EUniQ Pilot Evaluation
Public summary

Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE)

This public summary was established in view of the pilot evaluations for the EUniQ project. The pilot was coordinated by the following agencies:

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Public summary

YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) was evaluated by the external quality assurance agencies ANVUR (Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and research Institutes) and AAQ (Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance) in the context of the pilot evaluations that were conducted as part of the EUniQ project (https://www.nvao.net/nl/euniq). The EUniQ project partners agreed, after consultations with European Universities, on the formulation of a European framework to be used for the pilot evaluations of four alliances. This "European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities – 4th draft" was tested through these pilots and the evaluation of the pilots may lead to amendments of the framework. The Roadmap Group of EUniQ nominated experts for the pilot evaluations and from this list of experts the coordinating agencies convened an evaluation panel for each pilot. The experts were briefed on the evaluation framework and approach of the EUniQ project, and discussed the programme for the site visits during a workshop with the coordinating agencies held on 11 March 2020 in Brussels. The panel studied the information provided by the alliance and prepared themselves through discussions in online panel meetings and e-mail exchanges, and by preparatory consultations with the alliances. Although onsite interviews were envisaged these had to be postponed and finally replaced, as the Covid-19 pandemic persisted, by online interviews. The panel undertook online interviews on October 9th 2020 with representatives of the governance and management of YUFE and on December 4th with other stakeholders (students, staff, management of partner universities).

Overall, the pilot evaluation showed that YUFE is building its identity based on strong shared values and far-reaching ambitions. The Alliance has put adequate structures in place that have allowed to the first activities to commence, with great participation and commitment from all parties, particularly students.
According to the four criteria of the European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance, 3 out of 4 are addressed by YUFE. The 4th criterion about the *improvement policy* was considered not yet applicable, due to the early stage of development of the Alliance activities.

Regarding the *Strategy and policies* criterion, all YUFE partners revealed a close-knit, collaborative and collegiate team to create a strategic vision for a clear inter-university identity. The underlying strategic intent encompasses both a virtual and multi-campus university, where students may study courses in a physical location or remotely as an online participant, with the long term intention of becoming a single university.
Commitment to the quality of its teaching and learning, research, innovation and service to society is evident in the documentation and came across clearly in meetings with staff and students.
The partners were explicit in their reference to European societal challenges, with the aim to help create and secure a European identity. The concepts of egalitarianism, non-elitism and equality of opportunity for all are fundamental to the shared vision and crucial to the long term aim of a united European University.
The partners, all 'young' universities with a shared vision of a Europe they would like to become, are all active research universities, which is critical to enabling the ecosystem they envision students becoming participants in. The inclusion of employer representation is also important for the work-based elements of the eco-system, both in ensuring that the needs

of industry are considered but also opening up opportunities for work placement, shadowing and other real world experience for students.

The "quadruple helix approach" (universities and students; citizens; businesses; and local/regional government) draws on associate partners and wider society to ensure a scalable approach to the shared vision. Co-creation with students and partnerships with business and civic organisations are key elements of the strategic approach in order to meet the objective.

Some of the objectives are ambitious - for example the YUFE @Home instrument anticipates students and staff living with citizens. Nonetheless, the overall objectives are clearly focused on regional impact.

Regarding the quality assurance (QA) policies for the joint provision, the framework in development is specifically aligned with the ESG. YUFE's approach operates horizontally at programme level - through assuring the quality of the work packages - and vertically through the educational provision of the alliance itself. Thus, there is reliance on and trust in the internal QA within each institution and a focus on results and outcomes at alliance level. Due to national differences in QA requirements, the Alliance tries to complement rather than change these basic approaches by sharing basic principles (transparency), methodological approach (Plan, Do, Check, Act) and high level surveys, focus groups etc.

Collection, sharing and storage of data still need further work as at this early stage there is unsurprisingly little data available. It is planned for data management to be in one location, not excluding the use of cloud storage.

Regarding the *Policy implementation* criterion, YUFE organises its work into eight work packages (WP): Management of the project (WP1), Quality Plan (WP2), YUFE Student Journey (WP3), YUFE Staff Journey (WP4), YUFE Innovation and Entrepreneurship (WP5), YUFE in our Cities (WP6), Diversity and Inclusivity (WP7), Sustainability and Dissemination (WP8).

The YUFE project proposal contains detailed descriptions and objectives, as well as activities and processes to achieve the objectives for all WPs. Some particular activities of WPs remain flexible, and the extent of specific outcomes depend largely on financial resources available.

YUFE has produced a first draft of YUFE Quality Assurance Framework that will cover the YUFE QA system as well as the Quadruple Helix QA system. The basic principles are (1) Trust and appreciative approach, (2) Subsidiarity, decentralized responsibility, shared ownership, (3) Continuous improvement, PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, (4) Transparency and (5) Involvement of stakeholders. The QA of YUFE works on three dimensions: (1) QA in the respective universities, (2) QA of Open Programmes and (3) QA of every other type of activity taken by YUFE. Notably, YUFE partner institutions already have in place certain elements of common QA (such as the PDCA cycle, student participation, surveys, focus groups, etc.).

YUFE and its partner institutions allocated resources needed for successful continuation of the activities including development and implementation of the QA framework. The Alliance is aware of the need for a long term sustainability plan as they currently have to contain activities within funding limits. Plans include seeking external funding from regional, national and international sources.

YUFE has an established and actively working common management structure of the Alliance. The highest decision making body is the YUFE Strategy Board which consists of executives of YUFE institutions (both full as well as associated partners), President and Vice-

president of the Student Forum and the YUFE Managing Director as the main advisor to the YUFE Strategy Board at strategic and policy level. The Chair of the Strategy Board is elected by all members and the vice-chair is the Student Forum president.

Common activities are overseen and managed by YUFE Managing Director, who is also chair of YUFE Project Management Board, which is responsible for monitoring implementation of YUFE WPs. YUFE Managing Director is supported by YUFE Management Office.

Moreover, YUFE is planning to establish external advisory bodies which would be responsible for sharing of knowledge between Alliance members and providing external advice on strategic actions. The creation of these bodies would support YUFE even more, especially on working through bottlenecks and challenges such as YUFE diploma, long term sustainability, common database, etc.

Student representatives are full members of all internal YUFE management structures. They have been a part of YUFE since its inception and participated in developing the project proposal to EC as well. There is a Student Forum with mandate to ensure continuous input and participation of students from all institutions (PhD students are part of the Forum as a way to ensure research students are also represented).

All of the members of YUFE governance structure also meet in YUFE Townhall meeting to discuss most important issues and YUFE strategic priorities.

Currently, academic staff can mainly participate in the Open Programmes as well as being part of WPs. This was also supported by inviting teachers to suggest their courses as open courses on an individual basis.

YUFE has a clear distribution of responsibilities of WPs. Each WP is led by one YUFE institution (except for WP8 which is led by two institutions, each responsible for a specific distinct topic under WP8, Sustainability and Dissemination) and co-led by one or two more. Management teams are established for each WP and in QA are supported by responsible people from WP2. This organisation seems effective to produce the desired outcomes.

Internal stakeholders are involved a lot in the management of the Alliance. External stakeholder through associate partners are also active players in the Alliance and the current organisational structure supports it.

Associate partners contribute towards all WPs to the development of the YUFE Star System, which provides recognition of extra-curricular learning activities, such as language acquisition. It is expected that the YUFE Star System will provide more information about characteristics and competences of students besides 'purely academic' evaluations and it will be easier for employers to recognise transversal competences and soft skills of these students.

It is clear that diversity and inclusiveness are core principles of YUFE (with a dedicated WP7 for bolstering diversity and inclusivity), and YUFE keeps connections with other alliances for the exchange of good practices.

Regarding the *Evaluation and monitoring* criterion, YUFE is able to guarantee the effectiveness of its policy implementation for the benefit of the quality of education. Research is a long term goal of YUFE and thus it is too soon to monitor research activities at this stage. Even if the pandemic deeply changed the context in which YUFE alliance and its members are operating, a lot has been done already and YUFE members see this situation as a chance for realising their vision rather than a threat. For example, YUFE website (https://yufe.eu) is under constant development along with YUFE student portal and YUFE virtual campus. These have been speeded up by the pandemic.

Online meetings with all stakeholders and internal partners have been regularly scheduled, on a monthly or weekly basis. YUFE representatives underlined that online meetings

extended participation and transparency and reduced cost. Additional resources with respect to financial support will be necessary in the future to sustain the physical mobility of staff and students anticipated in YUFE full implementation.

After mapping Bachelor/Master programs, Bachelor/Master courses and PhD courses, YUFE defined an introduction offer of a hundred courses that has been launched in July 2020. A hundred students, out of 600 applicants, have been selected on a "first arrived first served" basis, coherently with the inclusive vision and politics of YUFE. The course catalogue includes now 141 online courses to be delivered in the second semester. Questionnaires have been submitted to students enrolled in the introductory offer. Analysis of the student questionnaire and how to handle the results is a matter of discussion among the partners. Each of the eight WP is monitored with a summary of progress (outputs) and a list of activities. An analysis of the challenges, bottlenecks and opportunities, with the contribution of four non-academic partners, has been done and brought to a work plan and activities update.

Regarding the *Improvement policy* criterion, this was considered not yet applicable, because of the early stage of development of the Alliance. However, YUFE explicitly adopts the PDCA-approach to all its activities, which implies that improvement will be an essential part in later stages.

So far, YUFE managed to attain most of the goals despite the changes to implementation brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. YUFE representatives are aware of the new challenges and the need for sustainable human and financial resources. The Panel believes that the process will speed up and result in more concrete implementation of the common ideas on QA as trust and understanding between partner institutions will evermore increase. Finally, the panel commends the willingness and openness of the YUFE community in engaging in mutual understanding for such an ambitious project.

Annex: Composition of the panel

The panel of experts was convened and consisted of the following members:

Liz Marr, Chair
Liz is Pro Vice Chancellor: Students at the Open University UK and has many years of experience as an academic and senior manager in higher education (HE). She is an active member of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) and President Oct 2018 - Oct 2020. Her special interest is in lifelong learning and increasing access to and inclusion in HE

Isabelle Perroteau, Member
Full professor of Applied Biology, currently her research activities are mainly in cellular neurobiology. Former secretary-general of the National College of Biologists of Italian Universities; chair of the Independent Evaluation Unit of the University of Torino; Rector's delegate for internal QA and expert consultant for innovative teaching methodologies and Deputy Director for teaching and learning of the Department of Clinical and Biological Sciences. She participated as a panel member/chair in many evaluation procedures in different European countries.

Ignas Gaižiūnas, Student member
Graduate of BSc Energy Physics and MSc Theoretical Physics and Astrophysics at Vilnius University. Senate member of Vilnius University for Oct 2015 - Aug 2020. Chair of Parliament of Vilnius University Students Representation Oct. Member of European Students' Union Quality Assurance student expert pool Jul 2017 - Jul 2020. Main areas of interest: student representation, quality assurance, external evaluation, development of study programmes.

The procedure was coordinated by:
- Coordinator: Alberto Ciolfi, Officer-Head of Unit, ANVUR
- Coordinator: Laura Beccari, Project Manager, AAQ

The coordinators also acted as secretaries to the panel.

All panel members and coordinators signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.