



# Stronger Higher Education Institutions in their regions

European Week of regions and cities 2022

Workshop “Building cross-border university alliances as drivers for border regions”

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# Empowering European Higher Education



A **European vision** for the **future of universities** and how the **Union can support**



A **call to Member States and higher education institutions** across Europe **to join forces**



**Proposed recommendations** for effective **European Higher Education cooperation**

**Commissioner Mariya Gabriel**



The European strategy for universities and the proposal for a Council recommendation on transnational cooperation “*will benefit the entire higher education sector, first and foremost our **students**. They need modern transnational campuses with easy access to mobility abroad to allow for a truly European study path and experience. We stand ready to join forces with the Member States and higher education institutions across Europe. Together we can **bring closer education, research and innovation in service to society.***”

# EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR UNIVERSITIES

SUPPORTING AND ENABLING  
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS  
ACROSS EUROPE



A European shared vision to support all types of higher education institutions to adapt to changing conditions across all their missions

Priority areas for transformation based and clear objectives

Concrete actions at EU level to enable and support the sector

Synergies with actions and national reforms

**Council Conclusions adopted by  
EYCS Council 5 April 2022**

# Four key objectives

## 1 Strengthen the European dimension in higher education and research

Bringing transnational cooperation to a higher level contributes to a culture of excellence and inclusion, a true European identity, and global competitiveness and attractiveness

## 2 Consolidate universities as lighthouses of our European way of life

### Strengthen quality and relevance for future-proof skills

*In a fast changing environment, universities need to strengthen their capacities to equip young people, lifelong learners and researchers with the right competences and skills*

### Foster diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality

More institutional changes are needed for universities to become places of truly equal opportunities

### Promote and protect European democratic values

Universities need to be places of freedom: for speech, thought, learning, research

## 3 Empower universities as key actors of change in the twin green and digital transitions

### Develop skills, competences and technological innovation for the green and digital transition

Universities are key actors for the green transition and for a more sustainable world. We need to make 'connected universities' a reality

## 4 Reinforce universities as drivers of Europe's global role and leadership

Universities are instrumental in building Europe's connections with the world

# Four flagship initiatives



Expand to **60 European Universities with more than 500 universities by mid-2024**, with an Erasmus+ indicative budget totalling EUR 1.1 billion for 2021-2027.



Examining the need for and feasibility of institutionalised cooperation instruments, such as a possible **legal status for alliances of higher education institutions**: pilot as of 2022 under Erasmus+ the implementation of existing European instruments



Explore common criteria leading to a potential **European label for joint programmes**, to be piloted as of 2022 under Erasmus+. Later on, the possible design and delivery, on a voluntary basis, at national, regional or institutional level, of joint degrees at all levels, based on these co-created European criteria, could be envisaged



Widening the implementation of the **European Student Card initiative**.

# BUILDING BRIDGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

**FACILITATING  
TRANSNATIONAL  
EDUCATIONAL  
ACTIVITIES**

## FIRST STEP TOWARDS:

- Institutionalised cooperation instruments (e.g. legal status for alliances)
- Common criteria for a European label for joint programmes, followed possibly by voluntary joint degrees based on these European criteria

**SUSTAINABLE  
EUROPEAN  
UNIVERSITIES  
ALLIANCES**

**WIDENING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE EUROPEAN  
STUDENT CARD  
INITIATIVE**

Reinforce **European transnational cooperation**  
by building bridges

Support **all higher education institutions**  
and enhance the **coherence** of European higher education  
systems

Full implementation of existing instruments  
and exploring avenues for new ones

Recommendation for **national reforms**  
and **European support**

**Council Recommendation adopted  
by EYCS Council 5 April**

# Universities - anchors of knowledge and innovation in their regions and cities

## ☐ Strong ties with ecosystems & local communities

- ✓ hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g. incubators)
- ✓ smart specialisation strategies
- ✓ sustainable development & digital transition
- ✓ knowledge transfer

## ☐ Address societal challenges

- ✓ solutions adapted to local needs (e.g. living labs)
- ✓ transdisciplinary knowledge-creating teams working through challenge-based approaches

# Universities - poles for attractive job creation and preservation in cities and regions



- ❑ learning opportunities for students and life-long learners
- ❑ development of future-proof skills (quality/relevance)
- ❑ skills mapping reflected in curricula
- ❑ training and retraining opportunities
- ❑ traineeships/ work placements / internships within partners in the ecosystems
- ❑ business community & industrial partners act as mentors within knowledge-creating teams

- **reinforcement of students and young researchers' employability**
- **contribution to balanced mobility and brain circulation**
- **engagement with private and public sectors**

# Thank you

## More information:

[Higher education initiatives | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Commission Communication on a European strategy for universities | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation](#)

[Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe](#)