TORCH

TRANSFORMING OPEN RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION THROUGH CHARM
TORCH

DELIVERABLE D11.3 – TORCH: ANNUAL OPEN FORUM 3 REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ANNUAL OPEN FORUM 3 REPORT

The third TORCH Annual Forum 'Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023' is a collaborative and insightful hybrid event hosted by Université libre de Bruxelles (CIVIS). This hybrid forum is address to representatives from European Universities Alliances, researchers, innovators, policymakers, European Commission representatives and other stakeholders from the European Research Area. The focus is the results, achievements and challenges from the European Universities Alliances' SwafS projects and the exploration of best practices and insights related to the transformational modules. The topics include the development of a common R&I agenda, resource sharing, joint structures, human capital enhancement, and collaboration with the non-academic sector. The forum also emphasises Open Science practices and the engagement of citizens and society in Alliance activities.

The forum was led by an Organising Committee including 11 Alliances that were led by TORCH. The dissemination efforts of this forum were coordinated by a dedicated communication group with 5 representatives from 5 Alliances who ensured effective outreach and impact. The European Research Executive Agency also played a crucial role in maximising the outreach of this event by extending invitations, creating an event page, and featuring the forum in its newsletter.

This report, TORCH's deliverable D11.3, provides the meeting agenda, session debriefs, and key conclusions.

The meeting programme includes plenary sessions, roundtables, workshops, and poster presentations. The first morning is focused on policy and strategic aspects of the European Universities Alliances' research area, featuring presentations on the European Commission's strategy, joint R&I activities, and assessments of Alliances' impact. During the afternoon, the sessions showcase the Alliances' outcomes through different workshops and an interactive poster session. The second day, the sessions are centred on inspiring the future of R&I in Europe with roundtables exploring topics such as research ethics and integrity, inter- and transdisciplinarity and responsible R&I. The concluding session synthesises the discussions from workshops and roundtables, providing the insights into transformative impacts, funding landscapes, and future trajectories for research within European University Alliances.

The forum foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among Alliances with external stakeholders, policymakers and other external stakeholders. The 'Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 is a testament of the commitment of European Universities Alliances to drive excellence, foster collaboration and shape the future of the European Research Area.

1. INTRODUCTION & FORUM OBJECTIVES

The third TORCH Annual Forum, entitled 'Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023', is conceived as a joint event organised with fellow Alliances. The hybrid event (hosted by Université libre de Bruxelles, CIVIS) is opened to all actors engaged in R&I, particularly those involved in the European Universities Initiative, including policy-makers and European Commission officials.

Throughout the forum, participants delve into best practices and valuable insights regarding transformational modules. Topics of discussion encompass the development of a common R&I agenda and action plan, the successful sharing of resources and infrastructures, exploration of joint structures, enhancement of human capital within the Alliances, and strengthens collaboration with the non-academic sector. Moreover, there are dialogues focused on mainstreaming Open Science practices and the way Alliances have effectively involved citizens and society in their activities.

Notably, the event facilitates dialogues between Alliances and external stakeholders, exploring diverse models and pathways to excellence within the European R&I ecosystem. Key R&I themes such as research ethics and integrity, sustainability, social responsibility, and innovative knowledge applications are central to these discussions.

The forum's agenda features engaging plenary sessions, a series of roundtables, workshops, and poster presentations, supplemented by keynote speeches and plenary presentations from distinguished European policy-makers and academic stakeholders.

Exploring synergies and sharing best practices with other European University Alliances that are addressing the same challenges facilitates all HEIs to support innovative solutions and progress in their respective common science agendas. Such sharing of knowledge also supports the values of the ERA policy agenda[1], which lays out a number of priority actions for that period, some of which provide a framework to strengthen future cooperation among Alliances, namely: Action 13 ("Empower Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with the European Education Area"), and Action 17 ("Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's public research performing organisations").

Intensifying R&I cooperation between universities involves not only developing aligned policies and transformative actions on strategic areas (research assessment; equality, diversity and inclusivity; Open Science; inter- and transdisciplinary challenge-driven research), but also establishing mutually beneficial partnerships to efficiently share knowledge and competences, exploring efficient governance models that facilitate the sharing of resources and capacities, the streamlining of administrative processes to support research activities, the creation of joint structures, and the establishment of mutual recognition agreements. The European Council and Commission encourage deeper cooperation and the pooling of knowledge and resources to deepen cooperation between

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[1] European Commission (2021). European Research Policy Agenda: Overview of the actions for the period 2022-2024. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf

HEIs, and invite the Member States to remove obstacles to more compatible higher education systems[2]. This provides a framework for a more effective transnational cooperation structure, by which interconnected HEIs are readier to fulfil all their missions and tackle the great societal challenges. Furthermore, it opens up an "opportunity for HEIs to explore the necessity, the benefits, the risks and the feasibility of setting up institutionalised cooperation instruments, such as a possible legal status for Alliances"[3].

1.1. Dissemination

The Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 dissemination efforts are led by the event's communication group, consisting of Blanca Burillo Lago (TORCH), Marie Ugeux (CIVIS), Rasa Krolé (EU-CONEXUS), Marina Fernández-Peña (ARQUS), and Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (FORTHEM). Collectively, these members play a pivotal role in crafting the communication and dissemination strategy of the event, creating content for the event website, developing social media posts, etc. The collaborative efforts of this group ensure a cohesive and effective outreach approach, maximising the impact of the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023.

Due to the limited capacity of the venue and the high number of Alliances involved in the event, the promotion of this forum is targeted at a limited audience: members of the European Universities Alliances, members of the European Commission, representative of the Member States, and other selected Higher Education and Research and Innovation associations and networks. The invitations to attend the event onsite were sent via email by the Alliances participating in the Organising Committee and the European Commission. Registration was only possible with the reception of an invitation.

To make available detailed information of the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 to the audience, a specific webpage[4] was created for the event within the CHARM-EU website including information on the context, programme, organising committee, all the participant Alliances, speakers and contributors, conference posters and practical matters.

Specific material was also designed by EU-CONEXUS to announce the Forum. The material of the event included a vertical poster, a banner, posts visuals for Instagram (wall post and story), Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

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[2] European Council (2022). Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe. Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Union, 21-4-2022 (2022/C 167/03). Available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022XG0421(02)

[3] European Commission (2022b). Proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation. Strasbourg, 18/1/2022 COM (2022). Available at https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/proposal-council-recommendation-bridges-european-higher-education-cooperation.pdf

[4] Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 webpage: https://www.charm-eu.eu/science-and-society-european-universities-Alliances-0

Figure 1. Banner with the visuals from the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023

Figure 2. Instagram post visual with the visuals from the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023

The communication group of the event works on a coordinated strategy for the dissemination of the event in Social Media channels from all the participating Alliances. The Organising Committee has 11 Alliances on the Organising Committee and then the event has other 21 participant Alliances. In total, 32 Alliances are involved in the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023.

The aim of the social media strategy is to inform about this event to the general public and raise awareness regarding the SwafS projects. Therefore, before the event, the group created several posts to be posted by all the participants Alliances:

· First post: the presentation of the event.

· Second post: the announcement of the days left until the event.

A common hashtag was also created: #SwafSAlliancesForum23

The coordination with the rest of the participating Alliances was to publish these posts with similar text and the same visuals. Each Alliances could choose when to publish them depending on each calendar and priorities. The posts were prepared for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Each Alliance could also choose the channel/s used to promote the event.
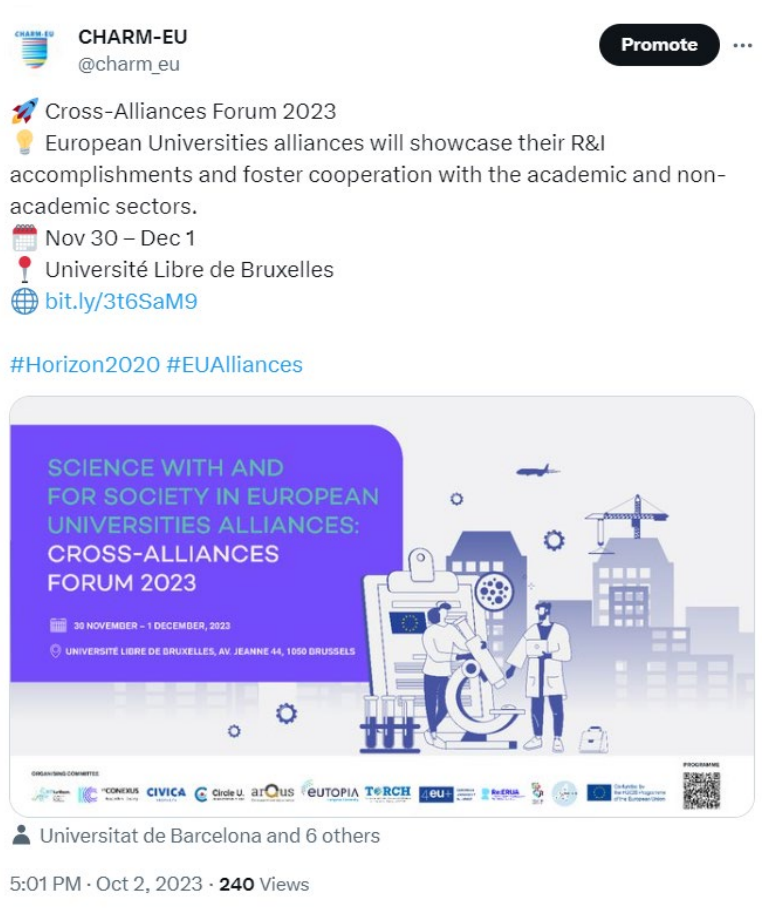
Figure 3. Presentation of the Cross-Alliance Forum 2023 in Twitter

Figure 4. Countdown post published on Instagram

In addition to Alliances' Social Media channels, the communication group also encouraged the rest of the Alliances to publish information about the forum on their own newsletter. TORCH published the event in the CHARM-EU external newsletter from October 2023[5] as a highlight. Additionally, it was internally disseminated among partner universities.

Another coordinated action was prepared for the day of the event. The communication group created a common post to start the conference. This post was the first post of the day for the participating Alliances. The photos taken by the photographer, Aurore Delsoir[6], where shared among Communication Officers from the different participant Alliances via WhatsApp in order to have certain homogeneity among all the posts during the two days of the event.

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[5] CHARM-EU External newsletter from October 2023: https://mailchi.mp/charm-eu/newsletter-december-02-13557893?e=e09feb6512

[6] Aurore Delsoir's website: https://www.auroredelsoir.be/

Figure 5. First post published during the event

Finally, the communication group worked on a post-event article. This piece is shared with the communication officers from the other Alliances. TORCH published this piece on their "Research "section in CHARM-EU website[7] and also published on CHARM-EU Social Media channels.

The European Research Executive Agency played a crucial role in widening the reach of this event. They sent the forum invitations to representatives from Member States, among members of the European Commission (Research and Innovation departments and Education departments) and the ERA Forum. In the European Research Executive Agency website, they created a specific event page for the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023[8]. Moreover, they added the information of the event on the European Research Executive Agency newsletter on the 19th of October 2023[9].

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[7] Events & News section from "Research" at the CHARM-EU website: https://www.charm-eu.eu/torch/news-events

[8] Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 page on the REA website: https://rea.ec.europa.eu/events/science-and-society-european-universities-Alliances-cross-Alliances-forum-2023-2023-11-30_en

[9] European Research Executive Agency newsletter – 19th October 2023: https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/rea/newsletter-archives/48408

1.2. Participation

The meeting is addressed to universities leadership, researchers and innovators, European University Alliances staff, and any actors engaged in R&I activities and management. It is also relevant for policymakers, as the European Commission's perspective is included. The number of participants is shown on Table 1[10].

Table 1. Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 number of participants.

No.	Participants
256	Individual registrations prior to the event
226	Individual in-person registrations
212	In-person attendees
48	Female Presenters/Chairs/Speakers/Rapporteurs
46	Male Presenters/Chairs/Speakers/Rapporteurs
37	Alliances represented

1.3. Organising Committee

The meeting is organised by representatives of several Alliances, under the coordination of CHARM-EU (Figure 1). The Organising Committee members are as follows:

· CHARM-EU: Blanca Burillo, Meritxell Chaves, Mireia Reus, Mária Szulovszky, Gemma Marfany, Jaime Llorca.

· CIVIS: Marie Ugeux, Julie Hyzewicz.

· FORTHEM: Nicole Birkle, Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska.

· EU-CONEXUS: Isabella Baer-Eiselt, Edita Lenkauskaite, Rasa Krolé.

· CIVICA: Sarah Thompson.

· CIRCLE U: Ruben Teboul.

· ARQUS: Luisa Bernstorff, Marina Fernández-Peña.

· EUTOPIA: Hattie Hine, Sam Cole.

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[10] See footnote 4 for details on online/in-person engagement.

· 4EU+: Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen.

· ERUA: Claire Douet.

·EPICUR: Michael Zacherle

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANTS

Figure 6. Organising Committee and participating Alliances

1.4. This Report

This report constitutes TORCH's deliverable D11.3, and contains the meeting agenda, followed by a debrief of all sessions and presentations, as well as the main conclusions drawn from the discussion. All presentations showed during the event can be accessed in Annex II. The report is to be published in the Project's website and distributed among the fellow University Alliances and any other interested stakeholders.

2. MEETING PROGRAMME

Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances - Cross-Alliances Forum 2023

November 30 - December 1, 2023. Université libre de Bruxelles.

Venue: Université libre de Bruxelles, Avenue Jeanne 44, 1050 Ixelles, S building.

Format: In-person (+ hybrid).

Day 1 (November 30), Morning - Policy | The future of R&I in European Universities Alliances

8:30 – 9:30 | Registration

9:00 – 9:05 | Welcome by presenters
  · Olga Wessels (ECIU and FOR-EU1 Chair)
  · Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair)

9:05 – 9:30 | Keynote: The EC Strategy to Support the Development of the European Alliances R&I Dimension
Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).
Speakers:
  · Marc Tachelet (REA, Director of European Research Executive Agency).
  · Manuel Aleixo (DG RTD, Head of Unit ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers).
Rapporteur: Blanca Burillo Lago (CHARM-EU)

9:30 – 10:30 | Plenary Session: Looking to the Future: The European Universities Alliances R&I Dimension
Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).
Chair: Carsten Schneider (CIVICA).
Speakers:
  · Manuel Aleixo (DG RTD, Head of Unit ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers).
  · Ludovic Thilly (EC2U)
  · Isabella Baer-Eiselt (EU-CONEXUS)
  · Raul Ramos (CHARM-EU).
  · Sébastian Le Picard (EDUC)
Rapporteur: Jaime Llorca (CHARM-EU)

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10:30 – 11:00 | Group photo and coffee break

11:00 – 11:30 | Plenary session: Assessment of the R&I impact of the European Universities Alliances - reports by Commission and REA experts

Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).

Speakers:

· Fionn O'Sullivan (TetraTech, Commission contractor).

· Helena Acheson (Director. Europe, UI Global, Commission expert).

· Gareth O'Neill (Technopolis, Commission expert).

Rapporteur: Blanca Burillo Lago (CHARM-EU)

11:30 – 12:30 | Panel session: From Agenda Setting to Implementation: Maximising the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects

Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).

Chair: Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (FORTHEM).

Speakers:

· Siobhan Moane (RUN-EU PLUS).

· David Dreyer Lassen (TRAIN4EU+).

· Sven Idarand (Transform4Europe).

· Laura Martin (SEA-EU).

· Nicole Birkle (FORTHEM).

Rapporteur: Agnese Rusakova (FORTHEM).

12:30 – 14:00 | Lunch break

Day 1 (November 30), Afternoon - Alliances | Showcasing the SwafS Outcomes: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

14:00 – 16:00 | Workshop sessions

· Workshop 1 – Advancing Our Common Science Agendas: building joint structures and support offices, pooling resources, capacity building, human capital, etc.

Facilitator: Tania van Loon (EUTOPIA).

Speakers:

· Eva Martin (EUTOPIA).

· Louise Wallenberg (CIVIS).

· Siegfried Walch (Ulysseus).

· Isabel Salgueiro (EELISA).

Rapporteur: Ulla Harmala (CIVIS).

· Workshop 2 – Pilots and Action Plans: what are the SwafS projects leaving for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension

Facilitator: Elena del Giorgio (4EU+).

Speakers:

· Mattia Bellotti (EUTOPIA).

· Sigríður Beck (MB TRAIN EUTOPIA).

· Sophia Karner (Una Europa).

· Manuel José Damásio (FILM-EU).

· Ladislav Kristoufek (4EU+).

Rapporteur: Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (TRAIN4EU+).

· Workshop 3 – Reforming Research Assessment

Facilitator: Dorothy Kelly (ARQUS).

Presenter: Antonio Ferrer-Montiel (NeuroTech).

Speakers:

· Andrea Tokić (EU-CONEXUS)

· Eva Mendez (YUFE)

· Joachim Reidl (ARQUS)

Rapporteur: Edita Lenkauskaitė (EU-CONEXUS).

· Workshop 4 – Inter- and Transdisciplinarity in research management

Facilitator: Natalia Tikhonov Sigrist (Circle U.) and Anouk Tso (EPICUR)

Speakers:

· Patrick Reurink (ENHANCE)

· Esther Chiama & Marco Aperti (UNIC)

· Thrasyvoulos Tsiatsos (EPICUR)

Rapporteur: Nora Korp (EPICUR)

16:00 – 16:30 | Break

16:30 – 17:30 | Interactive Poster Session

Module 1: Developing a common R&I agenda and action plan

- "TORCH Common Science Agenda: Driving Collaboration and Transdisciplinary Research to Address Global Sustainability Challenges", presented by Vicente Royuela (CHARM-EU).
- "European partnership for an innovative campus unifying regions", presented by Birgitta Alexandra Kappes (EPICUR).
- "Jointly shaping and artistic research agenda", presented by Lies Van de Vijver (FilmEU).
- "Professional Research Programmes for Business & Society", presented by Siobhán Moane (RUN EU PLUS).
- "Identifying the capacities and synergies of Ulysseus Alliances members and barriers to realising their full potential", presented by Saranne Comel (ULYSSEUS).

Module 2: Sharing resources & infrastructures

- "TRAIN4EU+ Sharing Research Infrastructure", presented by Anne Jürgens (4EU+).
- "Research Infrastructure (RI) activities of EDUC Alliance in EDUC-SHARE project", presented by Ondřej Hradil (EDUC).
- "Sharing resources and infrastructures in the Re-UNITA project", presented by Juan Ignacio Garcés Gregorio (UNITA).
- "Opening up research infrastructures and resources (RIs) across Una Europa: The journey so far", presented by Veerle Bruggeman (Una Europa).
- "Research for Society", presented by Rasa Krole (EU-CONEXUS).

Module 3: Strengthening human capital

- "Strengthening human capital through Research Activities, Research Mobility, and Training Opportunities", presented by Zeïneb Mazouz and Sarah Thompson (CIVICA).
- "Fostering Well-being Skills and Competencies for Early career and Mid-career Researchers", presented by Giorgia Giovannetti (EUniWell).

Module 4: Reinforcing cooperation with non-academic sector

- "Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems", presented by ENHANCE.
- "Fostering Innovation and Reinforcing the European University Alliance for Global Health's cooperation with the business sector and other relevant stakeholders", presented by EUGLOH.
- Co-designing/Co-Creating/Co-Delivering for Democratising Knowledge", presented by Christian Wagner-Ahlfs (SEA-EU).

Module 5: Mainstreaming Open Science practices

- "How the European Universities Initiative Contributes to the Advancement of Open Science", presented by Maximilian Heber (ERUA).
- "Revolutionising Research: Open Science Takes Centre Stage in Eutopia", presented by Elisa Maes (EUTOPIA)
- "Joint Strategy for Open Science", presented by Transform4Europe

· "Mainstreaming the Open Science within the ARQUS Alliance", presented by Luisa Bernstorff (ARQUS)

· "Challenges of the Research Assessment Reform in the European University Alliances", presented by CIVIS

Module 6: Engaging citisens & society

· "Engaging Citisens and Society", presented by Circle U.

· "Engaging citisens and society through the ECIU SMART-ER virtual research institute", presented by Prof. Xavier Gabarrell Durany (ECIU).

"Engaged Research is Advanced with Societal Partners rather than 'for' them", presented by Marco Aperti and Esther Chiama (UNIC).

Module 7: Exploring joint structures

· "Facilitating new research collaboration and links between ENLIGHT universities through thematic focus groups", presented by Dirk De Craemer (ENLIGHT).

· "Fostering Institutional Transformation of R&I Policies in European Universities", presented by Fabrisio D'Avenia (FORTHEM).

Day 2 (December 1), Morning - Inspiring the Future of R&I in Europe

9:00 – 9:45 | Plenary Session: Boosting Excellence within the European R&I Ecosystem through the European Universities Alliances

Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).

Facilitator: Isabella Baer-Eiselt (EU-CONEXUS).

Speakers:

· Frédéric Marias (UNITA).

· Joakim Esbjörnsson (EUGLOH).

· Marius Gilbert (CIVIS).

Rapporteur: Marie Ugeux (CIVIS).

9:00 – 9:45 | Break

10:00 – 11:30 | Roundtable sessions with coffee

· Roundtable 1 – Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions (broader vision).

Moderator: Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.).

Speakers:

· Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.).

· Michael Zacherle (EPICUR).

· Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU).

· Marc Vanholsbeeck (Belgian Science Policy).

· Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate)

Rapporteur: Birgitta Kappes (EPICUR).

· Roundtable 2 - Research Ethics & Integrity: The Role of New Technologies.

Moderator: Javier Valls (ARQUS).

Speakers:

· Aphra Kerr (CHARM-EU).

· Ladislav Kristoufek (4EU+).

· Mihalis Kritikos (DG RTD, Policy Analyst in Research Ethics and Integrity Sector).

Rapporteur: Jaime Llorca (CHARM-EU).

· Roundtable 3 – Responsible R&I: Fostering Societal Engagement & Involving External Stakeholders.

Moderator: Arnaud Regnauld (ERUA).

Speakers:

· Carole Brunet (ERUA).

· Timo Taskinen (FORTHEM).

· Dana Strauss (EC2U).

· Beatrix Busse (EUniWell).

· Pádraig Murphy (ECIU).

Rapporteurs: Claire Douet (ERUA), Agnese Rusakova (FORTHEM).

11:30 – 12:30 | Plenary session: Conclusions from workshops and roundtables, next steps and final photo

Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).

Chair: Sergei Guriev (CIVICA).

Speakers:

· Minna Wilkki (REA, Head of Department C, European Research Executive Agency).

· Stijn Delauré (Policy Officer, DG RTD)

· Tine Delva (Deputy Head of Unit, DG EAC)

· Olga Wessels (ECIU).

· Ludovic Thilly (EC2U).

· Auður Inga Rúnarsdóttir (Aurora).

Rapporteur: Sarah Thompson (CIVICA).

Public Programme

The full programme, along with the concept note and practical info to attend the event, were published at https://www.charm-eu.eu/science-and-society-european-universities-Alliances-0

SCIENCE WITH AND FOR SOCIETY
IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES:
PROGRAMME

DAY 1

30 November

Morning - Policy | The future of R&I in European University Alliances

Time	Session
8:30 - 9:00:	Registration / Welcome / Initial photo
9:00 - 9:30	Keynote: The EC Strategy to Support the Development of the European Alliances R&I Dimension Hybrid session
9:30 - 10:30	Plenary Session: Looking to the Future: The European University Alliances R&I Dimension Hybrid session
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 - 11:30	Plenary session: Assessment of the R&I impact of the European Universities alliances - reports by Commission and REA experts
11:30 - 12:30	Panel session: From Agenda Setting to Implementation: Maximizing the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects Hybrid session
12:30 - 14:00:	Lunch break

Afternoon - Alliances | Showcasing the SwafS Outcomes: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

2:00 PM – 5:30 PM CET

Time	Session
14:00 - 16:00	Workshop sessions • Workshop 1 – Advancing Our Common Science Agendas: building joint structures and support offices, pooling resources, capacity building, human capital, etc. • Workshop 2 – Pilots and Action Plans: what are the SwafS projects leaving for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension • Workshop 3 – Reforming Research Assessment • Workshop 4 – Inter- and Trans-disciplinarity in research management
16:00 - 16:30	Break
16:30 - 17:30	Interactive Poster Session Posters around 8 transformational modules: • Module 1: Developing a common R&I agenda and action plan • Module 2: Sharing resources & infrastructures • Module 3: Strengthening human capital • Module 4: Reinforcing cooperation with non-academic sector • Module 5: Mainstreaming Open Science practices • Module 6:Engaging citizens & society • Module 7: Exploring joint structures • Module 8: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (others)

DAY 2

1 December

Morning | Inspiring the Future of R&I in Europe

Time	Session
9:00 - 9:45	Plenary Session: Boosting Excellence within the European R&I Ecosystem through the European University Alliances Hybrid session
9:45 - 10:00	Break
10:00 - 11:30	Roundtable sessions with coffee Roundtable 1 – Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions (broader vision) Roundtable 2 - Research Ethics & Integrity: The Role of New Technologies Roundtable 3 – Responsible R&I: Fostering Societal Engagement & Involving External Stakeholders Roundtable 4 – Green transition: sustainability on a green society in a digital era
11:30 - 12:30	Plenary session: Conclusions from workshops and roundtables, next steps and final photo Hybrid session

3. FORUM DEBRIEF

The section below shows a brief summary of the meeting development, with the minutes of all sessions and presentations[11].

3.1. Day 1 (morning) - Policy | The future of R&I in European Universities Alliances

The meeting's first day is devoted to discuss policy and strategic aspects related to the European Universities initiative, including the EC views (morning).

Welcome by presenters

The event is opened by Olga Wessels and Ludovic Thilly, who act as hosts of the two days meeting.

> 9:00 – 9:05 | Welcome by presenters
>
> Presenters:
> · Olga Wessels (ECIU and FOR-EU1 Chair)
> · Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair)

Presenters Olga Wessel (ECIU and FOREU1 Chair) and Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair) extend a warm welcome to participants at the Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023. Ludovic Thilly appreciates the diverse audience, which includes representatives from European Universities Alliances, policymakers, the European Commission, Member States, and researchers.

The event's objective is to spotlight the accomplishments of Science with and for Society (SwafS) projects, emphasising their impact on institutional change, open science, public engagement, and knowledge valorisation. Throughout the forum, attendees can engage in plenary sessions, workshops, and discussions exploring how Alliances can actively contribute and make a meaningful difference in the European Research Area.

Distinguished keynote speakers from the European Commission will share insights into strategies supporting the development of European Universities Alliances in research and innovation. The event serves as a platform to celebrate and present both qualitative and quantitative data showcasing the outcomes of the SwafS projects.

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[11] All presentations can be found at: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 Presentations. Sessions recordings are available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzMZFF3wpEk and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if6gGpH2RwY.

Figure 7. Presenters of the event, Olga Wessels and Ludovic Thilly, welcoming the participants.

The EC Strategy to Support the Development of the European Alliances R&I Dimension

Senior representatives of DG RTD and REA provide an overview on the EC views and plans to support the development of the R&I dimension of the Alliances.

9:05 – 9:30 | Keynote: The EC Strategy to Support the Development of the European Alliances R&I Dimension

Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).

Speakers:

· Manuel Aleixo (DG RTD, Head of Unit, ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers).

· Marc Tachelet (REA, Director of European Research Executive Agency).

Rapporteur: Blanca Burillo Lago (CHARM-EU)

Manuel Aleixo, Head of Unit, ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers, DG RTD, starts his keynote speech celebrating the event as a landmark in the Science with and for Society projects. The European Commission listened to the European Universities Alliances (EUAs hereinafter) and their necessity to be involved in the research and innovation framework.

The goal of EUAs is to drive institutional change and innovation in universities and they have been successful. The EUAs have been working very hard to strengthen research careers, open science practices, knowledge valorisation, cooperation with companies, engagement with citisens, etc. The

objective of the European Commission is to create free movement of knowledge in Europe. The role of the EUAs in order to achieve it, they have developed the ERA actions, policy and governance. Universities are actors in the European Research Area and they are relevant for most of the ERA policy actions.

Figure 8. Manuel Aleixo giving his speech at the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023.

The ERA Action 13, dedicated to universities, addresses the university sector's needs. There is a dedicated group in which the European Commission, Member States and Universities work together. Coimbra Group is an important actor in it. The group is discussing the future needs and modalities of cooperation for R&I in universities. The Coimbra group was highly recommended to continue the support to the EUAs in the R&I area. The European Commission has already been supported by the EUAs R&I dimension with the WIDERA call and will continue to support EUAs with Horizon Europe.

Manuel Aleixo emphasises that one of the main European Commission goals is to improve the conditions of researchers in Europe. Additionally, the European Council has recommended Member States and the European Commission to improve the conditions of researchers' carers, especially the ones at the early stage of their careers. Universities are a pivotal actor to enact these recommendations.

The European Commission will also support EUAs by launching a pilot call to bring together entities and organisations that employee researchers, in order to create better conditions for early stage researchers. EUAs are in the back of the European Commission's mind for this call as they are an extremely important actors for the ERA.

"We will continue to work together in the context of developing the European Research Area, the actions and policies, and doing our best to make EU the most attractive place to do research and be a researcher", said Manuel Aleixo as a conclusion of his speech.

Marc Tachelet, Director of European Research Executive Agency from the European Commission, highlights that this conference is a valuable opportunity to witness the progress of EUAs. He also emphasises that this collaboration is possible due to the European Commission's funding. This momentum is an opportunity to demonstrate the impact of universities in Europe, which is important for the upcoming European elections.

The SwafS projects have been managed by the agency since 2021 (39 projects, 281 organisation, 80M EUR). He congratulates EUAs for embarking on this transformational journey, for delivering critical mass in institutional learning and driving systematic changes on the four dimensions that characterise the academic area (education research, innovation and service to society).

The REA and external experts have reviewed your projects and extracted lessons learned and good practices. He underlines a few of the good practices:
· EUAs unprecedented level of transnational cooperation

· Spread the culture of excellence and inclusiveness by supporting also the less experienced

· Put together transformative agendas through the active and the full engagement of researchers, students and staff and you have brought transdisciplinary and intercultural angle to your work

· Promoted this culture of growth and continuous learning

Marc Tachelet also underlines that institutional changes take time to show results, but they have already found many good examples to be scaled-up among EUAs.

He explains the key messages from the transformational areas:
· Strengthen human capital across all Alliances: EUAs support early carer researchers to ensure a highly performing and a competitive research and innovation system (training academies and platforms for developing leadership skills, exchanges programmes, with diversity and inclusiveness, common gender equality plan, etc.). More can be done to mitigate precarity, specially from young and female researchers, i.e., testing models to recognise research outputs and researchers. There is a great demand for recognising achievement.

· Non-academic sector engagement: within EUAs there is variety, but all the projects are related to researchers upskilling (mentoring programmes, etc.). 2023 is the European year of skills, and it is in line with the work of the EUAs (develop partnerships to step outside academia circle, developing skills). EUAs can do more in the cocreation and support of smart specialisation strategies: create more cross sectoral links and more dynamic engagement with local authorities. We encourage each one of you to take on an active role in shaping and driving national reforms and investment agendas.

· Collaborative structures to improve coordination within the Alliances: EUAs have created virtual research institutes, digital platforms for research, collaboration across institutional support

offices for researchers and support staff, setting frameworks for collaboration on sharing research infrastructures and services through memorandums of understanding, protocols and access policies. We call on Alliances to intensify their efforts to remove barriers for sharing research infrastructure as it is crucial to transnational scientific collaboration for Europe's competitiveness and leadership in scientific knowledge.

During the forum, the European Commission reflects on EUAs' achievements, on testimonials, and on how the EUAs' mission was able to act as a testbed to share knowledge and to inspire systemic changes. Today all the attendants in the forum can move forward to the next level of ambition, and beyond a project-based approach. He calls everyone to spread their reflections, learn from peers, use the learnings for institutional changes that could impact the research and innovation on a national and European level.

Figure 9. Marc Tachelet giving his speech at the Cross-Alliances Forum 2023.

Looking to the Future: The European Universities Alliances R&I Dimension

In this plenary session, four key aspects of joint research and innovation activities within EUAs are examined. First, the participants discuss about the need for continuous funding to drive the development of joint research agendas, highlighting examples such as capacity building and joint research support structures. Secondly, they address the importance of the investment pathway, calling for long-term, comprehensive funding models that are aligned with the diverse missions of universities, with a particular emphasis on the continuity of funding for Science with and for Society (SwafS). Thirdly, they highlight the unique position of Alliances as testbeds for piloting novel approaches to support the implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda.

Finally, they tackle the concerns about financial support will be address and respond to voices in Europe by advocating for strategic diversification of funding to ensure the pursuit of excellence in the research and innovation endeavours of Alliances.

9:30 – 10:30 | Plenary Session: Looking to the Future: The European Universities Alliances R&I Dimension

Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).

Chair: Carsten Schneider (CIVICA).

Speakers:

· Manuel Aleixo (DG RTD, Head of Unit ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers).

· Ludovic Thilly (EC2U).

· Isabella Baer-Eiselt (EU-CONEXUS).

· Raul Ramos (CHARM-EU).

· Sébastian Le Picard (EDUC).

Rapporteur: Jaime Llorca (CHARM-EU).

The chair of this session, **Carsten Schneider (CIVICA)** introduces the speakers and highlights pin-points and achievements of Alliances, which have been a great success so far. Stopping them now would make damage, so we need a sustainable future pathway. One crucial element in which Alliances are contributing is excellence in research. Without research (excellent research), universities (and Alliances) lose their distinctive feature, and research feeds into all the other activities of Alliances. The ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 actions are highly connected with the Alliances goals and advances so far in their SwafS projects. However, Alliances are facing several challenges: the short nature of projects and associated funding, does not allow them to institutionalise and the goals of funding call are not always about excellence.

Ludovic Thilly (EC2U - FOREU2 Chair) states that it should be clear that Alliances are not only about education (even if the initial funding came from Erasmus+). Alliances cover all the missions of universities, which should be developed in synergy. SwafS have been the perfect example of a top-down strategy meeting a bottom-up approach. If we provide a proper framework to our researchers, they will engage, as Alliances have shown with the SwafS projects. We are working to share research infrastructures, to build up common R&I agendas, etc. We went beyond what could have been done in the Erasmus framework. The European Commission is on the same boat with Alliances. How can we all be creative within the legal limits, so that we can make the European University Initiative a long-last transformational movement?

Isabella Baer-Eiselt (EU-CONEXUS) agrees with Ludovic message. The SwafS funding was essential to progress the R&I dimension of Alliances, but it has also limitations. With the investment pathway the European Commission is on the right way to create synergies for funding. Policy-makers need to acknowledge the need to work together to create comprehensive funding schemes, in order to

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reach the objectives they set out. EU-CONEXUS main strategic goals: 1) integrated transnational HEI and research institution; 2) integrated campus for 9 European countries; 3) focus on a unique thematic framework; 4) quality education; 5) challenge-driven excellent research; 6) innovation and transfer to society. Alliances can be relevant actors to distribute excellence across the EU. Cooperation with Member States is important to achieve the policy objectives. How frequent an intense is this cooperation?

Raul Ramos (CHARM-EU) also agrees with Ludovic comments. We don't think education and research should be separated. CHARM -EU aims for a challenge-driven university, creating flexible, student-led educational programmes focused on identifying and solving specific challenges in close collaboration with the broader community. So, research is part of our DNA and in fact, this is reflected in the name of our Alliance: CHallenge-driven, Accessible, Research-based, Mobile. We must look for synergies between education and research. Our Rectors reaffirmed the idea that CHARM-EU will keep developing its R&I dimension. More details are needed regarding what is to come in terms of comprehensive funding schemes. Thanks to all the Alliances participating in the event to send a joint message to our stakeholders. Sometimes, there has been a contradiction between competition and collaboration among universities. But there should not be. Excellent research can be done within Alliances, and can also have a multiplier effect across Europe. Alliances act as testbeds but also as leaders of institutional changes in ERA. We are happy with the outcomes of our project, particularly regarding promotion of multidisciplinarity, gender innovation and inclusion, etc. What we want to stress today is that Alliances, and CHARM-EU, are fully committed to keep developing our capacities to support research, but we need the stable support of the EC.

The last speaker from an Alliance, **Sébastien Le Picard (EDUC)** explains that Alliances created a new field for cooperation, based on trust and long-term cooperation. We have been working on finding connections between education and research, and also on making R&I more attractive to our students (not only PhD). Infrastructures sharing is also key, as it is crucial to attract talent and diversity in research. We have been able to involve our local ecosystems as well, thanks to the long-term cooperation, these ecosystems can connect as well. Very enthusiastic about what has been done and about the future. Alliances can facilitate connections between different funding tools, especially when it comes to early-career researchers.

Manuel Aleixo, Head of Unit ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers, DG RTD, replies to the statements from the Alliances. He states that the European Commission and the Alliances do not fundamentally disagree with the objectives. The European Commission wants to hear them and is trying to address their concerns. However, the European Commission has also certain constraints. We agree education and research cannot be separated, especially if we talk about universities. But research is not only done in universities. We fund research, not universities. We fund projects, not organisations. We have to operate within the limitations and possibilities of the treaties. The Member States transferred some competences in terms of research, but that is not the case in education. In education, the Member States transferred only a complementary competence to the EU (meaning that there is less we can do). Member States wanted to keep education as a national competence. This is the legal environment in which we operate. I cannot give you the expectation that in the future there will be a joint programme for education and research. It is unlikely because of the legal environment. I cannot give you the expectation either that there will be a dedicated part

of a future programme for research in Alliances. That said, there is a lot we can do and are doing. Regarding the ERA Policy Agenda, Alliances are being part of the discussion to shape it. We do envision to continue funding opportunities on the excellence initiative (widening part), and a future call focused on early-stage researchers.

Regarding the next framework programme, the European Commission is on a very early stage, just reflecting on how it would look like. Member States are included in this reflection process, so it is now the moment to contact your national representatives and express your views as to what are the future needs for the future framework programme. There are issues that cannot be solved at the EU level, but need to be addressed at a national level. We have a real issue with investment in R&I. MS need to realise that EU funding cannot replace MS funding, it has to be complementary. He also points out that Alliances with a legal entity would be able to apply for research funding.

Finally, he concludes that DG RTD and DG AEAC work closely on making this long-lasting effort. Discussion on a future investment pathway are conducted together. We can try to get creative together and try to push a little bit the boundaries. There is, in any case, difficulties for different funding programmes to work together in synergy.

The highlights of the discussion are:

· Satisfaction with the Alliances advances and success stories, and emphasis on the need for sustainable paths forward.

· Excellence identified as crucial for future Alliance research in ERA.

· Positive impact of Alliances on ERA policy agenda is highlighted, with challenges linked to R&I capacity building resource allocation.

·Discussion on synergies between education and research, and the need to reduce uncertainty regarding future funding strategies. Interconnection of education and research in Alliances is key to cover all their missions in an effective way.

· Emphasis on policymakers (DG RTD and DG EACEA) working together for comprehensive funding to achieve comprehensive objectives. Importance of policy-level collaboration for funding coherence is highlighted. Touch on potential improvements for future programmes and the need for better coordination between different tools and funding sources in Europe.

· Emphasis on the unique opportunities' Alliances provide for students, making research and innovation more attractive.

· Overall, speakers express enthusiasm for achievements and optimism about the future of Alliances.

· Speaker from European Commission responds to concerns, emphasising legal and administrative constraints in funding universities and institutions. Discussion on the legal environment, treaty limitations, and operating within competencies. Doubts expressed about the possibility of a joint

programme for educational research and a dedicated part of the future programme for university research due to legal constraints.

· Highlight of ongoing collaborations, policy agendas, and funding for early-stage researchers.

· Encouragement for input from Member States in the early stages of planning for the future funding programme.

· Audience raises questions about long-term impact of Alliances, need for legal entities, and suggestions for additional funding percentages for Alliance participants in research projects. Speaker responds with a general approach to funding entities, recognition of Alliance variety, and emphasis on accommodating diversity in future solutions, but with a clear focus on projects.

Figure 10. Photos from the session "Looking to the Future: The European Universities Alliances R&I Dimension"

TORCH
Transforming Open Responsible Research
and Innovation through CHARM

This project has received funding from
the European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme
under grant agreement No 101017229.

The chair of the session, **Carsten Schneider (CIVICA)**, concludes the session summarising that Alliances showed similar interests, also matching European Commission approach. However, the main question that remains after the discussion is what Alliances should do to overcome shortcomings at this stage. The solution seems to be that Alliances should lobby with national governments, apply to existing funding schemes, and work with the European Commission. Alliances have the feeling we have done everything we could to meet the expectations, and now we need guidance to move forward.

Assessment of the R&I impact of the European Universities Alliances - reports by Commission and REA experts

The presentation is based on two Reviews – one completed and one underway – of the mid-term progress being made by European University Alliances with Horizon 2020, Science with and for Society (SwafS) support. The aim is to foster institutional change in key priority areas: implementing strategies to mainstream open science, strengthening research careers, reinforcing knowledge valorisation and cooperation with the non-academic sector, engagement with citizens and society. Additionally, the Alliances are supported to share infrastructures and capacities in research and innovation and develop critical mass to implement common research & innovation agendas.

> 11:00 – 11:30 | Plenary session: Assessment of the R&I impact of the European Universities Alliances - reports by Commission and REA experts
>
> Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).
>
> Speakers:
>
> · Fionn O'Sullivan (TetraTech, Commission contractor).
>
> · Helena Acheson (Director. Europe, UI Global, Commission expert).
>
> · Gareth O'Neill (Technopolis, Commission expert).
>
> Rapporteur: Blanca Burillo Lago (CHARM-EU)

Fionn O'Sullivan (TetraTech, Commission contractor) presents the report TetraTech, a research and evaluation company, created a year ago about the evaluation of the Horizon support to EUAs. Since the Alliances are in an early stage of development, the report is on their potential. The report was based on an online survey (117 HEIs responses – more than 40% of all HEI Alliance members), in-depth interviews with 27 Alliances (over two thirds of Alliances receiving R&I grants) and interviews with 8 stakeholder organisations and 14 Member States organisations.

As mentioned, the results are about expectations and understandings about what the future might bring to Alliances rather than specific impacts. Fionn O'Sullivan found that there is overall good evidence of Alliances having strengthened capacities for research and innovation among participating HEIs. All Alliances registered some benefits from the SwafS project, and one third said

projects helped 'very' or 'quite' significantly, half said they helped 'somewhat', also evidence of deepening relationships with ecosystems.

However, there are difficulties. Alliances have done hard work, facing many barriers. Their progress is slow but steady. Additionally, the study reveals that there are great benefits for those in widening countries and for smaller universities.

The conclusion of the study was that the Alliances are on track to transform their research and innovation capacities but this is going to be a long-term endeavour requiring support. There is no evidence yet of significant impacts on wider (non-Alliance) HEI sector or on Member States national R&I policy.

 Examples of results:

· TM1 Developing shared R&I strategies and roadmaps: develop a common research and innovation agenda , identifying specific topics for collaboration and action plans, and engaging researchers in capacity-building projects often a challenge.

· TM2 Sharing capacity, infrastructure and resources: an initial approach (e.g. granting access to HEIs respective research infrastructure).

· TM3 Strengthening researchers' careers, including through gender equality plans: a significant positive influence in developing an HR strategy, EDI plans and helping revise frameworks for research assessment.

· TM4 Reinforcing cooperation in R&I with other sectors: helped to enhance cooperation between universities and wider innovation ecosystems, enhance cooperation with national, regional, and local authorities, strengthen relations with businesses e.g. new advisory boards with business expertise and new tools to support such cooperation e.g. databases of external partners and researchers.

· TM5 Transitioning to knowledge- and digitally-driven HEIs, conducting open science: nearly all Alliance members already developed or are developing an open science policy.

· TM6 Embedding citisens and society in R&I: most Alliance HEIs created new arrangements for engagement or are in the process.

Fionn O'Sullivan also underlines the transformational potential of all Alliances:

· In the study, the clear conclusion is that all responders welcomed the funding.

· For one third, the SwafS projects are making a real difference to them.

· The Alliances are getting good results with small amount of money (2M EUR per Alliance) and small amount of time.

He also points out the greater benefit for small HEI since smaller institutions reported more substantial benefits than larger ones. Smaller institutions have fewer resources and they are more

likely to be able to learn and transform their own performance by cooperating with other larger institutions which are better resourced.

The final conclusions from the presentation are that transforming Alliances' R&I potential has started but needs long-term systematic funding and a programmatic approach, rather than a project approach. Alliances have great difficulties combining different types of funding. TetraTech has worked on different solutions, but this issue is still an active debate that will not be solved immediately. Alliances are struggling also to keep with the existing set of requirements. Therefore, he recommends not to add extra policy goals, as it would be a risk of tripping Alliances up before they have learned how to walk properly. Finally, Fionn O'Sullivan reminds not to forget that 80% of higher education institutions are not in an Alliance, we cannot privilege this particular policy instrument compared to another.

Figure 11. Photos from the session "Assessment of the R&I impact of the European Universities Alliances - reports by Commission and REA experts"

From Agenda Setting to Implementation: Maximising the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects

European University Alliances have made an impressive step forward to foster collaboration in the research, innovation and transfer dimension. Due to their SwafS projects, Alliances embarked on setting up joint R&I agendas and actions plans, and exchanged on best practices, developing tools and structures to facilitate cooperation and bringing researchers together for joint project applications. Taking the next step from setting the agendas to sustainably implementing new formats and activities modelled and tested in the pilot phase requires time and resources. Some Alliances have built on their pre-existing joint collaboration before formally establishing the Alliance. Other Alliances need more time, especially within the research mission, to harmonise their diverse R&I priorities, support structures, internal workflows, policies and resources available.

> **11:30 – 12:30 | Panel session: From Agenda Setting to Implementation: Maximising the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects**
>
> Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).
>
> Chair: Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (FORTHEM).
>
> Speakers:
>
> · Siobhan Moane (RUN-EU PLUS).
>
> · David Dreyer Lassen (TRAIN4EU+).
>
> · Sven Idarand (Transform4Europe).
>
> · Laura Martin (SEA-EU).
>
> · Nicole Birkle (FORTHEM).
>
> Rapporteur: Agnese Rusakova (FORTHEM).

In this panel session, entitled "From Agenda Setting to Implementation: maximising the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects", chaired by **Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (FORTHEM),** the goal is to have representatives of five Alliances to talk about their experiences of implementation of the actions planned within their SwafS projects. They share some examples of how to maximise institutional impacts, despite not having a guarantee of continued funding. And they show us how the planned actions can promote an integrative approach to all the missions of the university.

Siobhan Moane (RUN-EU PLUS) presents the RUN-EU network, which is focused on regional universities. The RUN-EU PLUS project is led by TUS, Midlands Midwest and primarily focuses on enhancing the development of R&I with and for society through the development and deployment of collaborative professional practice-based research degrees across the RUN-EU Alliance. The main objectives of the project include:

· A common R&I agenda and associated collaborative action plan focused on the strengthening of regional business and society partnerships in R&I across the network which will complement the existing RUN-EU strategic vision for teaching, learning, research and engagement activities,

delivering institutional and societal transformation. Collaboration with regional partners is very important to identify core skills needed for the labour force of the future, we work with companies to understand which skills are needed and translate them further integrating in the content.

· Design and delivery of joint and collaborative accredited professional practice-based research programmes at both masters and PhD level across the RUN-EU Alliance in association with industry, business, and societal stakeholders and organised around a challenge they face.

· Development and implementation of strategies which enhance the capacity of the human capital engaged in research and innovation, through the development of a collaborative cloud of knowledge portal, that amasses training material and disseminates research achievements.

· Mainstreaming of Open Science practices and skills within the RUN-EU R&I platforms, through the delivery of new and innovative programmes.

· Contribution to the development of the recently announced ERA Hubs by supporting joint R&I activities across the Alliance. For example, get the early-stage researchers or senior researchers together for a week and work on a challenge of the week (learn new cultures of doing research), and then present the idea at the end of the week.

Siobhan Moane also presents an example of how projects like the SwafS-projects institutional game-changers can be. They have worked on collaborative research degrees at PhD level through either joint supervision leading to a single award or joint award allows progression to PhD for students from institutions which do not have PhD awarding authority and for the institutions themselves. Such cooperation can help to recognise viable career opportunities, develop frameworks that support the transfer of knowledge, like ambassador networks in RIT.

Additionally, RUN-EU PLUS has developed such collaborative PhD programmes in the areas of sustainability, digitalisation and social innovation with joint supervision and student mobility integrated into the programmes. An application was submitted to a national education agency for approval of a joint PhD in Digitalisation Engineering between 3 RUN-EU partners. This programme was co-designed by the partners and the taught modules will be co-delivered. Joint supervision (3-4 supervisors from partner universities – there are supervisor training programmes and workshops for supervision teams) and mobility are core elements, and the application were supported by over 20 companies who will be collaborating on the research carried out. If successful, this PhD will be the first awarded by 2 of the proposing partners.

David Dreyer Lassen (4EU+) discuss about sharing research infrastructure, alleviating access that can be used as tool for attracting talent in a targeted way. It is important to share the good and bad experiences alike. Sharing infrastructure is also fulfilling an important societal role, for example - start-ups have no access to own infrastructure and can be supported. Even at the individual university level it is difficult to keep on track of developments related to the available infrastructure, what is working, what is available, what is not being repurposed. At the Alliance level we need to come up with common definition, map the infrastructure and think of ways to make it accessible. This process in itself has been very helpful. We do not talk necessarily about sharing all research

infrastructure there is, but to apply the accessibility to some of infrastructure in a smart way - to attract people one wants. Then, it is important to take decisions of how to share and when to share. Also, the question of funders role has to be explored, because the – EU, private founders make requirements, and a new way of thinking starts prevailing -have to facilitate sharing. We need to understand how to make it work, as we do not have the same systems, protocols have to be established.

Flexible models that respect national legislation, specific regulations have to be created and the culture of sharing should be enabled. Enablers should be detected and maximised. Achievements in Sharing Research Infrastructures:

- · "Research Infrastructures are strong drivers for the generation of research results and thus knowledge at European Universities."

- · 4EU+ SwafS project TRAIN4EU+ has addressed transformation module 2 - "sharing research infrastructures" - within its Work package 3.

- · WP3 work on promising models for sharing infrastructures has led to a joint publication currently submitted to a journal.

Challenges in Sharing Research Infrastructures:

- · Mapping research infrastructure and maintaining an up-to-date list

- · Determine when and where sharing facilities "Core facilities" is the right solution

Ways forward in Sharing Research Infrastructures:

- · There are benefits from increased sharing of research infrastructures

- · There are good models on how to organise this. And some funding options are available.

- · But there is no simple way forward and there is no "one sise fits all", also when it comes to sharing research infrastructures.

Sven Idarand (Transform4Europe/T4ERI) explains that the SwafS programme project set the Alliance quite an ambitious plan - the partners wanted to set a joint agenda for collaboration (because until that time only few partners had done some standard research projects together). Therefore, Transform4Europe wanted to make all the possible support structures to help the researchers find their own colleagues from different partners, so the collaboration platform was initiated that has now been launched to act as a matchmaking device. Experts in the fields were identified, having the authority within their institutions, to act as facilitators.

During the project Transform4Europe the sharing of the infrastructure is as important as the connection between the researchers, so we joined our infrastructure platform to the same system which would nurture the collaboration even more.

To foster even better collaboration between the partners Transform4Europe needed to see the human capital that each of the partners have. It was very important to give a voice in the development programme for the research support staff (pointed out by EC as best practice). Although managing the piloting programme for academic and administrative staff can be challenging, we see this a vital part of the future collaboration.

Transform4Europe has been very successful in building different structures, also in Open Science, Science Communication and PERI, but now the question is how can we carry out the actual actions, as changes take time to have any noticeable results. Therefore, we see our work in the project as setting up an environment. Through the Science4All strategy, for example, we have planned a course on science communication for the researchers to build more on the universities' mission to serve the society as well, but the outcomes will be seen after the piloting phase.

While SwafS programme has given a real boost in the Transform4Europe Alliance's activities in R&I, the programme itself does not let us see the full effects of the started activities yet and the Erasmus+ programme is not meant to support R&I activities. Luckily, a lot of activities developed in the T4ERI project will also continue in some form in our Alliance's next phase funding from Erasmus+

Laura Martin (SEA-EU/reSEArch EU) is the next speaker to explain that the SEA-EU Alliance has worked towards intensifying and improving its research and innovation capacities through increased resilience (Anti-fragility think-tank), sustainable and open science practices, facilitation of innovation, engagement with stakeholders and long-term collaborations.

The most important challenge of the Alliance has been to design and produce a Long-Term Research Agenda, which has been built thanks to the analysis, the positioning of key investigators towards societal challenges and the evaluation of the common research activities, the research strengths of the Alliance and the alignment of our research with the Agenda 2030 Goals, the European Research Missions and the Research Areas priorities of the Horizon Europe Programme.

The Long Term Research Agenda has been built thanks to the Governance documentation and good practices that have been reporting among the SEA EU Alliance such as: position paper on reducing the carbon footprint of research activities, Strategies for stakeholder engagement, Joint SEA-EU Industrial PhD model recommendations, Report on best practices and learnings, workshops, mission-based hackathons, Policy paper with recommendations to fit regional priorities, report on the best practices of cooperation within the socioeconomic, report on gender, digital transformation of research and innovation roadmap analysis, Advisory Board and Stakeholders group report, SEA-EU Sustainable Development Goals Declaration, Report on Best Practices in Open Science, Industrial PhDs and life-long-learning, Survey report on doctoral students mobility; as well different SEA EU tools and initiatives as SEA-EU summer schools, SEA-EU Joint PhD, Blue Doctoral Community Alumni Network, etc.

Elaborating on the SEA-EU global vision, the Alliance's vision and ambition for its research community is: (1) To be an international reference point recognised for excellence in research priority areas, a promoter of open and fair science as well as an exemplary model of research ethics and integrity, (2) To provide an internationally recognised environment for developing careers of young researchers, increase the integration within the Alliance, provide seamless mobility and

collaboration experiences. For each of the missions prioritised, specific objectives have been identified, several of which are cross-cutting.

Finally, **Nicole Birkle (FORTHEM/FIT FORTHEM)** explains that the research dimension must be properly embedded in Alliance actions, and that is why it needs funding. The SwafS call was highly appreciated, and we need to speak about how to continue from that, especially if we are asked to create as much synergies as possible with the education and outreach dimension.

The European Commission invited Alliances to a dialogue about investment pathways promoting to use all the possibilities in the framework of Horizon Europe, e.g., MSCA, Infrastructures, the Widening Programme including Excellence Initiative, or other European funding schemes like Erasmus+, Digital Europe, National Support, and Structural funds. But there are issues with that approach, namely incompatibility between SwafS and these calls, constant need to apply and reapply, incompatible timeframes and priorities for various projects.

Bringing the Member States on board: Alliances are constantly encouraged to lobby for future funding especially also for their research dimension on national level. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the participating universities to lobby regionally and nationally for robust co-funding of the Alliances. FORTHEM is developing and refining respective concepts. However, it is important to note that not all Member States offer national co-financing at all, and that the regulations are so different that they hardly allow measures to be financed that benefit the entire Alliance and that can be strategically deployed.

In order to be successful in the long term, Alliances need a solid and stable basic funding we can build on to work on all missions. FORTHEM tried to bring as much as possible what was created in FIT FORTHEM under the umbrella of the ERASMUS+ funded Alliance structures in the second funding period, creating the Research, Innovation and Transfer Mission with three pillars: a mission board for strategic decisions, a joint virtual Research Services and Policy Office and a FORTHEM academy for Early-Stage Researchers.

Then, the discussion with the audience starts with a first question: Since the European Commission will support projects not Alliances, will there be an advantage if the project application comes from an Alliance? What will it be the added value of the project within the Alliance?

David Dreyer Lassen (4EU+) replies that from his experience, developing research infrastructure, common protocols, enable researchers work together, that will make the application within Alliance more attractive.

Nicole Birkle (FORTHEM/FIT FORTHEM) adds that they always suggest adding partners from the Alliance. There is no competition exchange and Alliances are especially attractive for early-stage researchers that need to establish networks. Step by step, established researchers will see the advantages.

Siobhan Moane (RUN-EU PLUS) explains that some research teams already have a track record to work together, interdisciplinarity comes with Alliances, without competing but collaborating.

Finally, the chair Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (FORTHEM) emphasises that trust has been built.

Figure 12. Photos from the session "From Agenda Setting to Implementation: Maximising the Institutional Impact of the SwafS Projects".

3.2. Day 1 (afternoon) - Alliances | Showcasing the SwafS Outcomes: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

During the afternoon sessions, Alliances present their results and progress around the diverse transformational modules.

Workshop sessions

· Workshop 1 – Advancing Our Common Science Agendas: building joint structures and support offices, pooling resources, capacity building, human capital, etc.

This workshop showcases the joint structures, resources and support offices developed and piloted by SwafS projects to build capacity and collaboration on an Alliance level. Presentations by Alliances focuses on EUTOPIA's Grants, Legal and Innovation Office, networking tools developed by CIVIS to initiate new R&I collaborations, the co-creation of an international European University Alliance branch by Ulysseus and EELISA's initiatives to boost connections through joint calls and contests. Participants are also be invited to explore four key challenges relating to the development of these activities through interactive discussion in break out groups.

> 14:00 – 16:00 | Workshop 1 – Advancing Our Common Science Agendas: building joint structures and support offices, pooling resources, capacity building, human capital, etc.
>
> Facilitator: Tania van Loon (EUTOPIA).
>
> Speakers:
>
> · Eva Martin (EUTOPIA).
>
> · Louise Wallenberg (CIVIS).
>
> · Siegfried Walch (Ulysseus).
>
> · Isabel Salgueiro (EELISA).
>
> Rapporteur: Ulla Harmala (CIVIS).

Each European Universities Alliance has to navigate in the diverse landscape of member universities with varying organisational structures, legal contexts, languages, and cultures. Rather than merely accepting these differences, Alliances recognise the imperative to embrace them within the working cultures of each institution. It is of utmost importance to engage in open discussions about these distinctions, sharing insights into how Alliances operate and how these practices align with the core values of the member universities. This deliberate exchange not only fosters mutual understanding but also lays the groundwork for long-term collaboration. From the outset, Alliances' approach involves defining key terms and concepts to establish a common language among partners and participants, ensuring clarity and cohesion in our collective efforts. Acknowledging that not every member needs to be involved in every aspect, Alliances embrace the understanding that while all members contribute to the overall goals, some objectives may not require universal participation.

This pragmatic approach allows them to focus efforts efficiently and avoid spending time persuading every party to engage in each new initiative.

To enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of Alliances, a crucial shift in the approach to legal status and project management is imperative. It is essential to move beyond reliance on short-term Project Managers' contracts for temporary initiatives. Instead, Alliances should invest in building human capital, recognising that continuous investment in individuals is key to long-term success. The inherent risk of losing valuable human capital is a concern when organisations adhere to a strictly project-based model for managing resources. To mitigate this risk, it is crucial to transition towards a more stable and strategic core group within each university. This core group should establish close connections with the institution's governing bodies, enabling effective coordination of various short-term projects undertaken by the Alliance. This strategic approach not only preserves the long-term history and vision of the Alliance but also ensures dynamism and cultivates the leadership capacity necessary for sustained growth and impact.

Achieving a balance between top-down and bottom-up initiatives within Alliances demands a commitment to clear communication and transparency among all stakeholders, encompassing administrative, scientific, and governance communities. This necessitates a collaborative approach where both top-down and bottom-up actors work in tandem to align objectives and strategies. It's essential to recognise that support for researchers and research managers extends beyond mere financial contributions. Technical assistance and guidance play pivotal roles in fostering an environment conducive to successful initiatives. Importantly, this equilibrium should not be viewed as a zero-sum game; rather, it requires a recognition that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are essential. Encouragingly, this can be achieved without imposing rigid ideas on researchers, allowing for the freedom to create and explore within defined parameters. Embracing this collaborative and flexible mindset ensures a holistic and sustainable approach to our Alliance's initiatives.

Addressing limited researcher engagement and promoting incentives for research and innovation collaboration within the Alliances requires a nuanced strategy. While Alliances may lack the financial capacity to fund large-scale research projects, the provision of seed-funding can serve as a crucial catalyst for initiating new research endeavours. However, this financial support must be complemented by administrative backing from the universities to ensure the success and sustainability of such initiatives. To mitigate potential discouragement, it is vital to convey that Alliances operate with a long-term strategy and vision. Emphasising that researchers' investments of time and effort align with a broader, meaningful trajectory can bolster commitment. Importantly, beyond monetary incentives, fostering collaboration can be achieved by creating spaces for exchanging ideas. Recognising time as a valuable resource, adapting mandatory teaching hours for researchers can provide them with additional opportunities to engage in and discuss research, further enriching the collaborative spirit within Alliances.

Figure 13. Photos from the workshop 1 "Advancing Our Common Science Agendas: building joint structures and support offices, pooling resources, capacity building, human capital, etc."

The main conclusions from this workshop were that fostering collaboration within Alliances requires a deliberate shift from the notion of "neutralising" individual university cultures and practices to a focus on understanding and embracing diversity. Recognising that these unique aspects impact each institution's ability to engage fully in Alliance actions is crucial for effective collaboration. Additionally, striking a balance between the Alliance as a project and a long-term vision is essential, necessitating both strategic and administrative cohesion. Tailoring approaches, whether top-down

or bottom-up, should be informed by a thorough analysis of target audiences and objectives. This understanding ensures that actions are launched with precision and effectiveness. Moreover, to better engage researchers, managing expectations through robust internal communication and exploring non-monetary incentives are key. By adopting these principles, Alliances cannot only strengthen its collaborative network but also advance its collective mission with greater impact.

· Workshop 2 – Pilots and Action Plans: what are the SwafS projects leaving for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension.

In Workshop 2 on Pilots and Action Plans: what do SwafS projects leave for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension, we showcase key outcomes of the 4 SwafS projects presented, focusing on areas where the 4 Alliances FILM-EU, UNA.EUROPA, EUTOPIA & 4eu+ have seen tangible progress and overall impact. Building on these key outcome outlines, speakers will engage with the audience in terms of 4 key questions, encouraging exchanges and interactive discussions, facilitated by the speakers. Through the presentations, interactive exchanges and a concluding Q&A session, we aim to underscore the SwafS projects' efforts to position European University Alliances as key contributors to the European R&I landscape, highlighting their unique value complementing existing R&I collaborations. Our second aim is to advocate for future investment needs to allow European University Alliances to take forward their ambitions and fulfil their potential as drivers of the European Research Area, in Europe as well as globally.

14:00 – 16:00 | Workshop 2 – Pilots and Action Plans: what are the SwafS projects leaving for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension

Facilitator: Elena del Giorgio (4EU+).

Speakers:

· Mattia Bellotti (EUTOPIA).

· Sigríður Beck (MB TRAIN EUTOPIA).

· Sophia Karner (Una Europa).

· Manuel José Damásio (FILM-EU).

· Ladislav Kristoufek (4EU+).

Rapporteur: Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (TRAIN4EU+).

EUTOPIA, a consortium comprising 10 European universities is actively engaged in the collaborative development of a sustainable partnership across education, research, innovation, and societal service, guided by a shared set of values and a common purpose. Specifically, within the framework of the SwafS project EUTOPIA TRAIN, partner universities have collaboratively crafted a comprehensive Research and Innovation agenda. This agenda serves as a blueprint, delineating priorities and principles geared towards achieving dual objectives: first, enhancing collaboration to foster knowledge sharing, excellence, and societal impact; and second, cultivating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to drive meaningful societal change. The Research and

Innovation agenda set activities designed to realise these objectives, drawing from the piloting experience of the SwafS project (EUTOPIA TRAIN) and, in certain instances, sustained through the core Erasmus+ project (EUTOPIA MORE).

The presentation, by **Mattia Belloti (EUTOPIA)** and **Sigríður Beck (TRAIN EUTOPIA)**, provides insights into the strategic evolution from conceptualisation to piloting and consolidation of these activities. They showcase the successes achieved but also shed light on the challenges that lie ahead. A central question for discussion emerges: "How can Alliances effectively balance strategic expectations regarding the enhancement of R&I collaborations across universities with the actual needs and capacities for institutional transformation? Which lessons have been learned, and which perspectives guide the way forward?"

Within the dynamics of EUTOPIA, the strategic development is in a top-down fashion, juxtaposed with the bottom-up implementation that focuses on embedding initiatives, each one of them contributing a unique facet to the Alliance's collaborative efforts. The Young Leaders Academy directs its attention to early-career researchers, nurturing their growth and development. The GLENN Office serves as a grant's office, providing crucial support for research endeavours, ensuring excellence in both research and impact. The Research and Innovation Atlas functions as a mapping tool, offering a comprehensive overview of existing mobility programmes across the Alliance's universities.

EUTOPIA's commitment to fostering connected research communities is evident in its bottom-up call to create networks of researchers dedicated to addressing global challenges. Looking ahead to the 2024-2026 Research and Innovation agenda, the Alliance aims to enhance capacity building through collaboration, with a specific focus on early career researchers.

Despite the Alliance's initiatives, EUTOPA faces challenges in terms of ownership, organisation, responsibility, funding for consolidation, prioritisation between activities, and the evaluation of results and impact. Managing expectations at the institutional level, both from communities and funders, remains a concern. The call for pragmatism and thoughtful consideration underscores the need for strategic thinking to streamline actions aligning with the Alliance's core objectives.

Sophia Karner, Una Europa, presented Una Europa's overarching vision for research and innovation. Titled "Una Europa's Vision for Research & Innovation," the presentation delves into the Alliance's journey so far and outline the Una Europa 2030 Strategy.

This comprehensive strategy serves as a holistic framework for collaboration over the next decade, encapsulated within three primary pillars: Powering the Research of the Future, Pioneering the Education of the Future, and Shaping the Society of the Future. Focusing on pillar I, which addresses advancing transnational research collaborations, Una Europa's vision centres on three key ambitions, informed by the outcomes of the Una.Resin project. These ambitions, each supported by concrete examples, include supporting the development of interdisciplinary hubs for research, education, and knowledge transfer, providing a transnational framework for training early career researchers, and opening up research and data infrastructures and resources. Looking ahead, Sophia Karner highlights Una Europa's next steps, particularly the Una Europa matrix exercise designed for prioritisation at the Alliance's highest decision-making levels, aligning ambitions with investment

needs. Emphasising the importance of support structures, such as Una Europa Clusters, the presentation concludes with reflections on future investment and policy needs.

Sophia Karner poses a stimulating question for discussion: "From your perspective, what support do European University Alliances need to take their research & innovation dimension to the next level? How can we match ambitions and investment needs going forward?" This question invites a thoughtful exploration of the collaborative efforts needed to elevate the research and innovation landscape within European University Alliances.

Una Europa is strategically navigating investment pathways at both EU and national levels to bolster its Research and Innovation initiatives. The Alliance is actively tapping into EU funding across various programmes while simultaneously fostering member states' financial commitments. In this landscape, regulatory frameworks are being scrutinised to identify impediments and facilitators for cooperation. Una Europa recognises the significance of incentivising researchers to cultivate Research and Innovation collaborations and is exploring diverse mechanisms for this purpose.

The Research and Innovation strategy of Una Europa is multifaceted, with a focus on developing interdisciplinary hubs for research, education, and knowledge transfer, providing a transnational framework for early-career researchers through joint doctoral programmes and expanded training opportunities, and opening up research and data infrastructures and resources.

In anticipation of future actions, Una Europa is conducting a survey in 2023 to gauge expectations that will inform its upcoming Action Plan from 2024 onwards. The Alliance is also contemplating the sustainability of clusters of professionals linked to the SwafS initiative outside the contexts in which they originated. Una Europa emphasises the need for member states to co-invest in the Alliance and seeks to clarify the unique added value of research Alliances compared to other collaborative structures. Evaluating impact beyond the Alliance's borders is a key consideration. The distinctive strength of Alliances lies in joint structures and the provision of a space for bottom-up collaboration and interdisciplinary efforts among researchers. Una Europa stresses that the European Research Area agenda must align with sufficient funding to support the implementation of ambitious goals and meet the comprehensive missions of universities.

Reflecting on past experiences, Una Europa acknowledges that some SwafS initiatives may have been stretched too thin across various actions. As the Alliance moves forward, strategic alignment and resource allocation will be pivotal to ensure impactful and sustainable R&I collaborations.

Manuel José Damásio, FILM-EU, shares insights into the collaborative journey with a presentation titled "Jointly designing a research agenda through joint research initiatives: the FilmEU Artistic research Agenda". Central to FilmEU's approach is the conceptualisation of an Artistic Research Agenda, grounded in the cultivation of joint dynamic clusters. These clusters, fuelled by an innovative seed funding programme, serve to invigorate a community of researchers and enhance the Alliance's Research and Innovation (R&I) capacity. Manuel's presentation provides a detailed account of this transformative process, offering lessons learned and outlining the anticipated next stages in implementing this joint research agenda.

The question for discussion posed by Manuel focuses on the diverse profiles of the Alliances, particularly in terms of thematic focus or size, prompting a deeper exploration of how collaborations in the Research and Innovation dimension have shaped and evolved. The discussion aims to uncover commonalities and differences in cooperation models and needs, fostering a collective understanding among Alliance participants.

Within the realm of university Alliances, FilmEU acknowledges the diverse landscape, with Alliances presenting varying profiles. Some are thematically oriented, ranging from polytechnics to business schools and social sciences, while others consist of multidisciplinary universities. Differences also manifest in size, mission focus, and governance models, highlighting the multitude of collaboration possibilities. The European Commission recognises and encourages these diverse models of cooperation, fostering the development of various solutions for Alliance governance and service delivery.

FilmEU strategically employs pilot initiatives as catalysts for joint Research and Innovation agendas. A matchmaking process engages institutions in collaborative endeavours, expanding from 4 to 8 participants and progressing from artistic research to addressing societal challenges. The creation of formal groups of researchers within the Alliance strengthens collaboration, yet challenges persist, including contractual dilemmas, connections, and funding hurdles. Recruitment of research managers proves pivotal, especially for non-research-intensive institutions, as it enables Alliances to attract external funding. Aligning Alliances with Smart Specialisation Strategies further enhances their impact, although challenges arise within national contexts related to human resources and funding constraints. While the conceptualisation of funding mechanisms worked well, the continuity of activities in the SwafS initiative now relies on internal university budgets, posing limitations. The establishment of a legal entity is seen both as a challenge and an opportunity, reflecting the nuanced landscape in which FILM-EU operates.

Ladislav Kristoufek (4EU+) shares insights under the title "Unleashing Potential: Exploring the Dynamic Synergies Between Education and R&I in 4EU+". The presentation spotlights 4EU+'s innovative initiatives aims at enhancing Research and Innovation dimensions and fostering synergies between research and education. These initiatives encompass mini grants, SEED4eu+ calls, visiting professorship calls, and the upcoming implementation of joint doctoral training programs within 4EU+. Ladislav Kristoufek explains best practices and challenges associated with creating internal synergies among partner institutions, particularly in large universities where different divisions often manage education and R&I separately. Furthermore, the presentation addresses alignment challenges within Alliances, specifically coordinating Erasmus+ projects with the SwafS/R&I dimensions in terms of timing and financial support. Additionally, he explores best practices and challenges in fostering collaboration with associated partners and stakeholders within ecosystems.

To stimulate engaging dialogue, the presentation concludes with a thought-provoking question: "How have Alliances built synergies between the education and R&I dimensions? What opportunities and challenges have been encountered, and how can we further strengthen connections across dimensions?" This question encourages a reflective discussion on strategies to

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This project has received funding from
the European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme
under grant agreement No 101017229.

deep connections and overcome challenges in the intersection of education and research within university Alliances.

During the discussion with fellow Alliances, different ideas come up regarding how to build synergies between education and research. For example, professional development and training initiatives within other Alliances' projects, covering diverse themes like Open Science, civil engagement, gender, and diversity, could be integrated into a comprehensive program. Autonomy self-study courses on Open Science from 4EU+ are complemented by an online student portal showcasing various courses and proving immensely popular. However, motivating individuals to complete courses still remains a challenge, prompting exploration into effective incentives. Another idea is the establishment of a database of experts which facilitates collaboration. Sharing it with the Academic Council for both research and education ensures alignment.

All Alliances agree that funding remains elusive, prompting reflections on measuring impact. Addressing challenges in research funding, faculty engagement emerges as crucial, demanding concerted efforts to involve all researchers.

Recognising the symbiotic relationship between education and research, 4EU+ advocates for joint endeavours, emphasising the importance of involving students in initiatives like Seed4EU. Teaching through research activities is encouraged and also fostering collaborative teaching among researchers to enhance the interconnectedness of education and research within the university landscape.

In conclusion, the activities of the SwafS projects serve as a solid foundation for positioning European University Alliances as integral contributors to the European Research and Innovation landscape. The unique value that these Alliances bring, complementing existing Research and Innovation collaborations, underscores their potential as significant drivers within the European Research Area, both regionally and on the global stage. To fully unleash this potential, advocating for sustained investment is crucial, empowering European University Alliances to realise their ambitions and play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Research and Innovation. Recognising the pivotal role of Research Support Offices in navigating Alliance challenges, particularly when it comes to proposal writing, underscores their importance in the Alliance ecosystem. Prioritising Research Management in future funding initiatives emerges as a key strategy to operationalise SwafS activities effectively. As Europe grapples with multifaceted challenges, aligning universities efforts to focus on these challenges demonstrates a proactive stance, emphasising the role of education and research in addressing contemporary issues and fostering positive societal impact.

Figure 14. Photos from the workshop 2 "Pilots and Action Plans: what are the SwafS projects leaving for future developments of the Alliances' R&I dimension."

· Workshop 3 – Reforming Research Assessment

The workshop focuses on the progress made by five Alliances concerning the reform of the research assessment systems.

14:00 – 16:00 | Workshop 3 – Reforming Research Assessment

Facilitator: Fernando Cornet (ARQUS).

Presenter: Antonio Ferrer-Montiel (NeuroTech).

Speakers:

· Andrea Tokic (EU-CONEXUS)

· Eva Mendez (YUFE)

· Joachim Reidl (ARQUS)

Rapporteur: Edita Lenkauskaitė (EU-CONEXUS).

Fernando Cornet (ARQUS), facilitator of the session, presents the workshop and introduces the presenter and the speakers to the participants.

Antonio Ferrer-Montiel (NeuroTech), the presenter of the session, underscores the need to empower researchers for impactful and innovative work. He advocates for quality, innovation, and transdisciplinary collaboration, emphasising the importance of adequate funding, education, and training. Ferrer-Montiel highlights the commitment to dissemination and communication, recognising research's potential impact on scientific, social, and economic areas. While acknowledging the role of AI, he cautions against its negative implications. He calls for curiosity-driven, socially oriented research addressing societal challenges and emphasises excellence beyond numerical metrics. Ferrer-Montiel advocates for upgraded resources, reproducibility through FAIR principles, and a collaborative approach involving not only scientists but society. In large consortia, he stresses valuing contributions, including authorship recognition, to foster an inclusive and collaborative research environment.

Andrea Tokic, EU-CONEXUS, emphasises the strategic role of the Charter & Code in guiding employers and funders toward effective implementation within their institutions. Acknowledging the institution's positive environment for employees as a voluntary initiative under university management, Andrea Tokic shares insights from the SwafS project. The project aimed to identify challenges within the Alliance to achieve HRS4R awards and proposed solutions. Major gaps across Alliance institutions included a lack of financial resources for specific activities, ethical and professional concerns, recruitment and selection challenges, and issues related to working conditions and social security, as well as training and development. Andrea Tokic also underscores the vital connection between HRS4R and research assessment, urging the central placement of HR issues. She highlights the adverse impact of overlooking crucial aspects of researchers' work at the institutional level, which can negatively affect motivation. Additionally, the failure to recognise the heterogeneous criteria of work performance may demotivate researchers from engaging with aspects beyond quantitatively measurable ones widely accepted thus far.

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Eva Mendez (YUFE) stresses the significance of eight pillars consistently brought to the table by the European Commission and she identifies research assessment as a bottleneck to Open Science. She also emphasises the need to prioritise researchers' careers by outlining core commitments: recognising diverse contributions, evaluating mainly qualitative research, abandoning inappropriate journal and publication-based metrics, and avoiding the use of rankings for research evaluation. Stressing the importance of educating researchers about Open Science, she contends that its benefits extend beyond societal impact, resonating strongly with scientists. Eva Mendez advocates for all institutions and universities to adopt an Open Science orientation. She envisions EU University Alliances as Open Science Universities, with a focus on skills for the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). The Alliances should serve as role models in practicing Open Science and advancing research assessment. To facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing, Eva Mendez proposes the creation of a permanent forum for experiences and practices in Open Science (#OSForum).

Joachim Reidl, ARQUS, reports on the collaborative efforts within their Task Force focused on research assessment reform initiatives across ARQUS universities. Notably, ARQUS presents a commendable practice from the University of Graz, Austria, operating as a pilot within the CoARA framework. The University of Graz utilises two key tools: Activity Framework and Research Fora. The Activity Framework transparently outlines expected achievements at various career levels and areas, serving as a guide in evaluation processes, appointments, resource allocation, and incentives. Meanwhile, Research Fora, as part of a bottom-up, proactive, and continuous process, shapes departmental visions and strategies, with the unique feature of potentially replacing traditional evaluation methods. The Task Force on Research Assessment Reform has a multi-faceted agenda, including accompanying the Graz pilot and other alternative assessment initiatives within ARQUS universities, sharing and pooling experiences, facilitating mutual learning and support for research assessment reforms, providing feedback for ongoing initiatives, and supporting the successful implementation of alternative research assessment projects across partner institutions.

Then, the facilitator introduces the first question to be discussed among all the participants. Using [Slido](#), the facilitator askes the questions and then the participants reply on the online platform. The results are then discussed among the participants.

Should the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) and the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment be: mandatory or voluntary? Notably, 61% advocate for a voluntary approach, believing that institutions would show greater commitment and success under such conditions, while 39% support a mandatory framework. The discussion considers the challenges of proper implementation if made mandatory and acknowledges the constraints at the institutional level within an Alliance, where legal limitations may come into play.

The following point of discussion is the pivotal role of HR Excellence in Research Award in enhancing working conditions for researchers through several key mechanisms. A significant aspect, supported by 59% of participants, is its ability to bring essential HR policies such as recruitment, career development, and ethics to the forefront of institutional policy-making. Additionally, 38% of respondents highlight the award's role in promoting a positive change in working culture, fostering an atmosphere encouraging research excellence and collaboration. Moreover, 31% note that the award contributes to shaping the institution's image as a stimulating and favourable environment

for researchers, thereby attracting and retaining top talent. However, it's worth noting that the one-year deadline and the extensive paperwork involved, coupled with the need to navigate diverse national laws, pose challenges that institutions might not have been fully aware of before engaging in the process.

The responsibility for making research open is the following topic and it is seen as a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, as indicated by survey responses. A predominant 97% believe that the primary responsibility lies with the researcher, who is supported by their institution. This underlines the pivotal role of individual researchers, assisted by the resources and mechanisms provided by their respective institutions, in fostering open research practices. Interestingly, 21% of responders acknowledge the only involvement of researchers in this process without the help of the institution. Additionally, the library is mentioned by 14%, highlighting its supplementary role in facilitating open research. Notably, there is an important majority that believes that a collective commitment is required at all levels, including researchers, universities, Alliances, and governance, to drive the openness of research initiatives.

Then, the facilitator askes the participants to add a word defining what is COARA for each one's Alliance. These are the words use to describe it: guide, known, mystery, support, motivation, strategic, way, opportunity, a core principle, an association to join, research and cooperation.

When asked about the level where there should be an establishment of consensus for comparable performance, it causes diverse opinions. A notable 65% advocate for consensus at the EU level, while 46% support a broader supranational approach. Both the university and national levels receive equal consideration at 38%. The European Universities level, at 27%, remains a noteworthy consideration. These varied perspectives highlight the complexity of finding consensus, emphasising the need to balance different levels to ensure meaningful and comparable performance assessments.

Establishing fair criteria for comparing researcher performance is a complex challenge, as noted in survey responses. An overwhelming 88% emphasise the importance of inclusivity, advocating for criteria that encompass research, teaching, and outreach. Recognising diverse subject cultures is also crucial, with 65% underscoring the need for criteria tailored to different academic disciplines. Career levels are deemed essential by 46% and gender perspectives and care duties are acknowledged by 42%, emphasising equity in assessments. Criteria related to recruitment, hiring, and mobility advantages for Early Stage Researchers (ESR) receive slightly less emphasis at 15%.

The last question of the survey: in which way should a framework be operationalised and concretised at the individual researcher's level? The survey shows varied preferences. A majority (65%) supports a top-down approach, while 50% favour a bottom-up approach. Only 4% believe in individual researchers autonomously implementing the framework.

Figure 15. Photos from the workshop 3 "Reforming Research Assessment"

The session, attended by 31 participants, concluded with a consensus on key priorities for research and assessment. Antonio Ferrer highlighted the importance of curiosity-driven, responsible, and transparent research with a focus on collaboration and societal dissemination. Andrea Tokic emphasised placing human resource issues at the forefront, addressing ethical concerns and

improving working conditions. Antonio Ferrer noted the prevalence of national consensus in performance measurements. Joachim Reidl advocated for a shift in research assessment, focusing on quality, impact, and involving stakeholders in defining criteria. Eva Mendez called for a cultural change, emphasising the significance of CoARA to move away from traditional metrics and prioritise good research over numerical indicators. The session collectively underscored the need for a transformative approach that considers ethical considerations, collaboration, and the broader societal impact of research efforts.

· Workshop 4 – Inter- and Transdisciplinarity in research management

Over the last decades, inter and transdisciplinary research has been a major trend in research development and has been supported by research funding agencies at national, European and international levels. Inter- and transdisciplinarity have been put forward as a means to understand nature and society in all their complexity.

Dealing with global challenges and "wicked problems" demands knowledge development across sectoral and disciplinary "silos". Research and innovation institutions in Europe have undoubtedly all potential to make inter- and transdisciplinarity a reality and a motor for the development of our societies. Yet, the scientific dynamics at the forefront of research frequently challenges disciplinary boundaries, while scientific breakthroughs are often found in the tensions and interactions between different academic fields.

That does not mean that academic excellence in specialised fields is inherently opposed to pushing the research frontiers beyond disciplinary categories. Rather the opposite is the case: the academic strongholds carry the potential for unleashing the transformative power of inter-disciplinary research and scientific convergence. For the sake of both scientific excellence and ground-breaking research, as well as for the societal engagement and problem-solving contribution of universities, eliminating the obstacles for inter- and transdisciplinary research is fundamental.

The effective implementation of inter and transdisciplinary research still encounters significant structural, cultural and practical obstacles in a traditionally mono-disciplinary academic world (this can also be dependent on national contexts –e.g. national procedures for recruitment, evaluation of researchers, funding mechanisms, etc.).

By developing R&I activities and stimulating the building of joint research environments across institutions and disciplines, European University Alliances are expected to significantly push inter- and transdisciplinarity to make it a reality and a key leverage for research quality and excellence. Approaching the ending of the pilot phase for the first two "generations" of Alliances – including the European funding for their R&I dimension through the SwafS actions – it is essential to take stock of the main achievements, the lessons learnt and the challenges and identifies the next avenues to foster inter- and transdisciplinary research in Europe.

14:00 – 16:00 | Workshop 4 – Inter- and Transdisciplinarity in research management

Facilitators:

· Natalia Tikhonov Sigrist (Circle U.)

· Anouk Tso (EPICUR)

Speakers:

· Patrick Reurink (ENHANCE)

· Esther Chiama & Marco Aperti (UNIC)

· Thrasyvoulos Tsiatsos (EPICUR)

Rapporteur: Nora Korp (EPICUR)

Transformative innovation and ground-breaking developments take place at the convergence of diverse disciplines, as acknowledged by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD). However, the journey towards interdisciplinarity has many challenges, marked by the inherent complexities of navigating various approaches, methodologies, and intellectual "languages." European Universities Alliances (EUAs) stand as exemplars of open-mindedness and resilience, demonstrating a collective willingness to surmount these difficulties. Despite the shared commitment, the definition of inter- and transdisciplinarity remains inconclusive, and sometimes each university has its own.

On transdisciplinary research and education **Patrick Reurink, ENHANCE**, states that ENHANCERIA centres its efforts on four main areas: sustainability through transdisciplinary research, sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, human resources, and career development, along with a dedicated focus on research infrastructure. Within ENHANCE, there is a shared understanding of transdisciplinarity, described as "the interaction between various academic disciplines and non-academic stakeholders with the goal of generating new knowledge between science and society to tackle sustainable development challenges and bring about societal transformation". However, critical questions arise, such as the potential actor-centric nature of the definition and the challenge of broad knowledge versus specific actors.

Concerns are raised about epistemic justice, asserting that all kinds of knowledge should hold equal value. The definition's perceived as university-centric nature and prompts considerations of equity and power dynamics. The presentation delves into the ideological approach versus problem-solving approach dilemma —whether transdisciplinary research is about transcending disciplinary boundaries or addressing specific societal problems. Coordination is emphasised as crucial for a comprehensive problem-solving approach, employing the T-shape principle to balance depth and breadth.

The importance of identifying good practice examples, emphasising levels of engagement and societal impact is also stated. Noteworthy examples include the "Walk and Talk" format, fostering co-production of integrated knowledge among diverse stakeholders, with an emphasis on co-creation and experiential learning rather than a mere presentation of results. The success stories of

this approach, such as the hanging garden and an autonomous boat project in Stockholm, have inspired participants from other universities to replicate similar activities in their respective hometowns. Further, Sustainable City Planning initiatives like UniverCity 3.0 NTNU and Trondheim, comprising over 100 projects in different thematic areas, illustrate the effective connection between civil society, academia, and the public/political sector. The commitment to sharing insights extends to a peer-reviewed publication on ENHANCE activities in transdisciplinary research, set to be disseminated through future email lists and the ENHANCE website.

In the domain of Research Management, the perspective taken is significant, as research managers are facilitators for transdisciplinary research. There is a close connection between research managers and researchers. Presently, a substantial amount of foundational groundwork, predominantly in the form of desk-bound activities, is underway to forge connections between diverse research environments. The insights collected from these initiatives and the subsequent recommendations constitute indispensable tools to foster transdisciplinarity in the future.

In order to increase transdisciplinary capacities, training for scientists needs to be provided and effectively articulated in educational formats. The proposition of a "train the trainer" programme gains traction, utilising the challenge-based education paradigm by various Alliances as a starting point.

The platform *participedia.net* serves as a central nexus for transdisciplinary projects. Recognition of transdisciplinary research – how to motivate researchers to engage with the different sectors à evaluation of professors as well as projects might need to change if transdisciplinarity should be fostered. Notably, at NTNU, a pre-existing recognition system is in place designed to acknowledge the broader societal impact of research, encompassing the 3rd mission in a comprehensive manner, and explicitly incorporating transdisciplinary initiatives.

Esther Chiama and **Marco Aperti, UNIC**, addresses the challenges inherent in industrial cities, recognising that challenges also present opportunities. They emphasise that the transition of industries necessitates upskilling and reskilling, acknowledging the potential for job loss and a shift in identity as manufacturing evolves into service-oriented industries. Adopting a systemic approach, they highlight the need for engaged research methodologies, bringing diverse stakeholders to the table to collaboratively propose and work on projects.

A fundamental principle of UNIC4ER is that every voice matter, advocating for inclusive engagement. Networking emerges as a pivotal component for transdisciplinarity, providing richness to research through diverse opinions and approaches that led to innovative solutions.

Engaged Research is defined as "an overarching term that describes a wide range of comprehensive research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with and within society.

UNIC introduces the Seed Fund, allocating funds for Engaged Research and Education aimed at pre-defined challenges. The criteria include challenge-based research and learning, engagement with partners within and beyond the Alliance, and a focus on creating a lasting impact (legacy) within the community. The initiative starts with a letter of interest to boost applications for the seed fund

(endorsement by various departments). UNIC contributes by match-making, monitoring and promotion.

Thrasyvoulos Tsiatsos, EPICUR, tackles Digitalisation of the EPIQAssess researcher assessment framework within the EPICommunity platform. The endeavour responds to the challenge of current researcher assessments lacking in adequately recognising value, performance, competencies, and skills. EPIQAssess emerges as a practical tool with a dedicated focus on deploying and implementing the assessment framework within universities. Anchored in a contextual analysis of recent publications, it presents an actionable approach to instigate transformative change.

EPIQAssess aims to acknowledge research efforts, especially those regarding inter- and transdisciplinary research and team science. Its structure encompasses four dimensions or the knowledge quadruple (research, innovation, interaction with society, learning & teaching), with a specific focus on both institutional and researcher levels. Employing quantitative and qualitative criteria, including core criteria, specific criteria, and personal qualities, EPIQAssess introduces the EPIGame – a Research Reward Cycle embedded in a gamification framework. This cyclic approach includes motivation (network and visibility), research (researcher, teacher, research teams), assessment (for innovation and engagement with society, for teaching, for research), recognition (peer review, appraisal by peers), and reward (mobility, badges), spanning networking, visibility, teaching, innovation, and engagement with society.

The EPICommunity platform, integral to this digitalisation initiative, serves as a hub for matchmaking and connecting researchers. Interoperable with Europass, it functions as a tool for deploying EPIQAssess, offering analytics of assessment scores and facilitating matchmaking, collaboration, and the establishment of inter- and transdisciplinary research teams. Accessible to HR experts and administrative staff as subscribers, the platform features a wall for posts and a chat function. While the platform is centralised and accessible to every researcher, it is not directly implemented at universities, ensuring platform security in accordance with GDPR standards.

Challenges faced include incentivising researchers to join the platform and addressing usability concerns, considering that researchers commonly use platforms such as ResearchGate. However, data safety is assured, and the platform remains free from advertisements.

Drawing from other Alliance practices, FORTHEM designed an app similar to Tinder for matchmaking researchers, promoting it as an application tool for seed funding. ENGAGE.EU also establishes a similar platform with 400 researchers, and discussions about sharing or making the code an Open Source for the platform are underway. Additionally, the ITD Alliance, a global entity for inter- and transdisciplinarity, is actively involved in advancing collaborative initiatives.

Conclusions:

In the pursuit of fostering transdisciplinarity, this session concludes by stating that it becomes evident that there exist various approaches to cultivating collaborative endeavours that transcend disciplinary boundaries. However, a noteworthy challenge lies in the often unclear or excessively academia-focused definitions of transdisciplinarity.

Figure 16. Photos from the workshop 4 "Inter- and Transdisciplinarity in research management"

Recognising the essential interplay between researchers and society, it is imperative that engagement with the broader community becomes a rewarding experience for researchers. Consequently, integrating the "3rd mission" into research assessments becomes a necessary consideration.

A crucial aspect of driving transformative change is establishing a robust connection between transdisciplinary research and education. The symbiotic relationship between these two facets serves as a catalyst for innovation and societal impact.

A resounding theme in the quest for transdisciplinarity is the principle that every voice matters. Acknowledging the diversity of stakeholders and ensuring their inclusion not only promotes equity but also facilitates the creation of innovative solutions. This emphasis on inclusivity underscores the significance of embracing a multitude of perspectives in the pursuit of collaborative and integrative approaches to complex challenges.

As a final recommendation, it is suggested to create a mailing list of participants in order to stay in Touch for exchange on inter- and transdisciplinary research.

Interactive Poster Session

Alliances showcase some of their main results via an interactive poster session. In addition, the poster on 'Mapping the Alliances R&I Best Practices Around the SwafS Projects Transformational Modules' is also presented. This highlights 32 Alliances' examples on best practices and outcomes of their R&I projects, organised around the seven transformational modules. All the Alliances' results are linked within the poster and can be accessed at once. A contact list regarding the R&I dimension of these Alliances is also included.

16:30 – 17:30 | Interactive Poster Session

Module 1: Developing a common R&I agenda and action plan

Module 2: Sharing resources & infrastructures

Module 3: Strengthening human capital

Module 4: Reinforcing cooperation with non-academic sector

Module 5: Mainstreaming Open Science practices

Module 6: Engaging citisens & society

Module 7: Exploring joint structures

Module 1: Developing a common R&I agenda and action plan

· TORCH Common Science Agenda: Driving Collaboration and Transdisciplinary Research to Address Global Sustainability Challenges (CHARM-EU).

· European partnership for an innovative campus unifying regions (EPICUR).

· Jointly shaping and artistic research agenda (FilmEU).

· Professional Research Programmes for Business & Society (RUN EU PLUS).

· Identifying the capacities and synergies of Ulysseus Alliances members and barriers to realising their full potential (ULYSSEUS).

Module 2: Sharing resources & infrastructures

· TRAIN4EU+ Sharing Research Infrastructure (4EU+).

· Research Infrastructure (RI) activities of EDUC Alliance in EDUC-SHARE project (EDUC).

· Sharing resources and infrastructures in the Re-UNITA project (UNITA).

· Opening up research infrastructures and resources (RIs) across Una Europa: The journey so far (Una Europa).

· Research for Society (EU-CONEXUS).

Module 3: Strengthening human capital

· Strengthening human capital through Research Activities, Research Mobility, and Training Opportunities (CIVICA).

· Fostering Well-being Skills and Competencies for Early career and Mid-career Researchers (EUniWell).

Module 4: Reinforcing cooperation with non-academic sector

· Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems (ENHANCE).

· Fostering Innovation and Reinforcing the European University Alliance for Global Health's cooperation with the business sector and other relevant stakeholders (EUGLOH).

· Co-designing/Co-Creating/Co-Delivering for Democratising Knowledge (SEA-EU).

Module 5: Mainstreaming Open Science practices

· How the European Universities Initiative Contributes to the Advancement of Open Science (ERUA).

· Revolutionising Research: Open Science Takes Centre Stage in Eutopia (EUTOPIA).

· Joint Strategy for Open Science (Transform4Europe).

· Mainstreaming the Open Science within the ARQUS Alliance (ARQUS).

· Challenges of the Research Assessment Reform in the European University Alliances (CIVIS).

Module 6: Engaging citizens & society

· Engaging Citizens and Society (Circle U).

· Engaging citizens and society through the ECIU SMART-ER virtual research institute (ECIU).

· Engaged Research is Advanced with Societal Partners rather than 'for' them (UNIC).

Module 7: Exploring joint structures

· Facilitating new research collaboration and links between ENLIGHT universities through thematic focus groups (ENLIGHT).

· Fostering Institutional Transformation of R&I Policies in European Universities (FORTHEM).
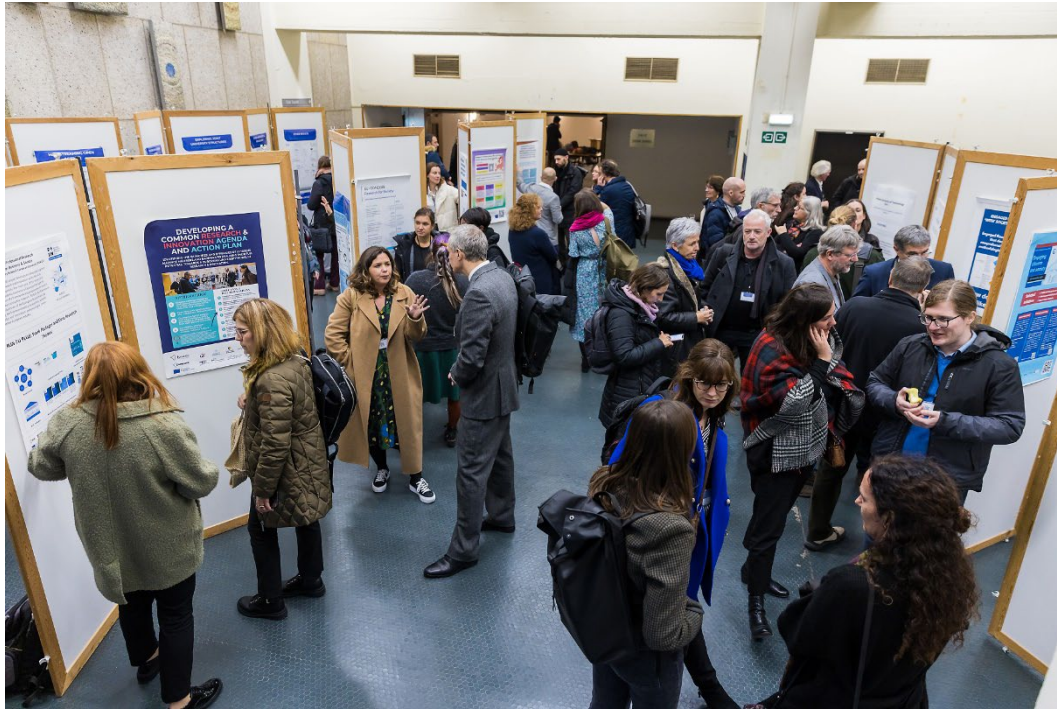


Figure 17. Photos from the interactive poster session

3.3. Day 2 (morning) - Inspiring the Future of R&I in Europe

Boosting Excellence within the European R&I Ecosystem through the European Universities Alliances

The workshop is supposed to begin with a presentation by Mr. Ion Tudor-Trestieni (DG RTD, Head of sector, R&I actors and research careers) on the various aspects that can be developed to boost the R&I sector in Europe through the European Universities Alliances initiative. Mr. Ion intends to report on ongoing discussions within the ERA Forum around Actions 4 (promote attractive research careers and mobility), 13 (empower Higher Education Institutions Excellence initiatives) and 17 (research management in public research performing organisations). Unfortunately, due to private reasons, this presentation has to be cancelled. The session starts directly with the discussion between representatives of the participating Alliances, opening the debate on the challenges facing European Universities Alliances and the opportunities they represent to help shape the new European research environment.

9:00 – 9:45 | Plenary Session: Boosting Excellence within the European R&I Ecosystem through the European Universities Alliances

Presenter: Olga Wessels (ECUI and Chairing FOR-EU1).

Chair: Isabella Baer-Eisel (EU-CONEXUS).

Speakers:

· Frédéric Marias (UNITA).

· Joakim Esbjörnsson (EUGLOH).

· Marius Gilbert (CIVIS).

Rapporteur: Marie Ugeux (CIVIS).

Frédéric Marias, representing UNITA, starts the first topic of discussion: What kind of collaborative actions have been developed? UNITA's accomplishments include the development of a comprehensive research roadmap of Alliance universities' policies. Additionally, UNITA has championed in HR research, establishing a label to facilitate the sharing of best practices within the academic community. A proactive approach towards gender balance has been carried out through the implementation of a monitoring programme, fostering also valuable exchanges between senior and young researchers. Another significant achievement is the creation of a platform for infrastructure sharing, ensuring that researchers across the Alliance have access to each university platforms. Furthermore, UNITA has advocated for various entrepreneurship and open science programmes, complemented by training sessions, fostering an environment of continuous learning and advancing research practices within the Alliance.

Another topic is also brought to the attention of the participants: How is the Alliance helping in boosting your research activities within your Alliance and/or institution? UNITA has significantly boosted research activities within our institution through various impactful initiatives. Under the umbrella of the Erasmus+ project, the funding of 15 PhD scholarships stands out as a notable achievement. These scholarships, backed by grants from each university, have served as catalysts for impactful research endeavours. Additionally, weekly online seminars have been established, providing a collaborative platform for researchers across the Alliance. However, these exchanges need to be developed as they have not always been effective. Then, the monthly online Board of

Vice Rectors of Research has proven instrumental in elevating the collective vision of the Alliance, sharing and deliberating on strategic decisions and fostering a collaborative environment that enhances the overall research landscape within the Alliance.

Joakim Esbjörnsson, from EUGLOH, discuss about the following question: What are the critical factors to achieve sustainability and reasonable conditions for the survival and further development of European Alliances? In particular considering the variability in resources and internal financial possibilities to support the initiatives. Emphasising the significance of commitment from all involved parties in an Alliance, Joakim Esbjörnsson underscores the need for dedicated efforts toward same objectives. He highlights the importance of a robust framework that includes the mapping of inventories of available resources. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are also identified as crucial metrics for measuring the success and impact of projects. Joakim Esbjörnsson advocates for allowing sufficient time in the planning and execution of sustainable projects, recognising their inherently long-term nature. To ensure strategic clarity, he emphasises the importance of defining both short and long-term objectives, providing a roadmap for the sustained success of European Alliances amidst the variability in resources and internal financial capabilities.

The following question presented by Joakim Esbjörnsson is: What are the key strategies for building and maintaining strong research and innovation partnerships between different institutions and countries within European Alliances? One essential approach is the clear definition of research objectives and methods, ensuring alignment and purpose in collaborative efforts. Another key strategy involves conducting an exhaustive inventory of available research resources and infrastructures. This comprehensive assessment not only identifies available assets but also shows strengths and potential areas for collaborative exploration. The implementation of methods such as hierarchical clustering proves instrumental in organising and categorising diverse research initiatives, fostering effective coordination. Additionally, the introduction of a seed mechanism emerges as a valuable strategy, providing essential support for innovative projects and initiatives.

Marius Gilbert from CIVIS starts with the following statement: "Building a European Alliance requires an active contribution from the research dimension. As it seems clear that the European Union will not target funding for the Alliances' research activities, we still need to create favourable conditions for promoting new collaborations among partners, especially for the early-stage researchers. Would the European Commission agree to support mobility (2-3 months) for Masters and PhD students, dedicated for the Alliances?" Marius Gilbert emphasises the necessity for Alliances to actively engage with practical and materialised tools, stressing the role of incentives and instruments in driving collaboration and ensuring researchers' involvement. Additionally, he advocates for the implementation of a system that promotes mobility for PhD students, facilitating integration and stimulating excellence. Acknowledging the resource and funding challenges faced by universities, Gilbert asserts the importance of facilitating the use of mobility funding specifically tailored for Alliances as a key demand in enhancing collaborative research.

Figure 18. Photos from the session "Boosting Excellence within the European R&I Ecosystem through the European Universities Alliances"

The following question discussed by Marius Gilbert is how we can manage the challenges of sustainable development and energy-saving aspects together with promoting Alliances that involves a lot of travel and digital resources. One strategy is to explore sustainable mobility options within

Alliances, considering alternatives like "slow travel" as substitutes for frequent flying. Encouraging longer stays for participants can be beneficial, allowing for the combination of multiple activities during a single visit and reducing the need for numerous short-term trips. Emphasising the importance of human relationships and interactive communication is crucial to facilitate effective remote working, acknowledging that digital resources are not a complete substitute for personal interactions.

In terms of external communication on research, the focus should be on providing expertise to governance as a primary goal. The Alliance can showcase its capacity to contribute valuable insights for informed decision-making, underlining the relevance and impact of its research. However, a critical question remains: how can these stimulating communication strategies be effectively implemented at the Alliance level?

The key conclusions highlight the necessity of incentivising greater researcher engagement within Alliances. Commitment and a solid framework are identified as crucial elements, along with the importance of providing mobility funding for researchers. To address sustainability concerns, there's a call for promoting "slow travel" mobility and encouraging longer research stays by combining research activities. Human interactions among researchers within Alliances are deemed essential for effective remote collaboration. The significance of designing a strong methodology, creating an inventory of resources, and maintaining a long-term perspective are underlined. Finally, Alliances are urged to actively contribute to government decision-making processes to enhance the impact of their research initiatives.

Roundtable sessions

· Roundtable 1 – Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions (broader vision)

Back in the early 2000s, the Lisbon Strategy has been one of the key drivers for the R&I agenda in Europe. To make the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion", it was indeed vital to strengthen the nexus between education, research and innovation and make the "knowledge triangle" a reality for the EU. The successive research framework programmes, and more specifically the creation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, have contributed to foster the integration of the knowledge triangle.

More recently, in 2019, the European Commission started to include transfer to society as the fourth mission and to replace the knowledge triangle with a square. The newly founded "European Universities" have replied by including actions such as research management training offers and the establishment of an Early Career Researcher board into the projects funded by ERASMUS+, thus softening up the existing hard boundaries of science subsidy practice in the EU already.

In its communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, the European Commission emphasised the central role of higher education institutions to foster the knowledge square. The

European University Alliances are now expected to make this a reality. Concepts like research and transfer as essential elements of exchange with society and research-oriented teaching illustrate the need to connect all missions of universities with each other. By establishing a systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation, by testing diverse innovative models and formats of cooperation, by transforming higher education institutions, Alliances will break the "traditional" silos between the four building blocks of the knowledge square and maximise its impacts with and for the society.

During the pilot phase, Alliances were mainly funded through the Erasmus+ which remains primarily an education programme of the EU. The R&I dimension of the Alliances has been supported through a specific SwafS call in Horizon Europe which was discontinued. The uncertainty about the EU support after 2027, specifically concerning research and innovation, is very challenging for the Alliances. Obviously, most Alliances will continue to develop and intensify the R&I agenda and strive to make the knowledge square a reality. However, it will be essential that the future investment pathway for the Alliances is structurally supporting the nexus between education, research, innovation and service to society – and thus overcoming the existing silos that still exist between these building blocks.

As cross-Alliance event focusing on the R&I dimension of the Alliance, the main objectives of this session are:

· to discuss how Alliances have contributed to make the knowledge square a reality and foster a holistic approach in the developments of their activities;

· to engage with partners and experts outside the Alliances and exchange views, experiences and expertise on the fulfilment of the knowledge square;

· to potentially contribute to future policy developments at EU, national, regional and institutional level.

10:00 – 11:30 | Roundtable 1 – Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions (broader vision).

Moderator: Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.).

Speakers:

· Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.).

· Michael Zacherle (EPICUR).

· Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU).

External Experts:

· Marc Vanholsbeeck (Belgian Science Policy).

· Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate)

Rapporteur: Birgitta Kappes (EPICUR).

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) extends a warm welcome to the panellists, external experts, and participants, proceeding to introduce herself. Subsequently, each panellist, external expert, and the rapporteur provides brief introductions.

The discussion starts with Topic 1: "During the pilot phase, what have been the main achievements of the Alliances, main obstacles they have encountered, and possible solutions?"

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) emphasises the close collaboration among like-minded Alliance partners, sharing common priorities in addressing issues such as democracy, climate change, and global health. He notes the active involvement of students through knowledge hubs, enhancing their education with interdisciplinary approaches. The primary challenge faced is the deep engagement of societal actors, with the proposed solution being their seamless integration into the Alliance's ecosystem.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) highlights the success of the Alliance in uniting to foster shared values, promote good citizenship, and advance sustainable development. The focus centred on formulating educational programmes, particularly for vulnerable communities undergoing technological transitions. The primary challenge involves aligning diverse European cultures and establishing labs, conducting outreach, and leading expeditions. Incentives are identified as crucial for fostering collective and active engagement in research and innovation.

In response to Elisabeth Macintyre's question: "Did it work?" the answer highlighted both successes and areas for improvement. Notably, successful efforts are attributed to a foundation of interest, while challenges, including starting from scratch, prompted a deeper examination.

Michael Zacherle (EPICUR) highlights several achievements within the Alliance. These included the mapping of current research areas at partner universities, the establishment of EPIcommunity as a networking platform among researchers, and the introduction of EPIpathways, offering Early Career Researchers (ECRs) opportunities for independent research projects with support from the Alliance's seed money fund. Additionally, solutions for societal outreach are addressed through dedicated work packages, envisioning a platform for Research and Innovation (R&I) actions.

However, challenges are acknowledged, including the broad focus of partners active in various fields and legal frameworks that posed obstacles in fund distribution to researchers. Despite these challenges, the efforts invested were deemed worthwhile.

In response to the Elisabeth Macintyre's inquiry about the differences between Alliances, **Marc Vanholsbeeck (Belgian Science Policy)** proposes a hexagonal model for effective communication with citizens and the development of research assessment skills. He advocates for actionable implementation, citing EUTOPIA and CIVIS as commendable examples following the COARA initiative. The added value of COARA and ERA should extend beyond declarations, with Alliances exploring calls for research actions to secure additional funding. Alliances are characterised as intermediaries between national and global dimensions, serving as experimental laboratories for research assessment.

Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) expresses that Alliances present an excellent opportunity to identify shared goals among researchers, likening them to miniature policy institutes. Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) suggests a symbolic representation of the knowledge square as a circle, embodying circularity, dynamic movement, and collective investment in research.

Elisabeth Macintyre then directs a question to Michael, asking him to elaborate on his concept of knowledge multidimensionality. Michael explains that the knowledge square inadequately captures interactions among key elements, leading to the development of a tetrahedral model that better illustrates inter-linkages. EPICUR creates the EPIConnect platform, connecting with peer Alliances to facilitate joint policy recommendations and share research infrastructure.

Looking ahead, the Elisabeth Macintyre emphasises the impending challenge in operating the *engrenage* and financing. The approach is framed as an investment in a circle of knowledge, connecting all dimensions through either the tetrahedron or knowledge square. The session concludes with a proposal to vote on what should serve as the pinnacle of the tetrahedron.

Topic 1: During the pilot phase what have been the main achievements of the Alliances, main obstacles they have encountered, and possible solutions?

Introduction by Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) admitting that the crucial problem of ensuring the longevity of Alliances is connected to the matter of funding. The distinction between Horizon Europe and ERASMUS+ funding and the challenges stemming from their paths are highlighted. Addressing funding source-related problems is crucial, advocating for a comprehensive understanding to persuade budget holders to support universities.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) sheds light on the competition between ERASMUS+ and Horizon Europe concerning infrastructure development. He emphasises the need to strike a balance between investment in infrastructure, projects for social impact, and the implementation of new technology within the ENGAGE framework. Christian advocates for targeted funding as a viable solution to address the specific needs of Alliances.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) suggests considering alternative approaches, such as education driving research or society-led research, asserting that the method of funding might be less critical in comparison.

Tine Delva from DG Education announces that the EC will address funding aspects soon. She seeks input on potential overlaps between ERASMUS+ and Horizon Europe and explores actions that could be funded under ERASMUS+. The challenge of finding solutions for the intersection between Horizon 2020 and ERASMUS+ is acknowledged.

Michael Zacherle (EPICUR) emphasises the need for a greater budget and a flexible budget structure. He proposes allocating a portion of the budget to research management and change management, particularly addressing research assessment issues.

Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) identifies the necessity for political alignment and advocates for the evolution of the triangle involving education, innovative research, and societal exchange.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) proposes the idea of Horizon funding providing a top-up for change management and seeks the Alliances' opinions.

Nora Korp (EPICUR) expresses differing views on the proposed top-up, emphasising broader inclusion and prioritising change management for achieving Alliance goals. Ricardo Costa (EC2U) highlights the challenge of Action 17 remaining unfunded and underscores the indispensability of change management for Alliance success.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) draws parallels with the pharmaceutical field, where professional writers are essential for securing EU funding. The challenge of modernising universities to align with Euro-speak standards is addressed.

Patrick Reurink (ENHANCE) addresses the multifaceted role of scientists and suggests outsourcing grant writing in Euro-speak. He emphasises the need to modernise management structures while being cautious not to distance terminology from society.

Joana Resende (EUGLOH) prioritises research management, advocating for non-Alliance members and expressing positivity toward available top-up funding. Seed funding is considered a suitable option given limited resources.

Stijn Delaure (Policy Officer, DG RTD) discusses excellence initiatives supporting institutional cooperation within Alliances. A call for open competition is highlighted, with a focus on Action 13 expert groups proposing less stringent conditions. While targeted funding for strategic cooperation was not supported by member states, successful projects often involve partners from Alliances.

Tine Delva (Deputy Head from DG EAC) discusses the ERA meeting's majority stance against top-up funding. Calls for capacity building within the European Excellence Initiative and highlights the positive impact of Alliances on success rates.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) urges a shift in focus from management discussions to the fourth mission, emphasising the central role of universities in serving society within local communities.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) notes the absence of citizens and advocates for true inclusivity, positioning science 'in' society rather than 'for' it.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) explores strategies to convince politicians and policymakers of the Alliances' transformative impact on society.

Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) emphasises the advantage of formulating top-up objectives, encouraging Alliances to engage with society and external stakeholders.

Nora Korp (EPICUR) challenges the notion of universities as ivory towers, suggesting a shift towards science diplomacy and active engagement with politicians.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) proposes involving younger generations in the discussions.

Marc Vanholsbeeck (Circle U.) advocates cultivating communication skills with policymakers and explores sustainable perspectives for careers aligned with Alliance objectives.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) highlights the impact of alumni on society and suggests maintaining dialogue and gathering feedback from them.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) raises the importance of universities creating fidelity beyond faculty, evaluating them based on students' overall experiences.

Tine Delva (Deputy Head from DG EAC) acknowledges legislative challenges and emphasises the need for dialogue on funding, investment paths, and the importance of research and innovation activities.

Stijn Delaure (Policy Officer, DG RTD) recognises the significant contributions of Alliances to society, advocating for the dissemination of their accomplishments for the benefit of students and communities.

Topic 2: Funding and perennity of Alliances

In the discourse on the longevity of academic Alliances, the Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) identified a critical issue—funding. The focus centres on the comparison between Horizon and ERASMUS funding, highlighting challenges in their respective funding paths.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) underscores the vital link between funding and the perennity of Alliances. Recognising the distinct paths of Horizon and ERASMUS funding, efforts are directed toward understanding and persuading budget holders for the benefit of universities.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) delves into the competition between ERASMUS and Horizon in infrastructure development, emphasising the need for targeted funding solutions. The ENGAGE framework and its continuous methodology are identified as essential, with research questions playing a central role in education and societal engagement.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) questions the conventional path of research-led education, proposing alternative approaches such as education driving research or society-led research, downplaying the importance of funding methods.

Tine Delva (Deputy Head from DG EAC) commends the engaging discussions and announced plans to discuss funding for Alliances. The intersection between ERASMUS and Horizon, the potential for funding under ERASMUS, and the need for constructive suggestions were highlighted.

Michael Zacherle (EPICUR) stresses the Alliances' demand for a greater and more flexible budget, proposing allocating 25% for research and change management. Action 17 is highlighted as an unfunded challenge, necessitating a strategic approach to address research assessment issues.

Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) emphasises the need for political alignment in addressing the challenges of education, innovative research, and societal exchange.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) seeks opinions on Horizon funding providing a top-up for change management.

Nora Korp (EPICUR) expresses disagreement, advocating for a broader solution to include universities beyond Alliances.

Ricardo Costa (EC2U) highlights the challenge of unfunded Action 17, emphasising the crucial role of change management.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) draws parallels with the pharmaceutical field, stressing the need to modernise universities to be Euro-speak compatible.

Patrick Reurink (ENHANCE) addresses the challenge of scientists fulfilling multiple roles, advocating for outsourcing grant writing in Euro-speak while modernising management structures.

Joana Resende (EUGLOH) prioritises research management, expresses positivity toward top-up funding, and suggests seed funding as a viable option.

Stijn Delaure (Policy Officer, DG RTD) discusses excellence initiatives supporting Alliances, the emphasis on open competition, and the challenges faced in securing targeted funding for strategic cooperation.

Tine Delva (Deputy Head from DG EAC) discusses the ERA meeting's stance against top-up funding and highlights the need for time in capacity building within the European Excellence Initiative.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) urges a shift in focus towards the fourth mission, emphasising universities' role in serving society within local communities.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) highlights the absence of citizens, advocating for inclusivity and science 'in' society, not 'for' it.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) discusses strategies to convince policymakers of Alliances' transformative impact on society.

Ragnhild Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) emphasises the advantage of formulating top-up objectives and engaging with society.

Nora Korp (EPICUR) challenges the notion of universities as ivory towers, suggesting science diplomacy for engagement with politicians.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) proposes involving younger generations in the discussions.

Marc Vanholsbeeck (Circle U.) advocates cultivating communication skills with policymakers and aligning career paths with Alliance objectives.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) highlights the impact of alumni on society and the importance of maintaining dialogue.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) stresses the importance of creating fidelity to universities beyond faculty, evaluating them based on students' overall experiences.

Tine Delva (Deputy Head from DG EAC) acknowledges legislative challenges and highlighted ongoing discussions on funding, investment paths, and the importance of research and innovation activities.

Stijn Delaure (Policy Officer, DG RTD) recognises Alliances' contributions to societal changes and urged the dissemination of their accomplishments.

Topic 3: Final Comments of Panellists

Michael Zacherle (EPICUR) shares a compelling case of entrepreneurship, illustrating a holistic approach. He describes an internship evolving into a research question, leading to results now integrated into a successful start-up.

Christian Iaione (ENGAGE.EU) emphasises key takeaways, highlighting the importance of engaging Research and Innovation (R&I) to create solutions with society. He cites the University of Amsterdam's establishment of an institutional interface, fostering a connection between universities and society for collective action on R&I activities.

Vinicius de Carvalho (Circle U.) stresses the urgency in cultivating and nurturing Alliances for development, growth, and the sharing of experiences. He underscores the timeliness for commemorating present achievements within Alliances.

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) expresses delight that a UK university remains within the Alliance scheme, acknowledging the significance of continued participation.

Marc Vanholsbeeck (Circle U.) highlights the importance of Alliances in demonstrating and engaging with citizens to improve communication with policymakers. He notes the need to connect compelling narratives with facts and figures for effective engagement at the national or federation level.

Solvi Berg (Norwegian Directorate) describes the current period as exciting, anticipating the evaluation of ERASMUS and the upcoming funding period. She emphasises that Alliances, as pioneers, should extend their results to universities not affiliated with any Alliances, paving the way for broader impact.

These final comments underscore the transformative potential of Alliances in entrepreneurship, societal engagement, and communication with policymakers, emphasising the need for continued collaboration and dissemination of results to benefit a wider academic community.

Conclusion

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) expresses satisfaction with the European Commission's responsiveness to concerns, welcoming the collaborative initiative, and emphasising the Commission's role in defining the "what" while experts contribute to the "how. She highlights the significance of the forum as a platform for meaningful exchange of ideas and emphasised the integral roles of both the EC and experts in the process. Expressing confidence in progress, she underscored the importance of a clear, consensual, and constructive process, especially with competent Alliance actors.

Figure 19. Photos from roundtable 1 "Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions (broader vision)"

Elisabeth Macintyre (Circle U.) recognises the forum's critical role in facilitating the exchange of ideas among participants and highlighted crucial takeaways from the discussions. On the Research Dimension, she emphasises its significance for Alliance success, regardless of each Alliance's unique

characteristics. She stresses the importance of funding for the research dimension in close collaboration with ERASMUS aspects. Encouraged by the EU Commission's consideration, suggesting adaptation of Horizon Widera 2023 initiative to Alliance requirements. In addition, she recognises uncertainties regarding sustainability and consolidation, particularly in aligning education, research and innovation, and societal service. She praises the common forum with the active participation of the European Commission, encouraging its continuation for ongoing collaboration.

The concluding remarks reflect optimism for the future, emphasising collaboration, funding support, and continued forums for addressing challenges and fostering progress in the academic Alliance landscape.

· Roundtable 2 - Research Ethics & Integrity: The Role of New Technologies

The roundtable sheds light on the current ethical challenges the academic community faces in relation to the use of AI in research activities.

> 10:00 – 11:30 | Roundtable 2 - Research Ethics & Integrity: The Role of New Technologies.
>
> Moderator: Javier Valls (ARQUS).
>
> Speakers:
>
> · Aphra Kerr (CHARM-EU).
>
> · Ladislav Kristoufek (4EU+).
>
> · Mihalis Kritikos (DG RTD, Policy Analyst in Research Ethics and Integrity Sector).
>
> Rapporteur: Jaime Llorca (CHARM-EU).

Roundtable 2 on Research Ethics & Integrity, moderated by **Javier Valls from ARQUS**, commences with a notable emphasis on the significance of ethics in research.

Mihalis Kritikos (Policy Analyst in Research Ethics and Integrity Sector, DG RTD) highlights the crucial need for a distinct ethical organisational and conceptual approach in research projects funded within the AI area. Focusing on the imperative to cultivate a human-centric, trustworthy, and robust digital research ecosystem, Mihalis Kritikos discusses the specialised guidance notes developed for Horizon Europe. Given the novelty of AI technologies in research ethics governance, the talk delves into the unique requirements for guidance, education, training, and expertise development. Notably, he addresses the challenges associated with the upcoming adoption of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, exploring its potential impact on the design and implementation of research projects. Emphasis is placed on the ethics appraisal process, extending beyond DG RTD to encompass all programmes, with dedicated ethics checks specifically tailored for AI projects. The talk underscores the transformative role of AI in reshaping ethical considerations and compliance, with a focus on the draft AI Act and its regulation of risks and obligations. Additionally, Mihalis Kritikos draws attention to the international initiatives on AI ethics by organisations such as

UNESCO, OECD, UNICEF, and the Council of Europe, positioning AI as a game changer in the ethical landscape of research.

Aphra Kerr, from Maynooth University, delves into the complex area of ethics and research integrity in artificial intelligence (AI) research, offering an interdisciplinary perspective. Acknowledging the influence of AI across various facets of society, Aphra Kerr emphasises the necessity for collaborative efforts from different fields. Within the ADAPT project, she highlights three research strands: digitally enhanced engagement, digital content transformation, and transparent digital governance. The discussion extends to her involvement in the MSCA ITN project, exploring the multifaceted nature of technology ethics. She points out the seven requirements outlined by the European Commission, emphasising the need to conduct research addressing these focal points. She notes the challenges faced in translating AI ethics into policy, citing the potential skewing and narrowing of perspectives. New challenges are identified, including generative AI, global knowledge workers with diverse backgrounds, interdisciplinary hurdles, institutional challenges necessitating updated research ethics practices, and the complexities of intersectoral projects driven by different motivations. Aphra Kerr advocates for a holistic approach to ethics in Research and Innovation, encompassing research ethics, data protection, technology ethics, and beyond. She highlights initiatives like ADAPT citizens' think-ins, artistic collaborations in algorithmic bias exhibitions, and participation in the beta festival as noteworthy endeavours within the landscape of AI ethics and research integrity.

Ladislav Kristoufek from 4EU+ provides insightful perspectives on the evolving landscape of academic research in the era of AI. The familiar maxim "publish or perish" has taken on new dimensions, with the integration of AI accelerating scientific discovery and emphasising the crucial role of transparency and collaboration. Ladislav Kristoufek highlights the emergence of open data, open code, and open science initiatives as pivotal in fostering accessibility and reproducibility. However, as the field progresses, challenges in peer review have grown more complex. For example, with ethical considerations in using AI for research, including the training of models like ChatGPT, raise questions about data control and the potential for biases in evaluation processes. He explores the ethical dimensions of utilising AI to generate research proposals, emphasising the need for focus on societal impact and applied research. He suggests that AI, while offering the potential to make the system fairer, also amplifies existing problems in scientific publishing, such as data manipulation and fraud. The discussion concludes with considerations on the role of AI in humanities and the overarching importance of Open Science. AI can help and make the system fairer, but also amplifies problems in the system that already exist.

The key conclusions drawn from the discussion centre around the question of whether AI could be employed to review proposals and papers, potentially replacing human reviewers, and the ensuing impact on homogenisation within the research landscape. Javier Valls emphasises a cautious approach, stating that AI shouldn't be utilised to conduct scientific research. The audience engages in an open discussion on the matter, exploring the ethical implications and limitations of integrating AI into the scientific review process. The conversation expands to consider the three levels at which AI implementation should be considered: at the European Commission level, in the training of predoctoral and postdoctoral researchers within institutes, and in the broader context of how AI is

utilised in research endeavours. This multifaceted exploration highlights the complexities and ethical considerations surrounding the integration of AI into various stages of the research process.

Figure 20. Photos from roundtable 2 "Research Ethics & Integrity: The Role of New Technologies"

· Roundtable 3 – Responsible R&I: Fostering Societal Engagement & Involving External Stakeholders

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) encompasses various aspects, including the integrity and methodological rigor of fundamental research, the reach and applicability of research findings, effective science communication, fostering public trust in science, and strategic allocation of research funding to tackle pertinent societal issues. The ERA Policy Agenda advocates for the establishment of R&I networks to enhance knowledge ecosystems and the promotion of citizen science. It also emphasises the importance of openness, freedom, inclusivity, and diversity in European scientific endeavours.

This roundtable delves into how European University Alliances uphold their commitment to responsibility in Research and Innovation (R&I) SWAFS projects by promoting societal engagement and involving external stakeholders. The discussion will examine how universities within these Alliances have contributed to addressing challenges associated with responsible R&I. We propose structuring the conversation around two primary themes, where experts from specific Alliances will share insights, followed by a broader discussion.

10:00 – 11:30 | · Roundtable 3 – Responsible R&I: Fostering Societal Engagement & Involving External Stakeholders.

Moderator: Arnaud Regnauld (ERUA).

Speakers:

· Carole Brunet (ERUA).

· Timo Taskinen (FORTHEM).

· Dana Strauss (EC2U).

· Beatrix Busse (EUniWell).

· Pádraig Murphy (ECIU).

Rapporteurs: Claire Douet (ERUA), Agnese Rusakova (FORTHEM).

The moderator **Arnaud Regnauld, from ERUA**, starts the session with the following question: what methodologies have been used in European Universities Alliances for strategic planning or/and implementation of responsible R&I?

Carole Brunet, from ERUA, delves into the theme of impact as social innovation in Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) collaborative projects, particularly focusing on two research packages cantered on strategy and innovation. Carole Brunet emphasises the need to scrutinise the institutional research process and organisational strategies, recognising the diversity in concepts held by universities and researchers. The exploration extends to the criteria for accepting or declining research projects and the identification of common values. Investigating into methodologies, the discussion touched on the ethical content of universal values and the role of researchers as stakeholders. Notably, the research shifts from examining methods within labs to investigating the actual practices of researchers through surveys and qualitative interviews. She highlights the importance of acknowledging power asymmetries and the growing social engagement of universities. Initiatives such as seed funding for collaborative experiment projects and the creation of an interactive catalogue of such projects are discussed. The presentation concludes with policy recommendations for university management and the European Union, emphasising the necessity of involving social sciences to ensure qualitative content and reflexivity in RRI collaborative projects.

Timo Taskinen, from FORTHEM, talks about the critical aspect of ensuring a shared understanding of "co-creation" as a fundamental prerequisite for engaging external stakeholders. Within the overarching theme of fostering institutional transformation, FOR THEM has established seven labs,

each addressing specific domains. For instance, the Food Science lab delves into the toxicology of supplements, while the Diversity and Migration lab creates a toolkit and training for those working with refugees in various languages. The co-creation concept is integral to numerous collaborative activities, including pre-lab discussions on aging, climate change, and a Multilingualism lab addressing issues in schools and communities. The initiative facilitates extensive matchmaking between academia and stakeholders, most of them regional ones. The labs serve as arenas for piloting transformative actions with the potential for future application. He highlights the importance of providing training and guidance for researchers, emphasising the co-creation process model as a framework delineating diverse ways to involve stakeholders in the research process.

Pádraig Murphy, from ECIU, provides insights into the Alliance work to mobilise research fields with stakeholders and citizen science to address Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11). The initiative is aimed at sharing methodologies, tools, and local contexts, emphasising a citizen science approach. Working with top partners across Europe, the project underscored principles integral to understanding challenge-based projects. The collaborative effort engaged up to 50 different stakeholders, ensuring a multifaceted perspective. The discussion highlighted the significance of co-creating elements and contexts at the local level, particularly around SDG 11. Citizen Science emerged as a transversal and central element, with co-creation webinars serving as shared platforms attended by participants throughout Europe. Researchers were trained in various techniques, and seed funding was made available to support projects addressing challenges such as biodiversity in rivers, biking usage in cities, etc. The project's management structure featured different layers, with the ECIU board overseeing, working packages dedicated to research, and an executive research group at its core.

During the discussion, questions are raised regarding **t**he formulation of collective guidelines and frameworks specifically focused on RRI. In response, Padraig Murphy (ECIU) highlights the multi-level decision-making process within the project. Scenario planning initiated from the board and setting the groundwork for developing guidelines outlining various types of actions and a code of practice. Padraig Murphy provides insights into the project's examination of the legal status and the exploration of an online platform as part of their comprehensive approach to RRI.

The following question is if FORTHEM has Alliance successfully devised shared methodologies aimed at engaging external partners in R&I activities. Timo Taskinen (FORTHEM) shares a specific example related to the toolkit for immigrants, emphasising the collaboration from the beginning of stakeholders, involving both officials and volunteers in their respective regions. The process included people from the partner universities utilising interactive games designed to explore the generation and development of ideas. The overarching goal was to provide the broader community with a service that had been comprehensively developed through the active involvement of society in all its facets.

The audience asks how the Alliances negotiate with the different stakeholders. Carole Brunet, from ERUA, explains an approach brought forward by a feminist psychology that shed a light on how to address silenced voices within communities and the imperative to acknowledge and mitigate power asymmetries. She advocates for an approach that begins with practices and addresses challenging situations to institutionalise changes. Recognising that institutions might not always be the optimal

spaces for sharing, Carole Brunet expresses hope that Alliances could serve as platforms for stakeholders to foster a shared vision and deepen their understanding of power dynamics. While financial considerations are always a topic of discussion, Brunet underscores the importance of stability and merit criteria and assessments, particularly within the careers of non-permanent workers and young researchers.

Arnaud Regnauld, the moderator, brings up the following question: what methodologies have been used in European Universities Alliances for strategic planning or/and implementation of responsible R&I?

Dana Straus, from EC2U, provides insights into the innovative and collaborative engagement within the Alliance, which comprises city universities. EC2U boasts a substantial network of 60 associated partners, strategically embedded in governance councils to ensure a connected network. One notable initiative is the creation of "lighthouses of innovation," a network involving 23 diverse stakeholders encompassing innovation offices, makerspaces, companies, social enterprises, NGOs, and more. The Alliance employs a systematic approach, starting with a survey to identify the strengths of stakeholders, followed by pre-meeting information sharing, matching stakeholders, and in-depth conversations to facilitate networking. Coordinated networking activities in virtual spaces, such as a LinkedIn group and lectures, ensue. EC2U will also produce a comprehensive document detailing over 60 pages of lighthouses. Future plans involve a hackathon to identify challenges and develop solutions within a 24-hour session with students. The EC2U Pan European knowledge system (PEKE) is set to be launched, reflecting the Alliance's commitment to addressing the interconnected problems facing the world and fostering wider human connectedness in the face of present challenges.

Beatrix Busse, from EUniWell, emphasises the transformative potential of placing well-being at the centre of RRI. Reflecting on the fundamental purpose of universities, she suggests that well-being could serve as a replacement for responsibility. Advocating for the integration of well-being into mainstream discourse and emphasising Alliances as bridge builders for solutions. Beatrix Busse rejects binary distinctions, emphasising the interconnectedness of roles within universities and the importance of collaboration between research and education. Alliances should commit to well-being in a multidimensional way. For instance, offering well-being courses. She also highlights the effort of EUniWell to reduce barriers and hierarchy and to emphasise the inclusion of all missions with a strong focus on teachers. EUniWell has a virtual platform created that facilitates collaboration within the academic community and extends to civic leadership for social well-being. Ultimately, Beatrix Busse stress that, in the context of EUniWell, excellence, inclusion, and well-being are inseparable goals, encompassing the well-being of both the planet and each individual.

Then the audience asks whether they have inspirational examples of students' involvement in RRI initiatives. Dana Straus, from EC2U, explains that EC2U involves students addressing real problems guided by companies and municipalities. This collaborative effort allows students to work together, fostering the exchange of ideas and solutions. The initiative includes an entrepreneurial week in various locations where students, guided by professionals, work on start-up ideas. This practical experience has received positive feedback, contributing to increased self-confidence among

students. She also emphasises the importance of Alliances as spaces to experiment with innovative formats.

In response to the question about the 15-minute city concept, Dana Straus (EC2U) highlights its potential as part of the sustainability agenda. However, she notes that the concept is not a primary focus at the moment for EC2U.

Beatrix Busse (EUniWell) responds to a question about the emphasis on inclusivity and diversity in RRI. She highlights that these values are integral to the Alliance's concept and attitude, and they are developed through their policy. EUniWell aims to become the "employer of the future" and actively practices inclusivity by establishing well-being offices and integrating well-being aspects into leadership mindsets. The Alliance also strives to implement these practices with kindness, recognising and appreciating the contributions of all members. Timo Taskinen (FORTHEM) emphasises the challenge of understanding the impact-producing factors. He stresses the need for inclusiveness and well-being in strategies, working with stakeholders and non-academic partners, such as cultural actors, to develop tools for assessing impact and defining the economic value of social contribution.

Key conclusions drawn from the discussions highlight the varied interpretations of RRI, recognising that each university and researcher may have different concepts embedded in institutional frameworks. The question of whether RRI represents universal fixed principles or values necessitates the elaboration of methodologies to create common ground. Co-creation emerges as a pivotal tool for fostering institutional transformation, with the FORTHEM Alliance offering a model describing how stakeholders can be involved in diverse ways.

The discussions underscore the need for RRI to become visible and institutionalised at different layers of management. The recognition of silenced voices in communities and the acknowledgment of power asymmetries should be targeted, emphasising the institutionalisation of these approaches. The goal is to engage all stakeholders in a shared vision, creating spaces for collaboration and fostering awareness of power dynamics. The stability of funding Alliances can secure is emphasised over the monetary aspect, allowing for the pursuit of complex goals.

Diversity in addressing various topics requires engagement with a diverse array of stakeholders. The chart of positive escalations is highlighted as a good starting point, representing a practical approach. The notion of moving beyond collaboration to consider relationships with stakeholders as friendships is emphasised. The broader approach of well-being is suggested as a replacement for responsibility, recognising universities as inherent bridge builders with a DNA for finding solutions. The call is made to view issues in an interconnected way, moving beyond polarisation.

Figure 21. Photos from roundtable 3 "Responsible R&I: Fostering Societal Engagement & Involving External Stakeholders"

Conclusions from workshops and roundtables and next steps

The closing session of the conference provides a synthesis of the two-day event and conclude with a look towards the next steps for the Alliances. Seven representatives (either rapporteur, moderator, or speaker) begin by recapitulating the discussions and insights emanating from each of their diverse roundtables and workshops. The session then transition into a final discussion featuring the two conference presenters, and a representative from the Aurora Alliance, chaired by CIVICA Research. Minna Wilkki from the European Research Executive Agency is slated to deliver impactful concluding remarks. Core themes to be explored in this session include the transformative impacts and value-added of research within European University Alliances, as well as the prospective funding landscape and future trajectory of research activities within the Alliances. This forward-looking dialogue closes the event while helping lay the foundation for a forthcoming joint statement from the Alliances.

11:30 – 12:30 | Plenary session: Conclusions from workshops and roundtables and next steps

Presenter: Ludovic Thilly (EC2U and FOREU2 Chair).

Chair: Sergei Guriev (CIVICA).

Speakers:

· Minna Wilkki (REA, Head of Department C, European Research Executive Agency).

· Stijn Delauré (Policy Officer, DG RTD)

· Tine Delva (Deputy Head of Unit, DG EAC)

· Olga Wessels (ECIU).

· Ludovic Thilly (EC2U).

· Auður Inga Rúnarsdóttir (Aurora).

Rapporteur: Sarah Thompson (CIVICA).

Minna Wilkki, Head of Department C at the European Research Executive Agency, starts her speech emphasising the demonstrable impact of the funds granted by the European Commission to the SwafS projects, positioning Alliances on the right path to become pioneers of change. The collaborative agendas implemented within institutional partners have effectively accelerated transformative initiatives. Aligning with the European strategy for universities, the Alliances exhibit characteristics of being more connected, open, digital, inclusive, and sustainable. The event serves as a testament to their successes in adhering to this strategic framework. She also encourages Alliances to actively participate in a range of Horizon Europe funding opportunities, citing the new call for Talent Ecosystems (currently in adoption process), the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant, among others. A key emphasis is placed on the importance of establishing trust and fostering collaboration between the scientific community and the public. This involves enhancing science communication and citizen science capabilities at both universities and Alliance levels. The overarching goal is not only to contribute to scientific advancements but also to boost European initiatives by building trust,

countering the impact of misinformation, and showcasing the economic and social value created by Alliances.

Olga Wessels (ECIU and FOREU1 Chair) underscores the tangible impact of Alliances, highlighting the substantial structural transformations accomplished in the last three years. Despite these achievements, Olga Wessels acknowledges the inherent fragility of Alliances, stressing the critical nature of the next steps in their journey. Against the backdrop of shifting political dynamics in Europe and impending elections, uncertainties can pose potential threats to the European Union budget and collaborative initiatives. In this context, public engagement, exemplified by forums like this, becomes paramount. Such events serve as a crucial signal to policymakers and stakeholders, affirming the collective strength of these Alliances and reinforcing their enduring presence in the academic landscape.

Stijn Delauré, Policy Officer from DG RTD extends congratulations to the Alliances for their outstanding collaboration and policy guidance. While highlighting that there will be no further SwafS funding, he emphasises the numerous opportunities within the WIDERA programme for Alliances to actively contribute to the implementation of the European Research Area. Stijn Delaure outlines forthcoming opportunities, including the Talent Ecosystems call scheduled for the following year, focusing on large inter-sectoral consortia in collaboration with non-academic partners. Additionally, he mentions the prospect of another European Excellence Initiative in 2025 or 2026 and upcoming opportunities related to ERA Action 17 on Research Management. Acknowledging the critical mass that Alliances possess, especially for early-stage researchers, he encourages active participation and support for these initiatives.

Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit from DG EAC highlights the significance of the forum, providing Alliances with a valuable platform to share experiences directly with each other and the European Commission. Explaining the intrinsic link between research and education, especially for universities, Tine Delva enlightens the importance of involving both DG RTD and DG EAC in these events. From the beginning of the European Universities Initiative, it was envisioned as a long-term approach rather than a short-term project, with substantial budget allocations and extensions up to 2028-2029 under Erasmus+. She underlines the multitude of future funding opportunities for Alliances under Horizon Europe and various supportive measures, such as joint European Degrees and the legal status. Responding to Alliances' requests for long-term and holistic support, Tine Delva introduces the Investment Pathway, which will cover education and research dimensions from 2028 to 2034, fostering synergies with national funding. The European Commission's call to Alliances is to articulate their collective impact, explaining accomplishments that individual institutions couldn't have achieved independently

Auður Inga Rúnarsdóttir from Aurora acknowledges the significant momentum generated by the event, establishing a lasting community that transcends the lifespan of individual projects. Despite funding constraints and evolving policy landscapes, there persists a robust determination to explore opportunities for sustained collaboration, aiming to fortify both Alliance-specific and overarching agendas. As a second-generation Alliance, Aurora is concentrated on developing a shared R&I agenda, placing emphasis on research support, HR policies, and Open Science.

Then, a spokesperson from each workshop and roundtable enter in the stage to summarise the main conclusions from each session.

In workshop 1, **Isabel Salgueiro from EELISA** explains that the discussion was centred on the advancement of common science agendas within Alliances. The workshop highlights that joint research structures and initiatives not only contribute to the improvement of services provided by local offices but also play a crucial role in enhancing societal outreach efforts. The need for Alliances to embrace diversity despite their differences was underscored, emphasising the delicate balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches in pursuit of common goals.

Elena del Giorgio, representing 4EU+, presents the main conclusions from workshop 2, which delved into the impact of SwafS projects on the future development of Alliances' R&I dimensions. The workshop raised critical questions about how Alliances navigate the strategic expectations set internally versus their actual needs and internal capacities. SwafS projects were recognised for providing both funding and a framework, with Alliances grappling with challenges related to prioritisation and the allocation of responsibilities. The workshop also highlights the synergies between education and research, particularly how some Alliances leverage Erasmus+ to align and bridge these activities.

In workshop 3, **Edita Lenkauskaitė from EU-CONEXUS,** presents discussions on reforming research assessment. The workshop focused on the significance of HR Strategy for Researchers (HRs4R) and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). Participants emphasised the need for HR policies, ethical recruitment, and training conditions to be at the forefront of everyday work. The workshop advocates for a cultural shift, emphasising curiosity-driven and responsible collaborative research with a strong emphasis on societal dissemination. It also called for a move away from traditional metrics in favour of a focus on good research.

Workshop 4, **reported by Nora Korp of EPICUR**, centres on inter- and transdisciplinarity in research management. The workshop proposed a definition of 'transdisciplinarity,' emphasising a university-centred approach with co-creation between researchers within and outside the university. Discussions explores how to engage and reward researchers for transdisciplinary work, and potential researcher assessment frameworks beyond CoARA. The workshop highlighted the importance of embedding transdisciplinarity into education as a means of jointly addressing societal challenges. One outcome was the shared idea of creating a mailing list or community of practice to foster ongoing collaboration.

Birgitta Kappes from EPICUR, presented the main conclusions from roundtable 1, were there was a unanimous decision on the critical role of the research dimension for Alliances. Participants emphasised the need for funding to closely interact with the Erasmus+ dimension of the Alliances. They suggested that WIDERA funding opportunities should be tailored to better suit the specific needs and objectives of Alliances, reflecting a commitment to a more holistic and adaptable approach.

Roundtable 2, led by **Javier Valls from ARQUS**, delved into the ethical considerations surrounding the use of new technologies in research, particularly the utilisation of AI. The discussions turns around the ethical implications of AI in research, focusing on where to draw the line. Participants

explore questions related to the extent to which AI contributions may overshadow the authorship of human researchers. The roundtable aims at reconciling these ethical concerns with the European Commission's vision and ethical protocol regarding the use of AI in research.

Agnese Rusakova from **FORTHEM** presents roundtable 3, which concentrated on Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and strategies for fostering societal engagement and involving external stakeholders. The roundtable highlights that each researcher possesses internalised concepts of 'responsible research,' which are deeply embedded in institutional frameworks. The consensus was that making RRI more visible and incorporating it into various layers of management is crucial for its effective implementation. The roundtable underscores the transformative potential of engagement in co-creation, advocating for the intricate involvement of 'external' stakeholders in research. To address power asymmetries, the discussion emphasises targeted limitations, and the importance of stakeholders sharing a common vision to create more collaborative spaces.

Figure 22. Photos from the closing session with Alliances' representatives and members from the European Commission, Stijn Delauré, Tine Delva and Minna Wilkki

The key conclusions from the roundtables and workshops underscore the pivotal role of joint research structures and initiatives in enhancing services and expanding societal outreach efforts. Discussions reveal both challenges and opportunities within SwafS projects, emphasising the need for strategic prioritisation and internal capacity alignment. The imperative for reform in research assessment processes is underscored, emphasising HR strategies, ethical considerations, and a shift away from traditional metrics. The significance of defining and implementing transdisciplinarity in education is highlighted, along with the need for holistic support across all dimensions. Furthermore, reflections from DG RTD and DG EAC representatives emphasise the intrinsic link between research and education and the forum's role in direct experience-sharing among Alliances and with the European Commission. The commitment of the European Universities Initiative to a long-term approach is evident, as the European Commission has allocated substantial budget for future years. Additionally, European Commission representatives outline forthcoming funding opportunities under Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, including the Investment Pathway and initiatives like the Talent Ecosystems call, demonstrating a commitment to supporting Alliance ambitions.

4. OUTCOME & CONCLUSIONS

The Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum 2023 provides a comprehensive overview of the achievements, challenges, and future prospects for European Universities Alliances in advancing R&I with societal impact. The key takeaways from the various sessions and discussions are summarised below:

Support from the European Commission

The forum starts with the remarks from Manuel Aleixo (DG RTD, Head of Unit ERA Spreading excellence & Research careers) and Marc Tachelet (REA, Director of European Research Executive Agency), who state the commitment and support from the European Commission for European Universities Alliances. Regarding the funding of research within the Alliances, the European Commission representatives announce a pilot call to enhance conditions for early-stage researchers. This European Commission reaffirm their dedication to foster an encouraging environment for research careers within the Alliances.

Challenges and Opportunities in R&I Funding

The assessment of the R&I impact of European Universities Alliances reveals the ongoing challenges in securing long-term systematic funding. Alliances launched a call for a programmatic approach, as opposed to a project-based one, emphasising the need for sustained investment to fully utilise their potential. The complexities of combining different funding sources and addressing existing requirements are highlighted as areas needing attention.

Strategic Shifts in Collaborative Endeavours

The workshops emphasise the importance of a deliberate shift in fostering collaboration within Alliances. Recognising and embracing diversity, both in terms of cultural practices and strategic visions, emerge as crucial for effective collaboration. Balancing project-based activities with a long-term vision and tailoring approaches to target audiences are identified as essential strategies.

Maximising Impact and Contribution to European Research Area

The discussions also showcase the unique value of European Universities Alliances in contributing to the European Research Area. From advancing common science agendas to piloting action plans, the Alliances display their potential to play a significant role in shaping the future of R&I. Advocating for sustained investment and prioritising research management emerge again as key strategies.

Research Ethics, Responsible R&I and Transdisciplinarity

Roundtable discussions explore critical topics such as the role of new technologies in research ethics and integrity, inter- and transdisciplinarity, as well as responsible R&I. The need for a cautious approach in incorporating AI into the research review process is emphasised. The importance of responsible practices, societal engagement, and involving external stakeholders in research initiatives is highlighted.

Long-Term Vision and Future Collaboration

The forum concludes with optimism for the future, highlighting the significance of collaboration, funding support, and continued forums for addressing challenges. The commitment to a clear, consensual, and constructive process, along with ongoing collaboration between the European Commission, experts, and Alliance actors, is reiterated.

In moving forward, the European Universities Alliances are poised to continue their transformative journey, building on the insights gained from the forum. The commitment of the European Commission, combined with the Alliances' dedication to societal impact and collaboration, sets the stage for a dynamic and impactful future in the European Research Area. The forum's role as a catalyst for exchange and progress has been crucial, with the shared goal of creating a robust and interconnected research and education ecosystem.

Figure 23. Photo with some of the forum organisers with Minna Wilkki (REA, Head of Department)