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

Type of legal entity: AISBL

Reason for choosing a specific type of legal entity:

- Commonly used by organizations that want a legal presence in Belgium/Brussels
- Belgian member university having experience with ASBLs

Composition of legal entity and partners involved:

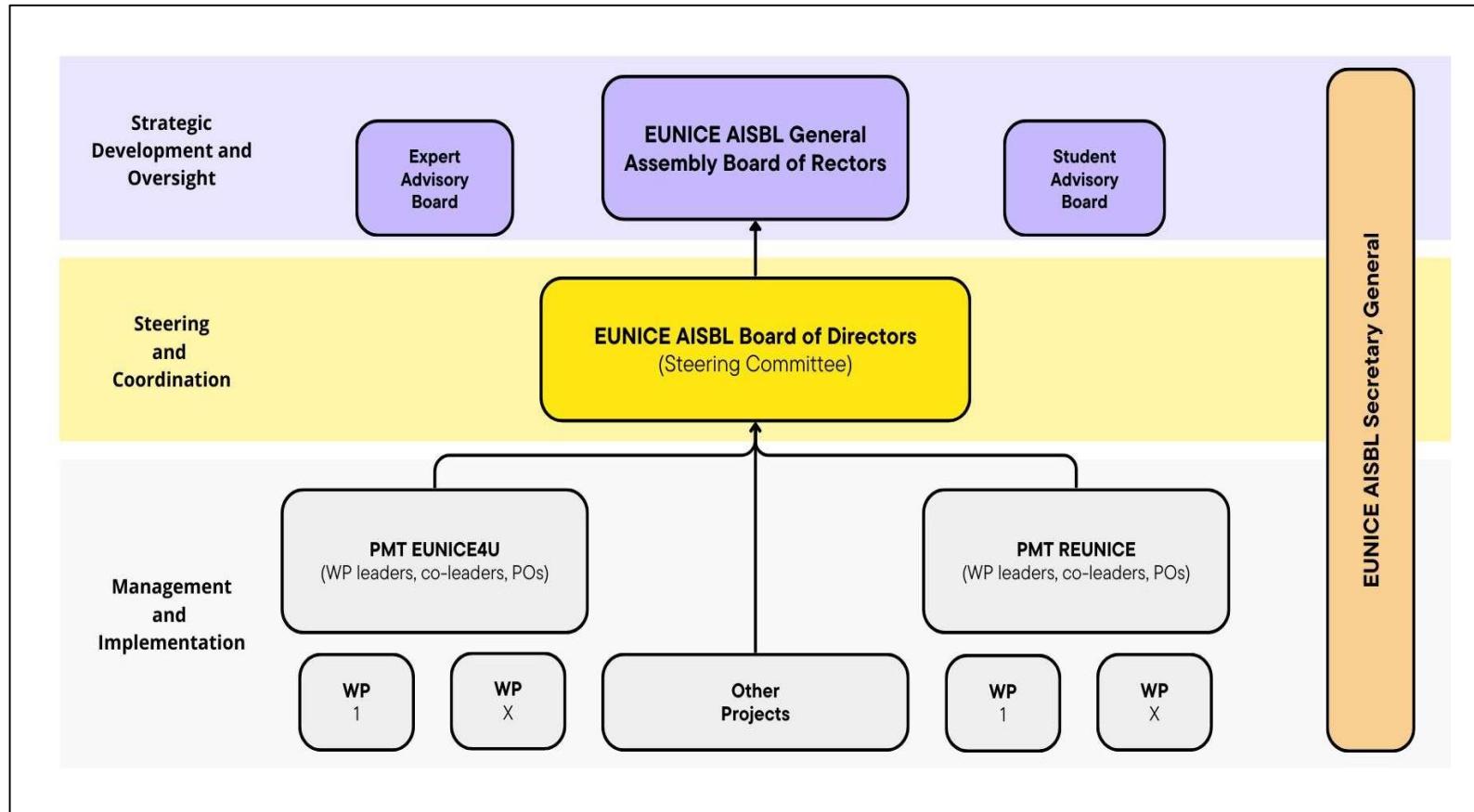
- Main governing bodies: General Assembly (Board of Rectors) and Board of Directors
- General Secretariat: Secretary General + Administrative Assistant
- 7 founding member universities + 3 member universities (Swedish university - pending approval of Swedish Ministry) + 1 Associated Partner (UM6P in Morocco)

## 2. Financial and operational capacity

### Funding mechanisms of the legal entity:

- Erasmus+ EUI funds (75%) & membership fees (25%)

### EUNICE AISBL governance structure:





### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

Main activities funded by the European Universities grant:

- Particularly involved in WP1 (strategic role), but contributes to all WPs
- Employment of the Secretary General and additional personnel (jointly hiring staff) and managing Alliance governance
- Operationalization of EUNICE AISBL as the central administrative and legal body of the Alliance
- Driving institutional transformation of member universities and the Alliance as a whole
- Enabling joint purchases and financial management (shared equipment and services, mobility schemes)

Role of the legal entity for ensuring the sustainability of the Alliance:

- Inclusive governance structure that ensures joint decision-making and involvement of all partners (rotating presidency)
- Facilitates collaboration and monitors implementation across member universities
- Manages funds and seeks additional funding (e.g. EU, national, private) and oversees joint budget planning
- Maintains continuity in policies and processes of the Alliance
- Acts as a unified representation at EU level and among external stakeholders



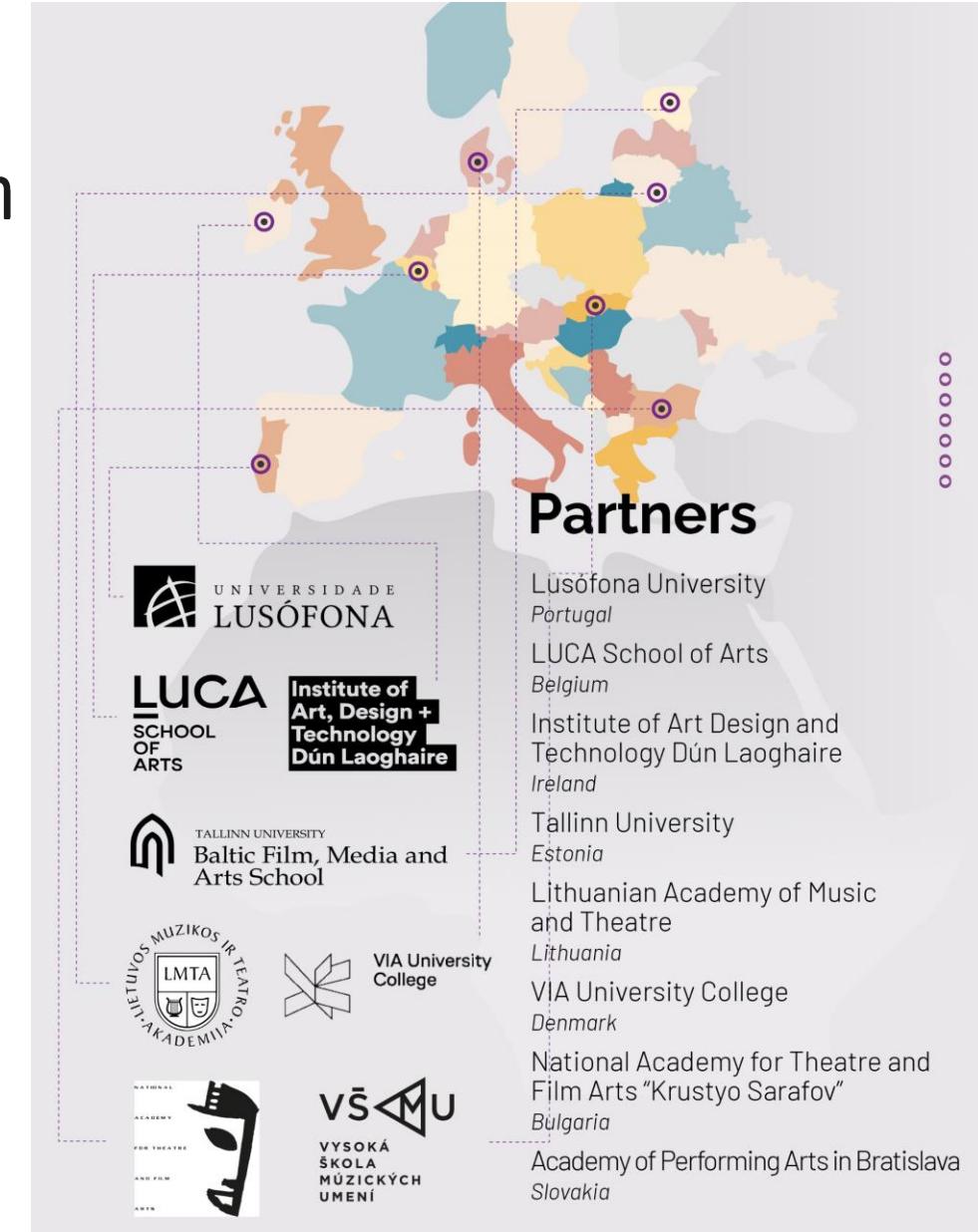
# FilmEU European Universities alliance & FilmEU Association vzw

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m  
éu**  
EUROPEAN  
UNIVERSITY

Veerle Van der Sluys, Executive Director

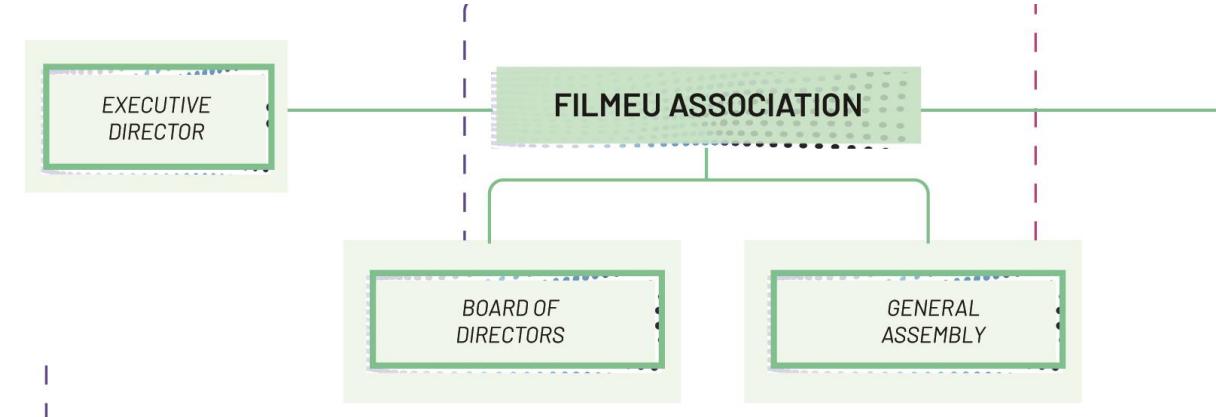
# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- FilmEU Association vzw
  - Non-for-profit legal entity under Belgian Law
  - Office in Brussels
- 2022 : Founded by three partners
- 2024 enlargement: 7 of the 8 alliance partners are effective members
- Why vzw? close to Brussels, Belgian partner, a non-for profit, cost-effective structure aligns with the partners organizational models



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- Governance



- Staff:

- Executive Director and Administrative Support
- Project members (secondments)
- Financial capacity
- Membership fee
- Project budget (FilmEU Cosmos projects: FilmEU+, WIRE FilmEU, Etiketa, Cutting Edges, FOREU4ALL)



### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

#### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Empower Partners: Design and implement integrated collaboration strategies with access to subnational, national, European, and international funding.
- Cultivate Excellence: Share best practices and foster joint governance to create a culture of excellence.
- Sustain Integrated Collaboration: Focus on high-quality education, research, and societal services.
- External Collaboration: Build partnerships with other HEIs and the Cultural and Creative sectors.
- Champion Art as Knowledge: Contribute to a more inclusive development of the European Higher Education Area and Research Area.

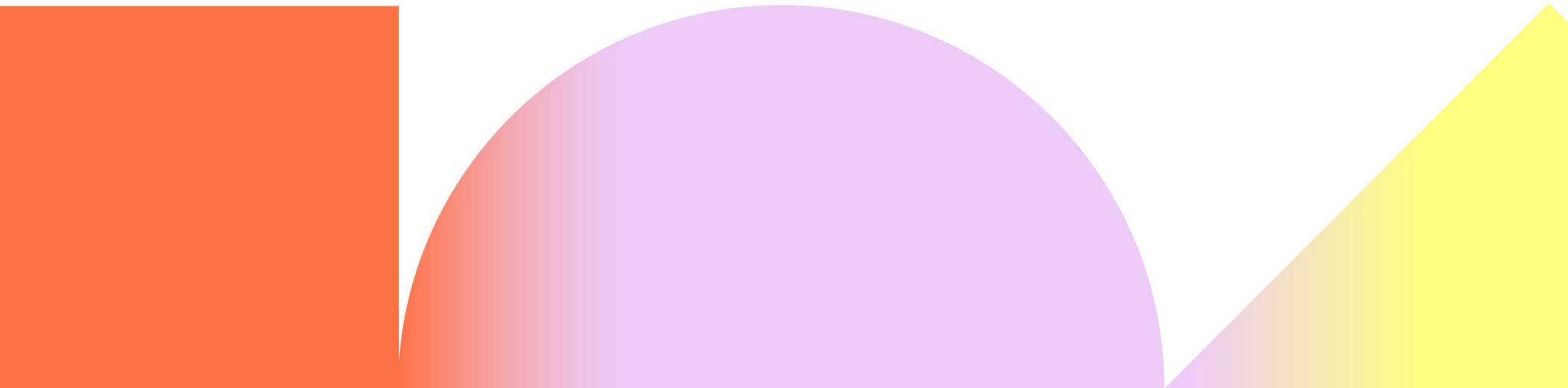
#### **Contribution to the Grant Agreement:**

- Beneficiary in Erasmus FilmEU+ project
- Co-lead in FilmEU+ WP3 Integration: to set up joined structures and procedures (Offices)

# Una Europa vzw



Emily Palmer, Secretary-General of Una Europa



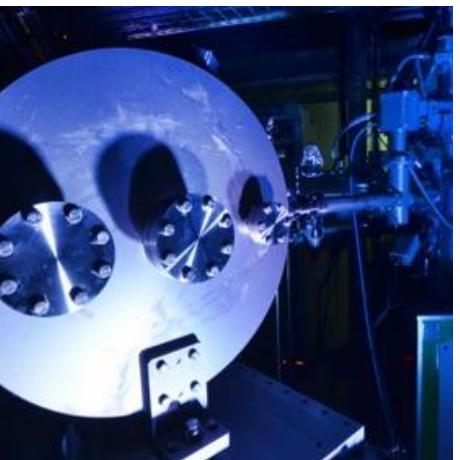
# Una Europa vzw



In February 2019 Una Europa established Una Europa vzw, a non-profit association under Belgian law, in order to formalise our in-depth inter-institutional collaboration and to ensure the success and sustainability of the alliance in the long-term.



**Joint staff  
recruitment at  
central level**



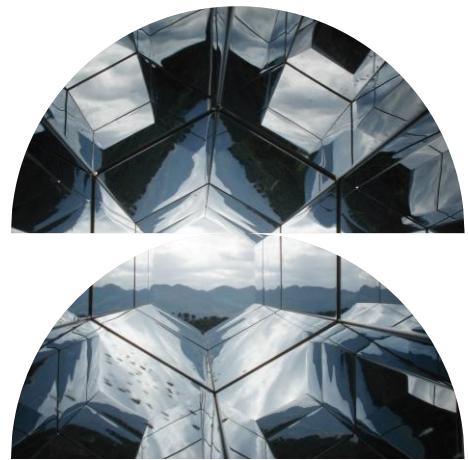
**Joint funding strategy  
& strategic  
applications**



**Joint representation  
and positioning**

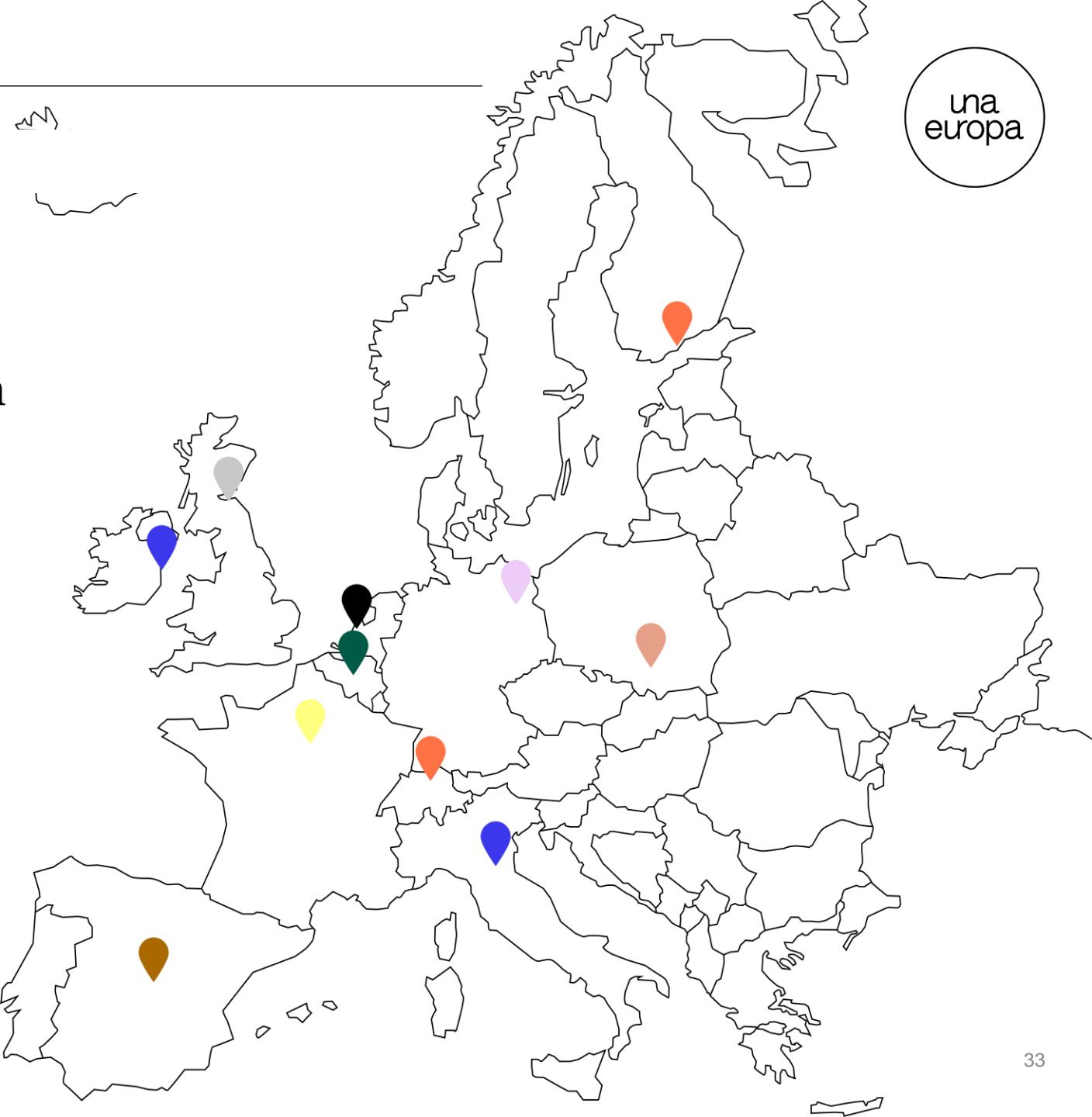


**Seed funding  
initiative**



**Joint vision for the  
future:  
Una Europa 2030**

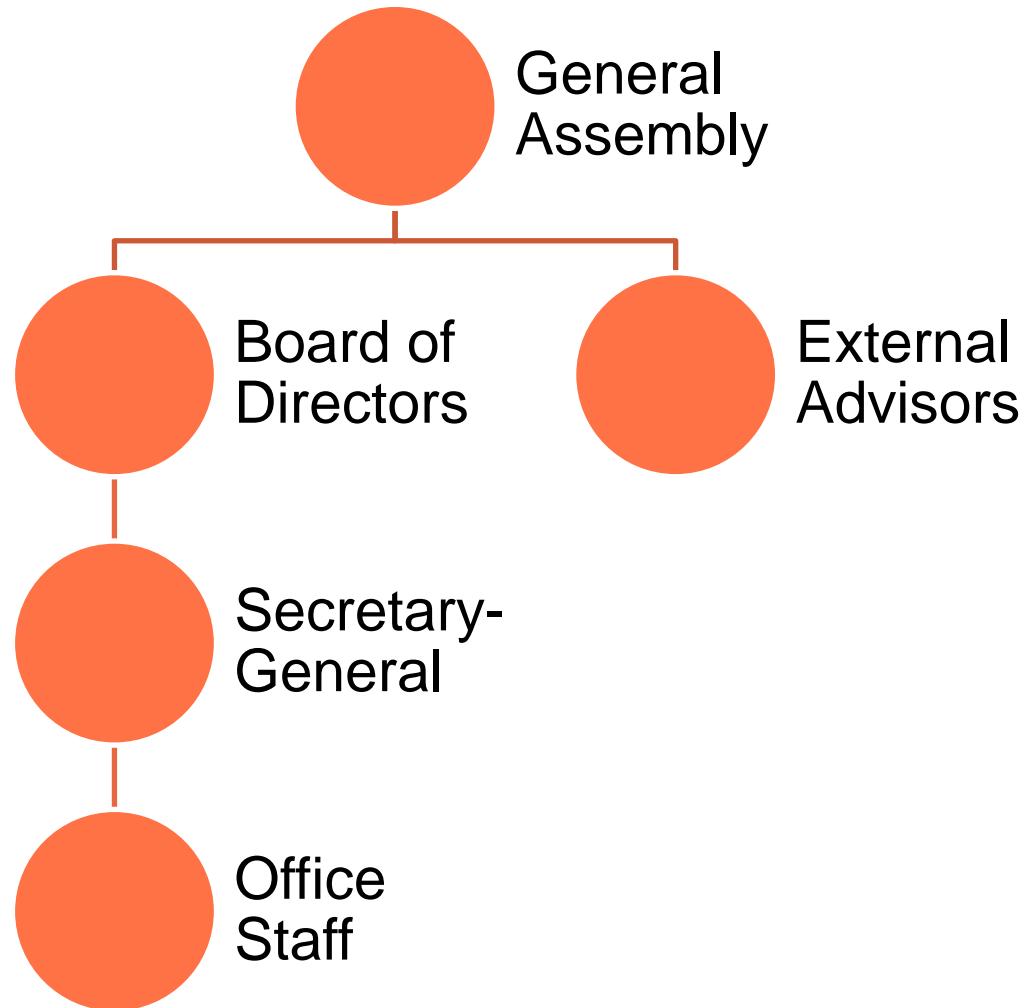
- + Freie Universität Berlin
- + Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
- + University College Dublin / An Coláiste Ollscoile Baile Átha Cliath
- + University of Edinburgh
- + Helsingin yliopisto / Helsingfors universitet
- + Universiteit Leiden
- + Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie
- + KU Leuven
- + Universidad Complutense de Madrid
- + Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
- + Universität Zürich



# Our governance



Una Europa vzw: Management of the Association and External Advisors



# Una Europa vzw staff



- Emily Palmer, Secretary-General
- Andrew Whitehead, Senior Governance Officer
- Melissa Claessens, Internal Partnerships Officer
- Nick Ollivère, Senior External Funding Officer
- Sophia Karner, Senior Policy Officer
- Deirdre Kilbride, Communications Manager
- Heather McComb, Digital Communications Manager
- Zoë De Paepe, Operations Manager

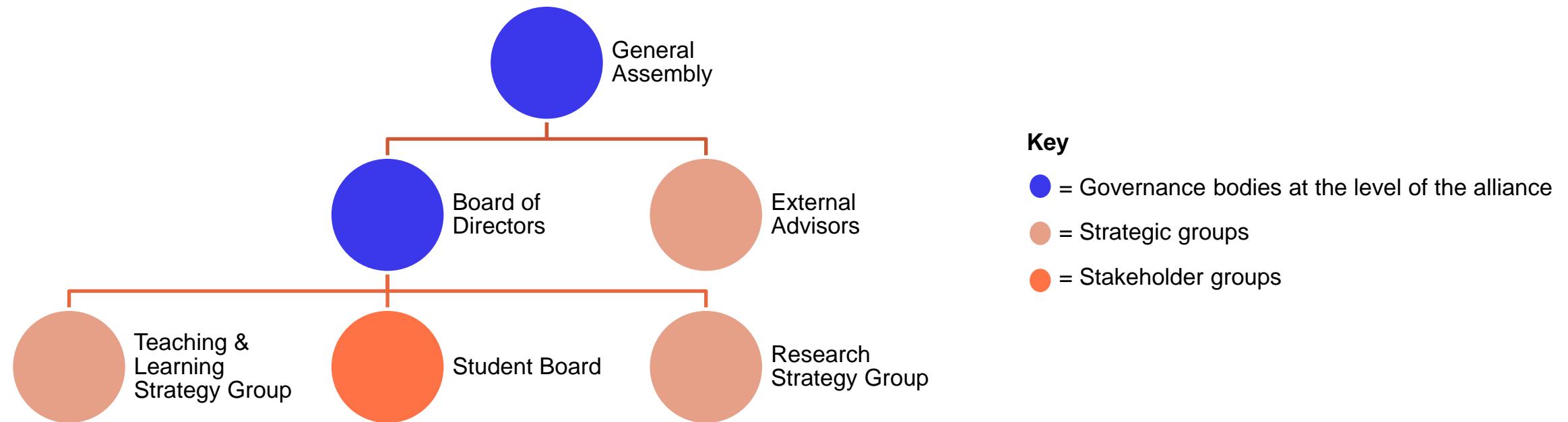
In addition, the office supports up to four six-month internships per year, open to students from alliance partner universities.



# Una.Futura WP12: Sustainability of the European campus – main activities



- **Ensuring sustainable representation**



- Upcoming Reflection paper on governance structures of European Universities and related dissemination event



# Una.Futura WP12: Sustainability of the European campus – main activities



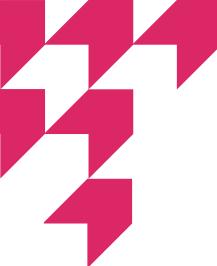
- **Facilitating sustainable cooperation**
  - Implementation of Una.Connect community-building platform
- **Financial sustainability**
  - Implementation and refinement of Una Europa External Funding Strategy



## UNITA-UNIVERITAS MONTIUM

UNIVERSITAS MONTIUM- UNITA GEIE

Federica Candelaresi - General Director

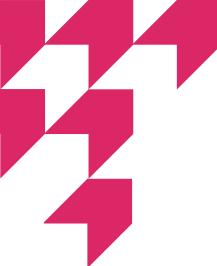


# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- EEIG - Economic European Interesting Group

## **Main reasons for choosing this type of legal entity:**

- Simplicity with which it can be set up in reasonable time.
- Prompt development of a legal structure which, although not endowed with full legal personality, is capable of performing a number of task independently (hiring his own personnel, stipulating contracts, accessing funding...).
- Absence of an obligation on the partners to provide a minimum share capital.
- Possibility to pursue a different model of higher education institution, called "entrepreneurial university" able to innovate, recognize and create opportunities and capability to produce spillover knowledge through the development of an internal system for knowledge commercialization including patenting and licensing.
- Possibility to accept members of both public and private nature.
- Advantageous applicable tax regime, as the activities of EEIG are only subject to stamp tax and VAT.



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

### Funds:

- **Annual membership fees.** Our members, at present, are: the University of Turin, the University of Savoie-Mont Blanc, the University of Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, the University of Zaragoza, the University of Beira Interior, the West University of Timisoara, the Public University of Navarre and the Transilvania University of Brasov and one associate partner: the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (Hauté Ecole Spécialisée de Suisse Occidentale).
- **Erasmus +**

### Institutional bodies:

- Conseil Stratégique; Conseil de Gérance, Comité de Proposition et Pilotage.

### Staff members:

- General Director
- IT Department
- Administration responsible and project manager (to be hired)



### 3. Role of the legal entity and contribution to the Grant Agreement

GRANT AGREEMENT- Project 101124853 — UNITA. **Full partner**

- Involved in the governance and management, co-designing the long-term vision to build the model for an institutionalised European university - WP1
- Developing of UNITA Communities (for example: supporting and facilitating the Student's Assembly elections inside the Alliance, facilitate organisational innovation through intra-entrepreneurship and management development, foster staff training and career development, management of the Virtual Campus and all the online tools to offer opportunities of training, knowledge, share, exchange and community building) - WP2
- Ensure the long-lasting, transformative effect of UNITA, by pursuing internal and external dissemination, guaranteeing its financial viability- WP5



11:00 – 11:30

## INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE LEGAL ENTITIES

### **Session 2**

Legal entities that are not a beneficiary under a European Universities grant

**CIVIS Association | E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Association | YUFE AISBL**



Prof. Stefan LANG (Secretary General)  
Prof. François HEINDERYCKX (President of the Board)



## 1. Type of legal entity and composition

**AISBL**

Flexible

Well known by Belgian member University

Low running cost

Convenient seat at Belgian member University

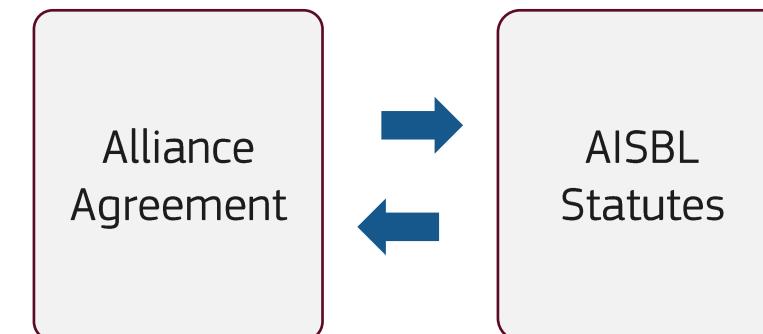
3 types of members

FULL

ASSOCIATE

AFFILIATE

Conceived and deployed jointly and coherently with an **Alliance Agreement** to allow lean and straightforward statutes.





## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- Funding: membership fees (full members only), determined annually.
- Lean structure, limited budget (for now).
- Board of directors of the Association mirrors Steering committee of the Alliance.
- Currently no staff (other than part-time secretary general seconded from one member university).
- Not yet a beneficiary within the main Erasmus+ funded project (CIVIS2).



### 3. Role and mission of the legal entity

#### AIM

*To support and encourage the collaboration among the members of the European University Alliance CIVIS in the areas of higher education, scientific research and innovation, and service to the community. (art. 4 of the statutes)*

#### POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Assistance in raising funds

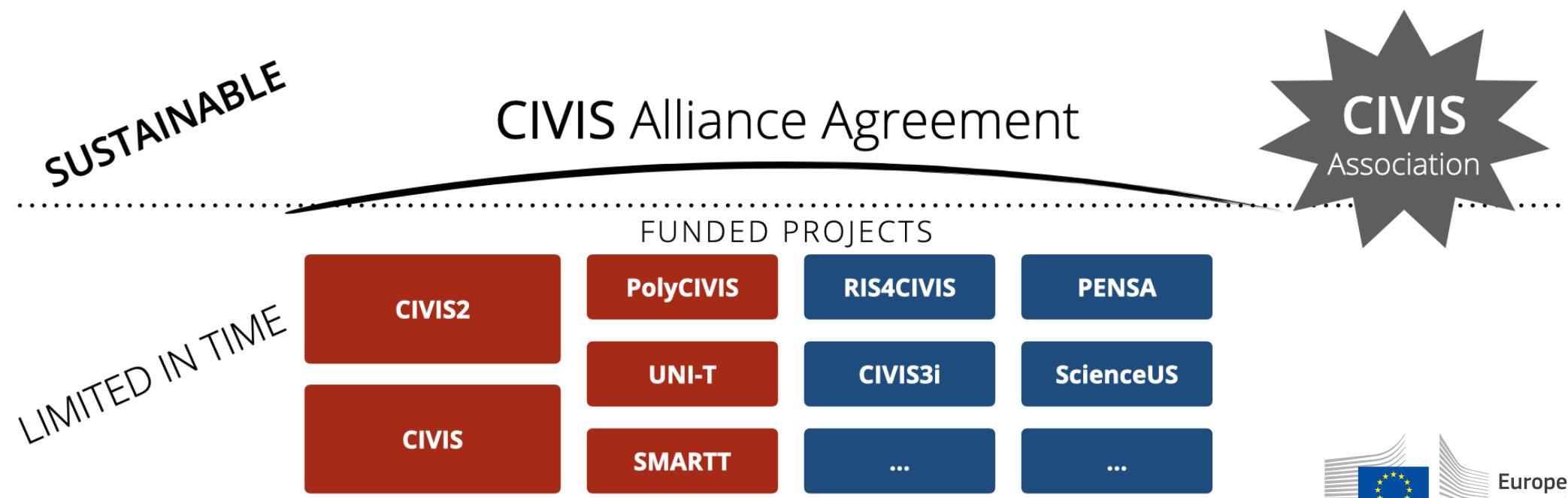
Administrative & logistical support

Management of resources

Join consortia for applications

Advocacy

Collab. among projects within the Alliance





# E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>

Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as  
Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions

## E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> European University Alliance

E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> - Association for the Promotion,  
Coordination and Further Development of the  
European University Alliance for Smart and  
Sustainable Regions

Gabriele Permoser, Managing Director E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>  
European University Alliance, Treasurer E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>  
Association



# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

- **Association** under the Association Act after Austrian Law (§5 Österreichisches Vereinsgesetz 2002), registered at the Austrian register of associations (ZVR 1927518133 )
- Founded on 19 December 2022
- Easy founding process, very good cost-benefit relation-> **creating identity!**
- Easy process for partners to become members of the association
- Currently 8 members (Members are beneficiaries of Erasmus+ 2.0 funding, associated partners are not members)
  - St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, University College Leuven-Limburg, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Polytechnic University of Setúbal, JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Politehnica University Timisoara



## 2. Financial and operational capacity

### **Financial Capacity:**

Funding through membership fees; private donations and sponsorships (currently on a small scale, but will be expanded in the future); third-party funding from regional, national and other European sources (in the near future);

**Managing Board:** 1 president, 2 vice-presidents, 1 secretary general, 1 treasurer & managing director – current board in office since 1 November 2023 (until 30 November 2026) – on a voluntary basis, no staff members yet

### **Operational capacity:**

- **Executive Board:** The Executive Board serves to form the common will of the association members.
- **President & Vice-Presidents:** The President and Vice-Presidents shall represent the Association externally. Additional vice-presidents to represent E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> in the various regions and to push specific missions (upcoming in the near future)



### 3. Role and mission of the legal entity

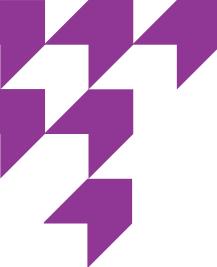
- **creating identity:** creating identity for a (future) fully-fledged European University that goes beyond of being just another alliance and beyond an only project-oriented approach
- represent, as a supporting and umbrella association, E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>, and provide legal status to the alliance -> for future: mandatory that it will be **accredited as higher education institution / university**
- **raise awareness, increase visibility** and strengthen commitment of relevant stakeholders
- support the **overall coordination** and **sustainable funding** of E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>
- organize and provide **scholarships and internships** for students and graduates of the association's members
- offer **individual funding to scientific and administrative staff** of the association's members for distinctive achievements
- **communicate, interact and cooperate** with relevant institutions and persons in the European higher education, research and innovation area and on international levels



YUFE- Young Universities for the  
Future of Europe  
YUFE AISBL



Maria-Valerie Schegk, Secretary General



# 1. Type of legal entity and composition

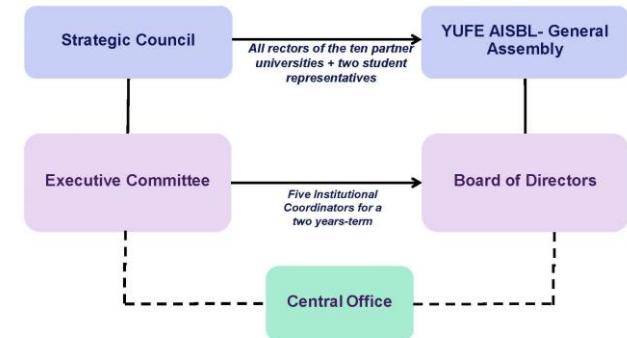
- YUFE has established a Belgian AISBL (operational since 01 September 2024)
- As the main tasks of the YUFE ASBL are to host the YUFE Central Office and coordinate the overall operations of the Alliance, the AISBL was analysed as the appropriate form offering the opportunities needed without being overly complex
- All ten academic members of the Alliance (including Essex) are members of the legal entity
- In the statutes, there is the possibility that also (non-academic) partner members can become members of the AISBL in the future

## 2. Financial and operational capacity

- The funding mechanism to operate the YUFE legal entity is conceptualised as a mix between E+ subsidy (and potential other subsidy streams) and a annual membership fee per partner
- The legal entity has two main decision making bodies: The General Assembly and the Board of Directors; both are highly complementary with the decision making bodies of the Alliance. The YUFE Secretary General is the legal representative of the legal entity and heads the daily operations in Brussels
- The YUFE legal entity hosts the YUFE Central Office of 6 FTE

### YUFE Alliance and YUFE AISBL

A governance in parallel





### 3. Role and mission of the legal entity

The YUFE AISBL not only house the YUFE Central Office as an impartial shared service agency for all Alliance partners, but will also streamline the Alliance's activities, optimize its organization, and serve as an active discussion partner for external stakeholders.

#### Services by the AISBL:

- Overall Alliance coordination, Ensuring that the decisions of the governance bodies are implemented
- Monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement
- Participation in project deliverables and milestones
- Pursuing strategic and annual planning of the Alliance as well as facilitating strategic discussions regarding the long-term future and sustainability of the Alliance
- Insights into the European policy landscape and scanning and identifying funding opportunities
- Central Communication services, managing the Alliance website and the social media channels, running central communication campaigns
- Capacity Building and positioning



11:30 – 12:15

# AGENCY PERSPECTIVE & BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCE - KEY ASPECTS TO CONSIDER FROM A GRANT MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVE

**Anila TROSHANI**

EACEA, Head of Sector A1.001 for European Universities

**Magdalena SIKORSKA**

EUNICE, Secretary-General of EUNICE AISBL

**Iwona JABLONSKA**

EACEA, Sector A1.001 for European Universities, Team Leader



# Where do we stand?



14

LEGAL ENTITY





# BENEFITS VS CHALLENGES

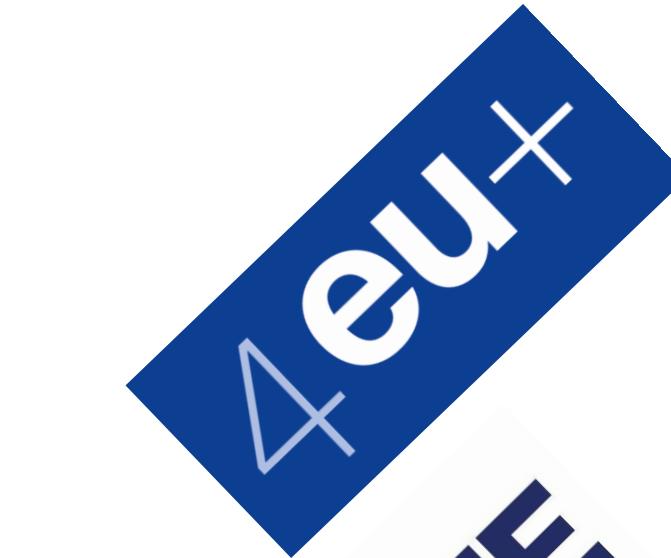


A photograph of three European Union flags flying in front of the European Parliament building in Brussels. The flags are blue with yellow stars, and the building behind them is a large, modern structure with a glass facade and a curved roof. The sky is clear and blue.

# European Universities – AISBL/ASBL legal entities

Magdalena Sikorska  
EUNICE AISBL Secretary General  
May 21, 2025

# The Alliances with AISBL/ASBL legal entity



# AISBL/ASBLs community of practice

- Informal network of Alliances with (or establishing) AISBL/ASBLs
- Ad hoc subgroup under „*Governance and legal entity*” topical group
- Mainly meeting online + 1 in-person meeting held so far
- Serves as a platform for networking, exchanging best practices and sharing challenges
- Different roles of legal entities (some act as coordinators of the EUI grant, other serve as umbrella structures supporting the Alliance broader ecosystem)
- The group is currently coordinated by EU-CONEXUS and EUNICE



# Pros and Cons of having a legal entity: Data gathered through a short survey

## Pros and cons of legal entity (AISBL)

B I U ☰ X

Form description

Full name \*

Short answer text

Alliance name \*

Short answer text

- YUFE
- EU-CONEXUS
- Circle U.
- 4EU+
- FilmEU
- EUNICE
- CIVIS

# **What are the advantages of having a legal entity?**

- Enables jointly **hiring staff** and offering **centralized services**
- Integrated handling of internal (e.g. seed funding) and **external funding** (e.g. Erasmus+, Horizon Europe)
- Facilitates joint projects, mutual **use of resources** and collective fundraising
- Supports long-term **planning, governance**, and the implementation of the **Alliance's strategy**
- Ensures equal representation and **shared responsibilities** among partners
- Acts as a **single point of contact** with external stakeholders (e.g. the European Commission, FOREU4ALL)
- Centralizes **logistics, communication**, and **grant management**
- Enables joint **investments** and joint **purchases**
- Possibility to cooperate with **global partners**

## ***What are the disadvantages of having a legal entity?***

- Requires ongoing **legal, HR, and operational management** by a small team
- Involves **membership fees, public tenders and VAT issues** and compliance with national regulations (Belgian law)
- Equal membership fees don't always reflect **different capacities and roles of partner universities**
- Need to **inform and align** all partner universities on **legal obligations and operational processes**
- Might be difficult to **adjust the structure or increase ambition**, rights, or financial contributions once established

## ***Was it worthwhile to establish a legal entity?***

- Yes, definitely!
- Yes, all in all absolutely yes!
- Yes
- Yes, we're just beginning to use it and learn from experience
- Yes, but some pioneering still to be done...
- Yes, it was worth it, but challenges remain...
- It is a step forward, but it is very demanding

# From policy to implementation

## Calls for proposals and funded projects – as testing platforms

### EUR UNIV

- ❖ **Develop and implement an integrated long-term joint strategy<sup>5</sup> for education** with, where possible, links to research and innovation, and service to society, that is responsive to the digital and green transition and key socio-economic challenges, while remaining committed to excellence:
  - Based on a **common vision and shared values**, for pursuing a high level of systemic, structural and sustainable institutional cooperation at all levels of the involved institutions, across all their missions, and across different areas of activity, building on their complementary strengths.
  - Supported by the design and implementation of relevant and efficient **joint management and governance structures<sup>6</sup>**. Students and staff at all levels of the participating organisations are empowered to take an active role in the governance structures of the alliance, where the diversity of the student and staff bodies is reflected.
  - Building on a shared **pool of resources** (financial, human, digital and physical, intellectual and administrative resources, infrastructure, data and services) to ensure joint capacity and capability, reach critical mass and facilitates access to high quality and inclusive education. Where appropriate, pilot or fully implement a common **legal status for the alliance**, to facilitate pooling together resources and activities to reach higher levels of excellence, acting with a legal personality.

### Eligibility condition

The applicants (potential beneficiaries) must be:

- Higher Education Institutions holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and any entities affiliated to them.
- Any other organisation consisting of the above referred higher education institutions - specifically set up with the purpose of implementing deep institutional transnational cooperation, including joint educational activities<sup>16</sup>.

## Policy experimentation – Legal status

The specific objective of Topic 2 is to examine, test and facilitate the use of existing institutionalised cooperation instruments at European level, such as a possible legal status for alliances of higher education institutions - for example 'European Universities', with the objective of facilitating deeper, long-term and flexible transnational cooperation. The aim is to give alliances, on a **voluntary basis**, the latitude to act together, **make common strategic decisions**, **experiment joint recruitment**, **design joint curricula or pool resources and human, technical, data, education, research and innovation capacities**.

Beneficiaries will analyse and explore **how the existing institutionalised cooperation instruments available at European level can provide solutions to the obstacles encountered with regard to the deeper cooperation that the alliances are pursuing, based on a needs assessment of the alliance**. It is highly recommended that this analysis is done in close cooperation with the public authorities at local, regional, and/or national level involved in the setting up of the institutionalised cooperation instruments at European level.



## Future

Brussels, 5.3.2025  
COM(2025) 90 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The Union of Skills

### ★ Deepened transnational cooperation to deliver future-oriented skills and competences

- Explore the development of a suitable **European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions**; and an **investment pathway for European Universities alliances**, to ensure sustainable cooperation and funding, pool resources and strengthen partnerships with businesses and research departments within their innovation ecosystem.

### Key deliverables

Skills Portability Initiative [2026]

Common European framework for the automatic recognition of study qualifications and learning periods abroad in school, VET and higher education [2027]

Launch of innovative joint European study programmes with a European degree/label [2026]

A legal status for European Universities alliances [2027]

Pilot a European VET diploma [2025-2026]

Pilot European School Alliances [2026]

# Description of Action

- needs analysis;
- feasibility study;
- launch of the decision - making process;

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- actual establishment of the legal entity (*with intention or not to include it in the consortium*);
- legal entity as part of the consortium: beneficiary or coordinator



## Answers to the registration survey :

- Not under consideration	3
- Under consideration:	22
- Under consideration/development:	11
- Under development	10
- Established but not as beneficiary:	3
- Established as beneficiary:	8

*Different types/legislations, areas of operations, etc.*



# Alliance vs. Grant Agreement

Long - term mission statement	Description of Action (DoA)
Alliance's composition	Consortium's composition
Alliance's mission	DoA implementation/completion
Long - term vision	WP/task/activity – based completion
Long - term impact	Short - term (transferable) outcomes
Alliance management	Project management
<b>How the legal entity enhances/contributes to both dimensions?</b>	

# State of play throughout EUR UNIV

NUMBERS	EUR UNIV (2019) 2022	EUR UNIV (2020) 2023	EUR UNIV 2024
<b>Nr of established legal entities (inluded as beneficiaries)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Min- Max budget per Grant Agreement</b>	<b>MIN EUR 67 308.00 – MAX EUR 2 118 807.00</b> <b>Average: EUR 1 050 192.00</b>		
<b>Staff effort per work packages/areas of activities</b>	<b>Main/massive</b> : Coordination, management governance; Communication & dissemination; Community/capacity building; Services- oriented WPs; <b>Limited</b> : Teaching; Learners needs; Sustainability and campus; Research networking; <b>Symbolic or absent</b> : Joint curricula/learning offer; Joint programmes; microcredentials; Recognition/accreditation; Digital tools;		

# Measure of the alliance's maturity?

- Extent of partners' **adherence** and **trust**
- Extent of **synergies**, common **interests** and **links**
- How broad and deep is the extent of collaboration:
  - **Purely administrative**
  - **Mainly fundraising - related**
  - **Truly systemic** - across all the missions, including pooling resources and joint educational offer (microcredentials, joint degrees, etc.)
- Extent of the **agreed level of autonomy and operations**
- **Indicator of deep integration?**





# Mission





14:00 – 15:00

# SETTING UP A JOINT LEGAL ENTITY

**Plenary discussion, session 1**



What are the expected opportunities and benefits in setting up a legal entity (in 1 or 2 words)?

Wordcloud Poll  122 responses 54 participants





## What are the main obstacles/challenges/points of contention (in 1 or 2 words)?

Wordcloud Poll

94 responses

48 participants





15:15 – 16:15

# OPERATING A JOINT LEGAL ENTITY

**Plenary discussion, session 2**



☐ Which of the following areas is your joint legal entity currently involved in?

Multiple Choice Poll 20 votes 20 participants

Human resources and recruitment - 10 votes



Financial management and sustainability - 16 votes



Joint educational activities - 3 votes



Physical and digital infrastructure and facilities - 7 votes



Data management - 9 votes



Procurement of goods and services - 12 votes



Joint governance and decision-making - 14 votes



Coordination and project management - 6 votes



Communication and dissemination - 13 votes





## Establishing a legal entity: Why NOT to do it (in 1 word!)

## Wordcloud P

 54 responses

 33 participants



slido





## Establishing a legal entity: Why to do it (in 1 word!)

Wordcloud Poll

76 responses

38 participants

