



2025/2036(INI)

28.3.2025

DRAFT REPORT

on a new vision for the European Universities alliances
(2025/2036(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Laurence Farreng

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	8
ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT	9

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on a new vision for the European Universities alliances (2025/2036(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to ‘green’ Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps²,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 – micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment³,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020⁴,
- having regard to the study of 11 September 2023 conducted for its Committee on Culture and Education entitled ‘EU funding programmes 2021-2027 in culture, media, education, youth and sports: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives – Erasmus+’,
- having regard to the study of 20 July 2023 conducted for its Committee on Culture and Education entitled ‘Early implementation of four 2021-2027 EU programmes: Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (Strand 3)’,
- having regard to the Commission report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative⁵,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 and 15 December 2017,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 June 2018 on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area,

¹ OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/817/oj>.

² OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 2.

³ OJ C 479, 16.12.2022, p. 65.

⁴ OJ C 32, 27.1.2023, p. 58.

⁵ [European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.](#)

- having regard to the Council Resolution of 18 November 2019 on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems⁶,
 - having regard to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué adopted on 19 November 2020 at the Ministerial conference of the European Higher Education Area,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2122 of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe⁷,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 May 2021 on the European Universities initiative – Bridging higher education, research, innovation and society: Paving the way for a new dimension in European higher education,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 27 March 2024 entitled ‘A blueprint for a European degree’ ([COM\(2024\)0144](#)),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2025 entitled ‘The Union of Skills’ ([COM\(2025\)0090](#)),
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure and Article 1(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 11 December 2024 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A10-0000/2025),
- A. whereas quality education and academic and scientific cooperation are prerequisites for achieving our European strategic autonomy, fighting skills shortages and fostering competitiveness with leading global universities;
 - B. whereas the importance of academia and universities for a competitive Europe is underlined in Mario Draghi’s report on the future of European competitiveness, in Enrico Letta’s report on the future of the single market and in Manuel Heitor’s report on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe;
 - C. whereas Erasmus+ is an EU flagship programme supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond;
 - D. whereas the European Universities initiative was established as a flagship initiative under the current programming period (2021-2027) of Erasmus+;
 - E. whereas the European Universities alliances serve a multidimensional purpose, starting with the creation of joint curricula and progressing towards the creation of inter-university campuses that have a strong European dimension, intended to foster the mobility of students and academic and administrative staff, and towards more

⁶ OJ C 389, 18.11.2019, p. 1.

⁷ OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/2122/oj>.

transformative changes of the higher education landscapes in the Member States and participating countries;

- F. whereas academic and scientific freedom is a central principle of universities' missions and activities;
- G. whereas higher education institutions in Europe face challenges with transnational collaboration, especially with regard to funding and governance;
- H. whereas the European Universities initiative has been much more successful than initially envisaged; whereas the aim of creating 20 alliances set out in the 2017 Council conclusions has been surpassed, as 65 alliances have now been created, encompassing more than 570 universities with more than 2 200 external partners, without any additional budget allocations;
- I. whereas these current alliances were selected through five competitive open calls focusing on quality, excellence, inclusivity and equitable geographical coverage;
- J. whereas the European Universities initiative is a key instrument for building an integrated, competitive and inclusive European Education Area and strengthening European identity;
- K. whereas the alliances have proven their transformative potential to modernise the Member States' higher education systems and have carved a role for themselves in educating a new generation of mobile European students; whereas universities from several alliances are at the forefront of legislative changes in their own countries;
- L. whereas 23 Member States are funding alliances with their national budgets;

State of play, challenges and obstacles

1. Acknowledges the warm welcome given to the European Universities initiative by higher education institutions and the initiative's role in facilitating efforts to remove obstacles to international cooperation in higher education; highlights the fact that mobility projects, the creation of common curricula and research cooperation between universities in Europe are instrumental in addressing needs in strategic areas; notes that the alliances are a powerful tool for the implementation of the Bologna Process;
2. Underlines the diversity of the alliances in terms of governance, topics and subjects covered, and the size and location of participating universities; notes the large and successful participation of universities from medium-sized cities, rural areas and outermost regions, making it an accessible and inclusive initiative; highlights the fact that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not appropriate for the alliances; notes that the Europe-wide geographical representation of universities within the alliances is key to tackling the brain drain;
3. Welcomes the integration of students in the alliances' governance structures, enabling young people to have a real impact on their development;
4. Welcomes the fact that some alliances are engaging in pilot projects aimed at creating a European degree and/or a legal status; underlines, however, that alliances should not

serve as the sole instrument for innovation in higher education; notes that alliances should have the freedom to specialise and be flexible in their undertakings;

5. Welcomes the significant increase in the number of mobility projects involving students and academic and administrative staff in universities participating in alliances compared to other Erasmus+ mobility projects; notes that the initial objective of achieving seamless mobility for 50 % of students in participating alliances has not yet been reached;
6. Is worried about current threats to academic and scientific freedom in several parts of the world, including in some Member States; underlines the role that universities, including alliances, play in making the European higher education sector more attractive to non-EU students and academic staff;
7. Welcomes the Union of Skills initiative, especially the upcoming proposal on the legal status for alliances, making it easier for them to initiate and lead European projects, attract funding and broaden their governance structure, especially in the case of universities from non-EU countries;
8. Welcomes the creation of FOREU4ALL, a community of practice for European Universities alliances; underlines its key role in disseminating innovations from the alliances to the broader academic community;

Recommendations

9. Underlines that funding and actions must encompass the three university missions and knowledge triangle: education, research and innovation; is worried about the lack of research and innovation pillars within the alliances; highlights the significant potential of the alliances to build networks of researchers and knowledge sharing at European level, for a multiplied impact in strategic fields such as quantum computing or artificial intelligence;
10. Stresses the need for sustainable and predictable funding for current alliances; asks the Commission to consider reserving future calls for the continuation of current and successful alliances; asks the Commission to keep the application process as simple as possible;
11. Underlines that the strategic vision for university alliances has to be reflected in the next multiannual financial framework; asks the Commission to evaluate each alliance in order to provide support and tailor-made solutions regarding their future development;
12. Recognises the need for the European Universities initiative to continue be a part of the Erasmus+ programme; underlines that Erasmus+ cannot be the sole source of funding for the alliances; asks the Commission to present a comprehensive investment strategy for the alliances, encompassing funding from EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, InvestEU, the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund;
13. Highlights the fact that, in order to achieve real success encompassing quality, excellence and inclusion, support for alliances cannot come solely from the European budget but should also come from national, local and private sources;

14. Stresses the need to strengthen the internationalisation of alliances, in line with, among others, the Global Gateway strategy; notes that alliances are at the right level for establishing partnerships with non-EU countries, and can use tools such as Erasmus Mundus; asks the Commission and the alliances to ensure that all partners involved comply with European values;
15. Asks the Commission, the Member States and the alliances to shift from a ‘project-based logic’ to long-term, transformative cooperation; underlines the importance for alliances to be able to scale up; underlines the need to set qualitative rather than quantitative goals;
16. Notes that alliances are testing innovative ways of teaching and acquiring knowledge, such as micro-credentials and blended mobility; emphasises the need to consolidate the interoperability of computer systems to create genuine virtual European inter-campus;
17. Asks the Commission to consider adding criteria to possible future calls, in line with topics linked to European strategic autonomy and competitiveness, such as energy, defence, climate change and digital transition;
18. Stresses the need for alliances to have the right structure and capacities to support technology transfer and enable scaling up in research, at European level;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The concept of the European University Alliances was first mentioned in the 2017 Sorbonne speech by Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic. It became reality in 2019 and was implemented as part of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme. This idea is backed by a long-standing tradition of cooperation and exchanges between European universities that dates to the middle ages, with examples such as the travels of Desiderius Erasmus to academic cities, or the Grand Tour, a traditional educational trip through Europe, for young men from the 17th to the 19th century. The European University Alliance Initiative, in its current form, was designed as a network of universities that promotes student mobility between campuses, and to advance pedagogical innovation. The first Alliances were launched in 2019, and became an immediate success. While the original idea was to launch just 20 alliances, 65 alliances exist today, bringing together more than 570 universities, representing more than half of the student population of the European Union. The calls of the Commission for university alliances were of an open nature, which allowed universities to fulfil them in an open and creative manner when it came to deciding the number of partners, the types of governance, the topics they would address and their forms of collaboration. This successful model has not only enabled the participation of the biggest, most internationally recognised universities, but also that of small and medium-sized universities, and those in the outermost regions, to unite around shared themes and objectives that contribute to the vitality of their territory, offering young people an EU level education, and tackling brain drain. This makes it a highly inclusive project that democratises academic excellence in an inclusive manner. Much more than networks, these Alliances also create intra-European campuses and have become catalysts for legislative changes. They are drivers of innovation, bridging the skills gap and encouraging a new generation of young Europeans to explore and learn. There are several reasons for looking closer into the Alliances, particularly at their future potential and issues that were identified over the years. In a time of increased global insecurity, the Alliances have become a real asset to improve the competitiveness and sovereignty of the European Union. It is therefore necessary to strengthen their capacity for innovation and research and for technology transfers, particularly in critical and strategic sectors that can continue to achieve security and excellence for the European Union. When academic freedom is under attack, particularly by global actors such as the USA, European Universities Alliances are a tool with which the EU can continue to attract researchers and academics from all over the world. To this end, it is necessary to acquire investment and funding for the Alliances, in order to increase their capabilities, strengthen their efficiency, consolidate their models and secure their longevity, aiming towards their future independence. Programmes such Erasmus+ are of vital importance for this. Rather than create new Alliances, these programmes and their funding should support the success of existing Alliances that have already begun to re-shape EU academic excellence and academic freedom.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the draft report:

Entity and/or person
Coimbra Group
LERU
Saarland University
Agreenium
EUt+ University Alliance
Una Europa vzw Student Board
Circle U. AISBL (Circle U. European University Alliance)
European University Association
ARQUS Alliance
Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research
France Universités

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.