



Erasmus+

Programme Guide

*In the case of conflicting meanings between language versions,
the English version prevails.*

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Erasmus+

Knowledge Alliances

Two types of cooperation projects can be supported under this action:

- **European Universities**
- **Knowledge Alliances**

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

Heads of states and governments called in the European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2017¹⁰⁷ on the Member States, the Council and the European Commission to take work forward in 'encouraging the emergence by 2024 of some twenty 'European Universities', consisting in bottom-up networks of universities across the EU which will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several EU countries and contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities'.

The Education Council Conclusions of 22 May 2018¹⁰⁸ further stressed the potential of 'European Universities' to "significantly enhance mobility and foster high quality and excellence in education and research, by strengthening the link between teaching, research and innovation and knowledge transfer, by demonstrating the benefits of multilingual learning, the recognition of qualifications and by developing joint education and research programmes and projects." They also highlighted that the European Universities "could play a flagship role in the creation of a European Education Area as a whole".

To achieve this objective, the European Commission proposes an unparalleled initiative which requires a quantum leap in cooperation between all types of higher education institutions from all regions in Europe and at all levels of the organisation, across all areas of activity, from teaching and learning to research and innovation.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND PRIORITIES OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES?

'European Universities' have an ambitious mandate aimed at achieving the following two objectives:

- Promoting **common European values** as enshrined in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and a **strengthened European identity** by bringing together a new generation of Europeans, who are able to cooperate and work within different European and global cultures, in different languages, and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.
- Reach a substantial leap in **quality, performance, attractiveness and international competitiveness of European higher education institutions** and contributing to the European knowledge economy, employment, culture and welfare by making best use of innovative pedagogies and striving to make the knowledge triangle¹⁰⁹ a reality. 'European Universities' will be key drivers to boost the quality of higher education and where possible to strengthen its link to the research and innovation landscape in Europe and its outreach towards the society and economy.

WHAT ARE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES?

The term "Universities" should be understood in its broadest sense, including all types of Higher Education Institutions. The European Universities initiative responds to a **long-term vision** and in this context, the following key elements are expected to be implemented by the 'European Universities' by 2025:

- A shared, integrated, **long-term joint strategy** for education with, where possible, links to research and innovation and society at large:
 - Based on a common vision and shared values, for pursuing a high level of enhanced, sustainable cooperation across various levels of the organisation, and across different areas of activity, building on their complementary strengths.
 - Staff at all levels of the participating organisations is empowered to implement this vision..
- A **European higher education inter-university 'campus'** where typically:
 - Students, doctoral candidates and staff can move seamlessly (physically or virtually) to study, train, teach, do research, work, or share services in any of the partner institutions. Students **customise their choice of where**

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8701-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁰⁹ According to the European Council conclusions of 28 June 2018, "cooperation between research, innovation and education should be encouraged, including through the European Universities initiative".



- and what to study** within the confines of pedagogically sound and logically structured study programmes between the different higher education institutions and other members of the alliance.
- **Embedded mobility** at all levels, including at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, is a standard feature. At least 50% of the students within the alliance should benefit from such mobility, be it physical, virtual or blended.
 - **New joint and flexible curricula** are delivered, where relevant, in the three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), based on **cross-disciplinary/multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches**, integrating innovative pedagogies, including the use of the latest digital technologies. While content is personalised, cooperation is global.
 - **Practical and/or work-based experience** is provided by external mentors to foster an **entrepreneurial mindset** and develop **civic engagement**;
 - The **student body reflects the diversity** of the population (in terms of social, economic and cultural aspects), including lifelong learners, part-time and non-traditional students. Access, participation and completion of under-represented and disadvantaged groups are ensured.
- **European knowledge-creating teams (“challenge-based approach”)** of students and academics, possibly together with researchers, businesses, regional actors and civil society actors - depending on the overall strategy and vision of the alliance - address together societal and other challenges of their choice in a multi-disciplinary approach through:
 - innovative learning and training that equip students and researchers with high-level, entrepreneurial, Open Science and transferable skills for a fast-changing labour market and knowledge economy and society, including through the transfer of research results back into education
 - creation of innovative solutions adaptable to different regions in Europe

In addition, ‘European Universities’ should act as **models of good practice** to progressively further increase the quality, international competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education landscape and should become key elements of the European Education Area by driving excellence. As laid down in the Communication Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies¹¹⁰, “Establishing the European Education Area will enable the EU Member States to do more, faster, to drive up the quality, competitiveness and inclusiveness of their education and training systems, while providing inspiration to non-EU countries to follow”. In this respect, ‘European Universities’, in cooperation with their national authorities, should commit to work towards relevant policy objectives of the European Education Area, such as: multilingualism; automatic recognition¹¹¹ of academic qualifications and learning periods abroad provided for by the participating higher education institutions within the alliance; the use of the European Student Card¹¹², once fully operational; as well as the Bologna key commitments (quality assurance, recognition, and wherever applicable three cycle degree¹¹³).

WHAT WILL THIS ACTION SUPPORT?

This action will support higher education institutions in **going beyond existing higher education cooperation models**, and gradually achieving the long-term ambitious vision for ‘European Universities’.

- This action will **test different innovative and structural models** for implementing and achieving the long-term vision mentioned in the section “What are European Universities”. It will support the creation of alliances, ideally composed of 5 to 8 partners, by either setting-up new cooperation partnerships or enhance existing ones, through a **step by step approach**. They will have the possibility to associate academic and non-academic partners from the world of work and to grow at a later stage.
- Through this action, higher education institutions will progressively implement the activities that are necessary to achieve their long-term vision, starting by increasing their level of integration. To achieve this objective, they will agree on a **mission statement** at institutional level of each of the members of the alliance. The mission statement will have to entail a full **joint strategy** for pursuing a high level of enhanced and sustainable cooperation across various levels of the organisation (e.g. management, academics, professional/support staff and students), and across different areas of activity (strong education focus with links where possible to research and innovation and service to society), building on their complementary strengths.

¹¹⁰ COM(2018) 268 final https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/combuildingstrongereurope_en_act_part1_v7.pdf

¹¹¹ COM(2018)270 https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recognition_en_act_part1_v6.pdf

¹¹² https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-student-card-initiative_en

¹¹³ The implementation of the Bologna key commitments is crucial to reinforcing and supporting quality and cooperation:

- a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications for higher education and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS
- compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area



- As this action follows a bottom-up approach, each alliance will have the flexibility to shape its **joint work plan of activities** that is the most relevant to reach their strategic objectives and that will ultimately help them in achieving the long term vision of European Universities, as described above. This joint work plan of activities should be supported by the design of relevant and efficient **common management structures**. Examples for establishing a tight cooperation between institutional management structures are: setting up joint boards, developing common pool of physical and virtual intellectual and administrative resources, distributing shared resources, common provision of infrastructure, data and services such as student, researcher and staff support, administration and international relations, with digitalised joint processes wherever possible).
- The joint work plan should also include activities to reach the high level of ambition in terms of mobility, social inclusion, and challenge-based approach. Alliances should also engage with key stakeholders in education and where possible research and innovation to foster societal engagement of students and staff as well as their entrepreneurial key competences. **This action will support higher education institutions in implementing the first steps of this joint work plan of activities.**

WHO CAN TAKE PART IN A EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY?

Applicant/coordinator: a participating organisation that submits the proposal on behalf of all the partners. The coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the proposal is implemented in accordance with the agreement. Its coordinating activities cover the following duties:

- represents and acts on behalf of the European University alliance towards the European Commission;
- bears the financial and legal responsibility for the proper operational, administrative and financial implementation of the European University alliance;
- coordinates the European University alliance in cooperation with the partners.

Full partners are those participating organisations that contribute actively to the achievement of the European Universities objectives. Each full partner must sign a mandate to confer to the coordinating organisation the responsibility of acting as main beneficiary and act in his name during the implementation of the proposal;

Associated partners (optional): European Universities can involve associated partners who contribute to the implementation of specific tasks/activities or support the dissemination and sustainability of the alliance. For contractual management issues, “associated partners” are not considered as part of the partners of the European University, and they do not receive funding. However, their involvement and role in different activities have to be clearly described.

Affiliated entities (optional): Organisations that contribute to the achievement of the European University's objectives and activities. Affiliated entities must be identified in the grant application and satisfy the requirements as described in Annex III (Glossary of terms) of this Programme Guide.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS A EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY PROPOSAL?

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible participating organisations	Any higher education institution holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), with its affiliated entities (if any).
Who can apply?	Any eligible participating higher education institution established in an EU Member State or other Programme country can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the European university.
Number and profile of participating organisations	The European University must be composed of a minimum of three higher education institutions from at least three EU Member States or other Programme countries. In addition, any public/private organisation active in the field of education and training, research and innovation or in the world of work can be part (as associated partner) of the alliance.
Duration	3 years
Where to apply?	To the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, located in Brussels.
When to apply?	Applicants have to submit their grant application by 28 February at 12:00 (midday Brussels time) for alliances starting between 1 September and 1 December on the same year.
How to apply?	Please see Part C of this Guide for details on how to apply.

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant **exclusion and selection criteria**. For more information please consult Part C of this Guide.

AWARD CRITERIA

The proposal will be assessed against the following criteria:

<p>Relevance of the proposal (maximum 25 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Purpose: extent to which the proposal aims to address and progress towards the long term vision of the action (please see section "What are European Universities" mentioned above and the relevant European Council conclusions of 14 December 2017¹¹⁴) – Contribution to the development of the European Education Area – Relevance of the joint long-term mission statement submitted by the alliance. The mission statement needs to be explicitly endorsed by relevant decision-making bodies. – Level of ambition and innovative approach of the proposal, including the extent to which the alliance will strengthen and expand cooperation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the provision of education, linking it where possible to research and innovation, as compared to what is already done by the members of the alliance. • through innovative and new structural models – European added value. Extent to which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal demonstrates the added value generated through its transnationality, in particular for students., • the proposal demonstrates contribution to regional development, for example through the involvement of the alliance's members in the development and implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies • the alliance will benefit other higher education institutions, mainly of the European Union, but also beyond, by driving excellence.
<p>Geographical balance (maximum 15 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The extent to which the alliance includes a high number of higher education institutions from different geographical areas¹¹⁵ and ensures a wide geographical coverage in line with the European Council Conclusions¹¹⁶. – The extent to which the applicant has motivated the geographical composition of the alliance and demonstrated its relevance to the achievement of the objectives of the European universities and of the European Education Area.
<p>Quality of the proposal and implementation (maximum 20 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consistency between the aims of the proposal and joint planned activities to achieve them – Commitments to work towards the policy objectives of the European Education Area – Extent to which the proposal demonstrates how the development of a joint strategy and joint planned activities will match the level of ambition of European Universities and how it will contribute efficiently to strengthening and enhancing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality of education, including through innovative pedagogical models to develop forward-looking skills and competences, making best use of digital technologies, blended learning and work-based learning • Level of students, staff and researchers' mobility • Where possible, the links between education and research and innovation, including how research results and innovation will feed back into education • The level of engagement with key stakeholders to foster societal engagement of students and staff as well as their entrepreneurial key competences • Involvement of the local community – The social diversity of the student body and supporting measures to promote the

¹¹⁴ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Please refer to the list of European geographical regions according to the categories set by EuroVoc (the European Union's official multilingual thesaurus managed by the EU Publication office):

<http://eurovoc.europa.eu/drupal/?q=request&mturi=http://eurovoc.europa.eu/100277&language=en&view=mt&ifacelang=en>

¹¹⁶ In the European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2017, Head of states and governments supported the emergence "(...) by 2024 of some twenty 'European Universities', consisting in bottom-up networks of universities across the EU (...)".

	<p>access, participation and completion of under-represented and disadvantaged groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The work programme and roadmap is clear and explicit, it covers the different stages and describes well the expected progress, output and outcomes between the different phases. – Quality and financial settings: the alliance has set up a quality assessment and review, which includes specific measures for evaluation of progress, processes and deliverables (for instance through the development of suitable quantitative and qualitative indicators, including the feedback from students and staff). The quality monitoring should also ensure that the implementation of the alliance is cost-efficient.
<p>Quality of the alliance cooperation arrangements (maximum 20 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arrangement structure: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear and appropriate, demonstrates the financial, structural and organisational commitment at highest institutional level while giving all staff the opportunity to be part of the co-creation of the alliance, both through the provision of education and, where possible, research and innovation, and at a structural organisation level through shared management structures, common provision of services, databases, human resources and scientific infrastructure. – Roles and responsibilities: the capacity and active role of each member of the alliance to deliver jointly the common vision, strategy and common activities is clearly demonstrated. – Complementarity: the extent to which partners complement each other, including in terms of diversity of types of HEIs, or show that they are collaborating with each other to obtain value added and cost efficiency. – The cooperation arrangements are well designed to maximise the benefits of the integrated cooperation by reducing existing administrative barriers and obstacles and to promote all types of mobility within the alliance, including mobility to and from organisations other than higher education institutions – The proposal includes clear arrangements and responsibilities for transparent and efficient decision-making, conflict resolution, risk management and reporting and communication between the participating organisations.
<p>Sustainability and dissemination (maximum 20 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Long-term strategy for sustainability of the alliance: the proposal includes a section on sustainability outlining how each member of the alliance will support this financially or otherwise with the objective of being sustainable beyond the EU funded period. – Capacity of the alliance to act as role model: the extent to which outputs and good practices generated by the alliance will be shared and have the potential to be mainstreamed in other higher education institutions with whom they cooperate beyond the alliance mainly in the European Union, but also beyond. – Dissemination: the proposal provides a clear dissemination plan of results and good practices put in place, and includes appropriate human and financial resources, activities, tools and communication channels including the use of social media to ensure that results and benefits will be transferred and shared openly and effectively to a wide range of stakeholders during and after the funding period of the European University alliance; – Open Educational and Open Science and Citizen Science resources: If relevant, and within the limits of existing national and European legal frameworks, the proposal describes how data, materials, documents and audiovisuals and social media activity will be made available to make data searchable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable (FAIR) to other higher education institutions and European Universities in Europe.

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 70 points. Furthermore, they must score minimum 13 points for the category "relevance of the proposal", 11 points for the categories "quality of the proposal and implementation", "quality of the alliance cooperation arrangements" and "sustainability and dissemination" and 8 points for the category "geographical balance".

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS ACTION?

Additional information about European Universities is published on the Commission website.¹¹⁷

Quality assurance must be an embedded component to ensure that European Universities successfully deliver the expected results and achieve an impact going far beyond the impact an individual partner organisation could achieve. European Universities are required to accomplish targeted dissemination activities which reach out to stakeholders, policy makers, professionals and enterprises. As a general rule, results should be made available as open educational resources (OER) as well as on relevant professional, sectorial or competent authorities' platforms.

WHAT ARE THE FUNDING RULES

Maximum EU contribution awarded for a 3-year European University: 5 000 000 EUR

The budget of the European Universities alliances will be based on the costs actually incurred by the alliance's activities. The EU grant will aim at co-financing these activities up to a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs.

The budget requested will need to be justified in relation to the planned activities as described in the application form. All the costs will have to be fully described and justified.

The costs must correspond to the costs incurred by the participating institutions in line with their usual policy. In particular, for remunerations, the costs should be in line with the usual policy on the actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs usually included in the remunerations; the costs for travels and individual support should be in line with the usual practices of the participating institutions/organisations on travel and accommodation; costs of equipment should be written off in accordance with the usual accounting practice of the beneficiary.

The costs (including equipment and subcontracting) should be reasonable, justified and directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the European University alliance. Moreover subcontracting will have to comply with EU public procurement rules.

The different budget items should be organised as follows:

	Eligible costs	Financing mechanism	Amount	Rule of allocation
1. DIRECT COSTS		Eligible costs actually incurred		
1.1 Staff costs	Costs of staff assigned to the action (both permanent and temporary) from the participating institutions/organisations, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in their remuneration.		Maximum 60% of the total direct eligible costs	The grant has to be used to cover the costs of staff for all beneficiaries when they are performing any tasks which are directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the European University.
1.2 Travel costs	Contribution to the travel costs of participants to the venue of the activity and return.		Maximum 10% of total direct eligible costs	Applicable for staff (both permanent and temporary), students and doctoral candidates from the participating institutions/organisations taking part in the action (e.g. for training and study activities, meetings, workshops and seminars).

¹¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en



1.3 Individual support	Costs directly linked to the subsistence and accommodation of participants during the activity, taking part in the action .		Maximum 20% of total direct eligible costs	Applicable for staff (both permanent and temporary) students and doctoral candidates from the participating institutions/organisations (e.g. for training and study activities, meetings, workshops and seminars). These costs are supposed to cover mobility activities of limited duration. (max 3 months) ¹¹⁸ .
1.4 Equipment	Depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second hand) provided they are actually incurred by the participating higher education institutions.		Maximum 5% of total direct eligible costs	Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental and lease costs are eligible, for the part that corresponds to the duration of the funding period and to the rate of actual use, for the purpose of the action. Only depreciation costs for equipment or other assets directly linked to the development of innovative pedagogies, blended and/or work-based learning activities are eligible.
1.5 Other costs	Costs linked with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of best practices to higher education institutions outside the alliance • Dissemination of knowledge and information (e.g.: advertising in the media, promotional materials and activities); • Renting of premises for major events • Audits; • Bank charges including bank guarantee where requested by the Executive Agency; • Subcontracting for specific tasks; • Travel and/or subsistence costs of third parties (experts, professors, speakers etc.) contributing to the European University's activities 		Maximum 5% of total direct eligible costs	Subcontracting is possible only in justified cases for specific, time-bound, project-related tasks, when these cannot be performed by the consortium members themselves or where the nature of the activity specifically requires external services. Subcontracting of core project activities such as teaching and/or project management (general management and coordination, monitoring, financial management, reporting to EACEA) is not possible. Staff members of co-beneficiaries are not allowed to operate in a subcontracting capacity. Travel and subsistence costs for people not belonging to one of the partner organisations can be co-funded when these persons are invited by the consortium to take part to the core activities of the European University.
2. INDIRECT COSTS		up to a maximum of 7% of the total direct eligible costs of the action ¹¹⁹ .		Flat rate

¹¹⁸Mobilities beyond 3 months can be supported through "mobility projects for higher education students"

¹¹⁹ A flat-rate amount not exceeding 7% of the eligible direct costs of the project is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which are not already covered by the eligible direct costs (e.g. electricity or Internet bills, cost for premises, etc.) but which can be regarded as chargeable to the project.