

Background Paper for the EUniQ Rome Workshop 23-24 October 2019

1. The European Universities initiative and the first selected alliances

The European Universities initiative that was proposed by the European Commission was endorsed by the European Council in December 2017. It called for the emergence of at least 20 European Universities by 2024 and should contribute to the establishment of a European Education Area by 2025. These European Universities are transnational alliances of higher education institutions from across the EU that share a long-term strategy, promote European values and identity, strengthen mobility of students and staff, and foster the quality, inclusiveness and competitiveness of European higher education.¹ The Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2019 (page 125)² states the following two objectives of European Universities:

- “Promoting **common European values** as enshrined in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and a **strengthened European identity** by bringing together a new generation of Europeans, who are able to cooperate and work within different European and global cultures, in different languages, and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.
- Reach a substantial leap in **quality, performance, attractiveness and international competitiveness of European higher education institutions** and contributing to the European knowledge economy, employment, culture and welfare by making best use of innovative pedagogies and striving to make the knowledge triangle a reality. ‘European Universities’ will be key drivers to boost the quality of higher education and where possible to strengthen its link to the research and innovation landscape in Europe and its outreach towards the society and economy.”

The European Universities should have a long-term vision and “the following elements following key elements are expected to be implemented by the ‘European Universities’ by 2025:

- A shared, integrated, **long-term joint strategy** for education with, where possible, links to research and innovation and society at large:
 - Based on a common vision and shared values, for pursuing a high level of enhanced, sustainable cooperation across various levels of the organisation, and across different areas of activity, building on their complementary strengths.
 - Staff at all levels of the participating organisations is empowered to implement this vision.
- A **European higher education inter-university ‘campus’** where typically:
 - Students, doctoral candidates and staff can move seamlessly (physically or virtually) to study, train, teach, do research, work, or share services in any of the partner institutions. Students **customise their choice of where and what to study** within the confines of pedagogically sound and logically structured study programmes between the different higher education institutions and other members of the alliance.
 - **Embedded mobility** at all levels, including at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, is a standard feature. At least 50% of the students within the alliance should benefit from such mobility, be it physical, virtual or blended.
 - **New joint and flexible curricula** are delivered, where relevant, in the three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), based on **cross-disciplinary/multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches**, integrating innovative pedagogies, including the use of the latest digital technologies. While content is personalised, cooperation is global.
 - **Practical and/or work-based experience** is provided by external mentors to foster an **entrepreneurial mind-set** and develop **civic engagement**;

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2019_en

- The **student body reflects the diversity** of the population (in terms of social, economic and cultural aspects), including lifelong learners, part-time and non-traditional students. Access, participation and completion of under-represented and disadvantaged groups are ensured.
- **European knowledge-creating teams (“challenge-based approach”)** of students and academics, possibly together with researchers, businesses, regional actors and civil society actors -depending on the overall strategy and vision of the alliance -address together societal and other challenges of their choice in a multi-disciplinary approach through:
 - innovative learning and training that equip students and researchers with high-level, entrepreneurial, Open Science and transferable skills for a fast-changing labour market and knowledge economy and society, including through the transfer of research results back into education
 - creation of innovative solutions adaptable to different regions in Europe”.³

With regard to the ambitious goal of 50% student mobility mentioned above an important clarification is given in the Frequently Asked Questions number 8 (extended version)⁴:

“The objective of 50% student mobility has to be reached within the alliance, as a result of a reinforced cooperation between all the partners involved. This objective refers to the European Universities' long term strategy, to be achieved by 2025, and does not include only physical mobility of students. All types of mobility, including blended and virtual, at all levels (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral) will be considered as contributing to the long-term target, including mobility to associated partners.”

Regarding the associated partners it should be noted that whilst the European University must be composed of a minimum of three higher education institutions (holding a holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education) from at least three EU Member States or other Programme countries, it is also possible for any public/private organisations active in the field of education and training, research and innovation or in the world of work to take part in the alliance as associated partner. The application is submitted by a participating organisation who acts on behalf of all the partners. This applicant/coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the proposal is implemented in accordance with the agreement.

To reach the long-term vision of the European University by a step-to-step approach the members of the alliance should agree on a mission statement which entails a “joint strategy for pursuing a high level of enhanced and sustainable cooperation across various levels of the organisation (e.g. management, academics, professional/support staff and students), and across different areas of activity (strong education focus with links where possible to research and innovation and service to society), building on their complementary strengths.”⁵

For reaching the strategic objectives the alliance should set up a joint work plan of activities supported by relevant and efficient common management structures (e.g. joint boards, common pool and sharing of resources, support, administrative and information systems). In addition, the joint work plan should include activities to reach the ambitions regarding mobility, social inclusion, and challenge-based approach. Alliances should also engage with key stakeholders to foster societal engagement of students and staff as well as their entrepreneurial key competences.⁶

The first Erasmus+ call on “European Universities” was launched in October 2018. A second call will follow in autumn 2019. These calls will test different models to implement the new concept of European Universities during the first three years. On 26 June 2019 the selection of the first 17 European Universities alliances was announced by the European Commission (see Annex: European Universities selected – June 2019). These 17 alliances involve 114 higher education institutions from 24 Member States, and include comprehensive and research-intensive universities, universities of applied sciences, technical universities and universities of fine arts. On average an alliance is composed of seven higher education institutions. This fits the “ideal” number that was indicated in the call, i.e. five to eight partners. Some alliances cover all disciplines, others have a special focus (e.g. urban coastal sustainability, social sciences or global health). Each alliance will receive up to €5 million in the coming three years

³ Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2019, pages 125-126

⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/faq-eac_eacea_extended_version_for_publication.pdf

⁵ Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2019, page 126.

⁶ Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2019, page 127.

to start implementing their plans. The European Commission intends to fully roll out European Universities under Erasmus+, with a significantly increased budget from 2021-2027.⁷

The first call saw 54 applications which were evaluated by 26 independent external experts, including rectors, professors and researchers, appointed by the European Commission. No information on specific characteristics of the (selected) proposals is published. The evaluations by the experts were based on the following five award criteria⁸:

1. Relevance of the proposal (maximum 25 points)
2. Geographical balance (maximum 15 points)
3. Quality of the proposal and implementation (maximum 20 points)
4. Quality of the alliance cooperation agreements (maximum 20 points)
5. Sustainability and dissemination (maximum 20 points).

Of the total maximum score of 100 points at least 70 points was necessary to be considered for funding. Moreover, for each of the five award criteria the minimum score should be more than half of the maximum score.

With regard to **quality assurance** the call states that this “must be an embedded component to ensure that European Universities successfully deliver the expected results and achieve an impact going far beyond the impact an individual partner organisation could achieve.”⁹ The award criteria “quality of the proposal and implementation” entails a specific requirement with regard to the internal QA of the alliance: “the alliance has set up a quality assessment and review, which includes specific measures for evaluation of progress, processes and deliverables (for instance through the development of suitable quantitative and qualitative indicators, including the feedback from students and staff). The quality monitoring should also ensure that the implementation of the alliance is cost-efficient.”

Moreover, in the specifications of the award criteria a number of quality aspects are embedded. In part these criteria are focused on the alignment of the joint strategy with the wider goals of the European Universities initiative and the consistency between the aims of the proposal and the joint planned activities to achieve them. But it is also required to demonstrate how the joint strategy and activities enhance the quality of education through innovative pedagogical models and digital technologies, as well as enhancing the level of students, staff and researchers mobility, the level of engagement with key stakeholders and the local community, and how research results and innovation are fed back into education. The award criteria relating to the quality of the cooperation arrangements focus on issues such as clear roles and responsibilities of each partner, shared management structures with efficient decision-making and communication, common provision of services and resources, and complementarity of partners.

It seems implied by the call that European Universities take the aspects mentioned above into account when setting up their internal QA system.

2. Input from European Universities: survey results

NVAO sent a small questionnaire to all selected alliances to gain a better view on the intentions regarding the internal QA of the European Universities and to facilitate the discussions during the Rome Workshop. The questionnaire comprised six questions (which are mentioned below). Fifteen out of the seventeen alliances responded. One alliance announced that it would respond very soon but this response could not be included in this draft (it will be included in the next draft). Alliances were assured that no response would be attributed to a particular European University. As a consequence in this paper an overview of the responses is given without naming any alliance. Answers are anonymised and shortened if necessary and duplications or similar answers are omitted. In the following sections an overview of responses is given for each of the six questions.

⁷ https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-3389_en.htm

⁸ See also the Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment of E+ Actions. Part II. KA2-European Universities: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/experts_guide_-_european_universities_-_part_ii_-_for_publication.pdf

⁹ Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2019, page 130.

2.1 Could you please mention 3 to 5 strategic priorities that your European University wants to achieve?

Sixteen alliances responded to this question. As there is a huge variety in the responses and the wording of the strategy is carefully chosen it is difficult and perhaps also not appropriate to categorise these. Therefore, a summary of the answers is given in the following table:

Alliance	Strategic priorities
1.	<p>Mission: to disseminate knowledge and new pedagogical methods to partner institutions, to train students who will, themselves, teach in schools, professional institutes and universities throughout Europe, to promote a better understanding of European culture and history throughout our national educational systems and to ensure that Europe continues to be a key reference in education, research and knowledge, and technology transfer.</p> <p>Vision: Together, we aim to create a truly integrated European University System by 2025. To do this we will define and implement a common approach to education, research and third-mission activities, on the basis of a shared set of core values: academic freedom, student-centred focus, access to higher education for all, interdisciplinary approach, innovative pedagogy, critical thinking and integrity and service to society. We will be European in identity and will lobby to become European in status too.</p>
2.	<p>The Alliance aspires to build on the member universities' sound prior experience in cooperation in order to achieve a high level of integration in its members' policies and action plans in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the education of critically engaged European and global citizens who are able and willing to contribute to a multicultural, multilingual and inclusive Europe which is open to the world; • increase and improve the joint research capacity of the partner universities; • better respond to the grand societal challenges of the 21st century in Europe and beyond.
3.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To provide skills and attribute-based programmes designed within a new and flexible academic challenged based structure and organizational framework. The student will build his/her own program. b. Optimise the Interchangeability of national accreditations, making double accreditations unnecessary c. To adopt an innovative governance approach, a new model of multi-institutional cooperative engagement, and to design a clear developmental framework for the financial sustainability strategy. d. To bridge the education, research, and business aspects, building an innovative teaching and learning strategy based on insights from the research and practice.
4.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participative governance and sustainable collaboration at all levels: A long-term and multi-sectoral program of structural integration that goes beyond the usual collaborations between universities. Step by step, we will develop a model for a European University alliance that is at once closely integrated, best adapted to our needs and in agreement with the necessarily different legal environments (at EU and national levels) in which we operate. b. For us, teaching, research and engagement form a continuum in which each element feeds the others. Our engagement offers new experiences to our students, by confronting them with real-life situations. c. A challenge-driven university: aims at being a vector of change and innovation with the following priorities: Health; Cities, Territories and Mobilities; Climate, Environment, Energy; Digital and Technological Transformations; Society, Cultures and Heritage. We thus wish to promote integrating education, research and innovation activities together, and relying on the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations. d. Developing the Bologna process and the new European Education Area principles, e. Our engagement with the Mediterranean area and Africa.
5.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Set up a system where learners, educators, researchers and other stakeholders can work jointly on challenges around SDG 11 b. Jointly offer a number of micro credentials around SDG 11 c. Set up flexible education paths and a pedagogical framework for Challenge Based Learning d. A European Joint Master e. Develop a competence passport where learners can list their learning outcomes f. Strengthen lifelong learning

6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build a common academic space where students, academic and administrative staff can collaborate and move from one university to the other by removing the remaining administrative, legal, social, cultural or financial obstacles and by implementing appropriate structures and aligned processes. b. Create new, Europeanised, tailor-made curricula for our students. By 2025, the student journey will be as flexible and individual as possible so that students can choose from a wide range of learning opportunities and teaching activities, as digitally supported as possible, and can benefit from shared and entangled curricula, with an emphasis on flexible and innovative mobility and exchange scenarios. c. Strengthening both regional networks to economic, political and societal actors as well as intensified cooperation beyond Europe.
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Educating future citizens of Europe b. Strengthening European regions and languages c. Focus on inter/cross-disciplinarity and societal challenges d. Network of regional networks
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To harmonize the model curricula and thus ensure interoperability. b. To develop our training by getting to know each other's methods as much as possible by working together on joint projects and exhibitions. c. To facilitate the mobility of students and staff by improving their language skills. To carry out research in the field of, to understand the terminology as it is used in practice and compiling a multi-lingual dictionary. d. To deploy our international potential by sharing our experience and becoming eligible for other joint projects. e. The objective of our project is to contribute to the reinforcement of a consciousness of European identity and to make known and popular the heritage and diversity of European culture.
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Become the global leader in higher education and research in the area of, with a perspective of expansion beyond the size of its founding consortium. b. Create a European higher education inter-university 'campus' based on an ever-closer academic and administrative integration of their teaching, research and innovation activities c. Create comprehensive and complementary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study programmes by offering different BA and MA study programmes which will be student-centred and allow students to create their own study programme. d. Organize a joint research area which will allow brain circulation within the consortium, connections between scientist and creation of new internationally competitive scientific teams. e. Reinforce the students' sense of European identity and citizenship by enhancing the students' mobility and providing the opportunities for the students' personal engagement in understanding different cultural practices and meanings and the opportunities for experiences that facilitate intercultural relations, enhance the intercultural competencies of the students and promote the value of diversity among them.
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve competences and exchange practices of teaching and administrative staff b. Offer a European experience to 50% of its students (by physical, blended or virtual mobility) c. Design joint curricula which are innovative, cross-disciplinary, internationalized d. Develop transnational training by research and innovation e. Reinforce professional and personal skills and employability f. Create a living and inclusive inter-university campus
11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a network of innovating universities geared towards the challenges of European society and beyond. Through the development of Learning and Knowledge Creation Communities, we will achieve the open and inclusive educational model that is characteristic for its member universities. b. Our universities are research driven and therefore the alliance also aims to connect the educational project to the excellence of our research and innovation activities. To foster the integration of the research networks, we will stimulate the gathering of its researchers and promote research mobility. Furthermore, we will share a challenge driven research agenda and enhance innovation capacity by pooling resources and expertise.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Develop the place-making capacities of the alliance - the co-creation of knowledge, environments, platforms, tools and methodologies to enable the testing of models for exchange and dialogue across sectors, institutions and regions. d. Install activities and mechanisms to ensure inclusion and balanced societies - developing a common strategy to identify exclusionary practices, challenges and obstacles as well as to foster inclusion and including a pilot case for promoting Europe's principles of openness and inclusion to all Europe's regions. e. Develop both grounded and global internationalisation of the alliance –stimulating student input to internationalising the curriculum, and sharing and evaluating experiences of building mature strategic partnerships with global (non-European) partners.
12.	<p><i>By the end of the first 3-year period we will have achieved the following main goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. increased the quality, attractiveness and European dimension of education through pooling of expertise b. set up a joint management structure to monitor the quality of activities and to ensure that the alliance is moving towards joint objectives; c. adopted a Transnational Higher Education Strategy, enforcing innovative student-centred pedagogy and multilingualism d. implemented three Missions (Mobility, Lab and Outreach Missions) to bring the strategy to life. These Missions aim to involve 30 % of students and staff in mobility; to create an online platform to facilitate virtual learning and networking; to set up knowledge-creating 'Labs' working on topics of high societal relevance, and to create new forms of outreach activities within our European regions (particularly by involving students in civic engagement and reaching out to local schools)
13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increasing the level of integration between the universities of the alliance by sharing educational programmes, analyses, policies, procedures, services, databases, infrastructures, research networks and governance. b. Offering a broad spectrum of personalised skilled-based curricula and a development-oriented and research-based education environment to strengthen the creativity and public engagement of our European students. c. Offering staff and students a full range of mobility (international, intersectoral, virtual), fostering multi-linguism/multi-culturalism, and providing the widest scope of opportunities for personal/professional growth and human potential. d. Promoting inclusion, situating our educational and research activities within the broader social context, and advancing the harmonious development of the alliance and its activities from environmental, social and economic perspectives. e. Fostering open educational resources, open science and open data to our communities and the world at large that permit to expand our university model outside our frontiers and working towards guaranteeing the sustainability of the alliance in the future.
14.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. We will create a truly European inter-university environment, where outstanding research is continuously linked to transnational learning and innovative, critical thinking. b. We will create and develop an innovative continent-wide 'living laboratory', reflecting on the imminent and distant future of universities and developing ground-breaking cooperation models and formats pertaining to European higher education and research. c. We will evolve from an experimental incubator to a truly international campus, piloting in four interdisciplinary focus areas (Cultural Heritage, Data Science & Artificial Intelligence, European Studies and Sustainability), of high relevance to deepening European cooperation and enhancing European identity. d. We will design, test, implement and evaluate more than 20 Joint Innovative Formats for education and mobility across the four focus areas, jointly established by course and programme teams to ensure they are scalable, accessible, high quality and cost-effective. e. We will consolidate the European University eco-system by ensuring that all students and staff can participate, by exploiting technology, by tackling legal barriers and other hurdles for flexible interuniversity education and by implementing a solid joint quality assurance system.
15.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Student Mobility: Students will be able to move between levels, programmes, modes (blended: physically and virtually), areas (research, innovation, work), duration (full-time and part-time), location and country. b. Career Development: Both professionals and students will be provided with development opportunities through internships and training at both academic and non-academic partners of

	<p>the regions. Tools will be developed to promote upward career paths and professional development exchanges.</p> <p>c. Connecting and co-creating with Local Citizens: Students will become involved in the local community by volunteering work, setting up citizens help desks, and by contributing to the development of housing solutions via a co-living programme.</p> <p>d. Collaborating with Local Governments and Businesses: Local/regional governments and SMEs will be partnering to foster a bottom-up, Europe-wide co-creation process in social engagement, innovation and entrepreneurship.</p>
16.	<p>a. Multidisciplinarity: connecting our common core of Science and Technology education with other fields, such as arts, design, business, humanities, and social sciences.</p> <p>b. Holistic approach to mobility: To realize flexible study path we are focusing on different types of study programmes (from short-term courses to joint programmes) and student mobility (virtual, blended or physical).</p> <p>c. Focussing on current societal challenges, in particular in Energy, AI and Industry 4.0.</p> <p>d. Entrepreneurship: Enabling students to connect their innovative ideas to business ventures.</p> <p>e. Regional impact: connecting our regional innovation ecosystems and initiate a trans-regional network for open innovation and entrepreneurship.</p>

2.2 Could you briefly describe the joint provision that your European University wants to set up? Which (joint) programmes, courses or other joint provision have you planned?

Sixteen alliances responded to this question. Some answers were quite general, e.g. referring to (automatic) recognition issues. Examples of joint provisions that are given by the alliances include:

- Developing Joint Bachelors, a Joint Master, a Joint Micromaster, a Joint Doctorate, joint continuous education and several joint formats at course level.
- Developing small-scale joint programmes.
- Seven new joint degrees will be implemented.
- Some modules and a master of 90 ECTS. We will scale the model to bachelors and other masters, and to phd transversal modules.
- A joint doctoral school / programme focusing on the pilot theme "Energy"; Joint interdisciplinary doctoral courses (i.e. „Philosophy, technology, art and society“ with a focus on "Philosophy of technology")
- Joint study programmes on all three levels, BA, MA and PhD. All study programmes should have multidisciplinary approach. BA and MA study programmes will be in the field of different sciences with a wide offer of minors from the same or other scientific fields which will allow the students to shape their study course according to their necessities and wishes.
- Creation of joint courses, study and mobility pathways, double/multiple diploma at Bachelor, Master and PhD level.
- Innovative study paths for a new M.Sc. – "5G and Machine Intelligence"; "Entrepreneurship Minor" with an ecosystem approach, "Business skills for AI, Energy and Industry 4.0".
- Various courses within and between the faculties and partners, i.e. summer schools and interdisciplinary study projects.
- Consolidate and connect study programmes in the field of European languages, establishing a model language policy for multilingual universities.
- Expand the teaching offer in the field of Liberal Arts of Sciences, working towards a "European Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences"
- Increase options for teaching study-units and courses offered in the English language and at least in one other language across the alliance.
- Joint teaching and teacher mobility within summer schools and interdisciplinary study project; Staff mobility within thematic staff weeks.
- Joint virtual eLearning platform that allows all students of the participating universities to have open access to a shared teaching and learning resources catalogue
- Joint curricula leveraging physical mobility as well as innovative virtual mobility and virtual exchange scenarios to extend possibilities offered to students to access education and collaborate cross-universities
- Increase in both virtual/digital and physical mobility across the universities of the Alliance
- Micro mobility program (summer/winter schools, short-term research stages for MA and PhD students, practical experiences, staff and faculty mobility)

- Virtual a-synchronic teaching units on the history, politics, law, economy of the European Union
- Create a virtual interuniversity campus (for virtual mobility implementation, learning platform based on gamification)
- Strengthen inter-regional meta-networks (developing master labs, research internships for graduate students in collaboration with socio-economical, cultural partners)
- Foster university community involvement and appropriation of the alliance through diverse manifestations/events.
- interinstitutional Learning Communities connect students, academic staff and stakeholders in order to co-create learning content. The partners will organise their common curriculum on a collaborative learning platform.
- The alliance's Campus is a jointly organised semester programme on rotating hosting campuses that gathers students from all partner universities. Each Campus is thematically oriented and offers students a semester-long programme using Erasmus+ mobility funding; all the courses are taught by teachers from partner universities. In contrast to a regular ERASMUS stay, the Campus provides a structured framework that aims at encouraging even the more hesitant students to spend time abroad.
- Personalized academic curricula will be the backbone of an equitable, diverse and effective education system that recognises and optimally fosters individual talents. The alliance will also be a place where students gain professional and cultural experience relating to the different regional contexts across Europe. To this aim, alliance-wide work-based programme and opportunities will be available as well as activities to facilitate and foster student's and staff's civic engagement.

2.3 Could you briefly describe how the internal QA of your European University will be set up?

Fourteen alliances responded to this question. Some answers were quite general, e.g. referring to the ESG and developing a common understanding of the different quality assurance models of the alliance' members, and to agree upon 'shared values of education quality and quality culture'. Also the establishment of an Advisory Board with external members was mentioned more than once. Many alliances focus on the project management, e.g. mentioning the development of a Project QA plan with standard reporting templates and a continuous improvement cycle according to a Plan-Do-Check-Act loop. Some alliances responded that the internal QA will be integrated in the governance and management model. For example, one alliance mentioned that the coordinating management office will provide and monitor a quality plan that accompanies the overall project plan as well as a dissemination plan and a data management plan. Progress in the work packages will be continuously monitored by the Secretary General and the respective work package coordinators. Potential deviations of all plans are monitored through a comprehensive risk management. A Governing Platform (composed by all alliance presidents and rectors) will ensure that all partners are considered appropriately and will further define and monitor the overall alliance strategy. A Regulatory Task Force dedicated to regulatory, administrative and legal questions is an integrated part within the governance structure. A panel of high level experts will evaluate and review the alliance after two years. Another alliance mentioned that quality assurance procedures will be assured by the Quality and Ethics subcommittee, and that a scorecard of key indicators will be made available. According to one alliance the national quality agencies, as associate partners, will assess the curricula design, quality and accreditation.

Other responses were quite elaborate in the approach to internal QA that the alliance will take, e.g.:

- The Quality Assurance System (QAS) is conceptualised as a tool for decision-making for the enhancement of the Alliance. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) will be the body responsible for implementing all the procedures and actions established in this quality system for the different WPs which make up the work plan. This committee will be appointed by the Steering Committee, and will be composed of one representative from each partner University. The QAC will perform different tasks in order to ensure the periodical quality control of the Alliance: It will collect information and analyse data in order to evaluate the relevance, adequacy, progress and achievement of Alliance objectives, considering the different indicators established in each work package.
- As regard the Internal QA, its main aim is to ensure that quality is monitored for deliverables, activities and procedures for the entire duration of the Project. The Board of Rectors will assign responsibility for quality assurance (QA) to an internal quality team (IQT), composed of the Lead Partner of each WP, the project manager, and two students who will be nominated on a rotating basis. The IQT will be responsible for the internal assessment of the project quality and effectiveness, following three complementary strands of action: 1. Production of a Quality Handbook; 2. On-going monitoring; 3. Annual report.

Additionally, the quality of teaching will be assessed by a task force which will develop an internal Quality Assurance strategy, drawing on the good practices and experience of the partner universities and in conformity with the ESG. Finally, the alliance will award a yearly prize to between three and five remarkable initiatives linked to the member universities. This prize will take the form of a label of quality designed to enhance their credibility towards other potential sponsors, and will be supplemented by a mobility.

- The internal QA will be based on the ESG which means that the students' satisfaction comes before everything else. Thus, the students will be included within all the academic processes. The University will make efforts to assure student-centered learning and teaching by assessing the quality of programmes and its characteristics that place the student in the center; flexibility, modern learning and teaching methods, programmes that correspond to labor market needs and, at the same time, meet the students' interests. Also, the University will consider and evaluate the most effective ways of student support. Internal QA procedures already in place at partner institutions will be included into the internal assessment strategy.
- The building blocks of the alliance curriculum emanate from the present curriculum in the respective partner universities. Therefore, QA of the building blocks is covered by the techniques for internal QA applied in each partner university. This requires understanding and transparency of each other's QA systems. Mutual trust in the respective systems is ensured by ESG compliance of the partner universities within their national QA frameworks. The collaborative learning platform needs to be linked to the windows of mobility in the present curricula. Monitoring, follow up and continual improvement of this tool will be central to alliance-specific QA activities.
- Our evaluation board will be appointed by the Steering Committee and will include representatives from the quality assurance centers of all alliance universities and members of Mission Boards. Together, the actors of the evaluation board will draft and create tools for evaluation that can be introduced as surveys, interviews or feedback workshops depending on the activity and the target group. For the assessment at the three stages of our activities, we will use the management methodology of objectives and key results: Explore, Create, Evaluate. During the challenge workshop at the beginning, we will define objectives and key results for single activities to be planned and implemented. The objectives define "what do we want to achieve" and the key results define "how are we going to achieve it".
- A dedicated quality management plan will be developed and implemented at the beginning of the project. It will identify procedures, criteria and resources for monitoring the project effectively. A Quality Assurance Board will be established consisting of one internal expert of each of the partner universities and 4 external experts. External experts will be experienced with the management of large-scale educational innovation strategies at universities. A solid joint quality assurance system will be put in place at the beginning of the project to achieve our long-term goal of realising single accreditation for the joint programmes. The partner universities will apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines and by choosing an EQAR-registered quality assurance agency suitable for each programme. The new joint study programmes will be developed according to the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. When developing new, flexible interuniversity courses and programmes and new mobility formats, staff will be given advice by a permanent unit of the alliance.
- The quality plan consists of a QA system based on the PDCA-cycle, implying openness and a will for continuous improvement, together with a quadruple-helix approach and fair quality reports based on both quantitative and qualitative KPIs. Starting from the existing QA experience of all individual partners, we will draw a common policy and framework, explicitly in line with the ESG, that can be translated vertically (i.e. by all members) and horizontally (i.e. for our new common initiatives). This will be done by a quality task force with representatives (=quality officers) from all partners, with keywords dialogue, subsidiarity, exchange of good practices, aiming at further strengthening the quality culture already present in all partner institutions. We choose an appreciative and development-oriented approach, with confidence in basic quality, with autonomy, ownership and ample interaction. An external advisory committee helps to engage alumni, experts, governments and citizens in order to realize the quadruple-helix.

2.4 What expectations do you have concerning the external QA of the European University and how should the external QA be connected to the internal QA?

Thirteen alliances responded to this question. A few of these alliances responded that they could not answer the question or did not have any specific expectations at this moment. One alliance suggested that links to national QA agencies should be established and also connected this question to the EACEA reporting requirements at months 18 and 36. It was suggested that the 5 mandatory EACEA meetings could be coupled to the Annual Summits of the alliance. Another alliance also perceived the external QA as the mid-term and final evaluations of the project and stated that these evaluations “will be organized by the External Advisory Board (including members from the international academic community as well as local, regional and national public and private stakeholders).” Similarly, an alliance responded that “Internal QA will be complemented by an external perspective, which will be entrusted to an International Advisory Board (IAB). It will be composed of five independent and internationally recognized experts in higher education and will be responsible for monitoring, quality assurance and external advice....The IAB will provide feedback from an external expert perspective on methodological appropriateness, relevance, integrity, internal coherence and compliance with the established requirements, work plan and timelines.” These responses show that external QA can be perceived by alliances in different ways: relating to national QA agencies and procedures, the EACEA evaluations of the project, or to international advisory boards consisting of external experts that are set up as part of the internal QA arrangements of the project.

Many alliances emphasise that the internal and external QA should be aligned. According to one alliance “Both types of QA should be based on similar methods and follow similar procedures...Ideally, both types of QA will lead to extremely valuable results / insights without being over-demanding, i.e. too time-consuming....”. Another alliance states that the external QA has to collaborate with the internal quality team and “participate to selected activities provided by the Project (i.e., partnership meetings, conferences, ...) and produce external quality reports analysing data collected autonomously in order to compare/integrate these results with Internal QA’ results.”

Other expectations with regard to external QA in connection with internal QA emphasised desires for an aligned, lean, trust-based and enhancement-led approach, as is demonstrated in the following responses:

- We expect a Common Assessment Framework, with not too much or too complicate evidences and indicators but significant and effective, simplified external procedures and aligned with the aim of the creation of these alliances. We expect procedures that allows the European University not only the detection of their strengths and weaknesses, but mainly to help European universities to build our quality management that helps to innovative while transforming and prepare for the future. We need a balance between the needs of quality assessment of external agencies and government and the need of quality management of each university. They need to be aligned, understood as a same aim. The control must be established based on quality management system evaluation/certification and evaluation of results.
- The external QA of a European University is to support trust in the alliance’s part of the curriculum. To make sure that partners will continue to support the Learning Communities, a link has to be established between the alliance educational board and the educational boards in the respective partner universities. The tools of external QA are thus focused on connectedness between the systems and need not to result in superposition of quality systems.
- We look to the EUniQ project to help with self-assessment of quality. It would be important to share common experiences across different European Universities. It still remains to be defined how to connect the EUniQ project to the internal processes of our project. This will become clearer after the workshop.
- Taking into account the autonomy of our institutions ; Appropriately applying existing measures and guidelines rather than defining new rules; A clear set of priorities and their practical implementation; An overall frame that helps the set-up of internal QA; Exchange about different QA approaches of European Universities.
- We hope that the external QA supports the appreciative approach and that it is conducted taking into account the specific context of and choices made by each European University and having confidence in their basic quality. Ideally, the external QA is based on assessments that start from the internal QA set up by each European University, with room for dialogue and communication, and with ultimate aim a sound quality culture and a continuously growing quality.

2.5 Do you anticipate any (e.g. legal or national) obstacles when it comes to setting up the QA of the European University? If yes, could you mention a few of these obstacles?

Fourteen alliances responded to this question. Although a few alliances do not anticipate obstacles, e.g. relying on assessments that will be set up according to the ESG, most do. The following examples of anticipated obstacles were mentioned in the responses:

- National education laws. It is understood that the harmonisation of curricula is a difficult task due to differences in national rules.
- Recognition of teaching hours taught during mobility or at distance (e.g. via videoconference tools); Recognition of teaching hours at a partner university and developing inter-institutional guidelines for free movement of university staff and academics.
- Automatic recognition of study credits.
- Accreditation system and regulations not harmonised among partner countries. If the establishment of European campuses has to be considered a medium term goal for European Universities, these procedures will have to be reconsidered and better aligned.
- No common accreditation system for European universities that can be used by any agency and recognised by any European agency. Differences in the rules, approaches and timescales of national agencies.
- It is not self-evident to develop an internal QA framework for our European University that addresses all requirements in all systems. It could also be a barrier preventing European Universities to design lean QA systems. We have chosen an appreciative approach, but for our partners operating in a completely different external QA system, this could entail a difficult balance.
- The connection of financing of education to the accreditation.
- Differences in the autonomy of universities in each national context.
- The complexity of QA in a multinational university consortium bringing together HEIs with very different legal and economic constraints, educational environments and quality assurance cultures.
- The external QA also needs to raise awareness for the necessity of developing internal quality cultures.
- Lack of awareness and differences in the approach to QA, its focus and necessity.
- Obstacles for setting up multiple or joint diplomas; Regulatory issues of joint degrees at M.Sc. level and for joint Ph.D. programmes.
- Assuring institutional enhancement (not only data collection).

Some responses hinted at obstacles that exceed the realm of (external) QA, e.g.:

- Data protection issues; Questions of IP, data protection, open science etc.
- The importance of intellectual property law issues is particularly relevant to our project.
- Differences in academic agendas
- Majors/minors in studies
- Regulated professions (medicine, pharmacy, ...)
- Diverse frameworks for staff mobility and staff training
- Sustainability of the project (3 years only)
- Consequences of Brexit.
- Low technical support from EU.
- European Higher Education Area very heterogeneous
- Afraid of mobility.
- Low idiomatic level in our communities.

One alliance mentioned that they are monitoring obstacles as part of their project:

- We are planning to conduct two reports which will map obstacles, enablers and solutions in i) quality assurance/enhancement systems and in ii) regulatory frameworks related to quality matters.

2.6 Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the QA of European Universities that you want to share with us?

Only four alliances responded to this question. The following answers were given:

- Need for common working group (can be virtual forum) to work on obstacles and on quality.
- It would be very useful and enriching to exchange ideas and good practices between the different alliances.
- We need clear guidelines because the implementation period is short, and the goals are ambitious.
- While designing the QA structures and tools, one should keep in mind that the QA should aim for lean and agile QA processes that do not take up an undue amount of time.