ERA POLICY BRIEF II

December 2023

Arqus Research & Innovation Project

(Grant agreement No 101017448)

European Research Area (ERA) Policy Brief II

SCOPE OF THE POLICY BRIEF

In this policy brief, the European Universities pilot Alliances report on the progress made through cooperation in selected R&I areas and provide a first set of recommendations to the European Commission for further policy development.

Policy background:

In order to strengthen strategic partnerships across the EU amongst higher education institutions, the European Commission targets the emergence of "European Universities" by 2024 by funding alliances from across Europe. The ambitious mandate aims to trigger systemic, structural and sustainable institutionalised cooperation between higher education institutions. As a complement to the Erasmus+ action geared towards supporting higher education cooperation models, Horizon 2020 support is dedicated to contributing to the research and innovation dimension of the alliances between European universities, in line with their shared, integrated, long-term joint strategy and in synergy with their education dimension.

This initiative is one of the flagships of the [European strategy for universities](#) that aims at supporting and enabling universities to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to take a leading role in the recovery of Europe, and in making our society greener, more inclusive and more digital. The adoption of this strategy was accompanied by a Commission [proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges](#) for effective European higher education cooperation. In parallel, the [European Research Area Policy Agenda](#) sets out 20 voluntary actions for the period 2022- 2024, including several of which are relevant for universities. . The feedback from the alliances helped co-shape the ERA Policy Agenda 2022 – 2024, such as ERA actions 1 (sharing of data), 3 (reform of research management), 4 (strengthening careers), 5 (gender equality), 7 (knowledge valorisation), 8 (research infrastructures), 13 (empowering universities), 14 (engaging citizens), 17 (research management).

FEEDBACK ON PROGRESS (MAX 2 P)

1. **Please describe the challenges your Alliance encountered in Reporting Period 2 regarding cooperation between universities in the field of R&I in relation to the institutional change areas (transformation modules) foreseen as well as regulatory obstacles hampering the cooperation.**

2. **Please describe how you tackled or intend to tackle these challenges. Based on your project's experience so far (and if applicable), briefly outline case(s) that you consider as good practice and of interest to other universities or to policy-makers.**

   This section replies to questions 1 and 2 and builds on the content of ERA Policy Brief 1, the content of which continues to be valid, but will not be repeated in detail here. In particular, this applies to the challenges of the European Universities Initiative (EUI) in general as a strong and necessary lever for structural, systemic and sustainable transformation of universities as unique institutions combining education, research, innovation and societal engagement. Continuing challenges addressed include the contradiction between the short-term project-based approach to funding and the long-term holistic

nature of the major goals of the initiative, the diversity of funding sources and regulations, the diversity of starting points among partners regarding resources and capacities, or the wide cultural diversity in

interpretation of concepts arising from deep-rooted national and institutional approaches. To this, we would add the very nature of research cultures and of universities as unique multi-facetted institutions with multiple missions. This ERA Policy Brief 2 addresses the overall initiative from a holistic alliance-based perspective, covering actions undertaken with funding from Horizon 2020, from Erasmus+, or national and regional sources, and specific reference to H2020 SwafS project funding.

A major challenge, which has a strong impact on the entire initiative is uncertainty in relation to continued external funding of the research dimension of the alliance. This uncertainty acts as a dis-incentive for institutions and researchers who are unwilling to devote time and resources to what can be construed as short-term activities with no continuity or relation to long-term strategies. This is closely linked to the short-term project as opposed to long-term programme approach advocated for by alliances if the European University Initiative is to succeed in general in its overall aims. Arqus has addressed this issue transversally by making careful use of a combination of funding sources, including own funds, and by ensuring that activities are aimed at facilitating cooperation through standing joint structures such as our Communities of Practice (e.g. Research Support Officers, Open Science Ambassador Network), the Arqus Strategic Unit, or our newly-restructured three Arqus Boards, among them the Research and Innovation Board and the Societal Engagement Board, each composed of Vice-Rectors responsible for the corresponding area at all Arqus member universities. Current proposals include the setting-up of further scholarship and seed-funding programmes funded by our members to give continuity, upscale and institutionalize pilot actions undertaken with H2020 project funding, alongside an alliance matchmaking platform for researchers.

For developing a common R&I agenda, challenges include aligning different institutional priorities and frameworks, added to the strongly bottom-up nature of research collaboration which often arises and thrives outside and irrespective of top-down structures and planning. Here again, our standing joint structures offer a framework for continued rapprochement, with a step-by-step approach, starting with a few jointly identified priority areas based on analysis of strategic institutional interest and existing cooperation (Climate Change and Sustainability; Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation; European Identity and Heritage). Intense bottom-up activity through Research Focus Forums, large researcher networking workshops, interdisciplinary "bridging" workshops, doctoral and postdoctoral mobility, including group mobility (Twinning), summer schools, mentoring programmes, together with the building of an increasingly close-knit community of researchers and research support officers all combine gradually to lay fertile seedbeds for a meaningful and impactful long-term common R&I agenda within the alliance.

For strengthening human capital, challenges continue to centre on diverse legal frameworks amongst institutions, and on different research cultures across institutions, but also across disciplines. Furthermore, it is challenging to take full advantage of potential synergies between research and education, as is essential at universities as research-driven institutions, given the imbalance between the two major missions in terms of staff dedication and career recognition, and the tendency to silo the two. In order to address this challenge, Arqus has adopted a focus on nurturing researcher talent and encouraging mobility. From its inception, Arqus has paid particular attention to the doctoral cycle and early-stage researchers as key to the future of research collaboration. An example from current Erasmus+ funding is the Arqus Talent Fund, which has selected the first 7 Arqus doctoral scholars, who all have mandatory mobility at a second Arqus university. This pilot initiative will now evolve into a further own- funded Arqus programme to promote joint research between Arqus universities through co-tutelles and co-supervision of doctoral theses within the framework of leading research projects and teams. Similarly, schemes such as the Arqus Mentoring Programme or transferable skills development programmes for doctoral candidates address these challenges. Innovative mobility has been promoted through the Twinning programme for group mobility involving senior researchers accompanied by small groups of doctoral candidates.

Sharing research infrastructures: challenges centre on diversity in infrastructure size, scope, and management, which has made the collection and collation of data complex. In some cases, institutional, regional and national schemes already exist, but are not interoperable. Following initial mapping and

analysis of infrastructures and platforms, work is ongoing on digital infrastructure for this under the current Erasmus+ funding for Arqus, in close collaboration with the Arqus Research and Innovation Board.

With regard to engaging non-academic actors and citizen and societal engagement in general, challenges have centred on different degrees of development of institutional activities and cultures at our institutions, and in the broader sense in our local ecosystems. WP6 in the SwafS project was entirely devoted to developing tools for citizen science which are currently being disseminated within and beyond the alliance, and WP4 has generated a set of resources for innovative transfer strategies. The alliance is carefully ensuring synergies between this work and that undertaken under Erasmus+ funding to link our nine local ecosystems.

As for mainstreaming Open Science, again a challenge has been the differing degrees of implementation of open science practice and policy at our nine institutions and in their corresponding regulatory contexts. The alliance has been committed to Open Science from its inception, constituting one of the initial key identifying features and, in the current Mission Statement 2022-32, one of the major cross-cutting enabling strategies for the alliance. Arqus has set up a network of Open Science Ambassadors, who are currently working collaboratively with the ENLIGHT Alliance on a series of webinar on Open Science practices.

Exploring joint university structures of diverse nature and with diverse functions has been a central issue and challenge for alliances from their inception. Arqus has recently implemented a review of initial structures designed in 2018 in the light of the experience of the first few years of collaboration, and is currently in a transition period to a new structure which is intended to be more agile and more adapted to the substantial challenges of the EUI. In particular, strategic structures have evolved to become more specific to each of the major university missions and to ensure involvement of top-level management at each partner institution in decision-making. Similarly, at intermediate levels, working groups, communities of practice, living lab clusters, and other joint structures are designed to ensure institution-wide horizontal and vertical collaboration. As for support structures, both centralised and de-centralised secretariats have been consolidated, and a dedicated Arqus Learning Management System has been procured which will shortly offer a wide range of functionalities for joint learning and teaching of all kinds, including early-stage researcher and staff development programmes. A Community of Practice of research support officers constitutes the embryo for a de-centralised joint research support structure with dedicated staff supporting intra-alliance research cooperation.

3. **Please describe the tangible progress that individual partners as well as the Alliance as a whole have made in terms of introducing changes in their entities as a result of this project.**

Tangible progress in relation to each Transformational module[1]:

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[1] See H2020 Work Programme 2018-20 - 16 Science with and for Society - h2020-wp1820-swfs_en-1, page 98: "[…](1) developing a common research and innovation agenda and action plan; (2) strengthening human capital, enabling balanced brain circulation and gender balance; (3) sharing research infrastructures and other resources; (4) reinforcing cooperation with non-academic actors, esp. academia-business cooperation; (5) mainstreaming of comprehensive Open Science practices; (6) involvement of citizens, civil society and public/cities authorities in research and innovation; (7) exploring joint structures across the European Universities on technical activities common to all 'European Universities', facilitating collaboration in activities, obstacles, and solutions that could be common to all alliances, as well as clustering activities to share best practices on research and innovation".

TM1 development of joint research agenda

The process of drawing up a Joint Research Action Plan of the Arqus universities has contributed to increasing among partner governance and senior research officers:
- deeper awareness about each other's research structures, organisation, priority topics, funding schemes.

- efforts to identify common ground on these to ensure that the alliance can bring added value to each partner. This will continue post-SwafS with the inclusion of the R&I dimension in the general strategic planning of the Alliance.

TM2 strengthening human capital
- In the area of research assessment reform, analysis of best practice and positions on this at partner universities is being carried out by a dedicated Task Force on Research Assessment Reform, in which the innovative assessment system being tried out currently at University of Graz and other examples of evolution of research assessment at Arqus universities are being shared and discussed among Arqus partners. The objective is that this experience sharing should lead to improved implementation at each Alliance partner.

- Networking initiatives to bring Arqus researchers together to work on collaborative projects have led to a dozen new applications to European funding sources as a direct result. Arqus partners are committed to continuing to promote research with alliance partners as one of their priorities.

- Resources created in the Arqus R.I. project are available for further strengthening of research capacities in the Alliance, e.g. an Open Science Ambassador Network (see also TM5), a toolbox for Open Research Agenda Setting (see also TM6), and recommendation and training materials in OS, ORAS and Co-creation in Transfer (see also TMs 4, 5 and 6).

TM4 Reinforcing cooperation with non-academic actors, esp. academia-business collaboration
The project has generated a set of resources for co-creation in transfer which will be available to all Arqus partners' research communities and governance when developing innovative transfer strategies: a pilot training programme on co-creation in transfer, a set of guidelines based on a survey on practices and priorities in Arqus universities, as well as a feasibility study for setting up a co-creation lab at Arqus universities. All of these are available on the Arqus website.

TM5 mainstreaming of comprehensive OS practices
The project has also generated resources to support Arqus institutions in the mainstreaming of Open Science practice, by setting up a specific OS section on the Arqus website which contains training materials and contact data of the members of the OS Ambassador Network, as well as their profiles and interests in OS. The Ambassadors are enthusiastic and experienced practitioners of OS available to give advice to interested researchers about the implications of OS for their research. They are also committed to continuing the development of OS training materials in the future. These training materials will also be made available through the DeReC (Development Resource Centre for Early-stage Researchers). The Network is already offering a series of webinars on Open Science jointly with a similar network in the ENLIGHT Alliance.

TM6 engagement of societal actors (involvement of citizens, civil society and public/cities authorities in research and innovation)
A Toolbox on Open Research Agenda Setting generated in Arqus R.I. has increased resources available to Arqus researchers for the involvement of citizens, civil society and public authorities in co-creation of research. A set of Recommendations was drawn up to help Arqus universities' management, administration and researchers to establish and further an effective framework for ORAS initiatives.

TM7 exploring joint university structures:
As outlined above, Arqus has set up three Boards, one corresponding to each mission of universities:

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Education, R&I and Societal Engagement. These are made up of Vice-Rectors or other top-level representatives with an institutional mandate.

A Community of Practice of Research Support Officers has been set up among all nine Arqus Universities, and a digital learning platform has been purchased and is currently being adapted to specific Arqus needs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (MAX 2 P)

In this section, the European Universities pilot Alliances make recommendations for policy. Given the unique strengths and focus of each European University Alliance, please focus only on those aspects of most relevance to your case.

Please feel free as well to expand to other policy topics you may wish to share your learnings and recommendations with (other recommendations).

1. **The inclusive cooperation approach of the Alliances was shown to accelerate institutional change also in less R&I-intensive universities, clearly indicating it has a positive impact on capacity building in R&I, next to education. It is however unclear up to now if the approach also positively affects excellent research. Therefore, please provide arguments and concrete examples how your Alliance provides (or is anticipated to provide) added value as compared to 'traditional' cross-border cooperation between researchers, such as through competitive collaborative research projects by the Framework Programme.**

True access to excellence is possible if the alliance convinces top researchers to join forces and efforts in large-scale projects. This seems possible if appropriate support can be guaranteed. To support excellent research the alliance is currently identifying key research areas for development and networking, designing steps to strengthen research infrastructure, to support joint publications and grant applications, and to optimize the use of resources to obtain external funding.

Strategic and important topics will incorporate interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, transformation and inter-cooperation. Arqus has already defined global common research areas such as climate change and environmental sustainability, artificial intelligence and digital transformation, and European identity and heritage. In order to home in on more specific research topics, a survey (see below) within the Arqus universities has identified areas of high competence. Now the aim is to approach our top researchers to stimulate and facilitate highly competitive grant applications in these areas. This development will go together with the career development of early-stage researchers. The aim is to interlink our young researcher communities and to build up a well-grounded, sustainable and vital researcher network for Arqus. The serious commitment of Arqus to this development can be seen in the decision to devote funds from our own university budgets as incentive mechanisms to initiate and carry out joint research projects.

During the Arqus I and Arqus R.I. funding periods, initial activities were undertaken to establish and strengthen a joint, internationally visible Arqus research community. These activities **include Research Focus Forums, Large Networking Workshops for researchers on climate change and artificial intelligence, Bridging Workshops** for researchers to explore the potential for interdisciplinary projects between climate change and artificial intelligence, **the Arqus Mentoring Programme**, which matches mentees from one partner university with a mentor (senior researcher) from another Arqus partner university, and more than **200 short-term researcher exchanges** across Arqus universities. In addition, a **Seed Funding Scheme** has been set up to support the organization of consortium meetings and other activities necessary for the preparation of competitive joint projects and initiatives. Besides these numerous networking activities, a common **infrastructure database** has been created.

Recently, important strategic issues were formulated for Arqus and, alongside joint academic offer at various levels, the highest priority was given to joint research, support for early-stage researchers, shared research infrastructure and mobility.

As there will regrettably be no dedicated follow-up funding for alliances from Horizon Europe for the time being, we are now planning to support a limited number of promising activities on specific topics (see above) in order to sustain the research dimension of Arqus in the coming years. To this end, Arqus has launched a bottom-up call for proposals from the community. The proposals should focus on attracting more students and research staff to Arqus and encouraging top researchers to cooperate. All proposals have been presented at the Arqus R.I. final conference in December 2023.

Besides the proposals coming from the community, the Arqus Vice Rectors for Research (Research and Innovation Board) will together set up a process to bring together the best Arqus researchers around a certain topic. This will require 4 steps.

Overview on topics of joint interest/overlap:

- Identify the most promising areas for collaboration with top researchers;
- These top researchers should meet at a carefully designed Arqus Research Symposium;
- After this symposium they should assess their opportunities for joint proposals to external funding calls;
- Provision of resources for joint activities

A first task has been to identify most promising areas for collaboration shared by the partner universities. A survey identified climate change, biodiversity and sustainability of materials and processes; digital humanities and transformation; healthy aging and metabolic disorders; and European dimension, democracy and cultural heritage. Future priorities for shared infrastructure will follow the needs of these areas. In addition, networking between research management units of the Alliance through their Community of Practice will foster grant applications in these areas. Finally, the establishment of temporary inter-university institutes or centres is under consideration as a means to support the development of excellence research fields in order to achieve the highest visibility within the Alliance and the ERA network.

Alongside these activities, Arqus II Erasmus+ funding2 will provide research support, in particular for early-stage researchers, through the continuation of the highly successful Arqus early-stage mentoring programme, the establishment of an Arqus PhD Advisory Board and an Arqus Early-stage Researcher Development Resource Centre, as well as the continued delivery of a training programme for careers outside academia and the development of a visiting scholar scheme for post-doctoral researchers. Transdisciplinary, impact-oriented summer/winter schools will also continue to be offered to Arqus researchers.

2. **The Alliances have repeatedly asked the EU and Member States (MS) to design a holistic support system, covering all their missions at once and reducing administrative burden to a minimum. Please explain your views and suggestions on how this should be realised in practice on the medium and long- term. Take into account differences in competences (e.g. R&I is a shared competence between EU and MS, while education is exclusive national competence) and be precise in the support target (e.g. the arrangement of common support for actual joint research activities might need to be different than support for building joint capacity in training, research coordination, etc). Be as concrete as possible, and where relevant illustrate your recommendation with practice examples of such holistic support currently provided at national level.**

Research consortia often build on years of collaborative research experience when applying for a competitive EU call for proposals. In the case of research consortia emerging from European Universities, this long-term collaboration is different in nature, given the transversal character and especially the ambition of the initiative, not limited to any one domain, or to any one mission of our universities in order to obtain maximum impact on our institutions and the European university system as a whole. Building this is necessarily a long- term process, and a very necessary one, without which the alliances would not be able to fulfil their essential research mission, which is of particular interest to Arqus as an alliance of research-

intensive universities. The European strategy for universities emphasizes the need for European university alliances to develop and share long-term structural, sustainable and systemic cooperation, not only in education but also in research. If this is to be taken seriously, the creation of research consortia needs to be supported. We therefore see a strong need for additional research programmes that address the specific needs of University Alliances. Such additional programmes should aim at establishing permanent resources, e.g. building up joint research support offices, topic-oriented competence centres, transdisciplinary institutions, and the establishment of permanent Living Labs. In the case of infrastructure programmes (such as EFRE), some of these should also be dedicated to European University Alliances. They should be used to set up core facilities and database infrastructures. With such direct support, the EU will fund the Alliances directly and can thus compensate for national imbalance in funding.

While scientific excellence must remain a priority in the selection of research projects funded by Europe, it would be important for calls for proposals to take into account conditions such as at least three partners being members of the same alliance, in order to strengthen research excellence within the European alliances in the long term. Consolidated long-term consortia such as European University Alliances offer optimal use of funds, avoiding the need to reconfigure consortia for each new application, building on constant collaboration among specialist groups each with their existing local, national and international networks, whilst remaining open to new external collaborations where these are appropriate or impactful. The use of EFRD funds to strengthen the competitiveness and cohesion of European alliance regions is an example of this. These calls for proposals financed by Europe would complement certain national support programmes which make it possible to develop short-term actions, although these are not balanced within the alliances, thus limiting their impact in the long term and necessitating a European-level action to strengthen the alliances

3. **Please illustrate with concrete examples how your Alliance will integrate the work on the transformation modules developed under this H2020-SwafS support with the Erasmus+ support to the Alliance project. Please provide the current state-of-affairs and your plans to integrate all your missions.**

From its inception, Arqus has understood the alliance to be a single endeavour, drawing on multiple funding sources to reach its major goals in all missions of our universities. This means that the SwafS project was already designed in coordination with the Erasmus+ funding 2019-22, and the second round of Erasmus funding, Arqus II 2022-26, was designed with the activities underway in the SwafS project in mind. Similarly, the use of complementary national funding where it exists has been designed as part of the overall approach to our long-term alliance goals.

Many of the activities carried out under the Erasmus+ funding have a direct impact on the research dimension of Arqus as an alliance of research-intensive universities. A few examples are the work carried out since 2019 on doctoral education, including courses on preparing for non-academic careers, summer schools on transferable and generic, but also discipline-specific skills. Similarly, under Erasmus+ a cluster map of existing research cooperation led to the designation of the three major interdisciplinary priorities for Arqus activities in all major missions as described above, to the organization of a series of research focus forums, and innovative mobility programmes (Twinning group mobility or mobility between our university business incubators) to bring together both early-stage and senior researchers. A more recent example is the Arqus Talent Fund, which has to date selected 7 doctoral and 9 Master's candidates for full Arqus scholarships involving at least two Arqus universities. The Arqus Living Lab clusters around the alliance's three major interdisciplinary priority areas are in part an evolution of the challenge-based learning programmes designed and implemented under Arqus I with the participation of researchers and civil society actors.

Turning specifically to the outcomes of the SwafS project funding, the following concrete examples show the integration of the work on the transformation modules (TMs) developed in Arqus R.I. with the structures

created at Alliance level and actions under the Erasmus+ support, both in the initial funding period 2019-22

and in the renewed funding period 2022-26.

- **TM7:** the **High-Level Seminar** established in Arqus R.I., a body for mutual knowledge and joint reflection on R&I, has **evolved into** and been replaced by a more "executive" standing structure, the Board of the **Action Line Research and Innovation**, a body with decision-making power on policy and investment in joint research.

- **TM1:** The content of the Arqus R.I.-born **Joint Research Action Plan** will become, from January 2024 onwards, **part of the general strategic planning** instruments of the Alliance (Balance Score Card and KPIs being developed by Arqus II Work Package on Strategic Development).

- **TM2, TM3 and TM7:** In Arqus II, collaboration among professional staff is channelled through the creation of Communities of Practice. **Research Support Officers of all nine Arqus universities have set up such a Community of Practice (CoP)**, with the aim of exchanging experiences and best practices, developing a training plan and channelling partner searches for collaborative projects in the Alliance. A second CoP of RSO members specialised in financial aspects of international projects is currently being discussed.

- **TM3 and TM7:** Building on lessons learnt in the Arqus R.I. task of "Building an Arqus Research Community", a proposal is being developed to create an Arqus researcher **matchmaking platform and a programme of matchmaking events.** This proposal was presented at the Arqus R.I. Final Conference to the Research and Innovation Board. A **monitoring tool for new research collaborations** is also being developed as one of the initial 10 **Key Processes** of the Arqus Alliance, ensuring the necessary follow- up. This is a direct result of the challenges encountered when writing reports on and evaluating the impact of researcher networking events, to keep track of new collaborations.

- **TM5 and TM2:** The **Network of Open Science Ambassadors** set up in Arqus R.I. is in the process of becoming a Community of Practice and should evolve into a standing structure giving **continuity to the promotion of OS in Arqus** at researcher and governance level. Furthermore, a **Science Communication** Task in the Arqus II WP on Linking Local Ecosystems will benefit from the Arqus R.I. work on Open Science.

- **TM2** As the University of Graz is piloting new procedures and criteria for **research assessment** both at individual and department level, a Task Force associates other Arqus universities to this exercise via a **bench-learning pilot open to all Arqus universities** (beyond the six Arqus R.I. members). The Task Force is also exploring possible exchange of experiences with other Alliances working on a similar way on this topic. The same group of universities is involved in **setting up a CoARA working group**. At two partner institutions, Arqus R.I. leaders are involving **university governance and high-level officials of national evaluation agencies** in face-to-face **dialogue on the reform of research assessment.**

- **TM2 a Task Force on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** was created in the second half of the Arqus R.I. project with the aim of mainstreaming EDI into Arqus R.I. activities and especially into the Joint Research Action Plan, taking full advantage of extensive work previously carried under Erasmus+ funding. The TF issued **Recommendations on Gender Balance** which have subsequently been included **in the Arqus Alliance-wide Handbook** as part of the Ethics and Data Protection Protocol of the Alliance. Equally, other elements of the Ethics Protocol developed in Arqus R.I. have fed into the Arqus Alliance Handbook.

- **TM4, TM5 and TM6: Training materials created in Arqus R.I.**, on Open Science **(TM5)**, co-creation in transfer **(TM4)** and stakeholder involvement through Open Research Agenda Setting **(TM6)** are available on the Arqus website in dedicated sections and user-friendly presentation, both for online consultation and in downloadable formats. The existence and use of these materials **will be promoted through the DeRec** (ESR resource development centre) being set up in **Arqus II** to be further developed and expanded

In relation to the second part of this question, i.e. our Alliance's **plans to integrate all our missions,** as pointed out above, this integration **has already been happening and has been an essential premise in the construction of Arqus** since its very beginning, as indeed has been the case in many other European University Alliances. A host of Arqus activities have elements which integrate two or more missions. Challenge-based research-driven learning programmes (regularly offered since Arqus I), workshops testing open research agenda setting tools with participation of researchers, citizens and students (Arqus R.I.) and, more recently, Living Labs in Arqus II bringing together academics, researchers, students and societal actors, are but a very few examples of this integration of several or all missions in Arqus activities. **Many more** examples can be seen in the document prepared by FOREU in this regard.

4. **Other recommendations (if not covered above)**

The establishment of a sustainable and predictable investment pathway architecture to allow the long-term, multi-mission vision of the alliances to become a reality as a necessary part of a globally competitive European Education and Research Area. Furthermore, Arqus urges Member States to strongly engage in and support such a process to ensure a coherent approach across European countries. This is necessary to truly deliver on the ambition and full potential of the European Universities Initiative.

European Universities Alliances fully committed to making the initiative a success in a long term

European University Alliances welcome the new EU Commissioner Iliana Ivanova and her stated support for the European Universities' Initiative, and are looking forward to engaging with her and her team. Alliances are committed to the European Universities, and Europe can count on the Alliances to continue this European success story and to further realise the full potential of the European Universities. Many exciting innovations, impressive developments and fruitful collaborations are already taking place, as recently showcased at the II Forum of Alliances in Barcelona on 14 and 15 September. Concrete success stories can be found on the communication channels of the Alliances and the European Universities.

As mentioned by Vice-President Schinas in Barcelona, the European Universities initiative is not a project, but a long-term transformational process. In this context, the European Universities alliances highlighted last year their need for sustainable and holistic support. This should combine resources from both the EU and Member states to ensure a more systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation across Europe and to unfold the full multi-mission transformation potential of the European Universities Initiative beyond the current Erasmus+ based funding model which extends until 2028/29. We, the European University Alliances would like to thank the European Commission for listening, and for the open debate that has been launched over the future **investment pathway** for European Universities.[1]

The Alliances remain committed to the transformational agenda enabled to date through Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 (unfortunately not yet continued in Horizon Europe) and the engagement of their own resources. The Alliances are also willing to discuss with all relevant stakeholders the establishment of a sustainable and predictable investment pathway architecture to allow the long-term, multi-mission vision of the alliances to be realised. A necessary part of a globally competitive European Education and Research Area. Furthermore, Alliances urge the Member States to strongly engage in and support such a process to ensure a coherent approach across European countries. This is necessary to truly deliver on the ambition and full potential of the European Universities initiative.

Alliances call for an investment pathway which depicts a clear vision for a long-term and holistic financial sustainable future. With that, the Alliances reiterate their call expressed in a joint statement of all 41 European University Alliances at that time on 8 March 2022:

> "All 41 alliances call on the Member States to urgently support the **establishment of holistic and sustainable long-term funding** to deepen transnational cooperation of European University alliances across all their missions in a coherent way. This will enable the European Universities Initiative to go beyond a short-term project approach and deliver on their long-term, innovative and ambitious vision of future-proof European universities. This funding must (1) **integrate all university's missions** (education, research, innovation, transfer to society) and (2) **combine resources** (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Interregional Innovation Investments, member state funding, etc.) reflecting not only the knowledge square approach, but also the infrastructural and other supports needed to drive the development of globally competitive European University Alliances. Finally, it is important that support is (3) **sustainable**, a

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[1] Individual alliances provide a more detailed feedback according to the background documents for the investment pathway, provided by DG EAC, in cooperation with DG RTD, including concrete input on the R&I needs of alliances.

long-term funding instrument is needed to build sustainable European Universities that can deliver on their vision. The upcoming midterm review of the current European Programmes is an excellent momentum to test and design such a holistic funding instrument."