Facilitating new research collaboration and links between ENLIGHT universities through thematic focus groups

Aim
- Community building and creation of strong research ties among ENLIGHT partners
- Link researchers with focus on specific research domains
- Identify potential research challenges as basis for future collaborations
- Explore funding opportunities for joint applications with help of the support offices
- Strive for successful ENLIGHT grant applications (min. 3 ENLIGHT partners involved)

Composition
- 1 focus group (FG) per ENLIGHT flagship area
- Each FG includes 3 members per partner university (PU): 1 senior researcher, 1 junior researcher, 1 research support officer (RMA)

Methodology
- Researchers take the lead and decide course of the FG
- Every FG has a digital environment (SharePoint) + online meeting space (MS Teams)
- Individual participant profiles
- Overview of interest and expertise per PU
- Overview of linked known calls
- Topic with high potential form a subgroup where specialist from all PUs:
  - Present their research
  - Share knowledge, datasets, calls, etc.
  - Work on project proposal

Challenges
- Researchers are unfamiliar with representing their institutional research community
- Junior (early career) researchers are harder to involve

Good practice
- The spreadsheet remains as a blueprint of possible (future) collaborations:
  - Quick, low-cost and cost-efficient way to identify common research interests
  - Subject specific subgroups open to all linked researcher(s) fields attract researchers

Lessons learnt
- It is not imperative for all PUs to participate to all FGs
- The success largely depends on two factors:
  - A strongly motivated researcher taking the lead
  - An RMA supporting the researcher by organising the subgroup

Success – outcomes
- In 10 months already 3 HE proposal consortia
- Joint research and education collaborations
- Joint international workshops