

ARQUS MISSION STATEMENT & JOINT LONG-TERM STRATEGY

2026-2035



Arqus Mission Statement & Joint Long-term Strategy

2026-2035



Full partners



UNIVERSIDAD DE GRANADA



UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG



Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth



University of Minho
uminho.pt



UNIVERSITÀ DI PADOVA



Vilnius universitetas



Uniwersytet Wrocławski

Associate universities



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01

Arqus Mission Statement 2026-2035

Preamble

The Arqus European University Alliance brings together the universities of Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon 1, Maynooth, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wrocław, along with two associate universities: Durham and National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, all of whom share extensive experience in joint transnational projects in many fields, together with a common profile as highly internationalised institutions with deep regional engagement in medium—or small—sized cities.

The Alliance's name stems from the Latin term *arcus/arquus*, for arch, representing the strong foundations the consortium has laid since 2018 to build bridges towards a shared future, to respond to the grand global societal challenges and to advance towards deeper European integration.

This renewed Mission Statement for the period 2026-35 updates previous versions of the Arqus Mission Statement (2019-25 and

2022-32); it builds on the Alliance's experience of working together since 2018, in particular during the first and second Erasmus+ funded work plans 2019-22 and 2022-26, and the Horizon 2020 funded SwafS project Arqus R&I 2021-23, on the many lessons learned, not least during the pandemic of Covid-19, and on valuable contributions from our members who have joined since 2021: Durham, Maynooth, Minho, Mohyla Academy and Wrocław, to complement our existing strengths, strategic growth and geographical balance.

The Alliance defines itself as a long-term initiative, beyond the constraints of individual funding streams and narrow project-based approaches. For this reason, this Mission Statement constitutes a programmatic approach for the next ten years, including all aspects of Alliance activity (education, research, innovation, culture, societal engagement, global outreach), beyond the priorities and limitations of specific funding calls and programmes.

Since the establishment of the Alliance in 2018, the already complex global challenges faced

by the world and by Europe in particular have grown at an alarming speed, as different geopolitical situations threaten core democratic values; as the future of the planet is increasingly endangered by human-driven climate change; as global health faces new and urgent challenges; as the digital revolution impacts our daily lives, the way we communicate and are informed, often calling basic longstanding assumptions about the world order into question. In this context of growing uncertainty, Arqus reiterates its commitment to essential democratic principles and to the value of responsible knowledge and science as major instruments for human progress. Arqus believes that universities, in all their missions, play a key role in finding solutions essential for the future of humankind and for shaping a more innovative, inclusive and resilient Europe. By working together our impact is even stronger. For all these reasons, **democratic resilience** will centre the upcoming period 2026-35 and will continue to form the backbone of the alliance vision, mission, goals, and core values.



Vision, Mission, Values and Major Goals



Vision

A forward-looking, open, integrated and research-driven European University, building transformative excellence with and for all.



Mission

To transform European higher education, research and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration, in pursuit of an equitable and sustainable future by together:

- Educating critical and socially engaged European citizens, equipped for lifelong learning, leaving no-one behind.
- Generating excellent, open, challenge-driven, innovative, and reflective knowledge.
- Acting as a committed multi-level societal and global player.
- Bringing down barriers to effective cooperation.





Values

Arqus acts in defence and promotion of:

- The core European values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for diversity and human rights, solidarity and the pursuit of peace and justice in Europe and the world.
- The core university values expressed in the Magna Charta Universitatum.
- The unique role played by universities as open places of freedom, pluralism and democratic participation, dedicated to the generation and dissemination of knowledge through research, education, innovation and culture for sustainable societal progress.
- The shared understanding of higher education as a public good and a public responsibility which serves purposes of individual, social, economic and cultural development.
- The conviction that through alliances people and institutions are stronger in their pursuit of the common good.



Major Goals

- Effective barrier-free cooperation at all levels of institutional activity in order to better respond to existing and emerging societal challenges.
- Joint evidence-based institutional learning, arising from acting as a common laboratory beyond the mainstream, innovating in pursuit of systemic, structural and sustainable impact.
- Engaged communities of learners, academics, professionals and alumni in multi-level habitats working together for sustainable progress.
- Co-created attractive flexible challenge-based and research-driven academic offer.
- Joint transformational disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation.
- Enhanced intercultural competence, global understanding and respect for diversity throughout our communities.

Key identifying features of **Arqus**



- 01 | **Integrated Arqus**
- 02 | **Community-centred Arqus**
- 03 | **Inclusive Arqus**
- 04 | **Excellent Arqus**
- 05 | **Sustainable Arqus**
- 06 | **Research-based Arqus**
- 07 | **Interdisciplinary, challenge-based Arqus**
- 08 | **Entrepreneurial and regionally-engaged Arqus**
- 09 | **Global Arqus**
- 10 | **Digital Arqus**
- 11 | **Plurilingual and intercultural Arqus**



01 | **Integrated Arqus**

The principal ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, which will serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

02 | **Community-centred Arqus**

The Alliance centres its primary interest on people, as the essential component, resource and beneficiary of the knowledge society, the *raison d'être* of education in general, and higher education in particular.

Following this principle, Arqus is co-created and co-developed through the active contribution of students, academics and professional staff from all its member institutions. Arqus pays special attention to student participation and engagement, involving students as full members of its governing structures. Moreover, it aspires to continue and increase the involvement of members of the university communities as it grows and develops towards a true European University. The strategy will address the three major groups composing the university community: students, potential students and alumni; academics; professional and technical staff.

A powerful driver for our deep integration is the mutual trust built in domain-based communities of students, academics and professionals across our institutions. Arqus aims to institutionalize these through our knowledge-creation teams or Academic Hubs, our Communities of Practice, and our Student Agora.

03 | **Inclusive Arqus**

The policies and activities of the Alliance are designed to provide quality provision and attention to the diverse community of people

participating in our higher education institutions, and to ensure their full participation in and ownership of this initiative.

The Alliance will continue jointly to promote widening access and participation for student and staff populations from diverse backgrounds, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and actively attracting talent from under-represented groups. The Alliance has developed shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community formulated in the Arqus Common Charters on Gender Equality, Inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals, and subsequently in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. Arqus is especially committed to ensuring universal accessibility of its resources and activities.



04 | **Excellent Arqus**

Arqus is composed of leading European research universities, each widely recognised for its deep commitment to excellence. As such, the Alliance is committed to attaining excellence in all of its activities: in student-centred innovative and inclusive teaching and learning; in cutting-edge research based on the principles of Open Science, and aimed at contributing to resolve the huge societal challenges faced by Europe and the wider world; in knowledge transfer ensuring that the benefits of all knowledge generated by the Alliance have profound social impact; in active local and regional engagement, driving sustainable progress and cooperation amongst our ecosystems; in promoting culture and preserving our rich heritage; in initiatives contributing to public understanding of science and culture; in quality and impactful professional and learning mobility for all; and, finally, very specially in deep and efficient cooperation mechanisms.

Arqus believes that by joining forces the already substantial individual strengths of partners are multiplied, facilitating our pursuit of all-round and inclusive excellence.

05 | **Sustainable Arqus**

Arqus is committed to driving sustainable change and empowering its communities to contribute positively through its research, education and institutions.

The 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals summarize the 17 major urgent societal challenges faced by our planet, and which Arqus recognizes as interconnected priorities for its joint activities, identifying itself as a “Partnership for the Goals” in line with SDG 17.

To this end, the Alliance has identified four major interdisciplinary challenges as priority areas for joint actions in the future, through our Academic Hubs, which will build on activities carried out since the founding of the Alliance, and on the Arqus Common Charter on Gender Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability:



Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development aims at achieving SDG 13 Climate Action, together with SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 14 Life Below Water, and SDG 15 Life on Land;



Responsible Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation as an instrument for the achievement of other SDGs, in particular: SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities;



Europe as a Global Actor embodied in European values as in SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, and working through our global outreach towards SDG 1 No poverty and SDG 2 Zero Hunger.



Sustainable Health, adopting an open approach to health beyond the absence of illness and working towards SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing, also closely linked to SDG 2 Zero Hunger, SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 14 Life Below Water and SDG 15 Life on Land.

Furthermore, Arqus members are also committed to reducing the environmental impact of their operations, sharing best practices and finding shared solutions to develop their campuses as exemplars of environmental sustainability.

06 | Research-based Arqus

Arqus promotes strong research collaboration within the Alliance and with European and global partners, in particular applied to the four major interdisciplinary priorities identified: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development; Responsible Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation; Europe as a Global Actor; Sustainable Health. To this

end, the Alliance brings together best practice in research management and support, and has established the EuREP platform to facilitate the sharing of research resources, equipment and data. It also implements joint doctoral and post-doctoral initiatives as the basis for early-stage researcher development and to promote shared opportunities.

Arqus believes that universities are unique institutions in that they bring together teaching and learning and research as their two major missions, alongside transfer, culture and service to society. As such, the Alliance aims to exploit the full potential of synergies between learning and teaching and research, developing challenge-based multi-actor learning spaces.

07 | **Interdisciplinary, challenge-based Arqus**

Arqus aims to stimulate open interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches to both study programmes and research to ensure the acquisition of the high-level, transferable competences required by the rapid evolution of technology, the economy and the labour market. Arqus believes this to be vital in order to ensure that complex societal challenges are addressed from the innovative and creative perspectives necessary for the pursuit of effective responses.

Furthermore, the Alliance will attempt to break down the barriers which currently persist between education and research within higher education. To this end, it will promote challenge-based approaches to teaching & learning, and ensure that research activities constitute an integral part of study programmes, allowing students to participate in ongoing research.

08 | **Entrepreneurial and regionally-engaged Arqus**

The Arqus Alliance aims to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit and creativity amongst the entire university community and across different areas of activities, through mutual learning, and combining the complementary strengths of all its members.

The Arqus Alliance aims to address societal challenges of local ecosystems and seeks social and civic engagement. As leading institutional players deeply engaged in our local ecosystems, we will further devote our efforts to foster social, cultural and economic development, through transformational and sustainable partnerships.

09 | **Global Arqus**

The major challenges facing Europe are for the most part shared with the rest of the world, and require global approaches to find global solutions for our interconnected and interdependent world. The Alliance aims to set up joint global initiatives in education and research, building on the complementarity of members' strong strategic partners worldwide.

It further aims, through global mobility and talent attraction initiatives, to build on that complementarity to promote Europe and Arqus as an attractive space for talent from around the world to study, research or work.

10 | **Digital Arqus**

The technological revolution has brought more rapid change than at any other time in human history, radically changing the way we live, work and learn. The Covid-19 pandemic served as a driver for the use of technology for professional and personal activities, in the light of imposed restrictions on mobility and face-to-face meetings and activities. Consequently, Arqus intensified its commitment to the digitalization of joint teaching and learning, of joint research, and of internal and external communication, awareness-raising learning activities, the enhancement of digital skills in general, alongside cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in the field through our Academic Hub in Responsible Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation, involving social and ethical concerns and approaches. Thus, Arqus is especially committed to the use of efficient Open Solutions, including Open Source software and Open Educational Resources, which facilitate collaborative work and are easily accessible, in order to leave no-one behind.



11 | Plurilingual and intercultural Arqus

The Alliance is committed to guaranteeing truly multilingual environments as an essential feature of our European identity and immaterial heritage. Arqus aims at making best use of the language diversity of our partners, who learn, teach and work in ten different languages and share the use of English as a lingua franca, in order to promote plurilingualism throughout Alliance and university activities, for the entire community and beyond.

The Alliance is further committed to moving beyond language competence in order also to promote intercultural competence amongst students and staff, as a core competence for an interdependent, globalised world.

Cross-cutting Enabling Strategies



**A laboratory
for institutional
learning**

**Mobility and
Recognition**

**Quality student
learning in
diverse flexible
joint academic
offer**

**Open and
Citizen
Science**

**A long-term
initiative
for a shared
future**

01 | **A laboratory for institutional learning**

Arqus defines itself as a laboratory for institutional learning and has carried out experimentation in innovative actions for deep university integration and inter-university cooperation.

The results of this experimentation provide a sound and informed source for deep evidence-based institutional learning within the Alliance, the successes of which will now be upscaled and mainstreamed for the enhancement of our central missions. They will further contribute to the advancement of higher education policies at national and European level. Findings are shared widely with other universities and networks and with the higher education sector in general. Learning also derives of course from failure, and the alliance constantly modifies its work plans to correct those actions which have not proved successful or viable.

02 | **Mobility and Recognition**

Arqus partners share a strong tradition and long experience in student and staff mobility at both European and global levels, and are fully committed to the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, in particular to full and automatic recognition of all mobility study periods and of all diplomas and certificates awarded by partner institutions, including microcredentials. This principle of recognition extends also to various forms of recognition of staff mobility. The Alliance is deeply aware of the centrality of staff and researcher mobility to the attainment of its long-term objectives, and as such works towards feasible shared policies for recognition in both workload systems and evaluation processes.



Building on our experience, the Alliance has taken up the challenge of implementing seamless mobility of all kinds with full recognition for all members of the community, by promoting physical and blended mobility, alongside virtual exchange in a wide variety of formats, including—where appropriate—structured and embedded mobility in the form of joint programmes in all cycles. Intersectoral mobility during which students engage in work-based learning, research-based learning and service learning are also priorities, as a special form of experiential learning, strengthening employability, entrepreneurial mindset and societal engagement.

03 | **Quality student learning in diverse flexible joint academic offer**

Arqus actively promotes student agency in the co-creation of flexible learning opportunities.

In order to enhance the quality of student learning and employability, the Alliance both shares existing academic offer and develops new joint flexible programmes in all three cycles, and in the form of short offerings such as summer schools, Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs), or microcredentials.

To this end, Arqus is committed to exploiting new forms of mobility and best practice for recognition of all kinds: for credit mobility; for formal, informal and non-formal learning; for prior learning; for service learning; and of qualifications.

Similarly, Arqus is committed to innovative and inclusive teaching and learning methodologies, as well as to strong staff development initiatives, making use of the opportunities offered by digital technologies, and of virtual and hybrid formats to enhance learning offer for all.

04 | **Open and Citizen Science**

Arqus subscribes to UNESCO's position that "universal access to information through high quality education contributes to peace,

sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue”, and is thus especially committed to the safe and appropriate use of Open Solutions, Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Access and Open Data.

Arqus acknowledges that Open Science (OS) can increase diversity, equity, inclusion and the notion of scientific knowledge as a public good; the quality and public understanding of, and trust in science; as well as efficiency, innovation and wealth. Therefore, Arqus is committed to fostering OS—including Citizen Science, Open Innovation and Open Education—and to coordinating efforts in order to enhance Openness within and beyond the Alliance in a strategic way.

Arqus is convinced that OS practices and measures must be implemented in a transparent and participatory process in a safe and accountable manner, paying attention to concerns regarding the transition to OS. Arqus commits to addressing OS at all institutional levels and to acting on all political levels—regional, national and international—in order to contribute to a safe transformation towards Openness in science. To this end, Arqus fosters partnership, exchange of knowledge and consultation throughout the alliance to achieve the mutually-agreed goals and to align strategies and practices with universities across and beyond Europe.

05 | **A long-term initiative for a shared future**

Arqus believes firmly that an essential element for its success and sustainability is the close link between its joint goals and policies and those of each partner’s institutional strategy in place or developed since 2018.

Partners are committed to investing in implementing and sustaining joint activities, within the bounds of their financial possibilities.

The cross-cutting participation of staff and students at all levels in partner universities in Arqus governance structures and work plans is the basis for sound community and identity building, thus ensuring strong potential for lasting cooperation in teaching and learning, research, transfer, cultural and outreach activities.

02

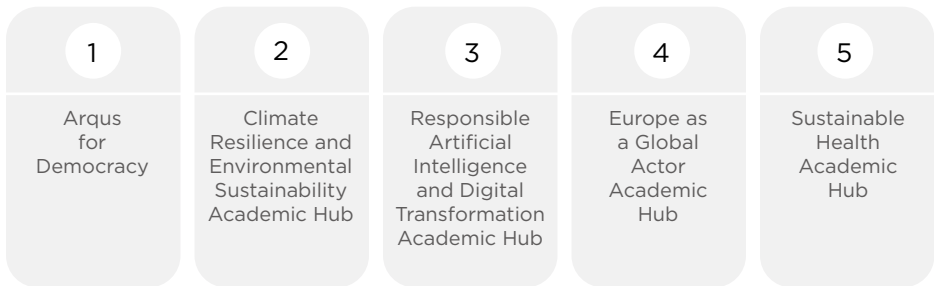
Arqus Joint Long-term Strategy 2026-2035



Executive Summary

Flagship Initiatives

Arqus has identified five flagship initiatives (thereof four Academic Hubs) to address pressing societal challenges and generate transformative impact:



Monitoring Progress – Arqus Information System

Arqus has developed qualitative and quantitative Key Progress Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress and ensure continuous improvement. Targets have been set for 2030, including:

- Compliance with Joint European Degree Label criteria.
- Further expansion of seamless and embedded mobility opportunities for students and staff.
- Implementation of the Arqus Flagship Initiatives and challenge-based multi-actor spaces.
- Diversification and expansion of external funding sources beyond Erasmus+.
- Full roll-out of the internal Arqus Quality Assurance system.
- Institutionalisation of professional recognition for involvement in Arqus activities.
- Implementation of the Global Outreach Strategy and analysis of its impact on the Alliance's development.

Long-Term Strategic Impact

Arqus seeks to achieve systemic impact across four interconnected areas:

- **Civic engagement:** Enabling forward-looking skills and preparedness of graduates to strengthen Europe's democratic resilience.
- **Integrated internal ecosystem:** Creating a vibrant, sustainable Alliance learning and research ecosystem that leverages the complementary strengths of its member universities.
- **Societal relevance:** Positioning Arqus as a long-term driver of societal value creation through open, participatory, and challenge-oriented approaches.
- **Structural transformation:** Championing deeply institutionalised forms of transnational collaboration to reshape European higher education.

The ten-year strategy is divided into two key five-year phases, each with distinct priorities and objectives.



2026-2030:

UPSCALING AND CONSOLIDATION

This phase focuses on scaling up and embedding alliance-wide practices to ensure long-term sustainability and transformative impact. Key priorities include:

1. **Full institutionalisation of Arqus:** Consolidating Arqus as a functioning European inter-university campus, supported by shared governance, digital infrastructure, quality assurance and recognition mechanisms.
2. **Operationalising synergies:** Consolidating interconnections and synergies across the major Arqus missions of education, research, innovation and societal engagement and thus promoting links across the European Education Area, the European Research Area, and the European Higher Education Area.
3. **Mainstreaming joint educational offerings:** Expanding flexible joint full-cycle European degrees, microcredentials, and interdisciplinary modules as standard components of partners' learning offer.
4. **Consolidating research cooperation:** Strengthening joint interdisciplinary collaboration through stable structures such as Academic Hubs, which focus on challenge-driven and research-informed activities.
5. **Strengthening democratic values:** Actively promoting equality, diversity, inclusion, and European democratic culture and values in governance, curricula and campus life.
6. **Strengthening stakeholder engagement:** Intensifying collaboration with external stakeholders to connect local and regional ecosystems across the Alliance.
7. **Global engagement:** Implementing the Global Outreach Strategy and the Inclusion and Diversity Action Plan to position Arqus as a values-driven global actor.

2031-2035:

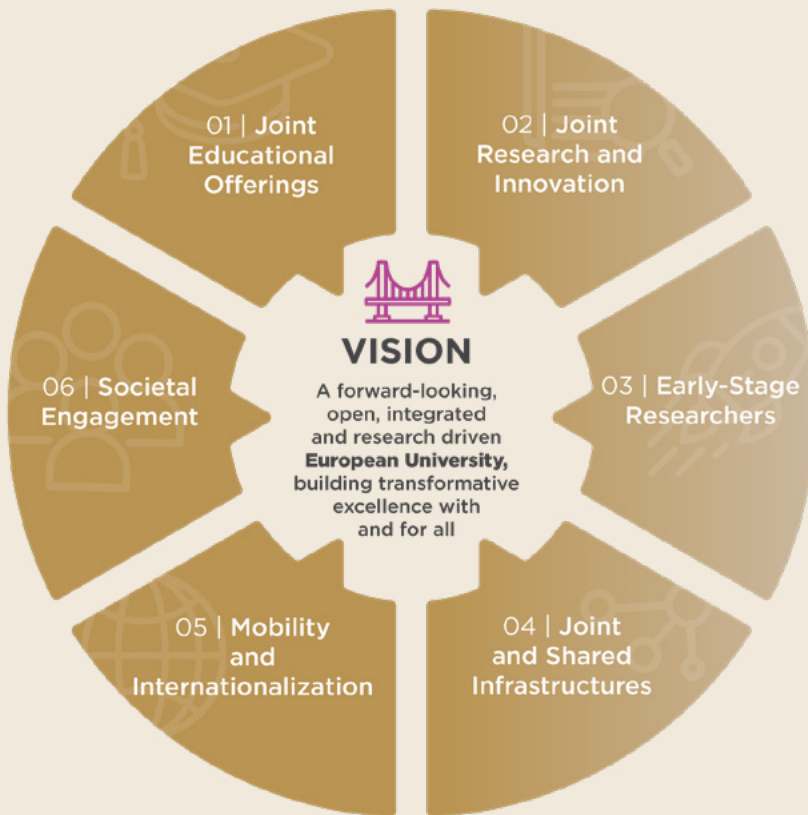
DEEPENING INTEGRATION AND SYSTEMIC IMPACT

Building on the consolidated foundations of the previous phase, this sub-phase focuses on even deeper integration, sustainability, and systemic impact. Key objectives include:

1. **Curricular and organisational integration:** Deepening integration across governance, curricula, and organisational structures to enhance cohesion and efficiency.
2. **Strengthening ecosystem connections:** Enhancing societal relevance and innovation capacity by fostering stronger structural connections to local, regional, and global ecosystems.
3. **Global outreach:** Expanding partnerships and implementing targeted global engagement with strategic partners for educational, research and innovation activities.
4. **Joint research initiatives:** Intensifying a strong portfolio of collaborative research projects supported by sustainable self-funding and seed-funding mechanisms alongside diversified external funding sources.
5. **Quality assurance and accreditation:** Building on the consolidated Arqus Internal Quality Assurance system towards potential institutional accreditation of the Alliance.
6. **Policy Contributions:** Strong positioning of Arqus as a reference point for inter-university cooperation contributing evidence, models, and narratives to European and national policy debates.

Arqus Joint Long-term Strategy 2026-2035

Building strong structures for the future, based on the foundations laid in 2019-26



Enlarged composition

With a view to strengthening its pan-European nature, to helping to fulfil our mission of bringing about inclusive systemic impact, building on the added value brought by new institutions of a similar profile in new geographical, cultural and linguistic regions, Arqus has grown since its beginnings with only six members (Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padua and Vilnius)¹, by welcoming the University of Minho (Portugal), the University of Wrocław (Poland) and Maynooth University (Ireland) to the Arqus community. This has brought three new institutions, three new countries and cultures, four new languages, and in particular completed the full range of regions in Europe.

Our composition has since been further enriched by the incorporation of two associate European university partners: National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (Ukraine) and Durham University (United Kingdom), who have, within the constraints of their status, gradually intensified their participation in Alliance activities and structures and their commitment to a shared future.



¹ For a short time, the University of Bergen (Norway) was a seventh member but decided to leave as the Alliance was implementing its enlargement strategy in 2021.

2019-26 Foundations laid

The principal ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, to serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

To this end, Arqus has a long-term approach to building our shared future step-by-step. In keeping with our name and the architectural metaphor on which it is based, the first years were devoted to laying the initial foundations for our shared campus, and the ensuing years to building on those initial foundations to consolidate achievements. The results of our endeavours over this period can be summed up as follows:

Trust built through establishing multi-level communities to ensure mutual knowledge and familiarity beyond our already linked International Office structures: multiple working groups, task forces, communities of practice and other groupings made up of professionals, academics and students from diverse areas of activity: senior management (rectors, vice-rectors, directors), professional services (IT, Communications, Quality Assurance, International Offices, Student and Academic Services, Student Admissions, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Services, Careers Guidance and Employment, doctoral schools, Research Management and Support Offices, Strategic Planning Units...), academics (through our four Academic Hubs), joint educational offerings and programmes, challenge-based and other learning activities and mobilities), students (through challenge-based and other learning activities, mobilities, together with student-led activities and representation).

Deep mutual knowledge through shared experiences and best practice exchange in many areas identified as being of mutual interest such as: university management; management of international mobility; mobility windows; international joint study programmes; organization of doctoral education; digital learning platforms; management of research resources; language policies, programmes and centres; quality assurance systems; strategic planning; staff development programmes; academic career assessment and management; research support services; teaching innovation and awards; student services; equality, diversity and inclusion policies and services; sustainability policies

and programmes; knowledge transfer and innovation services; global outreach; children's and seniors' universities.

Testing of numerous innovative initiatives identified as being of importance for the future of the Alliance, such as: challenge-based summer and winter schools; full joint degree programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level; joint microcredentials; summer and winter schools; MOOCs; the incipient Arqus Academy as a quality assurance and certification body for joint learning offer; mobility windows; Twinning initiatives (short-term group mobility for staff and students of all three cycles to promote joint initiatives); staff development resources; promotion of innovative teaching; short courses in transferable skills for doctoral candidates; small- and large-scale workshops for researchers, mobility between incubator services; a podcast series on areas of particular research strength; on-line seminar series in areas of academic interest; Arqus Cafés and Lounges for innovative language learning.

Shared tools and resources: a comprehensive digital eco-system comprising an entire suite of IT tools with a single sign-on approach: virtual campus, virtual office, open access repository; course catalogues; a partnering platform; a certification system; collaborative tools (drive, meet); multiple learning resources for diverse target groups. This eco-system is accessible through an identity management solution compatible with European solutions based on EduGain to facilitate interoperability with partner and other alliance systems.

An Open Mobility Agreement to facilitate seamless mobility for students, academics and professional staff; Arqus English-language style guide and terminology data base; formal agreement on the mutual recognition of language certificates; a joint data controller agreement; standard operating procedures; a joint quality assurance system; a joint information, data collection and visualization system; a corporate identity suite; operational handbooks.

Shared policy: Arqus has developed common charters on gender equality, inclusion and the sustainable development goals; a position paper on Open Science; recommendations for joint PhD initiatives; on language policy; on the European Strategy for Universities, on the European Degree (label), a Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action

Plan and a Global Outreach Strategy. Similarly, the Alliance has offered continuous input to the European Commission and to national and regional authorities on the European Degree Label, on Microcredentials, on Legal Entity for EU Alliances, on the sustainability of the European Universities Initiative, amongst other key issues.

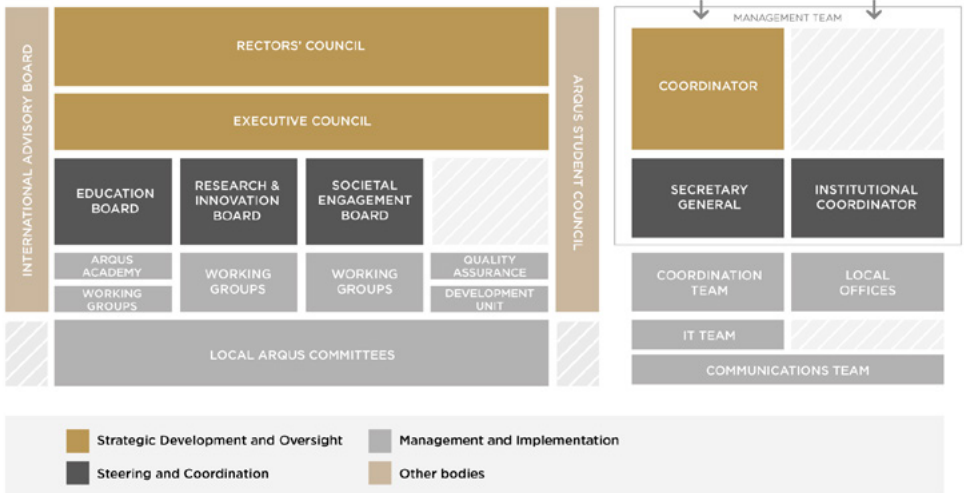
Shared structures: the Alliance has built a robust joint governance structure to ensure effective decision-making, facilitate the development of consensual joint policies and action plans, to consolidate participative structures which facilitate cross-cutting integration at all levels of the partner institutions. The structure has evolved from an initial more project-based to a more long-term alliance approach, paving the way for a possible legal entity. The governance structure is complemented with a reinforced two-tier Secretariat, at both centralised and decentralised level, and is enshrined in the Arqus Governing Principles and Provisions. Of special importance for the strategic planning of the Alliance has been the establishment of the Arqus Development Unit, commissioned to monitor progress and make recommendations to the highest-level decision-making bodies, the Rectors' Council and the Executive Council for enhancement and future development through bespoke work plans. They are accompanied in this process by the Arqus International Advisory Board, composed of six leading experts in higher education policy, who provide invaluable insights and recommendations.

Transformative impact: Major internal impact of those initial transformative actions was transversal internationalization “at home” of our internal structures, offices, services and for students, professional and academic staff in general, sowing the seeds for deeper and truly transversal future integration.

Acting jointly as a model: Arqus has constantly shared its experience extensively with other groupings at local, national, European and global level in order to communicate the added value to be found in its model of integration; it has also actively incorporated lessons learned by other alliances. Our universities have been especially active at national level through rectors' conferences, networks of universities participating in alliances, national expert and advisory groups. Arqus is a full partner of the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice, is represented in all of its Topical Groups, on the Forum Board and participates actively.

Arqus Governance Structure

Secretariat (Supporting structures)



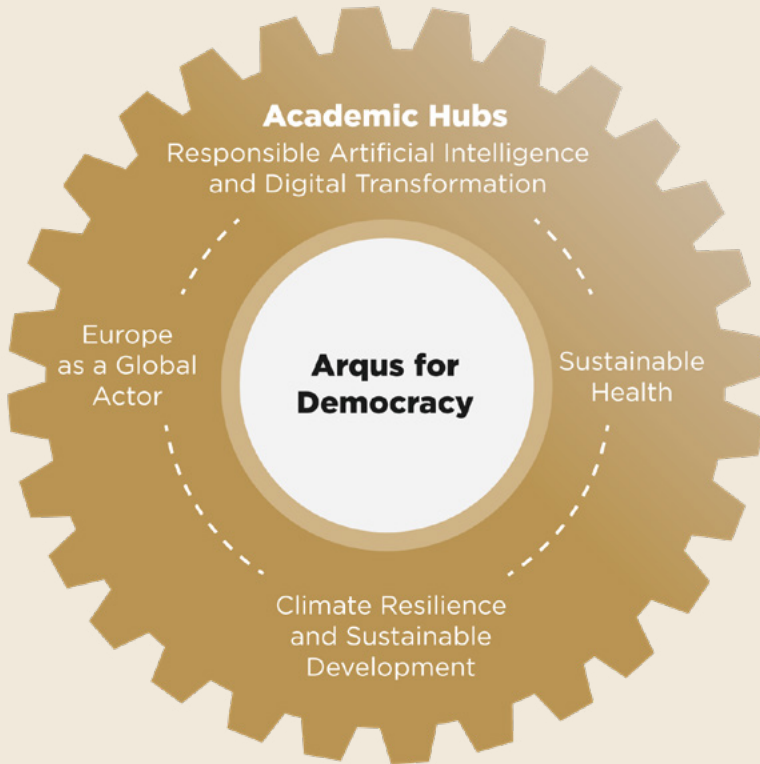
Moving forward 2026-35

As the foundations have been laid and the structures established, the next ten years will be devoted to upscaling and mainstreaming the internal and external transformative impact of Arqus, taking the Alliance to the next level over the period 2026-2035.

Arqus Flagship Initiatives

Arqus has now reached a level of maturity which allows it to prioritise major actions in pursuit of its major goals and generating visible impact within all its partners, their local ecosystems, and globally. These major actions for the next ten years have been denominated **Arqus Flagship Initiatives**. The Arqus flagship architecture comprises one transversal flagship initiative (Arqus for Democracy) and four thematic flagship initiatives implemented through the Academic Hubs, which serve as the Alliance's core academic structures for education, research, innovation and societal engagement.





Arqus for Democracy

Arqus activity for this period will deepen its focus on initiatives with the overall aim of contributing to the **resilience of our democracies** in the face of growing challenges and threats. Arqus core values are based on the assumption of the responsibility universities undertake in the education of critical citizens and the promotion of the core democratic values on which our societies are based and thrive, as described in detail in the Council of Europe's Framework for Democratic Culture. This major priority will inform all Arqus activities, through the other four flagship initiatives, our thematic focus areas organised in Academic Hubs, but also in specific activities.

This transversal Flagship Initiative is materialised in:

- A participative governance structure promoting democratic values through practice
- A robust values-based Global Outreach Strategy
- The Arqus Student Assembly
- Dedicated actions to promote European Values, including educational and staff development activities in Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Plurilingualism, Intercultural Understanding, Democratic Culture
- Academic debates and podcasts on issues relating to democratic resilience
- A cross-cutting interdisciplinary approach to the four Academic Hubs, as explained below.

Academic Hubs

European societies see themselves confronted with a set of interconnected, overlapping crises — often described as multi-crises. These crises are not isolated IN or FOR Europe, but they are both a product of and result in the region being embedded in intensive relations with other parts of the world — but not all parts of Europe in the same way and with the same effects.

While technical, natural and life sciences have a lot to offer in terms of technological solutions to these dramatic transitions and comprehending the scientific mechanisms of their emergence, the social sciences and humanities are specifically strong in providing context, critical analytical skills in social, political, and cultural communication, as well as navigating the political, social and cultural diversity of the continents' challenges in its various connections. The Arqus Academic Hubs—Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development, Responsible Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation, Europe as a Global Actor, and Sustainable Health—bring together Arqus academics at all levels and positions the Alliance as a forward-looking, values-driven actor in addressing some of the most pressing European and global challenges. This structure strengthens Europe's democratic resilience, promotes inclusive societies, and contributes to Europe's role as a global actor in research, education, and innovation. This task can only

be solved in interdisciplinary and challenge- based approaches.

The Academic Hubs are thus organised around four strategic themes which address pressing societal challenges and align with European policy priorities, including the European Green Deal, the Digital Europe Programme, the European Health Union, the European Democracy Shield, and initiatives to strengthen European identity. While the four Academic Hubs specialise in their respective interdisciplinary formations, they form an interconnected core of a cohesive academic Arqus vision. Each hub addresses distinct thematic priorities, yet their activities intersect across shared objectives and tasks. This interconnected approach ensures that solutions are holistic and reflect the complexity of today's global multi-crisis.

Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development Academic Hub

This Hub advances cutting-edge research and innovative education on climate adaptation, sustainability, and the green transition—key priorities of the European Green Deal and the EU Climate Law. It fosters deep interdisciplinarity by integrating environmental, social, economic, legal, and policy perspectives, equipping students and researchers to address the complex interconnections between climate, society, and governance.

By promoting collaborative academic initiatives, mobility, and knowledge exchange, the Hub strengthens Europe's democratic resilience by ensuring that climate strategies are inclusive, participatory, and grounded in evidence-based policymaking. It empowers future leaders to engage with communities and stakeholders, supporting just transitions and social equity in climate action.

At the global level, the Hub positions Arqus—and Europe—as a proactive global actor in sustainability and climate diplomacy. Through joint research, capacity-building, and outreach, it contributes to Europe's leadership in shaping international climate agendas, promoting excellence, inclusiveness, and innovation in higher education and research.

Responsible Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation Academic Hub

This Hub effectively addresses one of the most pressing and transformative challenges of our time: the integration of artificial intelligence and digital transformation into academia, administration and society. It contributes significantly to equipping alliance members at all levels with the skills, knowledge, and tools needed to navigate and lead in the era of AI and digital transformation. Moreover, this Hub creates a unique platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together diverse perspectives from across the alliance. By connecting students, academics, administrative staff, and external stakeholders, it breaks down silos and encourages the co-creation of solutions to real-world problems. This collaborative approach ensures that the solutions developed are not only innovative but also holistic, addressing technical, ethical, and societal dimensions of AI and digital transformation.

The Hub focuses on fostering interdisciplinary approaches to address challenges and opportunities in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation (DT). Building on innovative methodologies, students, academics, professional staff, and external stakeholders will be brought together to co-create solutions for real-world problems. A strong emphasis will be placed on the development of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, and digital literacy, through hands-on formats. In doing so, the task will also contribute to the development of innovative teaching and learning formats while promoting societal engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration across the Arqus Alliance.

Europe as a Global Actor Academic Hub

The Academic Hub “Europe as a Global Actor” fosters interdisciplinary collaboration in the social sciences and humanities with a focus on Europe in its transregional connections and contexts. Emphasizing democratic resilience and responses to contemporary multi-crisis, the Hub promotes joint research and innovative teaching across fields such as European studies, history, cultural and social sciences, geography, and economics. It provides a platform for scholars and students to link

research perspectives, develop collaborative projects and teaching programmes, and engage stakeholders in addressing global challenges facing Europe.

Through its respective centres of excellence, Arqus brings together universities shaped by diverse historical experiences of democratic transition and global positioning. These include post-socialist contexts at Europe's "frontiers" (Vilnius, Leipzig, Wrocław, Kyiv), post-fascist transitions (Granada, Padua, Minho), and post-imperial legacies (Lyon, Durham, Maynooth, Graz).

This unique post-authoritarian diversity makes Arqus the perfect arena for comparative and connected reflection on ways out of crises, allowing for a better understanding of democratic resilience as crisis literacy. Acknowledging diverse historical trajectories and experiences, this is at the core of Arqus' efforts in teaching and research in the social sciences and humanities, promoting cultural understanding, democratic values, and social cohesion.

Sustainable Health Academic Hub

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of health preparedness. The European Union has reinforced its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being. The EU's ambition to strengthen the skills base and competitiveness of the European healthcare sector further highlight the strategic relevance of this focus.

Arqus identified health among priority areas in recent strategic reviews. The strong collaborative dynamics already emerging within Arqus (e.g. innovative training offers, such as the Cancer and AI), provide a solid foundation for developing a Health Cluster.

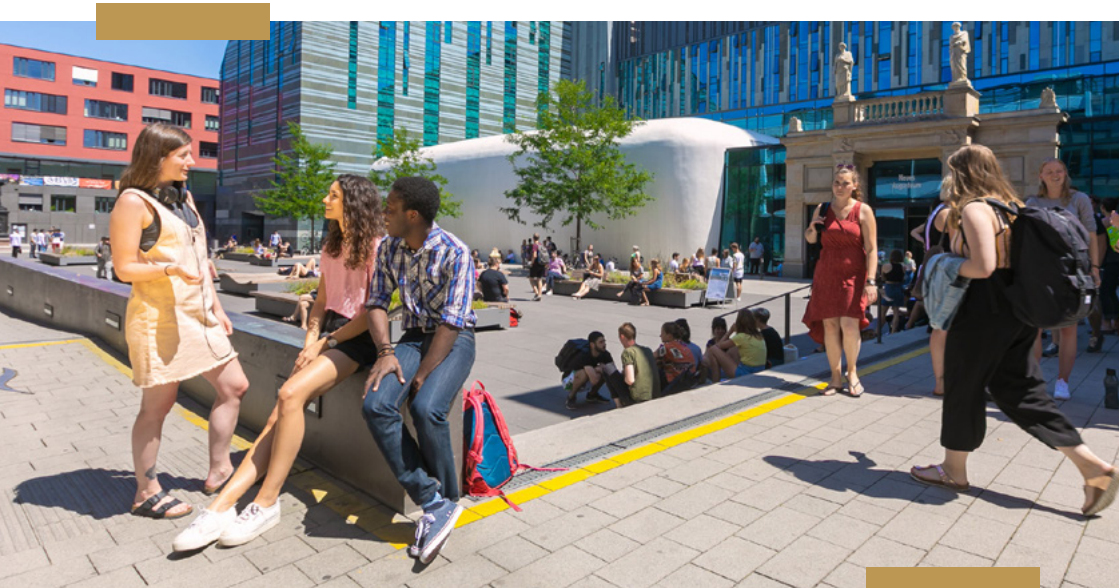
The changing nature of health determinants driven by social and environmental transformations requires multidimensional responses that a European alliance is uniquely positioned to deliver. The Sustainable Health Hub addresses challenges in public health, health promotion, healthcare systems, and One Health. It promotes interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration across medicine, pharmacy, nursing, life

sciences, social sciences, ethics, and policy to strengthen preparedness and equity in health systems. By fostering research, education and lifelong learning, the Hub contributes to Europe's democratic resilience by ensuring inclusive access to healthcare and evidence-based policymaking.

Through joint research, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement of health providers, health authorities and patients' associations, the Hub supports Europe's role in shaping international health standards and promoting well-being of European citizens.

* * *

These four Academic Hubs will concentrate the academic content of Arqus activity as our "Faculties", generating content and proposals for the support structures provided by Arqus expert Working Groups, Task Forces, Services and Units, ensuring synergies across our major missions of Education, Research, Innovation and Societal Engagement. The Alliance will thus generate synergies across the European Education Area, the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area.



2026-2030

UPSCALING AND CONSOLIDATION

The period 2026-2030 will primarily be dedicated to upscaling, consolidation and institutional embedding. Building on the design and pilots of 2019-2026, this phase will consolidate our already advanced move from project-based cooperation towards stable and structurally anchored alliance-wide practices.

Major milestones for this phase organised around the six Arqus Development strategic focus areas.

1. **Joint Educational Offerings**

Aim: To develop and establish new learning pathways at all levels

- Continued implementation of 10 full and flexible European degrees at Bachelor's and Master's level and all existing short educational offer (MOOCs, BIPs, summer and winter schools, micro-credentials)
- Building on successful prior experience, development of new full degree programmes (previously agreed on by the Rectors' Council)
- Ensuring that joint programmes (of all kinds) comply with Joint European Degree Label standards
- Consolidated staff training for the design and implementation of full joint programmes
- Consolidated staff development for innovative teaching and learning
- Through the Academic Hubs, increased disciplinary-level and transdisciplinary cooperation across Arqus partner universities promoted by transnational meetings of deans
- Upscaling the offer of joint or shared transversal modules incorporated into full degree programmes at all partner universities
- Upscaling the offer of joint or shared stand-alone and modular microcredentials to partner university communities and society at large
- A fully operational credentialling system
- Full implementation of the Arqus Academy as the body responsible for QA of joint educational offer and certification of joint learning activities, under the oversight of the Education Board

2. Joint Research and Innovation

Aim: To establish and intensify joint fields of research

- Self-funded research funding for small-scale joint projects and seed-funding for the preparation of larger-scale initiatives
- Enhanced access to research infrastructure at partner universities
- Open and Citizen Science policies
- Drawing on joint research initiatives arising within the four Arqus Academic Hubs, building on Research Focus Forums and other prior initiatives (Arqus R&I)
- Capacity-building for research support staff (Horizon Europe European Excellence Initiative submission)

3. Early-Stage Researchers

Aim: To support Early-Stage Researchers

Arqus continues to consider the doctoral cycle to be of central importance to the future of the Alliance.

- Deeper jointness of doctoral education through Arqus Doctoral Schools and the implementation of the Arqus co-tutelle framework, eventually leading to full joint Doctoral Degree programmes
- Consolidated and upscaled preparation of doctoral candidates for the transition to academic and non-academic careers, including entrepreneurial skills, reaching a substantial percentage of Arqus doctoral candidates

4. Joint and Shared Infrastructure

Aim: To share and develop joint infrastructures

- Maintenance of joint governance and support structures, including the centralised and de-centralised Secretariat
- Possible establishment of a legal entity as an instrument to support and facilitate joint Arqus activities
- Maintenance and continual updating of Arqus digital eco-system
- Further development of the EuREP catalogue of research infrastructure

5. **Mobility and Internationalisation**

Aim: To diversify and expand internationalisation options

- Intensification of promotion and defence of European and universal values (EDI, plurilingualism, intercultural competence, defence of scholars and students at risk, activities promoting democratic resilience) in all Arqus activities.
- Continued effort to remove persisting internal and external obstacles to full seamless mobility for all, increasing participation in mobility actions of all kinds and enhancing the quality of the mobility experience within the alliance, whilst ensuring the values of responsible, sustainable internationalisation.
- A reinforced Communication Plan to disseminate even further the benefits and opportunities Arqus brings to all sectors of our university communities.
- Recognition of staff involvement.

6. **Societal Engagement**

Aim: To deepen cooperation across Arqus universities and their ecosystems

- Intensification of involvement of external stakeholders of all kinds, with special emphasis on linking local Arqus partner ecosystems
- Implementation of the Global Outreach Strategy based on the values of responsible internationalisation and equitable partnerships to promote the major goals and core values of Arqus

In keeping with our community-based and participatory approach, the achievement of these milestones will be based on the reinforcement of ***Arqus Communities and Governance:***

- Knowledge-creating teams in our four major interdisciplinary focus areas. These will be led by senior academics driving intense collaborative activity, promoted by Arqus Chairs at partner universities.
- Consolidated Communities of Practice devoted especially to promoting joint activities amongst Arqus professional staff and to joint staff development programmes. They will be commissioned to apply their expertise to the shared pursuit of solutions to the

numerous internal obstacles encountered in their areas of activity to full inter-institutional cooperation.

- Student Agora devoted to ensuring that all students at Arqus universities are aware of the opportunities the Alliance brings them, and to broader and deeper student and alumni participation and engagement in general.
- Well-established and robust shared governance, quality assurance system and evidence—based strategic steering, enabling informed decision—making and sustainable development, consolidated risk management and closer cooperation in joint strategic planning in order to better exploit complementary strengths across education, research, innovation and societal engagement.
- Diversification of funding streams to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the Alliance.

And finally, Arqus will continue the pursuit of deep transformative impact at institutional, regional, national and European level through policy and advocacy activity. Through the active involvement of Arqus bodies and their members, Arqus will continue to contribute to the European and national policy debates, with special emphasis on:

- The EU Strategy for Universities
- The Union of Skills
- The European Democracy Shield and European Strategy for Civil Society
- The European Research Area (Act)
- The European Education Area
- The European Higher Education Area
- The Joint European Degree (Label)

As instruments for this end, special attention will be paid to active involvement in or leadership of:

- FOREU4ALL, its General Forum and Topical Subgroups
- National and regional groupings of universities participating in the European Universities Initiative
- Regional, national and European expert and advisory bodies

2031-2035

DEEPER INTEGRATION AND SYSTEMIC IMPACT

The period 2031-2035 will build on the consolidated foundations of the previous phase and focus on deeper integration, sustainability and systemic impact. With the European campus functioning as a stable and credible structure, this sub-phase will allow Arqus to further strengthen its internal integration and to amplify its external role.

During this phase, Arqus aims to:

- Deepen curricular, regulatory and organisational integration where feasible, building on the consolidated frameworks established in the previous phase;
- Strengthen structural connections to local, regional and global ecosystems, enhancing the societal relevance, innovation capacity and cohesion impact of the alliance;
- Position Arqus as a visible and credible European actor, contributing evidence, models and narratives to European and national policy debates and serving as a reference point for inter-university cooperation in Europe.
- The achievement of substantial progress towards, and where feasible the realisation of, the objective that 50% of students benefit from intra-alliance mobility opportunities, building on consolidated mobility pathways and cultures;
- The expansion and deepening of structural engagement with external partners, including associate partners, and the strengthening of links to regional, national and global ecosystems;
- The implementation of targeted global engagement with selected strategic partners for specific educational, research and innovation activities, in line with responsible and values-based internationalisation;
- The consolidation of regular joint international promotion activities within and beyond Europe, positioning Arqus as a mature, credible and visible European university alliance;
- The intensification of joint research activities and projects based on sustainable self-funding and seed-funding mechanisms, moving beyond pilot initiatives towards structurally embedded collaboration;
- The focused and structurally anchored sharing of research

infrastructure, based on established governance, trust and differentiated integration models;

- The intensified and institutionalised sharing of major local research initiatives, institutes and large-scale projects, building on the preparatory work of earlier phases and respecting differentiated institutional capacities and legal frameworks;
- The external evaluation of the Arqus Quality Assurance system following several years of operation, with a view to potential institutional accreditation of the Alliance;
- The continued collective contribution to major European and national policy debates on higher education, research and innovation, positioning Arqus as a reference point for inter-university cooperation;
- The maintenance of the Alliance's capacity to respond flexibly and strategically to emerging internal and external challenges, ensuring long-term relevance, resilience and impact.

This phased approach allows Arqus to combine ambition with credibility, ensuring that institutional consolidation precedes deeper integration and that systemic impact is built on robust and sustainable foundations.

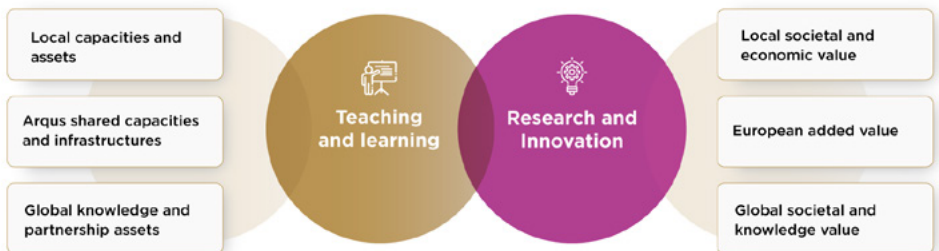
Long term strategic impact

Arqus European University Alliance seeks to create several interconnected types of impact:

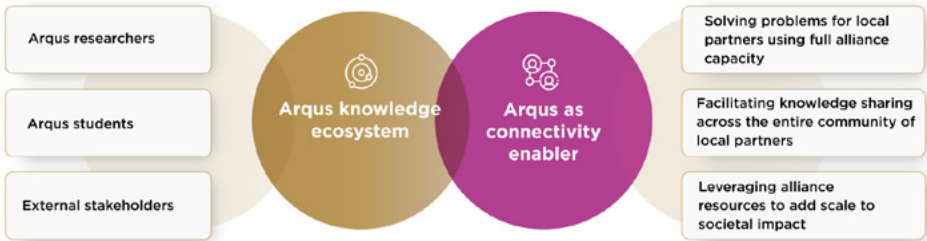
01 | Enabling civic engagement, forward-looking skills and preparedness of Arqus graduates for a stronger and more resilient Europe by jointly developing and delivering competence-oriented, flexible and inclusive learning pathways across the Alliance, institutionalising mobility, skills recognition and values-based education to strengthen graduates' understanding and appreciation of European democratic values.



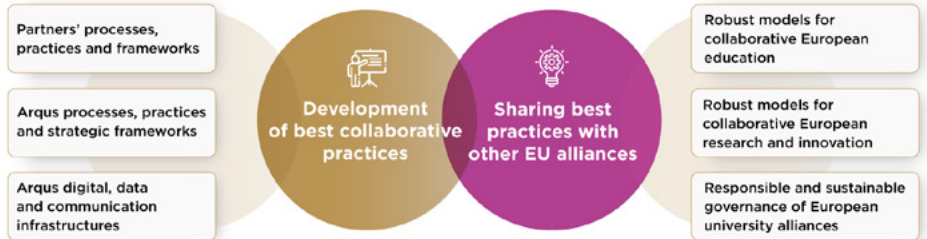
02 | Creating a vibrant, integrated and sustainable Alliance learning and research ecosystem by leveraging the complementary strengths of its member universities, embedding long-term transnational cooperation into institutional strategies and structures, and creating durable synergies between education, research and innovation that enhance local, regional and global value creation.



03 | Strengthening the societal relevance and legitimacy of our universities by positioning Arqus as a long-term driver of joint societal value creation, embedding open, participatory and challenge-oriented approaches in education, research and innovation, and leveraging our universities’ engagement with local communities, regional ecosystems and wider society.



04 | Championing long-term structural transformation of European higher education by moving beyond project-based cooperation towards deeply institutionalised forms of transnational collaboration.



Annex

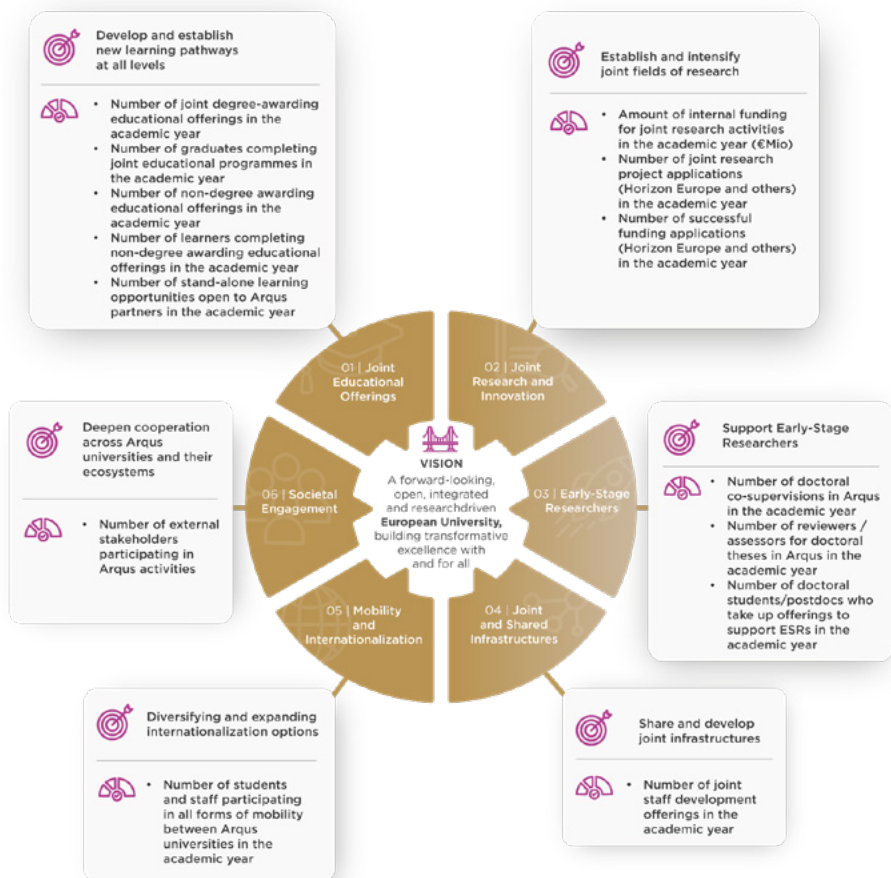
Key Progress Indicators



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Annex – Key Progress Indicators

In order to monitor progress in each of the six developmental strategic focus areas, Arqus has developed a series of Key Progress Indicators (KPI) which give rise to an annual progress report addressed to the respective governing bodies, with recommendations for future progress and improvement. The first set of KPIs are outcome-focused and quantitative; the second are qualitative in nature and reflect the maturity level of measures. Whilst for the first five-year period the KPIs are detailed, the goals of the second period are described in more general terms, pending further definition.

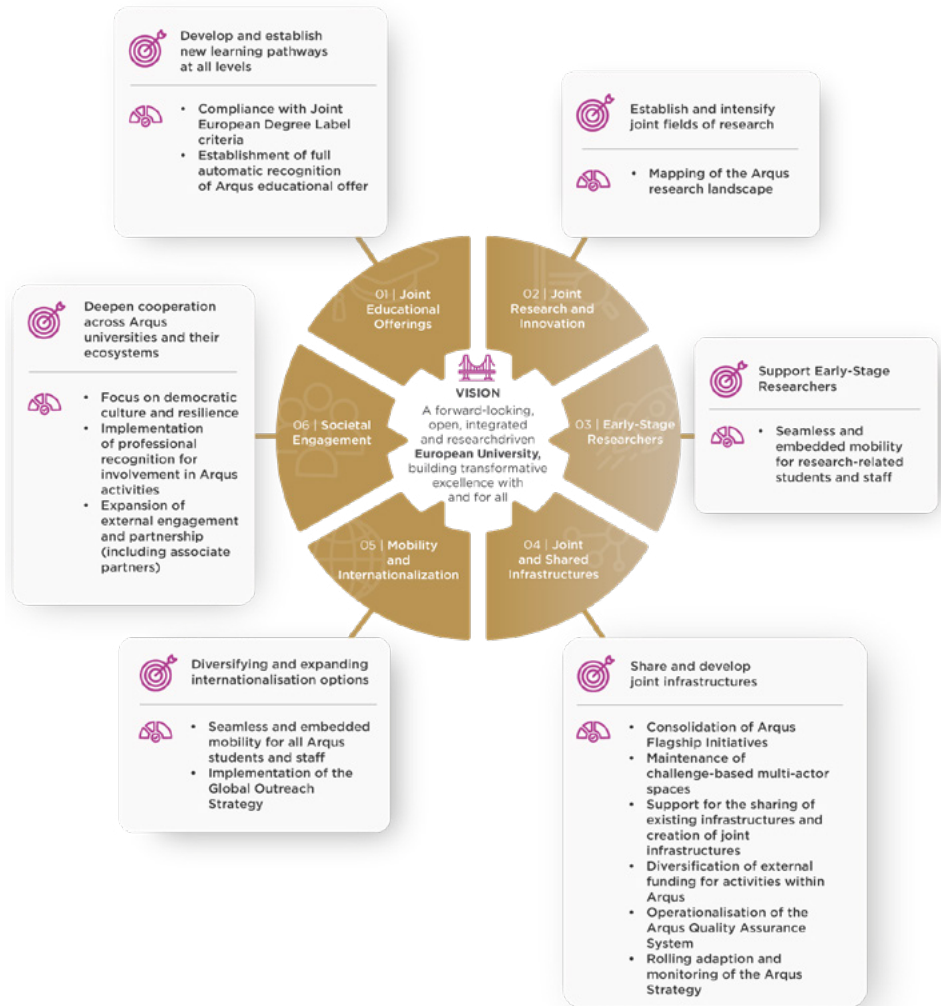


Overall Key Progress Indicator	2024	2030	2035
Number of people participating in Arqus activities in the academic year	9,997	40,000	Arqus mainstreamed as an integral part of all partners' institutional activities
Specific Key Progress Indicators			
Number of joint degree-awarding educational offerings in the academic year	6	15	Substantial joint degree-awarding educational offer in all three cycles. Mainstreamed flexible short-term educational offer serving all partners and local eco-systems.
Number of graduates completing joint educational programmes in the academic year	154	300	
Number of non-degree awarding educational offerings in the academic year	57	150	
Number of learners completing non-degree awarding educational offerings in the academic year	4,001	6,000	
Number of stand-alone learning opportunities open to Arqus partners in the academic year	26	100	
Amount of internal funding for joint research activities in the academic year (€Mio)	0.5	2.0	Intensification of joint research. Focussed, structurally anchored sharing of research infrastructure, including institutionalised sharing of major local research initiatives, institutes and large-scale projects.
Number of joint research project applications (Horizon Europe and others) in the academic year	6	50	
Number of successful funding applications (Horizon Europe and others) in the academic year	3	15	
Number of doctoral co-supervisions in Arqus in the academic year	3	30	Stable frameworks for deep cooperation in the doctoral cycle fully rolled out and mainstreamed
Number of reviewers / assessors for doctoral theses in Arqus in the academic year	26	100	
Number of doctoral students/postdocs who take up offerings to support ESRs in the academic year	85	250	
Number of joint staff development offerings in the academic year	30	65	Joint and shared staff development opportunities mainstreamed at all partners
Number of students and staff participating in all forms of mobility between Arqus universities in the academic year	1,530	10,000	Substantial progress towards the objective of 50% of students benefitting from Arqus mobility opportunities

*The baseline has been taken from figures from the 2023/24 academic year (identified as 2024) as this is the latest complete set of figures at the Alliance's disposal at the time of finalising this Strategy document.

Qualitative Key Progress Indicators	December 2025
Establish joint programmes within the framework of the European Degree (Arqus Label)	Arqus Label established. Adaptation of existing Arqus joint programmes to JEDL criteria underway
Map the Arqus research landscape	First Arqus Research Cluster Map under revision
Ensure seamless and embedded mobility for research-related students and staff	In progress, institutional commitment increasing
Create challenge-based multi-actor spaces (living lab)	3 Living labs (now Academic Hubs) now set up
Support the sharing of existing infrastructures and creation of joint infrastructures	Secretariat up and running following approval of GPPs March 2024 Digital Ecosystem up and running EuREP catalogue of research infrastructure under review
Diversify external funding for activities within Arqus	In progress (Digital Europe/Policy Experimentation/National Funding/CoFund/Horizon Widera...)
Institute the Arqus Quality Assurance System	To be completed by June 2026
Assess feasibility of a legal entity for Arqus	Underway – final phase to be completed by June 2026
Review the joint governance and management structures	Governing Principles and Provisions approved and implemented in March 2024
Ensure seamless and embedded mobility for students and staff	Open Mobility Agreement signed and updated annually. Institutional commitment increasing
Create a Global Engagement Policy	Global Outreach Strategy approved in October 2024
Expand external engagement and partnership (including associate partners)	Underway.
Implement the Arqus Inclusion and Diversity Action Plan	In 2026-28 Work Plan

Qualitative KPIs



Acknowledgement

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Arqus is also supported at a national level by Ministries and other institutions. All the information on this regard may be found on the Arqus website:
arqus-alliance.eu

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